ROGER PLANCHON, DIRECTOR AND PLAYWRIGHT,

AND THE Théâtre Populaire MOVEMENT 1957 to 1972

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ABSTRACT

In the 1950's and the 1960's in France there was a movement to bring theatre and culture to working class people. Roger Planchon started his work as a part of this movement. He founded his troupe in Lyons in the early fifties, distinguishing himself not only by the vitality and originality of his productions, but also by his insistence on creating a permanent fixed provincial theatre. In 1957, his company took over the municipal theatre of Villerbanne, a working class suburb of Lyons. They made every effort to acquaint the local population with their theatre by creating contacts with various associations. Gradually they built up a considerable following.

Planchon's work was from the first strongly Brechtian in orientation. He brought out the historical significance of both classical and modern plays, presenting them from a Marxist stand point. Eventually his work earned him widespread recognition as a leading contemporary director. In 1962 he wrote his first play, La Remise, a portrait of his peasant ancestors in the Ardèche. Planchon has tended over the years to write plays and to put on productions which are less and less interpretative, which ask questions but provide no answers.

After the events of May 1968, Planchon and many other directors of théâtres populaires admitted that only a minute fraction of their new public was made up of working class people; their methods had failed. In 1972 the government made Planchon's theatre in Villerbanne the new Théâtre National Populaire, and appointed him and his young colleague Patrice Chéreau as the artistic directors. Planchon's TNP has made a policy of touring French cities. Using the contacts already established by each local theatre group, it had touched a vast and truly national audience. It is very doubtful, however, that it will ever reach a really popular public.
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In March 1972, the French government announced that it was taking the unprecedented step of moving its first subsidised popular theatre, the Théâtre National Populaire, from the Palais de Chaillot in Paris to a municipal theatre in the working class suburb of Villeurbanne in Lyons. Roger Planchon, its director, was a leading figure in the popular theatre movement. After taking over the Théâtre de la Cité de Villeurbanne in 1957, he had painstakingly built up a local public around a nucleus of cultural activity there. He refused to leave Villeurbanne for Paris. Because they wished to see Planchon and his recently appointed co-director Patrice Chéreau at the head of the Théâtre National Populaire, the government gave the Théâtre de la Cité the status, subsidy, and responsibilities of the TNP. The government agreed to take this major step towards decentralisation for the sake of having talented and experienced directors in their programme of popularisation of the theatre. The line of development which resulted in this startling move reaches back into the eighteenth century; it is the history of popular theatre in France.

The theory of a théâtre pour le peuple appears as early as 1773, in Louis-Sébastien Mercier's L'Art dramatique. This writer, a political egalitarian, felt that society's injustice to the poor was reflected in its exclusion of them from the theatres. He considered all men as equally entitled to be part of a theatre audience, and to be represented on the stage. He appealed to the dramatists of his day to portray the lives of the common people on the stage; not only

1. Louis-Sébastien Mercier, L'Art dramatique (Amsterdam: Chez E. van Harrevelt, 1773).
were the poor a part of the social reality of the day, they also needed to be attracted to the theatres by the presentation of subjects familiar to them: "Il est réservé, sans doute, au siècle de la philosophie de donner au peuple un genre dont il puisse entendre et reconnaître les person­nages."¹

The official theatres at that time presented second-rate historical tragedies intended for the educated and the affluent: "... le théâtre, le théâtre officiel tout au moins, était beaucoup trop devenu un divertissement de classe pour que l'on songeât à ouvrir au 'peuple' la porte du Théâtre-Français."² Even Voltaire expressed dissatisfaction with the kind of audience which he had to please: "On va au théâtre plus paroisiveté que par un véritable amour de la Littérature."³ Mercier noticed that when, on state occasions, free performances were put on at the Comédie-Française, the common people in the audience were very appreciative: "Ce qu'il y a de plus étonnant, c'est que cette populace applaudit aux bons endroits, aux endroits délicats même, & les sent, tout comme l'assemblée la mieux choisie."⁴ Mercier believed (as Jean Vilar and the directors of popular theatres in the 1950's were to say) that the introduction of a fresh audience into the theatres would be a source of regeneration for the drama, from the point of view of the playwright as well as of the actor:

Si le poète veut donner de la force et de l'élevation à ses pensées, qu'il embrasse dans son imagination un peuple immense qui l'environne et qui l'écoute: l'intérêt publique pénetrera son âme, il sentirà ce qu'il

1. Louis-Sébastien Mercier, Théâtre complet, ed. by J. Murray (Amsterdam: B. Vlaam et Leide, 1773), preface, p.10.


4. Louis-Sébastien Mercier, Tableau de Paris (Nouvelle édition; Amsterdam 1782), Vol. III, p.11.
doit aux hommes assemblés, & les pensées qu'il convient de leur offrir.

Agrandissez cette salle mesquine ... ; que la multitude entre en foule ... : le concours immense du peuple enflammera l'acteur languissant, prêtera au drame une nouvelle chaleur; animé par le grand nombre, l'acteur sera plus disposé à concevoir et à nourrir ce feu qui naît de l'émotion générale. 1

In the eighteenth century, the theatre was considered as an art which should be morally uplifting. Voltaire regarded the theatrical experience as a civilising one: "Rien, en effet, ne rend les hommes plus sociables, n'adoucit plus leurs mœurs, ne perfectionne plus leur raison, que de les rassembler, pour leur faire goûter ensemble les plaisirs purs de l'esprit." 2 In his day, however, the only theatres which attracted all classes of spectator were those of the foires, some of which were to develop later into the boulevard theatres. These foire stages were not devoted to the "plaisirs purs de l'esprit", but to acrobatics and farce, and to the coarse, scatological humour of the parade. Mercier objected to the vulgarity of this "popular" entertainment; he thought that it was intended to distract the masses from serious issues: "Je veux que le théâtre soit pour lui [le peuple] un objet d'instruction, un honnête délassement, un plaisir utile, et non une distraction, ou un moyen politique pour l'étourdir et pour l'amuser, loin de toute réflexion sérieuse et patriotique." 3 Like Mercier, directors of popular theatres in the twentieth century were to challenge the assumption that the working classes wanted only superficial entertainment.

Having once assembled the different classes into one theatre, Mercier hoped to instil a reforming, and even

a revolutionary zeal into his spectators: "Puisque le spectacle est une illusion, que cette illusion tourmente autant qu'il est possible, qu'elle ne soit point passagère & que tout homme soit fatigué, tant que la cause de l'infortune publique n'aura point disparu."¹ Mercier's conception of the social utility of the theatre thus far surpassed Voltaire's idea of an intellectual communion between men. Mercier's own plays, however, were too dull and moralising to be successful dramatic works. Brecht, Piscator, Meyerhold, Planchon, all the twentieth century exponents of theatre for the people were to face this temptation of creating didactic works for the stage; the extent of the theatre's political effectiveness is still a controversial question today.

During the French Revolution, dreams of a theatre destined to the people found their expression in many government projects and decrees. In 1789, Chénier declared that "Le théâtre est, comme la Chaire, un moyen d'instruction publique."² The tendency to consider art as instructive was typical of the eighteenth century; in 1791, Mirabeau and Chapelier even dreamed of founding a scheme of national education based on the theatre.³ In the following years, many projets de decrets were submitted to the Convention Nationale, advocating the establishment of regular fêtes nationales.⁴ These projects had in common a belief in the moral value of bringing masses of people together to share in regular celebrations. The institutionalisation of holidays was also a means of assuring the permanence of the new Republic; organising public festivals was a matter of political good sense in a government claiming a mandate.

¹ I b i d , p .247.

Schasserieux l'aîné, Réflexions et projet de décret sur les Fêtes décadaires (De l'Imprimerie nationale, Nivôse, l'An III).
from the people. As well as inculcating civic spirit, the fêtes were to fill a need for pomp and spectacle which had previously been met by religious services.

When Rousseau condemned "... ces spectacles exclusifs qui renferment tristement un petit nombre de gens dans un antre obscur ..." he suggested a basic method of organising open air festivals: "Plantez au milieu d'une place un piquet couronné de fleurs, rassemblez-y le peuple, et vous aurez une fête." He thus suggested a formula for what the twentieth century would call a "happening". Rousseau made a basic distinction between theatre, le spectacle, which the audience watched passively, and festival, la fête, in which everyone participated. In the fêtes, which took place after the Revolution, however, any public participation was quite controlled; even in the days of the Terror, professional actors were requested or compelled to appear in the festivals. Some great celebrations were carried off successfully, notably those in the Champ-de-Mars on 14th July, 1790, to commemorate the taking of the Bastille; on 10th August, 1793, to inaugurate the new constitution; and on 8th June, 1794, to celebrate the Supreme Being. These consisted of solemn processions and hymns, as well as dramatic presentations of the events of the Revolution. None of the projects to make the civic celebrations regular events, however, was ever implemented successfully.

In the eyes of the revolutionary government, the official theatres were suspect at first, because these theatres had long been associated with the old regime. Later, however, they came to be considered as institutions which could be used to implement visions of popular education through the theatre. The Comédie-Française was closed in 1793. In March, 1794, the Comité de Salut Public reopened it under the name of Théâtre du Peuple, decreeing that it

should be "... uniquement consacré aux représentations de par et pour le peuple."\(^1\) By another decree, the Opéra was renamed Théâtre des Arts and moved to the rue de la Loi. The abandoned site of the Opéra was to be transformed into "... arènes couvertes ... destinées à célébrer les triomphes de la République et aux fêtes nationales ...".\(^2\) Neither project bore fruit.

For the smaller theatres, the Revolution at first brought more freedom. In 1789, in a conflict with the Comédie-Française, they appealed to the egalitarian sentiments of the Assemblée Nationale, pointing out that their productions had always been directed at the common people. They quickly won their case: "La loi du 13 janvier 1791 proclama la liberté industrielle des entreprises dramatiques. En même temps, la Constituante abolissait les subventions, la censure et assurait le sort des auteurs."\(^3\) After this legalisation of their freedom, the boulevard theatres mushroomed, meeting an ever-growing enthusiasm for drama amongst Parisians. Not only the educated rich now went to the theatre, but also the merchant classes, the small businessmen, the petits bourgeois.

The repertoire of these theatres underwent several changes in the course of the Revolution. They maintained their tradition of satire and farce: "Comme il riait sous l'ancien régime des persécutions de la Comédie-Française et des incessantes menaces de la police, Arlequin oublie sous la Révolution la guillotine en permanence et les angoisses de la patrie en danger."\(^4\) After 1793, they were obliged by law to present, three times a week and at the government's

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1. France, Comité de Salut public, Séance du 20 ventôse an II - 10 mars 1794.
2. France, Comité de Salut public, Séance du 27 germinal an II — 16 avril 1794; and Séance du 5 floréal an II — 24 avril 1794.
expense, a revolutionary play; the patriotic drama which developed was "... déclamatoire, ampoulé, naïvement sectaire et prédicant."\(^1\) Official censorship was re-established in April 1794, to remain in force until the Empire.

Under the Directoire, the boulevard theatres were reduced in number, and they were directly supervised by the government. In 1807, an official decree closed all but the three major official theatres and four smaller ones, and limited the genres which each was allowed to present. The official theatres began to regain their prestige. The nouveaux-riches flocked to those theatres considered elegant, giving by their attendance "... une marque évidente de leur ascension sociale."\(^2\) The situation was not identical, however, to that of the pre-revolutionary theatre; the rich were no longer connoisseurs. Their real admiration was for melodrama such as Pixérécourt could write.

As their social position was made secure, the bourgeoisie became eager to support playwrights whose work reflected their own ideology. Vaudeville was a genre which had originated on the foire stages. It developed, with the help of such dramatists as Eugène Scribe, into a form of short, light comedy, in prose and rhymed couplets. Vaudeville and comedies of manners were perfectly suited to a bourgeois audience, providing entertainment of an undemanding kind. The truly popular public was excluded, by the increasingly middle class orientation of these productions, from any sort of theatre. The drames romantiques challenged the artificiality of Scribe's kind of play, and to a certain extent attempted to give a more accurate picture of social reality, through historical settings, for example, or by indicating class differences in the characters' speech. The hero of romantic drama was not only, like the hero of romantic literature in general, "... an individual of low caste demanding

1. Descotes, Le Public de théâtre, p. 212
social equality with his more fortunate brothers ..., but also "... a low-caste individual claiming political rights and voicing in no uncertain manner his hatred for kingship and his desire to be ruled by his social equals." The hero of Hugo's play *Ruy Blas*, for example, is a commoner more innately noble and more politically able than the aristocrats around him. The romantics, however, made no efforts comparable to those of Vilar and the directors of the 1950's, to attract working class people to the theatre. The split in classes in the theatre was to be a permanent one. The middle class took a firm control over the divertissements of its society. Scribe was succeeded by Dumas fils as the favourite playwright of the bourgeoisie.

In the course of the nineteenth century, a few people began to advocate sharing art, and drama in particular, with the less favoured classes. Jules Michelet, in his lectures of 1847 and 1848, published under the title of *L'Étudiant*, described his ideal of a French theatre no longer directed only at sophisticated Parisians:

Ah! que je voie donc, avant de mourir, la fraternité nationale recommencer au théâtre! 
... un théâtre simple et fort, que l'on joue dans les villages, où l'énergie du talent, la puissance créatrice du cœur, la jeune imagination des populations toutes neuves, nous dispensent de tant de moyens matériels, décorations prestigieuses, somptueux costumes, sans lesquels les faibles dramaturges de ce temps usé ne peuvent plus faire un pas.  

Michelet thought of using national myths and legends in order to inspire feelings of brotherhood and patriotism in his audience. Like Michelet, Jules Bonnassies thought that

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drama should be the "... représentation solennelle des grands faits de l'histoire nationale ...". Bonnassies' plan was to reorganise the big theatres of Paris, those which were already subsidised, to allow the poorer classes into them. He made practical suggestions, which look forward to the work of Jean Vilar at the Théâtre National Populaire in the 1950's, such as lowering ticket prices, and creating troupes to tour the suburbs of Paris with inexpensive performances. Neither Bonnassies nor Michelet found himself in a position to implement his views on theatre; in the twentieth century, however, Romain Rolland with his historical plays, and Firmin Gémier with his productions for mass audiences, were to come close to realising the dreams of the two theorists.

Apostles of theatre for the people were not numerous in the late nineteenth century. Under the Third Republic, the stated aim of the government in subsidising the four official Parisian theatres (the Comédie-Française, the Opéra, the Opéra-Comique, and the Odéon), was to "... relever le goût public en lui donnant la possibilité d'admirer des œuvres que la gloire a consacrées." Thus only well established works of art and the classics were given official support. In the boulevard theatres, the drame romantique continued to hold sway over Parisian audiences. Reactions against this situation were more often directed against this sentimental genre than against theatrical privilege. In the last years of the nineteenth century, the naturalism of Zola and Antoine, and the idealism of Claudel and Paul Fort were not palatable, and sometimes not comprehensible, to the traditional bourgeois audience. Having sprung up as a reaction to bourgeois drama, however, they were even less accessible to the poor. They lived because an enthusiastic

young elite supported them, and not because a new class of audience had appeared. 1

It was not until fifty years after Michelet had published L'Étudiant that someone set out to realise his dreams. Maurice Pottecher was a playwright and director in Bussang, a small Alsation village. Fundamental to Pottecher's ideas was the aim of recreating a sense of fraternity between different social classes. Like Mercier and his contemporaries, and like Michelet, he wished to rekindle a feeling of patriotic fellowship in his countrymen. He did not simply wish to attract the working classes into existing theatres: "Le théâtre populaire ne se pose pas comme un effort contre le théâtre privilégié. C'est à côté, c'est en dehors que son action s'exerce; ce n'est pas de ruines que proviendront ses pierres." 2 Nor did he wish to form exclusively working class audiences; the public which he wanted was to be made up of all social classes. His conception of the people was a wide one: "On le prend [le mot 'people'] ... le plus souvent dans le sens restreint de plebe; prolétaire, tandis que Maurice Pottecher lui donne son acception plus large de populus, qui signifie l'ensemble, la communauté des citoyens d'une nation." 3 Jean Vilar, like Pottecher, was to give the terms peuple and populaire a less restricted definition than many of his contemporaries.

Pottecher, like Mercier, believed that the presence of the people would revitalise dramatic content and form.

He agreed with those who thought that the local legends and the national history of France would provide subject matter with a wide appeal. He insisted that the form of the plays would have to be genuinely dramatic: "3'il n'est pas nécessaire d'écrire spécialement pour le peuple, du moins convient-il d'écartier du développement tout ce qui pourrait demander un effort trop grand de réflexion ou dérouter une intelligence naïve, en un mot tout ce qui ne se traduirait pas par un 'mouvement' dramatique." Pottecher touched here on an important question, which was to concern all directors of popular theatres: what kind of production should one put on for a working class public? In the 1960's and 1970's, many directors were to move toward a purely visual "textless" theatre; Jérôme Savary is one well known example. It is true that Descotes, in his study of popular audiences, concludes that, in order to ensure popular success, "... la pièce doit être d'abord un spectacle." Pottecher's aim, however, was to make his plays "... suffisamment dramatiques pour émouvoir ceux qui ne sont pas encore élevés jusqu'à la réflexion, suffisamment pensées pour s'imposer à l'examen de ceux qui contrôlent leurs émotions." As Roger Planchon was to do, he produced plays which could be taken on many different levels corresponding to the various degrees of sophistication of the spectators.

Pottecher intended his plays to be apolitical; propaganda was in his eyes a limited art form directed at a specific group of people:

Le théâtre populaire ne peut participer à la vie universelle et éternelle de l'art, s'il se condamne, tout d'abord, à n'être qu'une manifestation politique, dont les sujets sont limités à un certain nombre de thèmes: revendications sociales, cris de colère, appels à

la révolution — quelque justice qui entre, d'ailleurs, dans ces appels et ces revendications; et s'il s'adresse à une classe, — si importante qu'elle soit — à l'exclusion du reste de la nation et des hommes.

Pottecher wished to be an "... éveilleur de consciences...", but a moral, and not a political one. In the mid-twentieth century, Vilar, Planchon, Armand Gatti were to try to create a "théâtre prise de conscience contemporaine"; although they were not to take a precise partisan position, they were committed to depicting social and historical realities as accurately as possible.

Pottecher founded his Théâtre du Peuple de Dussang in 1895, opening with his own first play. As Jean Vilar was to do in the 1950's, he took practical considerations into account in order to make his productions accessible to all:

... gratuité du spectacle, au moins pour cette partie de la population qui ne peut pas payer ...; désintéressement des acteurs, qui ne seront point, en principe, des professionnels mais des amateurs de bonne volonté ...; concordance des représentations avec les fêtes chômées, qui laissent au travailleurs le loisir de se rendre au spectacle; enfin utilisation des décors naturels, simplification des constructions coûteuses ... au profit de la figuration, qui sera plus nombreuse et plus active, et de la mise en scène, qui se développera plus largement.

The natural setting of the theatre was turned to advantage by using a back-cloth which could be closed to form an ordinary stage, or opened to reveal the rolling countryside behind and to create a sense of space. The first play was an immense success; the audience was a variegated crowd of two thousand

2. Ibid, pp. 21-22.
3. Ibid, pp. 7-8.
villagers, farmers, workers, soldiers, officers, and factory managers, tourists and visitors. Initial success earned Pottecher the admiration of many theatre people in the provinces who wished to expand the movement. In Brittany, in Lorraine, in Normandy and the Poitou, new efforts to create shows based on local folklore, and open to everyone, were numerous. In Paris too, various attempts were made to found popular theatres. In 1897, a journalist and actor Louis Lumet started a Théâtre Civique which toured working class areas of Paris giving free performances. The playwright Henri Dargel and a group of workers headed by Georges Deherme created a Théâtre du Peuple in 1899. In 1903, an actor, Emile Berny, created the Théâtre Populaire de Belleville, which reached its public through trade unions. In the same year, another actor, Henri Beaulieu, created a Théâtre du Peuple in Paris to give vast audiences the best of dramatic productions. All these theatres disappeared within a few years, unable to survive financially. The Théâtre du Peuple de Dussang outlasted its imitators, and continues to this day to present Pottecher's plays at its original location.

In the field of popular theatre, Romain Rolland is often cited as the most influential of twentieth century theorists. His frequently-quoted statement on the two opposing views of théâtre populaire describes succinctly what is still today the essential problem of the middle class artist working for the people, the choice of a suitable repertoire:

... les uns veulent donner au peuple le théâtre tel qu'il est, le théâtre quel qu'il soit. Les autres veulent faire sortir de cette force nouvelle, le peuple, une forme d'art nouvelle, un théâtre nouveau. Les uns croient au Théâtre. Les autres espèrent dans le Peuple.

It was necessary, he believed, to spare a new audience from the existing bourgeois theatre, the French classics because of "... cette stupide fascination de la parole devant laquelle abdique la raison...", the drame romantique because of its general mediocrity, bourgeois comedy because it was degrading. He also rejected foreign playwrights reputed to be people's writers, such as Gorki and Hauptmann, because he felt that their works were written to "réveiller la conscience des riches...", and also that their historical background might be unfamiliar to the uneducated. The distinguishing feature of Rolland's works is his absolute refusal to talk down to the people: "Nous ne mettons pas la gloire de l'esprit humain au service du peuple; nous appelons le peuple, comme nous, au service de cette gloire." His fundamental belief was that the popular theatre must grow from the desires and needs of the ordinary people. Perhaps in a future society, it would be possible to have "... un théâtre du peuple, qui n'ait point de parti, qui soit illimité, éternel, universel." Then the claims of the middle class that theatre should be apolitical might be met. In the present, however, those in power were only against political bias if it threatened their own position. In Rolland's time, the people's theatre must reflect their own views:

L'art ne peut s'abstraire des désirs de son temps. Le théâtre du peuple doit partager le pain du peuple, ses inquiétudes, ses espérances et ses batailles... Le théâtre du peuple sera "peuple", ou il ne sera pas.  

1. Ibid, p.23.  
2. Ibid, p.44.  
3. Ibid, p.49.  
4. Ibid, p.64.  
5. Ibid, p.65.
Rolland was attempting to change the orientation of popular theatre; it was no longer to be a concession from the middle class to the poor, but a creation of the intellect and will of the people themselves.

His own plan emphasised that the ideal theatre would be a source of energy, satisfying for the intelligence and full of vigour and joy. He suggested setting up, all over France, stages and theatres adapted to crowds, making all seats the same price, and starting a system of abonnements hebdomadaires. These kinds of reforms were to be adopted by Vilar when he took over the TNP, and by his followers in the fifties. According to Rolland, the plays would have to be written in simple, bold strokes, in order to do away with excessive stage machinery. The Greek theatre, Wagner, Shakespeare, such drama could satisfy the need of people for strong emotional contrasts, realism, and a clear morality. He singled out Shakespeare as the best historical playwright, as Roger Planchon was to do in practice by producing Shakespearian plays. He also recognised the need for social drama, plays relevant to the issues of his day, and favoured the idea of folk drama based on national legends. He was even attracted by the kind of mass spectacle which the French Revolution had produced. His own plays, all of them historical in content and politically relevant, were often played on public occasions, especially under the Front Populaire government. Because of their vast scope, they were to be used by Firmin Gémier, (Le Jeu de l'amour et de la mort, 1928), by Erwin Piscator (Robespierre, 1963), and by Raymond Gerbal in his popular theatre in Villejuif (Le Temps viendra, 1964). Rolland was one of the first to find a dramatic form suited to mass audiences.

In the years after the First World War, the best drama, which tried to move away from boulevard convention, was that produced by Jacques Copeau. His Vieux-Colombier theatre and drama school assisted in the development of those directors who were to become, in 1939, the Cartel des Quatre: Gaston Baty, Charles Dullin, Louis Jouvet, and
Georges Pitoeff. Copeau's reforming zeal was applied to the techniques of acting and staging, and not to the formation of a new audience. Although his own theatre was supported by an elite, however, he never excluded the possibility that his dramatic reforms would someday benefit the public in general:

Un théâtre qui a une mission, qui obéit à des devoirs, qui se tient pour responsable de la culture publique, aura toujours besoin d'une subvention ... 
Et nous continuerons de la demander directement à la communauté, au public, d'abord à l'élite et peut-être un jour à la masse.

In 1924, Copeau took a group of actors to live and work in Burgundy. This group, Les Copieux, trained itself in the techniques of the essentially popular Commedia dell'arte, and performed at harvest festivals and at vintage celebration in the area. In 1933, Copeau again worked for large audiences, producing a mystery play, Santa Uliva, in the Cloister of Santa Croce in Florence. He later became involved in other productions of this kind both in Italy and in France. In 1938, he suggested that true dramatic poetry could flourish only with a fresh public:

... il faudrait ... des auditoires moins blasés que les nôtres et moins incohérents. Il ... faudrait des salles plus vastes, des scènes plus rudimentaires, et ... un public plus vrai, un public anxieux de s'entendre dire quelque chose, et peu soucieux d'applaudir à des tours de force.

By 1941, he had come to believe, as he wrote in his book Le Théâtre populaire, that his own dramatic reforms had had too limited a public and that the future of living theatre depended

on a popular audience. Many of those who were to carry on the struggle toward a people's theatre were disciples or even relations of Copeau, and so his work had an influence on the development of this movement to the present day.

One of the followers of Copeau was the Catholic Henri Ghéon. Michelet, Pottcher, and Bonnassies, by advocating the use of legends familiar to French people, had acknowledged the need for a common interest to unify a popular theatre audience. When he worked with Copeau at the Vieux-Colombier, Ghéon found that one of his plays, coldly received by an ordinary audience, was a great success with Roman Catholics. From 1923 on, Ghéon wrote and produced célébrations, plays which were put on in the open air, in the style of medieval mysteries, and which attracted great crowds. In 1924, he created a theatre troupe, the Compagnons de Notre Dame, in whose productions the bond between playwright, actors, and audience was to be their common religious faith. They were to put on Christian plays for a public of the faithful which was, in Ghéon's eyes, "... toute la société française en roccourci ...". In this "popular" audience, the company intended to rekindle not only a humanistic fraternity, but a sense of Christian fellowship. After their first production, at the Vieux-Colombier in 1925, and despite the almost total indifference of the Parisian public, the Compagnons gave many performances in Paris, in the provinces, and abroad. They also put on plays in an open air theatre, the Théâtre du Pigeonnier, in the Vivarais, for local village people; the aims of this theatre resembled those of the Théâtre du Peuple de Bussang. Ghéon

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1. "Jean Dasté, at the Comédie de Saint-Étienne, and Michel Saint-Denis, formerly at the Comédie de l'Est in Strasbourg, are personally related to Copeau. Jean Vilar (T.N.P) and Maurice Sarrazin (Centre dramatique de Toulouse) were formed by Charles Dullin [who worked with Copeau] ..." Dorothy Knowles, French Drama of the Inter-War Years 1918-1939 (London: George J. Harrap and Co. Ltd., 1967), p.313.

was well liked by Catholics. A lack of support from the
general public, however, and the contempt of critics such
as Gide for the artistic worth of his Christian plays
tempered what success he had throughout his life.

Léon Chancerel was, like Ghéon, a Catholic, but
the plays which he presented were not restricted to Catholic
drama. He took his idea of founding a theatre group which
would be a real community from the Scout movement; from
his work with Copeau he gained an eagerness to meet the new,
exacting standards of acting set up by the Ecole du Vieux-
Colombier. In 1932, the original Compagnie des Comédiens-
Houtiers was formed with the aim of becoming a "service
dramatique national", putting on plays in the "faubourgs,
hôpitaux, sanatoria, centres usiniers, campagnes ...". Like
Pottecher he had a wide definition of popular theatre:

Par théâtre populaire, nous entendons un art
suscetable de rassembler, de toucher, d'émouvoir
ou de faire rire, non une classe, mais toutes
les classes qui composent un peuple, en l'espèce
le peuple français, et par delà, s'il se peut,
tous les autres peuples.

He totally opposed any notion of condescending to the ignorant
masses, and claimed that if the public had developed a taste
for bad art, that was the fault of the producers who forced
inferior works upon it. He felt that, as beautiful art was
a way of instilling in the audience an idea of divinity, every
production should aim at perfection:

Plus votre langage sera châtié, plus les
figures que vous lui montrerez seront plastiques belles, plus la poésie dans ce
qu'elle a de plus haut imprégnera, baignera
la représentation, plus vous aurez l'audience
du peuple.

2. Ibid, p.28.
3. Ibid, p.36.
He respected the intelligence of working class people, and felt that they should be encouraged to produce their own theatre; in 1927, he wrote a remarkable letter to a factory official, suggesting the establishment of a theatre within the factory, "... entre la cantine et l'infirmière...", animated by the workers themselves, with the future possibility of competitions between various factory troupes.\(^{1}\)

The Compagnons played, in a style which, having originated in Copeau's school, was fresh and new to the French public at large. They trained themselves, as a team to create on stage "... la synthèse du verbe et du geste, de la danse et du chant, de la musique et du bruit, de la mimique et du silence"\(^{2}\). They worked anonymously, giving the ensemble more importance than the individual, as most modern young companies do. They presented Molière, medieval mysteries, farces old and new, and they won great popular success in France and Belgium. The company had to disband during the war.

In the opinion of Firmin Gésier, bringing the common people back into the theatres was simply returning to the original form of drama. His notion of the "people", like that of Pottecher and Chancerel, was not exclusively working class, but included all social categories. His aim was to awaken a social conscience in his audience; the theatre could become "... l'église sociale où, par le culte de tous les arts réunis, le peuple doit prendre conscience de ses destinées."\(^{3}\) He hoped to achieve a political unity within his theatre public by making them share in a common artistic experience. Like many of his colleagues he believed that writing for the masses was revitalising, and he thought that playwrights should regard themselves as reformers. He even spoke of holding great festivals which would have involved all levels of society in a common dramatic event. Writing for the masses would mean making plays not only socially familiar,

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1. Ibid, p.120.
but politically meaningful to the new part of the audience.

Gémier's practical methods of attracting the people, besides making plays relevant to them, were to appeal for state aid and make the presentations free: "Que l'Etat supprime ces taxes absurdes! Qu'au lieu d'imposer notre art, il lui accorde des subventions non pas misérables comme celles qu'il lui conclut, mais généreuses et répondant à notre rôle social!"\(^1\) As government subsidies were not immediately forthcoming, he enlisted the help of successful actors, and of the subsidised theatres. The Théâtre National Ambulant, a travelling troupe with which Gémier toured the Parisian suburbs and the provinces in 1911 and 1912, had to be disbanded because of financial difficulties. In 1919, Gémier produced a massive spectacle at the Cirque d'Hiver, Bougdier's Oépine, roi de Thèbes, including in it athletic performances; it was enthusiastically received by a huge audience, and it was followed by another similar production. In 1920, Aristide Briand appointed Gémier director of the newly founded Théâtre National Populaire. The TNP at that time did not have a permanent troupe, but simply presented other theatre's productions at a reduced price. Even with a permanent company, in the 1950's, Vilar was to complain of the difficulty of attracting a working class public into the fashionable Trocadéro. It is not surprising that the original TNP was unsuccessful. After Gémier's death in 1933, it deteriorated further under successive directors, from Alfred Fourtier to Paul Abram to Pierre Adelbert. In 1937, the Front Populaire made an unsuccessful attempt to create a mass festival with a historical play, Vive la liberté, written collectively by fourteen dramatists; it attracted only the middle class.

It was in the thirties that Dullin was asked by Edouard Daladier's secretary to prepare a report for the

\(^1\) Ibid, p.217.
government on popular theatre. The study, prepared with the aid of Jacques Teillon, Dullin's nephew, was ready in the autumn of 1938. The foremost aim of dramatists, it said, should be to provide drama of good quality for everyone: "Aller vers lui [le peuple] avec ce que l'on possède de meilleur", telle me paraît être la devise à choisir." The first obstacle, the "... plais qui atteint tous les arts ..." was the extremely centralised structure of artistic life in France. The second difficulty was the stranglehold of middle class values on art: "On a gavé le public populaire à qui il était donné d'aller au théâtre (et qui n'est qu'une petite partie), de théâtre bourgeois et on est parvenu à embourgeoisier le public populaire..." Reforms would have to be thorough and far-reaching: "Le vrai théâtre populaire naîtra d'une réforme totale des moeurs et des conditions de travail qui nous sont imposées." Dullin recommended specific reforms, such as reduced price bookings, and the restriction of theatre ownership to professional theatre artists. He suggested the formation of companies to tour the provinces with productions aimed at a wide audience, stopping even in the smallest cities; he wanted to increase the number of productions in order to make good theatre available to those deprived of it: "... le résultat sera le plus souvent artistiquement convenable, mais non 'artistiquement parfait' (leur but [les tournées] sera donc de cultiver et de recréer le public de province)..." His suggestions included that of renovating existing theatres both in the provinces and in the periphery of Paris. In the periphery, he was in favour of establishing resident companies, each of which would tour a determined circuit. Unfortunately Dullin's report was ignored. Dullin himself founded the Théâtre de la Cité during the war, at the former Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt; its aims were to attract a popular audience,

but it was a financial failure.

The artistic life of France remained remote from the masses despite the first efforts to popularise theatre. There was a lack of theatres and a lack of funds. Subsidies until 1947, were only grants awarded after a production, and later they became advances to be reimbursed from the profits of a production. Government subsidies for art were slightly less in 1950 than they had been in 1938.\(^1\) Theatres were unable to compete with the cinema which had already drawn away the working class and much of the bourgeoisie. The Théâtre National Populaire at the Trocadéro continued to produce the kind of plays which prompted André Villiers to say, in 1950:

Il est admis qu'un théâtre populaire est un théâtre à bon marché, à prix réduit, mais aussi de qualité réduite. C'est en somme un théâtre de vulgarisation et c'est bien comme cela qu'il est conçu à la Direction générale des Arts et Lettres...\(^2\)

In the U.S.S.R. and in Germany, many experiments in popular theatre were carried out in the 1920's and in the 1930's. In the Russia of the Revolution, despite widespread poverty and hunger, there was, as in the Paris of the French Revolution, a blossoming of theatrical activity. A new freedom of production and new possibilities of participating brought the people to the theatre. The government sponsored various forms of dramatic propaganda. Large demonstrations were accompanied by allegorical plays and farces; on public holidays, there were open air performances for mass audiences, in which the crowds themselves played a part, much as in the Théâtre du Soleil's 1789 and 1793 or as in Malcolm Williamson's opera for audience and orchestra, The Wall. In 1918, a

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Proletarian Culture Movement was set up independently of the government, aiming to set up schools to train working class writers, and to produce plays on revolutionary subjects. Although the government expected party members to support the revolutionary struggle, it gave tolerant encouragement to other artists as long as they did not indulge in counter-revolutionary activities.

The Russian Revolution brought out many of the problems connected with popular theatre, and particularly the question of the kind of repertoire most suitable for new audiences of peasants, workers, and soldiers. A struggle grew up between the traditional theatre, represented by Stanislavsky's Moscow Art Theatre, and the new forms of drama with which such people as Meyerhold were experimenting. Lenin was in favour of maintaining cultural traditions, and he accused the "Proletkult" of adopting a patronising attitude toward the workers. Meyerhold, however, thought that a new society needed new theatrical forms. Psychological realism was for small studio theatres; for the new large audiences, stylisation in sets and in acting techniques was more appropriate. Vilar, in the 1950's, was to find that for his outdoor theatre in Avignon, the actors had to develop a very strong and simplified style of acting. Meyerhold emphasised the visual side of his productions, through elaborate constructivist sets, in which different surfaces and strong shapes were boldly juxtaposed. Like Brecht, he totally rejected the realistic illusion on the stage. He was like Brecht, also, in his insistence on maintaining a sense of fun: "There must be no pauses, no psychology, no 'authentic emotions' ... Here is our theatrical programme: plenty of light, plenty of high spirits, plenty of grandeur, plenty of infectious enthusiasm, unlaboured creativity, the participation of the audience in the corporate creative act of the performance."

In 1920, as head of the Theatrical Department of the U.S.S.R., Meyerhold put on his version of Verhaeren's The Dawn, in a large auditorium, and in the declamatory style of a political rally. Admission was free, and he gave over a hundred performances to packed houses. In terms of attendance, his productions in the following years were tremendous successes. From the first, however, "... new playgoers found the presentation strange and incomprehensible ..." The "futurist" schematisation and constructivist staging left them confused; they felt more comfortable before the familiar forms and repertoire of the traditional theatres. The Moscow Art Theatre argued that the proletariat needed the classical drama which it could assimilate, until equally good modern works were written. Meyerhold admired the classics, but, as Planchon was to do later, he argued for the freedom to reinterpret them. As it was "... nonsense to speak of an apolitical attitude...", as "... everything depends on the interpretation ...", even a classical play should be staged to correspond to the interests of the society for which it was being produced. Meyerhold's own creative production of Gogol's The Government Inspector was put on in 1930 in the Théâtre Montparnasse and it won Meyerhold the admiration of Jouvet, Tullin, Cocteau, and Baty.

Meyerhold was both politically and artistically a revolutionary. An article based on his lectures and published in 1930 touches on many points basic to the popular theatre movement in France. He spoke of the need to compete with the cinema by making the stage as sophisticated technically as films; this idea looks forward to Planchon's integration of film techniques into his stage productions. Meyerhold sensed, as Holland had claimed, and as Gémier had demonstrated, that his century was one of mass entertainment, of audiences of thousands; he felt that these crowds should be accommodated.

In amphitheatres with no social divisions. In the 1960's and 1970's, young troupes in France were to put on their productions in any available large buildings, from the Cartoucherie de Vincennes in Paris to the Roundhouse in London; even the more traditional auditoriums of the Maisons de la Culture were to be designed so that all the seats gave a good view and could be sold for the same price. Meyerhold made revolutionary demands upon drama, like many directors of the present day; he expected the theatre to awaken militancy, to combat decadence, and he hoped that the audience would "... leave the performance determined to tackle the task of reconstruction with renewed vigour."

He thought that the taste of the mass spectator was sophisticated and demanding; useful themes must be expressed beautifully, ideology must be interpreted with vigour and joy. Existing propaganda works lacked these qualities. Directors of popular theatres in France too such as José Valverde in Stl Denis, were to worry about the lack of fun in their productions, and particularly in those with serious socialistic themes. When Meyerhold refused to remain silent about the shortcomings of Soviet art in his day, he was eliminated from the scene of Russian drama.

In Germany, the concept of theatre for the working classes is linked with that of political or "epic" theatre.

This was an idea

... born ... in the reality of the street fighting of Berlin in the twenties ... it was the whole generation of the twenties -- artists astride history -- who created it, as a team, a great one that included Piscator, the director; Brecht the poet; George Grosz, Berlin's Daumier; Walter Mehring, the pamphleteer; Ernst Toller, the playwright; and Walter Gropius, the architect.

1. Ibid, pp. 263-269.

Erwin Piscator was the first to use the term "epic theatre", and he conceived of it as a theatre renewed in all its aspects; it was to be socially and politically committed, written and created collectively, open to technical innovation, and destined to vast audiences. On the relevancy of theatre to social issues, Piscator shared the view of Rolland and Meyerhold, that no play is apolitical:

... the theatre as an intellectual institution, is no more capable of keeping out of politics than art is, of whatever kind. ... The difference between us and most theatres is that they are being forced in this direction against their will, while we are developing in this way quite deliberately, with a clear political end in view.1

Unlike some of his contemporaries, he did not reject existing bourgeois drama, but felt that it could be integrated into the revolutionary struggle:

... it will be possible to make practically every bourgeois play, whether it expresses the decay of bourgeois society or whether it clearly shows the capitalist principle, into an instrument to strengthen the concept of the class struggle, to deepen revolutionary insights into historical necessities.2

Epic theatre was thus to appeal to the masses, and to foster political questioning in them. Piscator worked in and directed people's theatres in both Germany and the United States. In Berlin in 1920, he started a Proletarian Theatre Company which performed in meeting halls, in the suburbs, and wherever workers could be reached, and which used workers as actors; the theatre failed, receiving little support from its audiences.


2. Ibid, p.41.
At the Central Theatre in 1923, and later at the Volksbuhne, Piscator found that most of his public came from the moneyed classes. From 1927 to 1929, working at the Theatre am Nollendorfplatz, Piscator put on such productions as Ernst Toller's *Hoppo, wir leben!*, Tolstoy's *Rasputin*, and Našek's *The Good Soldier Schweyk*, all adapted by a writers' collective including Gasbarra, Mehring, Jung, Lania, and Brecht. These were manifestly politically orientated plays, and they were immense successes. Their spectacular use of stage machinery, such as films, moving footways, etc., made them very expensive; the theatre therefore required the support of middle class audiences. Piscator carried out his last experiments in people's theatre in the United States. In New York, he founded a Studio Theatre in 1940, to create classical plays at popular prices, and then, in 1949, a Rooftop Theatre which was to be the new people's theatre of America. Bankruptcy forced Piscator to close down his theatres in 1951, and he returned to Berlin. There he directed the Berlin Freie Volksbuhne from 1962 until his death in 1966. He continued to present plays with a political impact, such as Rolland's *Robespierre* (1963) or Kipphardt's *In der Sache J. Robert Oppenheimer* (1964-1965), but he never attracted a popular audience. He succeeded only in creating political drama in such original ways that he was supported by the middle class.

Brecht's name is more widely connected with the concept of epic theatre than is that of Piscator. His own political commitment paralleled that of Piscator. Brecht's famous comparison of epic and Aristotelian theatre emphasises the necessity, in the new epic drama, for a critical appraisal of a play, of the emotional and intellectual responses which it produces, and finally of the society it reflects, by both actors and audience. He was very sensitive to the theatre's possibilities as an instrument of revolution, and in his own works, always, "Human behaviour is seen as alterable; man himself as dependent on certain political and economic factors.
and at the same time as capable of altering them." The desire to provoke and involve the critical faculties of his public is at the source of most of the technical transformations which Brecht introduced into the theatre. Like Meyerhold, he underlined the importance of gesture and of mime. The much abused alienation effect was meant to expose, in every incident, "... the mimetic and gestural expression of social relationships prevailing between people of a given period." The distance which an actor placed between himself and the character he was playing might reflect, for instance, the difference between people of different historical periods: "The conduct of those born before us is alienated from us by an incessant evolution." Each gesture, each play, was to be committed to "... laying bare society's causal network/ showing up the dominant viewpoint as that of the dominators/ ... emphasising the dynamics of development..." Even the collective approach of the Berliner Ensemble to production and writing was meant to shatter the bourgeois romantic myth of the solitary artist cut off from society. In every theoretical and practical reform, Brecht showed his social and political commitment.

His Marxist outlook also made Brecht decry the possibility of political neutrality in art. Rolland's theories come to mind when Brecht writes of the "... social commitment in universally accepted works of art, which only fail[ed] to strike the eye because it was the accepted commitment". Brecht recommended, in staging the classics, exactly
the attitude which Planchon has adopted, that is to bring out the social and historical context of a work. As a communist, Brecht held the view that the ideas of value in the classics, for his time, were those which pointed toward a new society:

The Socialist Realist performance of old classical works is based on the view that mankind has preserved those works which give artistic expression to advances towards a continually stronger, bolder, and more delicate humanity. 1

Brecht's work was undertaken as a revolutionary; from the start he worked with left-wing organisations in Germany, and his first plays, Baal and Drums in the Night already showed his desire to expose the fabric of a capitalist state moving towards Fascism. In 1927, as we have seen, he cooperated with Piscator and Reinhardt in a production of The Good Soldier Schwytz. The plays which he wrote in exile showed an ever keener desire to challenge capitalist systems, and in 1947 he was expelled from the United States by the House Committee on UnAmerican Activities. In 1949, he founded the Berliner Ensemble, which was to visit France many times after 1954, and whose totally collective approach to production and mastery of the 'epic' style was to alter profoundly the direction of French drama. In France, Brecht was seriously misunderstood by many critics who were unable to change their own middle class perspective. 2 Nevertheless, the effect of his politically committed drama on young playwrights and directors such as Adamov, Dasté, and Planchon was extraordinary. Planchon has said that he and his contemporaries came to the theatre through surrealist literature, but that the first visit of the Berliner Ensemble to France made many of them disciples of Brecht. Planchon considers himself as "... the director in

1. Brecht, "Cultural Policy and the Academy of Arts", in Brecht on Theatre, p.269.
France who has been most influenced by Brecht's work..."¹, although he says that he was also the first to detach himself from Brecht. The influence of Brechtian theories is still discernable in the work of popular theatres today.

The development of popular theatre in France made major advances in the 1950's, with the help of Jeanne Laurent, then sous-directrice des spectacles au secrétariat d'État aux Beaux-Arts. She was keenly interested in the survival of theatre both in the provinces and in Paris, and in her book La République et les Beaux-Arts² she gives a history of the theatre under successive French governments. For a long time, the provinces were as deprived as the Parisian poor of good theatre. Provincial towns had often had, in the 19th century, a resident orchestra, an opera or light opera company, and sometimes an acting troupe. Towards the end of the last century, however, insufficient government subsidies caused a great deterioration in the number and quality of municipal theatres. Gradually permanent troupes were abandoned, and cities outside Paris became dependent on touring companies. In 1905, a recommendation to the government to establish a subsidy equal to that of the Odéon for popular productions and new creations in the provinces was ignored. The Conseils Généraux of the départements supported only special efforts, such as dramatic festivals, giving little thought to ordinary municipal theatres, and even less to popular theatre. Municipal efforts were in any case limited by the extreme centralisation of power in France. The film industry continued to gain ground: "The 62 regional 'reps' of the belle époque had dwindled by 1930 to a tiny handful, killed by local apathy as much as by the rival cinema."³ In the field of live

theatre, the provincial public was soon reduced to seeing productions of the Tournées Baret, the Galas Karsenty, or the Productions Théâtrales Georges Herbert. These catered to the taste of a middle class attracted mostly by stars from the boulevard theatres of Paris, of a "Province ... qui se veut 'parisienne' ... [mais qui] ... récuse l'avant-garde, et n'accepte pas non plus de pièces bousculent ses habitudes."¹ Thus a situation developed in which even the social elite was cut off from contemporary creations, and in which the gap grew between "l'artiste... dans la réalité du moment, et la foule, dont les guides sont ... tournés vers le passé".² By 1945, provincial theatre was nearly dead.

Yet there was a fresh, interested public available outside Paris, people who appreciated even the most difficult works when festivals such as Avignon made them available. This festival, now considered a prototype, was established in 1947 by Jean Vilar, primarily as "Un théâtre à VOCATION POPULAIRE".³ Its basic principles of operation, Vilar was to write later, were evidence enough of its popular orientation, its moderate prices, for example, its choice of a large area in which to perform before mass audiences, and especially its emphasis on contact between public and performers through public debate and discussion. In this contact the Lettres Françaises saw the possibility of live theatre in an age of television, for a theatre troupe is "... une organisation qui doit dépasser le spectacle proprement dit", and it is to be hoped that the "... rassemblement physique des spectateurs doive s'accompagner d'un approfondissement du sens du théâtre."⁴ One purpose of the discussions

2. Laurent, La République et les Beaux-Arts, p.94.
became a basic tenet of popular theatres from Vilar's Théâtre National Populaire to Planchon's Théâtre de la Cité de Villeurbanne: the need to "démystifier" theatre for ordinary people:

Nous avons voulu que fut étalé en pleine lumière ce que l'on appelait par romanesque de pacotille ou par intérêt, les 'mystères' du théâtre; détruit le mythe féodal du monstre sacré et autres enfantillages; aidé le spectateur d'un soir à se faire sur l'œuvre et notre art un jugement personnel.¹

The vocation of the Avignon festival, after twenty years, remained basically unchanged; its success and its popularity merely gave added impetus to its development as a true théâtre du peuple. Vilar sounded a note of confidence in the masses going far beyond Mercier's or Pottecher's idea that they would revitalise the theatre; in Vilar's opinion, it was a question of the survival or extinction of

... une culture qui ne peut être renouvelée, après des siècles, que par l'accès à ses trésors du plus grand nombre, par l'appel à la jeunesse, par l'étude des exigences légítimes de ce très vaste public dont les groupements populaires, les comités d'entreprise, les collectivités professionnelles connaissent, expriment, défendent les espoirs.²

Vilar's work, like that of Pottecher, aroused widespread interest. In the 1950's there were festivals at Angers, Arras, and Hénin-Liéard, to name just a few. This popularity, and the possibility of reaching large numbers of people, made Jeanne Laurent include summer festivals in her plan for establishing Centres Dramatiques in the provinces.

In 1951, Jeanne Laurent appointed Jean Vilar director of the Théâtre National Populaire. In his work at Avignon he had shown a flair for the adaptation of drama to the open air and to large audiences of mixed backgrounds, and he was to use his experience in his new position: "Quand,

¹ Vilar, Programme for the Avignon Festival, 1966.
² Ibid.
en 1951, Jeanne Laurent propose le Palais de Chaillot à Vilar, le TNP sera la continuation d'Avignon non par d'autres moyens, mais dans un autre lieu, et le TNP sera le quartier d'hiver du festival.¹ His major reform was to create a permanent company at the T.N.P. It became a real creative theatre, rather than "a supplementary building where the repertories of the national theatres could be seen at reduced prices."² Vilar appointed a new financial administrator, and purchased the necessary materials for the seriously ill-equipped theatre. He abolished tipping, making the ouvreuses salaried employees, started performances earlier and provided a reasonably priced restaurant in the theatre for people who lived far from Chaillot. All these changes were designed to make the theatre a place where people could feel at home. Having made the theatre accessible to the purses and more convenient to the schedules of working people, Vilar went out to find his audience: he started Festivals de Banlieue, yearly tours of the suburbs by the TNP, and, following the example of Jean Dasté in Grenoble and Saint-Étienne in the 1940's, he established the practice of making contacts through trade unions and other organisations. From these contacts there developed the policy of reduced price group bookings, and, more importantly, the institution of weekend theatre seminars at the TNP, with groups of working class people invited to take part in two days of discussions, playgoing, and talks by actors and technicians of the theatre, all at a moderate price.

Choosing the repertoire of the TNP presented the problem of striking a balance between classical and contemporary works, and the difficulty of taking a political stance which would satisfy critics both of the right and of the left. Vilar did not consider the classics as too

"bourgeois"; he even opened the first TNP season, at Suresnes, with a production of the Cid. Basically he chose plays on the principle of their relevance to contemporary political events or preoccupations:

Mais notre mission est d'abord d'accroître l'influence sociale de ce théâtre, d'en faire enfin le type même du théâtre moderne, adapté aux lois, aux exigences, aux contraintes de la société moderne; d'être curieux absolument du mode de vie du citoyen contemporain, de son habitat, de son emploi du temps, de ses colères, de ses souhaits. 

Attempts to introduce contemporary playwrights to his new audience were often not successful. In 1954, Pichette's Nucléa and Vauthier's La Nouvelle Mandragore and in other years productions of Vian, Pinet, Beckett, and Obaldia were financial failures. Vilar nevertheless maintained his sense of purpose; a concise, powerful sentence epitomises his approach to repertoire and to production: "Nous ne serons jamais assez dans le siècle." The carefully nurtured contacts between the TNP and the new audiences were a method of 'filling in' an unprepared public, of making contemporary works intellectually accessible to them. Vilar's methods of reducing costs, of attracting working people, and of keeping their interest alive were to be adopted by many popular theatre groups after him.

After the uncertain first few years, the TNP became a stable and creative theatre. There was much criticism of its level of success in attracting workers, but Vilar believed that many of the distinctions which we make between labourer, blue-collar worker, and even white collar worker were not realistic: "Lorsqu'on parle du théâtre populaire, on fiche tout par terre en ne pensant qu'au public ouvrier. Un instituteur qui essaie de maintenir le dialogue dans son village, est un homme de condition ouvrière, malgré ses mains blanches." 

His own assessment of the success of his work

2. Ibid.
was based on this wider view of the term *populaire*. Vilar did attract to the theatre hundreds of people who would not have gone if it had not been for his efforts at Avignon as well as with the TNP. In Paris, despite the large dimensions and the forbidding aspect of the Palais de Chaillot, he succeeded in creating a sense of community in his audiences. In the course of his work, he instituted reforms and methods of forming a new audience, which were to be used by many young directors after him. He succeeded in showing that "... le théâtre n'est pas qu'un divertissement, n'est pas un objet de luxe, mais le besoin impérieux de tout homme et de toute femme."¹ Jean Vilar left the TNP in 1963, although he continued his work at Avignon; the direction of the TNP was taken over by Georges Wilson.

Jeanne Laurent had seen evidence other than in the work of Vilar of the need for developing the theatre in the provinces. In 1945, Jean Dasté had founded a permanent company in Grenoble, and then moved to St. Etienne, and Maurice Sarrazin had started the Grenier de Toulouse; both had succeeded in obtaining the support of the municipal authorities. City councils could be persuaded to support a drama group when its presence would enhance notions of local grandeur. The Comédie Dramatique de l'Est, based first in Colmar then in Strasbourg, was founded in 1947 by Roland Piétri at the request of several cities in the area. In that year Laurent persuaded the central government to establish *Centres Dramatiques* in various provincial cities, to be supported half by the central government and half by the local authorities. As Laurent was to point out later, often, as in the case of the Comédie de St. Etienne and of the Centre Dramatique de l'Est, the government subsidy gave a much-needed official status, along with financial aid, to already active groups. The Grenier de Toulouse under Sarrazin, and the Comédie de l'Ouest under Gignoux became *Centres Dramatiques*

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Laurent's *La République et les Beaux-Arts* was published in 1955. In it was a plea that these centres be encouraged, and others created, in order to give a creative impulse to artists through their contact with a new public, and in order to renew artistic life nationally. Laurent made it clear that subsidies as they were in the early fifties were blatantly insufficient, and that the conditions under which the existing centres had to operate were extremely unsatisfactory. Short of actors and technicians, and without a permanent theatre, they were required to tour the regions at least three times a year, often being reduced to playing in cinemas or abandoned theatre buildings. Despite these disadvantages, the companies succeeded in the important first step of winning a public:

Soutenus non seulement par l'État, mais aussi par les collectivités locales et surtout par les villes qui leur ont offert un siège avec confiance et générosité, ils ont cependant, au cours d'une première étape, formé des comédiens et recruté un nouveau public avec des spectacles d'une qualité incontestable.¹

The Comédie de St. Etienne was even helped in its publicity and its finances by a spontaneously formed Friends Association. Having gained the support of mayors and of the public, the existing Centres Dramatiques now needed a reasonable financial backing from the central government in order to settle and prosper: "Il est incontestable," Laurent wrote, "que cinq troupes de pionniers ont crée en province un climat qui appelle la construction de théâtres pour répondre aux besoins d'une communauté."² Moreover, she felt that more Centres Dramatiques should be established. She suggested that one be created every time a new animateur gained approval and the

offer of financial support from a city outside Paris which was a siège d'Académie. The animateur would have to be an artist of quality as well as a leader. The Centres Dramatiques were to have a base in a building which could, at the discretion of the animateur, be used for other cultural activities such as concerts and art exhibitions. Thus Laurent's ideas looked forward to the creation of Maisons de la Culture. One very sensible basic suggestion was that, for the sake of flexibility and experimentation, a government arts plan should be drawn up, accompanied by a special budget, allowing the carrying over of credits from one year to the next, for a period of at least seven years.

After Jeanne Laurent's departure in 1954, no new Centres Dramatiques were formed as she had suggested. The existing centres were given no increase in subsidy, and yet they were expected to continue making three tours annually; their exhausting schedule and their lack of funds forced them to limit their work to traditional productions and forego creative research. In 1956, a crisis point was reached. Troupes decided to limit their touring and organise themselves as stable companies. In that year, Maurice Sarrazin asked for a permanent theatre in Toulouse. The Centre Dramatique de l'Est settled down in 1957 in Strasbourg in a modern municipal theatre, the Théâtre de la Comédie. Through a system of group subscriptions started in 1959, they eventually built up a dependable and large audience, although from a more limited number of cities than previously.

At that time, Roger Planchon had already started his work in Lyons. Born in the Ardèche in 1931, Planchon grew up in Lyons and was educated at a Catholic boarding school there. He left school at an early age, working at first in his father's café and then as a bank clerk. He spent a year in Paris, and, on his return to Lyons, in 1946, enrolled in some drama courses. He worked at one point with Hubert Gignoux, who had been one of Léon Chancerel's Comédiens-Routiers, and who was later to direct the Centre Dramatique de l'Ouest. In 1950, Planchon formed a drama group with some friends, a number of whom (Robert Gilbert, Jean Bouise, Claude Lochy, Isabelle Sadoyan) are
The young troupe played in a salle de patronage which they rented; when the curé objected to their repertoire and their ideas, however, they had to leave. There followed a period in which the group, supporting themselves with outside jobs and with help from their families, were compelled like many provincial companies to tour the region, putting on their productions in whatever old theatre or auditorium was available. In 1952, they found an old printer's shop in the rue des Marronniers in Lyons, and, at their own expense, converted it into a hundred-seat theatre. A request for state aid for their company in the next year was refused. The Théâtre de la Comédie in the rue des Marronniers survived without a subsidy; they shared their work and their profits equally among themselves and slowly paid off their debts. They built up a following of students and young workers with productions of Kleist, Synge, Lenz, Büchner, Brecht, Vitrac, Calderon, Ionesco, and Shakespeare.

Even in this choice of plays the political orientation of Planchon's work was evident. At the Théâtre de la Comédie, Planchon presented the first performance in France of Michel Vinaver's Les Coréens and of Arthur Adamov's Paolo Paoli.

Many of the ideas which were to guide Planchon's later career were already apparent in his work at the Théâtre de la Comédie. In an interview in 1956, he spoke of his profound admiration for Brecht and for committed drama ("De plus en plus je suis convaincu que le théâtre doit vivre et s'enrichir d'actualité".), and he thought of using cinematographic techniques on the stage as "... l'un des moyens neufs qu'a le théâtre d'obtenir l'adhésion du public nouveau qu'il cherche et mérite." Moreover, Planchon was determined from the beginning that the most effective way of bringing people to the theatre was by creating a permanent and stable theatre

1. "Je rêve d'un théâtre qui se ferait comme on fait un film..." Et grâce à Roger Planchon, Lyon est la seule ville de province où l'on joue la comédie tous les soirs", Jacques Lemarchand, Figaro Littéraire, Aug. 25th, 1956.
in one city; he was to look back on this era later:

L'histoire du Théâtre de la Comédie, c'est qu'on a fait le pari de jouer tous les soirs; ...

... C'est une chose à laquelle je crois que j'ai été un des premiers à m'attacher en France; faire un théâtre permanent, que les choses s'illlent de façon simple, régulière.

Ce que faisaient en ce moment-là (1952) les centres dramatiques, cela consistait à jouer dans une ville deux jours ... ... nous avons dit, à l'époque, très fort, ... "La décentralisation qui consiste à aller de ville en ville n'est pas bonne parce que vous ne ramassez, en vérité, qu'une clientèle superficielle. Ce sont les deux mille personnes qui iraient n'importe comment au théâtre."

... Et ce qu'on essayait de faire, ce que moi, personnellement, j'essayais de faire, c'était d'imposer l'idée qu'il fallait étendre le public, mais en partant sur la profondeur.]

In 1957, Planchon was offered a municipal theatre, the Théâtre de la Cité, in Villeurbanne, a working class district of Lyons. Here Planchon was to establish his company and begin to work to attract a working class audience. Succinctly stated, his basic tenet was from the very beginning that "... le théâtre est un privilège à partager pour qu'il n'y ait plus de privilèges." In his aims and in his principles he recalled Vilar. Like his counterpart at the TNP, Planchon started by making his theatre more appealing, putting up displays on playwrights and on various aspects of the theatre in the entrance hall; he reduced prices, arranged group bookings, invited groups to 'jourées' modelled on the TNP weekends ... He went out to find his audience as Vilar had done, not by organising tours since he was in a working class district, but by sending members of the troupe to give

2. Editorial, Cité-Panorama No. 9, 0.5, Feb. 1960.
lunch-hour talks on the theatre in factory canteens, by circulating displays and exhibiting posters in the factories, and by talking to people as they left work. He worked closely with trade unions, youth groups, and schools, and kept in touch with the views of his public through discussions and surveys: "Nous ne travaillons pas pour le public; nous travaillons avec lui." Like Vilar, like many younger directors, he was committed to making working class people aware of the liberating possibilities of culture. In his theatre settled in the very heart of a solidly working class area, he was one of the first to have a real opportunity to put these ideals into practice.

In 1959, the newly formed Ministry of Cultural Affairs under André Malraux began once more to attack the problem of decentralisation. In December of that year, the Théâtre de la Cité became the first Troupe Permanente and the first stable subsidised provincial theatre in France. In the hierarchy of popular theatres, the Troupe Permanente had the lowest status and received the smallest subsidy; the next grade was that of the Centre Dramatique: in 1965, the government were also considering the establishment of Théâtres Nationaux Populaires in the provinces. The Théâtre de la Cité was to be the first to follow through these various stages of the "carrière des honneurs." Troupes Permanentes were founded in 1960 at Grenoble, Beaune, Rheims, Marseille, Nantes, in 1961 at Bourges, in 1963 at Lille and Caen. In 1960, a third form of cultural decentralisation was established, the Maisons de la Culture, a "national network of multi-purpose arts centres." These were to include drama as one of many art forms, but the theatre group was often present before a Maison de la Culture was founded, as in Caen and Bourges, and remained the nucleus of the cultural activity within them.

The Théâtre de la Cité changed its status to that of a Centre Dramatique in 1963. The building provided by the municipality began to prove inadequate; hopes of becoming a Maison de la Culture rose when in 1963 the central ministry agreed to provide a subsidy to pay half the cost of the institution, and to appoint Roger Planchon as its director. There were repeated delays in its construction, however, because of the reluctance of local authorities to provide a parity subsidy. In 1965 Roger Planchon could write, "100,000 personnes ... réclament la construction de cette Maison de la Culture. Nous garantissons ce chiffre."¹

Still the local powers hesitated until, finally, the government abandoned the project. One thinks of the heading of a Times article written in 1971: "State scheme to take culture to the provinces falls foul of philistines."²

Ironically, it was not until the 1960's that the French government officially recognised the need for permanent theatres in the outlying areas of Paris. The need was certainly as great as in the provinces, for most workers could afford neither the time nor the money to commute to central Paris and back for one evening's entertainment. Even a 1905 proposal for new theatres had included a suggestion that, of four popular theatres to be built in Paris, three be placed in the periphery; alluding to this proposal in her book, Laurent suggested in 1954 that all four be built in the periphery or in the outskirts, in areas easily accessible by public transport, and where libraries and museums could be established as well.³ The TNP simply could not pretend to serve the entire Parisian population. In 1951, Vilar wrote: "Il faut construire des salles au milieu des agglomérations populaires."⁴ Jeanne Laurent echoed his sentiment three

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1. "Le 50 000e Spectateur", Cité-Panorama No. 4 N.S., Jan.-Feb. 1965.
3. La République et les Beaux-Arts, p.177.
years later: "Au Théâtre National Populaire, actuellement pourvu non d'un théâtre, mais d'une salle de cinéma, il conviendra de fournir un bon instrument de travail dans la périphérie de Paris". [my underlining] Vilar did try to fill the need with his Festivals de Banlieue, which he continued for seven years; these tours were so successful that Vilar took two years to make up the deficit in his budget after he gave them up in 1959-1960 to concentrate on his work at Avignon and Chaillot.

George Wilson, who succeeded Vilar in 1963, intended to continue working along the same lines and with the same aims as Vilar. The repertoire between 1963 and 1968 maintained a high standard, and could be considered as engaged as the plays chosen in earlier years; it included productions of Gorki, Durrenmmatt, Osborne, Shakespeare, several Brecht plays, and the première, in January 1966, of Gatti's Chant public devant deux chaises électriques. In 1967, Wilson acquired, as Vilar had attempted to do, a smaller hall, the Théâtre Firmin Gémier, for creating contemporary works. He opened it with Tancred Dorst's La grande Impréciation devant les murs de la ville and Kateb Yacine's Les Ancêtres redoublent de féroce. Under Wilson's direction, however, the TNP ventured out of the Palais de Chaillot less and less frequently. In 1968, the season ticket policy was also changed, to make it possible for the spectators to obtain reduced price bookings without seeing all the year's productions. Wilson thought that: "Si la politique des abonnements s'est révélée nécessaire pendant une longue période pour habiter le public populaire à fréquenter le théâtre en le forçant quelque peu à assister à toutes les créations de la saison, elle nous a semblé ensuite dépassée..." The sentiment prefigures that of Gabriel Garran, who refused to use the season

1. *La République et les Beaux-Arts*, p.188.
ticket method

... pour refuser une conception du théâtre populaire maintenant abâtardie qui enferme les gens dans une fidélité formelle à une seule entreprise et, sauf en cas de forte personnalité de l'animateur de collectivité, transforme la section culturelle d'un groupe-ment en 'billeterie d'agence', bradant sa responsabilité une fois pour toutes en début de saison.

But it would seem that in Wilson's case it was assuming too permanent and widespread an interest on the part of the spectators.

An enquiry carried out in 1971 revealed that the new policy reduced the size of audiences, and that an un-filled theatre made the older spectators, "... le public de Jean Vilar ..." rather uncomfortable. No doubt the size and the austere appearance of the auditorium must have seemed more evident when the theatre was not full. "On ne retrouve plus ces moments de communion intense que nous avions vécus au TNP" was one of the comments which came out in the enquiry. There were many complaints of the theatre's lack of interest in maintaining contacts with the public. People wished to be better informed and to have more influence on the work of the TNP. The debates and the discussions instituted by Vilar were one policy which could not be called dépassée. Like Vilar, Roger Planchon was to include debates after productions, attendance of spectators at rehearsals, and surveys of his audience, as basic methods of keeping in touch with his public.

The TNP was clearly never a centre where workers from all over Paris came regularly. Just before 1960, the government, recognising the need for theatres really accessible to people in the periphery of Paris, began to take effective

action. As in the provinces, subsidies often came as the recognition of the efforts of troupes already in existence. The Théâtre de l'Est Parisien, for example, was created as the result of work which Guy Rétoré and his company "La Guilde" had begun in the eastern outskirts of Paris in 1950. Several popular theatres were created in the early 1960's, such as Gabriel Garran's Théâtre de la Commune d'Aubervilliers, Pierre Debauche's Théâtre des Amandiers at Nanterre, Raymond Gerbal's Théâtre Romain-Rolland in Villejuif, and the Théâtre Gérard-Philippe in Saint-Denis, directed by Jacques Roussillon and then by José Valverde.

Patrice Chéreau worked in the Parisian banlieue very early on in his career as a director. In 1966, at the age of 22, he was invited by Bernard Sobel to put on a production at the first Festival de Gennevilliers. There he created a version of Labiche's L'Affaire de la rue Lourcine. In that year, the municipality of Sartrouville, a cité-dortoir in north-west Paris, requested his assistance as animateur of their theatre. He was to direct the theatre of Sartrouville for three years.

All these animateurs were strongly influenced by the work of Vilar, Dasté, Planchon, and the pioneers of dramatic decentralisation. Garran admitted that "Nous nous sommes voulus ... enfants périphériques de Jean Vilar." They shared a common ambition to offer not only theatre to their public, but a variety of cultural activities as well. They settled in working class areas because they wanted to attract people who had not been to the theatre before. Debauche summed up their major concern as ".... l'invention d'un théâtre populaire en direction de la classe ouvrière...".

1. In 1964, Chéreau had put on his first production Lope de Vega's Fuenteovejuna, at the Festival culturel de l'Union nationale des étudiants de France in Marseilles, and at the Erlangen Festival in Germany.
2. Quoted in Madral's Le Théâtre hors les murs, p.59.
3. Quoted in Madral's Le Théâtre hors les murs, p.93.
They tried to fulfil their aims by using the methods of the first provincial popular theatres and of Jean Vilar at the TNP; these included not only such details as abolishing tipping and selling all the seats for the same price, but also the general policy of making the theatre familiar to people through debates, tours of the theatre building, and talks in schools, youth clubs, and trade union organisations. When Gabriel Garran organised yearly festivals, he publicised each one with a door-to-door campaign in the council flats. Pierre Débauché, concerned to reach every part of the population of Nanterre, was ready to put on plays in Algerian or Portuguese; he also had the idea of sending emissaries from his theatre to holiday camps to speak to workers where they could take the time to listen.

Chéreau quickly discovered, in Sartrouville, "... que nous ne pouvions nous contenter de faire des spectacles mais qu'il nous fallait élaborer avec le public une politique culturelle."¹ Like his colleagues in other outlying areas, he found his adult audience harder to reach than the children: "Sartrouville est en effet une cité-dortoir où les gens rentrent vers 18 heures et se connaissent peu, où il est difficile aux collectivités d'établir des liens solides."² Chéreau turned his attention to the schools and, working in cooperation with teachers, integrated into the school curriculum demonstrations of how a printed text was made into a production. Like Planchon, Chéreau worked with trade unions; he kept them informed by giving them a dossier on each of the activities of the theatre, and he started the practice of presenting rehearsals at union meetings for criticism and debate.

These new Parisian directors tended to give their work a political orientation. Gerbal certainly stated what was at first a common and fundamental belief when he said of working class people:

¹ Chéreau, quoted in Madral's Le Théâtre hors les murs, p. 150.
² Ibid, p.151.
Bien souvent, à leurs yeux, la connaissance et le savoir de ceux qui socialement les dominent prennent un caractère quasi magique, inaccessible. Ainsi, la culture élitaire apparaît pour ce qu'elle est: un facteur d'aliénation... Les gens iront à la culture quand ils en auront compris le bénéfice, quand ils seront convaincus que la culture pour tous est un facteur d'émancipation, autant que d'embellissement et d'enrichissement de leur vie.1

Gabriel Garran and Guy Rétoré believed that, while theatre could not actually revolutionise society, it could provoke thought and make people aware; like Roger Planchon, they wished to stimulate in their public a prise de conscience contemporaine. Perhaps as a reaction against the reassuring nature of boulevard theatre, each of these young directors wanted to create for his new public "... un théâtre qui divise, qui inquiète ...".2 Chéreau described his work as engagé. As Meyerhold had said, and as José Valverde discovered, however, making productions relevant to contemporary life was only half the problem:

... on [the public of Valverde's Théâtre Gérard-Philippe in Saint-Denis] nous a reproché d'être des gens, non pas ennuyeux, mais tristes ... nous nous refusons à ne pas aborder les problèmes de notre temps. Or, on n'a pas encore trouvé la façon vivante et joyeuse de les aborder, et c'est ce qui, au niveau du contenu, nous éloigne le plus de la conquête d'un public populaire plus large.3

The directors wished to inquiéter, to be engagé without being triste; which authors, which plays were suitable? The problem was to build up a repertoire of plays so "universal" that they made each spectator feel concerned. Speaking in March 1968, Debauche described the

1. Quoted in Madral's Le Théâtre hors les murs, p.106.
2. Guy Rétoré, quoted in Madral's Le Théâtre hors les murs, p.21.
3. Valverde, quoted in Madral's Le Théâtre hors les murs, p.128.
The dilemma of directors trying to find something other than the perennial Brecht and O'Casey plays: "... j'avais constitué il y a deux ans une sorte de liste secrète de 22 pièces que j'avais envie de monter. Dans l'espace de deux années, j'ai monté deux de ces pièces, et les vingt autres ont été montées par d'autres que moi!" Indeed a few names seem to recur in the repertoires of popular theatres, names such as Peter Weiss, Gabriel Cousin, Arthur Adamov, and Armand Gatti appear again and again alongside Brecht, O'Casey, Shakespeare, and the French classics. One solution to the problem was the création collective. As Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop had shown with their Oh! What a Lovely War!, as Ariane Mnouchkine's Théâtre du Soleil have shown more recently with their productions of 1789 and 1793, a play created by a company might have the vigour, the joy, and the dramatic directness which would draw a mass audience and move them. The Théâtre de la Cité de Villeurbanne created their version of Les Trois Mousquetaires as a group, and it was so well received that, through several recreations over a number of years, they found that it became their most consistently popular production.

In 1968, the provincial theatres which had become stabilised and productive, the Parisian popular theatres which were still finding their feet, and the theatres of central Paris were caught up in the events of May. Many have never recovered. With the drama being enacted in the streets, the theatres, even those working for the people, suddenly felt an irrelevance in their existence. Most of the companies went on strike in sympathy with the workers; sometimes troupes occupied their own theatres, often they went out to entertain workers who were occupying their places of work. Planchon's company cancelled a planned tour of Canada.

1. Débauché, quoted in Madral's Le Théâtre hors les murs, pp. 85-86.
out of solidarity for the workers of France. After President DeGaulle's speech of May 31st, Jean Vilar resigned in protest from any government position. Jean-Louis Barrault, accused of not having turned off the electricity as ordered in the Odéon while it was occupied, was dismissed from his post as its director. Many drama festivals were postponed, shortened, or cancelled. At Avignon, Julian Beck and Judith Malina's Living Theatre sparked off demonstrations in favour of free street performances alongside the activities of the festival, and finally left Avignon, angry at the mayor's intransigent attitude. Theatrical events were created spontaneously, not by professionals but by young people. At Meudon, for example, the cultural centre was occupied by a committee which invited the people to open debates on culture, news, the struggle of the workers and the students... The response was enthusiastic; a creative workshop and a printing press were installed. After a week, nevertheless, the mayor insisted on closing down the centre.

Une conception administrative et même immobilière de la culture était opposée en termes non pas rudes mais crus à ceux qui entendaient animer leur cité, consolider dans la légalité le résultat, après tout extraordinaire, qui venait d'être obtenu, puisque le centre avait trouvé son public avant d'être inauguré.

It might have been thought at one stage that the popular theatres would be the only ones to survive. Barrault, after his dismissal, staged a mass spectacle, *Rabelais*, in a boxing stadium, meeting with an immense success in this his

first popular venture. At the Atelier, André Barsacq lowered prices, asked for government aid, and declared that he was abandoning the notion of profit: "... force sera alors de nous traiter en artistes. Croyez-moi, c'est notre seule chance de survie." In September a Théâtre de l'Ouest Parisien was founded to serve Boulogne-Billancourt, under the direction of Pierre Vielhescaze, one of Garra's associates at Aubervilliers. Contacts with the workers were established during the événements, which the men of the theatre hoped to preserve or to recreate later:

Au mois de mai, en donnant plus de 50 spectacles durant la grève, en pénétrant dans les entreprises, en jouant dans les cours d'usines, les cantines ou les entrepôts, nous nous sommes trouvés en face du 'non-public'. C'est ce seuil qu'il nous faut franchir.

It was this experience which made Gabriel Garra found his Tréteaux and send them out to play in factories, communal cultural centres, and Maisons de Jeunes. It seemed, indeed, that the popular theatres would not only survive, but emerge stronger than before.

At Villeurbanne, on the 25th of May, directors of popular theatres and Maisons de la Culture from across France joined together and after days of discussion, issued a common statement. They had reevaluated the situation of popular theatre in France. They concluded that they had failed to reach the 'non-public': "Une immensité humaine composée

4. Gabriel Garra, quoted in Madral's Le Théâtre hors les murs, p.66.
5. "Déclaration de Villeurbanne," in Madral's Le Théâtre hors les murs, pp. 245-250.
de tous ceux qui n'ont encore aucun accès ni aucune chance d'accéder prochainement au phénomène culturel sous les formes qu'il persiste à revêtir dans la presque totalité des cas." The traditional culture which they had been trying to filter down to the masses remained foreign and useless to this non-public. What was needed was "... une conception entièrement différente qui ne se réfère pas à priori à tel contenu préexistant mais qui attend de la seule rencontre des hommes la définition progressive d'un contenu qu'ils puissent reconnaître...". The directors thought that culture must provide for the people.

... un moyen de rompre son actuel isolement, de sortir du ghetto, en se situant de plus en plus consciemment dans la contexte social et historique, en se libérant toujours mieux des mystifications de tous ordres qui tendent à le rendre en lui-même complice des situations réelles qui lui sont imposées.

Popular theatre would now have to be

... une entreprise de politisation: c'est-dire d'inventer sans relâche, à l'intention de ce 'non-public', des occasions de se politiser, de se choisir librement, par-delà le sentiment d'impuissance et d'absurdité que ne cesse de susciter en lui un système social où les hommes ne sont pratiquement jamais en mesure d'inventer ensemble leur propre humanité.

In August, Claude Sarraute was to sum up the difficulty which the directors had recognised: "La culture, on s'aperçoit, n'est pas, en soi, un agent de renouvellement des esprits. Ce qui importe, c'est beaucoup moins sa diffusion que les motivations de ceux qui la dispensent et de ceux qui la reçoivent."¹ The Villeurbanne statement ended with five proposals: no more Maisons de la Culture should be built until a new, practicable status was worked out for them; the minimum budget allowed for cultural affairs should rise from 0.43% to 3% of the national budget; the disparity in subsidies between Parisian national theatres on one hand, and provincial or outlying Parisian theatres on the other should be remedied;

a minimum budget should be allowed for each category of cultural activity subsidised; the administrative and financial departments of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs should be reorganised.

A permanent committee emerged from the Villeurbanne meeting, and attempted to parley with the government. On June 19th, the Ministry received another statement, asking once again for a clarification and streamlining of the various definitions and situations of Centres Dramatiques, Troupes Permanentes, and Maisons de la Culture. They also asked for the creation of a permanent consultative committee composed of representatives from the Ministry and from the Villeurbanne permanent committee. They requested this time that 1% of the national budget be allotted to cultural affairs, and they once again suggested that the disparity in subsidies for national Parisian theatres and their counterparts in the banlieue and the provinces be reduced.1

The conclusions of the assembly at Villeurbanne were strongly attacked by Émile Copfermann:

... les directeurs élaborent une doctrine qui, pour l'essentiel, rejoint celle du Ministre pour laquelle l'Art est vu comme conscience et religion nouvelles et offert à une société frappée par le vide matérialiste. Appuyé par tous ses collègues, de Planchon à Gignoux, le philosophe chrétien Francis Jeanson avance la notion de 'non-public', parle du théâtre comme 'prise de conscience', comme 'moyen désaliénant', de 'politisation' ... tout en s'interdisant ce qu'il appelle 'prosélytisme politique', en l'occurrence toute politisation du public, ce qui illustre le jésuitisme profond de la démarche.2

In the same article Copfermann condemned the aims of the popular theatres of the mid-fifties, which were to put culture at the disposition of the greatest number of people possible, without

changing the society which cuts these people off from art in the first place, "... ce qui signifiait aussi que cet art ne changeait en rien les hommes." Roger Planchon could only answer in 1969 that, for tactical reasons in its negotiations with the government, not all that had been discussed or said at Villeurbanne in May 1968 had been made public.\(^1\)

It was certainly possible to doubt the success of the meetings. The government, in 1969, was still ignoring most of the demands or requests of the permanent committee. Far from cooperating, the Ministry of Culture under Malraux continued in its own direction: "Loin de donner satisfaction à l'une des exigences essentielles formulées par le Comité permanent et d'instituer une véritable continuité entre la formation, l'animation et la création, il concluait à leur nécessaire dissociation..."; a sharp distinction was made between "la direction des théâtres" and "une direction d'action culturelle".\(^2\) Problems did not come only from the central government: provincial cities which had had a taste of revolution often remained resentful of the directors of their Maisons de la Culture, and simply stopped paying their half of the subsidy. Gabriel Monnet in Bourges, Maurice Sarrazin in Toulouse, and Jo Tréhard in Caen were thus unceremoniously deprived of the buildings they had worked in. In 1969, the arts budget went down from .435\(^3\) to .427\(^3\) of the total budget.\(^3\)

At the TNP, Wilson suffered a disastrous financial loss when in 1968, despite the objections of organisations of spectators, Gatti's Passion du Général Franco was forbidden at the last minute. Wilson remained wary of choosing revolutionary plays afterward. Financial limitations imposed by a small subsidy and the impossibility of raising the price of

\(^1\) Cité Panorama, No. 15 N.S. (Nov. 1968-Jan 1969), 16.


\(^3\) Ibid, p.250.
tickets severely limited his activity. Wilson also claimed that the huge theatre's dimensions determined the kind of play he could choose, and complained that the government had not kept its promise of renovating Chaillot. In 1970-71, the average attendance at the TNT had dropped lower than in 1952. July 1971 brought a new subsidy from the Ministère de Affaires Culturelles and the season included such productions as Bond's Saved, Wesker's Chips with Everything, and Arrabal's Bella Ciao. But in 1972, Wilson rented the Palais de Chaillot to Annie Fargue for a commercial production of Jesus-Christ, Superstar, compelled to do so, he said, in order to keep the theatre going at all. This step was not acceptable to the government. Wilson's contract was not to be renewed when it expired in 1972.

The real repercussions of May were not clear to the reformers who assembled at Villeurbanne:

Parmi les directeurs des Théâtres populaires et les Maisons de la Culture, seuls Roger Planchon et Patrice Chéreau semblent ne pas être restés à l'illusion lyrique de la Déclaration villeurbannoise et avoir pris véritablement conscience, dans leur travail même, de la nécessité de reconsidérer l'idéologie et les méthodes de 'théâtre populaire', quoiqu'ils en aient tiré des conclusions radicalement différentes. 2

Both Planchon and Chéreau tried to grasp the events of 1968 by producing plays about the theatre, and both parodied various styles of production. Chéreau put on, in November 1968, a création collective entitled Le Prix de la révolte au marché noir. The style according to Gilles Sandier 3 seems to have recalled Planchon's Les Trois Mousquetaires


2. Dort, Théâtre réel, pp. 251.

as well as paralleling his 1968 play: "La culture y est contestée dans un charivari qui est plein de vraie culture théâtrale." Sandier thought that the entire play had the merit of being an honest appraisal, or rather description of a situation, that of the theatre after May:

... il est passionnant de voir un des deux ou trois hommes de théâtre les plus doués d'aujourd'hui (et le plus jeune), dire carrément sur la scène, avec les moyens d'une extraordinaire puissance théâtrale, son impuissance civique et politique d'homme de théâtre, impuissance aujourd'hui ressentie de façon pratique par tout homme de théâtre lucide et courageux.

According to Port, Flanchon's play La Contestation et la mise en pièces de la plus illustre des tragédies françaises LE CID de Pierre Corneille suivies d'une 'cruelle' mise à mort de l'auteur dramatique et d'une distribution gracieuse de diverses conserves culturelles, through its humour, exorcised "... les principaux styles de théâtre et d'anti-théâtre actuels comme les mythes du 'théâtre populaire'", so that Flanchon could resume his own more personal creative work. Possibly both directors had, with their colleagues in the spring of '68, "... caressé le phantasme d'une accession au 'pouvoir culturel'". Had both concluded that their situation as director was one of impuissance? Possibly they had seen the need, rather, for a readjustment of their own role in relation to their public, and in relation to their art. They could no longer define themselves as mediators. Perhaps Patrice Chéreau had the last word on 1968:

... le théâtre d'agitation en France en 1969 n'attend aucun talent ni aucune vocation, mais bien plutôt la situation qui en fera naître la nécessité chez ceux à qui il s'adressera - et qui le fabriqueront eux-mêmes.3

1. Théâtre réel, pp. 251-252.
2. Ibid.
In 1963, as we have seen, Roger Planchon was offered control of a new Maison de la Culture to be built in Lyons. He was especially pleased because his municipal building had been proving inadequate. Although there were thirteen hundred seats, only six hundred spectators could see and hear reasonably well in the old theatre. In addition, the structure of the 1930's building was inflexible, and therefore ill adapted to the variety of activities which Roger Planchon and Robert Gilbert, his administrator, had initiated and maintained through the years.

For Planchon, the ideal theatre would be "... non point un lieu solennel et réservé, où vont les bourgeois le dimanche, mais un véritable foyer de culture où chacun à sa guise est libre d'entrer quand il veut." In keeping with his idea that "... le théâtre n'est pas une manifestation artistique isolée, mais il se situe dans un contexte social...", he always welcomed within the walls of the Théâtre de la Cité artists from other theatres and from other fields of endeavour. As early as in 1959, for instance, when the troupe was on tour with Les Trois Mousquetaires, the theatre in Villeurbanne was kept busy with visits from the Grenier de Toulouse performing Anouilh's Eurydice and the Comédie de St. Etienne putting on Copeau's L'Illusion, with an RTF annual concert, a concert by the Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig, a performance by the Ballets Nationaux de Macédoine, and concerts by Art Blakey and Dizzy Gillespie. No doubt

1. Le Progrès (Lyons), August 5th, 1969.
the local press was right when it said that a **Maison de la Culture** would provide a suitable framework for the activities already in progress:

Depuis cinq ans Roger Planchon et Robert Gilbert attendent l'accord de la municipalité de Villeurbanne ... puis ... de Lyon, pour que leur soit confié la direction d'un ensemble culturel adapté aux activités multiples qu'ils ont mis en place dans le modeste Théâtre de Villeurbanne.  

Although the idea of a **Maison de la Culture** was finally abandoned, the Théâtre de la Cité kept up its numerous activities. In 1967, they decided to add jazz to the cultural programme as Vilar had done at the TNP, and they were congratulated for thus having contributed to a renaissance of this type of music in Lyons: "Le Théâtre de la Cité, en accueillant Ella Fitzgerald, le M.J.D., Sonny Rollins, Max Roach, Dexter Gordon, Art Farmer, Art Taylor, Rosetta Tharbe, a attiré vers le jazz un public nouveau, celui du théâtre." One might hope that as in the TNP weekends, the jazz fans were also in this way attracted to revisit the theatre for dramatic productions. Even the 1968 reappraisal of this sort of work, even the period of renovation, a little later, of the Villeurbanne theatre, did not dampen the group's dynamism. In 1969, while Planchon and part of the troupe were in Paris, the rest of the company divided its activities between two buildings, the Centre Culturel and the Maison des Sports. As well as presentations of *Nicomède* and of *Homme pour Homme* directed by Jacques Rosner (until recently an actor and assistant director at Villeurbanne), these activities included readings from Chekhov by one of Planchon's actors Gérard Guillaumat, an American Folk Blues Festival including Miles Davis, Duke Ellington, Thelonius Monk, and Ravi Shankar, and performances by Narcisco Yepes, the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra Octet, pianists Tamas Vasary and Eric

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Planchon's love for the cinema, his awareness of his public as a group of people whose concept of art and of artistic convention was formed by the film, made it natural to include the cinema as one of the forms of expression which the Théâtre de Villeurbanne supported. The first CINEMA NATIONAL POPULAIRE in Lyons opened on 1st March 1968. Robert Gilbert explained the reasons for its creation: "Au départ, nous voulions compléter les activités du Théâtre de la Cité. Depuis trois ans nous avons étendu notre programme avec des concerts de musique classique, du jazz, avec la présentation de ballets. Manquait le cinéma." The cinema aimed to show films of a high artistic calibre on a normal commercial basis, competing with other cinemas in the city. Cinema might be considered as the popular art par excellence: readily available and enjoying an immense prestige among all classes as an entertainment, it is also a medium in which some of the seminal preoccupations of our century have found their expression. René Allio, Planchon's former set-designer, who now directs films, spoke of this quality of approachability:

Une des qualités premières du cinéma ... est d'être toujours resté un art un peu en marge des arts 'officiels', peut-être est-il venu trop tard pour être consacré par les académies ...; ce n'est pas un des 'beaux-arts' sur un socle, et qu'on aborde avec respect, c'est un élément courant, quotidien; on va au cinéma comme on achète un journal; c'est ça qui est important et tant pis si, à faire ainsi, le spectateur laisse échapper des aspects de l'oeuvre. Le cinéma est un art qui échappe aux académismes, un art vivant, et c'est pour cela qu'il ne faut en aucun cas opposer un cinéma dit commercial et un cinéma d'auteur, car l'un se nourrit de l'autre et réciproquement."

1. Le Progrès Soir (Lyons), September 9th, 1969.
Yet in their choice of films, the cinema-owners seemed to believe that the ordinary working class wanted only light entertainment, and therefore offered little of any artistic value to the consumer. "La vérité", said a commentator about the much abused idea that a worker wants only to relax after a long day's work, "c'est que ce soi-disant 'repos bien gagné' n'est autre que le prolongement direct de son asservissement."¹ Good cinema, like good theatre, despite Allio's idealistic picture of the situation, has become a minority interest: "En réalité le public qui fréquente les salles obscures est resté, lui aussi, dans sa majorité, en dehors de l'effort cinématographique enregistré depuis la fin de la guerre."² Indeed the CNP idea is similar to the first conception of popular theatres. There were Cinémas Poulaires in Bordeaux and Toulouse already before the first one opened in Lyons. "Il faut", said the director of the Centre national de la cinématographie, M. Holleau, "que le cinéma sorte de son secteur relativement privilégié. Il faut passer par les collectivités pour obtenir un public plus large."³

Besides offering season tickets and group bookings at lower prices, the CNP Gratte-ciels, true to the Villeurbanne tradition of creating live contacts between artist and public, began by organising debates and discussions with guest speakers connected with the film to be shown. The film Temps de vivre, for example, was introduced by debates in which Marina Vlady, the producer Bernard Paul, and André Remacle, the writer of the novel on which the film is based, participated. These were organised by Travail et Culture, and the Club Cinédébats, with the active help of trade union committees from the Berliet factories in Vénissieux, Rhône-Poulec in Saint-Fons, and Rhodiacéta in Lyons.⁴ The new

¹. Michel Barroil, Vie Lyonnaise, January 1st, 1968.
³. Le Progrès (Lyons), October 31st, 1963.
cinema also suppressed tipping and the sale of sweets, provided comfortable, roomy seats, the best of projection standards, and presented short films related to the main feature instead of advertisements and outdated news.  

The first establishment was extremely popular; by mid-March attendance had already climbed to over 66%, compared to an average of 20% in other cinemas. It must have succeeded in its aim of proving "aux commerçants du spectacle que les films qu'ils jugent 'difficiles' peuvent être reçus par de très larges couches de spectateurs." Indeed, it was so well-received that two more CNP are now in operation in Lyons, one at the Opéra, founded in November 1969, and the other at Caluire, in 1971. 

Because it wished to maintain close contacts with its public, the Théâtre de la Cité often invited groups to the theatre for debates and discussions, tours of the building and critical appraisals of productions. Already at the Théâtre de la Comédie, Planchon had instituted "mardis", days on which a presentation was preceded by a brief introduction, and followed by a debate between actors and public. He continued this policy at the theatre in Villeurbanne, and, later, organised semaines culturelles, patterned on Vilar's famous 'weekends', and including exhibitions in the factories as well as presentations and discussions with the workers at the theatre. In a debate after a presentation of Henry IV at the Théâtre de la Cité in 1958 Planchon demonstrated his willingness to speak frankly and directly to his public: "... c'est très difficile", 

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he admitted, "de faire du quotidien qui se tienne." The theatre's activities were often explained during these visits. In December 1964 students from Grenoble were welcomed to the Théâtre de la Cité and heard talks by Roger Planchon and Jacques Rosner on the theatre's recent tour of the Soviet Union and by Planchon on Brecht. In March 1965 a group of education students from Lons-le-Saulnier were welcomed to a debate on Hochhuth's play Der Stellvertreter (performed in France under the title Le Vicaire), in which Rosner and Planchon and the actors Jean-Louis Martin-Barbaz and Marc Dudicourt took part; they saw a graphic art exhibition and a play in the evening; "après-midi culturels" such as this were a frequent occurrence. Even financial problems were discussed with the public, during meetings with various associations: in January 1970, Roger Planchon and Robert Gilbert explained to representatives of different groups that the need for subsidies did not stem from an inability to compete commercially (the Montparnasse productions had competed very successfully with commercial theatres), but from the wish to allow a popular audience to see plays at a price it could afford. Impending budget cuts and financial uncertainties were also discussed at this meeting. Thus the theatre remained a centre which welcomed its public as an influential and respected element in its work.

Educating children about theatre was a way of attracting future audiences to come well-prepared, and the Théâtre de la Cité early in its career organised school programmes, with the cooperation of educational authorities.

2. Le Progrès (Lyons), December 4th, 1964.
The drama school of the Théâtre de la Cité, under Jean-Louis Boeglin, gave productions for school audiences as early as 1953.1 Roger Planchon thought of simply giving school pupils free admission to usual performances; certainly the theatre refused to patronise its young audiences: "Nous ne faisons qu'une seule forme de théâtre", said Martin-Barbaz to a group of lycéens in Marseille, "c'est le théâtre adulte..." 2 In 1968 this sort of effort was vindicated, for the directors assembled at Villeurbanne saw education as a crucial issue. The theatre of Villeurbanne even stated a little later that lack of drama teaching in primary schools was a major reason for working class people's lack of interest, for they seldom went beyond primary school.3

It was not only schools which were visited by Planchon's troupe. The organisation of the information services was well described by André de Baecque in 1966; there were 16000 adhérents for whom the best seats were reserved, and 300 correspondents...

Ces derniers, véritables chevilles ouvrières de ce système d'abonnements, informent, transmettent, sollicitent aussi. Et il ne se passe pas de semaine sans qu'un metteur en scène, un comédien, accompagnés de l'infatigable Madeleine Sarrazin, [the secretary of the theatre] ne se rende à l'appel d'un groupement de spectateurs pour répondre à des questions, expliquer, suggérer.4

Subjects treated depended partly on the audience, and partly on the preoccupations of the Théâtre de la Cité at a given time.

Everyone participated in these visits. Jacques Rosner was a particularly active speaker. In February 1962, the Lyons student union, the A.G.E.L. heard Rosner and Claude Lochy, the company's music composer and one of its best actors,

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1. Le Progrès (Lyons), May 18th, 1956.
discuss the problems of the Théâtre de la Cité.\textsuperscript{1} In November of the same year, the A.G.E.L. were to hear a debate including Planchon himself.\textsuperscript{2} The Jeunesses Communistes de Lyon welcomed Rosner in February 1963 for a talk on the problems of the theatre in contemporary society.\textsuperscript{3} In 1965 he visited the Centre universitaire catholique to speak on popular and realistic theatre, and on the necessity of finding, if not of creating a public...\textsuperscript{4} He participated in a very lively debate at the arts faculty in Lyon in May of the same year, with the critic André de Baecque; it ended on a humorous note "... une boutade de Brecht aux gouvernants de Berlin-Ouest: 'Donnez-moi de l'argent et ne vous occupez de rien.'".\textsuperscript{5} In December Rosner preceded Françoise Kourilsky, a drama critic, as speaker at the Centre Universitaire International de Formation et de Recherches Dramatiques.\textsuperscript{6}

Other ambassadors spoke of the work of the theatre, to different groups in many cities and towns. At the Toulouse arts faculty, the critic Émile Copfermann explained the dilemma of theatre as a cultural, rather than a marketable product.\textsuperscript{7} The visits were not merely sophisticated publicity stunts, and the shortcomings and problems of the Villeurbanne experience were spoken of as they appeared. In a debate with young people in July 1966 in Marseille, Jean-Louis Martin-Barbaz admitted that the Théâtre de la Cité had failed in absolute terms to attract a working class audience, an audience of which \(8\%\) are workers may be relatively remarkable.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{1.} Le Progrès (Lyons), February 10th, 1962.
  \item \textbf{2.} L'Echo, La Liberté (Lyons), November 28th, 1962.
  \item \textbf{3.} Le Progrès (Lyons), February 13th, 1963.
  \item \textbf{4.} Le Courrier (Lyons), March 5th, 1965.
  \item \textbf{5.} Le Progrès (Lyons), May 15th, 1965.
  \item \textbf{6.} Le Républicain Lorrain (Metz), December 14th, 1965.
  \item \textbf{7.} La Dépêche du Midi (Toulouse), February 18th, 1966.
\end{itemize}
he said, but it is not a popular audience. In the following month, Claude Lochy explained to these young people the work of the stagiaires at the Théâtre de la Cité. Organisations of every kind were visited. Jean-Louis Martin-Barbaz went from the Union Féminine Civique et Sociale in March 1967, to the Club des Jeunes de la Ferrandière in December. Gilles Chavassieux, an actor and later an assistant director at Villeurbanne, spoke in July 1967, at a college in Grenoble, of the actor's role in the contemporary theatre. Planchon himself was guest speaker at one conference after another, from the 12e Festival International de l'U.N.E.F., to such modest affairs as a colloquium at Châtillon-sur-Chalaronne, or a week-long conference at the Dombes cultural centre. In the first years of its career in Villeurbanne the theatre thus sought to create contacts with all classes of organisations, and it maintained these links with determined energy.

The events of May, 1968, while they sparked off a total revaluation, also allowed for even greater contact with the public. Planchon and his troupe were the only ones allowed into the occupied Berliet factories, and they spoke to the hardest core of militant workers. "What we told them", Planchon said later, "was this: 'All right, you shut off the TV when Shakespeare is on. Culture therefore escapes you. But you can't transform the world unless you obtain culture.'" In Bourg-en-Bresse, representatives from the Théâtre de la Cité went to speak to workers and students.

1. Le MériIDDLEional (Marseille), July 24th, 1966.
2. Le Provençal (Marseille), August 4th, 1966.
4. L'Echo, La Liberté (Lyons), December 5th, 1967.
7. Le Dauphiné Libéré (Grenoble), March 10th, 1968.
about state authority and 'culture merchants'. The members of the company occupied their quarters from the 22nd May onward. Jacques Rosner, and the actors, Jean Bouise, and Gérard Guillaumat went from factory to factory to talk to workers on strike, taking part in discussions or giving readings from Dickens and Maupassant. After the Villeurbanne conference, and before the renovation of the theatre, activity was carried on with the same vigour. In February 1969 the theatre presented, at the Tivoli in Grenoble, a montage-lecture of Roger Vailland's novel 325000 francs; their aim was to create "... une véritable action culturelle, en dehors de ... [leur] propre théâtre ...".

Even on tour the company has always been careful to make the effort of going out to the public. In a four-month tour of eastern countries in 1963, an enormous programme was undertaken, including cultural exchanges, debates with university students and actors from host countries, and with the public. The visit to Paris in that year was prepared long ahead, by a few members of the company who rented a shop in front of the Odéon to organise the usual system of group bookings for associations and unions. In the next year Luce Méliste, in Miroir du Cinéma was already saying that critics were increasingly powerless to ruin a play: "Les comités d'entreprise ont remplacé le tout-Paris des générales." Nor was this only a way of guaranteeing full houses. "Le choix du public est une politique," said Cité-Panorama in 1964, "et la collaboration avec les associations, les syndicats, les comités d'entreprises un choix politique." The hope of the company was that "... collectivement la prise de

2. Le Progrès (Lyons), June 9th, 1968.
3. Le Dauphiné Libéré (Grenoble), February 9th, 1969.
As for other drama centres, keeping in touch with their activities meant not only sending out speakers but also inviting their actors to work within the walls of the Théâtre de la Cité with Planchon's company. In addition to the stagiaires who came from many nations to observe Roger Planchon's work, there were new faces in Villerbanne every season. Claude Lochy explained this policy: "Nous avons pris le parti, à Villerbanne, de ne jamais travailler avec les mêmes acteurs, ce qui nous oblige à nous reconsidérer sans cesse, à nous remettre en question au contact d'autres styles, d'autres talents. C'est indispensable, sinon on se met vite à vomir."

Thus the permanent "kernel" of Planchon's regular actors (the "nous" in Lochy's statement) worked in collaboration with a number of newcomers each year. Actors who came to work at Villerbanne often found the difference between Lyons and Paris surprising: "Le public est plus sain et réceptif, et les gens de théâtre ont la foi en ce qu'ils font...".

The members of the Théâtre de la Cité, remaining in Villerbanne for the major part of their careers, became a well trained and integrated unit, "the moving force behind Planchon's achievements...". Of course they occasionally branched out into other companies or even other media. René Allio, Planchon's set designer, was asked in 1962 to work in Stratford's production of Cymbeline. Rosner directed plays both at the Théâtre de la Cité and independently of it. In 1964, he put on in Paris a version of Gatti's La Vie imaginaire de l'Éboueur Auguste Gai which delighted Planchon because it was "pas 'planchonien' du tout!". Rosner then put on

2. La Dépêche du Midi (Toulouse), November 22nd, 1963.
5. The Times (London), July 9th, 1962.
La Mère in Toulouse at the invitation of Maurice Sarrazin director of the Grenier de Toulouse. In 1970 his production of Gombrowicz's Opérette at the T.N.P. shared the drama critics' award for the best play of the season with Planchon's Bérénice (created in 1966 at Villeurbanne, and shown four years later in Paris, at the Théâtre Montparnasse). In 1971 Rosner became the director of the Théâtre du Lambrequin, a Centre Dramatique in Tourcoing. Yves Kerboul, an assistant director and actor at Villeurbanne as Rosner was, in 1967 directed The Merchant of Venice at the Comédie des Alpes in Grenoble. Jean Bouise, the versatile and brilliant actor who has been with Planchon since the early days of the Théâtre de la Comédie, spoke of the need to try something new from time to time:

De temps à autre, on éprouve ... le besoin de prendre l'air. C'est nécessaire. Moi, j'ai pris en 1962 un congé d'un an pour tourner à Cuba El Otro Cristobal, sous la direction d'Armand Gatti. Eh bien! j'ai regardé Villeurbanne pour la première fois avec un certain recul, je me suis senti gonflé d'affection, j'avais hâte de retourner au berceau.

The actors' fidelity to Villeurbanne is perhaps explained by their increased level of participation in the productions there. Their loyalty to Planchon is understandable when one considers a short statement which he once made in an interview: "Ce que j'aime le plus au théâtre, ce sont les comédiens."

The work of the dynamic individuals who made up the Théâtre de Villeurbanne radiated throughout Lyons and the

5. With Ségolene, Gazette Médicale de France, March 5th, 1969.
provinces. Gérard Guillaumat, who joined the theatre in the early sixties, took an interesting initiative when he decided to become a *conteur populaire* as well as an actor. Early in 1965 he gave an evening of recitations from Maupassant, and, two years later, from Dickens. These recitals were enormously popular, and he felt they were well worth the year's preparation each took. His goals were strongly in line with those of the company; he wished to reach a popular audience:

Le conteur est populaire à cause du contenu, de ce qui est conté, mais aussi parce qu'il peut s'adresser à tous, aussi bien à un professeur de faculté qu'à des gens qui n'ont pas eu la chance d'aller à l'école. Tous peuvent comprendre et ressentir à la même profondeur.

Planchon was to defend the usefulness of having a theatre troupe physically present in a community; in the same way, Guillaumat spoke highly of the intimacy of the *conteur’s* art, of its quick acceptance among all kinds of audiences, of the joy of feeling reassured that

... au XXe siècle, à l'époque de la télévision, du cinéma où tout va vite, où l'on aurait plutôt tendance à être pessimiste sur l'humain, on puisse encore avoir cette qualité d'attention, avec des jeunes et des publics si différents.

The recitals became a part of the repertoire of the Théâtre de la Cité, and were presented in different towns, as well as in the occupied factories of May 1968; as we have seen, a Tchekov recital was added to the 1969 programme at the Théâtre de Villeurbanne.

Planchon’s company moved away from the little Théâtre de la Comédie in 1957, and into the Théâtre de la Cité de Villeurbanne. They tried to keep both theatres in use, but after a year, financial difficulties forced them to close

the Théâtre de la Comédie. In the 1959–1960 season, they agreed to Marcel Maréchal's request that he take over the disused building. From the start, Maréchal's choice of plays (which included Arrabal and Ghelderode for the first season) showed an orientation different from that of the Théâtre de Villeurbanne. Christian Baur recorded the opinion of Planchon and his troupe on Maréchal's work:

Maréchal est intéressé par les auteurs du verbe, par les poètes de la langue, les auteurs ayant un style extrêmement riche, lourd. Au Théâtre de la Cité, nous défendons un théâtre réaliste, critique, dont la poésie n'est pas exclue bien sûr, un théâtre qui représente une espèce de coup d'œil sur le monde...

In 1966, Maréchal's Compagnie du Cothurne was promoted to the rank of Troupe Permanente and in 1968, he was given the direction of the municipal theatre of the VIIIe arrondissement in Lyons. Thus, although Maréchal was not of the Théâtre de la Cité, he began a very successful career, as Planchon had done, by putting on his first plays at the Théâtre de la Comédie. Like Planchon's company, the Théâtre du VIIIe presented not only plays but also public debates, films, and art exhibitions. In 1972, they were given the status of a Centre Dramatique National. In 1974, Maréchal and the playwright and director Pierre Laville were named as the future directors of the Théâtre de l'Est Parisien, which Guy Rétoré was to leave in 1975.

In October 1963, at the invitation of Marcel Maréchal, Maurice Yendt and his Théâtre des Jeunes Années joined the Théâtre du VIIIe to put on his productions for children there. He had been working since 1960 to awaken children's sensibility to theatre and thus form an educated audience for the future. He was especially interested in children between the ages of 5 and 12. With the cooperation

2. Le Progrès (Lyons), August 18th, 1972; Monde, July 15th, 1974.
of educational authorities, children were taken to the theatre by coach during school hours. The Théâtre des Jeunes Années also organised stages for education students; for teachers it provided dossiers with information on each performance and its background, along with suggestions for creative activities which might be initiated after their pupils' visit to the theatre. Schools were lent audio-visual material on the theatre. With a subsidy from the Ministry of Culture, a small grant from the Rhône general council, and financial assistance from Maréchal's troupe, Maurice Yendt managed to keep alive his contribution to theatrical life in Lyons. Significantly, a guiding principle in Yendt's work was that "Le théâtre pour enfants ne doit pas être un théâtre à part, il doit participer de la vie théâtrale contemporaine..."¹ In this he echoed the feelings of Roger Planchon on children and the theatre.

Other Lyonnais have shown concern for the younger spectator. In 1964, Gilles Chavassieux, actor and assistant director in Planchon's company for many years, joined with professional actors from many different centres who were then working at the Théâtre de la Cité, and decided to form an independent company. Called the 'Groupe 64', it was founded specifically to produce plays for children. In a statement on the company in 1972, Chavassieux explained:

Nous pensons que l'échec relatif de la décentralisation dans le domaine de l'élargissement du public, d'une part, et du renouvellement de l'invention théâtrale, d'autre part, est dû, partiellement au fait que l'action n'a été menée qu'à l'intention du public adulte.²

Turning its attention to the children of the working class, the Groupe 64 began its work with C.E.T., C.E.G., and O.S.S. rather than with lycées. Audiences were a little older than

those of Yendt, ranging in age from 10 to 14; they were taken to the Théâtre de la Cité by coach during normal school hours, to see such productions as Le Roman de Renard, Gargantua, and Le Médecin malgré lui. The atmosphere in the theatre was meant to be very free, with children allowed to go out if they were bored. Members of the company followed up the plays by visiting children in the schools and encouraging them to discuss what they had seen. This interest in reaching children was well in keeping with the emphasis placed by the Permanent Committee of Villerurbanne on teaching young people to love the theatre early: "On n'apprend pas à l'école primaire (en général, les ouvriers ne dépassent pas le stade de l'E.P.) aux enfants à aller au théâtre. On leur apprend à aimer le sport; on ne leur apprend pas à aimer le théâtre, le cinéma, la musique." In 1974, however, the Groupe 64 decided to cease working as a "théâtre pour l'enfance et la jeunesse". Chavassieux deplored the fact that when productions were given during school hours, pupils were compelled to attend, and that many were therefore unwilling and inattentive spectators. He had come to think, as Planchon had said, that it was best for young people to be part of a normal audience of mixed ages.

Those who had worked or studied at the Théâtre de Villerurbanne often finished by developing independent groups. Bruno Carlucci's career in Lyons began with a three-month stay at the theatre to work with Planchon who fascinated him as a director. He went from this experience into his own form of production, which might be termed politically provocative, and which parallels the development of street theatre groups in the United States. Cooperating with Travail et Culture, Carlucci started by putting on small mobile shows on

a variety of subjects, from an "Hommage à Romain Holland" in 1966 to the war in the Near East, the Commune, and Mayakovsky. He also organised talks and exhibitions on subjects especially controversial in France, such as racism, war, and contraception. A show on Viet-Nam was performed in 1967 at factory doors, on the back of a lorry. In 1968, during the événements, he toured factories with his production of Adamov's La Politique des restes, and provided films, debates, and poetry and song recitals. In 1969, the troupe took the name of Théâtre de la Satire and in the next year they obtained the use of a hall in Vénissieux and a small subsidy to be provided annually from that city. After a production of Claude Prin's Cérémonial pour un combat, the Ministry of Culture also decided the group was worth subsidising, and gave them 15000 francs. The Théâtre de la Satire toured summer camps organised by Tourisme et Travail, and participated in the Semaine du Jeune Théâtre at the Cartoucherie de Vincennes. Robert Belleret called their work "farouchement engagé", and although the group claim to be more research orientated than popular, Belleret estimated that 20 to 25% of their following come from the working class. Carlucci's spirit of kinship with other theatre groups showed through in his suggestion that the abonnements collectivités in force should be organised so as to give the public the choice of going to any of the productions offered by various Lyons theatres.

Jean-Louis Martin-Barbaz has worked with Planchon since 1959. As he was teaching at the drama school of the Théâtre de la Cité, the Lyons conservatoire in 1969 asked him to become one of their teachers of drama. He soon became embroiled in a dispute with the director over the latter's decision to fail two students. When Martin-Barbaz left the conservatory in the next year his students followed him and

1. Le Progrès (Lyons), August 18th, 1972.
they decided to form a new company, l'"Ensemble théâtral de Lyon". The troupe put on La Mort de Pompée in 1971 in the cultural centre of Lyons, and at the Théâtre de la Satire in Vénissieux; later in that year they performed Luis Valdes's La Tête rétrécie de Pancho Villa at a theatre rented in Avignon. Most of the actors worked in other companies, that of Planchon, Carlucci, Maréchal, or Yendt.1

Roger Planchon's opinion of his public, his estimation of their tastes and of their capability for enjoyment and appreciation, evolved from the beginning through continuous contact with the public with whom, and not for whom, he was working. He started with the basic problem of their unfamiliarity with the theatre medium, and, like many young artists of his time, decided to turn this unsophistication to advantage:

Le public populaire, le public neuf, c'est ce qui nous intéresse le plus, parce qu'en travaillant pour lui, nous sommes amenés à pousser sans cesse nos recherches, et parce que nos recherches ne peuvent être appréciées valablement d'abord que par des yeux neufs, que n'embue aucune routine, aucune accoutumance.2

Because he felt that his audience's artistic formation was exclusively cinematic, he attempted to integrate film techniques into his productions. In his first visit to Paris in 1959, he was amazed to discover that audiences more accustomed to seeing plays did not understand many of these borrowings which had met with much success in Lyons:

Ce qui est admis d'emblée par le public de cinéma, les spectateurs de théâtre mettent peut-être plus de temps à s'y habituer ... ... il faut penser que les publics sont différents et que l'on s'adresse à des gens qui ont une manière de penser, une manière de rire différente, et il faut en tenir compte.3

In the Lyons area, the preparatory lectures, tours, and visits to the theatre, and debates on plays which the Théâtre de

2. Travail et Culture (Lyons), October 20th, 1960.
Villedurbanne organised were meant in great measure to lessen any feeling of foreignness which a new audience might have when coming into a theatre for the first time. The theatre's system of group bookings through clubs, associations, and trade unions also contributed to making a new spectator feel less as though he were venturing alone into strange territory:

... la formule de l'abonnement collectif déjà mise en œuvre par Roger Planchon à Villeurbanne et Patrice Chéreau à Sartrouville ... a ... le mérite de désintimider le public en lui permettant sa venue régulière au spectacle en compagnie de ses mêmes amis, de former ce public en le structurant, et par là, de lui permettre l'ébauche d'une réflexion à long terme.1

The more numerous and the closer the links between the theatre people and their new audiences, the better educated and interested that public would be.

As the schemes for attracting more people began to have their effect, another problem developed: that of the size of the audience. Programmes for increasing attendance in 1963 were especially successful: subscriptions doubled, with 45000 season tickets sold.2 Perhaps it was this growing mass of spectators which prompted Roger Planchon, in an interview early in the following year, to echo Meyerhold: "Aujourd'hui, je voudrais que les gens éprouvent au théâtre un plaisir analogue à celui qui fait vibrer le public des stades et des vélodromes..."3 If a huge audience were to become the norm from season to season would it still be possible to maintain close and human contacts? The problem of culture is one of organisation, Planchon was saying in 1962.4 Even in 1965, Allio felt that, "Le problème de toucher le grand public est avant tout un problème de salles, c'est à dire d'équipement."5 But how was one to continue being available

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3. La République (Oran), March 21st, 1964.
personally to answer questions if the demand for speakers kept pace with the growth in attendance at the theatre? Discussions between the audience and the people involved in production were essential in the theatre's work. A discussion amongst some agricultural workers, after they had seen Planchon's 1964 production of Le Tartuffe at the Théâtre de France, contains a candid comment: "Si on n'avait pas eu d'explication avant la pièce, on n'aurait pu faire de critiques sérieuses. J'ai trouvé bien qu'on puisse discuter avec un des interprètes." Clearly the theatre needed to continue this kind of interchange with its public.

To continue to reach audiences of many hundreds and still maintain a dialogue with them, it was necessary to rely upon the long-established representational structures of trade unions and of other organisations. From the very first meeting, on 2nd February, 1959, between the Théâtre de la Cité and representatives of 25 trade union committees from the Lyons region, the theatre placed its trust in the people for whom it was working. "Plus qu'une organisation du public, nous cherchons que le public organise son théâtre", said the company. The public was not slow to take action. A Centre d'Information Culturel de Lyon-Villeurbanne, grouping union representatives, took charge of the public services of the theatre as early as October 1958, even organising a special coach service to and from the theatre. Unions reordered their budgets to include a cultural fund. A Centre culturel de Lyon-Villeurbanne was also created in 1959. Not all participation was as direct as that of the 14 men and women Renault workers selected by their union to

1. Discussion recorded in Paysans, April-May, 1964.
5. Jean Lefebvre, "À la recherche d'un public actif", p.88.
form the marathon tableau on stage in Rosner's Parisian production of Gatti's La Vie imaginaire de l'éboueur Auguste Geai in 1964.¹ But the cooperation of collectivités, defined by the theatre as "Toute entreprise privée ou publique, toute association, tout groupement de droit ou de fait..."² was and is vital. When a Service Collectivités was formed under Madeleine Sarrazin, in order to coordinate relations between the theatre and the city, it had a far less administrative than humane role.³ The help of associations was appreciated by the theatre. At the beginning of the 1964 season, "Planchon remerciait les comités d'entreprise. Ils lui ont permis de pratiquer son art avec son équipe, de payer les dettes du théâtre... le réveil qui s'est effectué dure plus longtemps que le simple temps de la représentation."⁴

The public's opinion, which Planchon was always at pains to discover, helped to determine the orientation of the theatre's work. Even in the early years at the Théâtre de la Comédie, Planchon purposely alternated the programme between "Burlesque vaudeville knockabout shows" such as Rocambole and Cartouche, which filled the theatre, and what he termed "Very demanding shows which don't draw..."⁵ He explained his dislike of elitist experimental theatre:

... I think a production should be open towards people, even if it's very ambitious, with high artistic standards... What I like is to fill the theatre with one show, and then the next show to do something astonishing, surprising, so that people come and ask what have they done to us, why did they do something like that?⁶

¹ Le Figaro, May 9th, 1964.
² Jean Lefebvre, "A la recherche d'un public actif", p.93.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Le Progrès (Lyon), May 19th, 1964.
When the company moved to Villeurbanne, questionnaires were sent out asking what people from factories and local associations would like to see on stage. The answer was Shakespeare and Dumas, and so the first plays performed at Villeurbanne were *Henry IV* and *Les Trois Mousquetaires*. The latter production had to meet the problem of bowing to popular demand without sacrificing artistic integrity; thus Dumas was used as a starting point because he had been suggested by the public, but the show lampooned the novel's misogynous heroism and romantic patriotism. *Henry IV* was chosen from Shakespeare's plays because of its relevance to the sort of culture Planchon's audience had already acquired:

... C'est aussi des combats, des luttes entre factions, du mouvement et beaucoup de spectacle. Voilà ce que nous avons voulu conserver; voilà ce qui a plu à nos premiers spectateurs, à ces ouvriers dont beaucoup n'étaient jamais allés au théâtre de leur vie, mais qui ont justement retrouvé là ce qu'ils aiment au cinéma, par exemple dans les western, et aussi des choses qu'ils ont pu voir dans leur vie, des situations qu'ils ont vécues.

There was never any question, as Planchon and his colleagues reiterated at conferences, of producing un art populiste. Not only was each human being entitled to culture as "un droit fondamental"; everyone was to be presented with the very highest standard of artistic endeavour. Planchon had educated himself, beginning with world masterpieces, rather than letting himself start with easy or more immediately accessible works. "And so", he concluded from this experience, "I've always said that to bring people from outside culture into the theatre one must present the best things in the world, and then see how it works out.


The theatre's style of presentation was of course profoundly affected by the need to interest a new public. The productions must be accessible intellectually without being oversimplified or patronising. This was and has remained a basic principle. Planchon, in his first years at the Théâtre de la Cité, was groping for a style suitable for his audience. Henry IV was played in two parts, afternoon and evening, because Planchon was confident that "Le goût des spectacles à épisodes reste très vif chez le peuple..." There was no false modesty in his admission that "Il [le public] nous apprend à faire plus ample, plus clair - à faire mieux." At the same time as they saw the need for greater directness and clarity, the company respected their audiences: they were to be addressed as adult intelligent people, and not as passive consumers. Planchon explained this anti-populist attitude:

Of course one explains and comments in a production; but I've never believed in making a theatre to attract 'the masses' with comprehensible plays or acceptable stories. What you have to do is put into the performance something of the way people outside culture see things. There's no intermediary step, no easy way in - you have to turn the whole thing round at once.

Obviously the theatre must know its public, must know it so well that it could feel things as that public might.

The theatre is distinct from the mass media in that it establishes close, human contact between flesh and blood people:

... le théâtre seul, aujourd'hui, implique la présence constante, en chair et en os, d'un groupe créateur au milieu du public, et le lien qui s'établit entre une troupe permanente et son public est irremplaçable.

2. Ibid, p.12.
Certainly the Théâtre de la Cité knew its public well enough to feel that its own thinking had been transformed; the grass roots contacts established in the factory canteens and at factory gates, for instance, had a considerable effect on the theatre's emissaries. Jean Bouise admitted in an interview with Claude Fléoutier that

Ce n'est pas toujours si simple: présenter le théâtre, la nature de notre travail, notre répertoire, toutes les propositions pratiques faites pour amener le spectateur au théâtre, et dire ensuite qu'on est disposé à revenir pour répondre aux critiques qui nous seront tombées sur le dos, parler de tout cela quand le gars est à table et ne dispose que de vingt minutes, c'est quelquefois assez curieux.  

The speakers needed to define their ideas clearly and concisely, and to consider this public's interests:

Parler pendant le repas nous contraint à resserrer nos propositions, à nous interroger sur les raisons qui retiendraient particulièrement l'attention de notre auditoire, à poser plus généralement l'orientation de notre travail.

Indeed the actors gained much from these debates or talks. If we are to believe André Breton, their various ways of reaching the people were essential methods of becoming revolutionary artists:

... l'artiste ne peut servir la lutte émancipatrice que s'il est pénétré subjectivement de son contenu social et individuel, que s'il en fait passer le sens et le drame dans ses nerfs et que s'il cherche librement à donner une incarnation artistique à son monde intérieur.

Roger Planchon too was affected by his work with a new public. As the years passed, the discussions and the

debates, and the reactions of his audiences, gradually shaped his vision of what today's theatre should be:

Le contact avec ce public qui ne venait pas, précédemment, au théâtre m'a débarrassé de quantité d'idées romantiques sur le théâtre, la façon dont j'envisageais ça: le théâtre en vase clos, une certaine façon de croire qu'il y a des choses qu'il faut faire dans l'obscurantisme, l'érotérisme, l'avant-garde formelle, etc... 1

The preoccupations of his public became those of Roger Planchon the dramatist:

Il [Roger Planchon] n'a pas choisi ce public de Villeurbanne, mais il n'en ambitionne pas d'autre. C'est pour ces gens-là que maintenant il écrit ses pièces; auteur de fêtes diverses, c'est avec leurs yeux qu'il regarde l'histoire ... Pour faire réfléchir, pour aller plus loin, pour conférer, marcher de compagnie. 2

Even his own plays reflect more and more the provincial background in which he works, from the peasant play La Remise to the 1972 production of Bleus, blancs, rouges which prompted him to admit that he had become totally provincial.

In 1963, Planchon had said of his work in Villeurbanne: "Dix ans d'existence, c'est trop pour un théâtre. Il faut tout remettre en question..." 3 In its ten years of existence, the Théâtre de la Cité seemed never to hesitate to question everything it was doing, for self-evaluation was part and parcel of the openness to criticism and to change which its approach to its public fostered. Planchon had remained aware of the difficulty of achieving his aim, and of his lack of success in forming a public with a proportional representation of working class people. In 1964 he was saying: "Les ouvriers sont en dehors de la culture et ne sont

1. La République (Oran), March 21st, 1964.
touchés que par les formes dégradées de la culture bourgeoise. Ils n'ont pas de culture personnelle.1 In 1967, having lost hope of having a Maison de la Culture established in Lyon, Planchon questioned the entire government policy for provincial popular theatre: "... je crois que c'est toute une politique qui a échoué..."2 In 1968 a general dissatisfaction exploded into the Villeurbanne statement by the committee of directors, and was summarized in the term non-public, the unreached, the uninterested, the still untouched...

This concept was strongly attacked by more than one commentator. In the opinion of Philippe Madral, the idea of a public to be won over simply by intensifying publicity and lowering prices seemed illusory:

Horaires de travail, cadences trop lourdes, difficultés des transports, scolarisation insuffisante et inégalement répartie suivant les classes sociales, difficultés familiales liées à la garde des enfants, salaires insuffisants, fatigue physique et intellectuelle en fin de journée sont des composantes de l'absentéisme du public sur lesquelles ni la publicité ni la réduction du prix des places n'ont chance d'avoir prise.3

The definition was both too narrow and too vague for Madral:

... on peut remarquer qu'il n'y a pas un non-public artistique, mais autant de non-public qu'il y a de formes artistiques (cinéma, théâtre, musique, télévision, etc.) A vrai dire, comme le remarquait José Valverde, "il y a seulement des degrés de participation différents aux différents aspects de la culture".4

Émile Copfermann thought that the notion of a non-public had even more serious limitations:

Des ouvriers "non-cultivés" possèdent une culture que les "cultivés" des Maisons ignorent, la conscience de leur classe en lutte, qui n'a rien à voir avec une diffusion, active ou non, des oeuvres d'art. Et les étudiants l'avaient bien compris qui se révoltaient contre la

4. Loc. cit.
fonction "chiens de garde" que l'Université voulait leur faire assurer en diffusant "sa" culture.1

Jean-Louis Mingalon pointed out a similar incongruity: the notion of non-public covered a variety of different social categories, each alienated from culture for different reasons. He pointed out that "... la distinction public - non-public a été sérieusement estompée pendant les deux mois de crise qu'a connus la France ... Des ouvriers dans les amphithéâtres, des étudiants ou des comédiens à l'usine..."2 Planchon himself spoke in a New York press conference of a "radical shift..." in the directors' ideas for they "now declared art meaningless unless it deals with those who contest the concept of art itself."3

What were the effects of 1968 on Planchon's activities? The pause in theatrical production during the événements was soon followed by a complete break; the troupe left for a prolonged tour during nearly two years of renovations of the theatre building. The Villeurbanne meeting seems to have influenced Planchon's work in at least two ways. Firstly, his feeling of solidarity with other amateurs in France has grown. Indeed, the message of solidarity was the principal idea which came out of a public conference given shortly after the Villeurbanne reunion, at Saint-Germain-en-Laye:

Dans l'état actuel de la situation politique, où le pouvoir est sorti renforcé d'un affrontement qui visait à l'abattre, l'action culturelle doit demeurer révolutionnaire dans son esprit, au sens le plus noble du terme, pour éviter toutes tentatives d'immixtion, de dirigisme, de conditionnement, d'orientation de la part de l'État. L'action culturelle doit rester libre, indépendante, sous peine de cesser d'exister. Pour éviter les mesures de rétorsion et les exemples dont on n'a pas manqué de leur laisser entendre qu'ils pourraient en être les victimes, les trente-quatre membres du Comité de Villeurbanne doivent continuer à affirmer leur

solidarité.

The sudden unilateral decision by the government to dismiss Barrault was opposed in 1965 by the directors, and this was not to be their last unified stand against such policies. When Gatti’s play on General Franco was banned from performance at the T.N.P., in 1965, the theatres of France joined in a common condemnation of the action. Cité-Panorama included in its November edition a strongly worded protest signed by the Villeurbanne company, and entitled: "La Contestation et l'interdiction de montrer la pièce consacrée au général dont il ne faut pas mentionner le nom sur la scène du plus illustre des théâtres subventionnés et populaires le T.N.P." Later that year when the Caen theatre was threatened with official closure, telegrams and letters of protest poured in from various trade unions, theatres including the Théâtre de la Cité, critics, writers, and directors. Even Paolo Grassi, facing dismissal from the Piccolo Teatro in Milan for "anti-Americanism" in his 1969 production of Adamov's Off Limits, found that he had the support of distinguished French directors and critics; Roger Planchon was one of those who signed their statement:

La condition première du théâtre réside dans la libre activité artistique. Toute mesure qui porte atteinte à cette liberté non seulement frappe le théâtre, mais toute liberté, car c'est toujours par le secteur culturel que la censure passe d'abord.

The A.T.A.C. (Association Technique pour l'Action Culturelle) gained renewed vigour from the Villeurbanne conference, and

assumed an importance in the eyes of the government which prompted the ministry to promise closer ties, and regular meetings, between itself and the subsidised theatres.¹

In the strength of their newly found unity lay hopes for a larger and more effective cultural animation, said the Nouvel Alsacien, impressed by the A.T.A.C.'s publications.²

Moved by a spirit of egalitarianism, the organisation began to demand more rights for disciplines other than the theatre and for young troupes such as those of Gérard Gelas or of André Benedetto.³ The Villeurbanne Permanent Committee had asked for more public funds to be allocated to cultural endeavours, but with no success. In October 1969, artists from various disciplines, representing 53 associations, asked the government to allow 1% of its budget for cultural affairs. Actors, directors of Maisons de la Culture, artists such as Bernard Blier, Maurice Escande, Philippe de Broca, and the personnel of the Opéra joined in the request, and there were recorded messages from the producer André Barsacq, the mime Marcel Marceau, and Planchon, among others.⁴ When Edmond Michelet, the new Minister of Cultural Affairs, said that poverty stimulates artistic creativity, and showed scorn for the subsidised theatres' requests for more funds, he was given a united and vigorous reply. Roger Planchon, Marcel Maréchal, Jean Tasté (director of the Maison de la Culture at Saint-Étienne), and representatives of various associations joined together to answer Michelet. They said that an unsubsidised theatre today is caught between two alternatives: that of playing in studio theatres for an intellectual elite, and that of playing in expensive commercial theatres for a social elite.⁵ Solidarity for creative freedom

². Le Nouvel Alsacien (Strasbourg), October 1st, 1969.
and against censorship or government interference was more
than a lightly made, short-lived decision. In 1971 Gabriel
Garran and the "Syndicat National des Directeurs des
Entreprises d'Action Culturelle" wrote a resolution con-
demning censorship in any form, and giving as examples the
Gatti, Barrault, and Grassi incidents, as well as a 1965
ban on Planchon's play, L'Infâme in Nancy. The Théâtre
de la Cité's decision not to leave on its North American
tour during the 1968 strikes, the participation of the
troupe in local strike action, these were manifestations of
solidarity as well. In 1971, Planchon, then vice-president
of the A.T.A.C., could still stand by the declaration made
by the united directors in 1968: "Les hommes du théâtre
populaire ont pris ... une position courageuse et unanime.
Ils se sont déclarés solidaires des ouvriers et des étudiants
en lutte." 

Planchon's orientation seems to have changed since
1968 in another way as well. Has his conception of his
public changed? In a sense there is a note of resignation
in some of his statements in the years since the "revolution"
of May. "On ne peut", he said in an Express interview in
1969, "espérer attirer au théâtre tout un public d'ouvriers.
L'important, c'est de leur faire comprendre que la culture
existe, mais qu'elle reste un privilège. Le reste, c'est
de la démagogie." In a discussion recorded by Christian
Baur in Savoie 2000, the Théâtre de la Cité admitted that the
public in 1969, was simply not interested. For adults it
could only suggest more talks, exhibitions, discussions... Was Planchon beginning to abandon the idea of attracting
workers into his theatre? Was his avowed passion for writing
drawing him away from his work of animation? He certainly

3. Interviewed by Guillemette de Véricourt, L'Express, Nov.
   3rd, 1969.
retained his intense sensitivity to the preoccupations of ordinary people: "Le théâtre", he said, "doit cristalliser les thèmes obsessionnels d'un monde en évolution." This is what, as a writer as well as a director, Planchon continues to try to do: "... un théâtre pour majorité silencieuse - un discours pour adultes." To address people as intelligent, whole human beings has always been a basic principle in his work. What may have changed is the definition of his public. The "silent majority" was Richard Nixon's term for his politically inarticulate mass of lower-middle and middle class supporters. Is this, transposed into French society, where Planchon now sees his main audience?

Perhaps the political awakening through culture was a dream to be abandoned in the face of a gloomy statistical fact: 8% only of Roger Planchon's audience, after the years of work at Villeurbanne, is made up of workers. Perhaps, as Copfermann insists, only a social revolution could permit a truly popular theatre to exist. He is not alone in his opinion.

... Roger Planchon précisa que seuls des changements de structures profondes dans les rapports sociaux pouvaient ouvrir des perspectives réelles au théâtre pour le peuple... En attendant ce jour il faut se limiter à un "artisanat" de qualité qui ne permet pas toujours de survivre.

At a lycée in 1970 Planchon again said that one cannot change society through the theatre, but only "la [la société] rendre consciente du problème...", adding, nevertheless, that his was a "théâtre à répercussions, non 'digestif'".

1. Recorded by Ségolène, Gazette Médicale de France, March 5th, 1959.
2. Planchon, recorded by Jean-Yves Erhel, Ouest-France (Rennes), Nov. 14th, 1970.
Even the government showed, in its decision to turn the Théâtre de la Cité into a Théâtre National Populaire, that it was aware of a certain failure in foregoing programmes. M. Jacques Duhamel, at that time Minister of Cultural Affairs, explained this decision: "... les méthodes traditionnelles de défrichement ont fait le plein du public et ... on risque une dégradation." It is significant that during the 1971-72 tour with Bleus, blancs, rouges, the theatre's work with the public through debates and discussions was greatly intensified. Planchon's move to start afresh was in keeping with a general feeling that something needed to be done: "... il fallait sortir de l'impasse historique contre laquelle les créateurs, et avec eux le théâtre, allaient buter." The new T N P's organisation was certainly different from that of the old T N P and of the old Théâtre de la Cité de Villeurbanne. As Claude Olivier pointed out, the official aims incorporated into the new theatre were a first radical departure from the old programme continued from Jeanne Laurent's initiative in the fifties: "Le théâtre de Villeurbanne devient, lui, un théâtre national chargé d'une tâche dont il est dit expressément ... que son action doit s'étendre à tout le territoire." It was, said its charter, to be co-directed by Roger Planchon, Robert Gilbert, and Patrice Chéreau. Their mission would be to tour French cities whose theatres can accommodate them. In order to ensure that each production be prepared and given as wide a repercussion as possible, the T N P would rely on those structures for audience contact which had already been built up by Centres Dramatiques and Troupes Permanentes. Planchon explained how the troupe,

1. Lucien Attoun, "Quand l'imagination se surprend à prendre le pouvoir" (draft of an article), Archives of the T N P, Villeurbanne, 1972.
2. Ibid.
doubled in number to include seventy actors, would be divided in two so that its activity could be redoubled as well. For 15 days to three weeks, each troupe would present two plays in a given city; then the two troupes would exchange cities and stay for another two or three weeks:

Si bien que pendant un mois et demi pratiquement, peut-être plus, il y aura dans ces deux villes une forte activité, faite par deux troupes qui sont en réalité la même, l'une dirigée par Patrice Chéreau, l'autre par moi. Chaque ville aura quatre spectacles, plus tout un travail d'animation en profondeur.

This is the plan of action which gave rise to Planchon's exclamation: "Nous fêterons le théâtre un mois dans chaque ville!" To have "killed" the Théâtre de la Cité required courage, and to be ready to create something new from its ashes shows a readiness to start again which is typical of Planchon.

CHAPTER III

PLANCHON AS A DIRECTOR AND A PLAYWRIGHT

Planchon's ideas on direction were shaped by many influences. The most frequently mentioned is of course Brecht. In a 1956 interview Roger Planchon was already saying, "Je dois beaucoup à Bertolt Brecht. ... toutes mes réflexions me portent dans le sens qu'il a si fortement contribué à ouvrir." At the same time he spoke of his love for the cinema: "Le cinéma ne cesse de m'éblouir. ... j'imagine ce que pourrait être un théâtre qui se ferait comme on fait un film."¹

Of these two major influences that of Brecht was at first almost overpowering. Roger Planchon began, as he said later, by simply copying Brecht outright:

... nous devrions respecter ses réalisations scéniques au point de non seulement nous en inspirer, mais de faire modestement un travail de copiste.........................................................

Le théâtre épique est une forme dramatique nouvelle dont nous devrions apprendre à démonter et à remonter les modèles. Après quoi, nous pourrons voir comment la rendre plus efficace.²

Of course the Brechtian influence was not the only one even at the start. Planchon said of his 1957 presentation of Henry IV:

... nous avons voulu bénéficier à la fois des conquêtes de Vilar et de celles d'Artaud: du poli, de la netteté des représentations de Vilar, mais en ne renonçant pas pour autant à une certaine violence, celle que réclamait Artaud.³

And, from the emotional austerity of his model's plays, Planchon managed to drift into the lyrical operatic presentation of Edward II which the theatre gave in 1964; "A Villeurbanne," explained his assistant, Rosner, "on procède par tâtonnement, chaque spectacle appelant une forme particulière. En réalité, il n'y a jamais eu de rupture. Plutôt le glissement d'une méthode à une autre méthode."

Through all these experiments, however, Brecht's ideas on direction continued to influence the entire course of Planchon's work.

First and foremost, Planchon believes in approaching a play by studying what he calls the fable, the events or actions, rather than the psychology of the characters. As early as in 1958, he was saying:

... une mise en scène en soi ne signifie rien. Ce qui importe c'est le déroulement des scènes, leur rapport entre elles, le rapport entre le personnage et son langage, celui qu'il tient maintenant, celui qu'il tiendra plus tard... C'est la situation qui compte, son lien avec les autres situations du même personnage.2

It was to be an oft-repeated principle. Let us look first at what the characters do, he said again and again, and not at what they say: "Une pièce n'avance que par les événements... Les actes peuvent être de flagrants démentis aux paroles..."3 This idea of sticking to the events, Planchon found, came from Aristotle's Poétique; he surprised everyone in 1964 by exclaiming: "Je suis devenu classique!"4 He spoke of the effect of this principle on the staging of Tartuffe: "Seuls comptent les actes, les faits... je m'en tiens à ses sages principes [of the Poétique]. A bas 'qui est Tartuffe et vive Aristote: 'Que fait Tartuffe'..."5 Brecht

5. Progrès (Lyons), December 16th, 1965.
and Aristotle are not, Planchon was to reflect later on, so categorically opposed to each other as critics seem to believe; on this one point they agree:

... I think Brecht had only given Aristotle a very summary reading, and that if he had read a little more deeply he would have called himself a disciple of Aristotle, because he took up a lot of the things Aristotle was talking about - people's actions defining their characters and not vice-versa, for example.1

The priority which Roger Planchon gave to events in a play determined to a great extent his method of creating that play on stage. Denise Benabencq and Jean-Louis Martin-Barbaz described in Cité-Panorama the staging of Dans le vent ... errr... It began with a study, round the table, of the text, emphasising

... la nécessité de partir de la situation de base de la pièce pour trouver la signification de chaque phrase. La pièce fut appréhendée sans aucun ordre, chaque scène étant considérée comme un moment de la vie des personnages, comme un comportement humain dans une situation précise. Le comédien pour trouver l'interprétation juste devait s'appuyer sur sa situation à l'intérieur de la scène, et non sur l'idée d'ensemble du personnage.2

Jacques Blanc, who also worked at the theatre, described how the actors, during rehearsals for Dans le vent ... errr..., were cautioned to take each situation, and their character's behaviour within it, into account rather than starting from an immovable conception of the character's entire personality.3

The principle of looking first at the events thus formed the basis not only of Planchon's critical reading of a play, but also of its interpretation on stage.

From Brecht, Planchon adopted the important concept of a langage scénique: the presentation of a play on the stage, its translation by a troupe into a visual and auditory medium, was as meaningful in its own right as the written text. According to Brecht, "Ecrire une pièce constitue... la phase préliminaire de création d'une œuvre qui ne se trouve pleinement réalisée qu'avec la présentation." By incorporating this idea into his work, Planchon differentiated himself from the very influential Vilar:

Deux tendances semblent essentiellement s'affronter: celle de Roger Planchon pour qui les moyens spécifiques de la scène priment la littérature dramatique et qui considère l'œuvre écrite comme un scénario; celle de Jean Vilar qui ne propose rien moins que d'assassiner le metteur en scène 'car' il faut derechef s'en rapporter à l'auteur, l'écouter, le suivre.

It is doubtful that Planchon felt that the stage interpretation was more important than the text, but he certainly spoke of his debt to Brecht in coming to understand that they were equally important:

La leçon de Brecht, théoricien du théâtre, c'est d'avoir déclaré: Une représentation, c'est à la fois une écriture scénique et une écriture dramatique; mais cette écriture scénique a une responsabilité égale à l'écriture dramatique et, en définitive, un mouvement sur une scène, le choix d'une couleur, d'un décor, d'un costume, etc., ça engage une responsabilité complète. L'écriture scénique est totalement responsable, de la même façon qu'est responsable l'écriture en sol.

These two major theories, that of the importance of the fable, that of the significance of the langage scénique, were to affect all the aspects of Planchon's work as a director.

If the language of the stage is as responsible as that of the text, then each element in this language assumes a great importance. "Il n'existe pas de présentation "innocente", Planchon said, echoing Brecht. "Il y a toujours un prêche de metteur en scène."

The prêche manifested itself in every detail of the staging, the lighting, the music, the backdrop, and in each individual prop; even the physical appearance of the actor was already a choice and an interpretation. Playing with a simple set or with no set at all was also a choice: "On ne joue pas sans décor, on joue avec la volonté de jouer sans décor, ce qui est tout à fait différent. Il n'y a pas de décor neutre ... chaque élément qui est mis sur scène ou chaque absence d'élément ... a une espèce de signification." René Allio, Planchon's set designer for many years, explained the extra significance which an object acquires on the stage: "Espace convenu, ... la scène a toujours tiré de ce fait le pouvoir de charger de signification toute chose que l'on y place, grâce à l'évidence qu'elle lui confère."

He denounced artificiality in sets because it was made obvious by the presence of real human beings on stage:

Le théâtre commence à partir du moment où le comédien y débouche. [dans l'espace scénique]
Dès cet instant, le comédien (un corps d'homme) donne à la scène une échelle. Il noue et entretient avec les dimensions de la scène des rapports qui nous sont familiers, puisque ce sont ces rapports qui définissent notre perception habituelle du réel.

Tout ce qui viendra prendre place ensuite dans l'espace scénique devra tenir compte de cette première relation, ou relation fondamentale;

Ces objets qui jouent avec l'acteur et conditionnent l'acteur sont des objets vrais comme l'acteur est un personnage vrai. Ils

Since all elements including the choice of actor were to have a meaning, they must be chosen and juxtaposed with a thought for their interrelated meanings. Allio gave one example: "Le costume entretient des rapports avec l'acteur, mais les choix primordiaux se font par rapport au personnage. S'il faut déformer le costume ainsi défini ... pour l'adapter à l'acteur, c'est que l'acteur est mal choisi." The set designer's role was to predict what meaning an object might have on stage, among specific other objects:

Rien ne peut être gratuit dans un décor, qui ne prenne dès sa plantation sur la scène un accent inattendu ou surprenant. Le travail du décorateur consiste donc non seulement à structurer l'espace scénique et à organiser les rapports entre cet espace et l'acteur qui servent la pièce et la mise en scène, mais aussi à prévoir le sens que prendront les objets et les formes dont l'interprétation dispose.

Planchon believed that "Toute technique théâtrale comporte un point de vue"; it was therefore necessary to think of a set in terms of the critical interpretation of the play which the director wished to put forth.

Allio and Planchon worked out together the possible levels of meaning which might be suggested visually. Their entente was exceptionally good: "Le travail avec Planchon est facilité: nous abordons les choses sous le même angle, nous allons dans le même sens. Planchon est l'homme qui nourrit, enrichit chaque détail, met mille choses en une." Such an understanding is extremely important in a modern theatre: "Le travail du décorateur et celui du metteur en scène sont en fait complémentaires. Les 'significations' de l'un et

Jean-Louis Martin-Barbaz at one conference defined the director as "... un monsieur qui écrit le spectacle dans l'espace." The set designer's aim, according to René Allio, was to invent "... un langage pour l'oeil...", a part of the langage scénique, which would underline "... les significations de la pièce ... tantôt de façon précise et presque critique, tantôt de façon diffuse et subtile." Obviously, as Dominique Nores pointed out in an analysis of Planchon's and Allio's work, the set must be functional in the most basic terms: "Le décor ... fournit au spectateur des repères sur le lieu de l'action ..."; it must also, however, be "... fonctionnel, c'est-à-dire mettre sous la main des acteurs tout ce qui est nécessaire à un changement rapide, parfois à vue." Nores observed that Planchon also insisted on making a production beautiful: "... à aucun moment ces tentatives ne...

1. Claude Lemaire, "Le Colloque de Châtillon-sur-Chalaronne; Le décor de théâtre chez Roger Planchon", Dauphiné Libéré (Grenoble), March 7th, 1968.
doivent prendre le pas sur la beauté du spectacle. Planchon est l'un des animateurs qui attache le plus d'importance au visuel." The three requirements were inter-related, and one or the other might take precedence, depending on the play.

Roger Planchon did not feel bound to a particular style of stage set: "Il refuse tout parti pris décoratif. Cette attitude très moderne s'accorde bien à la vision critique sociale ... [de] Roger Planchon."¹

Whatever the function of a stage set, in modern theatre, it has a quality of reverberation distinctive among the visual arts. Allio explained how in his opinion, painting used to have a dramatic function as well as a descriptive one, for it was meant to suggest the emotional and psychological situation of the characters depicted. The two functions are now dissociated, the dramatic having been funnelled into the art of stage sets.² Its architectural quality gives a stage set a dimension not present in most plastic arts, that of time: "La peinture se déroule dans le temps quand elle se mêle à l'architecture, c'est le temps qu'on met à la parcourir..."³ A set also has, of course, a time dimension in another sense, as it is meant to indicate the setting of a play in terms of time as well as place. Allio said that, in planning this aspect of a set, the Théâtre de la Cité attempted to "... trouver des formes qui soient typiques de l'époque traitée et qui, en même temps, puissent renvoyer à des formes qui leur confèrent un sens supplémentaire."⁴

To find correspondences between our century and others in dress and architecture often required a considerable research effort. Allio more than other designers insisted on the importance of "documents extra-théatraux."⁵

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1. Claude Lemaire, Dauphine Libéré (Grenoble), March 7th, 1968.
Two particularly modern facets of staging, have extended the scope for experimentation in production: electric lighting and modern sound effects. "Aujourd'hui," said Allio, "la scène a trois dimensions, elle ne fait plus semblant, elle les a pour de bon." The third dimension, the structural and atmospheric possibilities opened up by lighting, must now be taken into consideration in any design. The stage is "... une part de l'espace où s'inscrivent les formes et les matériaux du décor, la lumière contribuant à la rendre sensible et à la structurer de diverses façons." Colour in Allio's work was used in relation to lighting, and for similar effects:

Allio s'en tient ordinairement à des tons assourdis, du marron au verdâtre. Quand tout à coup la couleur y fuse, blancheur des robes d'été ou les verts vifs, les rouges d'un panier de légumes, c'est intentionnellement, afin de révéler l'insolite des situations ou des rapports des personnages entre eux.

Music in the same way, with the increasing sophistication of acoustical equipment, could open up the stage imaginatively and suggest a far greater space than that actually available. In the opinion of Claude Lochy, the Théâtre de la Cité's resident composer, the musical accompaniment of a live play was an art sadly neglected in France: "Nous en sommes encore à découvrir le rôle de la musique de scène, de la musique écrite directement pour le théâtre." His ideal was a musical score which would serve the text faithfully, not playing "le rôle d'illustration naturaliste ou psychologique" or as background, but as an autonomous comment: "Le verbe rejoint la mélodie; C'est le point de jonction le plus explicatif, là où le drame devient totalement objectif. La musique n'est

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2. "Le décor", Le Travail au Théâtre de la Cité, p. 5.
plus le catalyseur de l'émotion du spectateur, mais au contraire ce qui le maintient en éveil, le déconcerte."

Beyond this, musical and sound effects could enlarge the imaginative scope of a production:

Aujourd'hui la connaissance de nouvelles techniques acoustiques, leur élargissement à tout l'espace du théâtre qui n'est plus limité au foyer de la scène et à ses perspectives, peuvent contribuer considérablement à réaliser pour la parole une nouvelle dimension acoustique théâtrale.

Un usage différent de l'élément auditif... peut faire ... que la boîte scénique annule le caractère statique de l'élément visuel... 1

A play's rhythm and structure could thus be transformed and revitalised by using modern stage techniques.

For Planchon, the cinema has always been a source of inspiration, partly because of his own passionate enthusiasm for it, and partly because he tried to attract a public nurtured on film conventions. Even his actors shared his interest in the modern cinema:

Il y a eu ... aussi ... le contact du cinéma - l'amour du septième art étant ... un des grands dénominateurs communs de la compagnie - et surtout du public, qui fait que les acteurs de Villeurbanne sont branchés directement sur la réalité quotidienne. 2

Planchon's work contributed to "dispelling the mistrust of the theatre for the cinema" and he has been praised for "not just using cinema apparatus but ... translating camera techniques into genuinely theatrical techniques." 3 Both lighting and sound effects were central in the cinematic techniques which Planchon integrated into his mises en scène. "N'est-ce pas le cinéma," said Lochy, "qui a obligé le compositeur à retrouver la notion d'écriture scénique', tout comme il y a pour la musique de film une 'écriture cinématographique'?" 4

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In the opinion of Allio, a "... fundamental transformation in man's apprehension of space and time [has been] brought about by science, the cinema, and television. ... account must be taken of it in theatre architecture and scenography."¹

In Planchon's productions, projectors were used with an instinct for their appropriateness in various scenes of different plays:

Stage movements were also regulated, in accordance with the lighting, with the cinema in mind:

The structure of a play could take on a new aspect under this sort of treatment:


Subjecting a play, whether classical or modern, to this re­juvenating style earned Planchon his reputation as a radical artist very early in his career.

Even as he used these new ideas for staging, Planchon remained a good disciple of Brecht. Sets, music, and techniques of lighting or of stage movement were never used without being revealed for what they were. Allio made a fine distinction, in his theory of staging: there was, on the one hand, "... ce qui sur la scène participe de la représentation", things which should "servir le jeu du comédien et conjointement... aider à la claire signification des épisodes". These stage props were to be realistic in a traditional way: "il faudra faire en sorte que cet objet ne soit plus réaliste vu de près pour l'être plus vu de loin." On the other hand there was "ce qui contribue à la présentation du spectacle vu dans son ensemble." "La présentation" he continued, "doit avouer le théâtre, et l'un des moyens les plus efficaces d'y parvenir dans notre domaine c'est, au lieu de se borner à aider la pièce en faisant illusion, de faire en quelque sorte un décor qui la commente." So, in Planchon's plays, the set was to be both "... un commentaire parallèle à l'illustration", and "... une description critique". In George Dandin, for example, a critic noted that the straw was real but that the set did not quite hide the backstage machinery. "Que ce soit par l'humour, par la grandeur, ou par la caricature," said another, "Planchon nous rappelle toujours que nous sommes au théâtre." This principle was certainly "à l'inverse du naturalisme". To make the spectator aware of being in a

2. "Le décor", Le Travail au Théâtre de la Cité, pp.7-8.
theatre was to treat him as an intelligent adult:

Laisser voir au public les servitudes inhérentes à la représentation, c'est revendiquer devant lui le droit de lui proposer une histoire fausse, qui ne deviendra vraie que dans son esprit, là où images et sensations, incitations et souvenirs se confondent et nourrissent la pensée de l'homme conscient. ¹

Thus it was another way of extending a play's imaginative resonance, beyond the stage and beyond the medium of theatre.

Notre scène non illusioniste nous donne bien une action à voir et à comprendre mais la vérité de cette action est en quelque sorte hors d'elle. Elle se situe ailleurs, dans la salle ou plus encore dans la société qui est le commun dénominateur de la salle et de la scène. C'est au spectateur qu'il appartient de la découvrir et de la faire exister concrètement. ²

Patrice Chéreau shares Roger Planchon's view on this question; as his own decorator he puts a refinement on the idea of Brechtian openness by showing how a set is operated: "Le lieu théâtral avoue sa duplicité .... Il voudrait être immuable: il ne cesse de se modifier sous la poussée des hommes actionnant des machines. ... Le décor est à la fois le théâtre et son contraire, le travail." ³ This revealing of the "mechanics" behind the show is in accordance with Planchon's taste for realism intelligently qualified.

All sets must be as real as the actor's playing, said Allio. Planchon's preoccupation with concrete, day-to-day reality, as well as his fidelity to the concept of studying a play through its events, has helped to shape his method of directing actors. What he demands of them is

that they appreciate their role rationally, step by step; as each scene must be analysed in depth, so must each character be considered carefully in his own right. "Il convient donc de nous appliquer à rendre plus typiques les personnages, à les caractériser davantage, et un mot, à envisager chaque rôle comme une composition."\(^1\) In addition, characters were to be looked on as primarily social beings: "Son [Planchon's] désir de montrer, ou au moins de commenter scéniquement les œuvres, l'amène à concentrer son attention sur la conduite sociale des personnages et non sur leur psychologie."\(^2\) Just as the play must be shown to take place in a specific historical context, so the characters in it must remain people of their time and of their situation.

Repeatedly Planchon stood firm against over-playing, or "pathetic" acting. In his first experience with Parisian actors in 1959, the main difficulty was to get them to rid themselves of a tendency to play emotionally: "Il fallait ... qu'ils se déshabituënt de jouer lyrique. Pas d'effusion surtout."\(^3\) Le Travail au théâtre, an account of the Théâtre de la Cité's methods and aims, begins with a Chinese fable whose moral is not to make unnecessary additions to something whole. Planchon wrote that the best actors sometimes overdo their roles with the mistaken idea that they are enriching them. Actors must, he reflected, subordinate their acting to the events of the plot: "Au théâtre, tout ce qui renforce l'histoire (la fable) paraît juste."\(^4\) Lately he affirmed categorically, "... my style is absolutely stripped bare of pathos. When I see an actor plunging into pathos, I feel he's lying."\(^5\) His ideal style of acting emphasised emotional

balance rather than lyrical outbursts.

How actors were to achieve this understated realism was another question. In the same way as Planchon's productions show respect for the audience's intelligence, his way of entering into a play shows a great deal of confidence in the actors. They work as a community:

... 'la méthode' Planchon est une méthode qui fait confiance au comédiens. À Lyon règne le travail d'équipe: il y a discussion, chaque proposition est étudiée, retenue ou rejetée, des recherches sont entreprises pour éclairer l'œuvre sous tel ou tel angle. Cet appui collectif est évidemment une des grandes séductions du cloître.  

The Manchester Guardian marvelled at this group approach to direction: "... anyone can make a suggestion, and the actors are encouraged to improvise during rehearsals." 

Claude Lochy gave a detailed account of the way in which roles were assigned in Villeurbanne in 1962:

La distribution d'une pièce n'est jamais précisée au début, à part un rôle ou deux. On lit la pièce à haute voix. On en discute... Chacun fait la mise en scène du rôle qu'il a choisi. Roger voit les acteurs à part pour savoir si le rôle qu'ils ont eu la veille leur convient. Peu à peu, au bout de quinze jours, la distribution se cristallise. Roger, bien sûr, impose un travail, un style de jeu, mais la discussion est toujours ouverte.

This emphasis on group effort was a way of discouraging "star" performances and of increasing the coherence of the troupe. Demanding of himself the degree of perfection which he expects in his actors, Planchon has an idealistic vision of his art:

Personnellement, il me semble qu'on ne peut faire une mise en scène, qu'on ne peut pas

Jean-Pierre Cassel described the humane and effective way which Planchon had of leading people into seeing a play as he had envisaged it:

Bluwal comme Planchon croient au pouvoir de l'échange, de la conversation, de la discussion, et ceci sans lâcher leur but. Ils laissent faire le temps et ainsi ils vous amènent à découvrir ce qu'ils ont découvert eux-mêmes dans leurs travaux préparatoires. Si vous préférez, ils croient au rythme du monde...

In this belief in a collective endeavour, and in his sensitive way of dealing with his actors, Planchon shows a confidence in the power of independent thought to shape a performance.

In a sense, actors in Villeurbanne are in a privileged position and were so even at the start of the theatre's career, in comparison with their Parisian counterparts. Employed full-time for a year, they have enjoyed a certain financial security which allowed them to take time and to reflect on their work. Planchon saw the importance of this advantage when the troupe went to Paris:

Toute aventure artistique, de quelque ordre qu'elle soit, exige une continuité qui n'existe pas à Paris... Il faut que tous les artisans d'un spectacle aient le temps, leur travail achevé, de méditer sur lui, de le repenser. C'est la condition indispensable pour faire un pas de plus en avant.

It was necessary to give the actors a freedom of thought and expression which might liberate them, without, however, losing the ability to funnel their creative efforts into a coherent

whole. Even for the créations collectives, Les Trois Mousquetaires, O M'Man Chicago, La Mise en pièces du CID, Planchon admitted that a director's hand was necessary: "Même si Planchon, 'tiré par les comédiens', ne peut tout à fait 'reconnaître ce spectacle [La Mise en pièces du CID] comme son monde; il lui a bien fallu 'donner une structure finale à l'œuvre collective'". Gérard Guillaumat described Planchon's control over the acting team: "Avec Roger, au début, on a une impression de liberté. On a l'impression de pouvoir faire n'importe quoi. En fin de compte, ce n'est pas vrai. Lentement on se sent pris dans une mise en scène rigoureuse." He went on to show how Planchon incites his actors to think about their role, and about the whole play:

Pour chaque pièce, c'est différent... Planchon met le comédien dans une position où il doit automatiquement se sentir perdu. Étant perdu, le comédien se pose des questions. Il devient curieux. Il ne s'intéresse plus seulement à son rôle mais à toute la pièce. Roger Planchon provoque les comédiens. Un bon metteur en scène doit être un provocateur.

This carefully planned "provocation" stimulates actors to take that one step further, to play their role more intelligently. Another actor, Jacques Debary, gave his own account of the effects of a strong direction:

Jacques Debary rappela à travers sa propre expérience les méthodes de travail de Roger Planchon: refus d'une conception globale du personnage au profit d'une recherche approfondie en accord avec la situation. Le metteur en scène offre ainsi au comédien des cadres très étroits mais nécessaires; ce n'est que lorsque ces cadres sont parfaitement en place que l'acteur peut retrouver aisance et liberté en cherchant en lui-même une vérité intérieure qui donnera la vie au personnage.

1. Lucien Attoun, Nouvelles Littéraires, November 13th, 1969
3. La Voix du Nord (Lille), Jan 22nd, 1968.
Provoking actors to think, making them analyse their characters as social beings, keeping them from emotional involvement which would lead to a lyrical interpretation—these were Planchon's objectives, and in meeting them, humour could be of great assistance. It could make rehearsals run more smoothly; Planchon even refused to direct actors in another language partly because they would not understand his jokes. On a more serious level, he felt that humour had an essential and delicate role to play; Planchon once described his style in these terms:

I am trying to define a certain style but it's very fine, very French if you like, very ... humourous. To play the kind of theatre I want, I need ... very intelligent actors. The more intelligent they are, the more they can play what I want them to play.¹

Roger Planchon's style has been described as being between parody and realism. This may well describe the dramatic tension of a performance in which the actor's perspective on his role is essentially witty.

To give the actor a certain independence was, for Planchon, to create a more realistic art. "Depuis 70 ans", he said in 1964, "le théâtre compte deux catégories de metteurs en scène: ceux qui font de l'acteur un élément et ceux qui en font l'élément essentiel. La première catégorie aboutit à l'abstraction, la seconde pencha vers le réalisme."² Roger Planchon's aim is far from abstract; the plays which he directs, whether classical or modern, Shakespeare's or his own, are rooted in a specific milieu. "Toutes le pièces sont sociales; elles ne sont pas bourgeois ou sociales", he told a group of students in 1964.³ What a mise en scène should suggest varied according to the

2. L'Echo La Liberté (Lyons), Nov. 20th, 1964.  
play, but there was one constant line of approach in all his interpretations: he felt that "... on ne peut comprendre une œuvre détachée du contexte historique dans lequel elle est née." Whatever a play had to say, its setting and the stage language into which it was translated must show that what happens does not happen in a vacuum. At the start of his career, Planchon's mises en scène made historical statements, but later he came to prefer a more understated, "dry" presentation. Herein, for him, lay the essential theoretical opposition between Brecht and Aristotle:

Quand Brecht s'empare s'une histoire contée avan lui par Shakespeare, ou Molière, il tente de lui donner une structure démonstrative, capable d'aboutir à une conclusion précise, comme une fable de LaFontaine amène inéluctablement sa moralité. Aristote, lui, ne s'intéresse qu'au conflit et ne lui accorde aucune valeur démonstrative.

The progression from demonstrative theatre to a more descriptive mode of production was a major development in Planchon's work. In 1968 the Théâtre de la Cité defined its aims in terms of stimulating questions rather than answering them:

... ce théâtre [at the Théâtre de la Cité] est critique, c'est-à-dire qu'il met en valeur les aspects de la société qui paraissent contestables, mais nous ne donnons pas au public les moyens de changer cette société, nous ne proposons pas de formule, ni d'idéologie politique. Nous ne voulons pas que le public perde sa faculté de jugement.

In his movement away from Brecht's didacticism, it is interesting to note that Roger Planchon's main preoccupation was a very Brechtian respect for the spectator's intelligence.

When Planchon attempted to define himself, to explain his aims and his methods as a writer, many of the concepts which had always guided his work as a director became clearer. He began writing after thinking of making a film: "J'avais envie de faire du cinéma. Et puis on m'a proposé de faire un film 'Cartouche' et au moment où je me suis aperçu qu'il fallait écrire le scénario, j'ai compris que je préférais écrire que faire du cinéma." Other factors also prompted him to become a writer. He has spoken often about a "crisis" in the theatre in the early sixties which led other directors to abandon spoken language on stage:

Il y a sept ou huit ans il y a eu un moment dans le théâtre où l'on a senti que quelque chose allait changer. On était arrivé à une espèce d'impasse.... A partir de cette période, la tendance à abandonner le texte n'a cessé de s'affirmer. Pour ma part, j'inscris mes tentatives à contre courant. Je me suis attaché en effet à donner une importance certaine au texte dans ce que j'écrivais, mais en veillant à conférer à l'écriture une certaine rigueur. Pour moi, cela continue l'orientation d'œuvres comme celles de Brecht et de Vitrac.

A personal reexamination of his work also led him to the conclusion that he must find a new means of expression. His production of Edward II in 1964, termed 'lyrical' by Rosner, gave him much to reflect on. He began to feel that he was saying too much through other people's plays: "A force de malmener les pièces des autres, je me suis dit que ce serait peut-être honnête d'écrire et de me malmener moi-même."  

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Furthermore, he felt that he was getting into a set pattern:
"... j'avais conscience de répéter, d'ânonner les leçons de Brecht." Trying a new form of expression might be a liberating endeavour: "J'ai décidé d'écrire pour sortir de la mise en scène. Je ne veux pas refaire les mêmes spectacles." Indeed he found that writing helped him to move away from the too rigidly Brechtian mode of direction:

Si l'expérience de la mise en scène ne m'a rien apporté pour l'écriture, en revanche, l'écriture m'a libéré et renouvelé pour la mise en scène. Depuis douze ans, je ne sortais pas de l'influence de Brecht. Je ne faisais que copier le mieux que je pouvais, mais copier.

Renewed as a director, Planchon was to find that writing brought with it different problems from those he had already faced.

Integrity led Planchon to try writing his own texts when he felt that he was being unjust to those of other people. The same sort of integrity, combined perhaps with the knowledge that other directors had failed as playwrights, prevented Planchon from using his director's experience when creating a written work: "Je suis le seul metteur en scène qui veut écrire des pièces d'auteur. Quand Baty écrivait, il pensait spectacle. Moi, j'essaie d'écrire comme quelqu'un qui n'aurait jamais foutu les pieds sur un plateau." He felt that to fit his writing to his staging would have been unethical:

I said to myself 'you must never write something just because you know you'll be able to direct it.' I tried to write plays which had no link with any production, and at the beginning I was the worst director of my own plays, I just couldn't do it. ... the temptation would have been to write it with a set


2. Recorded by Ségolène, Gazette Médicale de France, March 5th, 1969.


in mind, so that the text would fit the set.¹

No doubt the success which Planchon had in changing his style of direction after becoming a writer was in part due to this determination to write as a newcomer to the theatre.

Although he was able to renew his mise en scène, although he moved away from Brechtian models after he became a writer, Planchon found that Brecht remained a strong influence on his own play-writing:

You could say that all the plays I've written have been a long meditation on Brecht's work. I think the two writers who are the closest to Brecht are Peter Weiss and myself. He's taken one side of Brecht, I've taken the other.²

Even Brecht's own unusual method of composing his plays has, to a certain extent, been imitated in the Théâtre de la Cité. Brecht used to write amidst friends and colleagues, asking for advice, reading out parts, and getting as much help as he could. The discovery that despite all his experience as a director, he could still feel that he was a beginner at writing ("Je suis vraiment un auteur tout ce qu'il y a de débutant."³) probably made Planchon a little wary of judging his own work. Although he has called a playwright's work a solitary occupation, he makes each of his plays as collective a creation as possible by giving readings of freshly-written plays to groups of actors, technicians, guests, etc. Their comments and criticisms are taken into account and the play is gradually modified. As a reporter commented, "Le point final, pour lui, n'existe pas. Il lit, relit son texte à sa troupe, aux machinistes, à ses amis. Il écoute les critiques et corrige encore."⁴ Even on stage a passage could be changed if it was too difficult to say, as was noted:

during rehearsals for _Dans le vent:_ "Il n'hésitait pas à retrailler le texte, si les comédiens butaient sur certaines phrases, ou si la fable n'apparaissait pas assez nettement. Le travail d'approche était toujours fait en commun."\(^1\) It is this openness to change, again, which prompted a harried sound technician to ask about a recent alteration, during a rehearsal of _la Langue au Chat_ which I attended: "Le changement pour la croisade sentimentale, c'est définitif là, pour l'instant?"\(^2\) In an art so sensitive to people's reactions, a "definitive" version might well not remain definitive for longer than a moment.

If Brecht's influence is still perceptible in Planchon's work, his work was for Planchon a point of departure and not a horizon. Brecht's plays are demonstrative, while his followers today have moved in a different direction. Rosner said of Brecht in 1965, "Son œuvre est une œuvre historique, à sa place dans le contexte de l'Allemagne nazie.... Planchon, Gatti, ou Michel Vinaver [sont] tous trois marqués par l'influence de Brecht, mais engagés dans un théâtre beaucoup plus descriptif que démonstratif."\(^3\) Roger Planchon himself criticised a moralising tendency in Brecht:

> Brecht ... formule les problèmes et les met sous forme de question. La pièce donne la réponse: Plus la réponse est claire, moins c'est intéressant. Au contraire, plus c'est ambigu, plus esthétiquement et moralement la réponse devient intéressante.\(^4\)

His own plays never give set answers to the problems they bring up; he admires works which are not sermons: "J'aime la pièce qui pose des questions mais ne donne pas de réponse. Ce n'est pas poli d'en donner à la place des spectateurs."\(^5\)

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2. Théâtre de la Cité de Villeurbanne, October 1st, 1972.
4. _Progrès_ (Lyons), March 8th, 1965.
In Shakespeare all the important questions are put, and no one answer provided. Roger Planchon has an unswerving admiration for Shakespeare's writing, and has called him "... the author who gave me most inspiration to keep working after Brecht..." As in Planchon's plays the questions asked were meant to provoke thought, he had to write, like Shakespeare, about the preoccupations of ordinary people.

The interest in history which is evident in Planchon's writing is that of a student of Marx as well as of an admirer of Brecht. "Toutes mes pièces", he said, "sont incluses dans une aventure historique parce qu'on est coincés dans des situations historiques et déterminés par elles." Although he is a disciple of Marxist thought, Planchon does not aim to bring about the revolution through the theatre. Even the events of May 1968 did not transform him into a political agitator. He had moved towards the text as other directors, such as Jérôme Savary, moved away from it. In the same way, he wrote a more and more reflective theatre when the general trend, as for example in the work of André Benedetto, was for a theatre of agitation:

Si les jeunes semblent vouloir aller vers un théâtre de l'efficacité immédiate, un théâtre du document-brut mobilisateur, moi, je tend vers un théâtre méditatif, qui permet au spectateur de s'installer devant une histoire qu'on lui raconte avec lenteur.

Si, comme tout le monde, je suis hanté par la difficulté de l'Histoire, qui est vraiment une chose tragique, j'appartiens à une génération qui s'interroge sur ce que veut dire "Révolution", contrairement à ce qui se passe dans un certain théâtre de gauche où on veut faire la Révolution.

Planchon treated his spectators as adults: he provoked them to ask questions; but then he allowed them to reflect on these questions for themselves:

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Coûte que coûte, Planchon se veut artiste. Comme tel, il compte dégager de la libre description de la réalité des éléments de prise de conscience politique autr...
the second version of George Dandin in 1966, remarked that
"Planchon a ceci d'extraordinaire qu'il ne se contente jamais,
lorsqu'il fait une reprise, de reprendre la pièce telle
qu'elle avait été créée."¹ If this trait was already evi-
dent in his work as a director, it has become manifest in
his own plays.

Planchon's entire artistic perception is shaped by
approaching reality from its most humble and apparently
trivial side:

I have a passion for what is concrete. Every-
thing that is really palpable, concrete pleases
me. I like life in its most elementary state,
without heightening, ... it's the whole feeling
of life passing, something very fragile which
doesn't last, which is miraculous in the true
sense of the word.²

One can understand Planchon's preference for such artists as
Dylan Thomas and Bunuel who have a talent for transforming
even the cruelty of the everyday to show its beauty and its
humour. Like Browning's Fra Lippo Lippi, Planchon aims to
make people rediscover the extraordinary in our day to day
activities: "... we're made so that we love / First when we
see them painted, things we have passed / Perhaps a hundred
times nor cared to see;"³ Lukács too speaks of the "poetic
quality inherent in all human development, in growth and
change."⁴ In his personal love of the tangible, Planchon
shows a kinship with some of the finest creative minds of
literature.

To look closely at elementary reality is a disci-
pline which prevents any straying into abstraction. Roger
Planchon writes for a specific public:

¹ La Tribune-Le Progrès (St. Etienne-Lyon), December 3rd,
1966.
² "Creating a Theatre of Real Life", p.54.
³ "Fra Lippo Lippi", in Robert Browning, Selected Poetry,
(Toronto: The New American Library, 1966), p.164, 11.300-
302.
⁴ George Lukács, The Meaning of Contemporary Realism
J'ai écrit... toujours pour mon public de Villeurbanne, avec les événements extérieurs, les faits divers lus dans 'France-Soir' mais avec leurs réactions personnelles devant les événements. J'ai écrit toujours pour les Français, jamais pour les étrangers. Villeurbanne est une petite ville composée d'ouvriers embourgeoisés.¹

Planchon sees the life of simple people as "totalement opaque".² He admits that he is fascinated by the importance of dreams in the lives of most people, and he uses his own dreams in his writing: "Je vis la vie comme un rêve... Je me sers des schèmes de mes rêves."³ At the same time, working for an audience which is "outside culture" has made him extremely wary of over-abstraction or artificiality: "One must write or produce things which are rigorously truthful, never fall into abstraction or myth-making; if you do, people who are outside culture are justified in making fun of it."⁴ Planchon came to the theatre through an enthusiasm for the surrealists; his long-lived love of poetry tempers and enhances the pragmatic quality of his inspiration. He sees himself as an artist steering a middle course between two extremes which he dislikes in modern theatre, "romanticism, which prefers some completely false imaginary life to real life, and the sordid theatre, which wants to bring out the dirty side of things."⁵ His interpretation of reality is thus strongly influenced by the fact that he has worked during most of his career for a Villeurbanne public.

By using as inspiration the life he could see around him, Planchon gave his work another orientation which distinguishes it from that of many modern dramatists. His work has a strong provincial flavour, as he himself remarked:

1. Recorded by A. de Richter, Le Soir (Marseille), May 12th, 1969.
2. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
Planchon's artistic vision, from being turned upon a specific milieu, has been formed by it. Using his latest production of Bleus, blancs, rouges as an example, he spoke of the paradox that it is often in a work of art most rooted in a precise time and place that one finds a universal quality:

To be rooted in one's specific milieu, and yet to be aware of an international theatre language, that's the mystery. I realized when I wrote Bleus blancs rouges that I was governed by the same concern. I said to myself: careful, you mustn't write the story of an interchangeable revolution, you mustn't speak of The Revolution, but of the French Revolution in its specific Frenchness; and yet the play also works as a description of people caught up in a time of great historical change anywhere.  

Perhaps he is aiming for that quality which Adamov could see only as a combination of O'Casey and Brecht:

Je rêve ... d'un théâtre qui serait à la fois Brecht et O'Casey, c'est-à-dire un théâtre où les mécanismes seraient démontés, comme chez Brecht, et où, néanmoins, les personnes, les individus continueraient de vivre une vie individuelle, au milieu de ce démontage des mécanismes.  

To combine a historical awareness with a truth of individual situations can have a political impact far wider than to preach revolution, and Lukács praised this sort of artistic realism:

A character is typical... when his innermost

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being is determined by objective forces at work in society.... Whenever socialist realism produces authentic types... there is present this organic unity of profound individuality and profound typicality. 1

According to Roger Planchon, two main trends in contemporary French theatre are that which he terms the "Mystico-Sacré", and that of political agitation, which amounts to preaching to the converted. His own writing follows neither of these directions:

Je fais du théâtre politique, mais je m'intéresse essentiellement à la problématique de la politique. ... Pour moi, une situation au théâtre est vraie, dans la mesure où elle plonge ses racines dans la vie quotidienne. 2

A recurrent idea in Planchon's latest statements is that his aim is to "susciter une nouvelle sensibilité." 3 Perhaps he would agree with Claude Roy in La Nouvelle Revue Française, who defended Gatti and Planchon after their plays "La Vie imaginaire de l'éboueur August Geai and La Remise were shown in Paris; a left-wing critic Marc Pierret had accused them in an article in France Observateur of using working class people as dramatic subjects simply to give a middle class audience an evening's enjoyment, but Roy gave a very sensitive reply:

Le bon théâtre ... ne sert immédiatement à rien. ... une belle pièce de théâtre fait seulement prendre conscience.... Prendre conscience de la fragilité, du temps qui passe, de la tendresse, de la violence, de la fureur, de la pitié, prendre conscience de tout ce qu'il faut pour faire et défaire un homme. ... Mais il est sûr que de toute façon, avant de comprendre et de transformer, il faut ressentir .... Roger Planchon et Armand

Gatti ... sont des agitateurs du coeur. L'esprit humain est un produit qu'il est bon d'agiter avant de le faire servir.  

Modern writers whose plays have been presented at the Théâtre de la Cité de Villeurbanne include Bertolt Brecht, Arthur Adamov, Armand Gatti, Sean O'Casey, John Arden, Roger Vitrac, Michel Vinaver, and Tankred Dorst, as well as Planchon himself. Between 1957 and 1972, Planchon personally directed four modern plays other than his own; they were Adamov's Paolo Paoli, and his adaptation of Gogol's Dead Souls, and Brecht's Der gute Mensch von Sezuan and Schweyk im zweiten Weltkrieg.

Adamov's Paolo Paoli

... une œuvre d'art, et surtout une pièce de théâtre, n'acquiert de réalité que si elle se place dans un contexte social défini.

Planchon's cooperation with Adamov was so close that, on one occasion when the latter gave a talk at the Théâtre de la Cité, he was introduced as "l'auteur maison". Indeed, this playwright found in Roger Planchon's troupe an unusual understanding of his aims and his principles. Lyons was one of the few places in France where he could see his works staged. In a posthumous tribute, Gabriel Garran said of him:


2. Progrès (Lyons), March 22nd, 1961.
Adamov, partout ailleurs joué, ne l'était pas en son propre pays. Cet homme blessé était profondément meurtri par la situation de marginal et de "mal accueilli" auquel le réduisait le milieu théâtral français. ... Adamov a subi réellement la malédiction de la société bourgeoise.

The Théâtre de la Comédie in its early years put on two of Adamov's plays, Le Sens de la marche, and Le Professeur Taranne. The 1953-1954 season included his adaptation of Marlowe's Edward II. In 1956-1957, the theatre put on Paolo Paoli not only in Lyons, but also in Paris. Some people felt that it was his best play. "Le Ping-Pong était une promesse," said André Gisselbrecht. "Paolo Paoli est un aboutissement." It looked forward in some ways to the adaptation of Gogol which the Théâtre de la Cité was to put on in Villerurbanne in 1960.

Paolo Paoli was important as the first play which the Théâtre de la Comédie put on in Paris, before moving into their Villeurbanne theatre. Adamov's play is an attack on a society in which everything, including human beings, is used only for its exchange value. Set in the gay nineties, it focuses on a dealer in rare butterflies, and shows how his trade, esoteric and far removed though it may seem from the contemporary political scene, is part of a social situation. The dealer Paoli's business conduct is not only a symptom, but a shaper of the values and even of the events of his day. The structure of the play is in itself interesting; Adamov suggests that the scenes be connected by the projection on a screen of authentic press quotations, documents, and

photographs, chosen by him for their ironic relevance to the era and to the action of the play. André Gisselbrecht praised Paolo Paoli because its historical precision made it a more effective revolutionary and artistic statement. Historical events have their own poetry. To relate them in a "chronicle play" such as this one was the best way of showing how individual and collective destinies are inter-related:

Aucun personnage de Paolo Paoli qui n'ait de "caractère" (ou de "destin") strictement individuel: l'Histoire qui se fait fait aussi leur histoire. On a compris dès lors qu'Adamov donne au théâtre historique une acception fort peu traditionnelle: l'Histoire n'est pas cette toile de fond somptueuse contre laquelle des figures désincarnées énonceraient les quelques vérités définitives que l'auteur croit détenir sur la "condition humaine".

When Roger Planchon decided to stage the play, Adamov found\(^2\) that he agreed totally with the ideas of this young director. They had the same opinion of the characters, and of the way in which they should be played: "Les degrés de caricature dans Paolo Paoli. Sans nous concerter, Planchon et moi, nous trouvons d'accord. C'est Mme de St. Sauveur qui doit être le personnage le plus fantastique, Marpeaux le plus réaliste." The actors understood the play and embodied their characters with a perfect instinct for their determining traits: "Malka Ribowski, Svetla à la fois touchante et ridicule. Je la voulais ainsi. Galliardin est véritablement l'abbé, affairé, cancanier, méticuleux, maniaque. Meffre se tire bien du rôle difficile de Paolo."

The affinity between Planchon and Adamov extended even to their ideas on stage language. In a posthumous tribute, Planchon was to write of his collaborators:


Il aimait voir sur la scène des objets simples, élémentaires: une machine à écrire, un portemanteau de bistrot. Il était allergique à tout esthétique... Le vélo, le portemanteau devaient venir sur scène sans transposition comme des totems. Au metteur en scène de les charger de "forces". Pour Adamov, il y avait l'espace, et ces totems épars, saugrenus, et ridicules, qui devaient rester dans le vide lorsque enfin tous les personnages avaient disparu.1

This "allergy" to aestheticism corresponds to Planchon's intense distaste for la pathétique in acting. If the objects on a stage were over-stylised, could they not like the actors be accused of sur-sens? Already at the Théâtre de la Comédie, Planchon's clever use of simple props had been noticed and praised:

Or en jetant les objets les plus simples sur un plateau rétréci, Planchon finit par rendre les chaises, le bureau et les tables plus grands que nature. Au lieu de faire tourner les accessoires autour des personnages, comme cela se fait tous les jours au Français, il fait tourner le drame autour des choses.2

It was on Paolo Paoli that René Allio worked with Planchon for the first time, and the use of stage techniques in this production was a promising beginning for their future alliance. The slide projections for Paolo Paoli were made on a white curtain, and accompanied by a loud voice singing jingles, by martial music, or by crowd noises. Adamov was delighted with this idea: "Je trouve la mise en scène de Planchon et son idée de projeter des photos terrifiantes sur des airs de musique frivole magnifique. J'aime aussi beaucoup le décor d'Allio, le jeu des acteurs."3

The joy of working with a well disciplined and

sympathetic group was nearly followed by disappointment. The Commission des Arts et Spectacles threatened to stop performances by refusing further subsidies to the Théâtre de la Comédie. Roger Martin du Gard fortunately offered his support to the theatre, and finally persuaded the commission to lay down its arms. With the public, the play was an undoubted success. Adamov noted in his diary, when the play was being presented: "Succès public. La C.G.T. et les communistes nous aident. Mais la bourgeoisie ... vient à son tour."¹

Critical reaction was not on the whole favourable. André Gisselbrecht² was one of the few who appreciated the play, which he saw at the Théâtre de la Comédie. He was especially impressed by the way in which Allio had overcome the difficulties of the play's setting and of the small size of the stage. The play has two levels; it is

... une action où sont rassemblés toutes les composantes principales de la politique intérieure et internationale d'une époque dans les quatre murs, entre les tiroirs et les rayonnages d'un cabinet d'entomologiste et d'un bureau triste de fabricant ...

Allio and Planchon had succeeded in conveying both the small scale of the characters' actions, and the larger scale of world events and their repercussions:

Ainsi arrive-t-on à saisir qu'au travers d'un décor de bibelots et de fanfreluches l'Histoire marche à grands pas. Les dominantes bistres, marron, noires de cette belle époque, simplement saupoudrée ici et là de quelques vraies "couleurs", c'est là la trouvaille du metteur en scène.

He also appreciated the way in which the actors' very words and gestures were coordinated to blend in with the props: "C'est aussi le contre-point perpétuel des gestes et des accessoires qui ne laissent jamais la parole en l'air, le discours suspendu dans le vide." L'Abbé Saulnier in the

¹. Ibid, p.124.
². "Paolo Paoli d'Arthur Adamov", Itinéraire, pp. 36-37.
play, for example, had a nervous habit of lacing up his shoes when he felt embarrassed; Paolo Paoli had a tendency to squirm in his armchair as he manipulated colleagues, clients, and other victims. Already in this article written in 1957, Gisselbrecht suggested that Planchon and Allio might be the leaders of tomorrow's theatre, as they have in fact become.

Elsa Triolet in her criticism of the play\(^1\) showed a unique awareness of Adamov's aims and methods. This was a play based to a great extent on documents and newspapers of the pre-World War I period, but the facts shown had been culled with evident purpose: "... le choix des événements est déjà, en soi, une attitude, une création. Et peut-être est-ce cette attention sérieuse, cette importance donnée à la sottise qui imprègnent la pièce d'un humour insolite et démonstratif." She compared the play to a dance:

Les tours qu'ils [the characters] se jouent, le chassé-croisé de leurs intérêts respectifs et de leurs femmes, est un ballet qui tourne autour de l'ouvrier Marpeaux, condamné au bagne pour un vol qu'il n'a pas commis, chasseur de papillons pour Paolo, et éternellement roulé par tout le monde.

The excerpts from newspapers and political speeches chosen for the intervals between scenes gave these characters relevance and depth by bringing them close to our reality. It is not surprising, in view of the understanding between Planchon and Adamov, that the production should have elicited from Triolet the following statement: "De la lecture, déjà étonnante, à la scène, cette pièce curieuse gagne en clarté, en signification, en intérêt." It was indeed their common abhorrence for overstatement which made the play come to life:

C'est dire que le travail de metteur en scène atteint son but, emboîtant le pas à l'auteur, jouant réel, comme réels sont les décors, cette réalité n'ayant besoin d'aucune charge, se suffisant entièrement, se chargeant de charger elle-même.

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The actors, all subject to a rigorous control, were praised for the variety and the appropriateness of their performances:

Henri Galliardin, l’abbé Saulnier, qui est d’une richesse vivante par tant de détails dans le caractère, par les intonations, les colères, les inconsciences et les incongruences... Isabelle Sadoyan personifie, dans Cécile de Saint-Sauveur, toutes les variantes des poncifs de la sottise, se situant entre la femme du monde ruinée et la chaise... 

Triolet finished her review by giving her approval and her best wishes to the young company, but she added, interestingly, "La nouveauté de cette pièce rend difficile à prévoir sa carrière."

The play, indeed, was a success despite the sparse or adverse critical response. An ordinary spectator chided the critics for their reactionary attitude, and praised the production highly for its "... réalisme assaisonné de poésie ...". He summed up his satisfaction in a sentence which probably explains the play's success: "Il y a enfin une pièce à Paris où l'on peut rire ou pleurer sans entendre parler de cabinets, sans entendre parler desangoisses introspectives d'un quelconque désœuvré." The rarity of such plays on Parisian stages at that time shows the need which there was for socially committed theatres such as the Théâtre de la Cité de Villeurbannne.

Adamov's adaptation of Gogol's Dead Souls

"Well," said Chichikov, "if there aren't any obstacles, we might, with God's help, set about drawing up a deed of purchase."

"A deed of purchase for dead souls?"

"Oh no," said Chichikov, "we shall put down that they are living, as indeed it is stated in the census list. You see, it's my practice never to depart from the letter of the law. Though I've had to suffer for it in the service,

duty is sacred in my eyes. The law, sir -
I'm speechless when confronted with the law."

Gogol Dead Souls

The Théâtre de la Cité de Villeurbanne presented
Adamov's adaptation of Gogol's novel, under the title Les
Âmes mortes, in 1960 in Villeurbanne and at the Odéon in
Paris.

Gogol's novel follows the travels of a swindler,
Tchitchikov, who attempts to make his fortune in pre-revolutionary Russia by acquiring from landowners the deeds to
serfs who are dead but whose names are still on the official
census. In order to colonise the sparsely populated
southern areas of the country, the Tsarist government offered
inducements to people who resettled their serfs there: they
were given not only free land, but also a per capita re-
settlement subsidy. Tchitchikov could purchase "dead
souls" for very little from landowners. As the souls were
officially still alive, he could pretend to resettle them
and make enormous profits from the government subsidies.

Adamov was originally Russian. He was born in the
Caucasus in 1908, to a wealthy family who brought him up
speaking French. They left Russia for Germany in 1912.
Adamov came to Paris in 1924, and there he became involved
with political and literary revolutionary groups. His back-
ground, education, and temperament thus suited him very well
to the task of translating Russian literary works. The
dramatic adaptation which he made of Gogol's long and un-
finished novel was a reduced version, but it remained as
faithful as possible to the spirit of the original. Adamov
divided the plot into fifteen tableaux, by choosing only a
few episodes from the novel. He played on the opposition,
both psychological and sociological, between Tchitchikov and
the landowners whom he visits. He suppressed some characters,
dwelt on things which Gogol barely suggests, and changed the

1. Trans. by David Magarshak, (Penguin Classics,
order of events and the ending. All these alterations, however, were justifiable; Copfermann wrote that

Ces "trahisons" précédent en quelque sorte les éclairages que la mise en scène aurait ajusté sur *Les Ames mortes* s'il s'était agi d'une pièce. Il s'agit bien d'ajouter du sens; de préciser ce sens, au nom ... d'une certaine fidélité à l'esprit du roman.]

The press reaction to Adamov's work was quite favourable. "Nul mieux qu'Arthur Adamov," said Gustave Joly, "n'était qualifié pour 'dramatiser' le poème romancé de Gogol. Il en a restitué pleinement le ton et le rythme." Paul Morelle called the text "... clair, rapide, fongueux, corrosif, vigoureux."2

The Russian background to the play was to be conveyed in two ways. Firstly, Planchon introduced onto the stage a world of serfs and servants, different for each master, who were constantly present but always silent. The production thus looked forward to that of *George Dandin* in the following year, in which silent farmhands were to go about their tasks, sullenly watching Dandin or enjoying his discomfiture. Secondly, following one of Adamov's ideas, Allio and Planchon interspersed between the fifteen scenes slide projections of Tchitchikov in his troika, travelling endlessly along the roads of the Russian plains, past dreary villages and towns. Adamov had thought of this stage solution to the problem of conveying the most striking aspect of the novel:

... l'extraordinaire poésie; celle d'un espace infiniment parcouru, et le temps, lui aussi passe sur cet espace, et c'est toute la Russie qui défile avec ses villages, ses steppes, ses fleuves très larges, et le peuple misérable portant des charges trop lourdes, au milieu de ces villages et autour de ces fleuves.3

Allio, Planchon, and Jacques Rosner who was assistant director, altered Adamov's original conception of using actual film projections, and found other visual means of suggesting the constantly changing settings:

Un chariot amène en avant de la scène le décor du lieu représenté.

Au fond, un grand cyclorama fournit une ligne d'horizon, lieux si lointains, espaces si étendus qu'il est la partie du paysage qui ne peut pas changer, malgré les déplacements: c'est l'étendue russe. L'échelle est minuscule, sa figuration en devient presque abstraite et se réduit à cette ligne d'horizon toute fourmillante de taches et de formes qu'on ne peut pas lire.

Au-dessus du décor, et en avant du cyclorama, variant avec chaque changement, se trouve suspendu un tableau, agrandissement d'un fragment de l'horizon, la ville, la campagne, la plaine désolée ou cultivée, ou boisée, ou moutonnante, etc. A chaque fois s'y trouve représenté, dans sa situation topographique, le décor présent sur le plateau. L'auberge, dans la ville, la tunnelle devant le paysage, etc. L'échelle a augmenté, c'est une représentation purement picturale.

De chaque côté de la scène, un périacte offre la possibilité de cadrer différemment les décors par les représentations de lieux qui constituent chacune de ses faces et qui renvoient à une situation à la fois topographique et sociale. Maisons puissantes de style officiel (... scène chez le gouverneur). Maisons de bois, vieille église de bois, typiques (... scènes à la campagne et chez les petits propriétaires), arbres et campagnes enfin, pour compléter les scènes d'extérieur.

Au milieu ... le décor donne une représentation à l'échelle normale des lieux, réalistes, sans que l'on se soit privé ... de trancher des cloisons ou de rendre des portes ou des murs transparents en ne laissant en place que leur ossature. 1

Between the scenes, two or three-minute sequences of sketches by Allio were projected on the screen above the stage. These drawings, in sepia tones, were "... animés pour que la troïka de Tchitichikov erre entre ciel et terre; et pour que le profil d'un visage se mue en bête, ou que la boucle d'une

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chevelure brusquement grossie figure le détourn d'un sentier, les limites d'un champ, la plaine sans bornes. The total length of these short "films" was thirty minutes.

The sketches by Allio thus included not only landscapes, but many faces as well; by using drawings, Allio meant to describe the setting without competing with the realism of the stage properties or of the acting. He was also much freer to use different styles if he did not have to use actual film or photographs. The other advantage of using sketches was that they were more flexible and could reflect the change in mood between the first and second parts of the play. The first part, as in the novel, simply follows the hero's travels through various farmlands and towns. The second part, however, portrays the spread of rumours about Tchitchikov once people have begun to suspect that his business is not altogether legal, and that his activities may have put some of them in jeopardy:

Ce parcours psychologique entraînait une utilisation de dessins plus outrés, à un rythme plus sautiltant ou heurté, et à des mouvements plus faits de surprises que dans la première partie, cependant que les paysages à étendues s'y trouvaient remplacés par des visages aussi caricaturaux que les paysages étaient libres de facturer. Nina Gourfinkel described the effect of Allio's solution:

L'action se déroule sur deux plans: sur la scène, l'énorme farce de l'intrigue qui, aussi bouffonne qu'elle soit, rend fidèlement les douloureuses réalités de la Russie esclavagiste; sur l'écran l'arrière-fond musical et imaginé de cette farce fait sentir l'infini désolation du pays accablé. The sense of infinity was not only one of great

2. René Allio, "Comment rendre l'espace", Cité-Panorama No.9, O.S. (February, 1960).
3. L'Avant-scène, Fémina-Théâtre 221 (June 1st, 1960), 40.
geographical expanses, but also one of time. Tchitchikov's adventures stretch over a number of repetitious weeks and months. Furthermore, the audience had to be made to feel that the social attitudes pictured were widespread and had developed for centuries: "... l'argent ne renvoie plus à des objets, mais à un négoce absurde. Le cheminement de l'escroquerie la hausse au niveau d'une farce grinçante déroulée dans le temps par le cheminement de Tchitchikov dans la campagne russe; le temps égale l'espace."¹ The set underlined this epic nature of Tchitchikov's adventures. Adamov saw the character as a literary descendant of heroes who set off on a quest. Tchitchikov's quest, however, is ignoble: "Comme Ulysse ou Don Quichotte, Tchitchikov voyage inlassablement à la poursuite de son but. Épopée grotesque et dérisoire, car ce but se confond avec la plus sordide des escroqueries."²

Music for the play was used in conjunction with the slide projections. Claude Lochy, the composer, explained³ that for the first part of the play (which describes, as we have seen, Tchitchikov's travels through Russia), "La Musique est presque toujours aéré, tendue sur les tessitures hautes, soutenue par une voix de femme ou une onde..." In the second part, which depicts the spread of rumours about Tchitchikov's business dealings, Lochy chose to emphasise the grotesque aspect of the gossip: "Presque toute la musique de cette seconde partie est donc le murmure grandissant des ragots, de cette conversation, entrecoupée de pointes venimeuses, qui a Tchitchikov pour seul aliment." The music characterised the different kinds of people in the play. For the petty officials, Lochy used a wind quintet; for the landowners, and their

servants, he took his inspiration from Russian folk music; for the governor and those in power, he conveyed the impression of French snobbery ten years out of date: he used romantic ball-room music played as though by a village brass-band.

Gogol's characters, self-seeking, smug, and stupid, are all objects of ridicule. In Planchon's mise en scène, this burlesque side of the social portrait was emphasised, not only through Allio's drawings and Lochy's music, but also through another stage device: all the characters wore false noses. One of Gogol's short stories is entitled "The Nose", and so it seemed appropriate to choose this feature and make it ridiculous for each character. Adamov said that this decision was in accordance with his view of the novel and of the way in which it should be adapted to the stage:

Ce n'est pas seulement au texte, c'est à la mise en scène qu'il revient de souligner le caractère caricatural des situations, des silhouettes, des visages. Je ne prévoyais pas les faux nez employés par Planchon. Mais cette idée est conforme à celle que j'avais du "degré de caricature."

The false noses were a meaningful stage image reflecting the moral ugliness of Gogol's characters:

... la solidarité de classe devient solidarité de nez: ... les personnages prennent une force inquiétante ... et, au-delà de leur sottise, on sent une cruauté aveugle qui peut, d'un instant à l'autre, frapper. L'angoisse vient ... de l'accord de cette difformité physique avec une difformité morale beaucoup plus redoutable.

In Adamov's view of the play, among the villains and fools of the society painted by Gogol, Tchitchikov is the one character who attracts some sympathy from the reader.

1. Interviewed by Mireille Boris, L'Humanité, April 22nd, 1960.
Tchitchikov qui joue un jeu marginal parce que voulant faire partie du clan des possédants, il ne peut pas en faire partie, m'est évidemment le plus sympathique. D'autant plus que, poussant à l'extrême les conséquences d'un système taré, il accuse le système même. 1

Tchitchikov's trade shows up the society in which he moves: this is the political dimension of the novel's satire. More than Tchitchikov himself, it is his victims, "... the grasping and gullible citizenry of a degraded feudal society...", 2 who appear foolish. The use of false noses had important repercussions:

Dans sa mise en scène, Roger Planchon a voulu traiter, "à la limite de la caricature" ce sujet profondément tragique auquel, avec le recul, l'on peut donner, selon ses propres préoccupations, des prolongements métaphysiques ou politiques. Gogol eût, sans doute, opté pour les premiers. Adamov et Planchon semblent avoir choisi les seconds. 3

With a perfectionist's attention to details in the acting, Planchon elicited from his actors a sense of their social position as Russian characters in relation to one another. It was an important nuance. Gogol himself pauses in his narrative to comment on the class consciousness of his countrymen:

It must be said that if we in Russia have not caught up with foreigners in some things, we have far outstripped them in the art of behaviour. It is quite impossible to enumerate all the shades and subtleties of our manners. ... We have clever fellows who talk in quite a different way to a landowner with two hundred serfs and to one with three hundred serfs; and to one with three hundred they will talk differently again from the way they will talk to the one with five hundred, and in different way again from one with eight hundred - in short, even if the number were to grow to a million

1. Ici (- et maintenant, p.117.
2. Ossia Trilling, Observer, April 24th, 1960.
they would still find different shades for it.¹

Adamov attended Planchon’s rehearsals and made suggestions to the troupe on this very point. After a rehearsal of the first scene, a meeting between Tchitchikov and his servant Séligane, Planchon reminded his actors to keep in mind the class to which their character belonged. Adamov agreed:

Oui, il ne faut jamais oublier les divers échelons de la hiérarchie. De même dans la scène qui se déroule chez Manilov il faut que l'intendant soit d'un échelon au-dessus des autres domestiques: il doit s'incliner moins bas qu'eux devant le maître, et eux, ne pas rire avant que l'intendant en ait donné le signal.²

Planchon succeeded in imposing an extremely well controlled style on his actors, overcoming all the difficulties of the staging including the false noses:

Selon cette perspective caricaturale Planchon effectuait sur ses acteurs un véritable travail de modelage, les obligeant à renoncer aux conventions habituelles pour jouer et parler en fonction de leur habileté, de leur maquillage et, bien entendu, du rythme de la mise en scène.³

Critics seem to have been favourably impressed with the production as a whole. So well controlled were the movements of the actors, so well designed was the visual side of the production that entire scenes seemed to be "... de véritables Daumiers pleins d'un humour féroce!"⁴ Allio's sketches recalled in their spirit more than one great artist: "Les têtes, très typiquement russes, sont stylisées dans un esprit qui participe à la fois de Gustave Doré, de Daumier et de Picasso, du Picasso de Guernica."⁵ The slide projections

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and the *mise en scène* were thoroughly successful in conveying the novel's feeling for the great open spaces of Russia:

Roger Planchon a fait un travail de mise en scène extraordinaire et qui bouleverse les données traditionnelles du théâtre. D'abord, et pour la première fois, l'espace, l'étendue sont reconnus et acceptés... Ces projections situent tout un univers, elles nous conduisent peu à peu à une vision plus étroite, plus limitée qui est celle de l'espace scénique. 1

André Curn found the music and the slide projections remarkably well integrated. Lochy's "travellings musicaux", he said, succeeded in showing both the constant changes of the setting and the immensity of Russia. 2 The music's role as an ironic commentary struck listeners because, in the early 1960's, this was still a relatively new use for theatrical accompaniment. Stephen Hecquet noted:

Il n'est pas jusqu'à la musique de Claude Lochy qui n'accentue encore ce côté volontairement caustique, destructeur, en accompagnant les entrées et les sorties des personnages d'un commentaire raillier ou persiflant. 3

Even Gabriel Marcel was impressed by the meaningful contribution which the music made to this show:

Une musique de scène stridente, coupée par instants d'une plainte déchirante où s'exprime la misère séculaire du peuple russe, introduit dans le spectacle un élément dont la qualité ne me paraît pas négligeable. 4

Guy Dumur, 5 on the other hand, liked neither the music nor the slides, and in general he disapproved of the emphasis on the visual aspects in Planchon's production.

The play, he said, had been written by Adamov with the austerity

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of Vilar's staging in mind. Planchon, however, had treated
the show as a "... prétexte d'une démonstration théâtrale."
He accused the company of obscuring the play's ideological
basis by their distracting use of clever visual details:

En voulant s'écart er des synthèses esthétiques
des héritiers du Cartel (Barrault-Vilar), il
[Planchon] tombe dans une sorte d'art analytique qui efface la réalité dramatique pour
n'être plus que pur spectacle oculaire.

One might question the concept of an opposition between
"spectacle oculaire" and "réalité dramatique", especially
in view of Adamov's own involvement in the production. The
key to Dumur's criticism, however, lies in his conclusion:
he simply felt that Planchon's show was too self-conscious:
"Pour quelqu'un comme Planchon qui a tant travaillé, le plus
dur reste à faire; savoir s'effacer."

Certainly the presentations gave spectators an
impression of exceptional discipline and control. Every-
thing had been worked out with a conscious principle in
mind.

Il faudrait des pages pour apprécier le travail
de mise en scène de Roger Planchon qui anime
cette gigantesque machine aux quinze décors et
aux trente personnages, la science de la mise
en place des acteurs, la rigueur des mouvements,
l'étude des éclairages.¹

Planchon had constructed each tableau with great care to make
it whole and yet integrated to the production: "Il est im-
possible d'entrer dans le détail des quinze tableaux que
Planchon a traités avec une incroyable minutie de dessin.
Chacun des tableaux est un tout et, pourtant, chacun tient
à l'ensemble."² The actors also contributed to this total
harmony. They had a coherence which was very uncommon in
France at that time. They maintained a sense of the typi-
cality of each character and of each social group: "Ils sont

d'une diversité physique, ils ont une personnalité dans chaque groupe, qui les désigne tous à l'attention. They were nevertheless remarkably united in their dedication to the production. "On a là," said Jean-Jacques Gautier "la démonstration d'une troupe devenue un seul instrument à vingt-huit têtes." Pierre Marcabru exclaimed: "Cette unité, cette cohésion, dans le ton, dans l'interprétation, est ce qui m'a le plus frappé. La troupe du théâtre de Villeurbanne est la première troupe française à faire bloc."
The enthusiasm was general, and about the new play as a whole, Marcabru concluded: "Le Théâtre de la Cité est aujourd'hui ce qu'il y a de plus important pour l'avenir du théâtre français, et son renouvellement."

It may appear surprising that the production which attracted so much praise for its modernity was of a play based on a nineteenth century novel. Adamov himself, however, had seen the play as extremely well suited to the modern French stage. Like other playwrights he was strongly influenced by Brecht, who served as a model of a socially committed dramatist. It was Gogol's critical awareness which had attracted Adamov to adapt Dead Souls for the stage; he wrote:

"... Les Ames mortes se situant constamment au point d'intersection d'une critique sociale aiguë et de la poésie qui, dans la multiplicité des faits, choisit le fait révélateur, il m'est apparu qu'elles ne sont pas étrangères au théâtre dont nous avons le plus besoin; un théâtre épique et critique."

In Adamov's opinion, the ideal dramatic work would combine the political seriousness of Brecht's plays with the psychological density and individuality of Sean O'Casey's characters. Gogol showed up an evil system by portraying satirically the typical, believable human beings who were a part of it.

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2. Le Figaro, April 23rd, 1960.
Adamov was struck especially by what he felt was the modernness of Gogol's satirical method; he said in the same article:

... il [Gogol] venait tout simplement d'inventer la littérature critique moderne, celle qui dénonce l'ordre établi en en montrant toujours les conséquences, celle qui, de déduction en déduction, met un lumièrre l'absurdité de ce qu'on s'est accoutumé à considérer comme logique.

Adamov said that Gogol painted a society in which the term "soul" was a label for a slave: "... le mot 'âme' n'a aucune signification réelle dans une société qui précisément prend le spiritualisme comme alibi pour camoufler l'inhumanité avec laquelle elle traite les corps." Such a critical analysis of a specific society was an almost irresistible subject for the Théâtre de la Cité. Adamov said that Planchon was "... en France le metteur en scène le plus apte à monter une pièce à la fois réelle et irréelle comme Les Ames mortes". It was not only Gogol's skill as a realistic novelist, but the vigour of Adamov's adaptation, and the brilliance of Planchon's mise en scène, that made Les Ames mortes a modern play.

Brecht's Der gute Mensch von Sezuan
Proper plays can only be understood when performed.

Brecht's Der gute Mensch von Sezuan, known in French as La Bonne Ame de Sé-Tchouan, was first put on by the Théâtre de la Comédie at the festival of Lyon-Charbonnières in 1954. It was presented again in the following year, and for a third time in 1958 at the Théâtre de Villeurbanne. By this time, Planchon knew the play intimately; Gérard Guillot said of him "De cette parabole grave et douloureuse, il en sait l'affirmation, et l'humanité; plus rien ne lui est étranger ou extérieur..." ²

The Villeurbanne production, directed by Planchon with the assistance of Claude Lochy, was not simply a slightly altered version of the first two: it was a genuine recreation. In the same way, Planchon was to modify his production of Tartuffe profoundly with each successive recreation, and he was to rewrite his own play Bleus, blancs, rouges when he produced it a second time. The 1954 and 1955 productions of La Bonne Ame de Sé-Tchouan had not been successful. After the second, Planchon met Bertolt Brecht in Paris and discussed the play with its author. By 1958, his basic approach to the work had changed:

Il n'y a pas cependant de commune mesure entre les deux précédentes mises en scène de Planchon, et sa réalisation au Théâtre de la Cité. Autant, au petit Théâtre de la Comédie, Planchon avait joué sur notre sensibilité, sur la séduction qu'exerce toujours sur notre cœur le monde des pauvres, des miséreux et des malheureux, autant sur la grande scène de Villeurbanne il a centré son travail, disposant du recul nécessaire, sur l'alternative profonde que Brecht a inscrite dans la pièce: "Faut-il changer la nature humaine ou faut-il modifier la société?" 1

The experience gained at the Théâtre de la Comédie was extremely useful. It had shown, for instance, that the action of the play was more effective if it took place in a small area. Moving from a tiny theatre into the large Villeurbanne auditorium, Planchon and Allio found a way of creating this small space within a larger context:

... le décor général et la mise en scène d'ensemble cherchait à donner l'illusion d'un espace scénique illimité, alors que les actions particulières se trouveront ramassées dans une partie très réduite de la scène. 2

The play is a fable, but it is set in a specific time and place, that is, China between 1930 and 1940. The setting therefore had to be both realistic and "legendary".

1. Ibid.

Allio decided, appropriately, to use Chinese techniques of design and drawing:

D'où un décor de fond qui n'est autre qu'une gigantesque toile peinte à l'encre de Chine, ou suivant la technique du lavis. Et sur ce fond se disposent d'une part des éléments verticaux se déroulant à petites étapes grâce à la calligraphie et, d'autre part, des accessoires très réels, pour la grande majorité reproduits d'après des documents originaux de l'époque.

The paintings seemed to widen the stage and gave the production a legendary, almost fairy tale quality; the props unified the action, by giving it a fixed point around which to revolve. The costumes, even those of beggars and wretches, were designed after careful research into Chinese dress and Brechtian productions. Because the company was not sufficiently trained to act with masks on, they played without, except for Isabelle Sadoyan as Shen Te, when she had to assume the disguise of Shui Ta. The music which Paul Dessau had composed for the Berliner Ensemble was retained.

Brecht in the fifties was still relatively unknown in France; Planchon's troupe was young and its left-wing views seemed subversive to the Lyons authorities. The company therefore had to overcome considerable official opposition in order to stage La Bonne Ame de Sé-Tchouan at all. After rehearsals had started for the play, Planchon had to make an abrupt change in the season's programme: "J'étais en train de monter La Bonne Ame de Sé-Tchouan de Brecht quand on m'a fait comprendre qu'il valait mieux renoncer à ce projet pour le moment, sans quoi on me coupait toutes les subventions. Il a fallu mettre sur pied Les Trois Mousquetaires. Au galop!" The play finally did go on, but not much dramatic criticism in newspapers is available on it. One understands why when one reads Marcabru's account of his meeting with Planchon after one presentation:

1. Ibid.
2. La Tribune de Genève, June 20th, 1958.
Je le félicite; il prend un air penaud et me dit: "Surtout n'en parlez pas, j'ai pris par écrit l'engagement d'agir de tout mon pouvoir pour que le silence le plus complet soit fait sur mon travail, je n'ai obtenu le droit de monter la pièce qu'à cette condition.

Gérard Guillot appreciated the production for its inventiveness and its vitality. The mise en place, he thought, was extremely clever for it underlined the two levels of action:

D'où cette mise en scène bloquant les actions particulières (le débit de tabac, ou la noce de Shen Té) dans une partie très réduite de la scène, et libérant les autres pour donner l'illusion d'un espace scénique illimité (le parc, la ville de Sé-Tchouan).

He congratulated Planchon for another find; the company's way of moving props made the show not only more beautiful, but also more fluid:

... les décors mobiles qui descendent des cintres, se changent à vue dans une demi-obscurité, la scène peuplée de nombreux personnages qui évoluent sous l'injonction de coups de sifflet stridents, jouet d'un arbitre invisible dans une imagerie populaire ...

The costumes disappointed him because they were too new-looking, except for that of Shui Ta, a western style cream-coloured suit, modelled closely on that of the Berliner Ensemble for this character. On the other hand, Guillot found Dessau's accompaniment very appropriate; it was a "... musique révoltée ou bouleversante, sous-tendant les complaints ou ponctuant les interrogations angoissées des personnages au spectateur." Isabelle Sadoyan, he said, was unforgettable in the main role, candid and sensitive as Shen Té, arrogant and cunning as Shui Ta. The actors in general, wrote Guillot, were an exceptionally well coordinated team; it was evident that they had built up a strong discipline and unity from working with Planchon for years. He finally praised Planchon's

fidelity to the Brechtian spirit in this production: "Et Planchon s'est opposé au spectateur, en ne lui faisant aucune concession, par une évidence épique qui laisse juge et non partie."

In the opinion of Pierre Marcabru, Planchon's control over his troupe gave the production its principal quality:

... une extraordinaire intelligence du mouvement et de son tracé (surtout dans la scène de la fabrique); une netté d'épure dès que les déplacements dominent; une façon très particulière de lâcher et de retenir les acteurs, de les bloquer en plein élan; une sorte de brutalité dans la manière d'attaquer le public de front, incontestablement de grands dons lorsqu'il s'agit de mesurer, d'ordonner, de diriger la violence.

Planchon's precise, unrelenting direction, said Marcabru, gave the play a new power: "... la tension va ici jusqu'à l'éclatement, jusqu'au cri, jusqu'à l'affirmation d'une vérité insoutenable." Marcabru's reaction to the acting was less enthusiastic. He was dissatisfied with the movements of the three gods; they were not assimilated to those of the rest of the company, and the gods seemed "... extérieurs sans être présents." He found that Roger Planchon's dislike for pathetic acting, his propensity for "... une sécheresse active et rigoureuse...", had driven him too far in the other direction to produce a rather cold style. However, Marcabru gave Planchon the ultimate accolade in his conclusion, complimenting him on

... cette fermeté méticuleuse qui offre à La Bonne Ame de Sé-Tchouan un pouvoir de provocation dont la pression régulière et tenace nous rappelle le Berliner Ensemble. On y sent la griffe d'un metteur en scène à la fois inventif et scrupuleux, à la fois audacieux et précis...

The discipline of Planchon triumphs of all.

Both critics thus felt that Planchon had succeeded in bringing out the play's essence as a fable and as an example of Brecht's Lehrstücke. To be commended for remaining loyal to the spirit of a playwright is always encouraging for a young director. La Bonne Ame de Sé-Tchouan was produced in

the years when Planchon was copying Brechtian models and justifying imitation as a way of learning. To be told that his production recalled by its excellence those of the Berliner Ensemble was, for Planchon, to be told that he had achieved his aim.

Brecht's Schweyk im zweiten Weltkrieg

I am very fond of the good soldier Schweik, and in presenting an account of his adventures during the World War, I am convinced that you will all sympathise with this modest, unrecognised hero. He did not set fire to the temple of the goddess at Ephesus, like that fool of a Herostratus, merely in order to get his name into the newspapers and the school reading books.

And that, in itself is enough.

Jaroslav Hašek
Preface to The Good Soldier Schweik

Planchon presented Brecht's Schweyk im zweiten Weltkrieg under the title Schweyk dans la deuxième guerre mondiale in October 1960 at Villeurbanne. He was assisted by Jacques Rosner. As the programme shows, Planchon saw Hašek's hero as the descendant of a long line of popular heroes from the Guignol of Lyons to Falstaff, Till Eulenspiegel, and Charlie Chaplin.

The programme records Brecht's ideas on Schweyk. He wrote in his diary on the 27th May, 1943, that he could see both the positive and the negative side of Hašek's hero:

En aucun cas Chvéik ne doit être vu comme un saboteur astucieux agissant dans le dos des gens. Il n'est rien d'autre qu'un opportuniste des petites occasions qui lui sont encore offertes. ... Sa sagesse est bouleversante. Son indestructibilité en fait à la fois un objet inépuisable d'abus et un terrain fécond pour la libération.
André Gisselbrecht who collaborated with Joel Lefebvre on the translation of Brecht’s play, thought that Brecht had chosen to dramatise this ambivalent sort of hero for a very specific reason. Although Schweyk’s inaptitude makes everyone laugh, as we laugh we feel a nagging doubt about his actions. It is only his survival and the eventual downfall of his oppressors that justify his behaviour; "Schweyk, c'est une certaine forme de combat: la résistance sourde, pour temps d'inconscience et d'impuissance, où la résistance ouverte, et de masse, ce n'est pas possible." This sort of resistance is mostly a matter of retaining a sense of one's own superiority to the enemy:

Pour vaincre, il faut être intimement assuré d'avance, en pleine défaite, de sa supériorité; le pire serait de se laisser intimider par le pouvoir brutal. Pour cela, rien de tel que de montrer la violence en son fond inefficace. Cela, c'est tout le schéma mental de Schweyk ...

Gisselbrecht spoke of prisoners of war who found in rereading Hašek's novel the comfort which a knowledge of one's mental superiority brings.

The structure of Brecht's adaptation, Gisselbrecht continued, is different from that of his other plays. He uses few distanciation effects in it. The person of Schweyk himself, like Falstaff in Henry IV, calls into doubt the real basis of the events around him: "Schweyk, c'est la 'distanciation' faute homme." Brecht also changed the hero from a totally solitary being into a more accessible one:

Le célibataire de Hašek est réfractaire à tout ordre et ami de personne; chez Brecht, il approuve au moins l'ordre humain où on mange à sa faim et s'aime sans obstacles artificiels, et il est entouré d'un chœur qui l'accompagne dans son calvaire d'une amicale pensée.

Bertrand Poirot-Delpech was less certain that Brecht had recreated Schweyk as a more likeable type. The play, in his

2. Le Monde, October 18th, 1961.
view, was a loosely connected series of anecdotes, of a kind rife in any occupied nation; its aim was to show that "... aucun principe d'ordre ne peut s'imposer à l'homme de la rue, fut-il le plus bassement opportuniste, tant qu'il ne se reconnaît pas tout à fait en lui." Poirot-Delpech was amazed, however, at the equivocal nature of the character Brecht used to make this point. Schweyk's actions bring on reprisals and include fighting on the Russian front. He is decidedly not a hero.

The Villeurbanne production of Schweyk aroused lengthy discussions and lively controversies. One of the most talked about aspects of the staging was Planchon's use of the revolving stage. It did not serve only to change the sets quickly; it was used to emphasise chosen scenes, to show them from different angles and from varying distances, and to speed up or slow down the pace of the action. Planchon explained in the programme:

... nous avons surtout cherché une technique qui se rapproche davantage d'un langage. Ainsi une caméra qui par sa mobilité, par la façon dont elle découpe l'espace, par ce qu'elle montre ou dissimule, est dans un film réellement un acteur.

The cinema, almost from its inception, changed the role of the actor from a central to a peripheral one; the modern theatre, through "epic" styles of staging, has transformed the role of the stage actor in a similar way: "L'Acteur n'est plus le sujet souverain, il devient aussi objet, matériel, élément du langage scénique." Planchon's revolving stage had just this cinematographic effect. René Allio suggested that it brought into the theatre a new mobility: that of the spectator's viewpoint. The Villeurbanne set was functional as well: every prop was displayed on stage from the beginning of the performance. As in a circus spectacular, the show was continuous:

Ces décors forment un cercle, dispositif fonctionnel, qui entoure la scène; ils

The stage was more than a set-changing apparatus; it became "... un instrument qui varie la scène dans la scène, met en valeur un détail, isolé en gros plan un groupe d'acteurs n'importe où sur le plateau, etc., etc."²

In his design, René Allio used a very limited range of colours. He wrote that for most of us the memories associated with the Nazi era are devoid of colour:

"... je ne veux pas dire par là seulement qu'ils [nous souvenirs] concernent une période que son éloignement ou sa tristesse ont pu rendre grise dans la mémoire, mais que surtout les images sur lesquelles cette mémoire prend appui nous ont été presque uniquement fournies par les actualités cinématographiques et la presse, une presse où la photographie en couleur était rare."

Therefore Allio chose to design the costumes in shades of white, black, and grey. With such a small colour range, the texture of the fabrics used for the costumes and of the materials used for the props became far more significant than usual:

"Choisir le gris, c'est donner une importance particulière au choix des matières; leur variété jointe à celle des matériau offre une gamme d'utilisation et un répertoire d'idées et de sens peut-être plus riche que la couleur, car elles relèvent de notre expérience visuelle et tactile et renvoient davantage au monde quotidien qu'à celui de "l'Art" (comme fait la couleur)."

Some aspects of the presentation were in colour, however.

Josef Lada's original illustrations for Jaroslav Hašek's novel were reproduced in bright colours on panels framing the stage. The device reminded spectators of the Czechoslovakian Schweyk at the source of Brecht's play, and it also emphasised his character as a folk hero. Bright colours were also used for the scenes of Schweyk's dreams during his long march through the snow in search of Stalingrad; they sharpened the contrast between his reality and his aspirations, and underlined the indestructability of Schweyk's optimism. Some scenes of the play are set in the "higher regions" where Hitler and his acolytes live, "... le monde cauchemaresque ... où évoluent les mannequins monstrueux du régime..."; Allio explained why these scenes were staged in a single, horrifying tone: ... le rouge-sang, procédé expressionniste s'il en est, devant lequel nous n'avons pas à reculer pour illustrer ces scènes où la caricature, la parodie de l'art lyrique, et particulièrement de l'opéra wagnérien, poussent à des mises en forme d'une extrême force.

Allio pointed out that at the end of the play, curtains, props, and costumes were once again a uniform, faded grey, to convey "... le dernier degré d'usure, de déterioration, de déshumanisation."

Planchon used the stage at all times to bring out the falseness of the world which the play describes. In a discussion with Michel Gournot, he was astonished to find himself accused of having played one scene too naturalistically. It is a violent and unrealistic scene in which Schweyk is taken to Gestapo headquarters in the offices of a bank and interrogated. Planchon reacted energetically to Cournot's criticism, pointing out that for this scene the set had been entirely false, from its uniform blackness to the coffin handles on the doors, from the revolving doors between offices to the secretary played by a man in a grey skirt:

1. L'Express, October 26th, 1961.
Tout est comme ça, tout est faux, tout est fou, dans ce décor, et pour ramener un tout petit peu quand même la scène vers l'action, j'ai fait jouer les acteurs plutôt comme des hommes que comme des clowns, en effet, et encore! ...

Claude Lochy wrote in the programme that Hans Eisler's music is as important in this production as Kurt Weill's is in The Threepenny Opera. There were three different sorts of music to accompany the play. For the mimodrame, the style was of the large male voice choirs of the turn of the century, with a good brass and 'cello section, with a polka or marching rhythm. The numerous songs, accompanied by a honky-tonk piano, recalled the folk music of central Europe, or the Nazi airs of the forties. For the three dream-like sequences which take place in the "higher regions", the actors became opera singers, performing to a mock-Wagnerian accompaniment. Planchon himself added a postscript to Lochy's account of the music: "La présentation des Hautes Sphères est une parodie des mises en scène expressionnistes d'Opéra (Bayreuth), équivalent de la musique de Hans Eisler, parodie de Wagner." Hans Eisler, the composer for the Berliner Ensemble, spent eight days in Villeurbanne; Eisler said that since half the play was sung, one would be justified in calling it a musical comedy. Brecht had always thought that after the Nazi era, it would be impossible to dissociate Hitler from Wagner, and so the parody of Wagner was very appropriate. Because the musical part of the show was so important, the Théâtre de la Cité was compelled to ask for the help of singers and of a 45-piece orchestra from the Lyons Opera.

The quality of Planchon's direction and of the staging in general was too outstanding to escape notice. Poirot-Delpech lauded the idea of using a revolving stage to change the spectator's viewpoint: he described its effect on the structure of the presentation:

Ainsi naissent des ruptures ou des concentrations d'attention, des effets comiques et dramatiques
dont le théâtre n'avait jamais disposé jusqu'à ce jour, et cela sans qu'à aucun moment, en dépit des actuelles imperfections techniques, on ait l'impression de cinéma à rabais. L'instrument théâtral s'est vraiment enrichi d'un clavier, d'un registre nouveau.  

The traditional audience-stage relationship had been transformed within the limitations of a traditional building:

Nous ne sommes plus derrière le quatrième mur, mais derrière tous les murs à la fois. Ou bien, la pièce n'est plus divisée en "tableaux" placés devant nous, mais en "sculptures" qui pivotent sur un socle pour se présenter dans toutes ses dimensions.

Although some spectators were somewhat distracted by the continuous movement of the stage, most critics seemed overwhelmed by the originality of Planchon's use of such a simple device. Pierre Marcabru called it "... un tournant dans l'histoire du théâtre ..." for it gave the stage a new dimension:

Cela donne deux mises en scène complémentaires: l'une dans le mouvement du plateau tournant; l'autre dans l'immobilité de ce même plateau; sans compter une troisième, extérieure au cercle mobile, et qui permet de nombreuses alliances entre les éléments fixes et les éléments mobiles.

For him, it was undeniably an inestimable advance in theatre direction:

Au mouvement dramatique traditionnel s'ajoute un mouvement dans l'espace, mouvement qui permet de varier, et l'intensité de l'action dramatique, et les apparences de cette action. On ne saurait trop attacher d'importance à cette modification des conventions théâtrales.

Only Bernard Dort took exception to the revolving

1. Le Monde, October 18th, 1961.
stage, on the grounds that it was inappropriate for this play. Brecht, thought Dort, had wanted a central image of the inn ("l'auberge du Calice") which would underline its fixity and its intimacy in a turbulent and strife-ridden world. By opening up the production, Planchon had disregarded this fundamental opposition: "... le fait d'avoirdétransformé ce lieu clos en une aire de jeu ouverte, mouvante et tournoyante, immobilise paradoxalement le spectacle: Stalingrad et Prague, la guerre et le peuple, l'aliénation et la permanence s'y confondent." Later, in a discussion recorded in Théâtre Populaire, Denis Bablet said that using the set "literally" in the way that Dort suggested would have been reverting to naturalism. Instead, Planchon had found another way of putting across the idea of stability: he had made the characters who frequent the inn positive, in contrast to the Nazi characters who are caricatures. Dort, however, in the same discussion, repeated his criticism: it was not in the characters, but in the inn itself that the picture of permanence should lie.

Planchon wrote a lengthy reply to Dort. He said that the main opposition in the play was between the higher regions and the lower regions, whereas the contrast pointed out by Dort was of secondary importance. Nevertheless, he added, this lesser contrast had been indicated in the Villeurbanne production. For example, the costumes for the habitués of the inn were made of various different materials, and in different shades of grey; for the great anabasis in Russia, however, costumes and even the fabric part of the sets had all been made from exactly the same material. Planchon also argued that the auberge du Calice was staged as open purposefully, in order to make a point about the war; using Dort's own metaphor of a Noah's Ark, he explained this point:

L'Arche est d'abord ouverte, comment pourrait-elle ne pas l'être? Et les gens s'y trouvent connaissent les rafles, les arrestations, les violences; l'époque est "mouvementée"; puis c'est la guerre, avec ses batailles, ses bombardements, etc.; "tournoyante" est un qualificatif osé, mais expressif. Le plateau tournant, rassurez-vous, était plus qu'un moyen technique.

Allio's use of colour was also a meaningful contribution to this theme. In the discussion with Bablet and Dort, Françoise Kourilsky pointed out that colour was one of the ways in which Planchon underlined the opposition between the inn and the world:

Et les couleurs vives et chaudes des costumes d'Allio dans les scènes rêvées me semblent avoir - au-delà d'une valeur d'opposition "formelle" entre la réalité et le rêve - une puissance émotionnelle dont la fonction est de montrer la permanence de ce lieu qui reste amical et familier au milieu même de l'univers inhumain de la guerre.

Poirot-Delpech also commented on the use of colour to make the distinction which Planchon felt was more important, the opposition between the higher regions and the lower regions:

... le noir et le blanc des costumes, loin d'apparaître comme une imitation gratuite de l'écran, recrée à merveille l'ambiance tragique d'événements marqués à jamais par la grisaille de Mein Kampf. Les rares taches de couleur - apparition en rouge des maîtres du Reich et rêve bariolé de Schweyk dans la steppe - prennent une valeur émotionnelle dont personne n'avait fait l'épreuve avant René Allio.

The music was heard as a familiar and apt accompaniment to a presentation of the Nazi period. Poirot-Delpech found it very well performed:

La musique de Hans Eisler, enfin, presque aussi importante et frappante que celle de Kurt Weill dans l'Opéra de quat' sous est parfaitement servie dans ses parodies wagnériennes ou nazies comme dans ses ren- gaines d'orphéon, grâce notamment à Pia

Colombo, dont la pureté gouailleuse rappelle la jeune Édith Piaf.

Claude Olivier too, found Colombo's acting adequate, and was impressed by her singing, and pleased with the music in general. Only a few found fault with the accompaniment. Marcabru spoke of the weakness of the Wagnerian parody. Gabriel Marcel complained of the first scene, set in the higher regions, in which, he said, "... Hitler et ses compagons s'égosillent de façon inintelligible, au son d'une musique wagnérienne qui se veut burlesque"; there was no comparison in his opinion, between Eisler's music here and that of Kurt Weill for the Threepenny Opera.

For the performance of Jean Bouise as Schweyk, there was almost universal acclaim. Even Gabriel Marcel was moved to a few words of praise: "M. Jean Bouise est un Schweyk remarquable qui a joué le rôle avec beaucoup de simple vérité." For most critics, it was this performance as well as the liberating stage innovations which made the play such a success. Peter Lennon felt that the physical appearance of this "jewel of an actor" seemed to designate him for the part of Schweyk:

I could imagine no more cosy and confident take-over of the Schweyk personality than that accomplished by Bouise: he has a crafty eye, a mouth made for imbecility, a hoarse and offensively contented laugh, and the swaggering assurance of a Candide who knows that the world is even more of a cretin than he is; add to this his exceptional mimetic gifts and an insouciant control of timing ...

Pierre Marcabru's estimation of Bouise was that he was no less than a brilliant actor; his personality, his demeanour, and his looks suited this role perfectly: "Le visage d'un comique

malin, un apparent je m'enfichisme, un côté brouillard et insolent, puis une certaine manière de mettre les pieds dans le plat le plus paisiblement du monde, Jean Bouise offre à Schweyk une invulnérabilité qui tient du miracle." This was a type of acting infrequently seen on Parisian stages at that time; in a Brechtian role, Bouise's always understated and controlled acting became doubly effective. Marcabru noted:

C'est le type même de l'acteur dérangeant, de l'acteur qui, par sa seule présence, menace le bel équilibre des choses, bouleverse les rassurantes disciplines. De là un anarchisme pataud qui s'accorde admirablement à ce Brecht détendu et blagueur, jamais dupe, et qui plaide pour l'homme pris dans le furieux courant des guerres.

He went on to describe Bouise's interpretation as a symbol of the ever triumphant will of the people to survive. Although the performance had a certain cynisme éloquent, it left the impression that Schweyk was a positive character and not an equivocal one:

... c'est cela, Schweyk, une passivité conquérante. Celle du peuple... . L'instinct et la raison de Schweyk, sa sagesse aussi, c'est de survivre. Cela, Bouise l'a remarquablement rendu: cet entêtement charnel, où il n'entre pas de haine, où il n'entre pas d'aigreur, mais une tranquillité roulblarde, mais un acharnement joyeux, c'est celui d'un peuple triomphant et dominateur et qui mange ses héros avec un appétit féroce.

He even went as far as to compare Brecht's vision with the taoist philosophy - a conscious acceptance of the absurdity of life. Perhaps Poirot-Delpech was right to exclaim at the ambiguity of the character, if in trying to analyse Schweyk intelligent critics could be led so far afield. Claude Olivier saw in Bouise's performance an evocation of many popular heroes. He praised the actor's discipline behind this performance: "Un métier vrai, c'est-à-dire qui ne sert jamais à faire des "effets" mais qui est

mis tout entier au service d'une sensibilité la plus fine, de l'intelligence la plus aigüe. Au service du rôle."

He gave Planchon much of the credit for this interpretation, as well. Schweyk at Villeurbanne was neither Hašek's nor Brecht's hero, but a more linear, more provocative, and far less ambiguous character:

"Et, petit à petit, se façonne l'image non pas du "brave homme" poussé par les événements, un peu lâche et un peu sot, qui ne trouve rien d'autre à faire que d'opposer une certaine forme d'inertie à ceux qui le brutalisent d'une façon ou d'une autre - et qui "s'en tire" tant bien que mal: petit à petit apparaît un individu rusé, roublard d'abord, puis qui déploie des trésors d'ingéniosité pour lutter contre la tyrannie.

Olivier concluded that the character created by Bouise was perhaps closer to our own reality. Possibly Planchon had intended to make him "recognisable" to a Villeurbanne audience.

Bernard Dort also thought that Schweyk had been simplified. All the characters, he said, were far too likeable in Planchon's production; they were "tendres agneaux". Bouise, it is true, was so brilliant a comedian that he could be called a new Fernandel. He had, however, made the character of Schweyk too worthy of approval: "Le Schweyk de Brecht pouvait avoir raison en paroles, mais il avait tort dans ses actes." Robert Kanters was impressed by Bouise's work, by his infectious vitality and his way of inspiring others, "... sans jamais tirer la couverture à soi." Although he did not consider the interpretation a betrayal of Brecht, his assessment certainly suggests that Bouise's Schweyk became a popular hero whose acquiescence in the war is overlooked because of his wit, his likeability.

1. "Schweyk dans la deuxième guerre mondiale de Bertolt Brecht...", Itinéraire, p.82.
and his capacity for survival:

Il est l'homme du bon sens populaire, conscient de l'absurdité, de la folie criminelle de la guerre, qui essaie de sauver sa liberté et sa peau par une prudence narquoise beaucoup plus que par le courage civique, le citoyen contre les pouvoirs dont l'astuce masquée en sottise laisse perplexes et pantois.

Bertrand Poirot-Delpech gave the best balanced criticism of the play.¹ He congratulated Planchon on his success in conveying the ambiguity of Brecht's play:

C'est le premier mérite de Roger Planchon, pourtant amateur à ses heures d'exégèses et de diversions, d'avoir laissé les spectateurs entièrement libres de leurs doutes et d'avoir exercé son ingéniosité famée dans le cadre strict de la pièce, c'est-à-dire un documentaire héroï-comique sur le petit peuple tchèque des années sombres.

He saw Bouise's performance as part of a whole in which "Les jeux de scène s'inspirent judicieusement du folklore, de la marionnette et du dessin animé..." Bouise had invented a style to suit the role, a style which suggested, as other critics had noted, all popular heroes rolled into one:

... Jean Bouise a inventé selon son coeur un type de "baratineur" lunatique où se retrouvent miraculeusement, sous l'exotisme tchèque toutes les figures universelles et nationales de la prose populaire. Un mélange inoubliable de Falstaff, de Till Eulenspiegel, de Charlot, de Rellys, de Bussière, de tous les guignols; l'image même de cet instinct débrouillard et fraternel qui proteste de siècle en siècle contre son contraire sans trop savoir comment.

Poirot-Delpech also commented on the company's esprit de corps, for even the brilliance of such an artist as Bouise was dedicated to a common enterprise. The troupe gave an impression, "... exceptionnelle de nos jours, d'une équipe solidaire sachant où elle veut aller et lucidement docile à ses maîtres, en dehors de tous les jeux d'argent ou de prestige." The sense of a wholeness in the direction, the

¹. Le Monde, October 18th, 1961.
visual effects, and the acting, was perhaps a key to understanding Planchon's production.

In an illuminating article, Edouard Pfriimmer gave a lucid analysis of the quality of Schweyk's resistance in Brecht's play. Hitler, in the first scenes of the play, asks three questions about the common man: is he willing to come to the aid of the Führer; will he work for the Führer; will he fight for the Führer. Pfriimmer points out that Schweyk in the course of the play answers all three questions. Schweyk does come to his Führer's aid: arrested by the SS, he collaborates with them to get out of their clutches. He begins to feel, however, that he must be compensated with money for losing the respect of his fellow citizens by collaborating. Hitler's first question is thus answered: Schweyk will collaborate if it pays. The second answer is that Schweyk will work "voluntarily" if he is forced to do so; but he will do his utmost to play the fool so that the state, noticing he is costing them money, will free him. Finally, the answer to the third question is that he will fight if he must: told to march, he marches. But again there is an ironic twist to his docility; he marches on a revolving platform:

Nous voyons qu'il a beau marcher IL N'AVANCE PAS! Et c'est bien ça, en définitive, le sens de cette formule. Schweyk'n'avancant pas, Hitler non plus n'avance pas.... Telle est en résumé la ligne directrice de cette pièce.

Two features of Bouise's performance struck every critic: his cooperation with the other actors in his company, and his ability to recall a host of other popular heroes. If Bouise's acting brought to mind so many folk heroes, his performance cannot have been as one-sided as some critics suggested. There is an ambiguity inherent in the character of many folk figures; the idea of passive resistance often involves an acceptance of evils which cannot be avoided.

except by giving one's own life. Furthermore, Planchon showed Schweyk, not in isolation, but in relation to other characters; he placed him not in a vacuum, but in the context of a meaningful stage language. Was there not a real resistance fighter in the play, the widow Kopeka, whose heroism showed up Schweyk's self-preservation instincts? Was there not also, in the scene of Schweyk's long pointless march on a revolving platform, an image of the essential question of the play: is Schweyk's kind of resistance only accidentally harmful to the Reich? Planchon maintained the willed ambiguity of the play, not by concentrating it into one actor's performance, but by juxtaposing to Schweyk people and objects that made his morality look doubtful.

The production was judged very good by the vast majority of critics. It was "... un spectacle qui ravive, d'un coup, le goût pour le théâtre."

The praise which Planchon probably valued most, however, was that of Poirot-Delpech: "... il n'échappera à aucun amateur de théâtre vivant que leur spectacle, tel qu'il est, représente une des meilleures chances d'associer le nouveau public à un art menacé de mort."

Planchon's productions of Adamov and Brecht were examples of his Brechtian orientation. Arthur Adamov and Planchon shared an early admiration for Brecht's work, and a concern with the individual's relation to his social context and with history. Adamov's Paolo Paoli and the Tchitchikov of Les Ames mortes both engage in a trade which is apparently peripheral to society but which

in fact reflects and prolongs a materialistic and exploitative economic system. Shen Té, the "good soul" of Sé-Tchouan, and Brecht's version of Hašek's hero Schweyk are both caught in an imperfect world in which survival depends on compromise, but in which compromise may seem morally unjustifiable nevertheless. In all four plays, Planchon attempted to show the ambiguity of the characters' motives and of their conduct within their situations.

Critics of the late 50's and the early 60's were startled by the plays themselves, by their relevance to social and political issues, and by their lack of romantic complications; they were also impressed, however, with the careful staging which brought them to life. It was unusual to see a troupe working as a unit, with no competition for star status among the actors; it was exciting to sense that equal attention had been given to the visual, the musical, and the textual elements of the presentations. It was extremely uncommon to see a company whose artistic concerns were allied to the interests of a new class of theatre-goers.
CHAPTER V

FOUR ENGLISH CLASSICS

The production of Shakespearian plays in France presents many problems for a director. There is, firstly, the major difficulty of translating and adapting a poetic text from another century. There is, secondly, the disadvantage of the audience's unfamiliarity with the history of England, and with the conventions of the Elizabethan stage. Yet it has been noted that in the popular movement in the theatres of the fifties and the sixties, Shakespeare was included in the repertoire of many young companies.

For Roger Planchon, the choice of Shakespeare was motivated by other reasons than that of his personal admiration for the dramatist. He considered the form of Shakespeare's plays and their scope well suited to a popular audience. As we have seen, he chose to put on Henry IV at Villerbanne, because he sensed that his public would appreciate its fast pace and its sense of conflict. Indeed in Shakespeare the great number of short tableau-like sequences create a cinematic effect far removed from that of the classical French drama. The rhythm of the plays was thus familiar to Planchon's company, as they were well trained from the start in using film-like enchaînements in their productions. According to Peter Brook, even in England directors have only recently recognised the importance of this structure:

In England at least, all productions for quite some time have been influenced by the discovery that Shakespeare's plays were written to be performed continuously, that their cinematic structure of alternating short scenes, plot intercut with subplot, were all part of a total shape. This shape is only revealed dynamically, that is, in the uninterrupted sequence of these scenes...

As productions in France too became transformed, as directors showed that they had understood this need for fluidity, the critical response also evolved; critics began to redefine the very basis of their judgments:

... la grande victoire de Shakespeare en France depuis les efforts d'Antoine, de Copeau et de Gémier; il est devenu l'un des rares dramaturges classiques au sujet desquels la critique dramatique française, aujourd'hui, commence à parler théâtre avant de parler littérature.¹

Having taken form in an age and a place where the sets and even the action were usually reduced to a stark simplicity the plays had the directness necessary in productions aimed at the unsophisticated:

La plus grande simplicité d'intentions - et de moyens - semble jusqu'à présent demeurer la recette la plus efficace pour satisfaire ce véritable grand public. Sans doute ce n'est pas un hasard si elle demeure également la plus sûre recette pour ne pas trahir Shakespeare.²

It was more than the form of the plays, however, which led modern young directors to choose Shakespeare as a popular dramatist. The works of his age are the products of a civilisation similar to our own, "... une forme de civilisation chrétienne ... mais tout imprégnée d'humanisme ..."³ Roger Planchon has praised Shakespeare's treatment of historical themes and his ability to bring out the individual within his context. The preoccupations of the Elizabethan age, the nature of political power, the relation of the private individual to his public role, the concept of necessary violence, these are concerns of our own time. This is why the plays need little interprétation in Planchon's sense; a fidelity to the text, and to the spirit in which it was written, even simply a respect for the author, Chatenet

² Ibid, p.46.
³ Ibid, p.11.
writes, are the qualities which will satisfy French critics in a Shakespearian production.¹ Jacquot pointed out that Jan Kott could very legitimately call Shakespeare our contemporary:

Déclarer que Shakespeare est "notre contemporain" et non un vieil auteur qu'il faut retaper pour le rendre agréable à un auditoire plus raffiné; c'est reconnaître dans ses pièces des situations, des interrogations, qui nous concernent, et parfois de la manière la plus angoissante.²

Falstaff and Henry V

So, like gross terms,
The prince will, in the perfectness of time,
Cast off his followers, and their memory
Shall as a pattern or a measure live,
By which his Grace must mete the lives of others,
Turning past evils to advantage.

— Shakespeare Henry IV, Pt.I IV.iv.73-78

The Théâtre de la Cité's production of Henry IV was given in two parts, roughly following the two parts of Shakespeare's play, the first entitled Falstaff, the second Henry V. Each part lasted three hours. The structure of the play was altered for the presentation. Émile Copfermann explained the alterations and their effect:

Roger Planchon suit d'assez près le texte original; mais il met entre parenthèses son découpage en deux fois cinq actes — et en scènes — pour lui préférer des tableaux: quinze dans la première partie, qui s'achève avec l'exécution de Worcester, et quatorze dans la seconde.
La comparaison entre les deux versions

1. Ibid. p.94.

montre que si la structure de l'oeuvre n'est pas respectée, ... l'adaptation du Théâtre de la Cité respecte non seulement le canevas mais la fable et presque tous les personnages.  

Roger Planchon chose un style épique de présentation, dans lequel "... chaque élément reçoit son sens dans un tableau, et les tableaux sont séparés par des noirs et des projections de phrases importantes que l'on entendra ensuite...". In order that everything be clear to his public, Roger Planchon arranged for a screen to appear between tableaux, indicating as in a silent film what was about to happen. Although Marc Bernard called this technique "... le linceul de nos illusions", it was proof not only of Planchon's Brechtian disregard for the audience's emotional involvement, but also of his overwhelming concern for clarity. The short sequences followed the fast pace of Shakespeare's play; the projections helped the spectators to follow the plot by singling out essential lines. Mimed scenes were also used, mainly to portray the exploitation of the common people, and these in most cases were legitimate interpretations of the text, and of history:

Au cours de l'action, de brèves scènes mimées suggéraient les épreuves, les outrages subis par les soldats et les gens du peuple. Et ces épisodes n'étant en contradiction ni avec le texte ni, hélas, avec la réalité de l'histoire, leur introduction était parfaitement légitime.

Émile Copfermann gives a comparative reading of Victor Hugo's translation of the play and of that of the Théâtre de la Cité. He notes that, in Planchon's version often "... un parler bien en langue pour les comédiens a été substitué au

1. Émile Copfermann, Roger Planchon (Lausanne: Éditions 1'Age d'Homme, 1969), pp. 82-83.
He points out that not only the actors were treated with consideration in this adaptation:

Le texte, le langage même, réduit, qui souvent manie l'ellipse, respecte le modèle. Là encore, on a visé une plus grande clarté, compte tenu la traduction en français d'un parler pour lequel il faut chercher l'équivalence, compte tenu, aussi, l'ignorance à peu près complète qu'on a de ce côté-ci de la Manche de l'histoire d'Angleterre et des guerres très compliquées qui s'y succédèrent.

Planchon's audience were unfamiliar, not only with English history and with Shakespeare, but with the theatrical medium in itself. The sets, therefore, like the structural and textual adaptations, were designed to help them disentangle a complex plot. The backdrop gave general geographical information, while the stage props indicated the precise setting of certain scenes:

... le décor général est une vaste tente sur laquelle courent les cartes de l'époque, ce qui donne une marche à l'histoire. Sur ce fond s'implantent les meubles, les objets, les murs ou les bornes qui précisent les lieux dans le temps; ils sont précisés dans l'espace par des maquettes de chaque côté de la scène où la pancarte souligne l'indication géographique...

This solution had been selected by Allio2 after he had rejected two other ideas. He had thought at first of enclosing the set in medieval wooden screens, but this, as well as being heavy and cumbersome, would have shown only one aspect of the middle ages. His second idea had been to use large romanesque buttresses, but this would have made no comment on the play, and would have complicated the scenes set out of doors. The final solution was chosen, he said, because it was more meaningful: "Cela donnait au spectacle le plus

large contexte possible, élargissait l'histoire, mais avec le maximum de précision descriptive." One is reminded again of Allio's ideal balance between an evidently theatrical general présentation and a carefully realistic représentation:

Les différents lieux sont indiqués par la mise en place vraie des éléments que l'on trouve tout près du corps des hommes dans la vie quotidienne; ils encadrent et conditionnent les gestes: meubles, bornes, troncs d'arbres, petites parties de mur. Ce choix doit permettre une restitution assez réaliste ... du cadre matériel de l'époque.

A sloping stage was used in order to emphasise the backstage action, and to project the show towards the public. Claude Olivier lauded the simplicity of the set and of the production as a whole, for it was reminiscent of its Shakespearian model:

On est stupéfait de voir ce que Planchon a pu faire, sans aucun artifice, si ce n'est celui qui consiste à créer avec quelques morceaux de bois une place publique aménagée pour une cérémonie officielle: à faire d'une dizaine d'acteurs une foule, de cinq ou six gardes une meute de gardiens de "l'ordre". 1

With the wall maps setting the atmosphere, the most appropriate type of costumes would be very plain ones. The simplicity of the final costume design was only an apparent one, however, for they were thought out with great care, to give the spectator leads into the social and the moral position of the characters. Allio divided the characters into three groups. 2 Firstly, the proletariat, those who frequent taverns, would be people unable to afford colourful clothing; they were therefore dressed in rough

1. Lettres Françaises, June 11th-17th, 1959.
or limp fabrics in dull tones. The second group, foot-soldiers, were dressed in poor, shapeless uniforms, impersonal, ill-fitting, and cumbersome, which gave an impression of stiff leather and steel. The third group, the nobles, wore well-cut clothing, which looked warm, comfortable, and luxurious. Even among them there were distinctions, however, and they became most apparent in battle. Allio showed these differences in a chart defining them by their apparel:

**LES SEIGNEURS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Politiques</th>
<th>Chefs de tribus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tenue confortable mais plus sobre</td>
<td>parés, costumés de caractère agressif</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Le Roi</td>
<td>- Percy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Westmoreland</td>
<td>- Glendower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Northumberland</td>
<td>- Mortimer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Hastings</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guerriers efficaces</th>
<th>Frivoles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>soldats de métier tenue sobre</td>
<td>avec un peu de parade ou du moins élégants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Walter Blunt</td>
<td>- Glocester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Mowbray</td>
<td>- Clarence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Warwick</td>
<td>- Lancastre (les jeunes surtout)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Allio made an interesting point about the Prince of Wales and his companion Poins through their manner of dressing: "Le costume du prince Henry est d'une simplicité raffinée (c'est le type du jeune riche en blue jean et en blouson de peau), le costume de Poins est son ombre minable." Planchon said in an interview that the Prince's costume changed as he did: "... il a d'abord des espèces de blue-jeans, après il met le veston croisé, puis le smoking, enfin il porte la robe royale, une robe lourde, terrible, sous laquelle il est comme écrasé". Critics responded with

interest to this carefully planned costuming. Jean Jacquot could see the kind of distinctions between people that Allio wished to make:

... Allio utilisait le costume pour caractériser chaque groupe social et ses variantes individuelles, tirant parti de la rugosité, du moelleux, de l'opulence, de l'usure, de l'éclat ou de l'aspect terni et délavé, composant une riche harmonie de matériaux et de pigments, en évitant les tons purs qui réduisent le personnage au schéma et au signe.

André Gisselbrecht gave a very thorough and sensitive account of the use of costume in the production:

... on a fait en sorte que la diversité des costumes aide le spectateur à saisir le sens de l’œuvre; l'habit comme le décor (l'admirable carte médiévale de René Allio qui symbolise le Moyen Age politique et guerrier, les emblèmes féodaux ou ecclésiastiques) sont significants; parmi les seuls seigneurs, les chefs de tribus (gallois surtout), impulsifs et coléreux, sont affublés d'attributs et peints aux couleurs vives des coqs de combat, tandis que les "politiques" retors et cyniques sont drapés dans des habits plus sobres, de teintes plus graves; il n'est pas jusqu'à Henry IV, le vieil usurpateur, qui ne soit dénué dans l'habit de toute véritable majesté royale: sa tunique de vieux joueur de boule (lyonnais!) sur laquelle se promène, de temps en temps, une breloque, insigne du chef, manifeste en lui l'usurpateur, l'illégitimité, mais aussi l'habileté combinarde, une absence de race et de grandeur que seule la mort révèlera pleinement...

The sound track, like the sets and the costumes, underlined various phases of the action and was a commentary on different groups; Jacquot described them as "... des musiques d'époque utilisées 'sociologiquement' pour caractériser l'Eglise, la Cour, le Peuple, par fragments opposés,

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superposés, ou mêlés à des bruits...".\(^1\) Lochy said\(^2\) that he had aimed to connect the scenes musically, finishing the last tableau before each break, and preparing the next one. As each part of the play was balanced between the serious and the clownish, as it was set between two reigns, the music had to convey a certain complexity of dramatic levels:

Les matériaux y sont donc, ... complexes: thèmes traditionnels (l'autrefois), thèmes plus abruptes (aujourd'hui) et par-dessus le tout, un bruitage évocateur: cloches, foules, chevaux, foudre, cliquetis d'armes, rythmes divers, etc.

For the scenes set in the old king's palace, the musical accompaniment was courtly and vaguely religious; for the scenes with the prince, Lochy composed "... des thèmes grinçants ...". Recordings of Lochy's music were made over recorded bits of older music. In some scenes, especially for the monologues, themes were subtly underscored. In the main, however, Lochy felt that the accompaniment for this play was utilitarian; because of the play's preoccupation with war, the music was mostly martial in mood.

Gisèlebrecht\(^3\) said of the production: "... on sera obligé d'y réfléchir, avant et après, ainsi que l'ont voulu les animateurs de ce théâtre dans la cité." It was perfectly well adapted, he thought, to the public for whom it was intended:

Henry VI [IV] est un spectacle complet: le burlesque et l'obscénité y voisinent avec la violence, l'attendrissement et le tragique; le mouvement y est tel que même l'habitué de quartier n'est pas trop dépayssé; Planchon offre à son public populaire, frais émoulu, une grande leçon politique sur un rythme de western; et dans un cadre énorme: en deux "époques" de trois heures chacune ... Pour

\(^1\) Jacquot, Shakespeare en France, p.127.
\(^2\) "Pour Shakespeare. La musique", Le Travail au Théâtre de la Cité, pp. 15-16.
\(^3\) "Henry IV de William Shakespeare", Itinéraire, pp. 45,47.
faciliter à ce public la transition du cinéma, qu'il fréquente toujours, à ce théâtre qu'il boude encore, Planchon est disposé même à abréger les intervalles entre les tableaux et à réduire les mouvements des serviteurs de scène.

The audience, in other words, was respected; Olivier was also impressed:

Magie d'un théâtre qui fait du spectateur non le voyeur ou le complice, mais le témoin d'aventures dont, intimement mêlé à elles, il se trouve être à la fois juge et partie, acteur passionné et censeur intransigeant. 1

Even Chatenet, who did not like the principles on which the production was based, had to admit that Planchon had successfully broken with the long-standing tradition that no play should last longer than two hours; despite the length of the presentation, he said, not one complaint was heard. 2

There were varied reactions to the adaptation of the text. In Chatenet's opinion the characters seemed to be constantly winking at the audience:

Ce qui est acceptable dans un drame où un bouffon tient le plus beau rôle devient impensable s'il s'agit du Roi Lear aussi bien que de La Tempête, et nous prive, dans Henry IV, des plus nobles vertus du texte de Shakespeare... 3

Roger Planchon claimed to have given as clear and as faithful a rendering as possible; he felt, in retrospect, that his decision to respect the play as a whole had been the right one:

... nous avons tout donné, intégralement: mon travail d'adaptateur a seulement consisté à rendre le texte plus clair, plus efficace que celui des traductions françaises que nous connaissions - jamais à le simplifier. Là nous avons eu raison: ce qui a attaché notre public, c'est la richesse, la complexité.

1. Lettres Françaises, June 11th-17th, 1959.
2. Chatenet, Shakespeare sur la scène française depuis 1940, p.89.
de l’œuvre, le fait qu’elle se déroule sur plusieurs plans, qu’elle raconte plusieurs histoires. Ainsi chaque spectateur a pu y voir ce qui l’intéressait le plus.

The Théâtre de la Cité’s treatment of the play, according to Gisselbrecht, should satisfy even anglicistes: "... d’autant plus que l’adaptateur n’a pas eu à solliciter le texte (mises à part les quelques coupures nécessitées par l’horaire); il ne l’a pas non plus ‘modernisé’...; il l’a seulement, ça et là, distancé." He gave as an example the first scene.

Here the political motives for the king’s projected crusade were made obvious by the tone of the scene:

... dès lors qu’il [le discours du roi] est lancé d’un ton sec et sans pathos, comme un chef de bande lancerait l’ordre d’un "hold-up"...; l’épisode retrouve sa vraie signification; le spectateur est ramené de la sphère éthérée de l’héroïsme guerrier à celle des intérêts matériels - il y a toujours de ces chefs d’État qui tentent de sceller l’"union nationale", opération intérieure, par quelque guerre de rapines extérieure.

Jacquot also looked at the translation in relation to the stage presentation as a whole. He felt, however, that the stage indications, the signs, the sound effects, etc., were overdone, and the text over-edited:

On semblait craindre que l’auditoire ne réagît pas comme il fallait. Et pour commencer, qu’il se laissât prendre aux séductions du verbe shakespearien. Le metteur en scène avait fait connaître sa volonté de retirer son "aura" poétique à la langue des rois. Ceci n’apparut que trop clairement dès le monologue d’ouverture, où suraient dû éclater les deux grands thèmes de la guerre civile et de la croisade, mais qui fut écourté et assourdi au point de perdre son sens.

The text was so anti-heroic that it disappointed critics expecting a classical grandeur in Shakespeare’s characters.

There was unanimous praise for the interpretation of Falstaff by Jean Bouise. Dressed in a tan buckskin suit,

moving about with tender consideration for his great stomach, he had an animal-like presence which suited the role perfectly. Bouise created an ambiguous personage true to the Shakespearian model; Jacquot's successive reactions to the character in the course of the presentation are an indication of the richness of the performance:

Falstaff apparaissait comme un juge lucide, encore qu'aviné, des actions des grands. Sa voix grasseyante était celle du bon sens populaire. Pourtant, ayant lié son destin au prince, comme Mère Courage avait lié le sien à la guerre, il méritait sa disgrâce. Il était permis cependant de s'attarder un moment sur cette créature effondrée, tandis que le cortège du nouveau roi poursuivait sa marche implacable.¹

Bouise succeeded, with his great common sense, in making people laugh heartily; Guillot even said that Bouise seemed to "...réinventer le comique et le rire à chacun de ses mots ou de ses gestes dans le rôle écrasant de Falstaff."² At the same time Falstaff was given a real hearing. If on the one hand the king's speech on war in the first scene had been debunked, on the other hand, Falstaff's famous speech on honour in Act V, scene 1, was spoken as a serious outcry rather than a simple coward's self-justification. It was "...d'une insolence frisant la révolte, une révolte d'autant plus exemplaire qu'elle est confuse et vaine."³ He was the central image of the play, showing up both the concept of heroism, and the hard materialism of his society:

Choisirons-nous le monde féodal ou le monde de l'argent? Falstaff démystifie pour nous l'un et l'autre. Il raisonne, commente; un gros tambour comique qui raisonne plutôt qu'un héros de la conscience qui juge. Falstaff, l'énorme présence difforme et déformée de la réalité quotidienne, la constatation bouffonne et absurde de la comédie du pouvoir, souffrira comme nous du passage de la violence au droit de ce même

¹ Shakespeare en France, pp. 127-128.
² Lettres Françaises, November 20th, 1958.
Falstaff's last scene was made unequivocally pathetic, in order to emphasise the inexorability of the historical process and the ultimate vulnerability of such a character within it:

Il s'effondre sur l'estrade même d'où, quelques instants auparavant, son ancien compagnon, devenu roi, l'a rejeté - et fait jeter en prison. Jean Bouise peint alors le désarroi, l'angoisse, l'immense vide soudain du personnage, avec une intensité qui prend le spectateur à la gorge.²

Other characters, caught in the same historical cycle, were humanised in the same way. It was the presence of Falstaff which made it impossible to stage battles as glorious, or to present the nobles as honorable or superior men:

... il n'y a plus de "grandeur": les actions des nobles, dépouillées de toute auréole, n'ont pas plus de "noblesse" que celles des escarpes: c'est qu'elles leur ressemblent fort; le respectable archevêque d'York est traîné à terre par les sbires, et les rebelles pris au piège déloyal de la bataille de Shrewsbury sont emmenés avec des "allez!" brutaux comme des chevaux de labour ... ou des grévistes. L'héroïsme est dévalué: parce qu'il est singé par un fanfaron, et parce qu'on nous le montre voilant mal ses vrais mobiles, préfigurant ses vrais résultats.³

In one instance, according to Jacquot, the anti-heroic slant of the production went too far:

... lorsque Hotspur était assassiné par trahison tandis qu'il affrontait le prince Henri en combat singulier, le sens de la scène était faussé, puisque le poète n'avait pas eu l'intention de montrer ici la perfidie du prince.⁴

Planchon humanised the heroes by showing them, off the battlefields, engaged in meeting their physical needs or in gratifying their petty weaknesses:

Prenons la scène où l'archevêque d'York, vitupère contre la versatilité du peuple, las de l'usurpateur jusqu'à l'indigestion, dès lors que l'on nous montre ce féodal parlant d'indigestion en avalant les biscuits qu'un moïillon lui sert sur un plat d'argent, ses propos perdent leur valeur absolue, et par la même leur crédit (de façon générale, Planchon a délibérément accentué le substrat matériel de l'action en faisant manger le héros, comme dans la scène où les rebelles se partagent à table l'Angleterre comme un gâteau).

John of Lancaster, wrote Claude Olivier, was shown to be a deceiver, a person worthy of the haunts of the prince and Falstaff: "L'étrange main que celle de ce jeune Lancaster, dont Jean-Baptiste Thierrée trace avec grand talent la silhouette ambiguë, à la fois seigneur de pure race et 'tricheur' comme pas un." King Henry IV, he went on, was portrayed as a monarch unconcerned for the welfare of his subjects, like any political adventurer:

Obsession sinistre de ce moribond, pour qui le premier moyen de gouvernement fut toujours d'allumer la guerre en des terres lointaines afin d'avoir les mains plus libres à l'intérieur, sans souci aucun des véritables intérêts du pays non plus que de la vie de ses sujets.

The Prince of Wales was played as utterly ruthless especially in his final, callous rejection of Falstaff. Jan Kott thought that "... la compagnie de Falstaff et des coupeurs de bourses est une bien meilleure école de royauté que le carnage féodal. Ces occupations, du reste, ne diffèrent pas tant que cela l'une de l'autre." The plebian wisdom or cynicism of Falstaff parallels the ruthless actions

2. Lettres Françaises, June 11th-17th, 1959.
of the nobles: "... aux grands dégradés, plus pauvres types que nobles, correspond le produit dégradé, ou politicaillerie, de la 'grande' politique..."¹ The tavern was indeed clearly shown by the Théâtre de la Cité to be a school for a prince:

Investir un pichet de vin, circonscrire l'aubergiste, remplir sa bourse vide sont des actes réclamant un génie certain de la tactique, voire de la stratégie....
Embrasser la patronne du bogue pour mieux la dépouiller de son argent vaut accorder un faux pardon aux rebelles pour mieux les trahir.²

The prince was played by Planchon himself in the 1958 production; Claude Olivier rated the performance very highly:

Il [Planchon] montre ... le jeune Henry V, encore novice, mais prompt à jouer son rôle de monarque, inflexible déjà dans sa volonté d'écarteler de son chemin tout ce qui peut le gêner, tous ceux aussi qui furent hier ses compagnons, tel Falstaff.³

He summed up the prince's character by emphasising the scene in which, with his dying father beside him, the prince picks up the crown and caresses it as a symbol of his imminent power. The characters as a whole were played as human beings, seldom sublime, often ridiculous, sometimes monstrous.

If Planchon loved Shakespeare's works, it was for a reason especially evident in Henry IV. Gisselbrecht stated it succinctly:⁴ "C'est que les 'caractères' n'y sont jamais traités isolément et pour eux-mêmes, mais toujours au travers des grandes collisions historiques; c'est que les destins individuels y sont indissolublement liés au destin collectif, la psychologie à la politique." Thus,

³. Olivier, Lettres Françaises, June 11th-17th, 1959.
Gisselbrecht continued, Hotspur was both an individual and a representative of a code of belief and behaviour at a specific time in history; Planchon's idea of the character came through in the performance of André Sattisse as Hotspur:

... Percy Hotspur est bien le jeune homme fougueux, généreux et malheureux, prodigue de son sang, présomptueux et fataliste de Shakespeare; mais c'est aussi le féodalisme agonisant, avec sa brûlure d'honneur, sa fraîcheur de sentiments et son absence de calculs, devant la monarchie absolutiste et la Realpolitik; ses adieux à sa femme, la scène, tout à fait originale et d'une naïveté presque, où elle essaie de le retenir, est une scène d'amour, mais d'amour féodal: la femme est un doux trésor, mais que les affaires d'hommes ne regardent pas - la chose possédée n'a pas de droits sur qui la possède.

That Planchon had wished to bring out this dimension of the scene between Percy and his wife is clear. Both couples in this play, he said, are unable to communicate. Usually the actor playing Hotspur simply makes his misogynous remarks in a sharper tone. Planchon felt that the scene would gain in significance if Percy showed the conflicting attitudes which his behaviour denotes: "La scène devient beaucoup plus saisissante si l'on montre le passage de Percy d'un état à l'autre. Percy joue avec sa femme, et brusquement il exige que celle-ci le considère comme un homme: un être supérieur." He remarked that Les Mains sales contains an almost identical scene. Not only single scenes could be seen in a modern light. The conversion of the Prince of Wales also had a contemporary resonance. Gisselbrecht saw him as the prototype of the industrialist's son sowing his wild oats and then stepping easily into a right-wing position inherited from his father.  

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quality and the historical dimension which Adamov tried to combine in the characters of his own plays. Jacquot gave Planchon's company credit for underlining the historical significance of the work as a whole:

Planchon et ses amis s'attachèrent, dans leurs commentaires, à préciser le contenu historique d'une œuvre qui représente une société dans son devenir, à travers une série de crises et de conflits, et où les personnages, aussi accusés que soient leurs traits individuels, sont toujours vus par rapport à l'ensemble.  

Planchon's talent for portraying a historical period in all its detail produced a thoroughly realistic impression of Shakespeare's age. Claude Olivier agreed with this interpretation of the play and of the period:

... je souscris entièrement à sa conception qui fait essentiellement de cette épopée shakespérienne ... le drame qui oppose les maîtres de l'heure à ceux qui, en définitive, constituent l'enjeu de ces luttes, du peuple sur lequel pèse la tyrannie du prince une fois son pouvoir établi.

Power changes hands from one tyrant to another. Historical cycles seem inexorable and inhuman. One of the things which the Théâtre de la Cité underlined was that the brunt of hardship is borne by the common people:

Mais il n'y a pas seulement la description d'une nouvelle volonté de puissance, il y a surtout la récréation provocante d'une histoire en marche qui montre que le pouvoir politique quel qu'il soit, trouve sa justification dans et par l'argent et que le pouvoir politique fait payer de son sang et de sa sueur au peuple qu'il opprime la grandeur des États.

Even the conservative critic Gabriel Marcel had to admit that using a Marxist approach to Shakespeare was wiping

2. Lettres Françaises, June 11th-17th, 1959.
the slate clean: "... tout nous a paru comme rafraîchi et
regénéré."¹ In the opinion of Claude Olivier, it was "... un spectacle étonnamment proche de notre réalité, en même
temps qu'il restitue, qu'il rend immédiatement perceptibles
les intentions profondes de Shakespeare."² There could
hardly be higher praise for a director committed to making
his twentieth century public love the best of the world's
dramatic art.

Marlowe's Edward II

But what are kings, when regiment is gone,
But perfect shadows in a sunshine day?
Marlowe Edward II V.i. 26-27.

In the programme for Édouard II, Roger Planchon
gave a very thorough picture of the process of creation in
his theatre early in its career. The record of the reharm-
sals³ follows, step by step, the decisions which the company
took in producing their version of Marlowe's play.

As ked in November, 1959, to create a play for the
Orange drama festival, the Théâtre de la Cité decided on
Marlowe because no modern play could fill the large dimensions
of the stage in the huge Roman theatre at Orange. As this
was early in the company's existence, the choice of a play
on the grounds of its historical content was new and deserved
explanation:

La chronique est pour nous le moyen de rendre
compte de la marche de l'Histoire. Nous
avons cessé de nous intéresser aux débats
psychologiques (style problème du couple ...
In February 1960, they decided they would use the text as freely as if it were a scenario. Flanchon studied Velasquez' painting Las Meninas and then considered Picasso's version of the same painting. Picasso, instead of simply rejuvenating the masterpiece, used it as a point of departure from which to create his own work. The Théâtre de la Cité decided to do the same thing with Marlowe's play. Already they felt a youthful delight at the thought of upsetting many people by this decision.

The company studied the play and found that its themes began to take shape in their discussions. Marlowe, they thought, unlike Shakespeare, deprives his king of any aura of divine right; he shows that it is men, and not principles, that are in conflict.

The first rehearsals at the Odéon in May, 1960, were simply improvisations on themes springing from research notes, with no text, set, props, or direction. The research had covered ideological and historical questions, and the problems of presentation. Two thirds of the time available, at this point, was still being taken up by discussion. Two decisions then emerged: firstly, the company must avoid recreating Henry IV; secondly, they would present historical facts more clearly than Marlowe had done. Émile Copfermann pointed out that the troupe was now taking a new attitude toward classical plays and their production. The mise en scène was becoming, in their new way of thinking, more than a mediator between the text, the actors, and the public; it would be

... médiateur d'une écriture première de la pièce, sa littérature ancienne, et une seconde

According to Copfermann, Roger Planchon was filling a void: the classical dramatists had not taken into account the march of history, and so it was up to the stage language to convey this. Certainly the Brechtian orientation of the company is evident in its decision to make the production clearer historically; the programme notes continue:

L'ancien s'effondre, le nouveau surgit, dans un chaos immense de vies humaines. Ce n'est pas sous le règne d'Édouard que la Renaissance s'établit, mais pour rendre plus exemplaire notre fable nous l'indiquons ainsi.

After presentations in Orange in July and in Daalbeck in August 1960, Planchon recorded in the journal a sentence which Peter Lennon could well call a "... shattering entry..."1 "Nov-Dec. 1960. Nous allons tout refaire: texte, décors, mise en scène." In the new interpretation which followed this decision, the play's meaning became more complex: "La longue réflexion sur la violence devient le rapport que la violence entretient avec les privilégiés pour les acquérir, les abattre ou les conserver." In order to convey this more complicated idea, the fable had to be made more concise, clear, and forceful. Their summary of Marlowe's play at this stage foreshadows the line which they would take in their productions of Shakespeare's Richard III and Troilus et Cressida, and echoes the essential theme of Adamov's Paolo Paoli: "Que dit la fable d'Édouard II? la marche de l'histoire. Les hommes faisant l'histoire sont façonnés par elle. Ici tous (presque) sont broyés par ce colosse." With the resumption of rehearsals in Villeurbanne in January 1961, the actors began to sense that they were playing in a very particular style, "... un jeu pointilliste", they recorded, "où seraient préservés les temps forts et

A note of despair came into one of the last entries in the journal: "Au Théâtre de la Cité, nous avons toujours soutenu que la recherche d'un nouveau public allait de pair avec la recherche scénique et dramatique. Nous n'avons pas les moyens de le faire."

In 1954, for a first production of Edward II, the Théâtre de la Comédie had used Adamov's translation of the play. Adamov had succeeded in translating Marlowe's "... texte de combat..." into a vigorous equivalent, giving it "... une netteté et un tranchant rares en ce domaine où règne trop souvent un filandreux lyrisme." In the 1960 presentation, Planchon and his co-director Rosner, wrote a different translation, which combined elements from Adamov's version and from Brecht's adaptation. The result of this combined text was quite a departure from the original, as we can see from the following outline of the plot of Marlowe's play in comparison with that of the Villeurbanne version; the summaries are my own, but I have retained the title of each scene from the Villeurbanne text.

The Théâtre de la Cité

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Prince Edward and Gaveston are tried for having laid waste to the gardens of the Archbishop of Canterbury.
Edward is sentenced to a day in the Tower, Gaveston to a whipping end, at the request of the dying king, to exile.


2. From the translation of Edward II, archives of the Théâtre de la Cité de Villeurbanne (now Théâtre National Populaire). When a passage in the Théâtre de la Cité version is a close translation of the original, the act, scene, and lines in Marlowe from which it is taken are indicated in brackets.
The death of King Edward I is reported.

II Le Royaume et la Guerre p. 4.
An offstage voice tells of King Edward II's coronation.
In a stylised scene, Kent and King Edward II tell of the first five years of Edward's reign and of the war with Scotland.

III Le Soir de Bannockburn p. 5.
After the battle, amidst the wounded, the nobles have dinner.

King Edward II, having hidden during the fighting, is brought back by two soldiers.
The soldiers are to be killed to prevent them from telling of his cowardice.

IV Le Retour de Gaveston p. 9
The king, feeling everyone's hatred, sends for Gaveston.
The king's letter is presented as a dialogue between the king and Gaveston.

V L'Enterrement p. 10
At the Earl of Gloucester's burial, nobles and peasants have waited two hours for King Edward before beginning the rites.
Berkeley speaks with contempt of the classical age.

I. i A street in London.
Gaveston enters reading the king's letter summoning him back.
He is accosted by three beggars but needs more sophisticated men to please the king.

Edward quarrels with his nobles. Gaveston appears and is made Lord Chamberlain and Secretary of State.
Spencer and Baldock, having seen the nobles, plan to get into court.

Leicester tells Lancaster his idea of an emblem for the tournament in honour of Gaveston's return. (Marlowe II.i. 15-20)

The bishop recalls the nobles' pledge to the dead king that Gaveston's order of exile would never be repealed.

Gloucester's niece laments that her promised marriage to Gaveston will be like a burial.

The queen tells her she will be scorned, but that she herself endures this because she loves the king.

The bishop of Coventry enters, challenges Gaveston, and is divested of his mitre and his rank and given over to Gaveston. I.ii Westminster Warwick and Lancaster inform the Mortimers of Gaveston's position.

The Archbishop of Canterbury sends a letter to the pope about the treatment of the Bishop of Coventry.

Queen Isabel laments her situation but refuses to oppose the king.

VI Tynemouth p.15

The king speaks of his reunion with Gaveston on the day of the burial and recalls their conversation about new universities, Oxford, and a new cathedral.

VII Le Chantier p.16

The king supervises the building of a new cathedral with Italian vaulting.

Gaveston says he has missed Edward. Edward creates him Lord Chamberlain, Secretary
of State and reminds him he will be Earl of Gloucester by marriage.

Kent speaks of the discontent of the nobles. The king looks forward to the age of civilisation when there will be no more wars.

Leicester and the bishop announce that the Commons refuse to levy a tax to pay for the Scottish war.

The king speaks of his favourite, discusses the cathedral, and finds sympathy in the builders for Gaveston's stable boy origins.

Kent says that when the last stronghold, Blacklow, falls to the Scots, the war will be over. The new age will be born at the cost of 2000 deaths.

VIII Le Siège de Blacklow p.21

Voices offstage say Oxford is progressing, but wars remain fierce.

Soldiers in battle see they have been abandoned to be massacred.

IX Le Nouveau Temple p.22

1) The nobles sign Gaveston's order of exile.

Lancaster tells of the threatened state of the kingdom, under siege from all directions. (Marlowe II. ii.162 ff.)

I.iii Gaveston says that the nobles are gathering at Lambeth.

I.iv London (the Temple) The nobles sign Gaveston's form of exile.
The nobles want a scapegoat for the defeats: Gaveston.

Mortimer says the others fear to put down rebellion because they are in awe of the powerful merchants.

ii) (p.25)

Gaveston angers the nobles by sitting beside the king.

(The nobles demand that the king exile Gaveston to satisfy the people after Blacklow. Edward refuses, claiming that the nobles want only to protect their own privileges.

(iii) (p.25)

The bishop threatens the king with the power of Rome.

(Lancaster says the time it takes to obtain Rome's support will allow the nobles to call up troops.

The king again refuses to sign.

(i.i.v.)

Gaveston angers the nobles by sitting beside the king. They have Gaveston and Kent removed.

Edward refuses to exile Gaveston. Threatened with excommunication, he signs the order of exile.

Le Galet p.25

The nobles refuse to allow the king to detach and throw away the royal seal affixed to the form of Gaveston's exile.
At Gaveston's farewell dinner and wedding feast, his bride, Gloucester's niece leaves. Spencer tries to persuade the king to keep Gaveston, but the king says he cannot. Kent says the nobles have assembled at Lambeth. Gaveston and Edward discuss the pleasures of a refined court. The bishop opposes Gaveston. The king and Gaveston tear away his mitre and douse him in the river; he is given over to Gaveston. (Marlowe I.i)

Gaveston accuses the king of not loving him any longer. Edward sends away the queen and tells Gaveston he is sorry to have married.

The queen laments her suffocating marriage (Marlowe I. iv 171-186)

Isabel enters. Gaveston suggests she has been unfaithful with Mortimer. Edward rebukes her and tells her to influence the lords in Gaveston's favour. Isabel laments alone.

The nobles enter and she pleads with them for Gaveston's return; she takes Mortimer aside. The nobles agree to her plan to have Gaveston brought back and kill him. Edward enters mourning. Isabel tells him the exile is repealed. The nobles and the king are reconciled. Edward plans a tournament in honour of Gaveston's return and of his wedding to the niece of the Earl.
With winter comes famine. An offstage voice speaks of the people's misery. The nobles have destroyed the harvest. They try to impose a tax.

Gaveston regrets he has not helped Spencer, who thinks of going home.

Mortimer Junior tells his uncle he hates Gaveston's extravagance with the treasury while armies go unpaid, and his foppishness.

Gaveston, deciding to serve Gaveston and the king. Gloucester's niece happily announces the return of Gaveston, whom she loves, for their impending marriage.

Edward, awaiting Gaveston, ignores the news of the French invasion.

Lancaster and Mortimer Junior suggest ironic emblems for the tournament in honour of Gaveston.

News arrives that Mortimer Senior has been taken captive in the king's wars but Edward refuses to hear of ransoming him, and offers only a beggar's licence to Mortimer Junior.

Lancaster and Mortimer Junior describe Edward's negligence and the disorder of the kingdom.
Leicester tells Kent the nobles are marching on London and the king is needed. Gaveston refuses to accept the king's gifts.

Edward complains of the inevitability of war. Baldock introduces himself as one whose heraldry stems from Oxford. (Marlowe II.iv. 242-246)

The king is attracted by Spencer and takes him into his entourage.

Edward dreams of the pleasures of peacetime. Turcel enters to say the city is armed against the nobles.

The nobles' threats have had no effect on the Commons without the backing of the king.

Lancaster is ready to gain the support of the Commons against Edward; Mortimer wishes to gain the king's support against the Commons.

They declare their rebellion.

Kent advises Edward to banish Gaveston, but is banished himself.

Edward again accuses Isabel of complicity with Mortimer.

Baldock, as one whose heraldry stems from Oxford, is taken into the king's service.

They go to the marriage.
Their disagreement takes place against a background of ceaseless rain.

The queen enters to tell them the king and the Commons are advancing against them.

The queen asks for Gaveston's death as a personal revenge. She and Mortimer speak of their desire as a private matter.

Blackout

Mortimer tells Warwick that he and the queen have slept together. He refuses to carry her standard in battle because he loves her as a woman, not as a queen.

The queen enters and announces she is going to France. She will lead the struggle against Edward's favourites, but demands that the king's life be spared.

Les Broussailles p.40

The king, caught in some brambles, is freed by Leicester.

A voice offstage says the royal party has joined the army at Scarborough.

The group splits up and Gaveston joins the decoy party.

Gaveston and Gurney are hiding, in imminent danger of capture.

II.iv Tynemouth Castle

The king sends the others to Scarborough, while he and Spencer escape by land.

The queen tells the nobles about the decoy party.

She admits in a soliloquy that she loves Mortimer.
Gaveston speaks of the pleasures which will seduce a refined king. (Marlowe I.i. 50-71)

Gurney betrays Gaveston to Lancaster, Warwick and Mortimer.
Mortimer says that Spencer is Edward's new favourite.
Gaveston is killed by Lightborn.

II.iv. Gaveston is pursued and captured by the nobles.

The Earl of Arundel, Edward's envoy, asks for Gaveston to be permitted a last interview with the king. Pembroke gives his assurance of Gaveston's return. They agree reluctantly.
Warwick privately resolves to kill Gaveston.
Warwick's men take Gaveston from Pembroke's and kill him.

III.ii. Near Boroughbridge, Yorkshire
Spencer persuades Edward to fight the nobles.
Spencer's father is made an earl.

The queen enters with news that the king of France her brother has seized Normandy. She and the prince are sent to parley with France.

Arundel announces Gaveston's death. Spencer urges revenge; Edward vows revenge and confers Gaveston's titles on Spencer.

XVII Le Camp Royal p.45

Spencer and Baldock complain of the cold. Leicester tells Spencer he chose the king's side for love of refinement.
The king groans and cries in his sleep. Stones fly; the enemy is close.
The queen appears and tells the king she and the prince are leaving. She feels nothing for him now. The king says only the crown united them, but asks her to stay. She leaves.
Edward dreams of a reconciliation between nobles and Commons. The armies begin fighting before he gives the order.
Spencer persuades the king to go lead the armies, for love of him, now that Gaveston is dead.

XVIII Le Triomphe d'Edouard p.50
The king confronts the captured rebels, Warwick and Lancaster.
They scorn his victory because it depended on the merchants' support.
He has Warwick and Lancaster executed.

Money is sent to bribe the king of France and prevent the queen from getting his support.
Edward refuses to see the Commons immediately. He and his favourites retire to have a meal.

XIX Le Palais royal p.52
The Commons are becoming reluctant to support the court's pleasures. Edward decides to raze Killingwood, as an example to the Commons.
Spencer and the courtiers dress up as ladies to amuse the king. They mock the prudish attitudes of the merchants.

A messenger from the nobles demands the removal of Spencer, but the king refuses.

III.iii Boroughbridge, battlefield
The king confronts the captured rebels.
He banishes Kent, has Lancaster and Warwick executed, and Mortimer imprisoned.
Spencer, Levune, and Baldock arrange to bribe the king of France to ensure a cold reception for Isabel.
Leicester reads letters from France. The queen, Mortimer, and Kent have joined forces, and may gain the support of the Commons.

Baldock enters beaten by people outside and dies.

XX Le Débarquement, La fuite, La prise du pouvoir p. 55
Offstage voices say that on the queen's return the people turn to her. She makes an emotional speech, which Mortimer interrupts. (Marlowe II.iv.)

IV i. London near Tower
Kent helps Mortimer to escape.

IV. ii. Paris
Hainault befriends Isabel.
Kent and Mortimer join forces with them.

IV.iii. Edward's court
Spencer reads the news from France. Edward resolves to go fight them at Bristow.

IV. iv. English coast, near Harwich.
The queen makes a speech to her supporters; it becomes too emotional and Mortimer interrupts it.

IV.v. Near Bristol
Edward and Spencer flee.
Kent begins to falter in his rebellion. Mortimer grows suspicious of him.

XXI La Blessure p. 59
The king and Leicester recall their flight towards Ireland.
The king, in hiding with Leicester and Spencer, is reassured by an abbot.

The king is betrayed to Gurney by a reaper. Kent, with Gurney, tells Edward that he could regain power by giving up Leicester and Spencer; Mortimer is distrusted. Edward refuses. Spencer speaks of dying.

An offstage voice describes the king's suffering. He is dragged for two years between Berkeley and Kenilwood.

He asks for mercy but the voice representing the collective voice says he had shown none himself.

Edward, Spencer, and Baldock take refuge in an abbey.

They are betrayed by a reaper to Rice ap Howell and to the Earl of Leicester.

Edward is taken by Leicester to Killingworth, The other two mourn, as they are arrested.

Leicester tries to comfort the king. The Bishop of Winchester and Sir William Turcel ask the king to give up the crown.

After much hesitation, he does so. He is given over to Berkeley.

Mortimer says he rules Isabel and the prince.

The queen suggests that harder men take charge of the king if Berkeley is too pitying. She would subscribe to the king's death.

Mortimer puts Edward into the hands of Matrevis and Gurney with orders to treat him harshly.

Mortimer and Isabel try to persuade Kent that they support the king. The prince wishes to see his father.
XXIV Les Routes p.63

Gurney and Matrevis drag
the king along the public
roads.

Near Kenilwood they shave
him with puddle water. They
starve him.

XXV Le Couronnement p.66

A voice introduces the
coronation procession.

A champion offers to
fight for the side that
supports the prince’s right
to the throne, in the
celebrations. (Marlowe V.iv.
75-79)

The archbishop blesses
the young king at length.

XXVI La Partie de Chasse p.67

The queen, Mortimer, and
the prince discuss the hunt.

Seeing a prisoner, the
prince wishes to pardon him
as a favour on his coronation
day. The prisoner is Kent,
arrested for trying to free
the king. The prince
tries unsuccessfully to
prevent Mortimer from sen-
tencing Kent.

before accepting the crown.
He is carried out bodily by
Mortimer. Kent resolves to
free the king.

V. iii. near Kenilworth

The king complains of
being dragged from dungeon
to dungeon and starved.

Matrevis and Gurney wash
him with puddle water and
shave his head.

V.iv. London

Mortimer writes an equi-
vocal letter ordering the
king killed.

He sends Lightborn to per-
form the murder.

He soliloquizes about his
power.

Trumpets sound for the
coronation. A champion
offers to fight for the side
which supports the prince’s
right to the throne.
The queen aside to Mortimer says it would be better if the king were dead.

The hunting party leaves.

Lightborn describes to Mortimer a way of murdering without leaving bodily marks. Mortimer hopes Lightborn will not soften and gives him an order for Gurney.

XXVII L‘Arbre p. 70

The king dreams of being near a tree in a thunderstorm.

Lightborn wakes him.

XXVIII La Mort d‘Édouard p. 70

Lightborn promises the king he can be freed and the Commons will support him.

The king describes his prison (Marlowe V.v. 55–68). He remains suspicious.

Lightborn has him lie down and sleep. With Gurney’s help he performs the murder.

XXIX Chute et final p. 74

Two students discuss the death of Edward II. They belong to the generation after his. They describe him in terms of a history text-book.

XXX Les Communes p. 74

Mortimer arrests Turcel because the people are rioting after hearing of Edward II’s murder.

Kent is sent to his death despite the prince’s entreaties.

V.v. Berkeley Castle Matrevis and Gurney are surprised at the king’s endurance for he is kept in a sewer.

Lightborn appears.

Edward describes his prison. He fears Lightborn, but gives him a last jewel.

He sleeps, exhausted. Lightborn kills him by suffocating him with a feather bed.
The merchants wish to protect their interests by starting a war with France.

The students describe Mortimer's death. They say the Commons got their wish: they pushed the prince to accuse Mortimer of murder.

The students say the queen died simply of old age.

The prince sends his mother to the Tower for complicity.

The students find a moral: nothing excessive can endure. They speak of travelling abroad.

A voice offstage say the young are already dreaming of a new age. "L'avenir, dans un gâchis immense, digère la mémoire." p.78.

The sets for Édouard II were designed on a different principle from those of Henry IV. The idea, Allio explained in the programme, was to design a set as one would do for a modern play.
Davantage qu'une description par les décors, les objets, les costumes d'une époque donnée et historiquement définie, il s'agissait de trouver une transcription sur le mode plastique des thèmes dominants de la pièce.

This decision allowed Allio a great freedom in choosing his styles of design; the sets and the costumes were inspired not only from medieval art, but also from Chinese art and Japanese stagecraft. Costumes again distinguished opposing groups of characters. In Henry IV, class differences had been indicated by differences in cut, texture, and colour. Here, the basic conception of costume design varied from one group to the next:

... si, par exemple, tous les costumes des personnages entourant Édouard, très colorés, très raffinés, sont résolument cherchés, dans une manière décoratiste, le groupe des barons, traités dans des teintes plus sourdes, leurs corps déformés par des bourrages, est de style carrément expressionniste.

Iron, wood, and gold elements were used on the stage in conjunction with colour. The functional parts of the set, the spotlights, for instance, were visible. The stage was a "... grand disque tourné vers le public, ... dallé de fer brut ...", with a slope so that the metallic surface acted as a mirror. Large gilded panels around this central platform doubled as cupboards for props when these were not in use; the panels could be moved about in order to suggest various architectural forms:

Les formes des unes et des autres se composant entre elles devraient jouer comme une sculpture abstraite qui dirait tantôt des ruines mortes, tantôt des forteresses compliquées et tantôt les grands chantiers de demain.

The stage furniture and props were kept extremely simple and functional; consisting of a few seats, gates, screens, and platforms of polished wood, they could be combined, like the panels, in different ways in order to suggest an almost limitless number of areas and of objects. Thus, as René Allio concluded, the sets were resolutely modern: "En somme, ce
n'est pas à l'Art du Moyen Âge que nous avons pensé mais à l'ART MODERNE (y compris les héritages qu'il s'est assimilé) usant de l'art abstrait comme d'un véritable langage."

The set, quickly changed by reassembling it in a different form, was suited to a well-paced presentation. Marlowe's work, according to Bernard Dort, calls for a very fast moving treatment: "Ce théâtre n'a que faire de catégories morales, comme d'invocations métaphysiques. ... Seuls comptent les actes et les paroles ne font qu'y préparer." Even in the very first production at the Lyon-Charbonnières festival, in 1954, the Théâtre de la Comédie had shown that it understood the need for an action-orientated show; Dort was very impressed:

Roger Planchon l'a bien compris, qui a entendu constituer sa mise en scène à partir de ce mouvement, sur la succession des scènes, leurs contrastes, inscrivant chacune d'elles dans un espace scénique différent qui devrait suffire à la "situer" par rapport au public. Aussi son spectacle garde-t-il quelque chose de cette perpétuelle improvisation qui est à l'origine du théâtre élisabéthain, de cette liberté capitale dont font preuve les héros de Marlowe.

In the 1960 version, the action was speeded up to obtain a cinematographic effect in keeping with the original intention of using the text as a scenario. Projectors were shown following the actors on stage, and were sometimes lowered to frame a character. Indeed it was especially the lighting which showed the influence of film on Planchon's work:

Le cintre est ouvert, montre les projecteurs qui descendent vers la scène, à des hauteurs variables. Ils cadrent l'action, tirent un visage de l'obscurité, éclairent une partie de la scène, fournissent à la mise en scène une possibilité supplémentaire d'atteindre un récit nerveux, aux scènes de s'enchaîner rapidement tout en préservant leur autonomie.¹

The offstage voice giving a commentary on the action was likened to the narration in the film Hiroshima mon amour.² The scenes

¹. Copfermann, Roger Planchon, p.140.
were a succession of short sequences punctuated by the lighting, and accompanied by the lyrical power of this voice; "... séquences," said Elsa Triolet, "que les projecteurs vont chercher dans un coin ou un autre de la scène, des flash-éclairs comme ceux dont vous aveuglent les photographes..."

The musical accompaniment for the play was composed as for a modern play. It was not, as in Henry IV, a historical reconstruction. Lochy wrote in the programme that it was meant primarily to develop the themes of the play:

Le travail du musicien ne fut donc en rien celui d'un compilateur d'histoire et mise à part l'allusion très nette à la musique de la Renaissance en seconde partie (correspondant exactement au triomphe d'Édouard et à son "monde nouveau") la partition suit au mot le déroulement d'un texte qui recherche son soutien.

The text, thought Lochy, was lyrical because it traced the life of Édouard II as seen through his own eyes. It was a text which included a stream of consciousness technique, as well as flashbacks, reminiscences, and premonitions, and because of all this it reminded him of a great opera. Claudel had experimented in his play Christophe Colomb with the idea that music and text were equally important parts of a dramatic whole:

La gloire de Richard. Wagner a été de comprendre que tout ce qui est sonore depuis la parole jusqu'au chant est réuni par des liens subtils et que la musique est inhérente à tout ce qui se réalise dans le temps, soit qu'elle se borne à lui imposer un rythme, soit qu'elle le colore peu à peu de timbres et le transporte enfin dans la plénitude déployée de l'orchestre et du chant.

This idea springs to mind when one reads Lochy's sensitive description, in the programme, of the role which music played in Édouard II:

Le rôle du musicien fut donc de jouer en filigrane le texte parlé, d'y résoudre les

---

passages du rêve à la réalité, de combler les litotes constamment employées dans les rapports psychologiques, de dialoguer sans fin avec les acteurs.

As the play showed an internal world of half-thoughts and uncompleted ideas, the music too, according to Lochy, had an unfinished quality:

... l'orchestre est formé principalement d'instruments graves, de batteries, de sons et de bruits distordus, et la phrase musicale n'est pas toujours achevée. Presque toujours la violence, le lyrisme, la tendresse restent en suspens. Cela crée une impression d'aspiration vers l'intérieur comme une musique à l'envers, comme un souvenir de musique qui s'effiloche par échos et par bribes.

Like the set, the music underscored the theatricality of each situation. The soldiers' march was not in Lochy's opinion a realistic accompaniment suggesting a parade offstage, but rather the symbol of war in Edward's mind:

Les évocations guerrières de la bataille sont traitées sur le rythme d'un coeur précipité et angoissé qui se "soupient" d'avoir eu peur: la peur de la bataille pour le sang qu'elle coûte, le charivari et la confusion, le mélange et finalement l'absence d'idéal, et aussi la certitude de n'être pour rien dans une victoire.

Text, sets, costumes, and music thus were created from the same principle: that of using all the possibilities of modern art to convey the themes of the play.

The adaptation met with varied reactions from listeners. Marcabru\footnote{Arts, Nov. 1st-7th, 1961.} felt that the combination of Brechtian influences and Marlowian verse had not been successful:

Empruntant à l'Édouard II de Brecht, empruntant à l'Édouard II de Marlowe, prenant au premier une certaine brutalité de ton, et quelques silhouettes, prenant au second un certain lyrisme de la violence, et d'autres silhouettes, il nous offre un texte décousu, déchiré, étiré, et où s'opposent, non seulement deux siècles ennemis, mais aussi des langages hostiles et divisés.
It was felt that Planchon's text was neither a translation nor a recreation, but alternated unsteadily between the two: "Entre deux possibilités évidentes: traduire la pièce existante ou en faire une autre, Planchon a hésité, choisissant les demi-mesures, et bien souvent les approximations." The flaws in the translation were noticeable, thought Marcabru, because in this presentation the spoken language overcame the stage action: "Il faudrait non pas resserrer la durée des événements donnés, mais resserrer le langage qui étouffe ces événements, les noie sous un flot d'explications, parfois un peu candides, souvent trop définitives." Amusingly, an English critic took a totally opposing view, seeing in the stage work a fitting dramatic embodiment of Marlowe's verse:

The loss of Marlowe's mighty line is not as great as first appears because nobody has really mastered the difficult art of rendering English iambics into adequate French. To make up for it, M. Planchonlavishes on his spectators a poetry that is seen rather than heard and so scores over most of his rivals, with whom the spoken word is traditionally paramount, the plastic stage picture of little or no account.

It is true that the same critic called the play, not a translation, but a creation in which Planchon had borrowed "... most of the situations and a good deal of the dialogue from Marlowe and his principal political and philosophical ideas from the determinists." If, as it would seem, Marlowe writes an action verse, a text meant to convey stark confrontations between enemies, then the solution of using the stage picture to convey the power of his poetry seems justifiable.

The sets were not generally well understood. Although it was easy to recognise Allio's fertile imagination in the decision to combine simple elements in various ways, it was more difficult to see an integrated meaning in the different

styles and textures of materials used for the set. Elsa Triolet\(^1\) complained: "... la plantation du fond, très différente de ton et de matière, haute, menaçante, se marie mal avec les éléments de bois. Il y a aussi un certain disparate dans les costumes." The set was, according to Marcabru,\(^2\) "... presque abstrait..." and its blatant artificiality was not beautiful. In fact, it was a step backward in the art of set designing. The presentation had brought back what Planchon had promised to abolish: "... la pesante et grinçante machinerie théâtrale." How paradoxical, mused Marcabru, was this return to the "... 'décorativisme' du Cartel...." and to the "... vaines fascinations de l'expressionnisme." Not all the viewers responded so negatively. According to the correspondent for the *Times*,\(^3\) the set at Orange was perfectly adapted to the open air conditions:

Edward II is mounted on a circular slab, 18 inches high and 30 feet in diameter, with its top dyed red and its vertical surface a shimmering gold. This is set in the centre of the theatre at the foot of the audience...; it makes a "theatre in the round" which affords the audience, seated around 180 degrees of the platform, a perfect bird's eye view of the players.

This writer also appreciated the borrowings from other theatrical forms, and saw their purpose: "Two lateral runways," he remarked, "give access to the central ring, not unlike the approach ramp of the Japanese theatre, and their dramatic function is similar. In the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, the sets and the lighting were adapted to produce similar effects:

... the play takes place in what at first sight seems to be a triptych of high, unwieldy, slotted scaffolding; during scene-changes the stage-hands casually pull new sections of décor out of the slots as if they were taking books off a shelf and lay them around in appropriate places. Mainly because of the ingenious use of mobile lighting we forget about the scaffolding when a delicate garden scene is lit up or a dialogue isolated by spot-lighting. Even during the banquet scene, which employs the full length of the stage, the eye is kept down to the ankle or knee-high furnishings so tastefully carpentered by René Allio.1

No one disputed the ingenuity of Allio's props; their very simplicity gave them many possibilities. But the confusion about their significance and that of the sets seemed general. Even critics who admired them were uncertain of their meaning. One criticism was a stark indication that Allio had failed in his principal aim: to underline the themes of the play. "Il est conçu," said Pierre Seller of the set,2 "en fonction des recherches extérieures de la mise en scène et non des nécessités de la pièce."

Commentators were aware of the Brechtian influence on the production, but some were disturbed by the juxtaposition of Marlowe's lyricism and Planchon's Marxist analytical spirit. Although they praised the intentions of the company, critics were a little upset by the uncompromising pace of the production. They complained that the staging itself hesitated between involvement and distanciation: the short sequences were so intense and forceful that to cut each of them short in mid-current was to give the spectator an impression of a series of anti-climaxes. "Vous n'avez pratiquement pas le temps de vous accommoder à ce fortissimo des voix, des passions, des mouvements," wrote Triollet,3 "que déjà les lumières s'éteignent et

2. Edouard II d'après Christopher Marlowe (1960-1961), Itinéraire, p.87.
qu'elles se rallument pour aller chercher autre chose dans le déroulement du drame." Rather than taking a more detached view of the action when this happened, the spectator usually reacted with irritation. By attempting to "telescope" the scenes, Planchon had simply made the plot less clear; he had certainly not succeeded in opening a classic to our twentieth century understanding. Pierre Seller¹ wondered what had happened to Planchon's Brechtian outlook when he had decided to use the offstage voice: rather than giving the audience a perspective on the plot, this voice added a more emotional dimension to the play; it was a "... surenchère pathétique."

Planchon had given in this production an example of the sort of didacticism for which he was later to reproach Brecht. The play became "... an absorbing dramatic history lesson. ...", said the Times,² but its style went counter to the intentions of Marlowe:

But where the poet allowed the characters to speak for themselves, leaving it to his audiences to form their own rueful judgments, the director leaves nothing to chance. His avowed object is to point a particular moral — never forgetting that he must also be entertaining—...

More than one reaction indicates how much, at the time of this production, Planchon was still under the towering influence of Brecht: "... cet Édouard II," said Triplet³ "n'est pas loin non plus du théâtre brechtien, abrupt, éducatif, démonstratif et, quelque part, très profondément sentimental." According to Marcabru,⁴ Planchon had over-simplified the historical themes and thus impoverished the play. Brecht's version had presented Mortimer as a Machiavellian man of letters. Planchon's adap-

tation lacked this sort of subtlety: it could not even convey the complexities of historical progress:

Ce qui me gêne, c'est la systématisation quelque peu primaire des oppositions entre les marchands et les nobles, entre les hommes du Moyen Age et les hommes de la Renaissance. ...

La Renaissance n'a pas été une rupture mais un aboutissement.

History and its inexorable cycle should have been foremost in the play, thought Triolel, with the young king resuming at the end of the play "... le chemin de tourments du père, où il se trouvera à nouveau pris entre ce qu'il est et ce qu'il ne peut éviter de devenir." Edward II's homosexuality, and especially the hostility which it provokes in his society assumed too much importance, however; instead of playing a secondary role, it seemed to become "... l'axe historique du drame même du progrès." Seller too thought that it was made too evident and too gross, especially in comparison with the original play:

L'homosexualité d'Édouard, qui chez Marlowe n'est jamais présentée comme vulgairement choquante, même si elle s'affirme de la façon la plus brutale, devient ici, par moments, un divertissement, comparable à ceux des "boîtes pédérastiques" parisiennes.1

The attempt to remake the play along Brechtian lines led to a confused and directionless creation; Seller thought that:

... Planchon ... a essayé, tout en gardant la structure interne de Marlowe, de reconstituer ce qu'il est pu être, à partir du même sujet une pièce des dernières années de Brecht ...: la destruction d'Édouard signifiant la fin d'un monde et la naissance d'un monde nouveau.

The Times correspondent,2 who saw the play as a new creation by Planchon, based on Marlowe, was able to appreciate the production as "... a bold and, on the whole, successful shot

at depicting a whole historical epoch – the birth-pangs of constitutional monarchy – on an immense human canvas." He even congratulated Planchon for having brought out an essential facet of Marlowe's social outlook: "In exposing the common people to the same degree of critical cynicism as the warring factions of Kings, Lords, and Commoners, M. Planchon comes unexpectedly close to Marlowe." Peter Lennon for the Manchester Guardian felt that the production had opened up many themes important in the original play:

He [Planchon] made it "a long reflection on violence"; a comment on the predicament of the men who make history and who are in turn crushed by it; on the inevitability of a king having to make terms with injustice – and he retained the strong secondary theme which is a dissertation on homosexuality.

The general impression was that this was an interesting but incomplete piece of theatrical research. The opinions ranged from irritation to confidence in the company's future work. Pierre Seller felt that at that stage in his career, Planchon was far too sophisticated a director to indulge in "... une telle manifestation de 'jeune homme révolté'". Marcabru concluded his review by saying: "Si l'on envisage Édouard II comme un spectacle d'essai, l'expérience est curieuse, mais décevante; si, en revanche, on croit que cette représentation ouvre de nouvelles portes, on se trompe lourdement." Elsa Triolet gave a more sympathetic summary, seeing in the play a first draft of what could be a highly interesting piece of work: "Bref, voici dans on ensemble un spectacle dont les défauts sont aussi évidents que le talent et qui se présente comme le brouillon d'une œuvre qui nous sera un jour donnée à entendre et à voir." It is understandable, after such a reaction to his rewriting of Edward II, that Planchon should have felt it was time for him to begin

his own writing career.

Trollus et Cressida

If Helen then be wife to Sparta's king,  
As it is known she is, these moral laws  
Of nature and of nations speak aloud  
To have her back return'd; thus to persist  
In doing wrong extenuates not wrong,  
But makes it much more heavy. Hector's opinion  
is in this way of truth; yet nevertheless,  
My spritely brethren, I propend to you  
In resolution to keep Helen still,  
For 'tis a cause that hath no mean dependance  
Upon our joint and several dignities.

Shakespeare  *Trollus and Cressida* II.ii. 183-193.

*Trollus et Cressida* was a play which attracted  
Planchon for many reasons. It was a difficult work, seldom  
played and little-known. "C'est une des pièces les plus  
méconnues de Shakespeare," he said to Mireille Boris in an  
interview.¹ "Elle a dérouté. Parce qu'elle commence en  
farce et tourne mal. Elle manque apparemment d'unité. C'est  
une pièce difficile." In 1964, the play's themes were extremely  
relevant to events in France and in the world. Mireille  
Boris asserted that "...c'est en tout cas parce que le désar­  
mement est à l'ordre du jour dans le monde, et la force de  
frappe à l'ordre du jour en France, que Roger Planchon a choisi  
de monter *Trollus et Cressida.*" The recent resurgence of  
interest in the play shows that its themes are equally topical  
in the 1970's.²


2. Michael Blakemore, a director for the National Theatre  
Company, remarked that each era rediscovers certain plays  
of Shakespeare's; in the 1960's and the 1970's, after  
many years of neglect, there is a renewal of interest in  
*Trollus and Cressida* because "the whole stance of the play  
is one that we can respond to". From a lecture on July  
19th, 1973 at the Chapter House of Southwark Cathedral,  
under the auspices of the World Centre for Shakespeare  
Studies, London.
Planchon also liked the way in which the personal theme of love and the social theme of war were intermingled. He defined the play for Mireille Boris as "L'histoire de gens qui font bien la guerre et mal l'amour." In the same interview, he went on to speak of Shakespeare's very modern attitude to war: "La voix de Shakespeare est ici bouffonne et angoissée." In this story, men are in control of their destiny; it is not fate which compels them to make war; they do so of their own volition, even in some cases after a lucid appraisal of the worthlessness of their motive. Shakespeare shows that the forces which destroy human beings are determined by them: "Montrer la tragédie ou l'absurdité de la guerre est devenu banal," Planchon said, "mais laisser voir que le choix de la guerre ou de la paix est dans les mains des hommes, est une toute autre morale." The play would itself perfectly to a Marxist analysis. It was also well suited to Planchon's satirical bent, according to Jean Jacquot:

La satire y atteint parfois une amertume et une violence verbale à peine croyables, et il est vraiment difficile d'y ajouter. Le texte peut admirablement servir le projet de "démystifier" toute littérature, roman courtois ou âtre, idéalisant la guerre.1

Because the text is so virulent and powerful in itself, the aim of the Théâtre de la Cité was to use a translation as faithful as possible to the Shakespearian original. They aimed for a fidelity at the opposite extreme from their free use of the Edward II text. Rosner and Yves Kerboul assisted Planchon in directing the play. Seven people, including lecturers in English from the University of Lyons, and Planchon himself, worked on the translation; they finished with, in his words, "Presque un mot à mot".2 The play's rhetorical quality makes its staging even in English problematic; writing any adaptation therefore was a particularly demanding task. Jean Jacquot explained the difficulties

of translating Renaissance drama:

Tout doit y être subordonné à la parole, et là tout est difficile: il faut en distraire le moins possible le spectateur sans aboutir à une mise en scène statique, trouver une traduction fidèle, mais parlante, une diction faisant ressortir toutes les nuances du texte, et dont le débit ne soit pas ralenti, malgré la densité de l'expression. 

For the Villeurbanne public, the translation had to be clear as well as faithful. When alterations were made in the text, therefore, they were obviously intended to make the meaning clearer. There were two major types of changes in the Théâtre de la Cité's version of Shakespeare's play. Firstly, more obscure mythological allusions were often suppressed. For example, one passage in the play, in Nestor's famous speech on order in the universe (I.iii.31-55), contains three references to classical gods:

But let the ruffian Boreas once enrage
The gentle Thetis, and anon behold
The strong-ribbed bark through liquid mountains cut
Bounding between the two moist elements,
Like Perseus' horse: ... (11. 38-42)

The translation used none of these proper nouns; losing the sentence's classical resonance, it nevertheless retained the metaphor and made it understandable for any audience:

Mais que le vent en ruffian excite la douce salée et vous verrez
Le bateau aux hanches bien rebondies
Dans les montagnes d'eau bondir en bonne jument. (I, p.17)

The names of very well-known mythological figures were retained; a reference to Neptune in the above speech reappeared intact in the translation. Or they might be changed to a more common modern equivalent: "Apollo knows", for instance (I.iii.328), was rendered simply as "Dieu sait" (I,p.25). The technique of leaving out proper nouns but giving their meaning in a paraphrase or synonym could be very successful. In another passage,

2. From the translation of Troilus and Cressida, archives of the Théâtre de la Cité de Villeurbanne (now the Théâtre National Populaire). Quotations from the script give the act and page number.
Thersite's taunting of Ajax, bereft of its classical precision, nevertheless retained its sense and its pungency:

Thou grumblest and thou railest every hour on Achilles, and thou art as full of envy at his greatness as Cerberus is at Proserpina's beauty, ay, that thou barkest at him.

(II.i.35-38)

The significant imagery was thus changed very little, and was made comprehensible to an average modern audience.

The second kind of alteration consisted of changing the sentence order, and making subordinate clauses into separate sentences; in this way the meaning of one clause might be absorbed before the other was heard. Thus a speech which is confusing in the original might become a little clearer in the French adaptation. Agamemnon in one scene (I.iii) voices a simple thought in a complex series of phrases:

Speak, Prince of Ithaca; and be't of less expect
That matterless, of importless burden,
Divide thy lips, than we are confident,
When rank Thersites opes his mastic jaws,
We shall hear music, wit, and oracle. (II.1170-1174)

In the Théâtre de la Cité version, this thought was slightly longer but much less convoluted:

Parle prince d'Ithaque.
Des mâchoires hargneuses du grossier Thersite
nous savons
Que nous ne pouvons nous attendre à entendre
qu'oracles
Calembours et musiques. Mais de toi, ce n'est pas le fond creux d'un discours vide
Qui peut diviser tes lèvres. Nous ne l'attendons pas de toi
Et notre certitude est très grande. (I, p.18)

Clarity might also demand some editing; a reference by Pandarus to Troilus's "cloven chin" (I.ii.130) was simply omitted as untranslatable. On at least one occasion, the translation offered an additional pun, while retaining the Shakespearean meaning. Thersite exclaims to Ajax, "Dost thou think I have no sense, thou striketh me thus?" (II.i.23) In the Villeurbanné text, he said, "Tu me crois sonné, Samson, pour me sonner ainsi?" (II, p.1)
It is true that an extremely lyrical passage must lose its effect in such a close translation. The poetic frenzy of Cassandra's vision (II.11.104-112) springs from the rhythm of the passage, its brilliant use of alliteration and vowel sounds:

Virgins and boys, mid-age and wrinkled old,
Soft infancy, that nothing canst but cry,
Add to my clamours! let us pay betimes
A moiety of that mass of moan to come.
Cry, Trojans, cry! practise your eyes with tears!
Troy must not be, nor goodly Ilium stand;
Our firebrand brother, Paris, burns us all.
Cry, Trojans, cry! a Helen and a woe:
Cry, cry! Troy burns, or else let Helen go.

The translation, although it follows the meaning of the words, perhaps because it is so faithful to the meaning, loses the incantatory power of the English:

Garçons et pucelles, hommes et vieillards à rides,
Tendres enfants qui ne savez que pleurer
Venez grossir mes cris! Acquittez par avance
Une moitié des gémissements à venir. Pleurez, Troyens!
Habitez vos yeux aux larmes. Troie ne sera plus!
Pâris notre frère incendiaire nous brûle tous!
Pleurez, Hélène fait votre infortune!
Troy brûle! ou qu'elle parte! (II, p.10)

The key themes of the play were given as much importance as possible by this attention to meaning rather than to sound. Hector's speech, in which he reasons that the war is unjust and then determines to continue nevertheless (II.11.183-193 — See epigraph) was given the same vigour and clarity as in the original:

Hélène est la femme du roi de Sparte, et chacun
le sait.
Et les lois morales de la nature et des états
crient hautement.
Qu'il faut la renvoyer. Persister dans le mal
ne saurait atténuer le mal.
Telle est l'opinion d'Hector, s'il s'agit de Vérité.
Nonobstant mes foudreux frères, comme vous, j'incline
Et Hélène, car c'est une cause
Où notre honneur général et particulier est en
question.

(II, pp.11-12)
In the love scene between Troilus and Cressida, Jan Kott\(^1\) points out that there is the hesitation, the cruelty, the uncertainty of a real relationship between young people. Cressida's fears are genuine:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{I have a kind of self resides with you;} \\
\text{But an unkind self, that itself will leave,} \\
\text{To be another's fool. I would be gone:} \\
\text{Where is my wit? I know not what I speak.}
\end{align*}
\]

(Ill. ii. 155-158)

A very literal translation caught both the tone and the possible prolongations of meaning of this small speech:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{J'ai un moi qui demeure avec vous, mais se sépare de moi} \\
\text{Ce méchant moi pour être d'un autre le jouet,} \\
\text{Je voudrais être partie. Où est mon esprit?} \\
\text{Je ne sais pas ce que je dis. (III, p. 11)}
\end{align*}
\]

Thus the major themes of love and war were respected, and much of the style and imagery retained in a slightly simplified form.

Planchon called the set of Troilus et Cressida "... une machine à jouer ", to distinguish it from the "... décor-commentaire ". It said little about the themes of the play, except on such a banal level as to show blood-spattered walls as a symbol of war. Everything was planned to allow the play, as much as possible, to speak for itself: "... la mise en scène se veut très linéaire, très libre, très décontractée," said Planchon, "sans être pagaillèuse, j'espère, pour autant."\(^3\) The sets were designed by André Acquart. As befits a play about war, they were especially effective in the confused battle scenes. On an open stage, jutting out slightly, was

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{... un dispositif simple, qui d'abord \`a ouvrer et se ferme, autour d'un axe, comme les pages d'un livre, et au milieu duquel les deux camps trouvent tantôt des lieux séparés, tantôt des}
\end{align*}
\]

points de jonction. ... Dans la bataille finale — pivotent soudain les cartes d'un jeu immense, maculé de sang, qui isolent les combattants, les égarent et rendent scéniquement absurde, en même temps qu'obsédant, leur scharnement d'aveugles.

In this set the unspeakable stupidity of war was visibly present, for it transformed the combatants into puppets; Gilles Sandier wrote:

... à la fin, ce dispositif, en découplant le champ de bataille ... en balayant l'espace selon le rythme dîment de la boucherie égale et dérisoire, jette les unes sur les autres ces défroutues guerrières qui évoquent les soudards d'aujourd'hui ...

The differences between the two camps, he continued, were also made evident in the stage structures: "... ce déploiement de volets, de tentes, de paravents, sortant d'une énorme porte d'acier qui s'ouvrait et se refermait, faisait exister ce grouillement incohérent du camp grec et les lenteurs civilisées du palais troyen." The corruption and the absurdity of the societies in conflict were strongly suggested:

Dès l'abord, le dispositif d'Aquart, avec ses plans de muraillées éclaboussées de sang, balayant la scène sur un rythme forcené, des costumes "barbares", des personnages ... caricaturés nous imposent la vision d'un monde en dérèg, d'une humanité médiocre, d'une guerre sordide ....

Colours ranged from yellows to browns, a range "... suggestive of the Mediterranean sun...". The tones changed for different parts of the play, to create the atmosphere appropriate to each successive theme treated:

... le mur homérique abrite les amours de
Paris et d'Hélène et déchire ceux de
Troilus et Cressida. Changeant sous la
lumière d'Orient, il offre des nuances gorge
de pigeon aux propos des amants, d'ocre
brune à la querelle orgueilleuse des chefs
grécs. Il s'éclabousse de sang dans le grand
choc final, ... du champ de bataille.¹

Costumes too were planned with Planchon's habitual
aim of establishing a parallel between the past and the present.
He himself qualified them as being "... à mi-chemin de la
tunique et du complet-veston ..."² The total effect of set,
costumes, and movements was carefully worked out:

Les costumes, tenant de l'armure antique et
du "battledress", établissent un juste rapport
entre l'histoire de Troie et la nôtre. Le
meilleur du travail d'équipe était dans les
mouvements d'individus et d'ensembles rappelant,
mais en général sans trop appuyer, l'allure et
le comportement de guerriers du XIXe siècle.³

The mise en place had a cinematographic aspect, for Planchon
worked with a camera-like skill, "... faisaient alterner gros
plans, plans moyens, plans d'ensemble."⁴

Planchon felt that his production of Troilus et
Cressida would surprise English people because it contradicted
traditional interpretations: "Mais je n'ai pas cherché à faire
neuf, seulement à retrouver dans le détail le sens précis du
texte, à le retrouver par-delà les interprétations ordinairement
admissibles et qui le voilent."⁵ As he had done for Tartuffe, he
gave an everyday view of the human relations between characters.
Planchon faced the challenge of Shakespeare's irony, for instance,
by showing up both camps:

Garder aux Troyens une ingénuité suffisante
pour que leur religion de l'honneur demeure
le puissant mobile de leurs actes tout en
nous apparaissant périmée, à nous spectateurs,
et aussi dérisoire que le sens pratique,
généralement inefficace, des Grecs...

The Trojans were pompous and old-fashioned; the Council of Troy was staged like a family reunion, said Kourilsky, with little sister Cassandra having visions, and the brothers teasing one another but finally showing a fraternal solidarity. The Greeks were more pragmatic, but equally pompous and over-assertive:

... dès le début, avec la grande scène de délibération des Grecs,... Le ton, les gestes, étaient ceux d'une basse agitation électorale.... L'interprétation voulait faire sentir l'insincérité, ou du moins l'affirmation routinière de lieux communs rassassés.

It was through the characters of individual warriors, especially, that Planchon debunked the concept of glory in battle. The démystification was pitiless, with Ajax shown to be a sombre brute, Agamemnon a mediocre, self-satisfied fool, and Nestor a senile old wreck. Even the great hero Hector was humanised in this production. Planchon analysed this important character and saw between his behaviour and his beliefs an inconsistency which is only one instance of the play's grating, sardonic humour:

Hector sait qu'Hélène ne vaut pas le sang que l'on répand pour elle. Néanmoins il accepte le combat; il essaie même d'y trouver une valeur par le sacrifice de sa vie. Mais ici encore il est dit que le sacrifice de 100,000 vies ne justifie pas une erreur et ne fonde pas une valeur.

He is a lucid man who chooses to follow the forms of "honourable" conduct even knowing how absurd the term is in relation to reality:

... le héros est entamé du dedans, à la racine même de sa foi. Ses actes, dans le pourrissement général de la guerre, n'ont plus de sens. Ainsi ne croyant pas à l'enjeu du combat qu'il mène, décide-t-il de la continuer pour justifier sa patrie de l'avoir entrepris.¹

Ulysse, in the opposing camp, was given little importance, and even his solemn speech on the hierarchy of the universe was played as the attempt of a petty politician to win favour. Planchon explained² how serious characters are shown up in this play:

Les personnages ... montrent sans cesse des retournements: ils expliquent d'abord ce qu'ils devraient faire, ils agissent ensuite à l'opposé. Toute la pièce est ainsi faite, de l'opposition entre une certaine vision herofique et le comportement quotidien.

On stage, Planchon was careful not to dramatise, "théâtraliser" the precise moment at which characters changed their minds; the shifts in behaviour were simply shown, and the public allowed to judge how they had come about. For Planchon, the interest of the play lay for a great part in this difference between the ideals and the behaviour of the characters. It is a theme which has always fascinated him. It was especially evident in the treatment of the themes of love and war in this play: "On y montre des hommes qui font très bien la guerre, tout en insistant sur la sottise de la guerre, et des hommes qui font très mal l'amour, tout en soulignant la beauté, le miracle de l'amour, ce que, moi, je trouve absolument sublime et tout à fait d'actualité.³

In the opinion of some critics, Planchon had gone too far in underlining things already manifest in the play itself. Thersite is a demystifying element in the play, a Shakespearian fool whose cynical perspective is all too often an accurate one. Françoise Kourilsky felt that when the play was staged entirely as a parody, this character became almost extraneous. Gérard Guillaumat as Thersite had conveyed all the bitterness of an outcast, a bastard, but it was difficult to see the need for his presence when all the other characters showed themselves up as clowns. She felt that, had the others been a little less obviously smug, Thersite would have had more importance: "... c'est aussi un impuissant qui juge les impuissants, un révolté qui nous provoque à regarder au-delà des apparences. Il doit tout à la fois nous attirer et nous repousser, il peut avoir tort ou raison, à nous de juger." Indeed Pandarus and Thersite are the living agents of démystification in a society which assents to false values:

Tandis que les héros plastronnent, que les militaires élaborent des plans puérils, Pandare sert d'entremetteur et trouve son compte dans cet office, étant un peu voyeur, cependant que Thersite, témoin de la bouffonnerie générale, la commente en termes dont le modernisme stupéfie.

The Times correspondent saw a juxtaposition between the "... serious, nearly tragic Thersites ..." of Guillaumat, and the figure of Ajax: "Comic effects were reserved for the political-military level of the play and especially for an Ajax who resembled Maxie Rosenbloom and confirmed the resemblance by exercising like a prizefighter." The warriors, in fact, are ignoble men for whom honour is a mere pretext for battle. They give everything, including their own lives and those of others, for a worthless cause:

Les "héros" de la pièce font trop bien la guerre et bien mal l'amour. Ils prétendent combattre avec chevalerie et pour soutenir la renommée de leur dame, mais ils ne respectent la liberté ni d'Hélène, ni de Cressida.

The love story of Troilus et Cressida is woven into the war theme. Planchon pointed out that the two major themes of the play are treated very differently. On the one hand, it is meant to "... démystifier le héros, le culte du surhomme, etc.", and so war is attacked unsparingly. On the other hand, the play does not mock love in itself:

Shakespeare ne met pas en dérisio n l'amour, il met en dérisio n les attitudes fausses face à l'amour .... et en général, la dérisio n n'est pas chez lui sur les hommes ou les femmes, elle est sur les fausses valeurs que se donnent les hommes, c'est-à-dire quand il y a un décalage entre les valeurs et le comportement.

The Théâtre de la Cité presentation gave a much more sympathetic picture of Cressida than most commentators on the play. Troilus's behaviour toward her is determined by the fact that he is a warrior. He agrees to have her exchanged because he is a good soldier: "... il est guerrier et pour être un bon guerrier il faut renoncer à se conduire en homme."

The play questions the very validity of being a warrior, however: "Troilus sacrifie ce qu'il aime à l'ordre guerrier et à une conception de l'honneur dont la perfidie des combats montre assez la fausseté."

Roger Planchon went as far as to question the possibility of Troilus's love for Cressida, as he was to question the existence of Titus's love for Bérénice. Planchon could justify Cressida's behaviour by considering how she had been treated:

... l'amour n'est pas un échange, ... c'est un sentiment que l'on ne négocie pas. En ce sens, la phrase de Troilus à Ulysse est

très importante: "Je l'aime du même poids que je hais Diomède." [V.ii. 167-168] Pour moi, c'est l'avèu indiscutable qu'il n'a jamais aimé Cressida alors qu'il fut aimé par elle, et que c'est à cause de cet amour qu'elle cède à Diomède. [1]

Cressida's actions were shown to be something other than a demonstration of the faithlessness of women. Jan Kott's analysis of her character [2] seems to have influenced the Théâtre de la Cité's interpretation. He sees in Cressida an astonishingly modern character, unsure of herself, self-critical, and defensive... Her infidelity is no more, in Kott's eyes, than a logical acceptance of her position as chattel:

Pandarus a vendu Cressida comme une marchandise. Maintenant, comme une marchandise, elle sera livrée aux Grecs .... Une seule expérience de ce genre suffit. .... Elle a vu que le monde est trop vil et trop cruel pour que cela vaille la peine de défendre quoi que ce soit...

Colette Dompiétrini in the role, refusing traditional interpretations of Cressida as a symbol of false womanhood, brought out this other possible motivation; Renée Sœrel [3] appreciated her modernness:

Quant à Cressida, elle est un personnage du théâtre actuel, non pas délimitée psychologiquement, mais au contraire ambigu, déchiré, et qui, se voyant traité en objet, voyant sa liberté niée, se choisit alors, par désespoir, comme objet .... Il n'y a pas de "caractère" justement, il n'y a qu'un personnage entièrement déterminé par les circonstances, la violence, et la sujétion de son sexe.

Sœrel added that only Troilus could be too blind to see how consistent her actions are with his own: "Et Troilus, guerrier fanatique, jusqu'aboutiste, ne reconnaîtra plus, une fois l'échange accompli, celle qu'il aimait...." In Cressida's last appearance, she flirts with Diomède, unaware of Troilus's presence and the anguish she is causing him. The scene was

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2. Shakespeare notre contemporain, pp. 96-97.
3. Temps Modernes, April 1964.
staged to bring out brilliantly the contrast between her own
cynically logical sujebtion to reality and Troilus's desire
for an impossible and superhuman constancy:

Et si la scène ... reste, à mon avis, la
grande réussite de la mise en scène, c'est
que Planchon, en y respectant les changements
de registre, a fait clairement ressortir
l'ambivalence de la situation. Cressida
(Colette Dompiétrini) se disloque devant nous,
son unité même éclate: elle est la Cressida
de Troilus, la dame divinisée, et la Cressida
de Dionède, la femme vulnérable, objet des
désirs et des intérêts. Les mots et les
conventions restent sa seule protection, et
elle en use en toute lucidité: livrée d'avance,
elle se laisse pourtant conquérir selon les
rites.1

The love theme, finally, was not only mingled with but sub-
ordinated to the military theme; Renée Sœl again understood
this conflict of forces: "Comme dans un concerto pour deux
violons, la guerre et l'amour élèvent leurs chants, et celui
de l'amour, fatalement sera étouffé par l'autre."

The modernity of the themes and the characters,
derlined in the Villerurbanne production, gave this play a
startling relevance. Sœl observed that

... la pièce est étonnamment moderne, située
dans le domaine intermédiaire entre la comédie
et la tragédie, domaine qui est celui de la vie
même, et dans lequel Planchon, avec son irrespect,
son ironie, sa méfiance paysanne, sa générosité
aussi, est tout à fait à l'aise.

Michel Vinaver pointed out that the play is a succession of
moments, each needing to be played in and for itself; events
do not bring about the expected results: "Oui, c'est un
théâtre de l'inconcevable, où non seulement la psychologie
n'a pas de place, mais où la logique des situations n'est pas
plus tot posée que démentie."2 Perhaps this explained the
annoyance of a critic for whom the play was considerably too
dense to be comprehensible; Marc Pierret3 wondered what sort

1. Kourilsky, "Troïlus et Cressida de William Shakespeare,
Itinéraire, p.106.
2. Ibid; p.113.
of audience would be able to follow

... à la cadence d'une conversation banale
trois heures du Shakespeare le plus dense
et de convertir l'évocation de la guerre
de Troie, la sublimitation des obsessions
sexuelles élisabéthaines, l'écroulement de
la chrétieneté féodale, la naissance du
monde capitaliste et celle des valeurs
individuelles en un poème dramatique apte
à nous faire prendre conscience de notre
aliénation gaullienne et industrielle...

No one claimed that Planchon had been unfaithful to
the original text. Most critics, in fact, felt that it was
his excessive fidelity to the Shakespearian source that was
behind the rather stilted and unplayable version created at
Villeurbanne:

Or, la traduction anonyme choisie par M.
Planchon paraît fidèle aux moindres méandres
de la phrase, aux pointes les plus subtiles
de l'image, mais, ... gardant la préciosité
sans garder la musique, elle verse dans un
tarabiscotage ... pénible ...

It was, in all probability, the Shakespearian text itself which
confused critics unfamiliar with it. They pointed in unison
to the excessively scholarly translation: "... l'adaptation se
révèle souvent désastreuse à l'écoute: nouée, elliptique
jusqu'à l'amphigouri, sans ampleur dans l'invective, sans
grâce dans la confidence, sans vraie cocasserie dans l'audace
ou la trivialité. Une langue trop cérébrale, trop savante,
trop pressée ..." Gilles Sandier accused the translation of
being "... un texte maladroit, scolaire, d'une écrasante
complication, faussement trivial, sans véritable éclat, quasi
inintelligible." He thought that the skill of an Audiberti
might have saved the production. One wonders, however, whether
even a poet could manage to translate successfully a text which
Sandier himself described in these terms:

C'est une pièce pesante, irritante, qui jusqu'au bout captivante de ses phrases sentencieuses, de sa bouffonnerie amphigourique, de ses raisonnements paradoxaux, de sa sophistique ricanante et précieuse, semble avoir choisi d'être à chaque instant déplaisante, comme si Shakespeare, pour mieux accorder le ton à son propos, avait pris plaisir à choquer, déconcerter, irriter : une prairie de chardons.

Michel Vinaver appréciait la situation très intelligemment. Il voyait, dans la refus d'Planchon de modifier le texte, "c'est-à-dire acclimater ce texte aux possibilités d'absorption d'une audience d'aujourd'hui..." la peur de limitant ; sa principale caractéristique, que Planchon souhaitait préserver à tout prix, était "... l'ouverture sur tous les possibles." En effet, Roger Planchon justifiait sa présentation en disant que Troilus et Cressida est "... un chef-d'œuvre de construction baroque..." demandant un matériel de fait, un élaborat staging. Il s'agissait d'un texte qui résistait à un traitement linéaire ou d'idéologie.

Il admire le texte pour l'absence de moralisation dans, pour la très ambivalence qui rend ce texte si abstrait :

Ce qui m'apparaît extraordinaire, c'est la manière dont Shakespeare traite ce problème [le désarmement], en établissant une sorte de balance dialectique entre la guerre et l'amour, mais aussi entre la beauté et la laideur de la guerre ou de l'amour, en mêlant les destin individuels et l'histoire sans jamais déboucher sur le piège de la propagande.

Un texte de telle densité et complexité serait difficile à transmettre clairement sur le scène. Pour plusieurs critiques, il est incontestable que la richesse de l'imagery en fait difficile de rendre clair. Un général reproche était que les acteurs n'ont pas fait clairer la text for the audience.

seem to have a clear understanding of their lines. Planchon was accused of having always neglected the elocution of his actors. What would have been needed, said Sandier, was a sentence by sentence elucidation of the text during rehearsals with each actor. Only Gérard Guillaumat as Thersite and Pierre Santini as Diomède had succeeded, according to Sandier, "... à nous jeter le texte au visage et à nous le faire encaisser comme on encaisse un coup." Marc Pierret complained that the actors had taken the audience's understanding for granted, despite the fact that they were speaking in an "... algèbre poétique ..." for three hours.

Probably Vinaver's experience of the play, was a typical one and shows a reason other than the traditional Parisian hostility to provincial artists (Troilus et Cressida was the first play in Planchon's second Paris season), for the generally negative critical response. Seeing the play a second time, Vinaver was struck by how radically his opinion of it was transformed. The first time he saw Troilus et Cressida, in Planchon's version, he had felt unusually tired by the need to concentrate:

La plupart des critiques, à qui il incombe d'absorber une pièce tous les soirs, ont glissé, c'est compréhensible, de la fatigue à l'irritation, et il en est résulté un faisceau d'opinions vengeresses qui n'a pas beaucoup de précédants dans l'histoire de la critique théâtrale parisienne.

A second viewing, however, brought him round to an enthusiasm qualified only by his knowledge that most people would have seen the play no more than once. Planchon's intentions were obvious, and valid; he wished to present the play as it was, and to allow the spectators themselves to judge and to make modern comparisons if they saw fit:

One thinks of Planchon's reluctance to point out lessons which he feels are evident, for fear of being "impolite"; his principle is to ask the questions but never to answer them for his public. He even said that he had deliberately waited until the Algerian war was over before presenting Troilus et Cressida. In this production, however, it would seem that many did not even understand the questions. Vinaver criticised Planchon's habit of alternating, throughout his career, between two types of show, resulting from two opposing needs: that, firstly, of pleasing immediately a large and heterogeneous public by offering familiar works, and that, secondly, of creating experimental art, "... ce qui entraîne à jeter le public dans un état de dépaysement, lui imposer l'aventure." As we have seen, (in Chapter II, p.80) Planchon said in an interview with Michael Kustow that he quite enjoyed following up the amusing works, the good draws, with the serious and experimental. Troilus et Cressida, it would seem, belonged to the latter category. He admitted, convinced by people's reactions in post-presentation debates in Villeurbanne, that it was one of the most difficult plays for his audiences to understand. To have staged it differently, however, could only have been a betrayal, for realism was woven into its very text: "... il [le réalisme] naît tout seul." To explain and to clarify would have been to put on a different play. For Planchon, the work was so


intensely relevant to the issues of the time that not to have staged it would also have been a kind of betrayal:

Shakespeare démontre que, face à une situation donnée, un contexte favorable dirait le langage diplomatique, la réponse dépendait des hommes; mais ils ne surent que plonger dans la destruction et la mort.

Nous avons tenté de dégager fortement les éléments qui conditionnent ce comportement, car il suffit de regarder autour de soi, de lire attentivement son journal du matin, pour s'apercevoir que "la pièce a été écrite par notre contemporain, William Shakespeare." 1

Richard III

For it must be noted, that men must be caressed or else annihilated; they will revenge themselves for small injuries, but cannot do so for great ones; the injury therefore that we do to a man must be such that we need not fear his vengeance.

- Machiavelli The Prince 2

Planchon put on Richard III at Avignon in 1966 and in Villeurbanne in March, 1967, and so it is the most recent of his Shakespearian productions.

The adaptation, 3 which Roger Planchon personally supervised, combined a fidelity to Shakespeare with a desire for clarity and for a strong line of action. The changes made in the text were, for the most part, omissions or abbreviations of lengthy passages. As in the production of other English classics, it was assumed that a Villeurbanne audience would not

3. Translation of Richard III, archives of the Théâtre de la Cité de Villeurbanne, (now Théâtre National Populaire.) Quotations from the script give the page and scene number.
have the basic grounding in English history which Shakespeare could assume in his public. References to historical events antecedent to the story of Richard III, and not necessary to its comprehension, were therefore suppressed in the translation. In Richard's speech to Lady Anne in Act I, for instance, he lists the hardships which he has endured in his lifetime without being moved:

Those eyes of thine from mine have drawn salt tears

These eyes, which never shed remorseful tear,
No, when my father York and Edward wept,
To hear the piteous moan that Rutland made
When black-faced Clifford shook his sword at him;
Nor when thy warlike father, like a child,
Told the sad story of my father's death,

I.i.154, 156-161

In the Villeurbanne translation, these lines were summarised in very few words: "Ces yeux, ta beauté les a rendu aveugles de pleurs et a obtenu ce que ces malheurs n'avaient pu obtenir." (I, p.10). Again in Act I, there is a long discussion on the events leading to the present king's elevation to the throne, with Queen Margaret looking on unseen and speaking asides to the audience. (I.iii.11-163). This part of the scene was suppressed, for two reasons. The Elizabethan stage convention of having a character look on and speak, unseen and unheard by the other characters, was not likely to be acceptable to a modern audience. Also, the speech referred to battles and to assassinations with which the Villeurbanne spectator would be unfamiliar. At the Théâtre de la Cité, the scene thus started at the point where Queen Margaret announces her presence. In the last act (V.ii), the ghosts of the murdered visit the leaders of the two sides in their sleep; here, in the same way, allusions to previous history were omitted: the ghosts of Prince Edward and of Henry VI did not appear, but only those of the many characters who have been murdered in the course of the play.

Often in Shakespeare, dialogue is really a method of giving stage directions. For example, when Richard announces that Clarence is dead, several lines are spoken which are actually instructions for the actors:
Buckingham:
Look I so pale, Lord Dorset, as the rest?
Dorset:
Ay, my good lord; and no one in this presence
But his red colour hath forsook his cheeks.

II.i.83-85

The Théâtre de la Cité left out these lines, and no doubt the troupe acted the consternation rather than describing it. By omitting such unnecessary lines, Planchon was able to speed up the action of the play.

The rhythm of the production was of paramount importance. Repetition was usually omitted, although its poetic effect in some scenes was respected. In Act IV, scene iv, three women, Queen Margaret, Queen Elizabeth, and the Duchess of York, sit before the palace, side by side, cursing their fates, almost wailing. Planchon retained the passage in which the losses of each woman are counterpointed by those of the other two (ll. 40-46):

Marguerite:
... J'avais un Édouard jusqu'à ce qu'un Richard le tua. J'avais un Henry jusqu'à ce qu'un Richard le tua. Tu avais un Édouard jusqu'à ce qu'un Richard le tua. Tu avais un Richard jusqu'à ce qu'un Richard le tua.
La Duchesse:
J'avais un Richard aussi et tu le tuas, j'avais un Rutland aussi et tu le tuas.
Marguerite:
Tu avais un Clarence aussi et Richard le tua ...

However, he shortened one of Margaret's long speeches in this scene, in which she refers to the deaths of the two Edwards, and of York, and then recapitulates not only upon what the women have just said, but upon what the audience has just seen; she tells of the deaths of Clarence, of Hastings, Rivers, Vaughan, Grey, and again curses Richard (ll. 61-78). Planchon retained only her will for revenge, and her curse:

Marguerite:
Supportez-moi, car je suis affamée de vengeance et je ne me rassasie pas de la contempler. Tous les vôtres avant l'heure au fond de leur tombe ont été étouffés. Richard vit toujours, noir agent de l'enfer, resté pour acheter des âmes et les envoyer là-bas. Mon Dieu, arrache sa vie. Je demande de vivre pour dire "le chien est mort".

(sc. 17, p.82)
Thus Planchon remained sensitive to the power of the poetic repetitions but he tended to eliminate those which might slow down the play and create boredom.

In Act II, sc. iv, the young Duke of York exhibits his wit in a clever speech to his mother, to the Duchess of York and to the Archbishop of York. As the children's characters and their wit are shown in another scene, Planchon reduced this one, from a conversation of more than 70 lines, to a few sentences at the beginning of the next scene; these gave the only two important facts which emerge from the scene:

Brackenbury:

Le Cardinal:
La nouvelle déjà circule à Londres. La Reine s'est réfugiée dans la cathédrale avec son trésor et ses biens. Elle s'est placée sous la protection de l'Archevêque d'York. (sc.8,p.43)

Elsewhere the scene structure was largely respected.

In order to streamline the play, Planchon altered somewhat the original conception of Richard of Gloucester. In the Shakespearean play, Richard stands before the audience at frequent intervals to give them his plan of action in detail before putting it to execution. In Planchon's version, these monologues were shortened or eliminated. Thus a speech of fifteen lines (I.iii.324-338) in which Richard gloats delightedly on his past deeds and on his future ones, and boasts of his ability to hide them, was completely omitted. It ends on a Tartuffe-like note:

And thus I clothe my naked villainy
With old odd ends stolen out of holy writ;
And seem a saint, when I most play the devil.

On the one hand it was unnecessary to have Richard tell the audience what they could see him doing; on the other, as Planchon had chosen an attractive man for the part, his appearance of good need not be emphasised. Probably Planchon disliked also the idea of giving the spectator such blatant advice on how to react to the character. Asides which were superfluous were
eliminated; lines in which Richard says he will have the princes put away (III.v.106ff.) were omitted because the princes' imprisonment becomes apparent in the next act (IV.1). Similarly, the translation left out a dialogue (III.v.I-II) in which Richard asks Buckingham whether he can counterfeit terror, and Buckingham extols his own abilities as an actor; it was superfluous since Buckingham's skill in deceit becomes patently obvious in the subsequent scene with the mayor. Nothing was edited, then, which altered the course of the action. Needless repetitions, or directions which might be put across in the acting were left out of the translation. The major omission was of Richard's soliloquys.

The austerity of the adaptation was appreciated by critics. Gérard Guillot¹ was especially impressed:

... son texte [à Planchon] débarrassé de tout foisonnement shakespearien, de tout bouillon­nement poétique, accable, mais rend tout transparent, assaille mais élimine les paren­thèses, les épisodes inutiles, les digressions subtiles.

The presentation was determinedly devoid of any heroic emphasis. "Tout ce qui pourrait être épopée," said Sandier, "ce jeu de grands mots et de belles images par quoi est masquée la réalité, est soigneusement extirpé."² Both critics added that Planchon's version remained extremely faithful to the original.

There were three remarkable aspects of the set for Richard III, the use of lighting, the costumes, and the machine­like props. The stage designer for this play was Claude Lemaire. In the Avignon production, both sets and mise en place were especially effective; the play was presented in the courtyard of the vice­legate's palace, in a vast open space. Costumes and lighting were carefully integrated into this setting. The buildings which formed the background, built, as Hélène Cingria pointed out,³ at the time of the historical Richard III, were

lit up with a golden and pink glow; the costumes were in light tones of beige, white, and grey, so that the actors and even the props could "disappear" into the walls despite the strong lighting. The decision to maintain a steady artificial lighting was a departure from the usual Vilar-inspired practice of using only the natural evening shadows. It did have an advantage, said Cingria:

Ce parti pris d'éclairage constant qui changeait diamétralement la conception théâtrale préconisée jusqu'ici par le T.N.P. [under Vilar] m'a paru excellent pour la plupart des tableaux tant il obligeait les acteurs à jouer à la perfection pour centrer l'intérêt autour d'eux.

The only point at which the lighting might have been more successful if subdued was in the final scenes, for the ghost and dream sequences. The use of costumes of a similar colour, (in Planchon's words, "... toutes les teintes que l'on trouve sur les coquilles d'oeufs..."\(^1\)) was a way of negating class differences in the characters instead of pointing them out as in Henry IV. The corruption, as this sameness underlined, was general:

... tous se valent, ceux qui ordonnent les meurtres, ceux qui les exécutent, ceux qui les admettent.

D'où, au niveau des costumes (très beaux...), une uniformité accentuée par le plein air: rois, seigneurs, notables, serviteurs, se confondent presque, ...; les hommes de main chargés d'assassiner Clarence portent les mêmes bottes que les lords; le maire et le greffier sont habillés de façon à peu près semblable.\(^2\)

As the play progressed, the colours became darker, with black armour and helmets indicating the imminence of war.

The idea behind the props was in line with Jan Kott's thesis that, in all the Shakespearian history plays, a machine-

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like cycle orders the lives of the characters:

Mais qu'est-il, ce Grand Mécanisme qui commence aux pieds du trône et dont dépend tout le royaume, dont les grands seigneurs et les assassins à gages sont les rouages, qui accule à la violence, au viol, aux atrocités et à la trahison, qui exige sans fin des victimes, dans lequel la voie vers le pouvoir est simultanément la voie vers la mort? Pour Shakespeare, ce Grand Mécanisme est l'ordre de l'histoire, dans lequel le roi est l'oint du Seigneur...

Lemaire gave the set a mechanical quality which made it the perfect embodiment on stage of this critical view of the play:

... le génie de Planchon est d'avoir rendu visible sur la scène cette machinerie-piège. L'utilisation des objets est étonnante. Tous les objets sont des machines de bois, sortes de jouets, effrayants et presque fantastiques à force de précision, sortis souvent de gravures et d'images, qui vont de Calot à Velasquez. Machines à tuer, à s'asseoir, à manger, à coucher, à torturer.

The lighting emphasised the looming presence of these mechanical shapes: "... sur la façade rose du palais du vice-légit se dessinaient les formes brutales de l'échafaud, celles massives ou déliées des couleuvrines ou des arbalètes géantes, les lignes abruptes des meubles de cérémonie ou les panaches magnifiques des tentures royales." The stage seemed crowded with actors moving in compact groups and with objects, but this was for a purpose:

Le grouillement des acteurs sur le plateau, l'envahissement des objets qui se succèdent auraient pu écraser le texte: comme les silences épais qui s'installaient parfois, ils l'ont servi, ils en ont souligné la profondeur, la vigueur, toute la poésie tragique et l'humour, énorme à certains moments.

The stage area was moulded into an apparently solid form, the action into a machine-like ritual; in the words of Gilles Sandier\(^1\) it was a brilliant treatment of space:

... cet espace occupé par le tumulte insensé de l'Histoire, lequel prend pourtant l'apparence d'un cérémonial solennellement réglé, d'une mascarade de bouffons conduite comme un rituel, espace soumis par Planchon à une sorte d'élargissement et de distorsion comparables à celles qui étirent les visages et les corps du Greco ...

The battle scenes especially were noted for their beauty: "... rompant avec les scènes traditionnelles et "théâtrales" de bataille à l'épée, ils ont fait évoluer deux lourdes armées et leurs bombardes avec une incroyable souplesse."\(^2\)

The battle of Bosworth Field was treated with great irony; the same actors changed sides, with their armour and equipment, to represent first the soldiers of one army and then those of the enemy forces. The final battle was indeed trimmed of any remnants of epic grandeur:

... d'abord un prodigieux et complexe carrousel de mouvements inverses qui s'orchestrent mutuellement; les deux camps qui se préparent; l'affrontement, lui, dure quelques secondes, quatre corps qui s'agrippent et tombent naïvement sur place, comme dans ces jeux d'enfants jouant à la guerre ...\(^3\)

Restrained for a smaller indoor stage, the 1967 production in Villeurbanne seems to have been all the more powerful. "Plus de tumulte, plus de grouillement," said Jo Vareille.\(^4\) "Les antagonistes s'affrontent devant l'effacement des personnages secondaires, quasi figés." It was almost unbearably effective: "... le spectacle acquiert une froideur et une sévérité qui font mal,"; here the battles, both the verbal sparring and the physical combat, were given an atmosphere of the inescapable:

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1. Arts, Aug. 10th-14th, 1966.
The production pointed out the connotations of the word *politics* for an Elizabethan audience. For a public of Shakespeare's day, the word suggested intrigue and evil machinations. Every one of the characters in *Richard III* is caught up in an atmosphere of plotting and unrelenting violence, and the Théâtre de la Cité succeeded in emphasising this universal deceitfulness:

> Ainsi la représentation s'attache avant tout à démontrer le mécanisme de l'ascension au pouvoir et à décrire un monde de contrats passés d'homme à homme, de complots, de liquidations et de règlements de comptes, un monde corrompu où "le crime appelle le crime", où il n'y a pas de bons et de méchants...

The work demands this sort of interpretation; Hélène Cingria called it the most pitiless of Shakespeare's plays:

> ...non seulement parce qu'elle est la plus sanguinaire mais parce que les enfants d'Édouard mis à part (et que seraient-ils devenus une fois adultes), aucun des personnages ne mérite que nous nous attendrissions sur son sort tant tous sont intrigants, fourbes, dévorés d'ambition.

No one in the play, she pointed out, mourns a friend, a brother, a husband; the women rail against Richard for the loss of their position rather than for the loss of spouses or lovers. Planchon, remarking that there are three criminal plots in this work, concluded that all the characters were equally ruthless: "Seulement, le complot de Richard est celui qui réussit. En fait, tous les personnages sont des Richard en puissance."

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Among the numerous vicious characters, then, Richard III is merely the one person who goes "... jusqu'au bout de ses désirs et de ses soifs." ¹

As for his production of Tartuffe, Planchon chose for the leading role, instead of a repulsive looking actor, the young and attractive Michel Auclair. The motive was similar. The really horrifying aspect of evil, Planchon wished to point out, is that it looks so much like good. The decision to use Auclair made the seduction of Lady Anne more plausible, and also helped to explain his deception of everyone else. "On peut croire qu'il plaise," wrote Vareille, ² "d'autant plus que, dans l'instant où il parle, il croit lui-même à ses paroles, sait donc convaincre." In Jan Kott's opinion, Lady Anne accepts Richard because all moral categories have been wiped away by him; the atmosphere is of a concentration camp, a world in which nothing may exist except desire and death: "... elle le suit, pour toucher au fond. Afin de se prouver à elle-même que toutes les lois du monde ont cessé d'exister."³ He saw in her, Cressida's despair and consequent cynicism. In Roger Planchon's opinion, however, this scene had to be made more acceptable to reason. Making Richard attractive, and emphasizing at the same time the women characters' all-excluding love of power, the production leaned toward a more traditional interpretation of this scene; Gérard Guillot understood:

Et il suffit à Lady Anne de sentir qu'elle peut retrouver cette puissance et son rang de reine pour qu'elle oublie que Richard a tué son beau-père, son mari et qu'il est bossu, difforme, etc. L'ennemi d'hier est l'amant d'aujourd'hui si l'amant restitue ce que l'ennemi a enlevé...⁴

Guillot went on to say that Michel Auclair had succeeded in suggesting that the character of Richard III had

³. Kott, Shakespeare notre contemporain, p.60.
many different facets:

Du "monstre" hideux jailli de l'enfer, et créature démoniaque, Michel Auclair a fait un être inquiet, jamais sûr de lui, mais décidé à pousser ses avantages jusqu'à leur fin, passionné de victoires mais s'interrogeant sur leurs significations, troublé par ses défis et encouragé par la peur des autres...

Auclair incarnated the deceiver, as he had done once before in the role of Tartuffe, with the suavity of a real politician: "... un remarquable Richard menant implacablement ses intrigues, passant de la flatterie à l'injure, des promesses de récompense aux arrêts de mort avec une égale duplicité, sa bouche tordue distillant savamment fiel et miel."¹

There is a dimension in Richard's character which is not always successfully shown despite its significance as a part of Shakespeare's political vision. A horrific laughter accompanies his actions: "Richard III est l'intelligence du Grand Mécanisme, sa volonté et sa conscience. Pour la première fois, Shakespeare a montré le visage humain du Grand Mécanisme. Il est effroyable ... Mais il est fascinant."²

Kott saw a sort of grimacing joy in the character. Roger Planchon's sensitivity to the humour which underlies great tragedy made it possible for him to bring out this unexpected ricanement. The first scenes of the presentation were, astonishingly, funny; "... un début, ma foi comique," wrote Guy Leclerc,³ "où la peinture sans concession de cette hypocrisie fielleuse de politiciens avides a fait rire le public..." Auclair's Richard III had two smiles, and they were equally sinister; Jo Vareille caught their meaning:

... Auclair donne toute sa valeur à l'extra-ordinaire humour du texte shakespearien et lui restitue son "naturel". Richard ne cesse de commenter les menées atroces dont il nous fait complices, se plaisant lui-même, se gaussant des adversaires grugés de si expéditive manière.

². Kott, Shakespeare notre contemporain, p.56.
Mais le sourire - un autre sourire, court, affable, bienveillant, attendri avec les neveux bientôt assassinés - règne aussi dans les rapports de Richard avec les princes, chef de factions en présence, comme souvent dans les rapports de ces personnages entre eux.  

This hypocritical politician's smile gave the play not only its historical authenticity, but a ring of truth for today as well; Vareille understood this point well: 

Ce sourire par lequel Planchon prend précisément le texte à la lettre et bouscule la tradition romantique, contribue pour une large part à faire naître une inquiétante impression d'authenticité. N'est-il pas aujourd'hui celui des hommes politiques entre eux, jusqu'à ce que le rapport des forces en expédie quelques-uns à la retraite - sinon à la mort? Indeed the inevitability of Richard's own downfall shows him as the victim of a system which he has controlled only for a moment: "C'est l'histoire, et non Richard, qui est ici héros de tragédie, cette Histoire dont le roi, qui s'imagine la créer par la somme de ses crimes, n'est finalement que le jouet et quasiment le spectateur." He is thus a typical hero of a Shakespearian history play, and at the same time, a personage of our own time: 

Ces monstres, avides de pouvoir et de puissance, qui s'entre-déchirent ou s'allient le temps d'une victoire, qui s'épient ou se cajolent ou se haïssent le temps d'un complot ... nous les connaissons; nous les reconnaissions. Nous leur donnons des visages d'aujourd'hui sur des gestes d'hier. ... Que nous soyons des spectateurs actifs ou passifs de cette corrida, que nous soyons les acteurs, les bourreaux ou les victimes de ces règlements de comptes, ne change rien à l'affaire: l'Histoire est là avec sa cruauté, sa rigueur ... 

Valid for us as it was for Shakespeare's public, the play is an understandable choice for Planchon; it is evident that in his production he tried to ask of this classic the questions which his public would ask. He succeeded in drawing his spectators nearer to Shakespeare by emphasising the kind of political hypocrisy and even ruthlessness with which they were already familiar.

Planchon's attitude to the English classics thus evolved over the years, from the first youthful "cowboys and Indians" Henry IV to the more austere yet comically powerful political statement of Richard III. For Henry IV, the text was given in its entirety, but essential passages were presented visually as well as being stated. The vigorous rhythm of the production conveyed the farcical side of the play, and the excitement of its conflicts, but preserved its sense of historical inevitability. Edouard II was less of a success. It was completely rewritten. If the new text was a little lengthy, it was evidently meant to give a more modern psychological and historical view of Edward II than that of Marlowe; the staging was also planned with the freedom of abstract art. Critics, confused about the show's intentions, saw it, at best, as an unfinished experiment. Reverting, for Troilus et Cressida, to an extreme fidelity to the original text, Planchon again provoked the annoyance of critics; they blamed the translation for the play's abstruseness. Evidently Planchon considered the play's themes so timely and its treatment of them so modern that he felt it needed almost no alteration to be relevant to his audiences. There were so many complaints of an overly scholarly reading of Troilus et Cressida that it is not surprising Planchon took a slightly more liberal attitude toward the adaptation of Richard III. He again was involved personally in the translation. While remaining close to the original, he edited several lengthy passages which might well have bored any but an audience of pedants. The resulting
text was a vigorous and direct one which brought out both the horror of the political world of Richard III, and its bitterly comical relevance to our own time.

Planchon's answers to the problems of translating, adapting, and staging English classics show a strong commitment to his Villeurbanne public. From the start, he worked with the double aim of making the plays comprehensible to a relatively uneducated spectator, and of bringing out the immediacy of their themes for a twentieth century audience.
In putting on classical plays, Roger Planchon followed a method which usually resulted in a presentation far different from traditional interpretations.

Planchon began with a careful reading of the text, a study of its historical and social background in terms both of the time and place in which the play was set and of the time and place in which it was written. He used all the systems of critical analysis at our disposal today:

Le souci de Roger Planchon est de lire le texte en tenant compte de tous les détails. Il est aussi d'apprendre les langages modernes - marxisme, psychanalyse, structuralisme - permettant de déchiffrer le monde et qui, en un sens, éclairent les textes classiques.¹

His method of reading plays was at first Brechtian, orientated toward a search for the historical lesson which might be contained in an old work. Without losing this emphasis on history, his approach gradually became more Aristotelian: he concentrated on the events of a play in order to reduce the subjectivity of his interpretations. To determine how events were to be presented, which were important, and how they related to one another and to the words which characters use to explain them, it was necessary to study the text in depth. Indeed, in his presentations Roger Planchon was often lauded for a fidelity to the text so unswerving that it eliminated many traditional superfluities:

Si les mises en scène de Planchon revêtent pour la critique un caractère insolite, c'est parce qu'au lieu de regarder la pièce dans le miroir déformant de la tradition, il essaye, par de patientes études, de découvrir le sens et la virulence qu'elle

Planchon said that not only the text in itself, but the text in its precise context and as an expression of a writer's vision was to be respected: "Nous nous refusons à traduire scéniquement ce qui dépasse la pensée profonde de l'auteur."^2

Once he had discovered what significance the events of a play might have for us today, Planchon set about trying to transform this interpretation into a theatrical language. He never neglected to find out all he could about previous productions of the play, although often his own presentation took quite a different direction. As we have seen his approach to each mise en scène is different, but certain recurring qualities exist in his productions of the classics. Behind Planchon's entire conception of classical plays and of their value for us, there lies his passion for history; he told Michel Richard in an interview that "... le passé présente d'une certaine façon et éclaire complètement le présent, montre surtout comment le présent n'est qu'une phase historique."^3 Thus the plays in Théâtre de la Cité productions were suffused with a sense of history. For example, Planchon created around the usually aristocratic characters of classical drama a world of extras, the serving classes: each production showed how the labour of these silent workers permits the principal characters to exist by dealing with the mundane exigencies of life, cooking, cleaning, or, as in George Dandin, hay-making and bringing in the harvest. These figurants served many purposes. They set off the characteristics of the principal figures, the idleness of the

aristocrats in Marivaux, the ambition of the parvenu in George Dandin... They reminded us, in Bérénice, of the exterior world which seems unrelated to the personal passions of Racine's heroes, but which in effect exercises a great influence on them. In a sense the extras formed a part of the set, a décor grouillant within which the principal characters must live, acting out their social condition.

The sets of Roger Planchon's classical plays were noted for their revolutionary relationship to the action on stage, their often witty underscoring of certain themes, their sometimes 'shocking' revelation to the modern spectator of things which would have been tacitly understood at the time a play was written. As radically upsetting to modern critics as the presence of the figurants was this insistence onimmersing the characters in a reality frequently as commonplace as our own. For example, Dandin's wife and her lover were provided with a barn into which they retired long enough to make Dandin's claims of her infidelity more than plausible. The sets were also meant to provide a picture of an era, both of its mental climate and of its day-to-day actual appearance. On the one hand, for instance, the style of furnishing used for the Théâtre de la Cité's production of Tartuffe was more Louis XIII than Louis XIV because "... le style Louis XIV, au temps de Molière, était celui des châteaux, non des intérieurs bourgeois..." On the other hand, the paintings on the walls were there to reveal the reigning sensibility of religiosity which gives Tartuffe his chances of advancement. In Bérénice, the set was of an idealised world, with elements from both the Roman world in which it was set, and the era of Louis XIV in which it was written.

Partly by placing his characters in such a clearly defined context, Planchon succeeded in giving them a three-dimensional quality which was praised by astonished critics. "Ce sont de êtres porteurs de résonances," wrote one, "des individus, des types véritables au sens charnel où l'on dit

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un brave type." They were people conditioned by their own situation in the social hierarchy of a specific time and place. They were full-blooded human beings with physical needs and limitations. They were neither totally ridiculous puppets incapable of reasonable reactions (the Sottenville in George Dandin were pictured as an aged and slightly over-dignified couple who have faced economic ruin), nor ethereal and noble-minded personages never stooping from their tragic heights (Planchon's Bérénice was in the first acts a coquette unaware of her impending downfall). Comedy was always tempered by tragedy or near-tragedy: Orgon was not only discomfited, but deeply, even pathetically, disappointed after Tartuffe's unveiling. High tragedy was set off by suggesting that the true motives of characters were more human and less noble than they claimed. Not only the characters assumed an unusual density in this way: the social and historical system which determined their situation showed clearly. The picture conjured up by the dumb servants, the plain props of day-to-day existence, the deflated heroes, the humanised villains, was deliberately unglamorous. In Planchon's opinion, history is at its most interesting when it is closely studied.

Certainly Roger Planchon felt a great respect for the classics. Because they provoke each generation to ask itself the questions of its own time, they have for us the importance which mythology once had for the Greeks: Planchon said to Gérard Guillot that

Les grandes mythologies, aujourd'hui, sont mortes, et les chefs-d'oeuvres du passé tiennent pour nous le rôle que la grande légende divine et héroïque tenait pour les Grecs. Nous nous agrippons à nos classiques ... pour nous connaître un peu plus. Ces chefs-d'oeuvre ne sont pas un héritage ... ils sont notre miroir et changent avec notre compréhension.

Planchon even spoke of classical plays as works written on two different levels, in "deux écritures ... celle qui ne bouge

jamais, le texte écrit. [and] ... d'autre part celle qui bouge tous les vingt, tous les trente ans et qui s'appelle écriture scénique.\(^1\) This attitude explains both his respect for the written text, and his translation of it into defiantly personal terms on the stage. He said that it was with the classics that he was able to "faire oeuvre originale", and added, "Je suis frappé par le fait que les grands metteurs en scène ne font de grands spectacles qu'avec des pièces classiques."\(^2\)

Molière's George Dandin

La noblesse, de soi, est bonne, c'est une chose considérable, assurément; mais elle est accompagnée de tant de mauvaises circonstances, qu'il est très bon de ne s'y point frotter. Je suis devenu là-dessus savant à mes dépens, et connais le style des nobles, lorsqu'il nous font, nous autres, entrer dans leur famille. L'alliance qu'ils font est petite avec notre personne: c'est notre bien seul qu'ils épousent; et j'aurais bien mieux fait, tout riche que je suis, de m'allier en bonne et franche paysannerie, que de prendre une femme qui se tient au-dessus de moi, s'offense de porter mon nom, et pense qu'avec tout mon bien je n'ai pas assez acheté la qualité de son mari.

- Molière George Dandin I.i.

Planchon created George Dandin at Villeurbanne in 1958. In subsequent years, the company took the production on tour in France, Italy, eastern Europe, and North Africa, and presented it briefly in New York (1968) and in London (1969). In his production, Planchon went against many traditional opinions about the play. He saw the marriage of

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Dandin and Angélique, for example, as more than a boulevard comedy: in his opinion it was a symptom of the class divisions which existed in Molière's day. He defined the play in the following terms:

Cette histoire cruellement amusante de paysan enrichi qui a voulu échapper à sa classe en épousant une "damoiselle" bien née—situation sans issue—s'étalit avec les beaux-parents, contrôles d'étoffe et cherchant à dorer leur blason, le Monsieur de la ville (ce petit Don Juan) suivi de son homme de main, voyou de village.  

By looking at the plot in this light, Planchon was to make many discoveries about the play. "... Planchon ne s'est pas contenté," wrote Claude Olivier "de rester à la surface des mots; il en a éclairé tous les prolongements, de même qu'il a rendu clairement perceptibles les rapports sociaux des personnages."  

Comparing the results of his own reading to traditional interpretations, Roger Planchon found that there had been surprisingly gross misconceptions about each of them. He looked at each in turn, described their social situation, and puzzled at the way in which their traditional costumes are sometimes in flagrant contradiction with the text or with verisimilitude. George Dandin himself was the most ill-represented:  

Ce riche propriétaire, si riche qu'il peut renflouer une famille ruinée qui, elle, "s'offre le divertissement de courir un lièvre"—ce qui suppose un train de vie assez conséquent—est, dans toutes les représentations classiques traditionnelles, déguisé en paysan; et pourtant, Dandin n'a rien d'un paysan; c'est, répétons-le, un très riche propriétaire, dont le costume doit signifier, par conséquent, l'opulence, la richesse, avec un je ne sais quoi de parvenu. Mais pas de préciosité: où l'aurait-il apprise?

1. Official programme for George Dandin at the Théâtre de la Cité de Villerbanne.
3. Official programme for George Dandin at the Théâtre de la Cité de Villerbanne.
The aristocrats are usually dressed as though they were just going to Versailles, whereas, for the country, they would probably dress more casually. Clitandre, as an elegant young man on vacation, would wear a stylish hunting costume. The Sotenville are usually made to look not only overdressed, but dressed in bad taste, for no valid reason: "Contemporains de Louis XIII, ce sont des gens attachés à l'écoute." M. de Sotenville introduces himself to Clitandre as a veteran: "... c'est sous cet aspect qu'il s'affectionne. Regardons 'l'ancien combattant' d'aujourd'hui: le ridicule qui s'en dégage vient de l'excès de rigueur, et non de la préciosité ou de l'exubérance du personnage." As the wife of an officer, Mme de Sotenville would have a certain savoir-vivre and pride of bearing. And as ladies living in the country, she and her daughter Angélique would wear simple dresses rather than court costumes, light-coloured because of the summer heat. Roger Planchon added that their costumes might have elements similar to modern clothing: "Par exemple, Angélique pourra porter un délicieux faux grand chapeau en paille paysan, comme un chapeau de plage." Even Lubin's costume was given some consideration; as the village ne'er-do-well, he would prefer to hide his origins, and so he would consciously avoid wearing peasant clothing.

The play brought up problems new to Planchon. One difficulty peculiar to classical plays is the question of the unities. The Théâtre de la Cité decided to adhere to the rule of unity of time. In order to avoid the break in continuity of the intervals, at the start of each act they repeated the last scene of the preceding act. The transition from the first into the second act was described by a New York critic, Walter Kerr, who admitted to having been "enchanted":

The first act ... came to an end as a farmyard of workers, lovers, and in-laws quietly composed themselves for the angelus, then scattered to sweep up, to clout one another, to kiss, and to find position for the beginning of Act Two. With everything ready for Act Two, the lights darkened suddenly. When they came up again,
we were back at the angelus and played out the whole dispersal and regrouping, clout for clout, kiss for kiss.1

The company felt that asides broke up the dialogue; in order to remedy this, as often as the text permitted the characters showed that they overheard their interlocutor's attempt at an aside. Dandin's monologues presented another challenge: they introduce a different time level into the play and are extremely difficult to stage. The Théâtre de la Cité found various answers for each of the monologues:

Pour le premier [monologue], le personnage s'adresse directement au public, on introduit un nouveau temps, mais pour compenser nous l'avons placé devant une page du petit classique Larousse, qui, nous l'espérons, rappellera qu'il s'agit bien d'une pièce classique et non d'une manie brechtienne où l'acteur s'adresse directement aux spectateurs.2

Bernard Dort, interestingly, felt that the play had been chosen precisely for its similarity to Brecht's Lehrstück, particularly in its structuring of the action around a few moralising monologues.3 Planchon chose a different form of presentation for the second and the third monologues. It is less clear that these two speeches are spoken directly to the audience, and so they were presented as ruminations, almost monologues intérieurs. To show that these are not on the same time level as the action on stage, that they are enclaves in the passage of time, the stage movement froze while they were being said, and resumed afterward as if no time had elapsed. Claude Olivier described the effect of this solution on stage:

George Dandin soliloque dans la cour de sa ferme cassue; toute la maisonnée est présente, figée pour le moment, chacun dans l'attitude qui caractérise son personnage. Et c'est, dans l'admirable décor conçu par René Allio ... tout un univers qui surgit; familier à un double titre:

2. Official programme for George Dandin at the Théâtre de la Cité de Villeurbanne.
It was precisely these occupations, in fact, which gave the production its sense of a realistic passage of time. Under a soft lighting, the chores changed with the progression of a "rural day ... from dawn to dusk to dawn ..." It was exceedingly natural, Olivier pointed out, for each hour of the day to be marked by its appointed task on a farm. "Le temps coule dans 'Dandin'," said Jean-Jacques Lerrant, "rythmé par les départs aux champs et par la cloche de la soupe." The concept of unity of time was thus not only observed strictly, but used to considerable effect.

Unity of place was, according to Planchon, Allio's concern. Just as a sense of continuity in time had been created by showing farm work in its successive stages, so a basic feeling of unity might be conveyed by the natural setting. We must always feel the presence of "Cette terre grosse et épaisse, terre d'une riche province française, présente par ses ouvriers agricoles d'il y a trois siècles, autour de ce noeud sentimental et social." René Allio in conceiving the set for George Dandin seems to have remembered his distinction between présentation and représentation:

C'est le XVIIe siècle réaliste. Les classiques exigent un certain conventionnel, nous l'avons réintroduit en plaçant le décor au centre du plateau, en laissant une zone franche où il n'y a RIEN. Prolongé jusqu'au cadre de scène ce réalisme aurait introduit l'allusion réaliste.

5. Official programme for George Dandin, Théâtre de la Cité de Villeurbanne.
The programme illustrates the utter misery of the peasants' lot in France in Molière's time; it includes quotations from La Bruyère and others, and photographs of modern farming people alongside reproductions of Le Nain paintings. The set, said the programme, was dedicated to him, "... au grand peintre réaliste, à sa couleur, à ses sujets, mais surtout à sa manière à la fois objective et amicale de décrire la nature et les hommes de son temps, de montrer les choses comme elles sont ..." More than one critic saw the inspiration for the setting, and Claude Olivier praised Allio for giving the set a certain quality of modern realism which prevented the tableaux vivants of the monologues from looking like clichés.

In George Dandin, le lieu like le temps has two levels; through the setting Allio presented the social division, not only between Dandin and Angélique, but also between him and the class which he had hoped to leave behind. On one side of the stage there was a wooden barn "... in which the farmhands and the animals live", on the other, Dandin's "hard, sunbaked house". The props and the continuous hard work of the people around, and economically beneath, Dandin underlined his situation:

Dans cette cour de ferme ... avec sa charretée de foin, son billot où s'implante cruellement la hache, son étable proche et son potager voisin, on va, on vient, on vaque aux occupations distribuées par le maître, riche propriétaire terrien qui connaît son affaire, qui sait évaluer le bœuf sur pied ... 

The programme already had suggested that the peasants are the dispossessed on whom the wealthy depend. The stage picture of this idea was a powerful one. Each servant was somehow

1. Ibid.
shown to be a total human being, "... doté d'un état civil complet, d'un destin dont s'enrichit son rôle parfaitement éloquent encore que parfaitement muet." 1 Colin, interpreted by Jean Bouise, suddenly came to life: "Colin: a-t-il dix lignes de texte? Pas même, sans doute. C'est à peine ce que, en langage de théâtre, on nomme une panouille. Bouise en fait un personnage extrêmement présent." 2 Lubin and Claudine revealed a toughness well in keeping with the society around them: "Lubin est un coq de village et Claudine la servante d'Angélique une fille rouge qui sait à quoi s'en tenir sur les promesses des garçons." 3 The farm-hands laughed at Dandin as they saw him being manipulated by his wife and her parents.

The silent figures especially struck a critic in Moscow; he saw their presence as a moral commentary on the life of their masters: "Dans le spectacle nous voyons surgir l'image d'une culture mensongère et d'un monde oisif non moins mensonger; mais aux fausses valeurs s'opposent les valeurs réelles: la poésie du travail, la poésie de la vie domestique." 4 An American critic also assumed that this was the point made by the portrayal of the farm-hands, and called it "An interesting concept, but not Molière's." 5 Both misunderstood the import of the presentation. Dandin's predicament is that he is no longer quite a part of a world which he can never leave behind altogether. Each detail of the set said so eloquently: "La belle terre grasse et le fumier collaient aux chaussures du paysan parvenu, lourd comme un mangeur de soupe de le Nain." 6 The farm was constantly in Dandin's mind as he went about his business: "George himself always has half an eye on this [the stage traffic of hay-making and

1. Ibid.
corn-grinding], and he finally settles down - after his last defeat - to do a humble manual job in the yard."\textsuperscript{1} The extras showed up his frustration, as they were there to be "pushed rudely by Dandin, in expression of an irritation he mayn't voice to his social superiors."\textsuperscript{2} The more fully human these extras appeared to be, the crueler their lot, and Dandin's hardness seemed:

Il [Dandin] se conduit comme un petit patron de combat, qui fait trimer dur les pauvres hères à son service. Même cette vieille nourricière que blanchon a campé près de Dandin avec les gesticulations de la tendresse ne peut éveiller en lui un regard de bonté. C'est un monde en lutte où chacun dupe plus bête ou plus misérable que lui.\textsuperscript{3}

On the other hand, George Dandin was not totally undeserving of pity himself:

... George Dandin est littéralement partagé entre... deux mondes, rejeté de l'un à l'autre, balotté entre ce qui était sa ferme, son univers dont maintenant il n'est plus que le maître, et la maison sur laquelle règne son épouse, flanquée de sa petite servante et de ses deux parents, un domaine où il ne peut que se sentir étranger.\textsuperscript{4}

Thus it was the set and the figurants that best demonstrated the social no man's land into which Dandin has got himself.

The situation of each character in such a fierce society could motivate and often account for his behaviour. Angélique's position is in a way the worst, as a victim of Dandin's social ambition and of her parents' rapacity; we see in this play, Martin-Barbaz explained,

... un personnage qui veut acquérir des privilèges par son mariage avec une fille... "dont le ventre annoblit"; ils n'ont pas d'échanges véritables car ils appartiennent à deux mondes très différents. Il n'y a donc pas de couple véritable dans cette oeuvre de

\textsuperscript{1} Irving Wardle, \textit{Times}, April 18th, 1969.  
\textsuperscript{4} Bernard Dort, \textit{Théâtre public}, p. 61.
Molière, qui nous montre surtout le problème de la femme au XVIIe siècle, époque où elle pouvait être "vendue" littéralement par sa famille à un paysan sot, mais riche. Ce qui donnera à Angélique toutes les excuses pour tromper celui qu'on lui a imposé comme mari.\[1\]

Angélique's actions certainly were felt to be excusable in the eyes of many critics. She may be light-headed and foolish: "Angélique n'est pas une garce, c'est une petite fille mal élevée, un peu sotte, que le moindre godelureau à perruque, formé au cynisme de Versailles, va culbuter dans une grange."\[2\] But Henry Hewes thought that her unfair marriage justifies her dalliance: "Angélique seems no more selfish than her husband when she seeks to enjoy a love affair with a handsome young rake as a relief from her arranged marriage with a rough-handed older man."\[3\] Hewes also remarked that the setting and the country rhythms of the play made the lovers' relationship seem more explicit and more understandable: "... amorous intrigues have a certain relation to nature at work, and are not just the inventions of idle minds. Moreover, where Molière's text leaves one with the impression that the flirtations were never consummated, Planchon has imitated the laws of nature and sent the lovers to the barn for what we presume to be a full capitulation to natural forces." Planchon's troupe of course used Angélique's escapades for comic effect, underlining at the same time her own dilemma and that of her husband; Hewes was thoroughly amused:

The funniest scene is perhaps the one in which Dandin and his in-laws are hiding behind the sheets that have been hung to dry in the yard, in order to catch Angélique in the act of being wooed. Claudine spots the eavesdroppers and tips off Angélique, who is then able to turn the table on them and to beat her husband "by mistake" behind the sheet.

Angélique's parents, who have married her off to a coarse peasant in order to remake their fortune, are meanly opportunistic. In keeping with tradition, the Théâtre de la Cité presented them as slightly ridiculous characters; they appeared as

... noblesse d'autant plus enchantées de leurs privilèges qu'ils doivent avoir la bourse plate et le manoir délabré. Le beau-père est un ancien combattant qu'on imagine bien présidant les cortèges de notables et la mère une perruche caquetoise accoutumée aux présences de patronage.\(^1\)

Planchon's production, however, was unusual in that it reminded the audience that they were materialistic enough to have used their own daughter as a pawn:

... tout repose sur le fait initial qu'Angélique de Sotenville n'est devenue Mme Dandin que sur ordre de ses parents, vieux houreux de province, ridicules, certes - et c'est ainsi qu'on les joue toujours, mais d'une assez basse pour maquerauder de la sorte, ce qu'on oublie généralement de montrer - et il y aurait beaucoup à dire sur les raisons qui poussent à faire bon marché de ce trait de caractère-là.\(^2\)

Indeed just as M. de Sotenville's soldierly pride and rigidity were modelled on those of present day veterans, so the Sotenville's callous selling-off of Angélique has parallels today.

Dandin himself is modern in his wish to enter into a higher class. Planchon referred to M. Jourdain as Dandin's city cousin: "La représentation de George Dandin ne doit pas montrer le drame du cocu. Elle doit montrer la comédie du cocu par snobisme. Il se trouve aujourd'hui, avec le gros commerçant qui a épousé une fille de la bourgeoisie, des situations presque identiques."\(^3\) Dandin is in a situation

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3. "Notes pour Dandin", Théâtre Populaire, No. 34, (2e trimestre, 1959), 47.
open to ridicule, but it is a "Ridicule tournant facilement au tragique ...." 1 The play, as the Théâtre de la Cité was able to show, is more than a light comedy: "Si George Dandin est une comédie, elle est de celles qui font plus souvent rire que s'esclaffer. Et lorsque vient le rire, il est souvent amer." 2 It took Planchon's company to make this underlying bitterness perceptible:

At the very beginning when Jean Bouise, who plays Dandin, steps forward to address the audience about his predicament, we are struck with a sense of tragedy. Here is a man headed toward frustration, humiliation, and madness, the prisoner of his understandable desire to work his way up in the world. 3

The play gained in seriousness because its plot was presented as a social process: "D'une banale intrigue de cocuage, dont on avait fait jusqu'à présent la panacée des rires faciles, l'histoire de Dandin devenait celle de l'ambition, de la vanité dans une société de castes où l'argent, cependant, corrodait les barrières." 4 An American critic spoke of Planchon's "delicate Brechtian diddling" with the play, which brought out its "dark, tense, and bitterly funny harmonies ...." 5

When he pointed out for his actors the modernness of Dandin's situation, Planchon also said that it was necessary to emphasise the differences between the parvenu's fate in the XVIIth century and in our own: "... cette forme de société où évoluent nos personnages engendre des contradictions: ici, la mésalliance. En soulignant avec rigueur et précision la forme de cette société, nous en montrons le caractère particulier, historique. Du même coup, apparaît une solution qui sera donnée par l'évolution, la transformation, la mutation de cette société." 6 On the American tour in 1968 this point

met with sympathetic understanding:
The character of Dandin has been fixed for us as a particular social result of a particular period in a particular place. He is the recognizable ancestor of modern Dandins who have used their hard-earned money to gain social advantages which have proved more trouble than they were worth. Yet through this production we see the difference between Molière's Dandin and his modern counterpart, between the social attitudes of the seventeenth century and today's.

Perhaps some spectators went a step further and understood the Brechtian implication of this difference between Molière's century and our own; Planchon himself hinted at it in the programme for the Avignon festival: "Patience: le temps viendra où les Dandin prendront conscience. Cette conscience est aujourd'hui négative. 'Nous ne sommes pas nobles.'" Planchon was following a Marxist-based precept, reiterated by Brecht, for staging the classics: society must be shown to be mutable. There was no blatantly didactic intent in the Théâtre de la Cité's George Dandin. Jean-Jacques Lerrant probably best summed up its social message:

Comme dans chaque mise en scène de Roger Planchon, qui s'est largement éloigné du théâtre didactique, les rapports de l'homme et de la société sont complexes. Ils se déterminent l'un par l'autre tout en demeurant irréductibles à une opération claire. Chaque être porte en lui son mystère, ses alibis et ses justifications insondables.

Indeed, Pierre Mar cabru called the production the first Marxist mise en scène of Molière. The characters in Planchon's production of George Dandin were at the same time individual beings whose lot is determined for them by

society, and shapers of that society for themselves and for others.

Marivaux's *La Seconde Surprise de l'amour*

Nortensius-

J'entends; c'est que madame la marquise et monsieur le chevalier ont de l'inclination l'un pour l'autre.

Lubin-

En bien, tout coup vaille! quand ce serait de l'inclination, quand ce serait des passions, des soupirs, des flammes, et de la noce après; il n'y a rien de si gaillard; on a un cœur, on s'en sert, cela est naturel.

- Marivaux *La Second Surprise de l'amour* III.ii.

Planchon has said that Marivaux, because of the modernity of his characters, has influenced his own writing: "... there's a peculiarly modern tension between the characters in Marivaux, between their appetites and feelings on the one hand and their social code of behaviour on the other."

In *Le Travail au Théâtre de la Cité*, we can see how a close reading of the text and thorough research into the mentality of Marivaux's contemporaries preceded the presentation in 1959 and 1960, of *La Seconde Surprise de l'amour* at the Théâtre de la Cité.

The first problem was that of discovering what setting was most suitable for the play. Although Marivaux does not explicitly give a location, a certain quality of movement in the play struck Planchon's assistant, Rosner, as a possible clue for the setting:

Ce qui frappe encore, à la lecture, c'est la circulation incessante des personnages, c'est ce mouvement rapide au cœur des intrigues ... Quels sont les lieux privilégiés où l'on circule et où se nouent les intrigues? Les couloirs, bien sûr! ... Il nous a donc paru

intéressant et juste de situer une partie de La Seconde Surprise dans les couloirs, ce qui nous permettra au surplus de faire entrer le spectateur dans l'intimité de la maison: il y verra les domestiques vaquer à leurs travaux, porter les nourritures, etc.  

More specific passages in the play also suggested where certain scenes might take place; and, as they suggested various places, breaking up the unité de lieu might be justified. In fact, Planchon felt that Marivaux was simply bowing to convention by not indicating the various locations clearly; Copfermann explained why Planchon considered himself free to"interpret" the play: 

L'extrapolation repose sur cette donnée: l'auteur, corseté par une forme imposée de l'extérieur, inadéquate, tente de transgresser sa rigueur par des subterfuges. Au metteur en scène de traduire et, ce faisant, de venir à une lecture moderne. 

As according to the text the Marquise and the Chevalier are neighbours who share the same garden, the play was to be set in the garden and in the two houses. Precise scenes were located where, in all likelihood, given the actions and the words of the characters present, they would take place: 

Les premières scènes se passent le matin au réveil. La Marquise s'ennuie, elle n'a pas le courage de s'habiller, elle est donc vraisemblablement dans sa chambre. Mais lorsqu'elle reçoit le Chevalier ce ne peut être que dans son salon. Les scènes de liaison entre ces deux lieux se situent dans un corridor: c'est là que Lubin fait la cour à Lisette. 

The choice of one room rather than the other could underline certain themes within a scene: 

Pour la première passe d'armes entre le Comte et le Chevalier, il nous a paru amusant de la placer dans une salle d'armes. ... cela nous permet à la fois d'expliciter le dialogue et de montrer le désœuvrement du personnage: il vient s'entraîner mollement à l'esgrime parce qu'il n'a rien d'autre à faire.

One decision which was not understood by Parisian critics was the setting of the reading by Hortensius in a garden in winter. The Marquise, according to Rosner, would not know what literature is, and plans a reading as she would a party. The scene also made it possible to create a telling picture of the Marquise and the Chevalier, warmly dressed, sitting comfortably near a brazier, with Hortensius further off in the cold, blowing on his fingers to warm them. There were more interesting reasons, also, for the choice of such a setting: "... ce jardin en hiver est à peu près la situation de la marquise; ce jardin est à la fin de l'hiver, demain les bourgeons surgiront, il y aura des feuilles, il y aura des fruits sur ces arbres, mais aujourd'hui c'est encore l'hiver."

For the set, René Allio used enlarged reproductions of Watteau sketches, around the back and sides of the stage. Ceilings in the interior scenes were designed with special care to indicate in which room we were. The most stylish, in 18th century terms, was that of the Marquise's bedroom, "inspiré d'un plafond de l'Hôtel de Ville, très 'à la mode' pour elle." In her living room, a more severe and formal style of the 17th century suggested not only that this room was for receptions, but that the house was not new. The Chevalier's living room, "Comme il est dit dans le texte que les cadets de famille ne sont pas très fortunés" was both less ornate and more old-fashioned, "un assez simple plafond à caisson de XVIe siècle". For the scenes which take place outside, two entrances were placed one on either side of the stage; the Marquise's was a copy of the Hôtel Matignon.

1. Ibid.
entrance, while the Chevalier's was, again, more austere. Furniture, especially for the Marquise's bedroom, was designed after studying paintings of the day, to be "... alanguissant, confortable et bas ..." Costumes were also created by copying from the paintings of the day, especially, again, those of Watteau.\(^1\)

Mirrors were in evidence in the production as a comment on the characters' narcissism: "Les classes possédantes cherchent à être fascinantes et fascinent véritablement. Les autres regardent. Mais ces grands désœuvrés que Marivaux nous montre, qui peuvent-ils regarder sinon eux-mêmes? Ils aimeraient, se regardant, trouver l'image fascinante."\(^2\)

In order to emphasise this theme, Planchon thought that the actors might play to one another as well; the aristocrats would strike poses, whereas the servants would stare at their masters and mistress openly, with a candid interest in their affairs. Done with subtlety, this added another dimension to the social picture:

Ainsi, au détour d'une réplique, la marquise a brusquement le sentiment que Lisette existe en tant qu'autre: cela la gêne (Acte II). A l'Acte I, au contraire, elle lui parle sans la voir, elle lui donne la réplique sans supposer même qu'elle puisse être différente et avoir ses problèmes, tel son amour pour Lubin.\(^3\)

In one scene the visual metaphor was refined; in the fencing room, there stood a battered dummy, a life-size model of a human skeleton, with a mirror instead of a head, on which the Chevalier practised:

... si l'on regarde la scène d'un peu près, on s'aperçoit que c'est extrêmement masochiste, et le seul fait ... que le Chevalier en tapant sur le mannequin, se voit dans la glace, je crois que c'était traduire sur le plan corporel,

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3. Ibid.
Music for the play was composed by Claude Lochy. After reflecting on the language of the play, as Roger Planchon had explained it, Lochy felt that he had understood "... la position d'êcorchés vifs de ces personnages que la moindre approche sentimentale peut abîmer ou séduire." In order to convey this atmosphere of extreme sensitivity to the spoken word, Lochy chose an instrument popular in Marivaux's age:

Pour notre part, nous avons opté pour l'ensemble le plus janséniste qui soit: un trio de clavecins capable de reproduire avec toutes les inflexions possibles, les cadences de ce pur classicisme, et d'égratigner, de piquer au besoin les passions jusqu'au sang. ... La pudeur extrême des personnages, leur sincérité, leur façon de corseter le violence de leurs passions, tout cela nous a paru pouvoir être retenu dans les inflexions de ces clavecins si grêles, si mélancoliques, si austères.

Language and music were to complement each other in conveying the fragility and sensuousness of Marivaux's characters.

Planchon was wary of the sort of acting which Marivaux's style usually provokes. He felt that actors usually make the mistake of sur-signifier, showing too clearly to the audience when they are lying to each other. By making this deception obvious, said Planchon, the actor forgets something very important: "... que dans Marivaux les personnages sont de force égale et d'importance égale." The audience must feel persuaded that one intelligent actor is being quite misled by another. Just as the Théâtre de la Cité's Tartuffe would never remove his mask, so, contrary to tradition, Planchon's marivaudeurs would lie very convincingly to one

2. Claude Lochy, "Pour Marivaux. La musique.", Le Travail au Théâtre de la Cité, p127.
another. They would in this way appear as three-dimensional human beings of some intelligence. It was a fulness in the characters of Marivaux which first attracted Planchon to these plays. Far from being preoccupied only with discussing their affections in pretty language, they were sensuous and alive:

Le débat qui oppose les personnages de Marivaux n'est pas un jeu intellectuel, dégagé de toute sensualité ... mais bien plutôt la recherche d'un assentiment charnel. Toute pruderie ou ingénuité en sont exclus: les femmes de Marivaux ne sont pas sans parenté avec celles de Laclos; tout simplement elles sont moins averties, moins lucides, quoique plus sincères...1

Not only the noble characters occupied Planchon's attention. He gave some thought to the character of Lubin, and to the portrayal of servants generally. Just as he had looked through the list of characters in George Dandin and challenged the traditional practice of playing them as buffoons, so he looked carefully at Lubin and saw more than a clown. More egalitarian in spirit than older, and even than most modern theatres, Planchon's company assessed servants and ruling classes alike with a determination to make them as fully human as possible: "Il faut revenir aux textes. Il faut supprimer de la représentation des œuvres classiques l'opposition grands personnages - petits personnages: ceux-ci ne sont pas la caricature de ceux-là."2 Many modern directors accept arbitrarily that the social perspective presented by a playwright is unalterable. Planchon's attitude was different: "Les représentations traditionnelles cherchent à indiquer que la perspective que l'on nous présente va de soi. Nous allons nous aussi souligner une perspective, mais de façon que l'on sente qu'elle n'est pas immuable."3 This reflects Brecht's

3. Ibid.
determination to reveal the social forces at work even in classical plays. In the case of Lubin, it was important to take seriously his love for Lisette, which is the basis of his actions and of his words. An intelligent reading revealed that it was in their form and not in their content that Lubin's lines were funny. A knowledge of the class situation of his day allows one to presume that he would have good reason to make himself deliberately amusing:

Le but qu'il [Lubin] vise est pour lui très clair et important, mais pour l'atteindre il bouffonne...

Lubin s'adresse à des nobles; il ne peut leur parler que sous l'angle de la drôlerie. Sinon le toléralent-ils? Lubin ne peut user que d'un langage toléré.¹

In addition, Lubin's words have a discretion which is rarely appreciated despite its modern resonance: "Regardons l'histoire. Lubin a comme son maître perdu une maîtresse, mais il n'a pas fait parade de sa douleur; tout compte fait, il en parle comme nous aimons que l'on parle de la douleur, avec pudeur."² Planchon concluded that the actor playing Lubin must show the distinction between "cet homme et les moyens qu'il utilise pour s'exprimer."³ Unlike Lubin and Lisette, the other servants were shown to have no say in their lives:

Lisette et Lubin supportent ... tout de la marquise et du chevalier leurs maîtres; de les servir eux et de desservir leur amour. Ou plutôt: de servir l'amour de leur maître, ce faisant, de hâter le leur. Mais tous deux jouent les petits maîtres pour la piètaile qui ne partage ni les secrets ni les confidences des amants majeurs dépus ou encouragés. La représentation comporte donc trois plans: les maîtres, leurs valets de corps et de cœur, la basse classe des besogneux, sans nobles sentiments et aux rapports directs entre eux.⁴

1. Ibid.
The production thus tended to emphasize how people's love relationships, and even their means of expression can be socially determined.

Roger Planchon himself felt that his production of *La Seconde Surprise de l'amour* marked a turning point in his style of presentation. It was the theatre's first serious study of love conflicts in and for themselves. It was the first time their treatment of the theme was not a sarcastic one. Their analysis was also much less critical than usual:

"Bien sûr, nous ménageons toujours sa place à la critique dans ce spectacle (exemple: les rapports Lisette-Marquise, Marquise-Hortensius) mais je constate que la zone de la description pure y est devenue plus importante."

There were reflections prompted Roger Planchon to go a step further and wonder whether, in a just world, "un monde humain", where there would be nothing to criticise, theatre would have anything to say.

Critics found a great deal to discuss in the production of *La Seconde Surprise de l'amour*. Gabriel Marcel expressed surprise that the scene in which the Marquise complains of Lisette's interference (II, v.) should have been set in a laundry room. He was not only surprised but offended by the final scene in which, he said, "... nous voyons le chevalier et la marquise par terre appuyés contre des oreillers, à côté du lit nuptial, en présence de toute la maisonnée; cette matérialisation est à mon sens absolument contraire à l'esprit de Marivaux." He did not understand that the presence of the

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bed clarified for the modern spectator "... une situation qui, à l'époque de Marivaux, était comprise sans cet artifice."\(^1\) In Marcel's view, breaking the unity of place fragmented the play; he was upset by the change in rhythm, and pointed out that the production lasted twice as long as more traditional ones. In his opinion, the weight of the materialisation was too great for the lightness of Marivaux's style.

Elsa Triolet\(^2\) took a completely different view of the production. In her opinion, the realism of Marivaux's characters and the perfect continuity of his writing made Planchon's interpretation quite justifiable:

... c'est bien cette vérité des personnages et de leurs sentiments découps par Marivaux et collés sur un fond uni et vide, qui a permis à Roger Planchon de remplir ce vide d'un intérieur, d'un paysage, d'un va-et-vient de gens.

She reacted to the first bedroom scene with a good-humoured acceptance:

Il y a dans La Seconde Surprise de l'amour parfaitement la place, psychologiquement, pour y introduire un lit et montrer la Marquise et le Comte sans leur perruque poudrée, au naturel, comme des petits pois. Si Roger Planchon "attige", il le fait avec beaucoup d'humour.

She also appreciated Lochy's musical commentary which, she said, "... faisait passer le marivaudage à un autre registre."

Gérard Guillot\(^3\) saw the sets of this production with a similar understanding; the crowd of busy servants gave the world of Marivaux a true, living dimension:

Ainsi la mise en scène de Planchon, toute d'une monotone gravité, plongeant les créatures dans la réalité; ils tournent, et virevolte autour d'eux une armée de servantes et de valets, faisant le lit après l'amour, transportant les fauteuils dans le jardin pour la séance de lecture, défilant avec le potage, les légumes et les viandes... en tête desquels Lisette et Lubin qui ont le

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sens de leur condition et cherchent un établissement solide sans briser le lien solide qui les unit à leurs maîtres et dont ils partagent les intérêts.

He thought that the remarkable quality of these sets was that all the elements in them were given an integrated meaning to underscore themes important in the play but sometimes neglected on stage:

Ce sont de véritables compositions picturales que nous propose Allio, compositions où les taches de couleur, les volumes et les objets prennent non pas leur signification propre, mais leur part "particulière" de la portée générale d'un tableau.

Guillot appreciated the bedroom scenes because he looked at the preceding actions and saw this development as a logical consequence of them:

... lorsque le chevalier jette dans les bras du comte la marquise, celle-ci, par dépit d'amour-propre, s'offre et se donne au comte; tout au moins cela est suggéré dans le texte de Marivaux. Joué par la troupe de Planchon, le tableau s'achève par une course de la marquise et du comte qui la poursuit; et le tableau suivant les retrouve dans le boudoir en tenue légère.

He agreed, however, to a certain extent, with Marcel on the rhythm of the play and felt that the scene changes were too numerous and too slow. Generally he approved of Planchon's and Allio's ability to make plain things which had only been suggested previously.

The army of servants, the crowded, comfortable furniture, the movement of the characters, the use of language as a means to gain physical affection, all these facets of the production helped to create the impression that the characters were alive; Guillot approved:

Le théâtre à travers Planchon ne cache rien; les personnages dans un contexte social vrai mangent, boivent, font l'amour, ont même de petits besoins... Pourquoi pas, puisque telle est la réalité quotidienne et monotone, réalité dont il est impossible de s'abstraire.
It was not only the servants whose forms of conversation were shaped by their social position:

C'est la condition sociale de la Marquise et du Comte qui explique leur désœuvrement et qui détermine ce langage si spécifique qu'est le marivaudage et parallèlement l'amour de Lubin et de Lisette ne se manifestera pas sous les mêmes formes, c'est la situation de valet qui fait que Lubin, lorsqu'il s'adresse à ses maîtres, bouffonne, c'est le seul biais qui lui permette de manifester ses désirs.¹

We retain our interest in the masters but we also see on whom they depend and what effects their trivial games can have on other people:

Ainsi le spectateur est appelé à jouir des jeux de la Marquise et du Chevalier mais aussi à les comprendre du dehors, comme des divertissements (qui peuvent être graves, voire mortels) d'oisifs plus ou moins inconscients, et dont risquent de faire les frais les valets qui savent, eux, ce qu'ils veulent, qui connaissent leurs propres besoins.²

Michel Vinaver described how, with the utmost charm and elegance, the characters denounced their own artificiality and their own egoism at every turn; by the signes scéniques, the intonations and the gestures, they revealed that their only occupation was this frivolous game-playing:

Le plateau se transforme en une arène où, sous couvert des échanges de la plus exquise politesse, trois êtres s'affrontent dans le besoin qu'êprouve chacun de se prouver à lui-même son existence par la domination ou la possession de l'autre. L'instrument dont disposent ces oisifs - qui n'ont littéralement pas d'autre activité possible sur la terre que d'exister - est leur cœur.

Le théâtre de Marivaux, du rose, vire au noir. Il offre la vision d'une humanité fermée à toute espèce de salut; d'une humanité dont l'agitation, aussi enchantante soit-elle, est parfaitement désespérée.³

2. Dort, Théâtre public, p.311.
It was Elsa Triollet who provided the most complete vindication of Planchon's work on the play:

Le Seconde Surprise de l'amour n'a pas été écrite pour montrer l'oisiveté de ses héros, ou la dépendance des domestiques, qui ressemble au servage, mais, néanmoins, avec notre optique d'aujourd'hui, cela saute aux yeux et la façon de donner un entourage à l'intrigue amoureuse entre la Marquise, le Chevalier et le Comte, rend cette oisiveté et cette dépendance plus flagrantes ... cette troisième dimension rend toute l'affaire plus palpable, plus dramatique ... et plus comique aussi.

Planchon could ask for no higher compliment than that of having brought out in a classic the themes which are essential "avec notre optique d'aujourd'hui."

Musset's  On ne saurait penser à tout

Germain:
Mam'zelle Victoire ... Vous savez que monsieur aime madame.

Victoire:
Et je sais que madame aime monsieur.

Germain:
Et que monsieur veut épouser madame.

Victoire:
Et que madame n'en demande pas mieux.

Germain:
... qu'il ne faudrait qu'un mot pour arranger tout, et qu'au lieu de le dire, ils chantent.

Victoire:
Nos maîtres sont de grands enfants; il faut arranger cette affaire-là.

Musset On ne saurait penser à tout VIII

In the same programme as Marivaux's La Seconde Surprise de l'amour, at Villeurbanne from February 13th to March 15th, 1959, Planchon presented a version of Alfred de Musset's On ne saurait penser à tout. He was assisted in directing the play by Jacques Rosner. Unfortunately, as it was presented only at Villeurbanne, and for a short run, very little information is available on this production.

Planchon no doubt chose to present this short play in the same programme with La Seconde Surprise de l'amour because of its resemblance to the Marivaux play. Musset's little "proverb" is a light comedy about a young Marquis and a widowed Comtesse who really wish to marry each other, but who are too absent-minded to come to a firm decision. Victoire, the Comtesse's maid, finally brings matters to a close by writing a note to remind the Marquis to propose and to be certain to get a definite answer. As in Marivaux's play, the aristocrats hesitate and their servants take the initiative for them.

Planchon seems to have interpreted the play in the spirit of the knockabout slapstick shows which he had developed to perfection at the Théâtre de la Comédie. He deliberately pushed fidelity to the text to the point of absurdity:

"Un salon à la campagne": c'est l'indication de lieu de Musset pour son proverbe "On ne saurait penser à tout". Roger Planchon a pris l'auteur au pied de la lettre ... et le piano est dans les fougères, le canapé devient tronc d'arbre, et les porte-manteaux descendent des branches.1

The stage properties included such items as two canaries (one in good voice), a cuckoo-clock in working order, two butterfly nets, a violin, a hunting horn, a gun, a backgammon set, a croquet set, a deck of cards, a watering-can, a great quantity of artificial flowers, and a number of green plants. In a way this set may have been similar to those which Allio had designed for George Dandin and for La Seconde Surprise de l'amour: once again, Allio's design omitted no detail of country life.

Here, however, the set obviously emphasised and even made ludicrously evident the country setting of the play.

Claude Lochy played the role of the forgetful young Marquis de Valberg, Henri Galiardin played his uncle the Baron, Jean Bouise his servant Germain, Isabelle Sadoyan the flighty Comtesse de Vernon, and Françoise Goléa her maid Victoire. Galiardin had to teach Bouise the subtleties of backgammon for the play; the humorous possibilities of such a fine comic actor as Bouise demonstrating his skill at backgammon, croquet, etc., are manifold, particularly in a production which allowed for improvisation from the actors. Gérard Guillot said that, although he found Musset's "proverbe" unbearable to read, he had laughed heartily, along with the rest of the audience, at Planchon's presentation of it; it became, at Villeurbanne

Un burlesque de la meilleure veine, un burlesque où les plantes poussent toutes seules et à vue sous l'eau de l'arrosoir, où le valet transporte dans ses poches tout l'office, depuis la salière en passant par la boîte à cirage, où le piano joue sans pianiste dès qu'on lève le couvercle.

... Et le tout emporté dans un mouvement rapide, irrésistible, délirant, défaissant la réalité ici pour la reconstruire plus loin. Ce n'est plus du Musset, diront quelques esprits chagrins. Qu'à cela ne tienne! ... Nous avons ri, follement ri.

The Villeurbanne production of On ne saurait penser à tout thus seems to have demonstrated Planchon's talent for maintaining a quick pace and his unerring sense of humour; these were qualities which he was to show again in his musical comedies. Evidently this creation also revealed the fortunate lack of respect for tradition which Planchon was to exhibit in all his productions of classical plays.

Molière's Le Tartuffe

Orgon

Je recuille avec zèle un homme en sa misère;
Je le loge et le tiens comme mon propre frère;
De bienfaits chaque jour il est par moi chargé;
Je lui donne ma fille et tout le bien que j'ai;
Et, dans le même temps, le perfide, l'infâme,
Tente le noir dessein de suborner ma femme
Et non content encore de ces lâches essais,
Il m'ose menacer de mes propres bienfaits...

Molière Le Tartuffe V.iii.1645-1653

In his own talks on his interpretation of classical plays, Planchon usually used Tartuffe as an example. Echoing Piscator and Brecht, he said that there can be no neutral staging of a play. To support his point, he gave as examples the varying and contradictory versions of this play in the history of its performance, each conceived by a director claiming to serve the text objectively. In the programme, Planchon explained how, caught in the confusion of different theses on the play, he based his own analysis on a new question; he asked, not "who is Tartuffe", but "what does Tartuffe do?" By thus studying the events actually indicated in the play, he challenged many preconceptions.

In an article published in Lettres Françaises, Planchon explained his approach to Tartuffe. Firstly, he gave as an example the scene in which Orgon hides under the table whilst Tartuffe is attempting to seduce Elmire. Despite countless productions in which Orgon pops out, enraged by Tartuffe's words, Planchon pointed out in his article that it is clear from the text that Orgon actually should remain under the table: "... Elmire est contrainte de prier Tartuffe de sortir et réclame, avec une ironie indignée, à Orgon des explications. Si les faits se déroulent ainsi, notre compréhension de la pièce ne doit-elle pas se modifier?" Looking

at the events also destroyed the theory that Orgon always passively follows Tartuffe's lead; Planchon added that "Si l'on s'en tient aux faits, la pièce n'avance que par les décisions d'Orgon." A careful reading, Planchon said in the same article, also shed light on Orgon's feelings for Tartuffe; two endings were possible in this play:

1. La dénonciation de M. Tartuffe comme non religieux et une plus grande aspiration à la vie dévote chez Orgon;
2. l'écroulement des prétextes religieux qui font croire à Orgon que ce sont eux qui le lient à Tartuffe et la reconnaissance claire de la nature de leurs rapports.

Mais ici, et ce n'est pas rien, ... il rejette la religion, en même temps que Tartuffe, ce qui est la reconnaissance non consciente, bien que claire, du lien sexuel qui les unit.

From Planchon's reading it was clear that a new conception of Orgon must emerge.

Research into the historical and social setting of the play also altered the import of the play; in the programme, Planchon reflected on Orgon's society:

Pourquoi, dans cette société, un grand serviteur de l'Etat ... se réfugie dans l'aspiration au mysticisme, à la vie religieuse pour donner ou trouver un nouveau sens à sa vie? Les historiens répondent qu'après la Fronde, la monarchie s'établit solidement et que le pouvoir du groupe social auquel appartient Orgon se réduisit ou disparut. Par ces questions, nous sommes renvoyés à l'histoire du Grand Siècle dont Molière saisit quelques contradictions importantes en nous présentant un conflit incarné par des individus comme tels susceptibles d'être analysés en tant qu'individus ... mais pétris par le social, historique de part en part.

This historical accuracy justified a scene often unfairly edited, that of the Exempt. Firstly it was normal for a policeman to state his support for the power which employs him, secondly it was an interesting development to hear such a character speak as an individual; Planchon noted in the programme that:
Pour la première fois (peut-être), nous voyons un héros opposer à l'État des sentiments personnels. Les personnages de Corneille luttent, tandis qu'ici il ne s'agit que d'une enclave personnelle. Voici, je crois, le premier "citoyen contre les pouvoirs". Ce n'est pas un opposant, mais il défend le paisible pavillon individuel.

**Tartuffe** was first put on at Villeurbanne in 1962, and in the following years in Moscow and Leningrad (1963), Paris (1964), Stockholm and various European cités (1966), Avignon (1967), and New York (1968). In 1974, Planchon re-created the play and took it on tour in South America, and then in France.¹ The programme for the first Théâtre de la Cité production reveals the company's keen interest in the historical setting of the play. The programme is a collection of "...contemporary quotations... selected... for their ingenious effort at confusing caritas with amor."² The quotations also describe another aspect of Molière's age which is of considerable significance in the play: the power of the king. A paragraph on the education of the Dauphin, a description of the levée, reproductions of engravings, an account of the Fronde give a picture of France under an absolute monarch. Not only, then, are we given the usual schoolbook quotations of various critics of the play; we also get a glimpse of the religious and political atmosphere in which Tartuffes could thrive. Molière's famous witty riposte when the hypocrites tried to get the play banned in his day is given the last page in the programme.

Planchon's reading was a fundamental transformation in the manner of assessing the play. Rejecting as irrelevant the question of its catholicism or anti-catholicism, it centred on the social situation of Orgon, on his power within his family and within the kingdom, and on the climate of thought which permits Tartuffe to take advantage of Orgon's unconscious homosexual infatuation by posing as his religious mentor. Roger Planchon explained that his intention was neither didactic

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¹ For a brief account of the 1974 production of Tartuffe, see Chapter XI, pp. 613-614.

² Times, July 30th, 1964.
nor demonstrative:

Nous, nous avons voulu la [la pièce]
débarrasser de ce côté polémique, lui
enlever toute valeur démonstrative.
Et, fidèles encore une fois à Aristote,
ne nous sommes attachés qu'à
l'histoire qu'elle raconte.

With characteristic honesty, he also admitted that he had been
trying for some time to rid himself of a moralising tendency
in his work: "... il m'a fallu des années pour comprendre
qu'il faut laisser s'affronter les forces psychiques et
sociales et se garder de moraliser." Indeed Gérard Guillot
remarked on this noticeable change in Planchon's style: "... ce style d'approfondissement par le dépouillement et la pudeur
s'avère totalement nouveau chez Roger Planchon." A Muscovite
critic, Vadim Gaevski, saw in Planchon's transition into
Aristotelian understatement an unsuccessful attempt to combine
the qualities of Brecht and the precepts of Boileau: "Boileau
exigeait de l'art l'harmonie et la beauté, quels que soient les
thèmes qu'il traite, Brecht cherchait l'intensité de l'image qui
cloque le mal au pilori et qui donne la sensation de la force
et de la puissance de l'art." In Gaevski's opinion, the
beauty of Planchon's production distracted the viewer from the
politically criminal act within the play. The production,
according to Raphael Nataf, was remarkable for the absence of
embellishments, for its utter precision of speech and of move­
ment.

The much-praised set of Tartuffe, was, as we have
seen, meant to convey both an abstract picture of the sensibility
of the century and a realistic one of its daily life. Allio

5. "Le Tartuffe de Molière", Itinéraire de Roger Planchon
   1953-1964, pp. 96-97.
himself explained to Jacqueline Autrusseau that the set was a plastic parallel to Tartuffe's gradual uncovering; ... à partir d'une grande boîte à panneaux mobiles, un espace qui s'agrandit à mesure que la pièce avance et que la fuite s'accentue. Les formes deviendront ainsi de plus en plus abstraites, s'épurant jusqu'à la porte de la demeure d'Orgon, seule issue pour Tartuffe.

He also showed in this account of his work how it affected the rhythm of the production: "... le système de panneaux, grâce auquel j'approfondis progressivement l'espace scénique, permettait en outre d'assurer la continuité de la représentation tout en marquant le passage d'un acte à l'autre." Lighting effects, he said in the same interview, were planned with a very fine feeling for the atmosphere and the time sense which they would create:

Le décor du Tartuffe est à la fois réaliste - il se réfère à l'historicité - et utilisé comme ce que j'appellerais un instrument de chirurgie. Fait pour recevoir la lumière et la renvoyer, sans que surgissent des coins d'ombre, sans qu'aucun effet d'éclairage ne suggère un déroulement réaliste du temps, j'ai voulu qu'il rende sensible un temps à la fois vrai et abstrait.

He told Autrusseau that even paintings for the walls of Orgon's home were chosen with great care:

J'ai toujours cherché... à utiliser la peinture comme un commentaire, une référence... Cette fois, j'ai tenté de mêler le commentaire à la représentation. Le sujet des peintures... doit mettre en valeur les éléments intérieurs qui fondent l'action, souligner les sentiments érotico-religieux qui sont les "moyens" de Tartuffe.

An observer noticed that even the floor was planned to give a visual emphasis to the 'dryness' of the presentation: "... les évolutions des comédiens sur un parquet marqueté et luisant dessinent des figures géométriques, cercles, triangles, diagonales ou spirales, qui ont la sécheresse d'une épure."

Lochy's music also underlined the theme of the 'mystic' sensibility through an "... ouverture à la française avec double quatuor à cordes, encadrement plus que soutien du jeu dramatique."; it was described as a "... décoration pour parfaire l'impression de cette sensibilité religieuse dont il est tant question."1

Costumes were designed to look as modern as possible while remaining historically accurate. Trousers were in the Louis XIIIth style because that style is more similar to our own; some coats were strictly in a Louis XIVth fashion, but those worn by Valère and Damis were very like those of elegant young men of the 1960's. The policemen's uniforms were modern, as these have not changed in any case; the only anachronism was adding today's ceinturon. It was only for the women's costumes, Allio admitted, that he had failed to create this sort of ambiguity between the fashions of our century and Molière's.2 To give a faithful picture of an epoch both in material and in spiritual terms, and to underscore and heighten the play's meanings, these were the stated aims of the set, music, and costumes.

Critical comment of the set shows that it succeeded in many of its aims. Jacques Lemarchand noted its functional efficiency as well as its beauty.3 Its simplicity also pleased many spectators:

Sur scène les réverences gracieuses ont disparu ainsi que le clinquant des costumes, les boucles des perruques qui caractérisent l'époque de Louis XIV. Dans ce domaine, le metteur en scène Roger Planchon, et l'artiste-peintre-décorateur René Allio ont cherché à présenter d'une manière moderne avant tout la réalité terrestre des caractères.4

Gilles Sandier extolled its aptness as a commentary on the progress of events:

... ces panneaux de boiseries s'envolent les uns après les autres, transformant une pièce en une autre, agrandissant progressivement le champ, composant ou plutôt décomposant l'appartement d'Orgon, qui devient de plus en plus à claire-voie, à mesure que les masques tombent; à la fin, il n'y a plus, partout, que les carcasses posées sur ce parquet en marqueterie, luissant comme dans les peintures hollandaises, c'est saisissant. 1

He also recognised the costumes for what they are, links between the XVIIIth century and our own, and praised their beauty; "... des blue jeans 'Grand Siècle'", he noted, "des vestes-pourpoints, des braguettes en rhingraves, le ton dans les tons feutrés des violines, mordoré, gris et vert bronze ..." He was not alone in realising what power and density the costumes and the music gave to the play; Gérard Guillot wrote:

... il y a dans l'illustration du texte de Molière, tant par les costumes que par la musique, une vaste ouverture à la française laissant incuber la comédie plutôt que l'exposant ou la décrivant, âme sévérité tendue, une sagesse judicieuse qui en accroît le trouble, l'énergie, la puissance. 2

Bertrand Poirot-Delpech gave the most enthusiastic description of the visual presentation:

Celui [le cadre] de Tartuffe consacre notre premier architecte de scène. Une porte dérobée s'ouvrant dans une immense Descente de Croix; des murs mordorés sentant la rente et l'encens; des cloisons de boiseries blondes et d'images sulpiciennes découvrant le vide au rythme où tombent les masques; tout le squelette de la pièce est ainsi figuré dans l'espace, toute sa chair blafarde de société minée par les mensonges. 3

Not only did the set suit the play perfectly, it was able to do so in a subtle and complex way; it had multiple and brilliantly related significances:

... - s'y conjugaient visiblement la description naturaliste (celle d'un riche bourgeois), l'allusion symbolique (celle de la pénétration de Tartuffe jusqu'aux tréfonds de la maison d'Orgon) et l'évocation historique (celle d'une époque qui étouffe sous l'autorité du Roi-Soleil et qui trouve quelques dérivatifs dans l'exercice d'une piété fortement érotisée).

The decorator for the 1974 production, Hubert Monloup, was to retain some elements of Allio's design, but at the same time he was to suggest the transitional philosophical climate of the 17th century by showing Orgon's house in a state of interrupted renovation.

The austerity of the sets in the earlier productions emphasised the well controlled mise en place, which more than one critic compared to patterns of fencing. Planchon's direction was masterly:

... tous les mouvements, tous les déplacements, tous les gestes sont soigneusement calculés par Roger Planchon, non pas pour leur effet de façade, mais pour leur portée profonde. Et ce sont pour les interprètes la privation de ces excès comme prix de leur liberté ...

The flow of movement was conceived as in a film. There was a conscious purpose behind this careful choreography:

... la scène de Planchon tient du champ clos, du stade, du champ de manœuvres ou de la salle d'armes; mais ce magnifique enchevêtrement de mouvements croisés et comme distendus, il n'est jamais gratuit: ... à travers cette géométrie dans l'espace c'est le monde familier de nos gestes quotidiens qui est restitué... 

Indeed it was for an everyday reality that Planchon was aiming, for the authenticity of objects and of movements.

1. Dort, Théâtre public, p.311.
In a press conference he said that through Tartuffe, "Molière a étudié une société humaine dans les rapports de vie quotidienne de gens qui la composent." He succeeded totally in conveying this atmosphere of day to day life as it must have been lived in the XVII\textsuperscript{th} century:

Si bien que la société en question n'est pas seulement peinte dans ses actions, dans ses mobiles, ou même dans sa sentimentalité religieuse, mais encore dans la quotidienneté des choses (meubles, peintures d'époque sur les murs de la demeure d'Orgon, vêtements que l'on quitte ou que l'on revêt depuis le manteau jusqu'à la robe de chambre ...) et dans celle des êtres: pleurs, colères, soufflets, étreintes ou jeux de main, gestes désordonnés ou longs soupirs contrôlés. Tout cela cependant avec rigueur, retenue, bienséance!

Even Laurent came out of hiding; "... le célèbre Laurent, invisible depuis trois siècles, sortait enfin des coulisses pour serrer la haire et la discipline de son maître." Inside Orgon's house, real people were behaving as they normally did. In the 1974 production, Planchon was to emphasise this idea even more through the sets and the costumes.

Through this microcosmic analysis there appeared a picture of a society ruled by two powers, the secular monarchic and the religious, which might join together to impose an unbearable weight:

... ainsi entendue, la cabale dévote ne serait ni jésuite, ni janséniste: elle s'inspirerait de tout ce qui pouvait à l'époque se permettre de censurer, de dominer, de diriger, d'envahir, et même de persécuter. Et répondant dans cette perspective, la pièce peint magnifiquement, et surtout, les contradictions historiques du règne de Louis XIV, règne développant parallèlement la morale de la raison (Accordant les désirs sans les contrarier), et les progrès du pouvoir et de la monarchie (Définie par l'expression "l'ordre moral chrétien").

We are reminded of Ionesco’s Rhinocéros, as a symbol of whatever powers take hold of people’s minds; Roger Planchon himself used this comparison in speaking of the Exempt: "Il [l’Exempt] loge bien dans la cité radieuse du Roi Soleil, mais il refuse de devenir un rhinocéros. Par les décors et la mise en scène nous avons cherché à rendre sensible ce thème qui connaîtra le succès que l’on sait auprès des dramaturges contemporains." Gilles Sandier was able to sum up the entire play in quasi-sociological language:

Une famille de grands bourgeois cossus du XVIIe siècle, les séquelles de la Prorédé, une société menacée, sous un monarque absolu, d’une occulte dictature cléricale et policière, une jolie petite crapule qui use de deux moyens de parvenir: ses charmes et les singeries religieuses, c’est-à-dire usant du pouvoir que lui permet sur les êtres la morale cléricale du Dieu garde-chiourme et une dupé amoureuse de la dévote crapule, voilà le tableau.

Planchon had succeeded in his aim, which Robert Kanters defined as that of "... tirer la pièce du plan de la comédie de caractère à celui du fait divers symptomatique." The message was very clear. A group of farmers went to see the play and in a subsequent discussion, one of them said that he had compared what he saw on stage to his own experience of village life; asked if he saw only religious parallels, he answered: "Non; dans les campagnes les gens se servent de ce qui est bien vu à une certaine époque. On pourrait transposer sans changer grand chose à part les costumes.”

The social picture was drawn through the portrait of the characters, the civil and religious powers were revealed through their "... emprise sur les consciences." According to Planchon, social and personal forces interact to create events. If he constructed a picture of an age, he could

not in so doing neglect the psychological forces at work in this play: the two were intertwined in a fluctuating relationship. Molière makes us sense historical facts through their effects on human beings: "... le pouvoir d'intimidation de la morale chrétienne et de la monarchie, c'est un homme qui en découvre le commerce possible et un autre dont la vérité réduit à néant les raisons de vivre ..."¹ Planchon said in an article² that he admired Tartuffe precisely because the characters are so totally enmeshed in the action: "Aucun personnage ne s'analyse, chacun est happé par l'action, chacun exprime un 'je' au lieu du 'il' déguisé en 'je' des pièces démonstratives." Beneath the line of action there were hidden motivations, and these, "... le niveau le plus obscur des rapports entre les personnages...", were as important as the social and historical context from which they sprang.

Orgon, firstly, deserves as much attention as Tartuffe. If the play is diabolical, as Planchon said, in the same article, if it questions "... nos croyances au niveau le plus secret de nous-mêmes ...", it does this through Orgon: "... je n'affirme pas que le comportement de chacun reste étranger à son idéologie, à ses croyances, mais dans le rôle d'Orgon, ce mécanisme est, je crois, décrit." Orgon's homosexual love for Tartuffe is hinted at in the play, in Dorine's references to his excessive tenderness for the impostor; if one looks at the ending, verisimilitude demands that this love exist. In the production these sentiments were subtly suggested; the Special Correspondent for The Times wrote:

... the suspicion of homosexuality ...

is never blatant; it arises primarily from the humanizing of Orgon ... Intoning the "Et Tartuffe?" and the "Pauvre homme!" ... this Orgon gets the comic effect but also sounds like a man genuinely concerned about his friend; that is a novelty. As the play ends Orgon indicates how well he understands that he has too publicly

preferred Tartuffe to his wife; reconciliations are effected all round, with one exception: Orgon cannot face the scorned Elmire.\textsuperscript{1}

He was described as "Cet Orgon à l'âge critique et au ricanement déchirant."\textsuperscript{2} His attitudes and gestures in the presence of Tartuffe were also those of a lover:

Ainsi Jacques Debary est-il Orgon avec un sensualisme ambigu quand il est auprès de Tartuffe, avec un despotisme irascible lorsqu'il se veut chef de famille, avec une douleur amoureuse devant l'abus de confiance de l'imposteur qui l'avait envoûté.\textsuperscript{3}

In later productions the suggestion of homosexuality was further developed.

Planchon said that Orgon is unaware of his own feelings for his friend, and the Théâtre de la Cité presentation conveyed this self-delusion as well as the attraction itself. Planchon was said by Anna Ivanovna to have focussed angrily on the "... problème de la confiance condamnable, de l'aveuglement qui frole la bêtise ..."\textsuperscript{4} Poirot-Delpech saw more deeply into this Orgon:

Jacques Debary campe magnifiquement le véritable Orgon selon Molière: moins épris de son protégé, sinon platoniquement, que soucieux de se cacher. une réalité fatale à son coeur faible. Jamais un comédien n'a fait sentir à ce point ce que cette faiblesses a d'obscène, et de pathétique sa sanction.\textsuperscript{5}

The Aristotelian principle of underlining a character's behaviour and letting his soul show through his actions rather than his

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{1.} *Times*, July 30th, 1964.
  \item \textbf{4.} *Narodna Kultura*, May 22nd, 1971.\textit{From T.N.P. translation.}
  \item \textbf{5.} *Monde*, March 11th, 1964.
\end{itemize}
words was very useful in pointing out Orgon's contradictory conduct. Of this play in particular Planchon said that he thought it preferable "... de saisir les personnages au niveau du comportement plutôt qu'au niveau de l'idéologie qu'ils professent."\(^1\) Especially through the character of Orgon the production was able to show "Cette espèce d'ingérence perpétuelle entre nos idées et nos sentiments, entre ce que nous disons et ce que nous éprouvons. On s'engueule en famille, on discute et ce que nous éprouvons en réalité, les raisons profondes de la bagarre sont d'ordre psychologique et personnel. Ou inversement."\(^2\)

Orgon's situation, in the light of his increased humanity, and of the social conditions which allow Tartuffe to exist, is a very pathetic one. One of the unusual aspects of the Théâtre de la Cité production was that they brought out the pathos of this character. In the opinion of Guy Delecre, the presentation was "... un mélange de comique gesticulant et de tragique concentré."\(^3\) According to Dan Sullivan, Planchon had

... transformed "Tartuffe" from a comedy with an occasional glint of despair in it to a tragedy with now and then a laugh in it. Specifically, it is the tragedy of Orgon, the simple soul deceived by the man he thought would bring him to heaven. ... the end of the play, with Mr. Debary standing at one side of the stage with his family staring at him in disgust for being such a fool, is enough to break anybody's heart.\(^4\)

Indeed it was especially the final scene which moved everyone to pity Orgon. Here, as Planchon had explained, Orgon revealed the true nature of his attachment by rejecting everything, even religion, in a rage. The final adieux were "... déchirants comme une cour d'assises!"\(^5\) Gilles Sandier showed

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1. Lettres Françaises, November 22nd-28th, 1962.
3. \(^{\text{Humanité, March 11th, 1964.}}\)
how this last act was the culmination of the performance:

... l'Orgon de Jacques Debary, est saisissant de vérité: un faible et un violent, un nerveux extravagant, qui vit jusqu'à la tragédie (la tragédie de l'amour trompé) une passion insensée, par quoi s'éclairent soudain des vers obscurs jusqu'ici. Découvrir la trahison de celui qu'il aimait, c'est pire que la prison ou l'exil; à la fin Orgon, anéanti, est une pauvre carcasse vide... Ce 5e acte prend la violence d'une tragédie à la fois policière et passionnelle...1

Tartuffe in the Théâtre de la Cité version, was remarkable for two reasons, his youth, and his impenetrability. "His youth helps to explain Orgon's interest in him - why, indeed, should Orgon be drawn to the elderly eccentric whom we usually see as Tartuffe? - and it also helps to explain Tartuffe's persistent, confident courtship of Orgon's wife."2 As the programme pointed out, the original creation had cast as Tartuffe two young men, first Du Croisy, 34, and then La Grange, ordinarily the leading man in Molière's plays. Michel Auclair, as this young impostor, shocked modern viewers by the apparent openness of his demeanour; he was "... agressif, avec bonne humeur, qui sent sa force et son pouvoir, sans une trace d'hypocrisie et de piété traditionnelles."3 Gilles Sandier was astonished at this remarkable aplomb:

Séduisant et séducteur, assez sûr de son pouvoir sur sa victime pour n'avoir presque plus à se cacher, il arpente cette maison où il règne le pas assuré et le front haut: un peu Laclos, un peu Stendhal, un peu Don Juan, Julien Sorel plus crapuleux. Mais il y a plus qu'un gigolo ...; il y a un insecte impénétrable, un visage où le masque, comme celui de Lorenzaccio, colle à la peau, un visage qui ne livrera jamais son secret...4

Auclair's performance was fascinating because he refused to give

1. Arts, Mar. 18th-24th.
the audience any clues to his real thoughts. This interpretation, which made no concessions to the public, is fully justified by the text of the play. It was nevertheless a very unconventional one, as Poirot-Delpech noted:

Aucune réplique n'autorisant l'interprète de Tartuffe à mettre le public dans le secret de sa fourberie, Michel Auclair, plus exact en cela que tous ses devanciers, y compris Jouvet, ... garde son masque jusqu'à la chute du rideau. Un masque collé au visage, à la bouche à peine remuée, aux paupières lourdes, au regard infranchissable, éhonté. ... Nous ne saurons rien de l'âme de Tartuffe; et pour cause: il n'en a pas. 1

Like a Hamlet or an Iago, Tartuffe played his role so well that the audience was left wondering whether it is always a game or not, whether the character retains conscious control of his hypocrisy at all times. Act III, scene vi, in which Tartuffe accuses himself of villainy, provoked a great deal of comment; Gilles Sandier wrote that "... on ne sait plus si c'est un cabotin génial jouant sa grande scène jusqu'à l'hystérie simulée ou un personnage de Dostoïevsky se vautrant dans le plaisir masochiste de l'auto-punition..." 2 This scene, according to Jacques Lemarchand, showed "... une force et une scandaleuse violence ... comme si Tartuffe 'reprenait' un rôle souvent joué, recomposait un instant le personnage qu'il a crée pour séduire Orgon. [Les] ... témoins redeviennent des spectateurs, attirés de voir Orgon reprendre ... le rôle de dupe, et de dupe amoureuse, qu'à l'origine lui a imposé Tartuffe." 3

The two main characters thus remain true to themselves until the end, and "this was an achievement in itself: "Trouver l'équilibre instable entre ces deux personnages centraux, c'est là que réside la force du metteur en scène." 4 Poirot-Delpech in conclusion, praised the production as

... la plus magistrale 'restauration' classique depuis vingt ans.\textsuperscript{1}

**Racine's Bérénice**

Rome observe aujourd'hui ma conduite nouvelle. Quelle honte pour moi, quel présage pour elle, Si dès le premier pas, renversant tous les droits, Je fondais mon bonheur sur le débris des lois!

\begin{flushright}
Racine, Bérénice. II. ii, 467-470
\end{flushright}

Claude Sarraute had said, arguing the case for re-creating classics for each new generation:

Toute la force des classiques tient justement à ceci ... que de génération en génération, chacun y trouve ce qu'il y cherche, ou ce qu'il y apporte, ce qui revient au même. Voyez Shakespeare. Depuis la Restauration, que ne lui a-t-on pas fait dire outre-Manche? Et il s'en trouve très bien. ... Mais ce qui est bon pour les autres ne semble pas l'être pour nous. Dès qu'il s'agit d'un alexandrin, bas les pattes!\textsuperscript{2}

Racine is probably the playwright most venerated as untouchable by French critics, and Roger Planchon's productions of Bérénice in 1966, 1969 and 1970 provoked a real shock among them.

Planchon, used to subjecting every play to a careful analysis before staging it, dared to reread even Racine with a critical eye. He gave a detailed account\textsuperscript{3} of the problems encountered in studying this play, and any classical play. Ideally, he said, "... un dialogue s'installe entre les classiques et les époques successives qui les représentent."

The disciples of Brecht were right when they criticised the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} Monde, March 11th, 1964.
\item \textsuperscript{2} France Observateur, November 23rd, 1961.
\item \textsuperscript{3} Programme note on "Bérénice, archives of the Théâtre de la Cité de Villeurbanne (now TNP)." 
\end{itemize}
attitude of the conservatives. Theirs was the traditional view that the meaning of a text is immutably and eternally fixed, and that we should subordinate our own sensibility and experience to that meaning. The followers of Brecht were equally wrong, however, if they imposed on a play, unilaterally and at all costs, a meaning relevant to our day but perhaps superfluous or even contradictory to the text. Either method ended the ideal dialogue between us and the classics. Peter Brook spoke of the danger of doing a text some harm in trying to modernise it, and gave as an example the Berliner Ensemble's production of Coriolanus; in this a major scene was rewritten so that the entire orientation of the play was changed. The rewriting was interesting, said Brook, but it left the story castrated because it did not respect the organic wholeness of Shakespeare's play.\(^1\)

Racine presented an especial difficulty for a director accustomed to reading a play through its events. Commentators have said for a long time that the action in Racine's plays is reduced to its barest simplicity. Interpretations therefore have traditionally concentrated on the psychology of the characters. When one looks carefully at Bérénice, however, one finds that there are events, not only the external riots or the delegations in the palace, but also the decisions taken by Titus, and his reversals of them. These are important because they make the plot advance. They must therefore be underlined in production, rather than being subordinated as usual to a preconceived idea of a character's ruling passion. It was also necessary to notice the order in which these events take place: "La chronologie des événements est importante car c'est elle qui projette les lueurs les plus fortes sur les comportements des personnages."\(^2\) Psychology was not ignored in Planchon's reading: it was simply approached from another direction.

Even the traditional presentations, Planchon thought,


\(^2\) Planchon, programme note on Bérénice, p.2.
have shown serious misconceptions about classical French plays:

Exemple: la suivante dans une tragédie classique est elle-même une princesse ou une grande dame. Or on a substitué à ces rapports aristocratiques les rapports bourgeois de Madame et sa bonne. On croit parfois que les rapports bourgeois ne sont que la forme dégradée des rapports aristocratiques, mais à vrai dire, ils sont tout autres, un retournement complet a été opéré.

Anachronisms such as this were not the only problem. Language was another. The principal clause, the most important in French, is often followed in Racinian verse by several subordinate clauses which turn the listener's attention away from the meaning of the first one. In this way important information about characters is lost and the audience forms a false image of the play. The Théâtre de la Cité investigated this phenomenon by surveying various audiences about specific passages; they determined to find a way of accentuating the important part of each sentence.

In Racine's play we learn of actions and events through the speeches of the characters. A third difficulty in analysing them was therefore that of distinguishing between their real motives and those which they express. In Bérénice each of the three main characters threatens to kill himself. Each gives reasons for his suicide, but as the play progresses these motives alter. Which motive, if any, asked Planchon, should the presentation emphasise? How can a character show that he has forgotten what he said previously without allowing the audience to forget it as well? The character must redefine himself and yet suggest to the audience that he is seldom completely accurate in his self-appraisals.

To translate the strict constraints of alexandrine verse into a langage scénique, Planchon decided, he said, to impose a very precise mise en place on his actors: "Les personnages se déplacent dans ce spectacle sur des lignes droites,

1. Ibid, p.3.
des parallèles, etc. Tout petit déplacement a été banni."
Adhering to a structural convention can intensify and enrich content: "La recherche d'un naturel, de déplacements justifiés par les pulsions psychiques des personnages, mais dans un cadre géométrique devenait plus délicate et par là plus intéressante."
Departures from the form acquire a greater significance when they are less frequent: "Par ailleurs, cela permettait quelques déplacements courbes isolés d'autant plus significatifs."
Planchon regretted not having been able to try a more supple, sinuous stage interpretation of the play in order to compare the effect.1

Modern presentations of neo-classical plays based on antiquity create a peculiarly complex problem:
Dans les représentations modernes des pièces du passé, on doit recourir à un compromis ... il y a trois termes ... à concilier: par exemple dans Antoine et Cléopâtre le monde antique, les conventions de la scène shakespearienne et la vision qu'ont de l'un et de l'autre les hommes d'aujourd'hui.2

So in Bérénice the set attempted to reconcile Racinian ideas of the classical age with the political vision and the theatrical conventions of his day, and to put everything into a modern perspective. The set was conceived as one which would crystallise the social ideals of Racine and his contemporaries:

... une société idéale où les princes sont à la fois d'admirables hommes politiques, de valeureux guerriers et des amoureux sublimes. Guerre, amour et politique sublimes ... Le décor évoque donc un cabinet dans un palais d'une société idéale. Cette société, ce n'est pas Rome, ni le Versailles de Louis XIV, C'est le passé. Une cour Louis XIII rêvée qui emprunte des éléments à Rome (les armures), à Versailles (les glaces) etc.3

1. Ibid, p.5.
3. Programme note on Bérénice, p.5.
Roger Planchon used modern comparisons to explain our idea of Rome and how it differs from Racine's conception of the past:

La Rome de Racine n'est pas la Rome réelle; un empereur romain... c'est? Un colonel grec, un Franco tandis que Racine, c'est la rêverie d'un idéaliste. Avec Allio, nous, on a relu Saint-Simon et on a rencontré un Louis XIII sublimé, on a mêlé les glaces, les miroirs de Versailles aux armes, le bois bleu les portes qui s'ouvrent seules comme à Orly, on a retrouvé la conception de la qualité française dans cette optique là.¹

Mirrors were in evidence as they had been in the Marivaux productions. Here too, they were meant to convey the narcissism of the characters who watch themselves suffer: "Ils sont là se mirant dans leurs monologues, et inscrits dans les glaces."² In the opinion of Roland Barthes, in Racinian tragedy, characters wish to see each other humiliated: "... c'est la récompense du vainqueur que de contempler son partenaire défait, réduit à l'état d'objet, de chose dépliée devant la vue, car, en termes raciniens, c'est la vue qui est le plus possesseur des organes."² The mirrors extended the possibilities for this visual possession of one character by another. The reflections were also a scenic parallel to the misapprehensions and the indecisiveness of the main characters: "Réalité, renvoyée comme dans les miroirs, inversée. Les miroirs multiplient ce monde incertain. ... Introspections psychologiques, méprises, boîtes à miroirs." ³

Another feature of the staging was meant to point out the narcissism of the characters: the sound of footsteps off-stage. Roger Planchon explained in a letter to Richard Demarcy the significance of this sound effect. The first time we hear the footsteps, he said, is before the lights go up,

¹ Dauphiné Libéré (Grenoble), Dec. 3rd, 1970.
² Programme note on Bérénice, p.5.
⁴ Programme note on Bérénice, p.5.
while the set stands empty; these footsteps suggest an absent crowd. But the effect was used four other times. Planchon gave as an example Titus's monologue in Act IV, in which he decides to go speak with Bérénice. He walks toward the door, but stops on the threshold:

Alors son rythme de pas est repris par la bande sonore, et le personnage (arrêté) entend avec le spectateur son pas se poursuivre dans le palais, résonner sur les dalles, et ensuite il entend son bruit de bottes brusquement s'interrompre comme si son double sonore venait alors de prendre la décision de ne pas continuer plus loin.

Cette utilisation de la bande sonore est subjective, mieux elle cherche à donner un répère ironique à la subjectivité qui s'étale devant nous.... Si le spectateur voit le personnage immobile sur scène "entendre" l'écho splendide de ses pas (écho démesuré et emphatique) se poursuivre et en quelque sorte doubler son action puisque les pas à leur tour s'arrêtent, le spectateur est "armé" pour comprendre ironiquement de quoi il s'agit. 1

Racine, although he used the figures of Titus and Bérénice, based his play on the love affair between Louis XIV and Marie Mancini. The programme of the Villeurbanne Bérénice includes, as well as Suetonius's description of Titus and a note on Jean Racine, contemporary reactions to the play which strongly support this view. Titus's rejection of Bérénice is thus also Louis XIV's dismissal of Marie Mancini. What interpretation would a modern spectator put on these two parallel stories and on Racine's rapprochement of them? The programme suggests that Titus's behaviour seems inconsistent with his protestations of undying love. Even Racine's contemporaries doubted his claims. Certainly a late twentieth century appraisal puts his character in a less than favourable light.

Roger Planchon looked carefully at Titus's actions and concluded, in spite of three centuries of theses, that

Titus does not love Bérénice: "Cela fait peut-être trois cents ans qu'on écrit que Titus aime Bérénice, mais les faits ne permettent pas de l'écrire. "L'amour en lui-même n'existe pas, ce qui existent ce sont les preuves d'amour." Roland Barthes wrote in 1960 that he thought Titus was attached to Bérénice not by love but only by habit, and that the play was "... l'histoire d'une répudiation que Titus n'ose pas assumer. Titus est déchiré, non entre un devoir et un amour mais entre un projet et un acte. Tel est ce rien célèbre: la distance mince et pourtant laborieusement parcourue, qui sépare une intention de son alibi..." Rome, in the opinion of Barthes and of Planchon, is a pretext and not the reason for Titus's repudiation of Bérénice. This view of Titus did not convince François-Régis Bastide, who wrote that

Titus, homme faible, prince hamletique, soudain privé de son père et accédant à l'Empire, s'effraie au spectacle d'un amour lancinant, idolâtre, trop puissant, qui lui rendrait le gouvernement trop périlleux. Il s'effraie mais il ne cesse d'aimer. Il la renvoie parce que l'Orient ne peut entrer dans le lit des Césars.

Today, opinion would be more inclined to doubt, however, that Titus still loves Bérénice, and it is in a resolutely modern perspective that Planchon saw the play: "Il est vrai qu'aujourd'hui l'amour fait sauter toutes les barrières, toutes les conventions, toutes les traditions. Que Titus, au mépris de tous, n'épouse pas Bérénice, c'est avouer qu'il ne l'aime plus."

Critical response to the new interpretation was sensitive principally to the psychological transformation of the characters, but also to the precise mise en scène and to the very beautiful sets. The choice of a play solely about love was a departure for Planchon, said Bertrand Poirot-Delpech

2. Barthes, Sur Racine, p.98.
(who may have missed the Marivaux production), but he had presented this one with typical brilliance:

Il [Planchon] montre qu'il sait se passionner et nous passionner pour une histoire d'amour aussi intensément que pour les mécanismes de classe ...  

... 'On dirait presque que son envie d'aborder Racine est née ... d'un besoin de répliquer aux commentateurs universitaires ... Aux grilles strictement chrétiennes, marxistes, freudiennes ou structuralistes, Planchon a préféré obstinément la lecture de comédien, c'est-à-dire de quelqu'un qui fait confiance au seul texte, mais que sa nécessité de construire physiquement les personnages conduit à débusquer mieux que personne les faux-s semblants, les faux-fuyants dont ce texte ne cesse de masquer les comportements et les sentiments véritables."

Even while disagreeing with the interpretation of Titus, Francois-Régis could not help exclaiming enthusiastically that "... par cette Bérénice, la France va ré-apprendre Racine." Roger Planchon had succeeded, certainly, in presenting the play in a contemporary light, but without injustice to the text; Claude Olivier wrote that ...

... ce qu'il [Planchon] a cherché à faire, c'est à ouvrir un dialogue avec l'œuvre et, ce qu'il fait, c'est permettre au spectateur d'engager lui-même ce dialogue.

Encore une fois, Planchon n'a rien ajouté, il n'a nullement sollicité le texte."

The set as usual provoked much comment, but opinions varied widely on its significance and its effects. Bastide gave the most thorough description of it:

Un très haut coffret à miroirs, un labyrinthe où luissent les glaces de Versailles mais comme détournés de la Raison par le bleu de l'Orient, un bleu canard foncé, un turquoise patiné, quelque chose de soyeux et de dur qu'on croit avoir vu en rêve dans le Bazar d'Ispahan

Georges Portal found the decor totally unconvincing: "Mais l'appartement de Bérénice ... ressemblait aux appartements royaux autant que les mobiliers dits 'de style' du boulevard Magenta."^2 Guy Dumur agreed: "Les tissus font tape-à-l'œil, petit-bourgeois."^3 The queen's apartments were criticised by Jacques Lemarchand for a more serious reason; it was an "Ensemble très habitable pour Bérénice, étant entendu que le texte est chargé de justifier le décor, beaucoup plus que le décor ne peut servir le texte."^4 Other writers, however, were more sympathetic. Irving Wardle wrote: "... Plançon's curtain rises with majestic slowness on a dazzling set by René Allio (sombre panelling, billowing draperies, and a wall of mirrors that duplicates the upstage action) which manages to combine tragic gravity with the grace of Watteau."^5

Not everyone understood the political allusions made by the set and by the presence of a crowd of figurants representing, this time, the court. There were complaints about the replacement of a strictly Roman setting by one with elements which were dismissed as "... mi-Louis XIV, mi-Renaissance ..."^6 Those who saw the set and the sound effects as interrelated understood far better; together they suggested an atmosphere of unreality, suffused with the haunting presence

of Rome:

... [le]décors de René Allio, ... représente un palais vert bronze ouvrant à la fois sur une galerie de glaces à la Versailles et sur une alcôve de fourrures beige clair, tandis que les costumes évoquent plutôt la cour de Louis XIII. Mais tous ces éléments créent parfaitement, par leurs citations poétiques, l'ambiance de société rêvée, de jeux d'apparnces et de sensualité contenue où se développe la tragédie. Les bruits de pas en lointain et les irruptions de notables rappellent exactement le poids que pèse Rome dans les décisions à prendre.1

The society which the figurants and the visual richness evoked was neither that of Titus nor that of Louis XIV; it included both but transcended them according to François-Régis Bastide:

Planchon fait évoluer autour de Titus une suite d'officiers, de religieux, et donne à Bérénice une suite de dames qui tiennent de la cour de Louis XIII et des costumes de Mantegna. L'ensemble a la force, le charme, la rigueur d'un madrigal de Monteverdi. ... Cet insolite Versailles-Rome ... ne ressemble ni à l'un ni à l'autre mais à un troisième, indicible...2

The complexity and the strong connotative quality of the set also underlined Titus' aspirations. Raymonde Temkine spoke of

... la transposition hardie dans un XVIIe siècle composite où une galerie des Glaces Louis-quatorzième reflète les cavaliers et les dames vêtus à la Louis XIII; comme si, mal dégagé du règne d'un Vespasien encore chaud, Titus se voulait déjà projeté dans un avenir qui polariserait tous les regards sur lui seul. Une figuration inhabituelle dans la représentation d'une tragédie classique faisait d'une tragédie privée l'événement public que ne peuvent manquer d'être les amours couronnées.3

3. La Pensée, October, 1970, p.133.
Mirrors, echoing footsteps, luxurious surroundings, all these aspects of the production suggested the unreality of the world in which Bérénice takes place. The mirrors especially struck most observers as an apt parallel to the idealised society pictured, and as a clear indication of the characters' over-inflated idea of themselves. Gérard Guillot praised the "... galerie de glaces en équerre ... qui permet à l'infini de faire naître et se multiplier, se perdre et se noyer tous les personnages ..." and the "... étoffes lourdes et tapis à profusion..." which underlined "... le caractère euphorique et opulent de cette antichambre qui sépare les appartements de Bérénice et ceux de Titus ..." The mirrors also had the effect of letting us see the actors from various angles: "Ainsi pouvons-nous voir Bérénice ou Titus, simultanément de face et de trois quarts, et si cela ne suffit pas à nous éclairer vraiment sur les désaccords de leurs mots et de leurs pensées, cela y fait au moins une intéressante allusion." Ronald Bryden remarked that the set also emphasised the youth of the actors:

His [Allio's] towering indigo ante-room is dominated by a dais so billowing with blue and silver brocade, so deep in creamy fur, as to seem an enormous bed on which the principals strut like children. At the back, a baroque cabinet of mirrors creates an infinite perspective in which their gestures recede with adolescent narcissism.

The reflections showed up the game which the characters play before one another, and so gave the audience a perspective on their grand gestures; Gilles Sandier appreciated the subtlety of the mirrors' effects:

... trois êtres jeunes et narcissiques se contemplent, multipliés, dans des miroirs... pris au jeu de leurs paroles plus ou moins doubles, plus que livrés à de vraies passions, ne croyant pas nécessairement à ce qu'ils disent, ... et créant de leurs sincérités

successives une réalité à demi fantast-magorique, un monde incertain, presque imaginaire ou rêvé, que le jeu des miroirs irréalise davantage encore
imaginaire comme cette cour idéale sortie d'un rêve et multipliée par les glaces ...

The actors were careful to play to the mirrors as well, as Planchon had suggested they do: "The principals themselves—from Antiochus's first rapt entry into the room of farewells—are all lost in their private dream: freezing in mid-conversation; and smiling at their inner fantasies; and directly confronting one another only to inflict irreparable damage." Their gestures were deliberately large and artificial, and even the set pointed out their futility; Gilles Sandier wrote:

A la fin, quand Bérénice, lionne blessée dans son orgueil, arrache dans sa colère le pan d'une alcôve qui s'effondre, c'est moins le mur du palais de Titus que les briques du théâtre qui apparaissent: toute cette réalité—en fait ces allées et venues et cette rhétorique—n'était que jeux de théâtre et fantasmes d'adolescents: il ne s'est rien passé.

The sound effects were richly suggestive as well. They were for most viewers the menacing signs of a watchful power outside; Gilles Sandier went on to describe the stage as "... un monde où le bruit des pas se répercuté à l'infini, insolite et menaçant comme dans les songes, ou comme la voix du Dieu janséniste, spectateur et muet." The echoing sounds also enlarged the arena in which the action takes place:

Mais il faudrait parler de l'importance justement donnée au monde extérieur, dont les bruits viennent mourir au seuil du cabinet solitaire, les pas dans le lointain des galeries, qu'on devine immenses, du palais impérial, ce palais que le décor de René Allio... donne à voir tout en entier, dirait-on.

François-Régis Bastide described the moment when Titus announces to Antiochus that he must leave Bérénice that very day. Arsace at that instant takes four deliberate steps.

Thus the geometrical mise en place which Roger Planchon had spoken of was not only integrated into the sound imagery, but into the play as a whole. As they had done for the Marivaux production, many critics likened its precision to that of a fencing match; Gérard Guillot wrote:

Sandier noted that the geometry of the movements helped to convey the rigid authority of the court and of Rome behind it:


Retaining the fencing metaphor, Guillot spoke of the confidents' increased importance in such a presentation: "... ils sont témoins, mais ils sont aussi ceux qui entraînent le futur esquaireur, ceux qui font répéter les principales passes d'armes, ceux qui déclenchent les temps des diverses charges ..."^2

The confidents, indeed, took on a new significance because of the youth of the three protagonists. They represented more than servants whose presence prompts long speeches; they were "... overbearing middle-aged authority figures who do not scruple to prod their masters into remembering their responsibilities and self-interest ...", and who remind us that "... life is going on in Rome and in the respective countries of the other two principals."^3 Ronald Bryden went as far as to say that Planchon had turned Bérénice into a "... tragedy of the generation war, its protagonists victims of an adult system."^4

Whatever the role of the confidents, the youth of the main actors caught the imagination of the spectators, both in France and abroad. Bryden was astonished:

Instead of the traditional Comédie-Française trio of gracious, middle-aged monarchs vying with each other in nobility and withdrawing regretfully into the sunset of their sensuality, he [Planchon] throws onto the stage three young royals of the kind his audience would recognise from the pages of Paris-Match, sunning at St. Tropez: handsome, arrogant, sex-obsessed, obstinate, and often cruel in their passion. Their adolescent self-consciousness added the humorous touch which Planchon has said is present in all truly great tragedy.^5

The youth of the characters also permitted the troupe to revitalise long tirades by injecting into them the variations in mood and emotion which the text suggests. Planchon had chosen young actors precisely because he felt that the behaviour of the protagonists, their prevarication, their pride, their lack of moderation, was typical of adolescence; "... je souhaiterais ... que le public ait en face des personnages un regard juste tout en étant attendri ..."

"Nous sommes tous, nous avons tous été des Titus ou des Bérénice."\(^1\) The performances were at the opposite extreme from those of the Comédie-Française actors:

The acting ... combines lightness with propriety; it is entirely free from generalised rhetoric and inflated gesture. By paying strict attention to the sense the range of moods has been expanded to include unlooked-for moments of brutal sarcasm and ecstatic laughter, and while there is no distortion of the tirades, Planchon has let in more, allowing the current of action to flow through.\(^2\)

Even for the exacting ear of the French critic, Bertrand Poirot-Delpech, the beauty of the verse was enhanced by Planchon's treatment: "Chaque vers reçoit un éclairage d'une intelligence, d'une sensibilité, d'une cohérence et d'un naturel qui en renouvelent complètement la compréhension et l'émotion."\(^3\) The actors in their delivery underlined the conventionality of the Racinian dialogue rather than trying to conceal it:

... à partir du moment où l'on voit, dans les tirades-poèmes, des morceaux de bravoure, des exercices de séduction ou même des joutes oratoires, la poétique de notre dramaturgie classique se donne ouvertement comme anachronique et se justifie mieux qu'à l'intérieur d'une interprétation expressionniste, comme celle des sociétaires du Théâtre-Français.\(^4\)

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1. Jacques Blanc, Unpublished dissertation on the creation of Bérénice and Dans le vent... et... at Villeurbanne, for the University of Lyon, [1959], pp. 38-39.


It was clear to Gilles Sander that the mise en place was a geometrical parallel to this highly emotional but rigidly controlled alexandrine:

Transposant ... dans l'espace, par leurs déplacements rigoureusement géométriques, l'artifice et la convention de l'alexandrin de tragédie, et diversifiant le discours tragique à travers un savant appareil de cris, soupirs, silences, déclamations, joutes oratoires, ils rendent la tragédie à sa machinerie rhétorique.

The performances, tightly controlled by Roger Planchon in his determination to make the language scénique correspond to the rhetorical structure of the speeches, were almost unanimously praised. Francine Bergé played each situation for itself, not giving the impression that she knew in one act what was to happen in the next. Each actor should show, as Brecht demanded, and as Planchon insisted, that at a given moment he has the choice between the behaviour he adopts and another. He should show that the character he plays could do the opposite of what he does, and become the opposite of what he is. The Théâtre de la Cité's Bérénice was, at first, a young woman conscious of her charms and confident in their power to hold Titus, "Enfermée dans son amour comme dans une forteresse occupée de plein droit."

Some of her lines thus came alive with irony and coquettishness. Her insouciance gave way only gradually:

Presque primesautière d'abord, petit à petit, à mesure qu'elle commence à comprendre ce qui va arriver, elle perd sa joie de vivre, mais elle s'accroche au plus petit signe qui lui paraît favorable, elle feint jusqu'au bout de croire que le malheur ne s'abattrait pas sur elle, fait semblant même de ne pas y croire, comme pour conjurer le sort. Puis c'est l'effondrement, le déchirement, une suprême douleur à laquelle se mêlent la colère, le mépris, et tout ce qui reste en son coeur de tendresse pour l'homme qui la renvoie.

Raymonde Temkine admitted that she had been slightly annoyed at first by the apparent worldliness of this Bérénice; however, Bergé conveyed the pain of realisation so movingly that Temkine was finally won over.  

François-Régis Bastide, who compared Bérénice to Célimène in the early scenes, was astonished by her passionate and unrestrained reaction at the moment of truth: "Douleur non contenue, la tête jetée en arrière, puis tout le corps ployé, jeté à terre au mot de séparation, comme par la foudre." Yet, Bergé conveyed the subtleties even of this violent moment: "Quand l'espoir la quitte, c'est l'évanouissement, l'abandon, mais aussitôt la douleur se nuance coup sur coup de tendresse, de mépris, d'amour-propre. Le regard, la bouche, la voix, tout le corps, sautent d'un sentiment à l'autre." Her performance ranged "... de la joie la plus juvénile aux fureurs presque organiques de la femelle blessée." In her violent gestures the true virulence of Racine's text showed through. She left the spectator with a final impression of her utter loss, "... cet égarement de l'être qui a reçu un coup dont il ne se remettra pas."

Titus played by Sami Frey surprised critics by his adolescent attitudes. Underlining the childishness in the character made his hesitation and indecision seem more plausible. His performance was so fraught with emotion, however, that it made more than one critic question the claim by Roger Planchon that in this production Titus would be shown to be weary of Bérénice:

Nous avons vu des êtres qui souffraient et se lamentaient, des êtres qui sont effondrés et affligés de devoir se séparer alors qu'ils s'aident ... et non pas un être qui cherche "comment s'en débarrasser", Bérénice étant devenue pour lui une vieille maîtresse ne

Poirot-Delpech assumed that Planchon had given only an outline of his intentions in the programme note; naturally the actual presentation was more subtle:

En fait, le jeu prodigieux de Sami Prey exprime beaucoup plus de nuances, ou plus précisément d'alternances dans la conduite du roi. S'il est vrai qu'il a souvent le regard comme vide et les lèvres serrées dans l'attitude presque fourbe et lâche de qui n'ose pas rompre, s'il est vrai qu'il s'empare des objection politiques émises par Paulin comme de prétextes inespérés, il est vrai aussi qu'il regarde ce dernier avec les yeux perdus d'orphelin se cherchant un père, qu'il a honte, qu'il se hait d'hésiter.

Indeed Sami Prey's performance could be termed hamlétique, for it was one of swiftly alternating moods reflecting a tormenting indecision, "... an extraordinary study in inner paralysis periodically breaking free into shuddering violence." Planchon had succeeded remarkably well in directing Frey into a perfectly Brechtian interpretation for despite the highly emotional quality of his role, he did not compel the public to feel sympathy for or complicity with the character of Titus.

Even the usually dull Antiochus gained a new importance in this presentation. He was played by Denis Manuel, in a more traditional way than Titus or Bérénice, "... le plus 'classique' des trois, comme il convient..." He shared the narcissism of the other two characters, and was described as "aussi gosse mais plus romantique ou plus romanesque,

s'enivrant délicieusement de son malheur, de sa vocation
d'échec ..."¹ His own painful, if not desperate, situation
was made to seem worthy of concern:

A Antiochus, quoiqu'il ait, lui aussi, parlé
de mourir, il reste de la ressource, un
tourment actif et rageur qui est témoignage
de vitalité. Que Denis Manuel ait su rendre
attirant un rôle auquel on croyait acquise
justement sa réputation de fadeur, témoigne
du travail de décapage de Roger Planchon et
des ressources du jeune acteur. Pour la
première fois sans doute, on s'est intéressé
à ce jeune homme ... jusqu'à souhaiter, contre
toute exigence, trivialement, que la reine
répudiée trouvât en lui consolation.²

Roger Planchon thus placed the characters of Râcine
in their context, in an idealised world, in which their
sentiments and their behaviour appear both very human and
quite immature. Perhaps Bérénice "... is essentially a pro-
longed leave-taking..."³ and little more. Planchon never-
theless succeeded in suffusing it with a social and a human
truth seldom found in reinterpretations of the classics.

In his productions of French classical plays,
Planchon tended to make the characters fully human and be-
lievable by immersing them in their social and historical
context. He was attentive to the characters' actions, which
are sometimes in contradiction with what they say; thus his
productions were faithful to the fable of each play. He
took the text of George Dandin to the letter and made Dandin
a wealthy peasant aspiring unsuccessfully to elevate himself
socially by buying an aristocratic wife. He transformed
the characters of Marivaux's La Seconde Surprise de l'amour
into flesh and blood people filling their time by engaging
in emotional and sexual pursuits, and oblivious to those who

1. Gilles Sandier, La Quinzaine Littéraire, May 1st-15th,
1970.
serve them. He made Tartuffe both attractive and impene-
trable and thus made Orgon's infatuation believable and
pathetic. He presented Titus and Bérénice as self-conscious
adolescents ending a love affair under the watchful eyes of
a court which was both that of Louis XIV and that of Rome.
By placing the characters of each play in their social pers-
pective, while at the same time seeking to bring out their
human individuality, Plançon made these classical texts
accessible to a Villeurbanne audience, and thought-provoking
for the most demanding of critics.
CHAPTER VII
THREE MUSICAL COMEDIES

Three of the plays written at the Théâtre de la Cité de Villeurbanne were not signed by Planchon. Les Trois Mousquetaires, O M'man Chicago, and La Contestation et la mise en pièces de la plus illustre des tragédies françaises LE CID de Pierre Corneille, suivie d'une "cruelle" mise à mort de l'auteur dramatique et d'une distribution précieuse de diverses conserves culturelles were plays for which the cast and the technical team took an active part in the elaboration of the production, and even of the text. They were even more than Planchon's other plays the product of constant group work. All three rely to a great extent upon music and dance, and upon slapstick comedy, and all three are satires. Because of Planchon's talent as a director, they succeeded as spectacular productions; not everyone, however, saw a coherent dramatic statement behind the parodies.

Les Trois Mousquetaires

Tréville:
Eh bien, Messieurs, vous êtes-vous bien amusés pendant votre excursion?

Tous:
Prodigieusement!

Tableau 24

The play Les Trois Mousquetaires was a création collective first presented in 1953 and repeatedly recreated until 1969. The Théâtre de la Cité began its career, as we have seen, by sending out questionnaires to discover what their prospective public wanted to see on stage. The answer was
Shakespeare and Dumas. Les Trois Mousquetaires was thus created at the instigation of the public of Villeurbanne.

The play had a predecessor, a slapstick comedy put on at the Théâtre de la Comédie in 1954. Planchon's very early repertoire included, Claude Lochy said in an article, several "... burlesques échevelés..."; Bottines et collets montés, the precursor of Les Trois Mousquetaires, was one of them. In the same article, Lochy described the original production:

Notre première version de ces Mousquetaires imaginaires a donc été hellzapoppinesque; Porthos, Athos et Aramis eussent bien pu se prénommer Filochard ou Ribouldingue. Ils préfiguraient dignement aux effarants Rocambole et autre Cartouche, mais ils ne firent pas long feu.

When the Villeurbanne audience asked to see the Dumas story in the théâtre, however, this old comedy could not be used. The burlesque genre was no longer popular, and in any case the 1500 seat Villeurbanne theatre was an inappropriate setting for the kind of gags which had made people laugh at the tiny Théâtre de la Comédie. Nor was there any other suitable adaptation in existence. The play by Maquet, Dumas's friend and collaborator, was unquestionably out of date. In 1951, René-Maurice Picard had modernised Maquet's play, but his version, like the Théâtre de la Comédie's cloak and dagger romp, seemed dated in 1958.

The company therefore set out to create a new play based on Dumas's novel. Their first idea was to present the story itself seriously, but to make the four musketeers show up the plot with a series of gags; they would have been, according to Claude Lochy's account of the creation, "... un choeur antique à rebours ...". The actors thought that this would give the audience a perspective on the action. As discussion went on, and the work of adaptation continued, the projected play began to take on a different shape. The "chorus" lost its importance, and the characters of the novel became

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more and more puppet-like. They seemed to be objects caught in a machine controlled by the cardinal and the king. The troupe returned to the source, the novel, and reread it. They saw it this time, wrote Lochy, as "... une grande rêverie romantique sur l'Histoire ..." It was all action, and the action was pure fantasy. Relations between characters were on a completely false level. Only d'Artagnan seemed real, and he was the target of unceasing machinations and plots. The company decided that the best way of adapting the novel to the stage was to stick very closely to Dumas's original story.

Claude Lochy wrote a two hundred page adaptation of Les Trois Mousquetaires and Planchon edited it until it was little more than an outline giving thematic indications. The actors then met to elaborate a playable text by improvising on this framework of themes. They kept in mind, in the course of their work, the ideas prevalent in Dumas's day, and the historical background of his book. The script which resulted from these improvisations was linear and action-orientated, "... réduit," Gérard Guillot was to write,¹ "non au minimum mais à l'essentiel."

The troupe still maintained its original intention of giving the audience a perspective on the excessive romanticism of Alexandre Dumas. They decided that the best way of doing so would be to add to the adaptation, again in Lochy's words, "... le 'grain de sable du quotidien', la 'petite cuisine journalière' inoffensive en apparence, mais qui désaccorde constamment le grand orchestre de l'épopée..." It was a method which the company was to use again, to debunk the Al Capone legend in O M'man Chicago, and to make fun of the theatrical and political fads of the late 1960's in La Mise en pièces du CID. In rehearsal, the trivial detail which would show up a serious scene might suggest itself in unexpected ways. Planchon told of the way in which one tableau, the

¹. Lettres Françaises, May 2nd, 1958.
courting of the queen by Buckingham, took its final shape:

Ce spectacle fut conçu par la totalité des comédiens et par quelques collaborateurs involontaires: nous répétions la grande scène d'amour entre Buckingham et la reine, scène classique d'adultère (tous le théâtre français, de Dumas à Claudel, s'est appliqué à traiter cette situation) où les beaux sentiments se déploient dans de grandes volutes creuses et romantiques. Deux ouvriers entrèrent dans la salle de répétition avec une échelle; la répétition, imperturbablement, se poursuivit. Les ouvriers partirent mais l'échelle resta. Depuis, on nettoie un lustre dans cette scène d'amour.

The fun would spring not simply from the juxtaposition of a grandiose and a trivial level; Guilot remarked that "Le comique naîtra par le sérieux avec lequel seront joués les deux registres: celui qui met en mouvement les troupes du cardinal ..., et celui du repas compromis du même cardinal."

The set designer in 1958 was Jean-Louis Bertin.

The production was carefully timed in order to maintain a quick rhythm; the sets therefore had to be planned to permit a fast flow of movement. As the text was reduced to a minimum, necessary background facts had to be presented visually. The stage, in order to recapture the feeling of the Dumas story, had to have a slightly old-fashioned flavour as well, like a child's picture book, or a fashion magazine of years ago. Thus the set had to be practical, informative, and suggestive. Bertin himself explained his conception of the set. He described first its general aspect: "... tout le spectacle se passe à l'intérieur d'une forme rouge sans horizon. Tous les décors, morceaux de réalisme, joueront en silhouette. Des éléments de gravure serviront de commentaire à chaque décor, et redonneront la correspondance du 'quotidien.

1. Ibid.
The styles of furniture and architecture for each setting indicated the social origin of the characters who moved within it; all the sets, however, were slightly romanticized as in a child's imagination:

Les décors se divisent en trois catégories:
1. Les décors Bourgeois (Aramis, Milady, le Couvent), directement inspirés du style Louis XIII (panneaux carrés, pointes de diamant, lambris, dorures, moulures).
2. Les décors hétéroclites (extérieur, Bonacieux, d'Artagnan fils, d'Artagnan père), décors insolites de par leur lieu.
3. Les décors royaux (le Roi, la Reine, le Cardinal), décors très romantiques et très wagnériens.

As all the action took place within a red semi-sphere, Bertin chose colours carefully; props and sets were in a white to yellow-ochre scale, costumes ranged from white to brown; reds, greens, and blues were almost totally excluded. The costumes were carefully copied from the engravings of Jacques Callot and Abraham Bosse.

Bertin designed props in such a way as to enhance rather than impede the fast pace of the production. Economy of means was the key to this set:

Props were reduced to a stylised minimum, like toys improvised out of everyday objects: "... ses personnages viennent à pied, en frappant du talon, à cheval, en tenant un bâton blanc en guise de monture, en voiture, entre deux bouts de toile

he needed a flexible orchestra, he chose to compose for a small band: "... cela offrait un éventail de nuances des timbres en soliste très passionnant. On peut ainsi réaliser une fanfare ou un branle de champagne, comme [on peut] utiliser la technique sérielle et l'harmonie à douze sous."

The structure of the stage adaptation was modelled on that of the book: long periods of time might be telescoped into a few minutes; the needs of the action were paramount. Taking his inspiration from sources as diverse as the Chinese opera and American slapstick films, Planchon devised many theatrical abbreviations to portray the adventures of Dumas's heroes. He explained how the troupe had established the rhythm of the show:

En quatre pages Dumas expédiait une année entière. Sur scène, elle s'écoutera en cinq minutes, grâce à de fréquents retours en arrière, coupés de bonds en avant. Nous nous sommes amusés à jongler avec le temps. Un peu comme le font les Chinois dans leurs opéras. Les scènes de bataille, la prise de la Rochelle, les duels, sont dansés, comme le sont à Pékin les pièces guerrières. 1

The puppet-like quality which the actors had noticed in the characters was underlined in the production. Dumas's musketeers are constantly manipulated by the king or the cardinal. The central adventure in the book, the race to retrieve the queen's diamonds from Buckingham for her, became on stage something between a dance, a game of "goose" (played with dice on a board, and formerly common in England and France), and a football match. Emile Copfermann explained this stage picture:

Pour synthétiser cette course d'où va se dessiner l'issue finale, pour la vider de son pathétique (des morts tous les kilomètres) aussi pour des raisons matérielles, Roger Planchon a imaginé un gigantesque tapis de jeu de l'oise. La reine et le cardinal s'engagent, tour à tour, leurs dés tandis que de case en case, passent les représentants de chacun des camps, en fonction du hasard et des chapitres. 2

1. Progrès (Lyons), November 6th, 1959.
Thus the picture of the musketeers as pawns was emphasised, and the excitement of the chase was maintained without its melodramatic overtones. The return of the box of diamonds to the queen was played for fun, with the musketeers displaying a fine passing style as they threw the box across to one another. The play was a succession of these brilliant shortcuts. It began with a series of rapid tableaux, unified by an actor who called out the number of the page which had been reached in the novel. The actors kept very close to the novel; all through the play, someone would stop now and again to tell the audience which chapter was now being enacted.

Most of these techniques were not only shortcuts, but also a way of debunking Dumas's romantic vision of the events. Battles and duels especially were very impertinently treated. The programme clearly stated that "Les combats de ce spectacle sont 'cochonnés'. Ils ne souleveront aucun enthousiasme onaniste." In a 1945 production of Shakespeare's Antoine et Cléopâtre at the Comédie-Française, Jean-Louis Barrault had made his actors dance the battle of Actium. Similarly, in Planchon's Les Trois Mousquetaires, the battle of La Rochelle was stylised into a dance number. With standards swirling, heels tapping, and a drum beating, the French and the English took turns treading upon one another's feet, calling each other names, and occasionally "killing" one another with the flap of a flag:

De Winter:
Messieurs les Français, vous ne serez jamais que des...
Tous les Anglais:
Pa-pistes.

Jussac:
Messieurs les Anglais, vous n'êtes que des ...
Tous les Français:
Hu-guenots.
Les Anglais:
Péti-chistes.
Many of the battles were thus changed into dances: "Un combat se livre sur le rythme d'un flamenco bien scandé, un autre au cri de chachacha, un troisième à coups de drapeau." Walter Kerr, a New York critic, described a few of the fight sequences. Some were absurd and hilarious: "Somehow or other an entire contingent of Cardinal's guards and King's musketeers manage to squeeze themselves into a free-standing picture-frame, where they fight at such close quarters that they wind up in each other's arms." Others acquired grace and beauty: "... the lights go out to reveal a pitched battle being fought by orange rapiers and purple plumes in the abstract ...". Often duels ended on an anti-climax. The famous encounter between d'Artagnan and the three others, whom he has challenged, was interrupted by a passer-by asking for directions. Again, when the musketeers were creating a row in the street at night, attacking each other with noisy slaps in the face, an old lady intervened from her window: "Vous avez fini ce tintamarre? On va pouvoir dormir? Moi la journée, je travaille!" (9, p.40) The ceremonial surrounding battle was also the subject of ridicule:

... British manners are burlesqued in a scene at "Portsmouth" in which a British guard exasperates his superior officer by slavishly and over-enthusiastically carrying out the traditional foot-stamping and arm-flapping routines that, according to military protocol, must precede even the simplest question and answer between inferior and superior ranks.**

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1. From the November 1960 text of Les Trois Mousquetaires, archives of the Théâtre National Populaire in Villeurbanne, Tableau XVIII, p.52. Further quotations from the script include the scene and page numbers.

2. Le Soir (Marseille), July 8th, 1960.


Death scenes in the production were never frightening, usually succinct, and sometimes elegant; Walter Kerr admired one scene especially:

When d'Artagnan and friends manage to skewer five of the Cardinal's guards ..., the guards go down gracefully. All they need do to indicate death is to clap a black hat or black glove across their faces, borrowing from the Chinese theatre not only its charm but its expedition.

Comic and dramatic effects were borrowed from almost every source imaginable, "... au music-hall, au cirque, aux chansonniers, aux frères Marx, à Bob Hope, à Danny Kaye, à 'Branquignol', aux parties de rugby, aux ballets russes de Moiseev. Il annexe habilement les recettes du contraste, du 'retour en arrière', de l'anachronisme, du 'nonsense' anglo-saxon."¹ The gags were innumerable. Milady de Winter was unfolded at one point from a travelling trunk, "... as though", wrote Walter Kerr, "she had been sawed in half but were still viable."² A musical staff walked onstage with singers' heads instead of notes; Richelieu communicated by walkie-talkie with his aids; a periscope emerged from a hole in the floor, and surveyed the action; a hand came out from the floor and was stepped on; giant fists came down from the ceiling to punch characters. In the 1968 production, Richelieu told the king of the queen's infidelity "... by means of oversize toy building blocks that are quickly re-assembled to represent famous etchings of amorous dalliance and intrigue ..."³ At the end, d'Artagnan was lifted up to the heavens in a final triumphant whirl, like an Olympian god.

The love scene between Buckingham and the queen (T XI) was described by most critics as inventive and hilarious; Kerr praised its aptness:

... it's still impudently proper to let a couple of acrobatic clowns sway dangerously on a spindly ladder, all but losing the chandelier they're trying to dust, while an upper echelon love scene is being played beneath them. If the passionate aristocrats think their situation is precarious, what about the real trouble the common clowns are in? Even a vaudeville joke can make a point. Indeed most of the gags did make a point; they debunked the romantic aura with which Dumas surrounds his characters. The courtship scene showed up 19th century styles of dialogue, styles of acting, and notions of romantic love. Buckingham the great lover had to make his declaration with constant interruptions from the workmen cleaning the chandeliers. They eventually demanded, since he was disguised as one of them, that he come up and help them. Isabelle Saçoyan as the queen maintained a strictly classical Comédie-française type of acting throughout the scene, and thus made the ridiculous predicament of her lover even funnier. Her performance was very beautiful; she carried her hands before her like sacred objects, and succeeded with these gestures "... à styliser la silhouette d'Anne d'Autriche pour en faire un modèle vivant de Velasquez". Her serious tone, however, underlined the silliness of her lines: these included her account of the dire consequences of her previous meeting with Buckingham:

Seuls? non, nous n'étions pas seuls, il y avait un cardinaliste dans chaque bosquet. Moi, je n'oublie pas ce qui a suivi, l'éclat que fit le Roi, poussé sans doute par Monsieur le Cardinal, Madame de Chevreuse ma seule amie, condamnée à la retraite. Moi-même privée de dessert pendant quatre mois.

(XI, p. 47)

The script for this scene is a parody of traditional love scenes. Love dialogues often move from one argument to the other by simple word connections. For example, in Dumas's novel, the queen says to Buckingham: "Il est sacrilège de

lutter contre tant de choses, Milord." He answers: "... Vous parlez de sacrilèges! mais le sacrilège est dans la séparation des cœurs que Dieu avait formés l'un pour l'autre." Planchon used this same technique, but he made punning links on sometimes inelegant words; the lovers' attempts at high-flown imagery were thus made ridiculous:

La Reine:

Buckingham:
Oh Madame! vous me faites jurer comme un charretier embourbé. Allons dites-le-moi que vous m'aimez.

La Reine:
Je ne vous dis pas le contraire. Mais vous nous mettez dans un bourbier.

(XI, p.47)

The workers also punctuated the scene with their more colloquial speech. The romantic reminiscences of the two aristocrats lost some of their conviction when interrupted by such sentences as "Bon d'accord! Gustave-Françoué ou je ne sais quoié. Viens-t-en donc arquebouter l'échelle." or "Bonhomme si tu te plais pas en bas y'a de l'ouvrage sur la hauteur." (XI, p.47) Pierre Marcabru aptly summed up the technique used in this scene and in others: "Partant d'une opposition flagrante entre le réalisme des objets, des gestes et des situations et le romantisme désincarné du langage, la mise en scène pousse jusqu'à ses extrêmes limites l'affrontement de l'éloquence et des faits."²

No character escaped ridicule in this production. With little alteration of the text, it was possible to make all the great personages appear laughably human: "... en donnant très sincèrement le texte, on peut voir M. de Tréville chercher ses pantoufles, Milady se laver les pieds, d'Artagnan incommoder une voisine grincheuse..."³ Characters were

placed in irretrievably commonplace circumstances which made any pomposity on their part seem ludicrous. D'Artagnan first meets M. de Tréville at the letter's levée. In the play, during the important conversation on Richelieu's recent machinations, various articles of clothing were handed solemnly to Tréville, with the appropriate comment each time: "Saluez la culotte de M. de Tréville.", "Saluez le plumet touffu de M. de Tréville." (IV, pp. 16,19) Richelieu, in a scene which enraged so many spectators that it became famous (XIX) fried himself an egg at the same time as he plotted with Lady de Winter; wearing a white apron over his shrimp coloured surplice, he looked less of a statesman than a gourmand. The scene of the murder of Buckingham (XXI) was not treated seriously; it deprived him of what little dignity he had left after his ladder escapade; he was killed while pathetically trying to ward off his assailant by splashing bath water on him. Not even the king was spared:

... at one point, the French king enters with much fanfare to meet an expectant court. He stops and whispers concernedly to his major-domo. After a moment's sombre consideration the major-domo indicates with a series of blatantly discreet gestures the way to the men's room.¹

Henry Popkin, a New York reviewer,² saw in this systematic debunking Planchon's determination to see the world through his public's eyes:

... one of his [Planchon's] general practices is to provide a working-class view of the world and of history. Great people - or people who fancy themselves to be great - ... are seen, as it were, from below, even if Planchon has to invent the characters who enjoy this special vision. The purpose is to question the idea of greatness, especially greatness based on birth, and to destroy its mystique.

Thus Les Trois Mousquetaires looked forward and back to the work of Planchon on such plays as George Dandin or La Seconde Surprise de l'amour, in which the principals are seen through the eyes of their servants.

Planchon disapproved not only of Dumas's romanticism, but also of his fierce misogyny. The programme pointed out Dumas's hatred of women, as it came out in his portrait of Lady de Winter: "Foyer de forces maléfiques, elle fait le malheur des braves coeurs masculins. Elle torture, elle tue tous les mâles qu'elle croise dans le roman. ... La justice est du côté des hommes." In order to make the public aware of this underlying assumption, the production emphasised the men's brutality to the women. Mme Bonacieux narrowly escaped the unwanted attentions of the four musketeers by appealing to their patriotism. Jean-Jacques Lerrant wrote that: "Les femmes sont traitées comme dans la plus noire des séries. Athos coince la main de Milady dans un tiroir, la pince allègrement quand elle est réduite à l'impuissance, les mâles se précipitent pour jouir de la décapitation éclaboussante de la belle espionne."¹ Indeed, Lady de Winter's death was staged for all its gory fun, with the ghosts of her successive husbands returning to gloat at her beheading. Before dying, she removed her mask to reveal, not evil incarnate, but innocence and beauty in the form of a young girl:

Much of the fun of the production lay in its pastiches of almost every conceivable form of theatre; it mocked playwrights and directors, and even thumbed its nose at the audience. The Théâtre de la Cité made fun of "... Maria Casarès avec ses mélopées. Vilar et ses défilés de drapeaux. Edwige Feuillère et sa voix de gorge. Ionesco et ses 'idées' à forme concrète."² The company's own original

¹. Progrès (Lyons), April, 1968.
319.

material was cleverly integrated with these pastiches of other people's styles, as it was to be later in *La Mise en pièces du CID*. The riders on hobby-horses derided westerns, the wild rhythm of the show was that of *Hellzapoppin*. Bertrand Poirot-Delpêch noted a number of allusions, some obvious and others more subtle:

> Alors que le voyage à Londres ou les complots de cabarets sont traités avec un faux luxe pastichant le réalisme du Châtelet, les ferrets de diamants sont rapportés au bal de la cour à l'aide de passes de rugby tout comme la veste du Million de René Clair.... Des théologiens citent Virgile au lieu des Pères de l'Église, des personnages se mettent à déclamer du Victor Hugo ou du Brecht.  

Planchon described d'Artagnan's end as "... une apothéose où frémit le lyrisme de Ionesco."  

Entire tableaux were obvious take-offs. Mme Bonacieux's escape from prison was played like a *journée espagnole* from Claudel's *Le Soulier de satin*, as staged by Barrault; not only did her speech echo Claudel's lyrical style, she also offered one of her shoes to her jailer. Even Brecht was made fun of; "Nothing is sacred", cried a Scottish critic.  

Rochefort decided to play the scene of the arrest of Madame Bonacieux, for the benefit of Richelieu, "avec distanciation". (VI, p.28) The commentator, played by the tall dark Jean Bouise, stood forward pulling a child's wagon inscribed "Mutter Bonacieux", and declared coldly: "Je représente Madame Bonacieux. Je suis une jeune personne de 25 à 26 ans. J'ai le teint marbré de rose et d'opale, le nez légèrement retroussé, je n'ai pas de moustache...." After his speech, he sang a little song, in the Lehrstück tradition.

Planchon borrowed from whichever medium would be most expedient and appropriate. The perfect sense of timing

for which he was to become recognised gave even such an apparently disorganised production the smooth flow of a film. The show included a parody of television. In one scene, (VII, p. 32), d'Artagnan stopped speaking in mid-syllable. The actors looked at one another in silent dismay; d'Artagnan tried to speak again but still there was no sound. A stagehand then appeared carrying a placard apologising for technical difficulties. For a few moments, the action continued as a pantomime, with stagehands carrying in balloon-shaped signs for the next few lines of dialogue and action, which include the attempted arrest of Monsieur Bonancieux. Then a tape recorder was played at full speed, and the "sound" suddenly returned to normal. In another scene (XVI), when the queen is ordered to undress in order to be searched for a letter, the action was stopped at the vital moment with a panneau censuré; this was followed by the scene of Séguier handing the letter over to the king. The use of 'balloons' for speech also brought the comic strip world on stage. This sort of technique was used very cleverly in some productions abroad; on the opening night on Broadway, for instance.

Placards sometimes made jokes at the audience's expense: "We Are Thrilled by the Love Affairs of Top People' reads a row of placards over the actors' heads, mocking the very gullibilities that have made us want to see 'Three Musketeers' at all."² The public's taste for the macabre was also made fun of in the violence of the gags. Lerrant wrote: "... toutes les perversions de notre goût sado-masochiste sont exploitées ici de la manière la plus burlesque et avec une logique im-

1. Paris-Match, July 13th, 1968,
2. Walter Kerr, New York Times, July 7th, 1968,
placable dans l'absurde sanguinolent."¹

In the course of the play's long career from 1958 to 1969, the production was renewed so many times that only a fraction of the gags, innovation, and pastiches of other forms of art and other theatrical styles could be shown at any one time. The play pastiched new styles and they came into fashion. Occasionally unintended changes were made. In London in 1960, an English stagehand heard so much laughter that he thought the play had ended and brought down the curtain - in mid-scene. The audience, convinced that this was yet another gag, laughed even more heartily.² According to Planchon, there was another reason for making modifications in this production: "Les changements, c'était pour vaincre l'ennui de ... reprendre, toujours, encore; on enlevait un morceau, on posait une pièce. Ainsi bout à bout, cela donnerait bien huit heures de spectacle."³

Although each presentation was thus a selection of gags, some critics nevertheless found that there were too many jokes in one show. American reviewers especially reacted in this way. "At times," said John Simon, "Planchon's imagination becomes either megalomaniacal or narcissistic, I'm not sure which."⁴ "There comes a time", wrote Walter Kerr,⁵ "when... impertinence leaps beyond point and engages in an incestuous love affair with itself." He complained that the show lost sight of Dumas completely: "... there were no scenes from the novel substantial enough to serve as true targets for the jest; we were improvising about a cipher." Paul Morelle⁶ made the same point, using a Dumas aphorism quoted in the programme:

1. Progrès (Lyons), April 20th, 1968.
"Il est permis de violer l'histoire, mais à condition de lui faire un enfant.") Morelle asked: "Mais peut-on, à son tour, faire un enfant à l'enfant de l'Histoire?" He also complained that the play was too erudite, and found it paradoxical

... que Planchon, parti d'une œuvre essentiellement populaire, à des fins également populaires, et avec l'aide d'auteurs ou de techniques populaires, soit partvenu à un divertissement pour lettrés, à un exercice de style dont les finesse risquent de n'être entendues que par les mandarins, les initiés.

He thought that the supreme test would be to put on this show for an audience of children. Bertrand Poirot-Delpech too sensed that the allusions might be too esoteric: "On reprochera à Planchon d'avoir un peu trop réglé ses 'gags' à l'intention de gens de métier."

This was a serious charge, and somewhat startling when one considers that Planchon thought of the play's international success as "... celui d'un spectacle bon enfant..." and was even embarrassed in later years at its lack of sophistication. In a debate in Marseille, Jean Marie Boeglin had already provided an answer to the charge of elitism: "A chaque niveau de culture répond un degré de plaisir." The fact that the play was so successful internationally was in itself evidence that its slapstick fun appealed to people who could not grasp all the textual references or the visual allusions to French theatrical styles. The very wealth of gags which had annoyed some critics, as well as the unrelenting gaiety of the production, made the show entertaining for audiences of all kinds. Jacques Lemarchand, reporting after presentations in Baalbeck, where much of the audience did not understand French, felt that Les Trois Mousquetaires had withstood a difficult test there:

... je suis persuadé que les parodies de Claudel et les allusions à la "distanciation" étaient parfaitement mystérieuses pour la majorité des spectateurs de Baalbeck. Il n'importait pas du tout; nous étions tous également sensibles, sans nous arrêter au détail, à la représentation, menée au galop, riche de gags qui semblaient sans cesse improvisés, et conduite, en apparence, sans frein, que nous donnait le théâtre de Villeurbanne. ... Chacun y avait puisé son miel à sa convenance, refait à son goût cet ensemble savamment disparate; faut-il chercher ailleurs les preuves de l'universalité d'un certain théâtre?

Most people, indeed, were delighted with the adaptation. Reaction focused on the joyous rhythm and the sense of wholeness in such an apparently disparate accumulation of gags. Georges Baelde wrote that

... jamais on n'a l'impression de désordre ou de flottement; entre les individus et la masse, se sont intercalés les groupes; entre les gags et les sketches d'une part, l'intrigue globale d'autre part, se sont intercalés de vastes séquences dont chacun réussit à être homogène, originale, et à s'insérer dans un ensemble cohérent. .... les séquences sont soudées en un mouvement cinématographique.

Frequently spectators remarked that the production had the continuity of a film. It was "... une succession de fondus enchaînés." In the show, "Il n'y a pas d'actes, mais des découpages." Jacques Lemarchand thought that Les Trois Mousquetaires was characteristic of Planchon's best work, for it showed "... le même soin, la même anxieuse minutie qu'il met à organiser les ombres et reliefs d'un Henri IV ou d'un Falstaff. Et cela sans alourdir en rien la preste présentation qui file à l'allure d'un western."

Everyone marvelled that the precision and the control which were obviously necessary in such a carefully timed production had not destroyed its feeling of spontaneity. Les Trois Mousquetaires was a "... spectacle minutieusement réglé et qui, pourtant, comme ceux de la 'Commedia dell'Arte', comporte une part d'improvisation."\(^1\) Despite repeated recreations, the production seemed to lose none of its verve. Its liveliness even seemed to increase with time:

...Les Trois Mousquetaires nés entre Rhône et Saône ce printemps avaient fait du chemin: dévergondés au départ, ils ramenaient à la pointe de leurs bottes un enthousiasme renouvelé, un entrain encore plus débridé, une somme de gags "Hénaurmes"... une mise en scène plus fouillée, plus précise en dépit de son désordre apparent...\(^2\)

The red background and the curtains descending to give a silhouette impression of the setting reminded the audience of both Vilar and Brecht. The stylised eloquence of the sets often reduced the need for textual exposition:

Planchon, utilisant à son profit les leçons de l'Opéra de Pékin, [as in the "deaths" of the Cardinal's guards described above, p.314] substitue, chaque fois que cela est possible, un mouvement plastique, un objet symbolique à la description anecdotique. Il invente une réalité scénique qui ne procède que par allusions à la réalité tout court.\(^3\)

The Peking Opera performed in Paris in 1955, and its use of symbolic gesture may have influenced Planchon, in the same way as the Balinese Theatre had impressed Antonin Artaud in 1931. Lochy's score also helped, as he had hoped, to sustain both the serious and the comic levels of the play. Jean Beaumont described the accompaniment as a

...pastiche des entrées royales d'avant ou d'après Lulli, mais aussi crissements et borborygmes modernes en moquerie et même effusions romantiques par endroits! ... Elle contribue considérablement à nous

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1. Georges Versini, Progrès (Lyons), November 14th, 1959.
The precision of movement of the actors and their ballet-like grace onstage charmed many spectators. A reviewer spoke of "Le sérieux, la précision, l'exactitude de la mise en scène réglée avec une perfection dans le mouvement qui touche à l'élégance." It was in the beauty of the dance movements that Planchon had retained the poetry of the novel. According to Vadim Gaevski, the Moscow critic, Planchon had returned to an old genre, the comédie-ballet. Gaevski saw in the dance sequences a poetic expression of opposition to the bourgeois order as symbolised by military discipline:

... elle [la poésie] anime ... les images collectives du jeu et de la danse, du carnaval joyeux et déchaîné qui, tout le temps, se fait jour à travers les épisodes de rixes et de batailles (en sorte que les adversaires se mettent soudain à danser au plus fort du combat). Dans le spectacle l'élément de danse pénètre partout; on dirait que c'est là précisément cet in-saisissable ennemi intérieur que craignent par-dessus tout les militaires "intrépides" et les politiciens "perspicaces". Et en effet, le conflit principal du spectacle est exprimé par des moyens plastiques: c'est le conflit entre la danse et l'exercice militaire.

Although Planchon did not acquiesce to Dumas's philosophy, he admired one facet of the novel, which Raymonde Temkine defined as follows:

Mais il y a quand-même quelque chose en Dumas qu'aime Planchon et qui, l'idéologie - si l'on peut dire! - mise entre parenthèses, le fascine, dans ces mouvements des capes et ces tournoiements des épées; c'est le tempérament du conteur, le coté écrivain généreux débordant du bonheur d'écrire à toutes brdes, à la diable, parce qu'on a le souffle puisqu'on a la santé.

1. Echo-Liberté (Lyons), May 17th, 1958.
2. M.C., La Montagne (Clermond), March 9th, 1960.
Because he had succeeded so well in capturing onstage this sense of a rapid, joyous, all-enveloping movement, some reviewers thought that Planchon shared Dumas's kind of patriotic fervour. Planchon himself mentioned in the programme some of the curiously nationalistic praise which a 1951 adaptation of Les Trois Mousquetaires (by the Compagnie Grenier-Hussenot at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin) had elicited. The Théâtre de la Cité set out from the start to avoid identification with Dumas's values. The reviews nevertheless contained the same sort of sentiment as those of 1951. Jean Beaumont found the show so beautiful that he thought it failed as a parody: "Planchon se prend à son propre jeu et, sans qu'il l'ait voulu, la fresque d'histoire est bien plus glorieuse qu'ironique."¹ Jean Pigeon praised Planchon's fidelity to the spirit of the novel: "Ses mous­quetaires sont bien les preux chevaliers que souhaitait Dumas, ils ont le sens de l'honneur, l'humeur gasconne et la fibre fraternelle au sein d'une époque perfide et cardinalice."² It is difficult to understand this sort of reaction when one considers how determined the company was to avoid glorifying the musketeers or their era; the programme stated clearly that "Partout où la fibre patriotique vibrait, le sécateur a fonctionné. L'exaltation virile est ridiculisée. Toute­fois, quelques couplets lyriques on été conservés, mais on en a souligné grossièrement toute la platitude et la vulgarité." ³

Vadim Gaevski⁴ gave a subtle appreciation of the play which shows how the misunderstanding might have come about. The parody in the play stemmed from the novel itself: ...

¹ Echo-Liberté, December 19th, 1959.
² Le Journal de Charleroi (Belgium), October 13th, 1960.
³ Oeuvres et Opinions (Moscow), Jan. 1964.
Gaevski went on to point out the contemporary relevance of the production. A long sequence set in the back streets of Paris at night, and present in the play but not in the novel, might have been inspired by the terrorist acts of the O.A.S. The romanticism of duels was overshadowed by the ugliness of the crimes, the noble musketeer was replaced by "... le coupe-jarret". Gaevski thought that, by giving his heroes the brutality of hired killers, Planchon was alluding consciously to our own day: "Si le roman est écrit pour glorifier l'homme d'épée, le spectacle est conçu de façon à le ridiculiser. Son actualité réside dans cette nette compréhension du rôle joué par le 'mousquetaire contemporain'.'

Other critics were sensitive to the irony with which Planchon treated historical romanticism in the play. Yves Bourdon thought that it was less a parody of the novel than a reappraisal of its historical basis: "... c'est-à-dire d'un mécanisme dont on démonte les rouages pour montrer le rôle qu'y jouent les hommes sous des prétextes souvent vains, souvent sordides, souvent abusifs." Le Monde also quoted an unnamed American critic as saying that "Le Théâtre de la Cité nous a montré que les impulsions de la révolte gauloise ne se limitent pas à la Sorbonne." Michael Kustow, like Gaevski, saw the contemporary relevance of the play's deliberately anti-heroic, anti-militaristic stance:

This was written at a period in French history when an important section of French youth was beginning to express disaffiliation from the uniform by deserting from the French army so as not to have to torture Algerians; when the colonels' putsch was being prepared - scarcely an example of fidelity to the "great leader" de Gaulle.

Perhaps he best summed up the production when he said that it crystallised the style and the aims of the Théâtre de la Cité de Villeurbanne:

*It was, and has remained (constantly reworked, it is a staple element in the company's repertoire) an exemplary Planchon creation: popular as Hellzapoppin, formally acute as a Resnais film, politically shrewd as a Sorbonne tract.*

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**O M'man Chicago**

Vis' l'Amérique devient soiffarde  
Et du whisky on en sirote  
On s'excite sur la limonade  
Au temps du fox et du jazz-hot  
Où les pianos vachards distillent  
La musique très très modern' style  
De l'épopée des U.S.A.

"Chant de la Prohibition", O M'man Chicago

Roger Planchon wrote O M'man Chicago in 1963 with the avowed intention of creating another play with the immense popular appeal of Les Trois Mousquetaires.

When the Théâtre de la Cité created Les Trois Mousquetaires, they began with the novel; they saw it as a romanticized version of history, and they debunked it through the stage language. When Planchon read accounts of Al Capone's story, he found that the facts of his career were as distorted by writers as the historical realities of Richelieu's day had been by Dumas. He was dealing with a legend very similar to that which Dumas had created, a glorified picture of the criminals who had terrorised Chicago for 14 long years. Whereas every Frenchman knows his Dumas practically by heart, however, few people in France have a very clear idea of the Capone story. His fame rests on almost totally fictitious television series and crime novels. Lacking a specific narrative work around which a satire could be built, Planchon had to write the story of Al Capone rather than parody it. Because people were not very familiar with
the basis of the play, the company's "demystifying" ardour was not so evident in this production. Planchon simply showed that the gangsters were buffoons. When Brecht used the Capone story in The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui, he intended to give a clear and horrifying account of Hitler's rise from petty gangsterism to political power. Planchon's play, however, was not meant to be a historical tract; Planchon explained his intentions in writing it:

Pour dépouiller cette histoire de la pro-hibition de l'alcool des récits farfelus, il faudrait montrer comment les municipalités s'appuyaient sur les gangsters, il faudrait souligner combien les ligues de vertu ont curieusement aggravé la corruption et l'ont généralisée .... Or, je n'ai que des convictions, je n'ai pas de preuves. J'ai donc dégagé des lignes de force qui sont destinées à déboucher soit en plein réalisme comique, soit en pleine fée... mais ce n'est absolument pas une fable dans la tendance brechtienne ...

The play was not to the same extent as Les Trois Mousquetaires a création collective. It was written by Roger Planchon after considerable personal research into the period covered. It was written on several levels:

J'ai ... joué à la fois sur l'histoire et la légende de Chicago des années 1925 et j'ai débouché en pleine fée. C'est le songe d'une nuit d'hiver à Chicago. Il se déroule sur plusieurs plans: la vie d'Al Capone, le personnage le plus important et ce qu'il rêve la nuit par exemple.

Planchon looked at both Al Capone and his society. The play, he said in a university discussion, centred on these two main themes: "... l'étude de la subjectivité d'un ambitieux et celle des circonstances qui lui permettent d'apparaître comme 'grand homme': Al Capone, c'est un Napoléon au petit pied". He created around the figure of Capone three dream

3. Progrès (Lyons), March 14th, 1963.
figures, the first, M'man Chicago, representing both Capone's mother and his city, the second, Pool Daddy's Fog, a symbol of the misty city itself, and the third, Pottawattomie, a crippled Indian, the last survivor of the extermination of his people by the white man's civilisation. These three characters were, in a sense, Capone's other selves. Asked at the discussion about the presence of M'man Chicago in the play, Planchon said by way of explanation that:

... d'après certaines analyses de Freud, les gangsters auraient une affection obsessionnelle pour leur mère. Ainsi, Al Capone projette en imagination une figure qui en est à la fois sa mère - la ville de Chicago - et la femme qu'il aime. Ce qui, remarquons-le, provoque des intermèdes pleins d'une sorte de poésie fantastique.

The play is divided into nineteen tableaux, with many songs and dance sequences. It follows Capone's own reminiscences about his career. He appears on the stage at the start feeling that he has failed, and wondering how to tell his story. The three dream figures then appear and lead the cast through a number of scenes, dances, and songs, up to a final trial scene. The main conflict throughout the play is between the Sicilian criminals led by Capone, and their Irish competitors for the illegal trade in alcohol. In the course of his career, Capone decides at one point to become honest; in order to succeed in a business, he needs capital, however, and so he must continue his criminal activities until he has saved up enough money. He becomes prosperous by organising his underworld business efficiently, but the 1929 stock market crash ruins him. At his trial, he is eventually sentenced for income tax evasion.

Planchon invented for his characters a language peculiar to them. The text was entirely his own work:

Le texte est très écrit, oui, très écrit parce que j'ai cherché à créer une langue particulière à l'intérieur de la langue française ... ce n'est pas de l'argot, ni même du style série noire, c'est un langage qui n'appartient qu'aux protagonistes de _M'man Chicago_, mais qui a ses règles, son vocabulaire ... j'allais dire sa syntaxe.1

The new language would startle listeners especially "... par le choc de mots insolites." In order to meet the challenge of recreating in French the American underworld slang of the 1920's, he had invented a new slang. The text suggests the world of crime fiction; it belongs almost to the realm of folklore. The language is full of surprises, and it is sometimes reminiscent of westerns as well as of detective films:

Jake Lucullus Cake:
Al, ton petit gars me rouille les éperons avec ses propos éthiques. À l'entendre causer, je fonctionne au décompresseur.

The style is highly metaphorical. The dream figures especially use a speech rich in imagery:

Pottawattomie:
Moi, pauv' mec, j'entrevois pas la cause de la catara [c] te.

M'man Chicago:
Il entrevoit pas, j'ai la lessiveuse qui bout, je me déborde, tous mes amours finissent à l'égout. Le p'tit CAPONE fait la lessive des hommes, ça rince sec et j'passe mon temps à m'écraser la larme au coin de l'oeil et à en asperger tous mes atours. O rage, je finis en source!

(VIII, p. 49)

Some of the comparisons are very powerful, and as funny as those used by criminal characters in crime fiction. Lucullus's threat to Capone has the flavour of a Hollywood villain's boast: "Ils vous servent sur plateau en hors-d'oeuvre, un massacre, et à coté de celui-là, la guerre de sécession était une partie de campagne." (X, p. 59) "Love" scenes were written with a similar sort of imagery, although for these scenes it may have been less successful; Al, for example, cries to Mrs. Flaherty, "... Avec vous, Madame Flaherty, j'ai le coeur boréal, c'est l'horrible brasero et je suis un incompris. ..." (XIII, p. 76).

2. From the text of O M'man Chicago, archives of the Théâtre National Populaire in Villeurbanne, Tableau I, p.l. Further quotations from the script will include the scene and page numbers.
The lyrics of the numerous songs are also full of this deliberately striking use of commonplace words to provoke a shock or laughter. Capone's love song is in a style as convoluted as it is unromantic:

C'est'y le soleil qui fait la lippe
Pour qu'la lune engrosses les marées
Afin que les vagues et la mer salée
En se déchirant comme des nippes
Vous viennent lécher les ventricules
Du rocher-coeur qui se met à flotter
Au risque de faire déborder
Votre Gulf Stream ridicule. (XIII, p.80)

All the songs are funny, if only because of their unexpected turns of phrase, but they also express a considerable range of feeling. A recurring theme in the play is that of the gangsters' nostalgia for the "good old days" of rampant crime. This feeling is evident from the beginning, for the entire play is a flashback. The title song is filled with a melancholy couched in Capone's rough terms:

J'ai le coeur qui se dévisse
Quant [d] tu vampes le soir
O m'man Chicago
La vitre de buée
Se décrasse au rasoir
O m'man Chicago
Tu m'attaque le coeur au burin
Reviens.

(I, p.4)

The lyrics of some songs were strikingly beautiful, as in the Chanson de la pluie; here the dead of the play mourn their fate together in a dreary Chicago cemetery:

Au grand cimetière de Chicago
La pluie s'en vient enjamber les allées
Entraînent ses goudillots de fumée
Sur tous les morts allongés qui s'en vont en eau.

(VIII, p.50)

The show was called a comédie-ballet; only modesty prevented Planchon from calling it a musical comedy. Indeed despite the extent of his personal work on the script Planchon refused to sign the play, except as its co-director with Rosner. It was, he insisted, the work of a community; fifty
people had participated in creating *O M'man Chicago*. Song and dance were extremely important. In fact, Ossia Trilling felt that everything else in the production was secondary:

The attempt to explain Capone's behaviour in psycho-analytical terms is not seriously made but is taken merely as a pretext for introducing dream-like projections of Capone's other self. In fact, the entire show is one huge kaleidoscopic dream ballet.

Claude Lochy again composed the music:

... la musique a une lourde part, elle participe à l'action soit en faisant éclater cette action, soit en la prolongeant, en l'expliquant. Sur des paroles de Roger Planchon j'ai composé une dizaine de lyrics qui, à partir de tempos de l'époque (tangos, charleston...) rappellent le moment sans pour cela faire reconstitution historique. Tout est transposé, recréé, comme la musique des ballets.

Gérard Guillot, who no doubt saw the parallel between Planchon's Capone and Brecht's *Arturo Ui*, thought that the role of the songs was greater here than in Brecht's plays:

Et tout ce monde chante. D'une part, parce que les compositions musicales de Claude Lochy sur des paroles de Roger Planchon n'ont rien à voir avec les songes brechtien, mais sont au contraire de véritables mélodies, des soutiens efficaces de l'action dramatique. D'autre part parce que l'ambiance générale est telle que des contrepoints sonores s'imposent, contrepoints que reprend pour notre plus grand plaisir une petite formation orchestrale.

Jean-Jacques Lerrant regretted having missed most of the words of the songs, "... dont beaucoup paraissent d'un humour saumâtre et mélancolique qu'il faudrait sucer jusqu'aux moindres allusions."

Even a quick glance at the songs gives an idea of their importance in crystallising the conflicts within the play, and in following the stages of Capone's defeat. The "Chant de la Prohibition" (I, p.7) sung by the gangsters, expresses gratitude to the leagues of virtue for creating such opportunities for organised crime. The "Chant des Vierges de Chicago" is a belligerent war cry threatening lawbreakers with dire consequences. (IV, p.25). When Capone's empire begins to crumble, Garibaldi, one of his followers who has gone insane, sings a little song entitled "La ménopause chez le Racketeer" (XIII, p.74) ... The last song "La Cale prend l'eau" is performed by the assembled gangsters, who are to look, according to a stage direction, "mélancoliques et printaniers"; it expresses the passing of their reign and the birth of a bureaucratic era in which "Le vice se fonctionnera." (XVI, pp. 95-96) The songs give extra dimensions to some of the characters, and to the events of Capone's life.

The dances were not a recreation of 1920's styles. Jacques Giraud, the choreographer, maintained the anti-realistic principle on which the music was based, making the choreography "... résolument moderne, résolument expressionniste ou résolument poétique ..." 1 Giraud admitted 2 that the film West Side Story had impressed him very much; he had seen it five times, and it had influenced his own work on O'Maman Chicago. The company had thought of adding professional dancers to its ranks, but finally the ordinary actors of the Théâtre de la Cité took dancing lessons instead. As in Les Trois Mousquetaires, dance sequences were varied and lively. Gérard Guillot called the choreography neo-expressionistic, and he described its effect on stage:

Pivotant sans cesse autour de l'arme qui tue, cette chorégraphie est tantôt une marche à l'arme blanche (les ligues de vertu ou les nymphomanes), tantôt un fox ou un charleston d'armes à feu (les gangsters sous les règnes successifs de Jim Colosimo, Dion O'Bannion et Al Capone). 3

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2. Echo-Liberté (Lyons) February 16th, 1963.
In *Les Trois Mousquetaires*, dance had been used as an expression of conflict; here also it was "... used with remarkable insight to advance the action of the gang warfare between Irishman and Italian."¹ Even reading the text gives one a feeling for the importance of the dances as a structural and connecting device. The first scene opens with an invasion of the stage by armed gangsters who look ready to stage a hold-up. Capone strolls in after them. He does not know how to begin telling his story, but once the three dream figures have helped him through his hesitation, the "play within" opens with the "Chant de la Prohibition" and with a dance by the Leagues of Virtue, the gangsters, and the police. As in *Les Trois Mousquetaires* also, dance was sometimes a stylised death; when Al Capone shoots Jim Colosimo and Flaherty, Planchon's stage direction reads:

... des coups partent - Les deux se lancent dans un numéro de claquettes crispées intitulé "cygne-song". Quand ils sont enfin au plancher CAPONE vide son chargeur pour finir la scène ...

(II, p.15)

Dance and song were often simultaneous. The virgins of Chicago, for instance, sing as they dance. (IV, p.25) Dance was also used in fantasмагorical sequences: in a tableau entitled "La Pluie," all Capone's murder victims are standing under umbrellas on a rainy day in the cemetery. M'man Chicago arrives and they begin to carry her train; the march becomes a dance, the dance a tango, until M'man Chicago takes a broom and literally sweeps the others off the stage. As this scene is one of Capone's dreams, it finishes with his waltzing with M'man Chicago to a syrupy and funereal tune. Like objects, dances could be conjured up by people's words. In a tableau called "L'Ascension", Capone is taking power, and he plans a party to celebrate. As he speaks, couples enter dancing a diabolical charleston and reenter every time he refers to them. He plans the St. Valentine's Day massacre at the same time, and to find out if he will be successful,

he has bets placed on number 14 in gambling halls, lotteries and horse races; the charleston in the background becomes more frenetic when the results of these bets are good, and slower when they are bad. When it is announced that Morgan, Capone's arch-enemy, has survived the massacre, the dancers fade into darkness and the music takes on a sombre rhythm. The play finishes as it starts, with Capone's friends entering to a march, and finally dancing together.

André Acquart designed a simple and quickly transformable set appropriate in a production largely made up of dance numbers:

Un éclairage qui change d'orientation, deux panneaux qui pivotent, quelques tables qui tombent des cin tres, les comédiens qui virevoltent et l'illusion est complète. Trois heures durant, la scène est modifiée ainsi avec l'instantanéité d'un découpage cinématographique.

The sets, like those which Acquart designed for TréLus et Cressida in the next year, were indeed remarkable mainly for their mobility and adaptability. Jean-Jacques Lerrant praised them as "... les décors tout à fait ingénieux et ironiques ... en panneaux mobiles de cabines. Ils permettent dans l'espace théâtral des invasions en masse, des apparitions inattendues et des changements à vue insérés dans la mobilité de l'action." Gérard Guillo	 admired the set as a background for a series of fast-moving dance routines. He also understood the irony of these "Décors sinistres ou goguenards":

Le parti pris d'André Acquart fut sans doute d'accélérer le délire général par un dispositif scénique très mobile; des panneaux et des portes. D'où des pivotements, des claquements, des fermetures et des ouvertures qui sont à leur manière une contredanse matérielle de cette gigantesque gigue à la gloire et à la honte de l'alcool qu'est O'M'an Chicago.

2. Progrès (Lyons), March 2nd, 1963.
Roger Planchon described it as a set in which "... toute l'architecture scénique joue sur les matériaux ..." The costumes were stylised and flamboyantly reminiscent of the twenties. The sets were so formalised that they pointed to the artificial quality of the language and of the production as a whole.

Stage properties were important because they were often the material representation of figures of speech. In the tableau called "La Deuxième Nuit de Chicago", the stage is filled with people sleeping in cots. Only the dream figures are awake. M'man Chicago discovers that Pottawatomie has been prying into the dreams of the sleepers, and scolds him for having gone "... farfouillant avec ton crochet dans les poubelles des rêves ..." (XI, p.65) She demands that he share his discoveries with her. They then begin to eat something which M'man Chicago thinks is pig hide, and which Pottawatomie identifies as "Un petit bout de lard de Mme TORRIO qui rêve ..." Thus the metaphor of people's dreams as the dustbins of their minds, containing the scraps of their memories and desires, is incarnated on the stage. The scene continues with references to the dreams of the other characters:

M'man Chicago:  
Donne ce gâteau.  

Pott.:  
C'est un vieux truc sec ... C'est M'dame O'Bannion qui toutes les nuits retrouve son premier mari.

Another scene in which words called up objects was the one in which Capone plans to have his headquarters redecorated before his inauguration party. (XII p.69) He starts by ordering:

... une jolie volière barbouillée pistache avec des canapés roses en forme de coeurs, des descentes de lit crevette, des miroirs dans les plafonds, et vous me trouverez un artiste peintre genre Botticelli pour me faire des fresques qui représentent des gentilles gommeuses d'Hollywood pour calendriers, dans des poses cochonnes.

Immediately, painters, plasterers, and removers enter and start changing the set according to his instructions. A few lines later, he wants the furnishings changed to predominantly red ones, with white leather, polished wood, etc., and again the decorators move immediately and transform the set. The play ends on another concrete image. Al Capone and M'man Chicago argue about who is the real ruler of Chicago, and each tries to get hold of the crown which symbolises that power. In a "battle" stylised into a dance, Al finishes by removing M'man Chicago's wig and discovers that she is really Mrs. Capone, the former Mrs. Fleherty. They both tire of the fight, and the crown goes by default to Fool Daddy's Pool, who is the only permanent winner in the contest for sway over Chicago.

Critics in general were quite impressed by the production, although it did not get the rave reviews which the Trois Mousquetaires had elicited. The element of the production most difficult for them to accept was the artificial language which Planchon had invented. They admitted that it was difficult to find an equivalent in French for the speech Capone might have used, but many found that the text written by Planchon was far too complex for a stage presentation.

Jean-Jacques Lerrant was one of the few who thought that the text itself was good:

Le texte ... m'a paru un mélange plutôt percutant de rhétorique élizabéthaine, de préciosité littéraire, d'argot parfaitement grossier et de calements d'une bêtise puissante et savoureuse qu'on respire avec délices. C'est à la fois pénible, irritant et formidablement cocasse.

However, Lerrant was lost because of the actors' fast delivery; even the songs were partly incomprehensible: "Car ce texte extraordinairement difficile, volontairement alambiqué, est craché à un rythme de mitraillette spécialement accéléré pour 'chicagohan'. On en perd beaucoup." Pierre Biard complained: "Son texte ne passe pas, il est pénible, factice, systématique, dépourvu de verve et de spontanéité. Il sent

1. Progrès (Lyons), March 2nd, 1963.
l'huile. Les répliques sont longues, truffées de métaphores verbeuses qui n'évoquent rien et tombent à plat."

He added that the curious speech might have been funny if it had been used only by one character, but that when thirty people used it for two consecutive hours, it became painful. Like Lerrat, he was annoyed by the speed with which the actors delivered their lines in order to keep up with the fast pace of the action. Their response was almost like that of the critics who were to be so irritated by Planchon's difficult Troilus et Cressida in the following year. One reviewer had a very interesting reaction to the script. After complaining that it lacked simplicity and was often too enmeshed in its own puns, he blamed the acoustics of the old theatre, which were in fact notoriously bad, for part of his difficulty in understanding, and then added: "... nous ne pensons pas que la perte d'une réplique sur dix modifie en quoi que ce soit le jugement que d'ores et déjà l'on peut porter sur cette œuvre. L'abondance, la richesse du langage sont si grandes que la mauvaise audition finit par être sélective." Only Ossia Trilling felt that there was a point to the exceptionally fast delivery; it was meant to make an unnatural text sound as if the actors spoke it every day:

Unusual, too, is the dialogue, which Planchon has written in an attempt to reproduce the wisecracking element of the gangster thrillers in a form of artificial, stilted language that no Frenchman ever spoke, but which miraculously comes trippingly off his actors' tongues as though it were the most natural speech in the world.

Gérard Guillot liked the text without reservation; he found it funny, clever, and clear:

Cette langue puise d'abord sa cocasserie dans le rapport insolite des mots qui la composent; elle s'appuie sur l'inversion, les termes étant pris volontairement les uns pour les autres, deux par deux; elle se prolonge enfin

par une faconde qui tient à la fois des discours électoraux et de la littérature bêtement sentimentale. Un langage donc insociable, inconvenant, en même temps que savoureux, scabreux, séminant et glouton. Sans jamais demander éclaircissement ou traduction. 1

The use of the three dream figures, M'man Chicago, Pottawattomie, and Fool Daddy's Fog struck most critics as extremely interesting, original, and appropriate. It is through them only that Capone acquired the ability to tell his story at all. They also introduced many of the dances and songs which were so important in the show. The play was a fitting successor to Les Trois Mousquetaires: "C'est le même rythme trépidant, le même foisonnement de gags, la même exubérance sonore... servi aujourd'hui par une technique plus parfaite, un sens de l'équilibre scénique plus affirmé." 2

Guillot praised the skill with which, once again, Planchon had coordinated his actors' movements:

Ainsi Roger Planchon a-t-il pu laisser[er] la bride sur le cou à son sens inné de l'espace scénique. Si bien que les masses s'animent avec spontanéité, que les danses bousculent les êtres et les objets, que les apparitions se répondent surgissant du sol par des trappes ou descendant des cintres par de longs fils. 3

Lerrant 4 described Planchon's work as "...celui d'un grand sculpteur du [mouvement] et des mouvements, capable de construire les réseaux rigoureux d'une vaste frénésie." The fact that the actors had had to be trained to sing and dance made Planchon's success seem all the more remarkable: "Planchon a réussi à plier ses comédiens à des disciplines nouvelles: chants et danses. Il leur a imposé le rythme auquel ils n'étaient pas habitués, des revues à grands spectacles de type 'Folies Bergères' ou 'Casino de Paris'." 5

Many of the gags in the show were a part of the Théâtre de la Cité's repertoire: coffins on wheels, suburban picnics, cigarette butts picked up and eaten ... The play also included some short pastiches. One passage satirising the actor's vanity looked back to Les Trois Mousquetaires and forward to La Mise en pièces du CID. Capone has hired someone to fool Mrs. Flaherty; after she leaves, convinced, the "qctor" comes back and begs for praise:

Le Quidam:
Comment j'ai été M. CAPONI? Pas très génial ce soir, j'ai l'impression. Mais c'est prévisible quand on n'a pas assez répété et que le rôle est trop court, bien que Stanislawski dit, "il n'y a pas de petit rôle, il n'y a que des petits acteurs". C'est pour ça que lui, quand il monte Shakespeare, il se distribue Othello, qui est un rôle pour moi, si on me faisait confiance. Alors que là, c'est une panouille que je fais pour le cachet. Alors, vraiment, vous m'avez trouvé bien?

(XIII, p.76)

The passage recalls a similar one in Brecht's play, in which Arturo Ui engages an actor specialising in Shakespearean roles to give him lessons in deportment and in public speaking (as Hitler is purported to have done). The text of Planchon's play also makes a sidelong reference to Brecht; Ginny introduces herself to Mrs. O'Bannion: "Mon nom à moi c'est GINNY DARK. Ma soeur est connue à Chicago. Elle est lieutenant à l'Armée du Salut." (VII, p.43)

The aim of the production, according to Planchon, was to create an evening's fun. One of his remarks, however, puts the play in line with Gay's Beggar's Opera: "Ce n'est pas une fable moralisatrice. Mais un spectacle amusant sur le milieu qui subit en caricature les aventures de la bourgeoisie." Despite Planchon's claim that it was pure entertainment, many critics saw a Brechtian influence in the

1. Progrès (Lyons), January 14th, 1963.
production; the comparison with *The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui* imposed itself. Planchon's play, despite its light-heartedness, expressed a serious view of the prohibition era. In a discussion in the arts faculty of Lyons University, John Savacool, a lecturer in drama there, spoke from his own boyhood experience of Chicago in the days of prohibition. It was a society in an evolutionary state, which had two slogans: "Get rich quick", and "Down with restraint". Dealing in alcohol was a means of putting both mottoes into practice. Savacool, who had seen *O O'Man Chicago*, was impressed by

... l'Amérique "made in Villeurbanne": cèlè-ci lui semble très "exotique" et, cependant, il y reconnaît les figures légendaires des criminels transformés par la mythologie populaire: l'histoire véridique du "roi boucher" de Chicago, bien qu'elle soit atroce et ridicule, est imprégnée d'une sorte de grandeur épique car elle montre des héros sans peur luttant contre l'étroite morale d'une société puritaine.

Savacool added that in Planchon's play, the black humour fortunately debunked the criminals, who became "... dignes successeurs du roi Ubu de Jarry." Planchon thought that, like many theatre people of his generation, he had come to theatre through the surrealists; this first influence showed through in later productions, and especially in the three musical comedies.

It was certainly through the wit of his production that Planchon wished to give his audience a perspective on the Chicago "heroes". The ironies of the true Capone story suffused the entire production. The programme pointed out that: "Les ligues de vertu et le vertueux sénateur Volsteard qui proposèrent au Sénat la prohibition de l'alcool ne se doutaient pas qu'ils allaient donner des ailes au gangstérisme. Mais les faits sont là; la vertu favorisa le vice." The programme also mentioned the other major irony: the top

1. Recorded in *Progrès* (Lyons), March 14th, 1963.
criminals were finally imprisoned not for their horrendous crimes, but for tax evasion: "Cet acharnement de la légalité à récupérer l'argent gagné illégalement indigna les tueurs."

The treatment of Capone through the world of his dreams was a way of pointing out the artificiality of his legend: the thoughts and ambitions of the character in the play are petty and not heroic. A correspondent, again recalling Brecht, even suggested that the play might have been called *The Resistable Rise and Fall of the Inner World of Al Capone*. ¹

In the satire of Capone there was an implied criticism of the society in which he succeeded:

Ainsi dans cette "Al Capone Story" qui montre un homme affligé d'un complexe d'échec confronté et parfois confondu avec son mythe, avec sa légende et les obsessions des autres hommes. A travers les échanges perpétuels entre le symbole et la réalité grandit la satire "hénaurme" d'une société vautrée dans le sang des affaires."²

Ossia Trilling,³ who found the play funnier than *Les Trois Mousquetaires*, nevertheless said that it was "... not without its meed of bitter social criticism ..." In the play, Mrs. O'Bannion, president of the League of Virtue, becomes Mrs. Morgan, a gangster's wife; here was "... la caricature d'une réalité dont Chicago n'a pas seule le privilège."⁴ Moreover, the picture of government cooperation with the gangsters was very clear. There were numerous references to Capone's power over the authorities of Chicago. Hymie, one of Capone's henchman, says of him: "Avec sa cellulite, il reste le roi de Chicago ... Il a des amis à l'Hotel de Ville et au Palais du Gouverneur qui savent recevoir des enveloppes et Colosimo,

⁴ *Résonances* (Lyons), May 15th, 1963.
pour les glisser, a la manièr." (II, p.10) In the rest of the play, Capone proves the truth of this statement. When a police inspector declares that he will never be bought off, Al Capone answers, unperturbed, "Y'a pas de danger, Inspecteur. Moi mon métier c'est d'acheter les types qui vous paient."

(X, p.64) Again, when Capone plans his party, the list of invitations shows how total is his control over the city: "BIG HILL THOMSON, le Maire de Chicago, Le Conseil Municipal en entier, un auto-car de demoiselles fourre-tout pour mettre de l'ambiance et un orchestre de jazz qui swingue du tonnerre."

(XII, p.69) After the economic depression, things are even worse. Capone then re-evaluates the formerly incorruptible Inspector: "Il y a quelques mois, vous aviez une valeur marchande, mais maintenant pour 10 dollars, je peux m'offrir un Gouverneur d'Etat, sa femme, sa fille et son gendre."

(XIV, p.81)

Gérard Guillot saw in the play an intelligent appraisal of the political situation in Capone's day. Corrupt local councils, an inadequate legal system, the social effects of prohibition, the transformation of a crime syndicate into a "respectable" organisation, were there not, in this picture, reflections of some situations of our own day? "Aucun spectateur," wrote Guillot, "ne fait l'injure de demander au spectacle d'expliciter davantage les correspondances qu'il peut découvrir avec notre époque."

Certainly in the last scene, Planchon thumbed his nose at another government than that of Chicago. In this final scene we return to the beginning of the play; everyone around Capone prepares to tell the AL CAPONE STORY, but Capone asks worriedly who is going to finance the show. The reply comes back: "Le syndicat national du crime. Il est d'accord pour financer ton spectacle, il se doit de soutenir les oeuvres culturelles qui évoquent les grandes pages du passé."

(XIX, p.111)

More than one reviewer saw in this show, which included song and dance, gun battles, dream sequences, etc.,

and yet was based on an actual historical era, an example of "total theatre". Total theatre in the Wagnerian, and later the symbolist sense was a fusion of the arts of music and poetry. In the eyes of Claudel, it was an extension of the spoken text beyond its literal meaning to attain a cosmic significance. In the opinion of Gaston Baty, it meant that the sets and staging conveyed the impressions which the text alone cannot give. Critics of Planchon's play were closer to Wagner's definition than to those of Claudel or Baty when they used the term "total theatre"; they were simply suggesting that O M'man Chicago was a blend of widely varying forms of drama and of spectacle. Gérard Guillot, for example saw the production as an amalgamation of many art forms, and he thought of a possible title for every level of the play: it could be a record album, "Les très riches heures de Chicago de 1920 à 1923"; an opera, "La chanson de geste d'Al Capone"; an operetta, "Viande froide dans l'alcool"; a spectacular revue, "Whisky's boys and girls"; or even a big screen film "Bootlegger's story". He added that "... le spectacle est tout cela à la fois, parodie tous les genres, démystifie toutes les catégories, tout en étant unique de son espèce actuellement. En bref, c'est une marche accélérée vers un 'spectacle total' ...". Jean-Jacques Lerrant too recognised that the production took its inspiration from many different sources:

O M'man Chicago c'est une pièce, un opéra, une opérette, une comédie, une revue des Folies Bergères et par-dessus tout un poème orgiaque d'images-choc et de sons. Un poème qui va de la réalité la plus rêvée, la plus absurde, de document authentique fixé là comme un collage dans un tableau cubiste à un fantaisique de poubelle et de charogne.

Certainly more people saw the play as an entertaining spectacular, rather than as a debunker of crime fiction and of the Al Capone legend. From reading the text, one gets the

1. Ibid.
2. Progrès (Lyons), March 2nd, 1963.
impression that the songs, the dances, and the sheer fun of
the production are more important than its serious "message".
Nevertheless, Guillot concluded his review by saying: "... ce que nous venons de voir est déjà une authentique machine
de guerre contre la dé cervellisation d'aujourd'hui." In this
sense, O M'man Chicago was clearly a forerunner to La Mise en pièces du CID, in which the attack on dé cervellisation was to
to be made explicit in the concrete, visual image of a
"culture machine".

La Mise en pièces du CID

Il faut lire la liste complète, sinon ceux qui ne sont pas cités seront vexés.

Part II, p.86.

La Contestation et la mise en pièces de la plus illustre des tragédies françaises LE CID de Pierre Corneille
suivies d'une cruelle mise à mort de l'auteur dramatique et d'une distribution gracieuse de diverses conserves culturelles
is the full title of a play which became known as La Mise en pièces du CID. Like O M'man Chicago, it was created with
Les Trois Mousquetaires in mind. Planchon, in the programme
for La Mise en pièces du CID, said that, just as the Dumas
novel had been a mere pretext for speaking about the theatre,
so Corneille's play would be used as a starting point for a
play on theatre in the 1960's. They chose Le Cid simply
because it is the best-known of French plays.

The play was partly a result of the events of May
1968 in France. The company had thought in 1967 of creating
a show on the crisis in the theatre. May 1968 gave them the
incentive to create this play, expressing in it everything
that the theatre had just undergone. It was a création
collective like Les Trois Mousquetaires. Whereas that play
had been based fairly closely on the novel, however, this time
the troupe treated Le Cid as little more than a point of
departure. The text is a collage. When Corneille appears,
he speaks in excerpts from his prefaces, while his inter-
locutors' speeches are borrowed from women's magazines such
as Marie-Claire and Elle. The troupe elaborated a few
dialogues by taking cuttings and extracts from various sources,
and then worked as a group to make them into a genuine script:
"... le texte n'était qu'un point de départ; une fois
déchiqueté, metteur en scène et comédiens, dans une collabor-
ation étroite, brodaient librement sur la trame restante au
cours d'improvisations successives, dont on tenait le registre." ¹
By keeping this record, they prevented the text from becoming
too luxuriant, and they also kept track of the better inspira-
tions which had come to them in the course of their impro-
visations. Planchon described the next stage of their work
in the programme:

Les scènes ont été aussi construites, écrites,
placées bout à bout, montées, puis une intrigue
s'est dessinée. Alors, nous avons donné à
l'ensemble une structure plus solide, mais qui
préserve le charme des trouvailles improvisées
ou surgies des collages.

They were careful to integrate various sources subtly, so that
a spectator would not recognise from which newspapers or
political speeches sentences had been borrowed. On the other
hand the quotations would be just familiar enough for the
text to have a predictable quality; the public would be
trying to guess what the next line might be:

Ce procédé de Collage - peu employé au théâtre -
donne à la pièce son caractère curieux, car le
spectateur connaît la phrase qui va être dite
avant qu'elle soit prononcée. Cela apporte
un charme au spectacle car le public entend des
choses qu'il connaît et à la fois ne connaît
pas, ce qui ajoute à l'insolite. ²

The technique of juxtaposing varied materials was
one which Planchon considered essentially theatrical. He
stated in the programme that on stage there is no room for the
logical progression of ideas which one would find in a literary

². La Dépêche La Liberté (St. Etienne) December 22nd, 1969.
essay:

Il s'agit de montrer un conflit par exemple entre deux esthétiques qui s'affrontent. Mais pour aiguiser l'affrontement, on égalise les chances des adversaires. C'est intéressant: on apprend ainsi à mesurer le ridicule de ses propres positions. Ceci explique pourquoi ce "discours" a la fin est devenu une suite de petites fables ambiguës (et par là peut-être plus aiguës).

Indeed, even after the play had been presented a few times, the order of the lines was altered again and again to sharpen the sense of opposition between various ideas. In an interview with Edith Rappoport, Planchon gave an idea of the difficulties involved in recreating a text several times:

Puis après avoir joué le spectacle au premier trimestre 69, on a repris le tout et j'ai resserré le texte. Avant la reprise au Théâtre Montparnasse, il y a eu de nouvelles modifications. Le travail a été difficile pour les comédiens, car certaines répliques ont bougé 10 à 20 fois. Jean Bouise qui joue le rôle de Pafurle a appris son texte une dizaine de fois dans un ordre différent.1

The play's themes were very topical. Those playgoers who had frequented the Parisian theatres that season were quick to see the direct references in Planchon's text, and even in the staging. Because of its burlesque treatment of serious issues, the play seemed to the company to belong to the world of Aristophanes' plays: "Bien sûr, nous ne nous prenons pas pour Aristophane, mais de la même façon que cet auteur parlait de problèmes de l'heure, de Socrate, de même nous parlons des philosophes actuels, de l'évolution des hommes, des choses, du théâtre, etc."2 The main concern of the production, said the programme, was the problem of the theatre: its situation, its role in relation to the other arts, etc., all the questions which had preoccupied young people during the events of May 1968. Because these questions

2. Planchon, La Dépêche La Liberté, (St. Etienne), December 22nd, 1969.
had been put in the context of an all-encompassing revolution, it was impossible to recall them without bringing in political and social issues as well. Planchon stated in the programme, however, that "La pièce parle un peu d'actualité. Nous parlons seulement des conséquences de l'actualité sur le métier que nous faisons." [my underlining]

Planchon explained several times why the company had chosen a humorous genre for this kind of serious soul-searching. He said in the programme that certain eras make it impossible to create theatre in anything but a farcical style. He pointed to various contemporary shows on current events and remarked that they were all comedies. Even tragedies, at that time, had a universal trait — they included a grotesque note: "Tout se passe comme si seul le grotesque pouvait raviver, épicer le tragique." Their own show was in his view "... plus burlesque que grotesque."

It is evident that Planchon was deeply concerned by the problems treated in the play. He spoke to Nicole Zand of a dramatic crisis which had moved him to begin writing his own plays five or six years before the creation of La Mise en pièces du CID:

"... à mon avis, vers 1963, un certain nombre de spectacles sont arrivés à un point de perfection, par exemple ceux de Strehler ou Le Roi Lear de Brook. Les metteurs en scène se sont posé alors des questions, certains [Jérôme Savary, for example] ont abandonné complètement le texte ... on sentait que quelque chose était fini, et on ne voyait pas bien comment on allait se renouveler. Ce sont ces discussions latentes que le public a découvert il y a un an et demi."[1]

He said later in the same interview: "Ce spectacle, c'est un peu comme du Jerry Lewis: il y a beaucoup de citations et, surtout, l'envie de mettre le monde contemporain sur scène."

The farcical treatment of the themes of the play, far from being a mark of contempt, was a safeguard against excessive seriousness; Planchon went on to admit: "... personnellement,

si je parlais sérieusement actuellement, je le ferai avec une telle gravité que ce ne serait pas possible; le fait de parler d'une façon burlesque me permet de dire ce que j'ai à dire sans me prendre trop au sérieux." The satire was directed not against theatre, but against certain theories of drama and art which had become fashionable in the 1960's. It was a positive play: "On se contente de dire: Voilà ce que cela donne lorsque certaines idées sont mises en action! Le spectacle n'est absolument pas nihiliste. C'est l'affirmation d'une santé face à des concepts abstraits." The unifying characters of the play are Fafurle and his two wives. The play begins when they burst through a "classical" stage set with their car, interrupting a rehearsal of Le Cid. In Georges Wilson's production of Brecht's Mâitre Puntila et son valet Matti at the TNP in November 1967, Puntila entered into the living room in his car, and so Planchon may have "borrowed" the incident. Fafurle represented, according to Planchon, sometimes common sense making fun of extreme viewpoints, and sometimes its opposite, the propensity to adopt the most ridiculous theories as though they are incontrovertible. It would be naive to identify with Fafurle or to take him for the theatre's spokesman. Fafurle's two spouses were two sides of one wife, the one, Germaine, played by Loleh Bellon, "... exquise vamp rousse bûtitante qui

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1. / France Nouvelle, December 3rd, 1969.
parle du bout de son fume-cigarette...", and the other, Emilie, played by Isabelle Sadoyan, "... pétroleuse de haut vol ...". As these three characters were present through most of the play, critics devoted much of their attention to them. To many, they were irreverence incarnate, a completely fresh public:

Le rôle de massacreur est dévolu à trois gaillards, style débardeur-la-débrouille (Jean Bouise), pie fofolle ... et femme de ménage au grand cœur ... qui incarnent trois attitudes - goguenarde, excitée, larmoyante - face à la tragédie qu'ils saccagent à coup d'interrogations bêtasses.

Each character indeed represented an attitude characteristic of part of the French population:

Le premier [Facfurle], indifférent, d'un 'je-m'en-fichisme' révoltant, et digne fils du père Ubu, la seconde [Emilie] toute innocence, en bigoudis, et romanesque, petite soeur de Soraya, et grande soeur d'Elisabeth, et la troisième [Germaine], fort affectée, précieuse et chatte ronronnante, songeant au vison de l'hiver sous le soleil des Baléaires, en un mot comme en dix, des citoyens qui s'en battent l'œil de la culture, et du théâtre, amorphes ou conditionnés, dans le coton du lieu commun, et franchissant ces fantaisies comme le canard sous la pluie, aussi secs qu'il est possible, et sachant fort bien que la vie, et dans laquelle il faut mordre, ne passe pas par les théâtres où les intellectuels s'assemblent comme des nègres dans les clairières, à leurs tambours et à leurs danses.

Jean-Jacques Lerrant found the three actors, Bouise, Isabelle Sadoyan, and Loleh Bellon, remarkably well-cast as the three Fafurle. As well as giving the play continuity, they gave the public a perspective on the action, the humorous perspective

of "Trois clowns ... de la réalité..."

The actors of Le Cid appear only in a few brief sequences, and in their first scene, they are reduced to a few lines of the famous dialogues, followed by a pantomime of their rehearsal, as the Fafurle begin to make their own comments on the play. Some of Corneille's alexandrines were mercilessly chopped:

Don Diègue:
Le père de Chimène. Ne réplique point, je connais ton amour mais, infâme, indigné, je ne te dis plus rien. Fils père. Va cours.
Vole, et nous venge. (Don Diègue sort.)

Le Cid:
Percé jusques au fond du cœur, d'une attente imprévue aussi bien que mortelle. Misérable, malheureux, je demeure immobile.¹

The actors were subjected to more than verbal interruptions. Chimène's line to Elvire: "Ah! que mal à propos / Dans un malheur si grand tu parles de repos!" [III.iii. 803-804] prompts Germaine to respond angrily: "Oui, pourquoi lui parler de repos, idiotte! (Elle gifle Elvire...)" (Part I, p.15). The trials of being misunderstood are too much for Don Diègue; he has condescended to come and act tragedy in a provincial theatre only to find that the public talks during his performance. He leaves with an absurd sense of offended dignity: "On parle pendant mes scènes, ah foutre; c'est ainsi! Je reprends ma malette de maquillage et je rentre à Bruxelles planter des choux à la mode de chez-nous." (Part I, p.15). The actors are treated with little sympathy or respect. Making fun of his own tendency to introduce a crowd of extras into his productions of classical plays, (as in George Dandin and La Seconde Surprise de l'amour), Planchon

¹ From the text of La Contestation et la mise en pièces de la plus illustre des tragédies françaises LE CID de Pierre Corneille suivies d'une cruelle mise à mort de l'auteur dramatique et d'une distribution de diverses conserves culturelles, archives of the Théâtre National Populaire in Villeurbanne, Part I, p.12. Further quotations from the script will include the Part and the page number: the typescript is not divided into scenes.
added a number of extras to the cast of *Le Cid*. He then had Bip-Bip, a young rebel, shoot them down because she dislikes "... les grands sentiments." (Part I, p.26). Generally, the actors of *Le Cid* assume the identity of the characters whom they play. Don Cormas, for example, resurrected by Emilia's desire for a happy ending, returns with his brothers and is reunited with Chimène; the happy ending comes with the reconciliation of Rodrigue and Chimène over a plate of paella. The unfortunate Chimène, however, later enters pregnant, and angry not only at the director and Rodrigue; she carries a banner reading "Merci Paul VI". (Part I, p.44).

The actors re-enter en masse just before the interval to ask Fafurle, just as the directors of popular theatres had asked themselves in 1968, "... est-il possible de continuer à faire du théâtre si le sang coule sur les barricades, faut-il continuer à jouer Corneille?" They are told: "Le spectacle est ailleurs. La tragédie ne fait plus d'effet lorsqu'elle court dans les rues, par pudeur baissez le torchon." (Part I, p.60). Planchon may well have been referring to Günter Grass's controversial play *Die Plebejer proben den Aufstand* [The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising]. The play is set in East Berlin in 1953. A director, The Boss, obviously modelled on the figure of Bertolt Brecht, rehearses the scene of the plebeian uprising in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*; meanwhile real workers who are in revolt against the government ask him to be their spokesman. As he vacillates, the revolution spreads and it is finally quelled by the arrival of Russian tanks. After the Russians actually entered East Berlin in 1953, Brecht wrote to the authorities expressing the need for discussion with the masses; only the last sentence of his letter, in which he proclaimed his solidarity with the Party, was published. As a result, Brecht was accused in the west of approving the invasion of East Berlin by Russia, and defended in the east for having sensed a fascist resurgence behind the workers' uprising. Grass's play was put on by the Schiller Theater in West Berlin in 1966, in a set clearly recalling Brecht's theatre in East Berlin, and it provoked an angry response. Hélène Weigel asked Grass to alter the main
character of his play and threatened to forbid further showings of Brecht's work in West Germany.\footnote{1} The play, and Planchon's allusion to it in \textit{La Mise en piéces du CID}, broached the question of the responsibility of theatre people in the face of social and political upheavals, a question which was agonisingly \textit{actuelle} in the wake of the events of May 1968.

Near the end of the play, the actors save Fafurle from arrest by descending on two policemen reciting lines from \textit{Le Cid}. Fafurle declares to the audience: "Au théâtre la chose est possible, sur une scène il suffit d'un Rodrigue pour mettre en pièces deux armées sarrasines et trois compagnies de C.R.S. ..." \footnote{Part II, p.109}. The real C.R.S. \footnote{[the unpopular \textit{Compagnies républicaines de sécurité} who are used to break up demonstrations]} were extremely active during the events of May 1968. The actors are able to overcome them only in the fantasy world of the stage. The peripheral role of these actors in \textit{La Mise en piéces du CID} illustrated the position of the theatres during the events of May. They were full of good will but at the same time they became aware that they had never been at the center of developments. At Avignon, as we have seen, Julian Beck and Judith Malina and their Living Theatre tried to present their production \textit{Paradise Now} in the streets of the city, for free, after seats for the performances in the \textit{Cloître des Carmes} had been sold out. They were opposed by the mayor, and they and the contestataires accused Vilar of cooperating with a repressive authority. One of Vilar's statements illustrates well the distress which he and many of his colleagues must have felt keenly in the summer of 1968:

\begin{quote}
... le festival n'a jamais été révolutionnaire. Comment nier qu'il soit prisonnier de la société bourgeoise et capitaliste dont nous crevons! Mais c'est justement son ambition de retrouver dans ce cadre un terrain un peu moins bourgeois, un peu moins capitaliste.\footnote{2}
\end{quote}
The theatre director, M. Pierre, is possibly the character who suffers the greatest mental anguish in the course of the play. He is a nervous traditionalist, living on tranquilizers in order to deal with his numerous problems; his actors leave, people picnic in the theatre (as they did in the Odéon in May 1968), and his extras are killed. He breaks down and leaves, returning to find that things are even worse. Through him, Planchon cocked a snook at the unenthusiastic spectators by voicing their probable objections to the play: "... les plus beaux vers de Corneille sont amalgamés avec des spéléologues et des horloges parlantes, enfin avec n'importe quoi." "Ce n'est pas de l'art .... Collage ou bricolage je trouve ce barbouillage intolérable." (Part I, pp. 41, 42) He collapses again when he learns that Chimène is expecting a child. As soon as he makes his next appearance, he must face Bourdolle's attacks on his traditionalism. He defends his career in the self-righteous tones of a war veteran: "J'ai fait la révolution. J'ai été un révolutionnaire. Oui, dans La Mort de Danton, chez Vilar, en 56. J'ai joué Brecht, O'Casey et Gatti." (Part II, p. 71).

By choosing to mention mainly playwrights whose work had been put on at Villeurbanne, Planchon was no doubt poking fun at himself once again. M. Pierre unfortunately reveals the limits of his radicalism a few lines later when Bourdolle protests, as the Living Theatre had insisted at Avignon, that theatre belongs in the streets. M. Pierre exclaims: "Vous n'y songez pas sérieusement, dans la rue il n'y a pas de rampe. Il m'énerve, il m'énerve." His revolutionary ardour stops short of allowing him to change the forms of drama. He is so unaware of the extent to which everything has been attacked that he thinks putting Corneille on a pedestal (literally) will protect him.

M. Pierre may well have been represented the kind of director whose left-wing pretensions appeared, after the 1968 revaluation, suspiciously récupérées. When he makes his last appearance, he is told that all contemporary men of the theatre have died or killed themselves. He accepts suicide, with a literary flourish: "Mais las, la contestation s'est établie solidement en moi, à mon tour je me conteste, mon mal
augmente à vouloir le guérir, tout redouble ma peine, allons mon âme et puisqu'il faut mourir." (Part II, p.87) Some people saw this incident as a symbol of the death of theatre itself:

... quant au théâtre, il s'enterre lui-même en la personne d'un metteur en scène qui se poignarde comme chez William (Shakespeare), ne laissant plus que le cri, l'informulé, bref, la table des matières — pour qu'on comprenne bien, d'ailleurs, on balade une chasse d'eau et ses alentours immédiatement.

In 1967, Jérôme Savary produced Fernando Arrabal's Le Labyrinthe at Vincennes. The play was set in a hospital lavatory, and Savary used the flushing of the toilet as a sexual image. Planchon was no doubt making fun of this kind of symbolism by using it comically.

Bourdolle is the intellectual who has forgotten to live because he spent all his time reading. The company, through him, poked fun at students and leaders of the contestation in the universities. Bourdolle first appears as the archetypal scholar, for whom culture is a preserve, and art belongs in a museum, carefully guarded:

... Comment croyez-vous que je suis devenu premier garçon à l'hôtel de la culture? En remplissant des fiches de police et en rangeant soigneusement les clients par étage. Je donne à chacun ce qui lui revient: un appartement, un salon ou une grande suite ou un placard à balais. Je ne décide pas pour tout l'hôtel bien sûr, je m'occupe surtout du XVIIe étage. C'est le plus chic.

(Part I, p.8)

He then proceeds to give a lesson on Corneille, complete with the date of arrival, and date of departure, and he has his pupils literally clean up a play:

Prenez vous balais et vos petites pelles. Ramassez les vers qui ont perdu leurs pieds, glissez ça et la une béquille ou une cheville pour les aider à marcher. Ceux qui sont

trop handicappés, vous les jetez à la poubelle. Voici une pièce, Messieurs, faites le ménage. (les grooms, avec des petits plumeaux et des chiffons épuisent, nettoient, etc ... les acteurs du Cid, le décor du spectacle ...)

(Part I, p.8)

He later embarks on a few lines of convincingly academic double talk, trying to make the three Fafurle engage in a practical exercise:

Montrez-nous la nécessité du naturel dans l'invraisemblable au théâtre puis, que l'invraisemblable e[s]t la nécessité du naturel, puis en quelques lignes, établissez la non-nécessité de l'invraisemblance et du naturel avec des exemples, si possible tirés du monologue que nous venons d'entendre.

(Part I, p.19)

Fafurle desists. Two men come to pick up the connerie en barres which, they heard, is being distributed. Fafurle, in retaliation, confounds Bourdolle with a rude story in the form of a riddle. Bourdolle leaves Fafurle a series of composition topics on Le Cid, which have appeared in Baccalauréat examinations. The house lights go up, and the audience find that these absurd questions are being fired at them. Germaine slips in a question from Œlle whose importance somehow seems equal to that of the literature questions: "Comment opérer pour se maquiller le bas du dos lorsque la glace est placée au dessus du lavabo?" (Part I, p.22) The prize examination question is:

L'on se propose d'élever un monument à Corneille. On veut sur le piédestal sculpter deux bas-reliefs représentant deux scènes caractéristiques de son oeuvre. Décrivez les deux bas-reliefs tels que votre imagination vous les représente.

(Part I, p.22)

Perhaps by having Fafurle read out questions from actual examination papers, Planchon was parodying the pièces-document, plays based wholly or partly on actual historical documents, such as Vilar's Le Dossier Oppenheimer (1964), Peter Weiss's Die Ermittlung (L'Instruction) put on by Gabriel Garran at Aubervilliers in 1966, or André Benedetto's play on Vietnam, Le Napalm, which he presented in the Place des Carmes at
Avignon in 1966. Fafurle, as he questions the audience, becomes a kind of Bourdolle, an earnest and tyrannical examiner:

Pas de toilettes lorsqu'un passe son baccalauréat.
Que disent-ils au fond de la salle?
Ils contestent. Ils contestent le baccalauréat?
(Fafurle décroche un téléphone.) Monsieur le Ministre, l'examen ne peut pas se poursuivre, ils contestent le baccalauréat. (Part II, p.23)

The play thus recalled the recent upheavals in the universities of France, and the attacks on educational rigidity and conservatism.

Bourdolle embodied the absurdities of the academic whose professional detachment has barred him from unscholarly activities and from involvement with real people. After taking an analytical view of Bip-Bip's sexual problems, he reveals that he has never overcome his own difficulties:

Premier garçon à l'étage de la culture, psychanalyste émérite et occasionnel et une vie sexuelle au point mort, réduite à l'insignificance. ... Toutes mes amours sont littéraires et platoniques, je ne vis pas, je rêve ma vie dans les livres. (Part I, pp. 30, 31)

Then a "topless" Chimène appears. Bare-breasted women appeared in Arrabal's plays Le Labyrinthe (Vincennes, January, 1967), and Le Cimetière des voitures (Paris, December 1967), to give only two examples. Chimène is followed by several other literary heroines. Bourdolle is elated. There is a similar sequence in Arrabal's play Et ils passèrent les menottes aux drapeaux (produced in Paris at the Théâtre de l'Epée-de-Bois in September 1969), in which prisoners in a Spanish dungeon dream of women. One of them, Amiel, imagines that he and his girl Lelia embrace each other, naked, behind a sheet held up by two women. In La Mise en pièces du CID, two "pères la pudeur" interrupt Bourdolle's naughty daydreams by raising a voile pudique in front of them. The veil recalls not only the sheet in Arrabal's play, but also the panneau censuré which saved the modesty of Anne d'Autriche in Planchon's Les Trois Mousquetaires (see supra p.320) Bourdolle is dejected when his visions disappear, and he begs Fafurle to brainwash him.
The brainwashing transforms Bourdolle into an anti-intellectual, with ideas at the other extreme, from his previous ones. Through him, it is clear, Planchon wished to debunk the contestataires as much as that which they contested. Bourdolle expresses his opposition to traditional drama by throwing little red books of The Thoughts of Chairman Mao at the actors rehearsing Le Cid. He argues against his former beliefs with the same convoluted logic which he had used to defend them:

Je place l'art dramatique et l'artichaut sur le même pied d'égalité. Je juge les choses à partir de leur fonction et de leur finalité. Dans un raisonnement idéologique fondé, je prends l'artichaut par son pied et l'art dramatique en flagrant délit de mensonge. Donc l'art c'est l'inversion de la vie. Cela dit exactement ce que ça veut dire. (Part II, p.70)

In his next appearance he is accompanied by the aesthetes, who attack Corneille verbally. The dialogue for this scene is a good example of the effectiveness of skilful collage. Corneille speaks in his own style; the majestic calm and the modesty of his sentences show up the extremism of the protesters:

Corneille:
Ceux qui se font [sont] pressés à la représentation de mes ouvrages m'obligent infiniment, ceux qui ne les approuvent pas peuvent se dispenser d'y venir y gagner des migraines, ils épargneront de l'argent et me feront plaisir.

Bourdolle et les esthètes:
Nous voulons un théâtre dégoûtant, sali, qui pue, qui répugne, qui ne craigne ni la boue ni le crottin, un théâtre qui n'ait pas peur d'avoir les mains sales, qui saisisse la réalité à pleines mains, un théâtre qui chie et qui conchie dans sa totalité, le théâtre propre et classique comme le tien, Maître (ils dansent autour de la cuvette).

Corneille:
Chacun sa méthode, je ne blâme point celle des autres et m'en tiens à la mienne.

(Part II, p.81)
Bourdolle makes his final entrance in an extravagant hippy costume, exclaiming: "Je suis passé de la contestation absolue et je baigne dans le comique." Emilie immediately gives a different explanation for his behaviour: "Il est resté trop longtemps dans le détergent." (Part II, p.93). He sets off a scene in which "mystical" couples dance, holding L.S.D. sugar cubes between their foreheads and chanting "love, love, love". After his dismissal from the Théâtre de France in 1968, Jean-Louis Barrault put on a jeu dramatique entitled *Rabelais* at the Elysée–Montmartre wrestling ring. He hoped, he said, to "... recreate upon the stage a state of trance ..." Whether or not Bourdolle's words at the beginning of the scene were meant as a malicious reference to Barrault's statement, there is little doubt that Planchon, in this sequence, was poking fun at a scene in *Rabelais* in which hippy couples danced, sang, lay embracing one another, repeating in English the phrase "Make love, not war", and, later, smoked the herb "Pantagruélium" (hashish).

In *La Mise en pièces du CID*, Tarzan then swings in on a rope, and he is revered as a new god. In Jérôme Savary's production of Arrabal's *Le Labyrinthe* at Vincennes in 1967, one character, the judge, spent his time swinging on a trapeze above the stage; his London production of the same play, at the Mercury Theatre in June 1968, became a happening in which, on one occasion, an actor abandoned his role to swing to and fro on a rope hanging from the ceiling. In 1971, Savary was to create, with his Grand Magique Circus, a play on "Zartan", Tarzan's unloved brother; perhaps he was leading a reaction against the fashionable revival of interest in Tarzan which

Planchon had mocked. The episode in Planchon's play is not only a take-off on the radical chic of the sixties; it underlines the naïveté of hippy idealism and of its glorification on the stage and in the streets.

A minor character, attached both to Bourdolle's group and to that of M. Pierre, is the petit Marquis. Borrowing one of Molière's favourite targets, the brainless but always fashionable snob, Planchon created a character who might have fitted equally well into a seventeenth century comedy. The Marquis is the quintessential snob. He follows every fad slavishly. "Cher ami", he says by way of introduction, "je ne suis rien. Je suis une mouche, à chaque aube, je meurs et comme je ne suis rien, je peux être tout." (Part I, p.5.) At first, his respect for drama is so great that he prays when he enters a theatre. In an exchange with Fafurle, he says, "dans culturel il y a culte ...", and he suffers overpowering indignation at the riposte that "... dans culte, il y a cul." (Part I, p.4) "... si le théâtre devient grossier," declares the Marquis, "ce n'est plus du théâtre." (Part I, p.44). In a sequence which some critics saw as a reminder of the Biafran war, the Marquis, in exchange for a choucroute alsacienne allows the Fafurle to paint him red. Becoming a contestaire while it is fashionable, he changes sides again when he feels that the revolution is over, and plagiarises Bourdolle's ideas into a book. He even volunteers to be brainwashed, if that is the latest fashion. He finishes, appropriately, changed into a butterfly by Fafurle, at his own request.

The last group, that of Bip-Bip and her followers the Affreux enzymes gloutons, are partly comic strip characters and partly the creations of television advertising. During the demonstrations of May 1968 in Paris, the police often claimed to be "protecting" the real students from the trouble-makers, whom they called "les affreux". Planchon thus used a term which would have a precise meaning for those in the audience who had lived through les événements. Bip-Bip was described as an "... éblouissante égérie de banlieue 2000, érotisée et
et survoltée...", and as "... une dévoreuse de 'comics' qui parle comme Arletty."¹ She is the young student, rebelling against everything. She is obsessed by her search for le Docteur Mabuse, the only man horrible enough to attract her. She mistakes Corneille for Mabuse and tries to drag him into her comic-strip world, where a giant King Kong appears. When Corneille reacts to her with nothing more than sentences from his prefaces, she gets her revenge by leading the stripping, whipping, torture and killing of the playwright. At the end, she decides that a large "culture machine" which has appeared on stage is the real Docteur Mabuse, and she throws herself into it to disappear forever.

The minor roles and the extras included "... Général Dourakine, les échappés de l'équipe sauvage, des curés, des croque-mort, un petit ramoneur, un zouave, des infirmiers, deux barbouzes, des vétérans de la grande guerre...".² Dourakine derives masochistic enjoyment from a whipping administered by Bip-Bip. Two of the characters to whom people seemed to react with enjoyment were the two identical policemen, Albert and Albert, inspired by the Dupont and Dupond of Tintin. The conflicts of May 1968 had brought out innumerable complaints of police brutality, and so it was understandable that these two caricatures should have amused spectators so greatly. As watchdogs of the government, they chant a couplet which many critics quoted with relish: "Subversion pas de subvention... Subvention pas de subversion." (Part I, p.50) They enter whenever the dialogue begins to sound political. Fafurle brainwashes them and incapacitates them hilariously; finally, they are put back to normal, because no detergent can cope with the mind of a policeman. At the end of the play, Fafurle, reluctant to change them into cows because cows are gentle and

¹ B. Bost, Dernière Heure Lyonnaise, Jan 21st, 1969; Dinah Maggie, Combat, Nov. 21st, 1969. Arletty was a stage and film actress of the 1930's and 1940's, famous for her unsophisticated accent and voice and for her gifts as a comedienne.

² Dinah Maggie, Combat, Nov. 21st, 1969.
and respectable, decides to transform them into horses instead.

The music for the production was, once again, Lochy's responsibility. It was a particularly difficult task choosing a musical genre appropriate as an accompaniment to such a mixture of dramatic styles and themes. In the programme, Lochy told how he had decided that each different genre in the play would have its own accompaniment: "La musique qui doit intervenir au milieu de ce gigantesque capharnaüm ne peut être qu'une musique de circonstance; c'en est une, et je dirai, avec soulagement." Like the play, the music was a collage made of innumerable "borrowings": "... je me suis particulièrement amusé à tenter de croquer en quelques mesures la silhouette fugitive qui passe. Les références sont nombreuses et l'on demandera au spectateur une oreille alerte pour piquer les allusions." Lochy gave several examples: the "Soldiers' March" from Faust was used to accompany a lament by several middle-aged petit bourgeois on the generation gap; the "Toreador" song from Carmen accompanied the finale of the first part; at the end, "... l'adoration des nouveaux dieux, le retour à l'enfance, l'arrivée de Tarzan déifié, voit apparaître l'immense univers de "L'Hymne à la joie".* Lochy found musical works which could be easily recognised: "Ces emprunts directs ont été opérés en fonction de leur immense popularité et de l'immédiat rapport qui se fait au niveau de l'oreille entre ce que la musique évoque et le nouveau texte qui lui est proposé." Lochy also tried an experiment. He suggested themes and rhythms to the assembled actors, and called on their musical talents and on their sense of humour to help him write the score. This decision in itself was a small contestation, for it demanded that the actors contribute on more than one level; Lochy wrote in the programme:

... ce dynamisme à multiples poussées est une des vertus du spectacle. Que Don Gormas prenne parfois le saxo-ténor pour scander un can-can, que les affreux enzymes gloutons nous mitraillement de guitares sauvages, c'est déjà une réaction rigolarde contre "l'horrible spécialisation"
The sets were designed by Jim Léon, a young English collage artist. The props needed for this show were caricatures of modern theatrical accessories; a giant toilet bowl, an enormous golden inflatable phallus were part of the material element in a parody of the extremes of modern theatre. The sets themselves had to "perform". When Fafurle and his two wives arrive, the backdrop for Le Cid collapses under the impact of their torpedo-like vehicle. When Victor García produced a montage of Arrabal's plays at the Théâtre des Arts in 1967, under the title of Le Cimetière des voitures, the stage was packed with car bodies on metal scaffolding, and these props "performed"; actors slammed or tore off various parts of the cars and performed on or in them. In the final scenes of La Mise en pièces du CID also, there was a profusion of objects on the stage. A giant golden phallus, for example, inflated itself in full view. It was certainly the illustration of a recent trend in drama. Jorge Lavelli's production of Oscar Panizzi's Le Concile d'amour, which created considerable impact when it was put on in November 1968 at the Théâtre de Paris, included a pantomime in which a large phallus decorated with stars was exhibited, and finally cut up. Jean-Louis Barrault used a phallus as a stage accessory in his production of Rabelais in December 1968. During one scene of his play Off Limits, created by Gabriel Garran at Aubervilliers in March 1969, Adamov had as the only stage accessory an African phallus set on a small round table. The critic Claude Lorme thought that Planchon was referring to the production of J-P. Zehnachen's Faust in June 1969, and Guy Dumur suggested that the sequence was an allusion to Peter Brook's production of Seneca's Oedipus, put on at the Old Vic in March 1968. Planchon was making fun of this general tendency to use phallic props, but the scene in his own play seems to have been modelled specifically on that in Brook's production of Oedipus: after Jocasta's suicide there was a final scene in which attendants brought in and unveiled a golden phallus ten feet high. To the tune of "Yes, we have

no bananas," actors wearing gold cloaks approached the phallus and engaged in an orgiastic celebration around it. By staging such a scene, Brook had invited mockery.

In Planchon's production, a large coin-operated machine appeared in the final scene and gave canned comfort and advice to everyone in a soft, artificial voice. People asked the machine for culture, and it immediately mixed together various ingredients to create a perfect blend of culture which came out of a tap. The machine was not readily identifiable, and yet it was designed to remind the public of many facets of contemporary "culture":

Passé l'apocalypse, que reste-t-il? Rien, rien qu'une énorme machine à décérébrer en douceur, qui, avec la voix des hôtesse d'Orly, moud le bonheur et l'amour, le courrier du cœur et la culture, le tout en conserve ... qu'on distribue gracieusement dans la salle.¹

Coming at the end of the play, it was an important symbol; the audience was to retain this as a final picture:

On peut éprouver quelque mélancolie en voyant à la fin de la pièce une machine envahir l'espace théâtral: un ordinateur électronique peut-être, en tout cas un appareillage de technicité triomphante qui prodigue des opinions et des certitudes à la manière vénale d'un distributeur automatique.²

In Armand Gatti's play, V comme Vietnam which was presented at the Grenier de Toulouse in 1967, the dehumanised military tactics of the Americans were symbolised on the stage by an I.B.M. machine, the Châtaigne, which is used to plan combat operations; its sophistication contrasts with the simple ingenuity of the Viet Cong, whose symbolic weapon is the planche à clous. La Châtaigne represents American society as well as military power; at one point it even plays une musique texane when one of the characters puts a dime into it. Planchon's "machine" may thus have been inspired by that in Gatti's play.

¹ Henry Rabine, La Croix, February 10th, 1969.
Although it attracted much comment, the machine was only part of a set in which props seemed almost to multiply.
A simple list of the various properties almost filled Jacqueline Cartier's column:

The costumes, like the props, were a curious mixture.

The actors of Le Cid were dressed in beautiful beige and white traditional costumes. Fafurle, wearing short, wide trousers revealing striped socks and white tennis shoes, was as much a clown as a Frenchman on holiday. Emilie, his "sensible" wife, wore curlers in her hair and an apron over an ill-fitting

1. France Soir, November 17th, 1969.
house dress, whereas the elegant Germaine retired behind a screen every few minutes to change from one ravishing ensemble to another. There were it was estimated, "... environ deux cents costumes allant du pagne de Tarzan au pourpoint brodé du Cid, en passant par le frac, les déshabillés vaporeux, les blousons noirs, les tuniques de hippies."¹

As Planchon said, the play was mainly about the theatre, and it touched on current events only insofar as they affected the course of theatrical development. References to dramatic theories and trends were innumerable; whereas, in Les Trois Mousquetaires pastiches of other styles had been thrown in for fun, however, they were now part of the essential question: where was the theatre to go after May 1968? In Part I of La Mise en pièces du CID, a long discussion by several characters on the question "What is theatre?" finally concludes: "Le théâtre c'est ... N'importe quoi si on réussit à le rendre théâtral." (p.49) The production certainly illustrated a great number of the possibilities which this n'importe quoi opened up. In a press conference,² Planchon explained that satire necessarily aimed at more than one target at once:

... c'est une pièce satirique, et le public doit prendre garde à la façon dont il lit une pièce satirique; il n'y a jamais dans la satire une seule thèse ridiculisée, mais plusieurs choses y sont mises en cause. L'acte de mise en pièces a lieu à un moment de crispation entre diverses forces qui ont "fait la contestation"; dans le domaine théâtral, l'opposition entre la tendance magique [perhaps Planchon was referring here to the followers of Artaud, for example Jérôme Savary, or Jorge Lavelli] et la tendance brechtienne [as represented in the work of Armand Gatti, and of Planchon himself] est à ce point que la discussion n'est plus possible; à toutes les questions posées il ne peut y avoir de réponses logiques, mais une réponse bouffonne est peut-être possible, "pourvu seulement que l'on sache pourquoi on fait les clowns".

Planchon conceives of the stage as the perfect arena for stark confrontations of opposing ideas. In this production, ideas were shown to be extreme by juxtaposing them with their extreme opposites. Both sides of the question were made to look equally ridiculous. Planchon's attitude, although he refused a prise de position, was not anarchistic; the stance of the Théâtre de la Cité was one of openness rather than of negation. By constantly demolishing each myth as soon as they had set it up, they kept the audience alert; a Swiss critic, L.-A. Zbinden, wrote:

Chaque scène se présente comme un conflit entre les défenseurs d'un ordre et ses contestataires; le classicisme et la liberté du théâtre, le théâtre et l'anti-théâtre, le flics et les anarchistes; mais sans manichéisme, c'est-à-dire sans parti pris tranché des auteurs... car les passions, la peur, ou certains procédés techniques modernes comme le lavage de cerveau, peuvent changer les hommes, transformer les purs en impurs, les flics en moutons, les réactionnaires en révoltés, d'où une constante ambiguité et, pour le spectateur, le sentiment que si tout est possible, rien n'est jamais joué.

The mass of characters included representatives of widely differing points of view, sometimes in settings totally inappropriate to their ideologies. The play was, in Zbinden's words,

... un bric-à-brac prodigieux de symboles mystiques, phalliques, scatologiques, psychédéliques, avec la marche d'Aïda, la paella espagnole, l'odeur d'encens et de poudre, l'op et le pop, la rue de Lappe et le pape, les barricades et les anciens combattants, Pompidou, Olivier Guichard...

Styles of acting, characters, methods of staging, etc., were borrowed from the music hall, from the cabaret, from farce, and from grand-guignol. The long title itself was a parody of the title of Peter Weiss's play, known in France as La Persécution et l'assassinat de Jean-Paul Marat

par le groupe théâtral de l'Hôpice de Charenton sous la direction de monsieur de Sade, which was put on at the Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt in September 1966. Daniel Bard saw many different targets in Planchon's satire: de Gaulle, Malraux and his banning of Gatti's La Passion du Général Franco at the TNP in 1968, Sophia Loren and her Carlo, the blind followers of Grotowski, the naïve Living Theatre, the partisans of "théâtre-ordures", the readers of erotic picture-novels, Pirandello, Ionesco, Beckett, Adamov, the blasé audiences of boulevard theatre, Marcuse, and May 1968 in general.1 The Bread and Puppet Theatre had broken black bread with its audiences, the Open Theatre had offered its spectators apples: "Planchon, lui, vise plus haut: il fait distribuer des 'conserves culturelles'."2 He made fun of the conservative element in his audience by using deliberately crude terms, but only after Bouise had warned sensitive critics to leave. The torture of Corneille was a take-off of Arrabal and Grotowski, and even Beckett, for the poor man is finally stuffed into a dustbin. Uniting such disparate targets into one satirical play created startling parallels:

Les confrères de Planchon y passent d'Arrabal à Barrault en passant par tout le monde. Et l'on s'aperçoit, par exemple, qu'il n'y a guère de différence entre le sadomasochisme que l'on prête à Arrabal et celui qui est à chaque page des ouvrages de la comtesse de Ségur, leurs différences tenant dans les frustrations de l'une et la liberté de l'autre.3

Through this sum of quick references, Planchon conveyed the feeling that various dramatic forms can finally be equally valid:

Lightning sketches are super-imposed one upon the other; here we get a flash of Pirandello, and there a quick glimpse of "Hair" ... this horrifying battle between the classical and

the avant-garde theatre assumes the nightmare proportions of paintings by Jerome Bosch: musicians, dancers, acrobats, fragments of comedies and of tragedies all muddled up together — all thrown into the same "théâtre-sac", as Planchon calls it, an immense tent where public and actors are imprisoned and from which "théâtre" as we know it is completely eliminated.\footnote{F.S., Paris-Weekly Informations, January 7th, 1970.}

Direct textual references to dramatists and directors, living or dead, were innumerable. Fafurle's very first lines when they enter into an empty stage area are:

\begin{quote}
Tout est blanc. Tout est désintégré.
Mes poulettes croyez-moi, ou nous sommes déjà dans la troisième guerre mondiale ou nous sommes tombés dans une pièce d'avant-garde. Si nous sommes chez Beckett, Emilie il va falloir vivre dans des poubelles.
\end{quote}

\textit{Part I, p.l.}

Fafurle is able to summon up dead writers. In support of his defence of obscenity onstage, he has Aristophanes appear briefly, and later calls up Rabelais, Jarry, and, in lieu of his creator, Falstaff. In the second half of the play there is at one point a veritable fireworks display of ironic references to well-known men of the theatre. Planchon invented for each of his colleagues and even for himself an appropriate death:

- Monsieur Ionesco est mort, victime du devoir.
- Monsieur Adamov est mort en criant: vive les talons aiguilles et la sociale...
- Le mystérieux Monsieur Beckett meurt depuis toujours, il n'en finit pas d'agoniser.
- ... Le bon Monsieur Beck a mangé de la viande rouge, Monsieur. Il est mort en pacifiste de mort violente.
- Monsieur Grotowski s'est crucifié, eh oui. Monsieur, en jurant qu'il était athée.
- L'exquis Monsieur Strehler est mort sur scène comme une diva dans les draps blancs de Domiani.
- Monsieur Brook a eu un accident de voiture, sa Shakespeare s'est retournée dans un faubourg de Londres.

- Planchon est mort gâteux, Monsieur, on l'a enterré en Ardèche.

- Le bouillant Chéreau, héroïquement est monté au sommet d'une barricade mais il est déjà blessé à mort.

Beneath the humour of the passage lies a sense of regret; in his reappraisal of the theatrical situation, Planchon had decided that the forms of the sixties were no longer adequate. The theatre would have to take a new direction.

Planchon even made fun of the terms which had resulted from the Villeurbanne conference in June 1968. Bourdolle asks of the three Fafurle: "Mais qui sont ces gens? des acteurs, des spectateurs? du non-public?" (Part I, p17) The term non-public was thus reduced to a mere label, useful in the directors' admission of defeat, and which the press had picked up eagerly, but which had not led to effective action. In many ways, the Fafurle were the non-public, and the production did not offer a way of reaching them; rather, it used them as the agents of its satire. Later on, Bourdolle again brings up the issue:

Bourdolle:
... Dans cette salle il n'y a que des bourgeois, des petits bourgeois, où sont les ouvriers?

... Monsieur Pierre:
Dans les usines je suppose.
Bourdolle:
Et pourquoi ne sont-ils pas dans les théâtres? Répondez.
Monsieur Pierre:
C'est une bonne question à laquelle je ne sais vraiment pas quoi répondre, mais ça ne fait rien, je vais vous donner un autographe.

(Part II, p.70)

Indeed Planchon may have been suggesting that the problem is insoluble: even Jean Vilar never attracted a representative proportion of workers to his theatre; only 6% of his audiences were working class. The passage quoted above was more than a reference to 1968. It was a challenge to those in the theatre: what in fact had changed since the événements?
Planchon was too honest not to pastiche his own work as well as everyone else's. He parodied his own tendency, which was especially evident in his productions of history plays, of having processions go diagonally across the stage. As we have seen, he mocked his own idea of adding extras to French classical plays. He included the famous scene from Les Trois Mousquetaires in which the Cardinal cooks himself an egg. He used his own technique of showing material objects on the stage to represent figures of speech; the company seemed unwilling to let a single idiom go by without dramatising its absurdity:

Chaque mot appelle une illustration sonore ou visuelle, chaque supposition est matérialisée dans l'instant: à peine parle-t-on de tuer les auteurs, voici une galerie de portraits en carton, un collimateur, des rafales, et les têtes qui tombent; [this gag was probably a reference to the trend toward "authorless" theatre, as in the productions of Jérôme Savary or of Jorge Lavelli]; le mot de sac ou le mot de suicide est-il lâché à la cantonade, voilà toute la troupe empaquetée ou un revolver contre la tempe!  

In Barrault's Rabelais also, there was a scene in which, through lighting effects, words seemed to materialise as they were spoken, and came fluttering down upon the stage; as the characters caught the "words", they burst.  

Fafurle's words often conjured up these visual puns. When he says of Emilie that she is "... très délicate, très sensible. Si on marche sur son ombre elle crie.", he demonstrates by stepping on her shadow and eliciting a scream. (Part I, p.18) He calls for light, and the lights go on; challenged by the petit Marquis he is also able to summon out of thin air "un hussard qui joue du clarion ...", and "... une choucroute alsacienne fumante...". Planchon was making fun of himself and of other people from Apollinaire to Ionesco who have used this stage


trick, and also illustrating the thesis that in the theatre, everything is possible. The satire was especially clear in one instance when Fafurle proceeds by word association to make an utterly absurd statement, and finds that it immediately comes to life:

Zizi, seul un poète pouvait appeler un phallus zizi! Zizi c'est un nom d'oiseau. (un zouave entre) Un oiseau moqueur comme un oustitî qui aurait fait son nid dans la culotte d'un zouave. (le zouave salue militairement, ouvre la fermeture éclair de sa braguette, un oiseau s'envole, le zouave sort) (Part I, p.4)

When the actors come to Fafurle protesting that they are unable to continue in the course they have chosen, he suggests that they need a car: l'auto-censure. They rush to the wings and immediately bring out the materials to build one. The text describing their work becomes a bitingly ironic picture of self-censorship:

Germaine:
Regarde-les, Léon, ils vont la construire eux-mêmes, ils sont ingénieux ces gens de théâtre. Regarde-les se dépatouiller! Ils coupent une scène par-ci par-là, ils fendent en deux une réplique, ils rafistolent en acte ou deux et hop, l'auto-censure est montée.
Fafurle:
Elle est jojotte votre guimbarde! Ça a plutôt l'air d'une brouette que d'un engin de compétition mais je reconnais que les coussins sont tout confort. Le débrayage est automatique, quelle merveilleuse marche arrière. L'échappement est plus ou moins libre, mais on ne peut pas tout avoir! (Part II, p.61)

The pressure for self-censorship had always been a major concern of the subsidised theatre groups who worried that they were themselves limiting their artistic freedom. The "car", like other jokes, made a serious point. After the banning of Gatti's play at the TNP in December 1968, the subsidised theatres were even more likely to be cautious in their choice of repertoire.

One of the most powerful of these concrete images was that of l'homme dans l'horloge, a character representing time. He appears, in one instance, in a scene in which Émilie and Germaine are dreaming of love; he pretends that he is
going to stop for them: "Retenez vos souffles gentils spectateurs que les milliards de poussières qui dansent dans la lumière se figent, on nous parle d'amour." (Part I, p. 39)

As soon, however, as they give up their dreams and decide to face reality, the clock begins to strike; at each stroke, Germaine and Emilie are convulsed with pain. There could hardly be a more concise and witty expression of the consciousness of aging.

The brainwashing incidents are another example of this dramatic literalness. In April 1966, André Benedetto had written a manifesto decrying the theatre as the lackey of capitalist society, and calling for a more revolutionary art. The last words of the manifesto are "LAVEZ-VOUS LE CERVEAU." Planchon took the advice and translated it into stage language for his production. The brainwashing procedure, which takes place through the side of the Fafurle's car, consists of sawing open people's skulls and scrubbing their brains with detergent. After their first brainwashing, the two Albert remove their head bandages and Fafurle realises to his horror that he has forgotten to rinse out their brains. They can only stand silently, with soap bubbles floating up around their heads. Fafurle tries to remedy his oversight. After their second brainwashing, the Albert come in carrying anvils; these are their family secrets, and they are compelled to carry them around; they have become visible because of Fafurle's scrubbing. The Albert cry "En nous lavant la tête, Monsieur Fafurle à mis à jour nos névroses. Nous ne pouvons plus exercer notre profession avec une enclume dans les mains." (Part II, p. 74) When the Fafurle succeed in riding the Albert of these weights, the two policemen suddenly collapse physically, turning into mud puddles: "Car tout ce qu'on dit est vaseux. On patauge dans les mots." (Part II, p. 76) Fafurle turns the ventilator onto them, but they then dry up into dust and blow away, followed by the Fafurle with a vacuum cleaner, trying to recapture them.

The machine at the end of the play was also a solid metaphor. It represented the consumer society, with its mechanistic reality beneath an artificially warm voice, and its readiness to provide meaningless comfort in exchange for hard cash. It became an especially caustic image when it began to mix up the ingredients of a liquid, potable "culture":

La Voix:
Ah Mozart! Racine! Bach! Délicieux dans du lait froid. Tu mets du sucre de cacao dans l'entonnoir ... Rimbaud en livre de poche, une pincée de Vivaldi, du sel, de la cannelle, du Paul Klee qui apporte une note classique, discrète et raffinée, une cuiller de Genet et une pincée de Xénakis pour parfumer le potage. Vous remuez, c'est prêt. Vous servez. (d'un robinet coule un liquide, les gens se servent)

(Part II, p.105)

Here indeed was a ruefully honest appraisal of the work of the Maisons de la Culture, and possibly of the men who had met at Villeurbanne in 1968. The machine was the image of condescension.

Planchon and his company found that it was impossible in a production about theatre to ignore the political and the social events which had so strongly affected the theatres in 1968. Planchon admitted: "Nous parlons des acteurs, des metteurs en scène, des directeurs de troupes, etc., plongés dans les événements historiques." Of course the Théâtre de la Cité always presented plays in their social and historical context. The political issues discussed in this production were almost as numerous as the dramatic. Because La Mise en pièces du CID had been created from the contributions of various members of the company, its satire was bound to be wide-ranging:

... ne faut-il pas voir dans le "théâtre improvisé" une forme d'expression d'une époque de la manière la plus efficace, la plus immédiate, alimentée par les thèmes de l'actualité, n'est-il pas une provocation à une "contestation spontanée permanente?"

The show, according to Planchon, included "... les contradictions sociales que pose le théâtre par rapport au gouvernement, par

Almost in spite of itself, the theatre had been brought into the centre of the worker-student revolts: "... les gens de théâtre se sont trouvés au cœur de la mêlée; ce n'est pas uniquement à cause de la proximité de la Sorbonne, mais comme symbole des ambiguïtés combattues, que l'Odéon a été investi en mai 1968." Because it was a satire, because it was a *création collective*, and because it dealt with issues which were linked with social and political questions, the play was about les *événements* almost as much as about the theatre.

It was often difficult to see where theatrical problems stopped and political ones began. The play, wrote Claude Baignères, touched on "... le délire des auteurs en mal d'originalité, le désarroi du public encloué dans les traditions ou prêt à applaudir n'importe quoi et la ladrerie des Pouvoirs de tout bord qui le serrent dans leurs bras pour mieux l'étouffer." It attacked many aspects of our society which are not directly connected with the theatre:

... l'enseignement, la censure, la police, la finance, la société; de consommation, l'Amérique et ses dollars, la littérature, les maisons de la culture, Malraux (badigeonné en rouge), les charognards du Biafra, l'Académie, les intellectuelles émancipées, les hippies, la télévision, l'information dirigée, le petit livre rouge, l'érotisme .... Le monde n'est plus qu'une immense farce noire.

Again, Planchon could see both sides of these issues with an equally ironic spirit. André Alter saw the play as an analysis of art in a modern capitalistic western society:

... ce qui est avant tout mis en question ici, c'est la notion de culture, et, plus exactement encore, l'usage qui est fait de la culture dans une société qui reste essentiellement bourgeoise,

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qui est dominée par l'idée du domaine réservé à l'élite et qui ne voit dans l'héritage du passé qu'une sorte de trésor privilégié. Mais Planchon a-t-il tort de discerner dans certaines revendications contre cette culture-là la menace d'un nouveau sectarianisme facilement récuperable par une société toute prête à en faire un nouvel objet de consommation?  

Certainly no one group could say that the play spoke only for it; the various points of view on politics were treated as lightly as the different outlooks on the theatre: 

... il [Planchon] évoque la révolte des étudiants et l'opportunisme inconscient des enseignants qui redoutent d'être dépassés par les événements. Il se moque, au passage, de la censure et de la dignité pudique des notables. Et les contestataires du Festival d'Avignon [the Living Theatre and its followers], les hippies, les beatniks et autres "affreux" participent aussi à la sarabande, qu'ils animent de leur ridicule.  

Materialism, modern advertising, pointless drama criticism, and many of the targets of the 1968 protests were ridiculed, along with the protesters. Gérard Guillot noted that the same problems were treated here as in Les Trois Mousquetaires, but that they were looked at in a different way: "... seules l'actualité et les actualités des événements de ces dernières semaines rendent la rêverie plus urgente, plus aiguë et plus ambiguë."  

In general, critics were impressed by Planchon's masterful staging of the work, although many had reservations about the aims and the purpose of the production. Pierre Marcabru complained that the show lacked the solid structure of Les Trois Mousquetaires, and that it attacked too many things to make a point: "Planchon ... amorce et désamorce tour à tour ses pétards, artificier hésitant devant les risques et jusqu'à vider son spectacle de tout contenu  

critique..." Henry Rabine also complained that the show lacked a solid framework; it became "Une gentille revue chansonnière de gauche dont la première parti fracasse mais dont la deuxième s'essouffle ..."; it was a show "... crevant de superflu mais manquant singulièrement du nécessaire." The collage form permits unexpected juxtapositions, but demands a strong editing to give it a coherent form. Some critics complained that the text was overabundant and therefore weak in places. Colette Cosnier criticised the script saying that: "Alors que Planchon semble déplorer la décadence du théâtre de texte, on peut lui objecter que le sien est parfois assez médiocre. Le principe du collage est en lui-même particulièrement efficace ... mais trop de jeux de mots faciles, trop d'à peu près alourdissent le texte." Jacques Lemarchand observed that the text would soon be dated; its fashionable slang and the ideas which it used were themselves fads which would soon be forgotten. Gilles Brayer objected to the use of rude language, but he admitted that Planchon had included a valid excuse for it by claiming to be a follower of Aristophanic and Rabelaisian tradition. Certainly it was an anti-literary style, and its occasional coarseness was no more than one aspect of its apparent artlessness.

Although reviewers may have felt that the text itself lacked order; they could not deny that the production had coherence and unity; Planchon maintained his usual strong control over his stage and his actors. If this was not théâtre libre, it was humour libre, said Jürg Bissegger:

... ce désordre apparent est soumis à une discipline esthétique des plus rigoureuses. Sur une scène vide, devant des panneaux d'un blanc luisant se déroule une fête en mouvements.

2. La Croix, February 10th, 1969.
et en couleur qui démolit joyeusement le "bon théâtre". ... les gags s'appellent, s'enchevêtrent et se délient à loisir grâce à une intelligence qui sait imposer la clarté scénique même là où il s'agit avant tout de brouiller les cartes.

The collage was unified by its amazing pace, by the skilfully chosen musical interludes, and by the clever sets. Comments on the rhythm of the show were similar to those written on Les Trois Mousquetaires or O'M'man Chicago; such expressions as à bride abattue and un rythme haletant reappeared:

... un assez époustouflant rodéo d'images et d'idées, monté sur un rythme ultra-vif, sans temps mort, sans ralentir, les différents clans ... surgissant des coulisses au moment où d'autres viennent d'y rentrer.

... un rythme soutenu sans défaillance, les changements à vue magiques, les mouvements d'ensemble réglés à la seconde et au centième, ... les gags fréquents, bref l'intelligence et un sens prodigieux de la scène...

A few spectators, however, felt that not even such an excellent mise en scène could conceal the fact that this was a poor play:

... toute la pièce ... va tâcher de nous faire croire à l'improvisation, à la spontanéité .... L'emploi systématique de la vulgarité ... ne fera qu'accentuer le côté laborieux de cet ouvrage décousu, où le mouvement physique, réglé de main de maître par Planchon lui-même, ne pourra nous ôter une triste impression d'immobilité.

Jean Dutourd described the mise en scène as "... la sauce sublime qui fait passer le poisson insipide."

The rhythm of the production depended to a great extent on the music and on the sets. In fact, the production was staged in a sort of "anti-set". Jean-Jacques Lerrant

wrote that: "Il s'agit moins d'un décor ... que d'éléments qui s'épanouissent pour finir dans la 'machine à rêves' pop' art, symbole monstrueux et suave."1 The props were spoofs of props:

... la dérision qui frappe le théâtre des obsessions sexuelles et scatologiques est particulièrement efficace, par la boute­fonnerie et l'énormité des moyens employés. Un priape gigantesque, un(e) cuvette haute comme deux fois un homme suffisent à dénoncer l'aberration des auteurs et des animateurs engagés dans les voies de l'immonde.2

The music was a parody of musical accompaniment: "Entraînée par l'étonnant Jean Bouise, à l'humour pince-sans-rire, la troupe tout entière s'en donne à coeur joie aux accents d'une musique elle-même joyeusement parodique et iconoclaste sans complexes."3

The props were used to make an ironic point. Jacqueline Cartier, after her long list of stage properties, added maliciously: "De la société de consommation, c'est une satire qui consomme beaucoup."4 She had touched on the signi­ficance of the set. The abundance of objects on the stage reflected not only the mayhem of the May 1968 revolution, but also our over-abundance of goods in an industrialised west. Not everyone understood. The luxuriance of the material element in the show was overwhelming; if one did not see it as a statement about society, it seemed an unnecessary screen:

... en donnant des moyens importants, en ne lésinant ni sur le décor ni sur les accessoires, en multipliant les effets lumineux, les projections de bandes dessinées, en nous faisant passer de l'op-art au pop-art, de Rauschenberg à Oldenbourg, vous avez noyé la contestation dans un ketchup qui la rend enfin comestible.5

4. France Soir, November 17th, 1969, See supra page. 366
Some, like Jean-Jacques Lerrant, did see the joke, however; he congratulated the troupe on the smoothness of their movements in such a crowded stage area: "Décors, costumes et projections de Jim Léon font grouiller sur le plateau les figures et les fantasmes puérils de la 'société de consommation'. Entre l'insolence inventive de Jim Léon et la verve autodestructrice de Planchon, la collaboration est savoureuse."¹ The triumph of the machine at the end was upsetting because it presented a cynical picture of French society:

... la contestation n'a plus de sens quand cette machine perfectionnée remplace nos pauvres actuels affrontements, notre pauvre actuel folklore et pacifie tout le monde en dispensant de la satisfaction couleur rose chewing-gum; plus tout un assortiment de boîtes de culture en conserve.²

It summed up what the other objects on stage signified.

Of the play as a whole, there were three recurring criticisms. One was that its light-heartedness made it seem like a school variety show. It had "... quelque chose qui fait penser à ces petites fêtes de collège..."³ Guy Verdot called it "... une sorte de revue de fin damnée (Excusez le calémbour: c'est contagieux), une revue ayant la valeur très immédiate de celles qui se donnent dans les lycées et collèges au seuil des vacances."⁴ The other two criticisms follow from the first. A school play is understandable only for the school audience; also, however cruel its parodies are meant to be, a school production is, finally, a harmless way for the pupils to relieve their minor irritations. Planchon

1. Progrès-Dimanche (Lyons), November 30th, 1969.
4. La Nouvelle République du Centre-Ouest (Tours), November 20th, 1969.
was accused of writing for initiates, and of making light of serious subjects.

Planchon had been charged with elitism before. In Les Trois Mousquetaires and O m'man Chicago, the references to other theatrical styles were said to be comprehensible only to a small number of spectators. Here, wrote Colette Cosnier, everyone could understand references to Hair, and everyone would think of Vietnam or of Biafra when an actor was painted red. But only the happy few would laugh at the clever passage in which Planchon invented appropriate deaths for his professional contemporaries...: "Théâtre populaire? certes non! mais une fois de plus un spectacle qui se veut destructeur et qui ne peut concerner que les initiés." Jean Hermann described it as a show born in over-favourable provincial surroundings: "Car au Théâtre de la Cité, La Contestation du Cid demeurait la petite réunion de famille dans le cadre ouaté qui ménage l'honnête esthétique post-brechtiennne aux bonnes âmes de la gauche lyonnaise." Added to the feeling that this was not a production intellectually accessible to an uneducated public, there was general puzzle-ment at the fact that Planchon had put it on, with the backing of Lars Schmidt, at a commercial theatre, le Théâtre Montparnasse, with seats costing 32 francs. Was this popular theatre?

Planchon was able to defend himself against the charge of financial and intellectual elitism. The show, like many others, he said, could be taken on many different levels simultaneously:

Si le spectateur est au courant des problèmes actuels, il rit à un certain niveau; s'il ne connaît pas ces problèmes, il rit quand-mêmes à un niveau plus quotidien, au niveau de la simple "rigolade". Notre spectacle a deux publics qui peuvent être soit très intellectuel, soit très populaire; nous espérons que nous aurons les deux.

3. La Dépêche La Liberté (St. Etienne), December 22nd, 1969.
He said that the Villeurbanne public, 85% of whom came from unions and associations, had accepted the show very well. The prices in Paris, Planchon admitted, were not low enough for a working class audience. However, provincial companies still needed, at that time, the consécration of a success in Paris now and then. When the government had heard that the Théâtre de la Cité was planning a season in Paris during the renovation of the Villeurbanne auditorium, it had forbidden Planchon to use any of his subsidy money in the capital. The company had thus been compelled to try its chance in the public sector.

The second charge, that the production was a harmless little amusement, was more serious. After May 1968 especially, people in the arts had become very wary of being récupéré: generous government subsidies might come with attendant restrictions ("Subvention pas de subversion ..."), and lead to the auto-censure which had been materialised on the stage of the Théâtre Montparnasse. Part of the audience may have felt that the play had been made by theatre people for the benefit of theatre people. Because all the jokes were "inside jokes", none of them seemed very pointed to those outside le métier:

Even those who felt that they belonged to the group which Planchon was addressing were aware of this basic weakness in the satire. Gilles Sandier wrote:

Dans un spectacle sans réelle agressivité il brocarde en brouillant les pistes; il a beau se brocarder lui-même, le jeu n'est pas sans complaisance narcissique; ce spectacle est fait pour les copains, les mandarins que nous sommes, et pour les bourgeois en lisière de bourgeoisie, intelligemment épris du théâtre...

It is true that while only regular theatre-goers appreciated the references to the recent theatrical season, many other spectators recognised the social and political allusions in the production. However, many people thought that the events of 1963 were too serious to be treated so lightly. Planchon was accused of having transformed major artistic and social upheavals into an evening's entertainment for snobs:

Pensez donc! Des centaines et des centaines de spectateurs vont chaque soir payer très cher pour se sentir intelligents pendant deux heures. On va les faire ronronner délicieusement en jonglant sous leur nez avec des objets culturels qu'ils ne connaissent pas pour la plupart, mais dont ils ont lu ou entendu dire qu'ils étaient "classés".

It is possible that some spectators were angry because Planchon had showed that May 1968 was over, and that it had left only questions, not answers. Planchon's own feelings about the revolution were serious enough, and they even showed through the fun of his staging at one point in the production:

... il est un moment où les rires cessent: un groupe de jeunes envahit la scène en brandissant des drapeaux rouges et noirs, en couvrant les murs d'inscriptions, et on n'a plus envie d'ironiser, comme si on savait que plus jamais l'imagination ne sera au pouvoir, comme si on rêvait à ce qu'aurait pu devenir le théâtre, comme si mai 68 s'était déjà transformé en mythe.

The events were not long past, and not everyone had the courage to see them as really over.

The extent of the satire was thought to have weakened the impact of the play; no one viewpoint was treated entirely positively. Corneille came out quite well in the end; he was "... une valeur si sure, si traditionnelle, si solide...", that other forms of theatre only appeared more ridiculous in comparison.

and not as an adequate expression of our time. Not one
dramatic form seemed valid for today: "Le spectacle reste
constamment au niveau de l'allusion sans offrir de certitude
quelconque. Aussitôt qu'un mythe échoue, un autre prend sa
place, ce qui fait que l'on peut continuer la démystification
à l'infini."¹ Was this simply un théâtre de constat de décès?
Was it, as Collette Cozniér suggested, a reaction to increased
government interference in artistic affairs after 1968?: "La
Mise en pièces du CID est un cri d'alarme d'un homme de
théâtre qui se sent menacé par une censure ... de plus en plus
puissante."² Many critics sensed an underlying anguish beneath
this witty production:

Homme de théâtre et passionnément de théâtre,
Planchon exprime ici l'écartèlement de la
condition du théâtre dans une société où la
culture peut servir d'abri dans le même temps
qu'est menacé l'exercice de la liberté créatrice,
ô où la liberté récupérable se dévore elle-même,
ob les esthétiques de la scène s'affrontent
agressivement.³

The production was far from nihilistic. Planchon
was, after all, the inheritor of the forms of theatre which he
pastiched:

Naturellement il est lui-même un produit du
système qu'il prétend massacrer: car sans le
Living aurait-il osé utiliser ces superbes
machines, et sans Armab, ou d'autres, montrer
cet énorme phallus gonflable? Simplement, il
fait le point de la situation: il pose brillamnent le problème, et laisse aux besogneux le
soin de le résoudre. N'est-ce pas là la per­
fection de l'intelligence décadente?⁴

The show was a mise au point rather than a mise en pièces. It
was a presentation of the questions which had been asked until
then, and its conclusion was open: "En clair, il appartient

¹. Europe, March 1970.
⁴. Agenor (Bruxelles), No.14, December 1969.
aux artistes de trouver ensemble de nouvelles questions pour des solutions à venir.\textsuperscript{1} Critics had complained about the lack of a positive position from which they could stand to see Planchon demolishing extreme viewpoints. Bissegger\textsuperscript{2} saw the show's lack of a stance as its strength. Planchon refused to substitute for outworn jargons a new one which would soon be as outdated:

Si le spectacle de Villeurbanne apparaît aussi revigorant, c'est qu'il ne fait appel à aucun dieu sinon à l'ironie, cette distance intérieure grâce à laquelle on ne risque pas de se faire avaler. Ainsi naît la véritable culture qui consiste en une attitude plutôt qu'en un magasin.

Planchon himself, when he was asked about his aims in this play, spoke once again of giving people a perspective on events: "... je crois que c'est là un des rôles du théâtre: donner aux gens un autre regard en leur fournissant certaines images qui les aident à mieux voir la réalité."\textsuperscript{3} He is one of a number of modern playwrights such as Arthur Adamov, Armand Gatti, and André Benedetto, who departed from the absurdist movement, dedicating themselves rather to a socially relevant theatre inspired by the work of Brecht and Piscator. Like them, Planchon sees theatre as a means of prodding people's consciences by making them aware. Unlike the more extreme among them, he refuses to impose a prise de position on his audience. He has always felt that the role of theatre is to pose questions, but not to answer them. As Planchon was seriously concerned about the problems depicted in the play, it was a healthy sign that he had chosen to express himself through laughter; the play was

... optimiste en ce sens qu'elle procède d'une vraie inquiétude - l'humour et l'ironie dont elle abonde en sont la meilleure certitude - et non pas d'une révolte à bon marché et sans lendemain.

\textsuperscript{1} J.-P. Léonardini, Humanité, November 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 1969.
\textsuperscript{2} Journal de Genève, January 25\textsuperscript{th}-26\textsuperscript{th}, 1969.
\textsuperscript{3} France Nouvelle, December 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 1969.
...[the production was] un joyeux sabordage d'une culture que beaucoup aiment à écrire avec un "K", une saine reprise en main marquée au coin de l'intelligence et de la lucidité. Une opération à chaud propre à débarrasser les ganrênes qui rongent, non seulement les maisons de la culture et le fanatisme qui souvent s'attache à elles, mais notre société en général.

Planchon had wanted to strip away the new myths, born of the événements, and which many of his critics had not yet abandoned. It is not surprising that he met with only partial understanding.

Of the three plays, Les Trois Mousquetaires seems to have been the most successful in terms of audience response. It was the totally light-hearted product of a very young troupe, created originally while the memory of the Théâtre de la Comédie's burlesque days was still fresh in the company's mind. It pastiched a work which is universally known and read; its international success was in a great part due to the familiarity of the Dumas story to spectators in every part of the world.

When the company attempted to recreate this sort of success, they had difficulty in finding another such universally popular work on which to base the text. Planchon no doubt chose the story of Al Capone not only because he had a personal interest in the subject, but because it represented crime fiction at its most fabulous level. Seeing that this legend has never been set down in a distinct series of well-known episodes, however, Planchon had to tell the story of Capone at the same time as he debunked the myths which had grown up around him. He could not, as in Les Trois Mousquetaires, pastiche well-known episodes or reduce great historical figures to a comically human level. He tried instead to make known the ironies of Capone's career and to capitalise on them. The show was more successful as a musical than as a satire.

For their third production of this kind, although the theatre used the extremely well-known play _Le Cid_ as a starting-point, the show was about something else from the beginning. Corneille was no more than a pretext for creating a play about the theatre, about the dramatic fads and trends, and the political atmosphere of the sixties. _Le Cid_ was not used even as a framework for the satire. _La Mise en pièces du CID_, like _O'Me man Chicago_, lost the effectiveness of irony which is directed at a precise and well defined subject. It became a revue rather than a play.

Although all three plays are extremely important as examples of créations collectives, _Les Trois Mousquetaires_ and _La Mise en pièces du CID_ are also significant as statements on the theatre. Whereas in _Les Trois Mousquetaires_ other theatrical styles were pastiched for fun, in _La Mise en pièces du CID_ the tone of the satire had changed radically. Written after 1968, this work emphasised that the revolution of May was over, that it was time to reconsider the issues which it had brought up, and that it was necessary to consider the issues which it had not brought up. It left the question of future developments in the theatre totally open.
CHAPTER VIII

THREE PEASANT PLAYS

Planchon's three peasant plays are the only ones which he has allowed to be published. They include his first play, La Remise, written in 1962, L'Infâme, written in 1969, and Le Cochon noir, written in 1973. Each of these plays is set in a small remote village in Ardèche, a region south-west of Lyons, from which Planchon's own father came. Planchon himself spent holidays in the Ardèche Department when he was a boy and he came to know both the countryside and its inhabitants well. All three plays are filled not only with a sense of the land's rugged beauty, but with compassion for the centuries-old, grinding poverty of its people. The mentality of the peasants in these plays is shaped by the Catholic church in a way which is almost medieval: the parish priest has to assimilate the remains of pagan beliefs into religious doctrine; the priest is silently tolerated even when he lapses, because a respect for the church and a sense of parochial unity prevent people from appealing lightly to outside authorities. Even when these authorities are compelled to intrude, they learn little from the reticent villagers. The remoteness of the Ardèche makes its inhabitants feel protected from events in France, which is to them virtually another country. Nevertheless they are affected by international and national affairs: sons go to war and return home maimed; industrial and economic pressures slowly destroy their agricultural way of life.

La Remise

Ce n'était pas un homme terrible, ni par ailleurs ce n'était pas un homme bon. Mais quoi, il n'a pas pu, ou n'a pas voulu voir que ça ne servait à rien de défricher ces montagnes, et il s'est obstiné et il est resté sous la remise.

La Remise: second version (1964)
La Remise was the first play of which Planchon claimed the authorship. It was created in 1962 at Villeurbanne, recreated in November 1963, and, in April 1964, it was taken to Paris. It was published along with Le Cochon noir in 1973.¹

Planchon described La Remise in an interview given to Claude Cézan² as "... une histoire très simple de paysans et de déboisement, qui va de 1919 à 1957, pendant cette période où le monde n'en a pas fini de se transformer." He told Cézan that it was a semi-autobiographical work, "... une pièce imaginaire fondée sur des éléments véridiques." Planchon felt deeply attached to his past, to the wild and deserted region where his ancestors lived, and he admired the grand character of his grandfather, on whom he based the portrait of Émile Chausson. In the same interview, Planchon admitted that he had written the play for personal reasons:

> Je n'avais d'autres raisons que les raisons du coeur, et le besoin de transposer cette histoire, que je comprends et que j'aime, sur le plan dramatique. Car je suis très sensible, je dirais même, grâce à mes origines, sensibilisé à tout ce climat de rudesse, de dépouillement, de grandeur.

He felt justified in choosing this subject for another reason as well: it was a neglected topic: "... à ma connaissance, aucune pièce de théâtre, à part La Gonfle de Roger Martin du Gard, n'aborde les problèmes posés à la paysannerie française par l'évolution économique actuelle."³

The creation of this his first play written as an individual, rather than created by the troupe as a whole, was an extremely difficult enterprise despite Planchon's experience as a director. He felt that he was a complete beginner at

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writing. He also felt inadequate in comparison with the writers whom he admired:

L’admiration portée aux grands auteurs modernes, la connaissance que j’en ai, comme il était prévisible fut un obstacle. Le théâtre de fables, sociales ou métaphysiques, qui est ce qui compte dans le théâtre contemporain, pesa sur moi de tout son poids.

In addition, trying to stage his own play presented new problems. A director usually comes to a definite decision about any play which he is going to present. He then stages what he feels is the play’s essence, and puts aside the rest; the production will emphasise what he most admires about the play. The author-director’s dilemma is that he lacks perspective; the necessary subordination of one theme to another becomes both problematic and painful; finally the stage version of the play never seems satisfactory. Planchon explained his dilemma to Claude Sarraute:

Moi, je n’arrivais pas à me résoudre à sacrifier aux exigences du spectacle ce qui m’avait coûté à écrire, à éclairer tel aspect du texte au détriment de l’autre. Et surtout plus je le relisais [the text] plus je le retravaillais, plus je le trouvais mauvais. Il m’a fallu trois ans pour m’en sortir.

In 1974, in an interview with Colette Godard, he was to recall his first attempts at writing:

... il m’était d’autant plus difficile d’écrire que j’avais deux handicaps: j’étais un metteur en scène, donc quelqu’un qui pensait en images, et je ne pouvais être naïf. Je savais ce qu’était une bonne pièce ...

The 1963-1964 text was different from the 1962 play:

When he presented La Remise for the second time, in 1964, Planchon tried to improve both the text and the staging:

Les changements portent sur les rapports entre certains personnages. J'ai aussi tenté d'épaissir la pièce. Il y avait beaucoup de répliques elliptiques. C'était sec, peut-être par réflexe romantique. Désormais les choses sont plus expliquées. J'ai voulu d'autre part introduire une certaine continuité dans le déroulement de l'action. Pour cela, le plateau tournant a été précieux. La Remise ne doit pas être une pièce linéaire, chronologique, elle se présente dans toute son épaisseur, avec toutes ses résonances.

In the 1973 play, Planchon seems to have wanted to combine the increased clarity of the second version with a greater sense of dramatic economy.

The play is based on an enquiry into a murder. In the first two versions, a police investigation into the murder of his grandfather leads a young man back to his father's birthplace and brings him gradually to an understanding of his origins. Planchon admitted that the young man, Paul Chausson, represented himself:

C'est un drame pris à l'envers. Un retour en arrière. Je suppose que mon frère (ou moi), ignorant tout de l'histoire, vienne dans l'Ardèche, apprenne tout et ne comprenne rien. C'est une sorte de lente remontée de cet adolescent à la recherche d'êtres lointains et disparus. Avec aussi la peur de remuer le passé...

In the 1962 programme, Planchon explained how he had experimented with time and place in his writing of the play:

Paul le personnage qui présente et qui raconte la pièce le fait de deux façons. Quand il rapporte des événements qu'il n'a pas vécus mais qu'il a reconstruits à partir des récits des témoins, les scènes présentées sont classiques: unité de temps et de lieu - présentation,

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1. L'Echo Liberté (Lyons), November 21st, 1963.

There are four enquiry scenes in the play, which take place in three days. The remembered action spans the years from 1919 to 1954, the year of the investigation. In the two first versions, the investigation scenes are themselves remembered by Paul who narrates them; Émile Copfermann pointed out\(^1\) that Paul narrates the entire story in two speeches at the beginning and the end of the play:


The time structure was the most experimental aspect of this play; it was the part of his play which Planchon altered most in successive revisions. The enquiry scenes which form the framework of the action were revised carefully with each rewriting. In the first version, for these scenes, the dialogue alternates quickly from one place and time to another, with sometimes a speech from one dialogue followed

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2. From the 1963-1964 text of La Remise, archives of the Théâtre de la Cité de Villeurbanne (now Théâtre National Populaire), I, p.I, XIII, p.90. Further quotations from the unpublished scripts give the date of the script, the scene and the page number. The second text is given as the 1964 version.
by two sentences from the next. Lines are also repeated several times in the play order to show that we are witnessing the same scene from a different viewpoint. In the second version, Planchon divided the scenes into slightly longer pieces so that a conversation could become comprehensible before another began. The technique of repeating lines from one enquiry scene to the next to bring the public back to the same point was also used less insistently.

In the published version, Paul is not present at the enquiry scenes and there is no narrator. Planchon retained the classical unity of time and place in the flashback scenes, and the more open structure of the enquiry scenes. Here, Chausson's eldest son Célestin, in his hospital setting, is visible during the enquiry scenes, usually with his son Paul by his side. We also see the various characters in the remise, giving a fragmentary account of the crime. The commissaire appears by Célestin's bedside; when Célestin asks questions of him, we hear one of the characters answering from the remise. At other times, Paul asks his father a question, and it is Célestin's reminiscences which introduce one of the remembered scenes. Thus the play in its published version has the simultaneous multiple settings which Gatti used in La Vie imaginaire de l'employeur Auguste Geai; there the dustman Geai looks from a hospital bed upon several settings representing him at various stages of his life. Jacques Hosner directed a production of Auguste Geai at Villeurbanne immediately before the first production of La Remise in 1962, and presented it in the same season as La Remise in Paris in 1964. Gatti's experiment with time and place may have influenced Planchon's successive productions of his own play. Planchon's stage direction at the beginning of the play gives an idea of the kind of staging which he would use if he produced the play again:

Dans les scènes d'enquête, plusieurs temps cohabitent: l'enquête en Ardèche sous la remise, les scènes de l'hôpital pendant et après le départ du commissaire.
Des images viennent aussi s'inscrire: des soldats du corps expéditionnaire français, plusieurs fois de suite, descendent le drapeau, le plient et l'emportent. Des paysans jettent des fleurs dans une tombe fraîchement creusée. Des prêtres répètent mécaniquement quelques gestes du cérémonial de la messe. La mère entre, quitte ses sabots, les attache ensemble et sort, etc. Toutes ces actions sont répétitives.

In the first versions of the play, Planchon had said that the director should try to place all the characters in the same positions for each sequence in which a line was repeated. In the 1973 version, he used gestures which conveyed more economically than words the sense of futility which is contained in the theme; all these gestures have little use or effect. They also create the ambiance of the country setting, and, instead of the repeated lines, they give the impression that we are going back repeatedly to similar scenes from the past.

The sets in the two productions of the play were designed to convey these different levels of time and reality. Planchon said:

Les événements vécus par Paul se situent dans un cadre réel et précis (une vraie remise) tandis que les scènes classiques du passé se situent dans un cadre explosé.

Notre décor classique peut en effet exploser en éléments, ces éléments peuvent à leur tour devenir leur épure abstraite. Les décors à transformation servent généralement au théâtre pour changer de lieu, celui-ci au contraire sert à décrire le même lieu de façons diverses.

The décor explosé opened the setting up and gave it the flexibility of the imagination. Armand Gatti used the term "théâtre éclaté" very early in his career to describe the simultaneous presentation on stage of various times and settings. He described his objective as that of "... faire éclater le temps, c'est-à-dire retrouver ce présent, passé, futur, 

conditionnel ou tout autre subjonctif à l'intérieur d'une même situation. In *La Remise* the "classic" set was almost naturalistic: a peasant's house with one wall removed, in which one could see the crude table, the water boiling, the soup sending up its thick steam. The walls opened and were partially raised up for the enquiry scenes, transforming the set into a stylised non-realistic one. Lighted panels gave the date of each scene. In the 1964 version, Planchon and René Allio modified the sets: they added a revolving stage and no longer used the lateral walls of the *remise*: the sets could again be raised into the *flies* for the enquiry scenes. All the costumes were in shades of grey, and the sets were also stone-coloured or in dull beige tones. Even when the action ranged to other settings, elements of the *remise*, the outhouse, were always present; characters such as Chausson's youngest son Gabriel who try to escape seem to carry its presence about with them. The 1964 programme contained the following explanation:

La rêverie rode sur et dans la *remise*, qui sensible et mythologique est toujours présente, mais en encoche les murs et les fait éclater, puis les débarrasse de leur matière, en garde l'épure, et fait surgir à l'intérieur d'autres éléments de lieux éloignés dans l'espace. Que ce soit l'Indochine ou cette usine désaffectée à cause de la concentration économique.

The Théâtre de la Cité's ideas on stage design had evolved from being simple illustrations of the setting, to being a comment on the play, to being a critical description. In this play the company hoped to go a step further. Certainly the sets here were at one with the structure of the play; they were absolutely faithful to Planchon's intention to make the action and the narrative levels alternate between the remembered and the *vécu*.

When he wrote the play, Planchon tried to capture the flavour of the language which his grandfather spoke, because it was characteristic of the area in which he lived: "... la dureté fait partie de la poésie de ce climat. Et du langage

aussi. J'ai recherché, à l'intérieur du français, un parler rocailleux.¹ He explained how he had attempted to recreate the terseness of peasant speech: "Ils parlaient patois. Généralement, même ils ne parlaient pas. Alors pour trouver une équivalence à ce parler de la Haute-Ardèche je me suis un peu inspiré de la langue du seizième siècle, qui est rude et pleine d'éliisions, pas l'éliision d'une voyelle à la fin d'un mot, pas "j'te", mais l'éliision d'un mot dans une phrase, un verbe qui saute, trois adjectifs à la suite, choisis pour leur consonance rugueuse, rocailleuse."²

When he changed the text in 1964, Planchon tried to make it a little less elliptical; not only individual speeches were changed, but explanations were added to make scenes and characters' actions more comprehensible. In the published version, generally, Planchon made scenes and dialogues equally clear but more concise. In one scene, set in 1925, Mme Chausson questions Andréa, Célestin's girlfriend. In the 1962 script, the older woman's irritation seems uncalled for, and the audience must conclude for itself that the mother is worried that her son will leave Borée. In the 1964 script, Célestin appears and gives Andréa the following explanation: "La mère te questionne pour savoir si je vais quitter le pays. C'est contre moi qu'elle grogne. Le vieux n'a pas voulu que je travaille à la fabrique et la mère sait que je tiendrai ce que j'ai promis, et pas plus tard que dans une quinzaine." (1964, III, p.16) He also makes an additional speech later to tell his father that he is leaving because the factory burned down: "Vous avez réussi. La fabrique a flambé, on l'a reconstruite. Pour me garder auprès de vous, vous m'avez empêché d'y travailler, je pars dans les villes: votre victoire est de déboiser ces montagnes, mais, répondez, quelle est votre récolte à part votre sueur?" (1964, IV, p.24) In the published play these two speeches are both clearer and more

¹ Interviewed by Claude Cézan, Nouvelles Littéraires, March 28th, 1964.
² Interviewed by Claude Sarraute, Monde, April 2nd, 1964.
lifelike. Célestin's anger is apparent even in a simple reading of the text:

Bon Dieu, la mère, pourquoi questionner Andréa? Je vous l'ai déjà dit, hé n'épouserai jamais une fille d'ici. Je vais partir en ville. Lundi, je vais travailler à la fabrique pour gagner des sous, pour filer. Que le père en crève ou non, lundi matin, je vais travailler à une machine. Allez, viens, l'Andréa...

(1973, p.95)


The text was more and more direct and simple with successive versions of the play.

A few details were changed. The colourful but not generally familiar term "traîne-grôle" was changed in 1964 (IX, p.63) to "traîne-savate". In 1962, a critic complained about a sentence which was far too literary for old Chausson: "Dites, Marie Giffard, vous êtes clownsque..." (1962, III, p.22) Planchon changed the line in 1964 to make it more colloquial: "Hé, la Giffard! Vous avez la boîte à musique qui se détraque" (1964, III, p.18) In the published version he made the expression even simpler and more terse: "La boîte à idées se détraque." (1973, p.97) P'tit Jules, a minor character, leaves Borée; in the 1964 text, he explains his departure, giving an explicit picture of the transformation of the countryside: "Mon frère m'a trouvé une place aux aciéries de Saint-Chamond. J'aurais bien gardé la ferme, mais, à ce jour, allons trouver une femme qui accepte de traire les vaches. Les filles d'aujourd'hui veulent se décolorer la tignasse." (1964, XII, p.82) In the published version, this speech is retained and even slightly extended: "Mon frère m'a trouvé une place aux aciéries de Saint-Chamond. J'aurais bien aimé garder la ferme, mais aujourd'hui, impossible de trouver une femme qui accepte de traire les vaches. Elles veulent toutes

1. Maurice Moissonnier, France Nouvelle, April 18th-24th, 1962.
se décolorer la tignasse, se coller des bigoudis." (1973, p.159)

Minor structural changes made the scenes clearer.

In the 1962 play, the scene of old Chausson's return from prison begins abruptly with the conversation between him and his wife. In the 1964 and the 1973 plays, the scene is preceded by a sequence in which Rosine, a neighbour, comes to warn Mme Chausson of her husband's arrival; the audience is thus informed about the prison sentence and the following scene is less confusing. A scene in which the Chausson family is held up by a young thief was also slightly amplified. In the 1962 script, he is led silently outside by Chausson; in the two later versions, he makes a long nervous, pleading speech; his obvious cowardice makes Chausson's contempt seem almost inevitable. In the published play, Planchon also made the old man's reasons for killing the thief more explicit. Not only does he want the money which the young man has stolen; in his imagination he already converts the cash into more land: "Avec deux cent mille, Gabriel, on va tout acheter jusqu'au ravin." (1973, p.114) This added detail is both pathetic and typical of Chausson.

By extending certain scenes or by amplifying some speeches, Planchon altered his presentation of some of the characters. The scene in which Gabriel meets Violette Nogèr, a girl from Chambon, was lengthened in the 1964 version. Violette taunts Gabriel for his fear of his father; Gabriel says that he hates him but insists that he is not afraid of him. In the published version, Gabriel actually defends his obedience of his father: "C'est le père. Je lui obéis. Même s'il a tort. Même si je le déteste." (1973, p.113)

As in Le Cochon noir, the authority of a father is theoretically unquestionable. In the scene of the fête des violettes, which takes place later in the play, Gabriel explains to Violette that he is leaving. In the 1964 script, Planchon added a few lines to Gabriel's speech which made it more pathetic and more emotionally brutal; (the parts which were added to the speech in 1964 are underlined):
Je suis saoul. J'ai fait le plein de la grande dose pour fêter mon départ demain, pour Grenoble, Lyon ou ailleurs, avec l'argent que j'ai volé au Vieux. (il sort une liasse de billets de banque de sa poche et l'agit devant Violette). Mais ne compte pas m'accompagner. (Un temps, il la regarde). Dire qu'on se réservait pour le mariage. Mouche ton nez, la Violette, et viens par là. maintenant, je suis décidé. Tu es toute trempée et ça n'a pas l'air de te déplaire comme une truite. Tu vas me le payer. (1962, XI, p.31; 1964, XI, p.75)

In the published version, Planchon lengthened the speech still further; Gabriel compares the girls in Borée to those in the city, in an attempt to show his indifference and independence to the Nogier girl:

En ville, toutes les filles sont plus jolies qu'ici. Ce ne sont pas des travailleuses, mais des baiseuses de première, avec les yeux faits et les ongles peints. Ici, les filles qui ont du bien se réservent pour le mariage. Il ne faut pas qu'elles se trouvent en ballon, obligées d'épouser le père du lardon. (1973, p.152)

In the published play, it is also made clearer that Gabriel remains a peasant even in the city brothel. When he first arrives, Gabriel puts down his entire inheritance and demands to "hire" a woman for a week. Planchon inserted in the published version the ironic reaction of Marcelle the prostitute: "Pauvre plouc! Avec ton petit paquet tu te crois milliardaire?" (1973, p.127) Aimé, a fellow client at the brothel, also points out Gabriel's mannerisms: "Tu te marres comme un paysan. Paysan, hein? Les paysans sont dans le vrai." (1973, p.132). Planchon thus emphasised that Gabriel's "rusticity" is something which he carries about with him even away from Borée. His liaison with Marcelle is hopeless especially after he returns from Vietnam having lost a foot in a mine explosion; in the published play, there is more bitterness in the ironic picture which he and she paint of their future life in Borée:
Marcelle:
Il m'emmène chez son père pour traire les vaches et cuire la soupe. Ce sera la belle vie! J'aurai toujours les ongles faits et la mise en pli impeccable.

Gabriel:
On vivra comme des rentiers dans la plus belle ferme de Borée avec trois vaches et deux chèvres. Dès le matin dans la gadoue en smoking et habit de soirée! (1973, pp.139-140)

Gabriel's wish to escape is made to seem more unrealisable.

When he first rewrote the play, Planchon seems to have wanted to make the characters, even the minor ones, more fully human; in the third version of the play, however, the minor figures are less characterised: the fable and its major protagonists are more important. In the enquiry scenes of the 1962 script, a journalist and his silent photographer are present, looking for a sensational story. The journalist represents the outside world, making all the comments of a callous city dweller on the story, and also making references to current events from a petit bourgeois point of view; he flutters about the remise trying to get pictures and information about the crime:

Journaliste:
(Au photographe) Tu notes ça. C'est bon. Les voisins ont peur de toucher l'arme du crime. (À Giffard). Si, si, tenez, tenez!! Attention, clichettes! ... Merci ... (Aux gendarmes). À nous! Ne souriez pas!!... Aucun de vous n'a entendu les informations? Dien Bien Phu est tombé, oui ou non? J'espère en tout cas qu'ils n'auront pas tué notre Geneviève de Gallard. (1962, I, p.4)

The journalist represented too many things at once. Planchon, when he rewrote the play, may have taken into account Maurice Moissonnier's criticism of this character; Moissonnier advised Pierre Vassas, who played the role, to be less voluble and showy.1 The journalist was extraneous to the action and yet always appearing. Planchon eliminated the figure, and his photographer, altogether in the 1964 and 1973 versions.

1. Ibid.
The commissaire is a dull traditional incarnation of a police investigator in the 1962 play; in the second version, he was made into a more distinctive character. His remarks to his policemen are straightforward in the first play: "Installez-vous là mon garçon, à la place du corps. Oui, vous!" "Bouvet, déplacez-vous." (1962, I, pp. 1-2) They are enlivened by a grain of sarcasm in the second version: "Installez-vous là, mon garçon, à la place du corps ... oui, vous, le poète." "Bouvet, tu te déplaces et ne souris pas, imbécile, tu fais le mort..." (1964, I, p.1) In the first script, the commissaire refers in passing to their sandwiches; in the second he gives the impatient Paul a speech praising the salubrious effects of "sandwiches au jard". In the published play, the commissaire indulges in few such personal remarks. He retains his wit, but he is no longer in the position of explaining events to Paul. He appears directly at Célestin's bedside and shows some understanding for the dying man's feelings about the enquiry. Planchon made him no less human, but far less important.

The figure of the country doctor, Isidore Gardien, was also made more interesting in the 1964 version. In the 1962 play, he is a mere witness, providing information about the events leading to the crime and about the mentality of the inhabitants of Borée. In the 1964 play, he is an ex-socialist who has postponed his projected departure from the Ardèche until he is too old to want to move away any longer. Old Chausson, in a passage added in 1964, blames the doctor for influencing the young people:

Vieux:
Vous leur avez assez chanté qu'il fallait partir et que vous alliez le faire!
Docteur:
Je ne l'ai pas fait. Je ne sais pas pourquoi.
Vieux:
Moi, je sais. Il y a une race de sous-cul qui n'est jamais prête à payer le prix de ce qu'elle veux. (1964, VII, p.43)

The passage is almost identical in the published play. In the 1964 play and in the published play, it is the doctor who makes comments on the current political scene; he shows how he has changed from his youthful political commitment to his present apathy:
The doctor resents old Chausson. In the 1964 play, Planchon added a few lines in which Paul summed up the old man's feelings about the doctor:

Paul:
Vous saviez sa fin inévitable. Pour lui, vous étiez rangé du côté de ceux qui l'abattaient. Vous étiez d'accord avec ceux qui électrisaient l'Ardèche.

Le Docteur:
Mais qu'allez-vous chercher? Je n'ai été qu'un témoin.

Paul:
C'est ça, je crois, qu'il vous reprochait.

In the final version there is no such explicit analysis of Chausson's attitude to the doctor; his contempt is clear enough in his own speeches to the doctor.

Planchon added a new character to the published version of La Remise. Following the example of Adamov in his play Paolo Paolo, Planchon intended to show the larger events of international politics running parallel to local occurrences, in this case those of Borée. The first two versions were criticised, however, because references to the Vietnamese war (which were made only in connection with Gabriel's lameness) seemed to be artificial and unconvincing additions rather than integral parts of the plot. In an attempt to increase their importance, Planchon added to the published play the figure of a commanding officer under whom Gabriel served in Vietnam. The character is introduced skilfully as one of the people whom the commissaire contacts after Gabriel's death. The officer shows great surprise that Gabriel seems to have killed himself; he immediately assumes that the young man sank into despair after seeing France give up everything in the Indo-Chinese war. The officer is a believable person; he finds nothing special to say about Gabriel but sees him as a typical veteran of a
pointless war. Gabriel in all three versions of the play makes a disillusioned speech about his life:

Il y a des choses foutues avant de les commencer.
On défriche un bois pour rien. La terre est trop ingrate.

The officer makes even more explicit this parallel between the uselessness of fighting in Vietnam, and the pointlessness of Chausson's battle against progress; his speech echoes part of Gabriel's:

Maintenant, on vient nous raconter qu'il est juste de décoloniser. Alors, je pose une question: pourquoi ces hommes sont-ils tombés là-bas? Si nous cédons l'Indochine, pour qui, pourquoi Chausson a-t-il sauté sur une mine? Enfin, nom de Dieu, où sont les responsables? (1973, p.145)

Planchon also altered, in successive versions of La Remise, the character of Marie Giffard. Gaston, her former fiancé and Emile Chausson's older brother, appears as an idiot in the play, having been gassed in the First World War. In the first script, Marie Giffard is a woman frustrated of her hopes of marrying Gaston because she was seduced by Emile Chausson; she says to Paul:

Qui n'avait des raisons de tuer cet homme sauvage qui ne savait que détruire. Le jour où il eut la certitude que ton grand-père, non, ton arrière-grand-père remettrait la ferme au Gaston, il n'eut cesse de tourner autour de la fiancée de l'idiot jusqu'à ce qu'elle se donnât à lui, pour pouvoir ensuite cracher dessus. (1962, V, p.30)

In the 1964 scene, she also explains the social conventions which made it possible for Emile Chausson to destroy her marriage hopes, and she makes it clear that she was publicly disgraced:

Ce n'est pas la vérité ... qu'en ces temps les familles choisissaient pour leurs filles celui qui convenait pour agrandir le domaine? C'est pas la vérité que Chausson trouva le moyen que l'idiot le surprenne avec la fille dans la fougère et que les gens d'ici à Mézilhac connaissent sa honte? ... Alors le
mariage fut remis et l'on jetait des cailloux sur la garce. (1964, V, p.27)

In the published play, Planchon made an important alteration; here, Marie Giffard has not only been seduced by Chausson in her youth: she is still his mistress. Old Chausson maintains his relations with her, taking advantage of her desperate desire to have a child. Her final fury and her claim to be the murderess are far more understandable in the light of the binding, cruel relationship which she has kept up with Chausson, even knowing that the entire village knows of it. This character assumes a far greater force and density in the final version of the play.

In the first two versions of the play, Madame Chausson is little more than a beast of burden who accepts her load passively, and quietly works herself to death. In the published version, Planchon changed her into a character of considerable strength. When her husband returns from prison, she tells him that Célestin has decided to leave the farm. In the 1973 play, she also threatens to shoot Chausson if he lays a hand on his son, and the old man takes her seriously. Even when she is ill, she defends her husband from Marie Giffard's attack; the following speech appears only in the published play:

Tu as craché sur Chausson toute ta vie mais toutes les fois qu'il t'a demandé de coucher avec lui, tu n'as jamais refusé que je sache. Sors d'ici Marie Giffard, sinon je prends le fusil et on n'entendra plus parler de ta cerveau sêche... Un peu de patience, Marie. Dans quelques semaines tu l'euras pour toi toute seule. (1973, p.121)

In 1964, Planchon seems to have wanted to underline the pathos in Chausson's situation. In the scene of Célestin's departure, the father stands frozen, holding his suitcase. In the first script, he is silent. In the 1964 script, after Célestin has left, he finally speaks, saying to his wife: "Ton fils est un foutu imbécile. Son carton va se déchirer en route, retrappe-le et donne-lui la valise en bois." (1964, IV, p.25) The level of feeling jumps from
irritation to a sudden eloquent movement of generosity. In
the published text, Chausson is less pathetic. His silence
is a barely contained rage, and he angrily tells his son to
leave before he loses his temper. In his last speech, his
fury and his pragmatism are juxtaposed to the last gesture of
affection:

T'inquiète pas, la vieille. Bientôt Gabriel
remplacera Célestin avantageusement. Dans
deux heures ce carton sera déchiré. Qu'il
ne remette jamais les pieds ici, sinon je le
chasse à coups de fusil. (temps). Retrappe-
moi ce corniaud et donne-lui la valise en
bois. (1973, p.104)

There are in the 1973 play small details which show up the
old farmer's malice. When Marie Giffard announces that the
factory is on fire, he is far more hypocritical, in the pub-
lished play; although he is the one who started the fire, he
rushes out to sound the alarm. Instead of killing the young
thief who comes to rob them, he lets him bleed to death by
the side of the road. In the definitive script there is
also an example of the kind of insinuation with which Chausson
tries to separate his son Gabriel from the Nogier girl:

Son père possède trois camionettes, mais elle
est moche comme un cul. Tu dois épouser une
femme, pas des voitures à essence. Ce qu'il
ta fait, c'est une bonne travailleuse qui
t'aide à la maison et une bonne baiseuse.
Je t'en trouverai une, car tu es beau garçon.
(1973, p.151)

When Planchon spoke of La Remise he said that its
caracters were important to him in themselves and not only as
victims of social deprivation: "Mais La Remise n'est pas qu'une
histoire sociale ou plus exactement ce n'est pas seulement que
ceste histoire m'a intéressé; elle m'a intéressé aussi sur le
plan psychologique."¹ The peasants had a sense of grandeur
which fascinated him: "Ces personnages d'autrefois étaient
admirables; c'étaient, à leur manière, de grands seigneurs."²

². Interviewed by Claude Cézan, Nouvelles Littéraires, March
28th, 1964.
The character of Emile Chausson was so powerfully drawn that it overwhelmed the critics. They were almost unanimous in their admiration:

Un patriarque rusé, mais d'une hautaine présence.
Et dominant cette chronique, la figure du patriarque intraitable, seigneur despotique, âpre, d'une grandeur farouche.

Quel Lenain ne serait pas pale, à côté?

Chausson's stubbornness is so inhuman that it becomes grandiose. His opposition to cities and their attitude to the country comes from the very core of his being; Marc Pierret rightly observed that Chausson shoots the young thief not out of patriotism, or because he wants to steal his boots:

... mais parce que la vie du jeune tueur pleurnichard et hystérique lui semble l'exemple même du genre d'homme que fabriquent les villes; il s'en débarrasse comme il arrache la mauvaise herbe, en paysan têtu qui n'a pas le temps de s'interroger sur son propre malheur et qui ne se repose qu'en injuriant le monde entier...

The figure of Chausson gained in stature as the play progressed; Planchon himself interpreted the role impressively well, aging from scene to scene:

... d'homme jeune il se transforme en vieillard tyrannique après avoir animé son personnage d'une rare richesse de sentiments ... la scène du retour où le père ne peut retenir son fils, attiré par la ville, est interprétée avec une intensité lourde d'amour retenu qui témoigne autant du talent du comédien que de celui de l'auteur.

Both as a playwright and as an actor, Planchon expressed dramatically the nobility beneath the apparently stupid and futile resistance of Chausson: "... ce sont des sauvages, des hommes du moyen âge, à la fois féroces et subtils; simples

   Georges Lermineu, Parisien Libéré, April 9th, 1964.
   Marcelle Capron, Combat, April 18th, 1962.

2. France Observateur, April, 1964.

aussi, ce qui leur confère une sorte de pureté jusque dans leurs passions et dans leurs horreurs.\(^1\)

It is no wonder that, juxtaposed to this towering figure, the character of Paul appeared weak and insignificant: "Il reste que Planchon se projette littéralement lui-même dans le personnage qu'il interprète, privant d'authenticité celui de Paul, le neveu photographe. On ne peut prendre au sérieux cet insignifiant jeune homme, ni sa quête de vérité."\(^2\) In Lyons Jacques Rosner played the role, whereas in Paris it was taken by Pierre Santini. In the first two versions of La Remise, Paul comes to the Ardèche; he does so, however, not on his own initiative but at the request of the police. He becomes interested only gradually in the story of his grandfather. Planchon wanted the audience to be drawn from indifference to concern in the same way: "Je voudrais que le spectateur se trouve un peu dans la même position que Paul découvrant ce qui se passait dans sa famille et qu'il ignorait. Il le rejette et le revendique tout à la fois ..."\(^3\) In the 1964 script, Planchon emphasised Paul's progression from irritated indifference to keen involvement. He is depicted as generally more impatient, inserting ironic comments which are not in the 1962 play:

Le Docteur:
Elle parle d'avant quatorze.
Paul:
Est-il nécessaire de remonter au déluge? (1964, V, p.27)

He also shows a far stronger desire to leave: "... vous me transmettrez à Lyon le résultat de votre enquête ... Je désirerais savoir à quelle heure passe l'autocar. Je compte le prendre... Tout cela est passionnant, mais j'ai cru comprendre que ma présence n'était pas légalement obligatoire." (1964, V, p.28)

In this second version, he is a photographer. He shows his

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2. Esprit, Aug. 1964, p.484.
increasing interest in the case by taking pictures of various places connected with the past events. Just as his indifference appears more affected, so his concern is deeper at the end of the play.

Planchon's attempt to increase the emotional side of Paul was not totally successful. Because Paul directly represents the public, it was difficult to give him too much characterization. He was there primarily to ask questions for the spectator. Émile Copfermann explained the ambiguous position of the character:

Il incarne la tentative d'une critique interne à la pièce qui écarte le simple constat. Paul est le spectateur de la salle et en même temps le personnage qui pénètre, par le récit qui lui en est fait, l'univers des autres personnages...}

In a sense the structure of the play seemed to be based on Paul; Jacques Lemarchand thought that La Remise was remarkable for this use of a mediating character between the audience and the action:

... l'aventure presque immobile de la famille Chausson... nous paraîtra... interprétée par ce jeune garçon - et son enquête, en apparence policière, rejoint cette quête un peu angoissée, mais honnête, mais pleine de découvertes qu'il faut faire courageusement, sur un passé qui n'est pas le vôtre, qui est quand-même le vôtre. Paul Chausson ne jugera pas: il comprendra.

Certainly the enquiry scenes showed the lack of chronological order or organisation which they might have in Paul's mind. Planchon's self-avowed technique, however, was to make the scenes from the past, those described by witnesses, clear, linear, and classically composed. In terms of the structure of the play as a whole, these scenes too are remembered by Paul; they are his memories of the witnesses' remembered accounts of the past; they are in fact at two removes from reality. Even if he does not judge, would Paul's memory be so perfect and his

1. Copfermann, Roger Planchon, p.16.
understanding so unbiased as the staging of the scenes from the past might suggest? Although we are supposedly discovering the story through Paul's eyes, we feel that we are seeing what really took place. Paul becomes a fellow witness, rather than a guide transforming the facts through his own perception; Bernard Dort wondered whether it was

...à travers Paul, comme le suppose la construction en flashback, qu'il [Planchon] a voulu que nous prenions conscience de l'histoire des Chausson? Dans ce cas, celle-ci aurait dû nous parvenir d'une manière encore plus fragmentaire, réfractée et modifiée par la conscience de Paul. Or, les fragments de La Remise qui reconstituent peu à peu, de manière presque chronologique, le drame, sont présentés comme de véritables "tranches de vie", sans être jamais déformés par la mémoire et le récit. Tels lors, Paul paraît de trop: il n'est plus le médiateur — à peine est-il un commentateur privilégié et parfois encombrant.

In Armand Gatti's La Vie imaginaire de l'éboueur Auguste Geai, on the other hand, the dying Auguste Geai does distort the facts of his past, in a futile and moving attempt to find a meaning and a dignity in his life.

Planchon appears to have taken this criticism very seriously. In the published play, the audience does not have a "guide" representing it. Paul's role is reduced almost to that of Célestin's confident. He is little more than a son worried and slightly puzzled by his father's anguish over events long passed. He himself is involved in the story only because it affects Célestin so deeply. The commissaire reports to Célestin directly, and Paul asks few questions except of his father. Making Paul an outsider, Planchon focussed on the remorse of Célestin which was merely suggested in the first two versions of La Remise. One speech, changed with each rewriting, shows how the conception of Paul altered from 1962 to 1973. He speaks of what he has learned during the enquiry. In 1962, he addresses himself to the audience and gives a nostalgic summing up of the story:

Sans doute étaient-ils tous là, dans la remise, et non dans leurs cercueils qui pourraient où ce qui reste dedans n'est plus que de l'eau. Gabriel, en septembre, tel qu'il partait en vendanges avec son sac de pommes de terre, et son lard, aux portes de l'hiver, il est là, suréolé de fabuleuses histoires, cuites fameuses, et parties de jambes en l'air. La mère, dans son rôle de servante, qui comme une vieille chèvre, mourut toute en sueur. Gaston, avec ses menottes, avec ses yeux morts remplis de larmes; le gazé de 14. Et cette fille Nogier du Chambon, et la Marie Giffard, comme une torche, et l'autre qui se retire avec sa morgue, son rasoir à la main, avec lequel il accoucha ses deux fils, suivi de son troupeau sanglant, taillé à coups de faux rouillés. (XIII, p.93)

In 1964, the speech is an emotional outburst addressed to the doctor, after Paul has abruptly left the table:

Ce n'était pas une indigestion. Je suppose que cela fera pouffer votre ami le gendarme; j'ai quitté la table pour pleurer. Mais vous aussi, ne vous gênez pas! Je vous ai dit qu'il pouvait aller se faire foutre avec ses vieilles histoires, et vous voyez, je pleure de rage. Oh! pas sur leurs cercueils pourris, où ce qui reste dedans n'est plus que de l'eau, ni sur cet imbécile de Gabriel qui, en septembre, part en vendanges avec son sac de pommes de terre et son lard et qui, les hivers, se vante de ses cuites fameuses et de ses parties de jambes en l'air. Ni sur la mère, la vieille servante, qui meurt en sueur comme une chèvre. Ces racines, ce passé dont vous parlez est bête à pleurer, et idiot comme Gaston avec ses menottes et ses yeux morts, remplis de larmes. Ce n'est pas sur eux que je pleure, non! Pas sur cette fille Nogier du Chambon, ni sur le vieux cinglé, avec sa morgue et son rasoir, avec lequel il accoucha ses deux fils. Non. C'est sur moi que je verse une petite larme. (X, p.67)

In the final version of the play, this speech is Célestin's; he asks "Où sont-ils maintenant? ..." and he concludes: "Des cercueils pourris. Ce qui reste n'est plus que de l'eau." (1973, p.146). His regret for the past is more plausible than Paul's acquired pity. Indeed, the underlying irony of the published play is that Paul does not feel anything for the land, and only pity for those who exhausted themselves on it.
It is Célestin who interprets events, through his own guilt and painful memories. By increasing the importance of Célestin who was directly involved with the past, Planchon made that past seem more immediate and the reconstruction of it more interesting for the audience.

In the 1962 script, Célestin shows mainly an eagerness to forget his past. In the 1964 version, Planchon added lines to the hospital scenes which show Célestin's pity for his father and even a certain admiration for him. He attributed to the dying Célestin a sense of regret:

Oui, je vais descendre de l'autobus sans jamais être revenu vers le Vieux ... et pourtant, il m'aurait reçu comme il savait le faire parfois pour un étranger, tuant le lapin et la poule, heureux de dépenser en trois jours le travail d'une année.

Crois-tu que ce soit commode parfois d'avoir raison?

Il était usé, voilà la vérité et moi je n'y suis pas retourné parce que le grand con me faisait peur.

(1964, X, p.66)

He tells Paul that he drove straight to the Ardèche when he first had a car, but did not have the courage to stop. Célestin's last words about old Chausson in the 1964 script place the surly old figure in another light:

... Ces menteurs ne t'ont pas tout dit: le vieux savait rire. Un jour, tous les deux, on s'est couché sur le dos dans la boue du chemin de châtaigneraie pour pouvoir rire tout notre saoul, oui, tout notre saoul, de je ne me rappelle plus quoi ...

(1964, X, p.66)

The emotional impact of Célestin's scenes is also greater in the 1964 play than it was in the 1962 play. In the 1962 script, he speaks only at rare intervals; in the 1964 script, the conversation between him and Paul was amplified and joined into one long uninterrupted sequence in the middle of the third enquiry scene. There was thus more time to build up in the audience an understanding for the character. In the 1962 play, the last scene with Paul and Célestin ends with the nurse's exit to get an intern; in the 1964 version the
last lines were very moving; they were one instance of the basic optimism which Planchon saw in the play:

Paul: (Penché sur Célestin)
Qu'est-ce que je dois faire?
Célestin: (finir par murmurer)
Eh ben! Continue. (1964, X, p.66)

Paul was thus to go on enriched by his meeting with his father's past.

In the published play, Célestin appears in his hospital setting during all the enquiry scenes, and almost takes an active part in them, showing a deep involvement with the events in Borée. The play begins with his explanation to Paul of the two deaths and continues with the first enquiry scene. Instead of asking Paul for information, he is the one to give his son the facts; instead of Célestin, it is Paul who suggests that the past is best forgotten. Célestin puts together the shreds of evidence which the commissaire brings him. He is filled with nostalgia by small details:

Le lard chaud qu'on retire de la soupe et qu'on coupe sur la tranche de pain.
La faux, la faux, celle-là je l'ai souvent aiguisée.
(1973, pp. 81, 82)

His sense of guilt is transformed in this version into overwhelming remorse. Paul asks of the murder weapon; "Qui tenait cette faux?" and Célestin answers: "Le salaud qui a abandonné son père." (1973, p.83) He repeats again and again that he wants to get out of the hospital to go and sort things out in Borée. Paul in order to calm his father asks him to tell the anecdote (which Célestin tells spontaneously in the 1964 play):

Paul:
Rappelle-toi, rappelle-toi. Tu m'as raconté l'histoire cent fois: un jour, grand-père et toi, vous vous êtes couchés sur le dos dans la boue d'un chemin pour pouvoir rire tout votre saoul. Rappelle-toi, pour rire de je ne sais plus quoi.
(1973, p.164)

Célestin has thus retained some happy memories from his boyhood and even shared them with his own son. In the 1973 version, Célestin's last appearance is preceded immediately by Marie Giffard's self-immolation. The audience hears with Célestin
the sound of the remise burning. He cries: "Je dois remonter en Ardèche, une dernière fois. La remise brûle. Il faut éteindre le feu, retrouver ce bout de chemin."

(1973, p.165) Paul's reply is affectionate but the scene ends less pathetically than in the second version. The emphasis is on Célestin's anguish rather than on Paul's future.

In La Remise there is an overwhelming feeling for the kind of life which Borée has known for decades and which is disintegrating at the time of the play. In all three versions, the text is filled with a sympathetic knowledge of the Ardèche country and with a sense of its doom. It comes out in small details: Marie Giffard for example berates Émile Chausson for sending his brother to an asylum where there will be "... pas même un chien ou une chèvre pour lui lécher la main." (1973, p.90) The village entertainments, pagan ceremonies given Catholic names, are depicted with humour and sympathy: "... la Saint-Jean, c'est la fête des filles. Elles doivent sauter sans sabots, comme si elles cherchaient chaussure à leur pied." (1964, II, p.16) In a scene on the day of La fête des vedettes, which many critics singled out for particular praise, a group of inebriated young men try to decide what to do for "fun":

Albert:
On devrait retourner au village et là, barbouiller de fumier les pignées des portes.
Ou bien décrocher les volets de toutes les maisons, et les porter à quelques kilomètres de là. (1964, XI, p.71)

Gabriel in the Privas brothel paints a bitter picture of Borée and its inhabitants:

C'est un joli pays où il n'y a plus rien à faire. Il reste le vent qui traîne encore, et les touristes débraillés qui photographient les ravins, laissent partout leurs papiers gras.

Des sauvages idiots qui la nuit vont déterrer les bornes pour changer les limites des champs.

(1964, VIII, pp. 48, 51)
Certainly the region is shown to be many years behind the rest of France in its development.

For those inhabitants who remain behind, such as the doctor and the old parish priest, the gap between them and the city continues to grow. One of the curé's remarks which was pointed out by more than one critic, gives a pathetic picture of his isolation: "... tu sais ce qu'on m'a dit, Paul? Vers Tournon, il y a maintenant des prêtres qui ont des automobiles! L'Eglise se modernise." (1964, X, p.70) Like the doctor's patients, all the curé's faithful are old:

Pour l'office divin, plus d'enfants de chœur.
C'est un vieux de mon âge qui m'aide à dire la messe. Quelle pétassière! Depuis huit à dix ans, l'évêché ne m'envoie plus de mission. Peut-être, au Puy, ils me croient mort.
(1973, p.146)

In the published script he also asks, in a moment of discouragement, "Que faire contre l'industrialisation? Elle a tué nos campagnes, elle a tué la religion." (1973, p.106) In Le Cochon noir the Solitaire laments the passing of spiritual life with the arrival of mechanisation. The curé of La Remise witnesses the end of the process.

Planchon created for the stage a harsh poetry of the countryside. The doctor quotes a saying which sums up the situation of Borée at the time of the enquiry: "Les choses passées sont mortes et dans les cendres, comme disent le vieux, allez donc retrouver le bois vert!" (1964, p.8) Marie Giffard's bitterness comes out in a last speech resounding with the frustration of a peasant girl deprived of her marriage hopes in a backward village; she speaks as she burns her trousseau:

C'est une saleté de toile écrue, à la façon ancienne, qui n'a jamais connu ni la sueur de la peau, ni l'herbe et le soleil pour la sécher. Le trousseau d'une jeune fille de grande maison à cinq vaches, aussi net qu'au premier jour. Les hivers, on en étendait dans la buée de la soupe du porc, mais dans cette remise, ce n'était pas le mien. Fils de Célestin Chausson, jeunette, j'ai été couverte du duvet des vieux et je n'ai pas eu besoin de vieillir.
(1964, XIII, p.89)
Emile Chausson more than any other character shows in his words a deep love for Borée. His speeches have a dramatic power which stems from his near kinship with the earth. The difference between him and the city dwellers is evident is their language; when Prosper returns from the seminary his dialogue with Emile Chausson wittily illustrates their linguistic separation:

Prosper:
Eh bien! mon frère, tu es heureux?

Le Vieux, au curé:
Heureux? Avez-vous déjà entendu une pareille connerie?
Prosper:
Je veux savoir si tout va bien.
Le Vieux:
On est là, Prosper, on est là. Couillon. (1973, p.97)

Bernard Dort compared Planchon's style in La Remise not to Zola's but to that of Claudel, and he quoted the following speech as an example:

Dieu! quelle belle journée tu nous offres avec ce fils nécessaire pour faire pousser sur cette rocallle qui ne donne que de la fougère et des orties. Trois hommes ou plus ne seront pas de trop. C'est la montagne à déboiser, à mettre en espaliers; des tonnes de pierres à déterrer pour arriver aux prés et aux semaines...

(1964, II, p.13)

Certainly the combination of love for the soil and religious dedication in Planchon’s prose recalls Claudel. The task of transforming arid mountainside into arable land has been sanctified for Chausson by the generations who have undertaken it before him; only those who possess a piece of land can understand. Chausson almost despairs when he tells the doctor of the callous replanting of trees on the land:

Vous n'avez pas de terre, vous ne pouvez pas comprendre. Le gouvernement replante des bois, pas des châtaigniers, mais des pins.

Ces saletés de grand fûts, tout cons.
Sur ce qui était devenu un pré ou un champ de seigle, ils replantent des pins. Toutes les murettes qui retenaient le terrain s'écroulent chaque hiver. Avantage, personne ne songe à remettre debout les pierres. Et tous de brailler que le monde change. Eh oui, il change: les pluies font glisser la terre vers le bas. Tout se délabre et tout s'efface. Cette terre que nos pères et les pères de nos pères avaient remontée dans des sacs, elle glisse lentement vers sa place primitive. À croire que cette sueur, c'était pour user plus vite les carcasses.

(1973, p.122)

Le Vieux can tell from the crash when a faraway chestnut-tree has been struck down by lightning; he can feel from the air when it is going to rain: "Quand le vent est une soupe froide, la pluie vient dans la vallée." (1964, XII, p.79) His closeness to the land is the result of long experience of it. Planchon created for Le Vieux a style both simple and fundamentally passionate.

Response to the play varied among different audiences and critics. The provincial public was more receptive than the Parisian audiences, who tried to maintain their traditional sophisticated indifference. A Lyons report on the presentation of the play was very favourable: "Cette pièce dure, âpre, dense, lyrique, a obtenu un grand succès. Des rappels enthousiastes ont salué Roger Planchon, auteur, metteur en scène et comédien."¹ In the Parisian theatres the response was far from being so eager: "Dans la salle, le divorce faisait plaisir à voir: d'un côté, un public glacé et impassible, au bord du sommeil ou s'y laissant glisser parfois, et, de l'autre, des enthousiastes, des chaleureux, suspendus aux lèvres des acteurs."² It will be interesting to see the response to the 1973 version when it is presented.

Critics were startled by Planchon's experiment with

2. Figaro, April 7th, 1964.
dramatic structure. Most spectators could see that the
enquiry was a way of leading the public into the story:
... si au bout de quelques minutes, l'enquête
policière ne retient plus l'attention, c'est
qu'à celle-ci s'est superposée une enquête
autrement plus importante: les coups de lanterne
au milieu de ceux qui s'adaptent plus ou moins
au monde en évolution, et les coups de sonde
parmi ceux qui restent à la traîne (le père Chausson)
parce qu'ils refusent de suivre le rythme. 1

The play was not a murder mystery, but the portrait of a dying
way of life:
Il est moins passionnant de savoir qui a
ouvert le crâne du Vieux que de saisir au
vol l'odeur du soufre qui traîne sur la
superstition des vieilles, l'innocence im-
puissante des curés, le goût du sang uniforme-
ment répandu chez les jeunes et la chaleur des
filles sautant les feux de la Saint-Jean. 2

The plot is, however, quite complex, and intelligent critics
declared that the structure of the play had left them confused.
Jacques Lemarchand 3 was one of them: "Dans cette chronologie
vagabonde ... ce qui est clair pour l'auteur ne l'est pas
toujours pour celui qui bée et attend la suite." Claude
Olivier 4 blamed Planchon's subjective approach to his topic:
"La Remise ... apparaît comme une sorte d'exorcisme auquel
le spectateur, à moins d'être hanté par les mêmes démons que
Planchon, parvient mal à participer." These critics felt that
Planchon's intimacy with his subject had prevented him from
acquiring the perspective necessary to transform a story into a
play; he had forgotten that the audience did not have a first-
hand knowledge of the facts.

The first script is certainly elliptical in style.
Possibly critics were confused because they were simply unused
to such experiments with chronology and space in the theatre.
Certainly not everyone was unable to follow the plot of La Remise.

Maurice Moissonnier\(^1\) found the play clear and comprehensible even in 1962:

On passe aisément de 1954 à 1919 ou 1944, l'esprit voyage avec agilité entre l'actuel et le souvenir, orienté il est vrai par des voyants lumineux. Aucun retour en arrière n'est gratuit, chacun d'eux, au contraire, est ressenti comme un besoin par le spectateur.

The structure of the play took into account the new conception of time and space which the cinema had created; moreover, a cinematographic framework was ideally suited to the themes of the play:

Planchon opère une sorte de montage de différents fragments d'événements dispersés dans le temps et il a dû briser l'unité de la représentation théâtrale, il a pu jouer de ces ruptures du temps et de l'espace qui lui autorisent les éclairages directionnels isolant telle ou telle zone de la scène, l'usage du plateau tournant permettant des changements subits de temps et de lieu.\(^2\)

Jean-Jacques Lerrant felt that this kind of structure was eminently suited to the atmosphere of rugged grandeur which Planchon had wished to capture in his characters: "Il a inventé un temps nouveau, un temps poétique, qui permet de déchiffrer les personnages en trouvant leurs clés dans le passé et le présent enlacés."\(^3\) The police investigation allowed Planchon "... to create at once a realistic documentary and a psychological examination into the spiritual decline which overtakes a savagely obstinate peasant..."\(^4\) Like the revolving stage in Planchon's production of Schweyk dans la deuxième guerre mondiale the multiple time structure of La Remise allowed the public to see characters and scenes from different angles — although here their aspect changed with the passage of time rather than with a movement in space.

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The sets had a central role to play in underlining the changes from one era to another and yet sustaining a clear line of action. They were also fundamentally related to the themes of the play, according to one reviewer:

Il est vrai qu'il [Planchon metteur en scène] l'a [Planchon auteur] admirablement servi avec son idée de décor, tout d'abord sobre, fermé et classique qui, par la suite se désintègre pour élargir la scène aux dimensions du drame, comme se désintègre cette famille sous les coups de bouter du monde extérieur. C'est ainsi que le sordide drame paysan se hausse au niveau des structures de la société actuelle. ¹

The set was remarkable not only as a practical instrument, but as a visual complement to the text:

Il s'agit moins d'agencer un parfait divertissement que de présenter un reflet authentique de la vérité sociale considérée. La vie quotidienne dans l'Ardèche, ce sont bien ces vieilles masures de pierres sèches dessinées par René Allio et ces faux, ces tables de bois épais et ce bordel de Privas au luxe criard. ²

Jean-Jacques Lerrant preferred the 1962 sets to those of 1964; he found that the revolving platform made the movement of the play monotonous: "La tribu ardéchoise paraît, maintenant, flotter dans un espace mort vaguement entouré par des montagnes, sur un cyclorama, qui ressemblent au Fuji Yama. J'aimais mieux la tanière étroite que la famille emplissait de son fumet." ³

In general, nevertheless, critics recognised the originality of sets which were completely integrated with the structure of the play.

Commentators on the play were divided in their reactions to the text of La Remise. Planchon's attempt to reproduce peasant speech left him open to charges of naturalism. Pierre Marcabru ⁴ accused Planchon of returning to the style of Antoine and Zola by putting on the stage peasant speech in its

³. Progrès (Lyons), Nov 26th, 1963.
natural state, without poetic transposition. Some reviewers said that Planchon had tried to make his style "poetic" in places, that he had hesitated between "... le lyrisme de mauvais aloi ..." and "... le jargon pseudo-paysan le plus conventionnel". His alternation between the two styles had created an imbalance in the play:

\[
\text{Ensuite et surtout il semble avoir hésité entre deux modes expressifs, deux "tons" qui se conjuguent, se chevauchent non sans un certain désordre, d'un côté un mode presque naturaliste dans son insistance, de l'autre une tendance allusive, à l'humour savoureux et robuste.}
\]

Other critics said that it was Planchon's attempt to write in a lyrical style which made the text unconvincing: "... la poésie âpre des collines chauves, de l'éclatement doré des genêts, du chant sombre des sapins, des eaux à truites, de ces coeurs aux secrètes tendresses, cette poésie ne passe pas." This was Planchon's first play to be presented in Paris, and possibly critics were reluctant to show enthusiasm for the work of a beginner from the provinces. The text is very convincing at least as a piece of work to be read; it has the terse and powerful imagery appropriate in a play about simple people.

Critics from the provinces, who were after all more likely to be familiar with peasant speech, were very impressed by Planchon's recreation of this kind of language for the stage. They praised the play for its rugged lyricism. Pierre Biard spoke of "... l'âpre poésie d'un texte vigoureux riche et beau ..." Bernard Frangin's enthusiasm was only slightly qualified: "Le ton hésite, bascule parfois dans la farce, débouche sur des tirades quelque peu littéraires, mais dans l'ensemble il reste dru, direct." Frangin was sensitive especially to the density of the text: "... en grattant, sous

5. Echo Liberté, (Lyons), Nov. 25th, 1963.
l'écume des mots, derrière l'alibi des actes, on voit surgir des êtres complexes, d'une dignité, d'une grandeur aussi, assez étonnantes." A few Parisian reviewers recognised the merits of Planchon's writing. Michel Zéraffa noted that its vigour was exceptional: "Le dialogue de Paul est nerveux, original dans ses images; nous sommes dans cette remise et avec ces gens."1 Gérard Guillot praised the incisive power of the language; it was "... tendu, impitoyable et... sauvage. Une langue qui n'a point le poli des galets de la vallée, mais le tranchant des silex des hauts plateaux."2 The dialogue, the play conveyed not only the reality of the Ardèche, but the incredible difference between that reality and the conditions of the world around it; the critic for France Nouvelle wrote as follows:

Souvent le dialogue est d'une férocité attachante ... avec beaucoup de sûreté, Planchon esquisse l'arrière-plan ou, plutôt, ce qu'il se plaît à appeler "l'écorce mythologique" de la période; ce qu'on voit, ceux qu'on voit en première page de Match.

... Du même coup des événements de Dien-Bien-Phu à ceux de Borée, une certaine presse donne toute la mesure de sa déchéance; vigoureuse et utile dénonciation.3

Certainly Planchon's text for La Remise succeeded in moving at least the provincial public: "Tour à tour rude ou gaillard, le dialogue soulevait de rires la salle, qu'il plugeait peu après dans une stupeur tendue."4 The highest praise came from Jean-Jacques Lerrant; he felt that no spectator could resist the lyrical power of this script:


2. Lettres Françaises, April 12th-18th, 1962.
The text was by a writer of great promise who knew personally and well the people about whom he wrote.

Most critics saw how completely Planchon's knowledge of his ancestors had enhanced the play. Marcelle Capron made this comment:

La peinture de tout ce milieu paysan sort en traits d'une puissance, d'une vigueur d'une âpreté, qui se gravent profondément en nous ... Il me semble que l'authenticité d'un pareil témoignage devrait éclater aux yeux de chacun. 1

More than one reviewer saw in this authenticity the great value of the play. Bernard Frangin, for example, said: "Planchon, fils de l'Ardèche et qui sait que ses racines profondes sont dans ce pays-là, a dégagé avec force ce drame des hommes qui s'épuisent sur une terre qui refuse. / Le noyau de l'oeuvre est là. Et sa beauté." 2 A student critic praised in the play the "Prédominance de la vie sur la démonstration." 3 Many writers remarked that the play showed Planchon's love for the Ardéchois and their hopeless ambitions; they also noted that he controlled his feeling to avoid sentimentalising:

Planchon connaît bien son milieu et il sait à la fois en voir les effarantes limitations et aimer les êtres qui y vivent ou qui y ont vécu sans aucunement aimer leurs mutilations, leurs défauts, leurs aveuglements. Il y a toute une marge, indispensable, à la lucidité, entre la compréhension et la justification, la pitié dangereuse. La grandeur de La Remise est de savoir en même temps comprendre et critiquer. 4

Jean-Jacques Lerrant too saw in La Remise a compassion balanced by a self-imposed sense of perspective; the coarse humour, the

2. L'Echo Liberté (Lyons), Nov. 25th, 1963.
earthy imagery were techniques with which Planchon limited
any lyricism or over-involvement:

... le propre de cette chronique c'est d'ê tre
irrigée d'humanité, d'amour au bond des larmes.
On sent l'auteur possédé par le besoin filial
de comprendre les ancêtres sans pourtant les
justifier alors qu'il dérobe le cœur sous les
images brutales et des ricanements. On perçoit,
dans La Remise, un cri rauque par lequel il est
difficile de ne pas être bouleversé, bien que
Roger Planchon se soit défendu de toute émotion
mélodramatique à coup de boutoir ardéchois dans
la bible familiale.  

Planchon's picture included both the sense of wonder at the
survival of primitive rural customs and beliefs into the mid-
twentieth century, and a bitter understanding of the inevitabil-
ity of their final erosion:

... il a su parce qu'il était pétri de leur
glaise, saupoudré encore de leur poussière,
montrer la réalité quotidienne, effroyable,
pitoyable, émouvante, de ces villages perdus
dans les terres inhospitalières où la seule
échappée possible pour les jeunes hommes en
colère était jusqu'en des temps encore proches,
le bordel ou la guerre d'Indochine.

The picture, both sympathetic and critical, was so accurate
that it was shocking. A writer in a farmers' journal con-
sidered the play brutally truthful: "L'œuvre de Planchon
ne laisse pas le spectateur à sa neutralité: elle le provoque
avec une sorte de violence. Il est possible qu'elle déplaise,
même à certains publics paysans: il y a des moments où le
miroir est insupportable." Planchon was at one with his
subject: "... les paysans dont Roger Planchon reconstitue
l'histoire sont ceux de sa race. Leur présence surgit du
fond de ses os." His kinship with them could not be stated
more succinctly.

1. Progrès (Lyons), Nov. 28th, 1963.
Planchon also wanted to go beyond the psychological level to give a picture of Börée as a social and economic entity, and to "... faire sentir les bouleversements de quarante ans d'histoire." The very traditionalism which he portrayed so well condemned the region to economic death. The inhabitants of Börée were presented as individuals, but as individuals destroyed because of their own inadaptability to history:

"Le but de Planchon était, par ce jeu des durées, de mieux mettre en contraste l'obstination "rurale" et patriarcale de Chausson et l'évolution de notre époque. L'histoire de Chausson et des siens est celle de gens aliénés, incapables de s'intégrer dans une nouvelle condition économique, politique, sociale. ... ses personnages ... sont tous "humains", complexes, déchirés, le vieux Chausson surtout..."

In his first play, Planchon already faced the problem, described by Adamov, of creating characters who were individuals as well as historical beings. Many of the critics congratulated Planchon for having created a balance between psychology and history. Jean-Jacques Lerrant was one: "Et j'ai été extrêmement sensible, de nouveau, à la subtilité des rapports dialectiques établis par Planchon entre ce qu'on peut appeler encore le mystère des êtres, bien qu'on le débroussaille, et leur déterminisme économique et social." Marc Pierre suggested that Planchon's personal vision gave the play its social impact: "... en s'attachant uniquement à son autobiographie qui lui permettait ... de se placer devant le phénomène social le plus réduit et le plus personnel... Planchon est parvenu à nous raconter une histoire exemplaire qui ne nous laisse pas tranquille face au scandale de l'ignorance des autres."

Planchon's own description of La Remise mixes two levels of existence, that of daily village life and that of

world events:

... la vie d'un petit village, d'une terre sauvage, avec ceux qui naissent, qui meurent, qui aiment, ceux qui partent, ceux qui s'accrochent, refusent de partir, et le travail dur, ingrat, la pluie, la neige et les misères; le retour des paysans de la guerre 1914-18, l'installation d'une fabrique, puis sa fermeture pour des raisons économiques, puis la guerre de 1940-1945, le marché noir, les maquis, les parachutages...

History makes its presence felt in the daily lives of the Ardéchois. Remote and isolated as they are, they are drastically affected by its vicissitudes:

L'Histoire force, bien sur, les solitudes ardéchoises et bouleverse la mythologie du terroir. Le refus d'un père obstiné de s'adapter à la vie moderne aiguise les conflits des générations. La politique et l'économie s'enlacent au noyau de vipers des passions humaines. Roger Planchon... expose les jalons et les repères d'une société primitive que décomposent les remous d'un monde nouveau.

They refuse to see themselves in relation to the world outside; Marie-Louise Bablet caught the essence of the conflict when she wrote: "Le drame est celui d'une famille qui veut vivre en vase clos mais que le monde extérieur happe par à-coups." 3 Copfermann pointed out that serious historical events made themselves felt, in La Remise, "... sur le mode dérisoire: la Résistance par le marché noir, l'Indochine par un pied bot, la Grande guerre par le cerveau d'un fou muet." 4 In La Remise history is not an abstraction but a succession of definable processes. The family's downfall is attributed to concrete economic causes:

La clôture de la vie de ces paysans ne répond pas à une loi interne de l'existence paysanne; elle est le produit de l'évolution du dehors. ...

... La répétition des mêmes gestes, des mêmes paroles, le vieillissement stérile des personnages de La Remise tiennent non à une essence de la paysannerie mais à la situation concrète de ces paysans-là dans la société française. Voilà donc le spectateur obligé d'élargir son champ de réflexion ...

The play provokes the public to think about French society as a whole; the events of La Remise can be seen in the framework of a Marxist analysis of twentieth century France:

Au temps du mélinisme on pouvait encore pratiquer sur un sol de rocaillies des cultures héroïques mais, dialectiquement, l'évolution du capitalisme dominé par sa dure loi du profit maximum allait condamner à mort l'entreprise. Au temps de Jules Ferry, on pouvait allègrement conquérir les rizières d'Indochine mais, dialectiquement, l'oppression et les rivalités coloniales allaient faire germer des forces nouvelles. En 1959, ici et là-bas, tout s'effondre et voilà pourquoi cette histoire est celle des épaves: paysans, docteur, putains, curé, faux héros, tous des déchets, des hommes et des femmes sans horizons.

Clearly, Planchon wanted to emphasise the historical side of his play. In the published version, characters are reduced in importance partly in order to show events more clearly; the additional character of Gabriel's commanding officer is also a connecting force between the picture of Borée and that of France's war in Indo-China.

Characters in La Remise as in Planchon's other plays, in particular Bleus, blancs, rouges, are involved in spite of themselves by the social and economic transformations which are initiated elsewhere. At one point in La Remise, Gabriel makes a comment which startles the unprepared spectator; he speaks of the war's effects on the Ardèche: "Par ici, c'est peu de chose. En France, les Anglais bombardent les villes." (1964 VI, p.32) In a discussion in Rheims, Planchon spoke with

1. Dort, Théâtre réel, p.17.
3. At the Théâtre Populaire de Reims after a reading of Le Cochon noir to drama students, on October 26th, 1972.
some amusement of the extreme parochialism of his forbears, for whom the Ardèche was a country set apart from France. In the character of le Vieux especially Planchon illustrated this isolationism; the old man replied in the play to the above remark: "Toutes ces villes où l'on vit entassés, ainsi que des têtards dans une flaque. C'est chiennerie et dégoûtation. L'air est une eau sale et les citoyens grabetent dedans comme des vicieux dans le péché. Bénis soient les Anglais, qu'ils nettoient!" (1964, VI, p.32) Chausson cannot see his situation as part of a whole, affected by its relation to the other parts. He conceives of any form of adaptation as a loss of dignity and a betrayal of the past. The city and everything it represents is to be resisted unhesitatingly.

Chausson's resistance assumes superhuman proportions. Planchon created a character of such stature that he became the focal point of the play. He was criticised therefore for allowing the historical element of his play to sink into the background. In the opinion of Copfermann,

Si les guerres de 1914-1918, d'Indochine entrent bien dans la pièce par Gaston et Gabriel, Dien-Bien-Phu reste un bavardage plaqué et le parallélisme des deux mondes condamnés, celui de la campagne ingrate, celui des guerres coloniales, trop sollicité. Ainsi La Remise devient-elle surtout la magistrale description d'un personnage complexe, attachant, la figure presque tragique d'Emile Chausson le Vieux de Borée, d'une grandeur antique.¹

Bernard Dort too considered the parallel between Borée and Indo-China as superficial, and suggested that the stature of Chausson made him the centre of attention: "Impossible d'échapper à la mythologie de la terre - aride, dure, noire, mais essentielle - et des "racines": sans doute, le Vieux a-t-il historiquement tort, mais poétiquement il a raison."²

Emile Chausson de Borée is clearly the central figure in La Remise. The basic theme of the play lies within his

¹ Copfermann, Roger Planchon, p.162.
² Dort, Théâtre réel, pp. 203-204.
proud resistance. He is not fighting historical forces as much as trying to deny their effect on his life. He refuses to recognise, or he is unable to recognise, economic change as the principal force with which he must deal. When he wilfully prevents "the city" from installing electricity in Boreé, when he burns down the factory, he is not accepting them as the opposition, but trying to eliminate their interference with his fight against the mountainside. He belongs without realising it to a generation "... où l'ennemi, ce n'est pas une nature ingrate, mais le paysan lui-même."\(^1\) Georges Lerminier\(^2\) pointed out that the play could have been set in Ireland, in Corsica, or in Spain, for it was a universal picture of a rural economy breaking down under the pressure of industrialisation.

The most shocking aspect of the play is the needless ignorance of the characters, who are buffeted by economic changes inevitably and uncomprehendingly:

> Inconscient des mécanismes historiques qui déterminent l'évolution de la société qui est la sienne, chaque membre de cette famille revit pour son compte l'impossibilité de réaliser ses projets fondés sur des valeurs qui n'ont plus cours. Exilé au cœur même de son propre pays, ayant décroché de l'histoire, chacun des Chausson, incapable de trouver un sens aux bouleversements sociaux dont il est le témoin aveugle, s'enfonce dans la démence.\(^3\)

The play was "... l'histoire d'un monde qui changeait sans qu'on ait donné à ses paysans le moyen d'avoir un regard neuf pour pénétrer dedans."\(^4\) Their ignorance, and their resulting inadaptability, might have been prevented: "Ces hommes auraient pu être employés ailleurs, mais ils meurent usés, cruels avec les autres et avec eux-mêmes."\(^5\) This is the

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central issue in the play. The comparison of the futility of Chausson's battle to the uselessness of the Indo-Chinese war is an important but subordinate theme. By adding the character of Gabriel's commanding officer, in the published version, Planchon made the parallel a convincing one and he integrated it into the play as a whole; he more than answered the criticisms of Copfermann and Dort.

Le Vieux is drawn as a being to be pitied but not forgiven; the play is effective because the portrait of Chausson is so moving: "Le vieux monde agonise et enfante douloureusement un autre monde, rejetant les laissés pour compte sur la touche. Existe-t-il des coupables, sommes-nous tous des coupables?" Planchon refused in La Remise, and in all his plays, to preach revolution. The picture of Chausson is humane but never totally approving; the public is as conscious of Chausson's stupidity as it is of the pressures against him: "Planchon s'est gardé de toute leçon politique. Il se contente de nous demander si, à tous ces êtres qui "se débattaient pour trouver la sortie", [from the play, 1964, XIII, p.88], on peut considérer qu'une chance à été offerte." Claude Roy compared La Remise with Gatti's La Vie imaginaire de l'éboueur Auguste Geai which Rosner, as we have seen, put on in Paris in the same season in 1964. Roy saw them both as intelligently moving and therefore rare works:

Les deux oeuvres ont de la force, une vérité venue de loin, et cette façon de nous émouvoir parce que d'abord l'auteur a été ému, le ton tout droit de celui qui pose sa main sur notre bras et nous demande: "Est-ce que vraiment vous trouvez juste ... Est-ce que vous ne croyez pas qu'il faudrait faire quelque chose ... Est-ce que?" Ce n'est pas un ton qu'on entend si souvent au théâtre.

Roy spoke in the same article of the need to move people

emotionally before they can be called to action. To have roused intense feeling for his characters was, for Planchon, to have given his audience a new kind of awareness. Changing people's awareness had been his aim in his *mise en scène*, and it would always be his aim in his own plays as well.

**L'Infâme**

*Ils sont appliqués à courir après l'absolu mais incapables d'en vivre l'exigence.*

- *L'Infâme*

When he wrote *L'Infâme*, Planchon had already written seven plays including the *créations collectives*. He first presented the play in 1969, and he published it in 1970. It was the first of his plays which he published.

The play is based on a true story, that of the *curé* of Uruffe, (in Lorraine) l'abbé Desnoyers. In 1956, Desnoyers killed his mistress, who was nine months pregnant, christened their child, killed it and disfigured it. The incident shocked and astounded not only the church but the entire country; Desnoyers's trial provoked endless controversy and discussion. Plays, films, novels, and numerous studies have been made on the case of Desnoyers. Planchon chose to write a play based on Desnoyer's crime mainly because the incident so deeply affected French people of all kinds and of all classes; even in 1970 people remembered the case. Planchon thought that this widespread reaction was a mark of France's deeply rooted Catholicism:

... je crois que la France est profondément catholique, je ne parle pas seulement des catholiques qui vont à la messe, qui pratiquent, mais à tous. Je me suis aperçu de nombreuses fois que chez les athées il y a de grands thèmes chrétiens qui traversent leur raisonnement, que des hommes qui se disent parfaitement incroyants, qui appartiennent à des partis de gauche, continuent

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Planchon has admitted on many occasions that he is fascinated by insane people. Indeed, in a discussion after a showing of Le Cochon noir at Caen, in December 1973, he said that he had just finished writing a play on the killing of children by madmen.\(^2\) His interest in Desnoyers was twofold: the priest had provoked strong reactions, and he had committed the crime of a madman. In a press conference before L'Infâme opened, Planchon described the incredible behaviour of the priest:

Cet homme a eu, après son crime, un com­portement stupéfiant. S'étant ménagé un alibi, il est revenu au village, a fait sonner le tocsin, a dirigé les recherches, décrit les cercles de plus en plus étroits autour du corps; quand il l'eut découvert, il tomba en prières, pleurant, et dit aux paysans qui n'en demandaient pas tant qu'il connaissait l'assassin, mais ne pouvait le dénoncer, tenu par le secret professionnel. Il mit de même peu à peu les gendarmes sur sa piste, tout en se défendant jusqu'à l'aveu final, avec un luxe de détails.\(^3\)

Faced with a horrifying crime, Planchon's reaction was to try to comprehend the motivation behind it: "Ce fait divers est stupéfiant. Il est donc légitime de vouloir le comprendre. C'est-à-dire de pouvoir l'expliquer. Le comportement de cet homme fut aussi surprenant que les attitudes de l'Eglise et de la Justice."\(^4\)

Planchon's play was not an attempt to reconstruct the crime. His preface to the play includes the following caution: "Le sujet de la pièce n'étant qu'inspiré par ce sanglant fait divers, les événements, les personnages, sont donc totalement imaginaires. Toute ressemblance avec des personnes vivantes

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2. At the Comédie de Caen, information kindly communicated by Dorothy Knowles.
4. Official programme for L'Infâme, Théâtre de la Cité de Villeurbanne.
ou ayant vécu ne peut être que pure coïncidence."\textsuperscript{1} Planchon was interested more in the man and in his relations to the church than in the details of the crime or even in the trial which followed it. The play begins after the murder and ends with the arrest of the priest. Planchon turned his attention to the criminal's milieu and to the church hierarchy in particular. He showed how they react to an unacceptable and apparently irredeemable action committed by one of their number. He tried to depict all the variations of response in the murderer's fellow priests: "Il était attirant de voir ce qui se passe dans un groupe, ici l'Eglise, constituée autour d'une idéologie très sérieuse lorsqu'un des membres fait une chose absolument incroyable. Toutes les tentations du groupe: virer le type, ou bien le récupérer et le protéger (en en faisant un héros)."\textsuperscript{2} The play can virtually be summarised by describing the various stages of the church's reaction; Planchon did so at a debate in Rennes:\textsuperscript{3}

\begin{quote}
Ce qui m'intéresse ... c'est la façon dont réagit la collectivité à laquelle appartient cet homme et c'est ici l'Eglise catholique. Cette collectivité est d'abord complètement divisée. Ses membres adoptent des positions diverses et inattendues, selon des motifs personnels. Il s'ensuit un véritable grenouillage jusqu'à la position finale de récupération du membre égaré et aux cérémonies d'expiation qui ont été ainsi organisées à l'époque.
\end{quote}

Although he is not a believer, Planchon insisted at the same debate that he attacked neither the church nor its rule of priestly celibacy: "Je n'ai absolument aucun compte à régler et je ne cherche nullement à en régler."

Using the newspaper story only as a starting point, Planchon invented his plot and his characters freely. Desmoyer's name was changed to Duverger; the setting was changed from

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} From the official text of L'Infa\textsuperscript{me}, 1969, archives of the Théâtre de la Cité de Villeurbanne, now Théâtre National Populaire. Further quotations from either text will include the year, scene and page number.
\item \textsuperscript{2} Reported by Jean-Jacques Olivier, Combat, Feb. 17th, 1970.
\item \textsuperscript{3} Reported by Henri Terrière, Ouest France, 18th November, 1970.
\end{itemize}
Uruffe (near Nancy) to Lauzun, a village in the Ardèche. He described the play in the programme:

Un être faible, ballotté par les événements, les situations, qui cherche par des raisonnements, des attitudes, à préserver ses "illusions vitales". Il perd pied et surnage ainsi jusqu'à la fin. Face à lui, une communauté réagit, prend des positions, découvre et définit une ligne d'action inspirée de l'idéologie dont la communauté s'est réclamée....

Voici donc une fiction, un décalque imaginaire de la réalité, situé dans un pays mythique qui ressemble à la Haute-Ardèche où je gardais les vaches à 10 ans.

Planchon portrayed in the play not only the church but also the village as a community faced with the lapses of its spiritual leader. He told Jean-Jacques Olivier: "J'ai essayé de montrer également le curé de village... défendu par son village qui pourtant était au courant de ses agissements." In his own plays, as in his productions of Bérénice and of Tartuffe, Planchon underlined his interest in the relation between an individual's ideology and his behaviour. In L'Infâme, he said to Olivier, he looked at Duverger, at his fellow priests and at his fellow villagers with the intention of determining to what extent they are guided by their principles and to what extent by their emotions: "... ce qui m'intéressait c'était le mélange d'idéologie et des sentiments, c'est-à-dire que sous couvert de sentiments on traite d'idéologie et que sous couvert d'idéologie on traite de sentiments."

Planchon altered the text only slightly for publication. Numerous minor changes in wording give a different emphasis to some speeches. In the first scene, the shepherd Célestin describes the murder to the Evêque. In the original unpublished script, when he is pressed to be more definite, he cooperates; in the published play he is far more enigmatic. When the Evêque says: "Certains accusent ton curé.", Célestin answers, in the unpublished script: "Ceux-là ont raison de le faire." (1969, I, p. 2) The sentence was suppressed in the published play. When the Evêque asks, "As-tu réellement vu

cela Célestin ou l'as-tu rêvé?" he elicits slightly different answers in each version:

J'ai vu le pistolet. J'ai vu la lame.
Dans le jardin il a fait un trou pour le
tenter. Je vais te l'appeler. Il
confirmera. (1969, I, p.3)

J'ai vu ce que j'ai vu et j'ai vu ce qu'il
y avait à voir. Je l'ai vu dans le jardin
faire un trou. Je vais l'appeler. Il
confirmera. (1970, I, p.56)

The priests in the play have in common a speech which
is correct and educated. By indicating punctuation more care­
fully in the published version of the play, Planchon put one
aspect of their language into perspective: they depend on
religious phrases. No doubt the levels of meaning would have
been pointed out by Planchon for his actors during rehearsals;
for the reader, however, punctuation is an invaluable aid.
By putting inverted commas around the religious phrases which
the priests use, Planchon gave their speech a curious dimension.
Whatever his temperament or his reaction to the crime, each of
the priests speaks in this way. The inverted commas emphasise
Père Laurent's cynicism in response to l'abbé Tardieu's calls
for charity: "Avec infiniment de 'bonté' et de 'compréhension',
nous avons tout fait' pour contenir les élans successifs de ce
personnage." (1970, III, p.59) More importantly, the quotations
indicate that the priests tend to rely on religious formulae
to explain motives or behaviour. The old curé uses quotations
only once, when he tries to explain his failure to stop
Duverger after hearing repeated confessions of his difficulties:
"Avais-je 'le droit de désespérer d'une âme?' Non. . . .  Il faut
'maintenir vivante la petite flamme.'" (1970, IV, p.61)

L'abbé Tardieu uses a seminarian's word when he explains the
redemption ceremonies to Thérèse Ménelon: "Il ne s'agit pas
d'étouffer le scandale, Thérèse. Il s'agit de 'l'hypostasier'.'"
(1970, XII, p.80) The inverted commas indicate not only that
he is preaching to Thérèse, but that he is vindicating the
ceremony for himself: Thérèse would not know the word and
he does not explain it. Even the Evêque uses quotations when
events seem to suit them. At the end of the play, he finds
that the peasants respond well to the idea of a communal
expiation of the crime: "S'ils se frappent la poitrine, c'est qu'ils reconnaissent en eux le pécheur. Ce qu'ils nous donnent peut-être à comprendre, c'est le 'mystère de la culpabilité de tous les hommes'" (1970, XII, p.80) The quotations from religious dogma are used to describe or justify events, but not really to determine behaviour; Planchon showed the discrepancy between theological doctrine and human motivation.

Only the members of the church hierarchy use this device. In a discussion between the Inspecteur and l'abbé Tardieu, the difference between secular and spiritual truth is underlined by capitalising l'abbé Tardieu's references to Vérité; the actor would no doubt pronounce it differently. By adding to the conversation the Inspecteur's lay definition of truth, Planchon emphasised the distance between his language and that of the priest even more.

L'Abbé Tardieu:  
La vérité est-elle établie pour autant?

L'Inspecteur:  
La Vérité! La vérité, Monsieur l'Abbé, ce sont les petits faits vrais que j'ai consignés sur mes fiches. (1970, X, p.75)

The Evêque makes a similar distinction between religious and secular usage: "Mais pour nous, chrétiens, n'y a-t-il d'autres 'Lumières' que les 'Lumières' psychiatriques?" (1970, XII, p.80)

In both versions of the play, each priest uses a language appropriate to his temperament. Père Laurent is a serious and pragmatic man concerned with preserving the church's dignity. His language is straightforward and sometimes ironical: "Enfin, Tardieu, son exploit final éclipse le reste. Pensez-vous qu'il ait tué sa maîtresse pour favoriser les vocations dans le diocèse?" (1970, III, p.59) The language of the Evêque is one of willed moderation and conciliation, and yet it shows the extreme sensitivity of a man often in pain:

... il y a tant de violence en chacun que cette pièce est chargée d'électricité. Pourquoi toujours la haine, la violence dans les coeurs, c'est insupportable. L'air en devient irrespirable. Est-ce la maladie qui aiguise ainsi la sensibilité? La haine, la violence me cisaillement les nerfs le long de la colonne vertébrale. Ce n'est pas une image, c'est une douleur atroce et concrète qui n'a rien d'imaginaire. (1970, III, p.60)
Like Célestin in La Remise, like the dying curé in Le Cochon noir, he suffers such intense physical pain that it colours his entire language. At the end of the play, it is his suffering which he uses as an image of the way of redemption for the church:

C'est par la souffrance que l'Eglise se régénère, que cela plaise ou non à ces Messieurs [the journalists]. La souffrance! La jeunesse, le monde moderne, ne peuvent en admettre l'idée. Et pourtant, elle est dans chaque page de l'Évangile, elle est dans chaque repli de ma peau. (1970, XII, p.81)

In contrast to Laurent and the bishop, l'abbé Tardieu uses far-fetched and naïve imagery in his defence of Duverger: "... son âme était haute et ... si un archange apparaissait en bleu de travail à tous ceux qui l'accusent et qui cassent les vitres du presbytère, ils ne le reconnaîtraient pas, tant ils sont éloignés du divin." (1970, II, p.58)

The positions of l'abbé Tardieu, Duverger's fiery defender, and of the more sceptical characters were contrasted even more sharply in the second version of the play than in the first. Tardieu's language is often put into perspective by its juxtaposition with that of cynics. In Tableau VII, seven acting areas are shown at once; two of these are the local inn, where Tardieu is speaking to the peasants, and Thérèse Ménelon's home, where Célestin, the curé, and Thérèse discuss the events. Tardieu's speeches in this scene were rewritten in the published version to make them even more emotional. By increasing the sense of exaltation in his words, Planchon made the contrast between them and Célestin's short, dry phrases even more striking; the words added in the published version are underlined:

L'abbé Tardieu:
Je n'admet pas cet argument. Votre pitié est une gifle, il est un sentiment plus chrétien que la pitié, c'est l'amour. Oui mon coeur tremble et je reconnais là la musique du Saint Esprit, parfairement, l'amour que je lui porte témoigne de son innocence. J'aime cet homme, je le respecte, j'embrasse ses genoux.
When Duverger is arrested, l'abbé Tardieu makes a speech which appears only in the published play, and which again shows his naive idealisation of Duverger: "Plus un mot! (Aux gendarmes). Une âme se déchire et s'agrandit devant nous, qui peut comprendre, qui peut admettre? Personne! (A Duverger). Mais tous les deux nous acceptons qu'on ricane, n'est-ce pas?" (1970, XI, p.79) In the last scene, Tardieu reveals the reasons for his loyal defence of Duverger; when they were both in the seminary, Duverger once spent a night persuading Tardieu to continue his studies for the priesthood. He ends by saying "Depuis cette nuit-là, il resta mon confesseur, mon ami, mon directeur de conscience." (1969, XIII, p.88). In the published version the words "mon ami" were placed last and thus given more importance. In the first version the Evêque responds with approval: "Tous, nous l'avions abandonné. Vous aviez raison avant nous, contre nous." (1969, XII, p.88). These two sentences were omitted in the later text. The bishop's opinion remains less sympathetic; Tardieu's fidelity is the mark of a human friendship rather than of a spiritual bond.

The police inspector, like that of La Remise was more strongly characterised in the second version of the play. Just as the commissaire recommended bacon sandwiches, so the Inspecteur suggests that bicycle riding is a wholesome pursuit: "Tenez, moi mon cher, j'adore faire du vélo. Sur un vélo, l'effort musculaire se double d'une méditation intense: mon sujet de méditation préféré..." (1970, X, p.75). In the published version, the Inspecteur also gives a metaphorical account of his work:

C'est troublant, les champignons. Il pleut et brusquement, ça surgit dans l'herbe, une étrange moisissure. Les plus beaux ne sont pas toujours les bons, Monsieur l'Abbé. Moi je les ramasse tous, puis je les trie et quelque-uns passent dans la poêle à frire. Un panier à salade pour la cueillette. Un!

(1970, X, p.76)
Additional satirical comments emphasise the Inspecteur's horror at the crime, and his impatience with Duverger's way of hiding behind religious language; (the words added in the published play are underlined);

L'Inspecteur:
Une gosse de 17 ans, Monsieur le Curé, voulait conserver son enfant, elle a payé de sa vie son amour maternel naissant.

Duverger:
Elle est allée porter au ciel, mettre à l'abri près du Père, pour qu'elle fleurisse là-haut, cette fleur miraculeuse.

L'Inspecteur:

Duverger:
La vierge, la maman ... Elle veillait déjà sur Jésus, lourde du secret de sa naissance miraculeuse ... Je me perds à imaginer son état d'âme.

L'Inspecteur:
Un état intéressant

(1970, XI, p.79)

In the first version, Duverger is not interrupted; in the published play, the Inspecteur's cynical attitude gives the audience a perspective on Duverger's words.

The peasants' speech is different from that of the priests, as the language of Émile Chausson was different from that of his seminarian brother Prosper. It is vivid and earthy. In L'Infâme as in La Remise, Planchon makes his deep feeling for the Ardèche evident in the powerfully terse expressions of the villagers. Even Duverger loves the country with all the peasant side of himself:

J'aime ce pays, ces vieilles roches, ses volcans éteints, cette immense fureur apaisée. A la sortie du village, il y a un ravin, mon ravin. ... Les orages toujours s'y déchaînent. Sur les rochers la foudre tombe souvent, elle fend les dalles, les noircit et pourtant chaque printemps le ravin est couvert de fleurs ...

(1970, VI, p.68)

For its inhabitants, the countryside is alive with forces. Thérèse Ménelon declares: "Le mal n'existe pas. Un grand souffle d'innocence parcourt toute la création." (1970, IV, p.61)

In the Théâtre de la Cité's rewriting of Edouard II, the image
of rain was almost obsessional. In L'Infâme, also it is used often, and notably in Duverger's sermon: "... notre soeur la pluie tombe, elle glisse sur les genêts. L'avenir est à nos côtés, aussi sûrement que nos ombres. Quelle quiétude de savoir que la nuit succède au jour. Quelle paix la pluie donne à l'âme." (1970, X, p.75) Not every image is so peaceful: Célestin and Thérèse imagine frightening scenes of dead people coming out at night. Célestin frightens Duverger with his description: "... si les morts restaient dans leurs boîtes, ils seraient trop désœuvrés. Ils arrivent le soir sous les châtaigniers. De grandes plaques transparentes comme de l'eau glacée, ils s'installent sur les petits murs. Ils ne parlent pas mais si tu vibres avec tout ce qui vibre, tu les comprends un peu." (1970, XI, p.77) Célestin's vision is a chilling one, but it is expressed with a grain of humour and in simple words; when Thérèse speaks in fear of the dead, the old curé allays her terrors with a gentle wit:

Thérèse:
J'ai peur des morts. Ils sont là, des milliers. Ils respirent sous terre. J'entends leur souffle distinctement. Qu'est-ce qui les retient de pousser des cris? Les feux follets, on dit que ce sont les âmes des jeunes mortes. Est-ce vrai, Monsieur le Curé?

Le vieux curé:
... Si c'est vrai, ce sont les âmes des coquettes qui font un dernier clin d'œil.

(1970, VII, p.70)

This mixture of humour and superstition makes the language which the villagers use believable. Even for real dangers, they find startlingly beautiful expressions; a passage in L'Infâme recalls a similar sequence in La Remise in which a young gendarme describes how he has seen a cow, lost and frozen to death in an Ardèche winter:

Je parle de la pureté de la neige qui, ici, recouvré tout plusieurs mois. Tous les ans des gens tombent dans les congères. On ne les retrouve qu'au printemps. On dit alors "la reine de l'Hiver leur a tendu la main." La reine de l'Hiver, une invitation qu'on ne refuse pas.

(1970, VIII, p.73)
Célestin especially is of the country. He loves his ewes, and sees creation as a whole made up of animals and of human beings with animal instincts. His words are imbued with a sense of toleration for vices, weaknesses, and madness: "J'ai connu un berger qui, dans toutes les limaces qu'il trouvait, donnait un coup de dent. Et puis, bien d'autres gens encore, indécis, changeants, cinglés, j'en ai connu au régiment." (1970, VIII, p. 71) In his pragmatic acceptance of his and other people's driving forces, he is like Falstaff, like Schweyk, and he looks forward to the character of Gédéon in Le Cochon noir; like these characters he loves life, at its most basic level more than any morality or idea. All these roles at the Théâtre de la Cité de Villeurbanne were played by Jean Bouise, and indeed those of Célestin and of Gédéon may well have been written for Bouise. Emile Copfermann rightly remarked in his book in 1969, that "... c'est à travers lui [Bouise] que passe une certaine continuité." Célestin can appreciate Duverger's behaviour with a rough humour and an honesty at the antipodes from the attitude of the clergymen: "Un curé qui vole les culottes qui sèchent dans les prés, ça fait un tort considérable à l'église. Chacun sait qu'on ne vole pas des culottes de femme simplement pour se moucher. Duverger est un bon bougre mais sa queue le démange et son discours va de travers." (1970, I, p. 56). Although it is coarse and direct, this is perhaps the most accurate and charitable account of Duverger in the entire play. Célestin's report of the murder is factual, sardonic, and dwells on the physical details of the crime; because it is not emotional his speech is doubly effective. The repetition at the end is that of a fascinated onlooker:

Elle est descendue de la voiture, il est passé derrière elle, il lui a tiré une balle dans la nuque. Alors il lui a fait sauter ses frusques et il a fendu le ventre pour sortir le bébé. Il lui a planté le couteau dans le cœur puis il lui a découpé soigneusement le visage avant de sauter dans sa voiture pour aller dîner. Des entailles. Des

vermicelles. Combien y a-t-il de globules dans un litre de sang? Je n'en sais rien. Combien de litres de sang dans le corps d'une fille? Vraiment je n'en sais rien mais il n'a pas fallu longtemps à la terre pour absorber le tout (1970, I, p.56)

Images in the speech of the peasants are always succinct and down-to-earth. Mme Duverger, the Curé's mother expresses her defeat and discouragement tersely: "La boue des cimetières sèche, les âmes aussi." (1970, XI, p.78) Célestin captures in two images the idea that the country is dying: "Le pays n'est plus ce qu'il était, dans toutes ces maisons abandonnées, au toit défoncé, il ne reste rien des existences qu'on y mena. Une fourchette de fer dans la cheminée qui devient grise." (1970, XI, p.77). The old curé too has acquired the simplicity of speech of his parishioners. He tells Célestin that he must visit an old schoolmistress who is dying "... silencieusement comme un bonbon qui fondrait au soleil." (1970, XI, p.79). The curé has been left behind, like the old Curé in La Remise. He does not understand the reasons for the redemption ceremonies organised by the bishop; he doubts the idea of a collective consciousness of original sin: "Je ne sais même plus qui peut commettre un péché.... Les riches, peut-être, Les pauvres, eux, me débitent leurs petites compensations, leurs petites malices, un lamentable cortège gris. Pauvres vies. La leur, comme la mienne." (1970, XII, pp. 80-81). It is the curé, finally, who sums up the dichotomy between the language of the church hierarchy and that of ordinary people in the Ardèche: "J'ai trop vécu parmi les paysans. Tous ces mots de haute spiritualité, je ne peux plus les articuler, je m'en méfie. Par contre, je parle volontiers des lierres, des orties, des fougères, si pauvrement, si miraculeusement élémentaires." (1970, XII, p.81). One might almost think that Planchon himself was speaking. The language of L'Infâme is particularly interesting because it reflects so clearly the social and intellectual differences between educated clergymen and the poor people who make up their provincial parishes.

In Duverger's speech, the vivid style of the peasant and the correct parlance of the seminarian achieve an uneasy
balance. The old curé tells Duverger: "... ce sont les mots qui vous saoulent." (1970, IV, p.64). He is right. Duverger is a prisoner of his language in a different way from Planchon's other characters; he is not limited by his vocabulary but carried away by his rhetoric. Père Laurent too says that "Duverger adore le pathétique. Déjà au séminaire il était porté aux dramatisations pathologiques et ridicules." (1970, VIII, p.73) In Duverger's lengthy speeches, in his many outbursts, the vigorous imagery of the peasant usually outweighs the religious clichés of the trained seminarian:

La peur est là, avec ses os, dans le sac de peau. Les forces qui m'entraînaient, Monsieur le Curé, étaient plus puissantes que la chérie sucrée des livres saints. ... Comme cela arrive de temps à autre aux valets de ferme, je suis tombé dans une fosse à purin. (1970, IV, p.62)

He takes an ironic distance from the phraseology which the seminary has taught him:

Ne t'inquiète pas, Maman, ton fiston, comme le beau Saint Georges terrasse le dragon. Tous les deux on s'empoigne, on se déchire comme des chiens sur les places avant de s'accoupler; "Une grande bataille spirituelle." C'est une expression de séminaire. (Au vieux curé). Un peu farce, vous ne trouvez pas? (1970, IV, p.63)

His religious preparation has proved false in form if not in content: "On nous parlait d'épreuves, de difficultés au sujet de la sexualité, mais avec des mots si claires, si limpides, que cela ressemblait à une bonne pâte d'amandes enrobée de miel." (1970, VI, p.67) For most of the play, he sees himself as separate from the church hierarchy: "... cette hiérarchie catholique n'est formée que d'esprits boursouflés et prétentieux." (1970, VIII, p.72). Eventually, ironically, it is through his seminarian's training that Duverger finds a way out of his dilemma. In the last scene he uses quotations from prayers and religious texts as his fellow priests have done throughout the play: "La Vierge sera ma médiate, car elle est 'la fleur jamais vue tout à coup dressée sur la Faute dont s'étonnent les abeilles.' Elle est 'le sourire revenu sur les

Planchon slightly altered some of Duverger's speeches from one version of the play to the other. In general, he was presented as more responsible for his crime. In one scene, he tries to explain what forces took hold of him at the moment of the murder. A few sentences from the script were suppressed in the published play: "J'ai été assailli. Des milliers de voix m'accusaient, me tourmentaient, assez méchamment je dois dire. Tout me concernait. Tout déferlait sur moi. J'étais à découvert. Je ne pouvais rien écarter. Une trouille verte." (1969, IV, p.22)

These sentences suggest that Duverger was passive at the moment of the crime; Planchon considered him as at least partly responsible. Duverger tells of a school incident in which he had misspelled his name and been laughed at; in the first text, he says, "J'ai gommé, j'ai gratté..." (1969, IV, p.26); in the second, he says, "Je gommais, je grattais..." (1970, IV, p.63). The imperfect tense suggests a recurring nightmare rather than a simple memory. The relation between the incident and his attempt to cover up his crime is underlined slightly. Duverger's final sermon was also altered. In the typescript he promises to say important things: "J'ai des choses capitales à déclarer." (1969, IV, pp. 61-62); in the published play these words are omitted. On the other hand, in this version, a few sentences are added in the middle of his sermon: "Une confidence, Inspecteur, ce n'est pas une confession. Une confession: péché confessé, péché envolé, je me frappe la poitrine je fais le singe avec sincérité, je récite quelques ave et hop, la facture est réglée. Me voilà en pleine forme." (1970, IX, p.74) These lines give the impression that Duverger suddenly remembers the presence of the Inspecteur in the church, and they show that he has a more cynical perspective on his own actions.

Duverger is the product of the type of village of which he is the curé. The village of Lauzun is given almost as much importance as the church in the play:
Planchon prend donc la rencontre de trois valeurs hors du temps et contre le temps; le village arriéré; le fou; l'église qui s'abîme dans les vertigineuses subtilités de sa propre structure; ... trois schizophrénies, en somme, qu'il faut unir en une seule pour comprendre cette pièce dont est prétexte l'histoire du curé d'Uruffe.

On the stage, the village was represented in the characters of Duverger's mother, Mme Duverger, of Célestin, of the old curé, and of Thérèse Ménelon. The programme for L'Infâme indicated that a mother has a great influence in forming her son for the priesthood. Mme Duverger is the instigator of her son's vocation. She is depicted with understanding; her own existence has been hard:


She has, however, pushed her son into a way of life for which he is not suited. The play, and the performance by Aline Bertrand included in the portrait a domineering side:

Née et prédestinée à être bonne de curé, elle demeure impassible, refusant de dire ce qu'elle sait. Servante quoi qu'il arrive, mais servante qui a commandé et qui commande encore. Servante dont le service va jusqu'à la défense, jusqu'à l'agression, ou jusqu'à l'amour filial avec ses troubles et ses ambiguïtés, ses élans et ses luttes. Aline Bertrand est cette mère-servante avec une justesse et une sincérité inoubliables.

In the unpublished script, Mme Duverger makes a laconic departure. In the second play, Planchon added a passage in which she shows both the bitterness of her disappointment with her son, and the hardness that is in her:

Tout m'échappe des mains. Tout. Je ne parle pas des fourchettes et des assiettes. J'ai travaillé et maintenant on me confisque. Je vais disparaître tranquillement. Ce n'est pas triste, Monsieur l'Abbé. [To Tardieu]...

Et Dieu, hein? Qu'est-ce qu'il dit? Rien? C'est bien. Mais je vous supporte tous de plus en plus difficilement et vous, en particulier, Monsieur l'Abbé.

Oui, Guy, parle-moi de la saleté que tu as entre les jaunes. (1970, XI, p.76)

Within the village, people are, like the characters of La Remise, the deprived and the forgotten, living in a past which should not have survived into our century: "Tous ces échantillons d'humanité mutilée ou fruste seraient incompréhensibles sans le cadre de la campagne arriérée où ils ont effectivement vu le jour."1 Like Borée in La Remise, or the village of Le Cochon noir, the community is closed in upon itself. They tolerate a lecherous priest because they prefer to handle their own difficulties. Thérèse Ménelon, having had intercourse once with Duverger, later offers him a gift of money anonymously; she does not refer again to their encounter until Duverger is accused of the murder. When a girl tells of Duverger's behaviour with her, her father beats her so badly that he dislocates her shoulder. Even Célestin gives voice to a probably common prejudice when he suggests that "Si le Pape ne veut pas que de pareils scandales se reproduisent, il devra mettre des cadenas aux braguettes des jeunes abbés ou alors sa Sainte Altesse devra régler l'affaire, dès l'entrée au séminaire, avec un petit sécateur." (1970, XI, p.79).

Visually, the production was very stark. It reflected the poverty and cruelty of life in a remote agricultural area. Hubert Monloup designed the sets, aiming at a very simple and direct style to convey forcefully a complex portrait. Planchon described the mise en scène as a puritanical one:

C'est un spectacle très janséniste sur le plan de la forme avec des éléments très pauvres, avec quelques petits éléments décoratifs et quelques personnages dans un

The Théâtre de la Cité put on Bérénice in London in the month after the production of L'Infâme in Villeurbanne; possibly the deliberately geometric mise en scène which Planchon chose for the Racine play influenced his staging of L'Infâme.

Planchon gave a thorough description of the set:

L'espace scénique est ouvert, sans entrées, les scènes d'extérieur se passent sur une surface sablée et les scènes d'intérieur sur une surface de plancher de 5 mètres sur 6, où l'on apporte un mobilier très simple. La lumière est diffusée par des quartz pour les extérieurs (les trois quarts de la pièce se passent dans une espèce de nuit); pour les intérieurs est suggéré un plafonnement bas, avec des lumières plus près du sol. Les costumes sont transposés de sorte qu'ils ne sont pas caractéristiques d'une époque précise.²

Actors were seated on benches on either side of the playing area, "... dans un disponibilité pirandellienne, assis comme dans les stalles d'une église."³ When a scene finished, children's voices were heard reciting their catechism or their school history lessons, singing childish songs or asking each other riddles. The children's words created the atmosphere of French elementary schools, and their catechism replies echoed in a simplified form the religious phrases which the priests use in the play. The actors who were to appear in the next scene then came out onto the playing area, passing through a complicated series of paths and drawbridges. Before the action resumed, three backcloths descended, hiding the stage hands and the actors not involved in the scene. The cloths were off-white, with three little pink angels, slightly faded, at the top suggesting both childish religious faith and a decrepit reality. As in André Acquart's design for Troilus et Cressida, sets could be changed quickly and cleverly. Stagehands created "interiors" by placing a few boards in the centre of the stage, and then pushed them to the side of the stage to

form a sort of palisade for the outdoor scenes. Monloup suggested the setting of various scenes with very simple props: a few farm tables, for example, were placed together in different ways to suggest, at different times, a confessional, a bed, and an altar. The scene-shifting was stylised into a kind of liturgy in itself.

Gilles Brayer felt that the costumes were really "intemporels"; Monloup had succeeded in making them non-naturalistic:

Les soutanes ne sont pas en serge noir ou violette mais en tissu chiné noir et blanc et c'est dans ce même tissu que sont coupées les capotes des gendarmes. L'Evêque porte un chapeau de feutre noir à bords roulés et un pardessus. Celui du séminariste est en tissu gris clair à chevrons. Les costumes liturgiques sont par contre très vrais.

The costumes were designed to be seen in a half-light; they were part of the external expression of Duverger's frightened self-questioning. Only the liturgical costumes retained their reality; the church finally regains its dignity through the liturgy.

The deliberately long scene changes were a distancing technique as well as a comment on Duverger's milieu. Machinery was visible. The "stage language" in this production showed Planchon's allegiance to Brechtian principles of staging. Jean Dutourd complained that the long scene changes, with their complicated machinery and their ceremonial air, distracted him from the play: "Non seulement c'est assommant de monotonie, mais l'intérêt est constamment coupé." Dutourd evidently did not see the relation between the children's sing-song recitations and the rest of the play. Most viewers did understand. Even before the actors started to play, they were "Chargés de cette hérédité collective ..." which many Frenchmen share. The remarkable aspect of the set and the

mise en scène was their complete integration. In La Remise, the structure of the play, its experimental approach to time and place was faithfully interpreted in the sets. Here props, sets, scene changes, and mise en scène together completed and commented on the themes of the play. Gérard Guillot praised the carefully thought out sets very highly:

Ces personnages qui attendent leur tour sont tout à la fois acteurs et spectateurs, témoins et participants. La belle machine théâtrale accueille ses techniques; mais en même temps les techniques participent de l'élaboration significante. ... que dire de ces soutanes gris acier, plus parures que vêtements, de ces objets témoignant de la richesse du culte ... tout a été soigneusement étudié, pensé, conçu, semble-t-il, de l'intérieur. Quelle réussite dans cette alliance sans bavure et sans une seule fausse note de la mise en scène et de la décoration.¹

Not only the curious enchaînements, but the structure of the play itself attracted the interest of critics. Tableau VII especially caught their attention. In this scene, as we have seen, there are seven simultaneous settings. It is like a scene from Gatti's La Vie imaginaire de l'Éboueur Auguste Gai or like the multiple settings of the published version of Planchon's La Remise. We see at the same time Thérèse Ménelon, Célestin, the old curé, and later Mme Duverger in the house of Thérèse, Père Laurent writing a letter in his room, l'abbé Tardieu haranguing the peasants in a country inn, the Évêque in his room with his servant Édouard, the Inspecteur speaking on a wall telephone in a corner, Jean-Luc, the Évêque's nephew in the library of the presbytery, and Duverger lying down in his presbytery. The reactions of various characters to the crime are counterpointed to one another in this scene; it crystallizes the feelings about Duverger and the murder. Gilles Brayer called the scene "... le chef-d'œuvre de la mise en scène ...."² Jean-Jacques Lerrant rightly referred

¹. Lettres Françaises, April 2nd, 1969.
². Vie Lyonnaise, April 1st, 1969.
to it as an important example of Planchon's analytical approach: "... l'investigation ne se poursuit pas selon une ligne continue. Elle entrecroise parfois des solitudes, des rêves et des peurs, en un seul lieu aux pouvoirs multiples."¹

The general structure of the play was praised as well because its complexity was well suited to the study of a mad and anguished human being. Comparing L'Infini to La Remise, the Times critic described the second play's composition as "... a seemingly anarchic structure that is in reality a framework for a cleverly disguised enquiry on several levels into what makes people, and the institutions they serve, behave the way they do."² In many ways the play resembles La Remise. In L'Infini as in the earlier play a young man attends an enquiry and finds himself transformed by it; Jean-Luc, the Évêque's nephew, is like the Paul Chausson of the first two versions of La Remise. He is at first only half involved; he is related to the bishop and he is interested in Duverger as a fellow priest. Again his attitude is like that of Planchon to a certain extent; he is sympathetic toward Duverger, and he stands back to study the church's reaction to the criminal. Like Paul in the first versions of La Remise, he is profoundly affected by the enquiry and by its result; he leaves the priesthood and his studies.

The police inspector in L'Infini as in La Remise is able to make an intelligent appraisal of events and of the people involved in them. His cynicism gives him a perspective. He becomes, in his role of patient observer, a kind of pivot around which the other characters revolve, trying to explain or to get rid of Duverger. He was "L'inspecteur de police ... le type même du rationaliste qui sait très bien que la déduction et la logique l'emporteront sur la morale, la foi, la passion et la folie. Alors il attend."³ If Planchon had returned to the

1. Progrès (Lyons), March, 1969.
2. Special Correspondent, Times, April 2nd, 1969.
enquiry structure which he used in *La Remise*, it was because *L'Infâme*, even more than *La Remise*, was the psychological study of a being within his milieu. From their respective stand­
points, the Inspecteur and Jean-Luc both illuminate the charac­
ter of Duverger and the nature of his crime.

Staging and dramatic structure were inextricably
linked in the play to give the portrait of Duverger the greatest
density possible:

*L'œuvre déroutera aussi par sa conception même: des tableaux d'apparence vériste, in­
tercalés dans un tissu conjonctif sonore tout à fait non figuratif, voix d'enfants, cita­tions, le flux de l'inconscient collectif et des archétypes de la communauté où se déroule l'action.*

The play reflected a number of psychological levels interacting;
within Duverger himself, self-doubt, self-recrimination exist
side by side with a desire to exonerate himself or to escape
other people's blame:

*C'est aux incroyables tours de passe-passe des consciences, des monnaies d'échanges et des systèmes de compensation universelle que la pièce de Planchon s'applique avec transparence. **Il a merveilleusement compris que la seule mise bout à bout, bord à bord des diverses "choses" de cette affaire constituent un résidu suffisant qu'aucune "lecture" tendancieuse ne parvient à ramasser tout entière.***

In the published play, Planchon increased the pace at the end
of the drama by creating an *enchaînement direct* between tab­
bleaux X and XI, and integrating tableau XII into tableau XI;
there is thus no pause in the action from tableau X until the
end. The intensification of these scenes in which Duverger, almost in despair, finds a way of conciliating his actions with
church doctrine, and the church authorities find a way of trans­
forming Duverger's act into an occasion for liturgical cele­
brations, made them far more shocking. They are a suitable

collection to this "... théâtre d'analyse scrutant les replis

des êtres et dénudant les hypocrisies morales et sociales jusqu'à leur mystère même ..."¹

The critics seemed to ignore the fact that there are two levels of speech in this play, the educated speech of the priests and the simple but more vivid language of the peasants. Reviewers blamed Planchon for an imbalance between artifice and authenticity in the text: "Parfois, la langue est belle, parfois elle est plate ou d'une efficacité trop visible."² Pierre Marcabru³ declared as critics had done after La Remise, that Planchon's style was an awkward attempt at realism:

... C'est une écriture plate, une sous-écriture, réaliste avec ce que ce réalisme comporte de fabrication, et en fin de compte de coquetteries de style, écriture venue droite du siècle dernier, de l'atelier de Maupassant ou de Daudet, écriture scolaire et maladroite tout à la fois, et non pas cette écriture neutre qu'une telle autopsie réclame ...

Marcabru blamed this failure on a basic hesitation which he sensed in the play between objectivity and subjectivity, between materialism and psychology, and also on "... cette confusion entre l'écriture petite-bourgeoise et prolétarienne qui marquent si fortement les limites du réalisme socialiste, à quoi Planchon sacrifie." He thought that none of Planchon's characters came alive.

Clearly this is a play of dialogue and discussion rather than of action. The text and the characters are convincing and alive however, even when one reads the play without the benefit of a complementary and enriching "stage language."

Guy Verdot defended the text on the basis of its poetic power:


¹. Jean-Jacques Lerrant, Progrès (Lyons), March, 1969.
Poirot-Delpech too felt that Planchon's non-realistic approach was justified by the beauty of his language in this play:

"Au combat anti-religieux - qu'on lui reprochera peut-être de ne pas livrer - il préfère l'investigation presque poétique. Ce qui reste de la soirée, ce sont des mots attristés sur la souffrance, sur l'opacité du monde, sur la fragilité des signes, ce sont une attention singulière à la nature, des images de brouillard blanc, de nuages, de nuit ...".

Seeing the play a year later, during the company's season in Paris, Poirot-Delpech again praised the beauty of the text, emphasising the control and subtlety of Planchon's style and the depth of comprehension in his attitude to Duverger:

"Comme écrivain de théâtre, Roger Planchon affirme de pièce en pièce un goût plus marqué pour la formule ramassée et frappante, pour une certaine éloquence, pour les scènes balancées et les belles chutes. Nourri des grandes traditions, le style préfère au réalisme et aux audaces une rhétorique ajustée, où la confidence et la référence à la nature se remarquent d'autant plus qu'elles sont rares, presque sèches à force de pudeur. Car il y a de la pudeur dans cette analyse d'un scandale, une vraie compréhension de l'"autre", si éloigné soit-il.".

The play provoked extremely strong reactions in France. The mayor of Nancy banned performances from his city, purportedly out of consideration for the relatives of Desnoyers who still lived in the area. Planchon found this incomprehensible: "... La censure municipale n'existait pas jusqu'alors. Il y avait là comme un refuge de la liberté. Après la décision du maire de Nancy, la censure municipale est établie. Le maire fait, en quelque sorte, son entrée dans la critique artistique." Planchon refused to present Bérénice which was to be shown at Nancy in the same series as L'Infâme. Associations in Nancy protested to the mayor, and sent a telegram to

Planchon congratulating him on his courage. After a presentation of L'Infâme in Rheims at the Maison de la Culture in November 1970, actors dressed as priests took up a collection to send the mayor of Nancy a birthday present of flowers. Planchon claimed that the play had been chosen and then banned without being read. (The theatre later sued the city of Nancy, and finally won its case in October 1973). A Lyons critic, Jean Beaumont, after reading only the programme (which included excerpts from the trial of Desnoyers) refused to see L'Infâme or even to attend a press conference about it. Without reading the play he declared confidently: "Il s'agit moins d'analyser un cas monstrueux que d'accuser l'Église et le Sacerdoce de secrérer des monstres, des obsédés, des meurtriers."\

Hostile critics accused Planchon of not knowing enough about the church. Even his characterisation of the priests seemed to be an attack on the church; because members of the hierarchy react differently to the crime, some critics thought that Planchon wanted to show an organisation fundamentally divided within itself:

Il semble qu'il [Planchon] ait été surtout préoccupé de nous donner sans en avoir l'air et sous le masque de l'impartialité, une attaque caricaturale contre la hiérarchie ecclésiastique en nous dépeignant son désarroi devant une telle situation. Certes chacun est représenté très objectivement mais tous sont d'avis différent, l'ensemble donne l'impression de l'anarchie, il n'y a plus aucune idée directrice.\

J. C. Dumoulin also objected that the priests in L'Infâme behaved too much according to their temperament rather than according to common guiding principles: "Nous nous trouvons en présence de divers types de prêtres, dont chacun réagit selon son tempérament bien plutôt qu'en fonction de la ligne de pensée qu'il pourrait représenter au sein de l'Église."\n
But was there

2. Dr. Barthélémy, Ouest Médical, March 24th, 1970.
really one established line of behaviour with which all the priests could react to such a crime as Duverger's? Planchon shows his characters searching, each according to his own lights, for a Christian way of dealing with Duverger. They finally decide on the celebrations of expiation. Had the priests agreed from the start they would have seemed inhuman.

The criticism of Planchon's treatment of the church, the banning of the play in Nancy, are indications that the Catholic mentality is indeed very strong still in France; yet not only Catholics attacked the play:

Le thème est Dieu, précisément. Un drôle de Dieu, en vérité qui n'inspire guère les croyants et fait ricaner les incroyants, ou les simples, figurés ici par un berger crasseux qui tresse ses chèvres. Devant une pareille caricature, et pareillement indigente, du Dieu des livres d'image, j'ai beau ne pas être chrétien, je suis gêné par une si manifeste mauvaise foi.1

It was a play intended for a country with a predominantly Catholic ideology. A British reviewer seems to have found the end of the play inordinately shocking; his language suggests that he felt that he was witnessing frightening superstitious rituals:

Planchon castigates an inflexible religious system that breeds such painful paradoxes as Duverger. He also switches his drama halfway through into a poetically conceived black mass in which victim and persecutor inextricably overlap. It ends on a ceremonial note (the hounding of the criminal and the public expiation of unspoken and untold other sins by means of brain-washing rituals) as terrifying as the events leading up to it.2

The play certainly gave rise to much misunderstanding.

Planchon insisted that he saw the church as an organisation of human beings rather than as a model of a divine order. It was no doubt the humanity of his portraits which annoyed critics accustomed to considering the hierarchy with

reverence. As he had done in *La Remise*, Planchon investigated the reactions of a human being within his milieu:

... l'enquête policière ... apparaît ... comme une investigation psycho-sociologique destinée à mettre en lumière tous les éléments qui peuvent conduire un homme à la folie, en faire finalement une victime, dont le crime même sera exploité par l'Eglise, qui organisera d'imposantes cérémonies expiatoires: ... si Roger Planchon démonte sans complaisance certains mécanismes de la hiérarchie ecclésiastique, il ne tombe pas dans un anticléricalisme vulgaire auquel le sujet pouvait facilement tourner.

Within the structure of the church, the social divisions of the secular world subsist. Yves-Marie Choupaut² rightly pointed out that Planchon had seen in the church's reaction examples of class ideas as well as manifestations of the priest's personalities:

Mais il y a quelque chose de pathétiquement vrai dans ces affrontements de ce curé paysan avec son évêque aristocrate. Et c'est à partir de cet antagonisme social que la pièce s'éloigne de l'univers de Bernanos pour finalement le nier. Le repentir du curé n'est pas vu comme une victoire de la grâce, mais comme une défaite des hommes, une soumission du plus faible au plus fort. L'étrange prêtre cesse d'être traversé par ces éclairs de raison qui lui faisaient furtivement entre-voir sa situation avec une terrible humeur de potence.

Duverger changes from a sardonic reappraisal of his vocation to an acceptance of the Evêque's formula for reintegrating him into the body of the church. At the same time, Planchon, despite his own atheism, does not dismiss Duverger's religious faith as hypocrisy or ignorance. Choupaut concluded that the play had a basic spiritual dimension:

Quoi qu'on pense des idées de l'auteur, qui ne dissimule pas son athéisme, cette pièce est de celles qui vous coupent le souffle. Car

---

Planchon a réinventé, en lui donnant les dimensions du XXe siècle, le dialogue tragique qui met aux prises depuis des millénaires l'homme et la divinité.

Bernard Bost, too, thought that the fundamental questions in the play never excluded the spiritual order:

Planchon ne ferait qu'attaquer l'Église s'il la présentait comme une puissance sèculière, mais parce qu'il lui prête un investissement mystique, L'Infâme est une œuvre de foi; ... Planchon fait ... vivre un combat dans lequel les forces sont plus spirituelles que sociales. 1

Duverger is a man driven to a mad act by the pressures not only of his social group, but of his faith. His fellow priests are driven not only by personal motives but also by their beliefs. It is true that the church's récupération of Duverger is ironically presented. It is true also, however, that Planchon does not condemn the characters who find this solution. Père Laurent, despite his sense of propriety in public, in private writes to his brother of his own spiritual conflicts. He feels the ineffectiveness of the words with which he has tried to guide other men:

"Priez la Vierge. Confiez-lui votre âme boueuse, vos tourments passeront avec l'âge." Ce sont les banalités que je récite aux prêtres que je confesse. Si ces mots les consolent et les apaisent, Dieu agit à travers moi, car mes sermons sur la chasteté sont si plats. ... Je pense souvent au grand Teilhard de Chardin qui a déclaré n'avoir jamais connu ni tentations, ni luttes dans ce domaine. Question de tempérament sans doute. (Il prend sa plume et corrige sa lettre)... de grâce. (1970, VII, p.69)

Even the abbé Tardieu's naïveté can be blamed on his youth, and it is counterbalanced by the seriousness of Laurent and l'Évêque. Planchon's characters are intelligent and they act in good faith. Their dilemma is that the principles by which they wish to live have little relation to ordinary human behaviour.

Some reviewers were as irritated by Planchon's portrayal of the village as they were by his ideas on the church. Georges Durand considered the play "... systématiquement anticlericalement..." and thought that the village in the play was too backward: "... Roger Planchon situe le drame dans son Ardèche natale, et reconstitue un village abîté, exagérément sous-éduqué et sous-développé, les enfants énonçant en leitmotiv une histoire de France et un catéchisme sommaire jusqu'au squelette." Most critics, however, understood that the picture of the village was intended to increase our understanding of the unfortunate Duverger. He was placed "... dans un milieu humain et social qui est sans doute le mieux fait pour que cette vocation forcée débouche sur le scandale. C'est un milieu paysan, secret, un village replié sur lui-même, et dont les habitants préféreraient régler leurs affaires intérieures bien entre eux." No one is totally blamable; Duverger's mother is herself the victim of a bleak life, Thérèse Ménelon of loneliness, the village of tolerance based on a fear of scandal. Nevertheless the influences on Duverger have pushed him into a life of concealment and hypocrisy. Claude Roy saw Duverger as a person caught in a current of contradictory ideas and beliefs, "... cet enchevêtrement de croyances irrationnelles et de structures sociales, de loi biologiques et de règles continues, de rapports économiques et de survivances archaïques, de sagesses empiriques et d'extravagances dogmatiques qui constitue la paroisse d'une société agraire et sa religion, sa vie quotidienne." Even Jean Dutourd, who considered the play a failure, commended in it one aspect, "... le sens du folklore français, de la terre française, des choses de chez-nous." Planchon himself is aware of the strong provincialism of his work. L'Infini like La Remise and Le Cochon noir captures the spirit of old-fashioned Catholicism still alive.

1. Comtois (Besançon), Mar. 5th, 1970.
in the remoter parts of France:

Avec L’Infâme, l’auteur Planchon réalise pleinement son dessein d’ancrer une réalité particulière et individualisée, un cas limite, dans la réalité complexe et parfois mystérieuse de la province française. — ou plutôt d’une province, celle dont il est issu et qu’il connaît le mieux. Ce n’est pas le curé assassin qui sent le soufre, mais bien le monde qui l’entoure, dispensant l’encens comme du désodorisant quand il faudrait changer les mentalités pour purifier l’atmosphère.

Of Planchon’s three peasant plays, L’Infâme is the one in which there are the fewest references to the outside world, and virtually no allusions to historical events in the nation or beyond it. Yet the reverberation of the crime in L’Infâme is nationwide, whereas the murders in La Remise, and those in Le Cochon noir are known to few people. In L’Infâme Père Laurent worries about the publicity which the church gets after Duverger’s crime. Duverger's own behaviour is histrionic and self-conscious; it seems intended for the outside world as well as for the village. When he is finally arrested, for example, he walks along dramatically holding aloft the crucifix of a borrowed rosary. The expiation ceremonies at the end are to take place in every parish of France. There is thus a constant feeling that the investigation is taking place in full view of the nation. The journalists do not appear in the play; their reaction is reported to l’Evêque by the Inspecteur: they believe that by getting rid of Duverger the church would only grow stronger. Their point of view, like that of the Inspecteur is that of people who do not have "... la tête théologique..." (1970, XII, p.81) Their presence in the background is however a reminder that many people are concerned with Duverger, the crime, and the church’s reaction to it. An English critic saw in the picture of a typical isolated agricultural community a questioning going beyond the facts of

Duverger's case or his motives:

All this blows up against a wall of misery and apathy, of countryfolk too set in their ways to care, or too puny to revolt. The training and celibacy of the priesthood are incidental problems in a far wider complex, which questions the whole basis of Catholic teaching.  

The intervals during which children recited catechism and history lessons were thus far from being a mere structural device; they showed the fundamental links between Duverger and his village, between that village and the rest of France, between the characters of the play and the people in Planchon's audiences. Based on an incident which shook the entire country and called into question fundamental assumptions of French Catholicism, the play could not be regarded as divorced from social realities. Planchon had chosen the topic for its very impact on people of all kinds even thirteen years after the crime.

The play did not claim to explain Desnoyers. Planchon's Duverger was a fictional character; nevertheless, critics complained that he bore no resemblance to his real life model. Some saw an unjustifiable transformation of the man into a more intelligent character than he was:

Le Desnoyers de Planchon est parfois un raisonneur vindicatif, sorte de philosophe du mal. C'est trop faire d'honneur à ce médiocre qui avait échoué à son certificat d'études et dont chacun constatait le manque total de préoccupations intellectuelles.

... Planchon ... en fait un sournois discuteur, épileptique ou cabotin, dostoïevskien de corps et d'âme, bouffon de Dieu, bouffon des hommes, bête littéraire.

Others, on the other hand, complained that Duverger seemed too insane and that he could not be held responsible for his actions. He was "... un personnage incohérent et frénétique ..."; "...  


2. Georges Durand, Comtois (Besançon), March 5th, 1970.

un obsédé qui est tout près d'être un fou ..."; "... un dément dont les actes n'ont pas même la logique de la démence."

Even favourable reviews often made the reservation that Duverger seemed too insane. Gilles Brayer would have preferred "... un être sain physiquement et responsable de ses actes, ainsi que les médecins l'ont déclaré au procès." Some critics saw Duverger as a double personality, "... l'obsédé sexuel ... le croyant ..." or even "... assassin et mystique ...".

Planchon's portrait of Duverger confused critics because it treated his shifting logic with a serious desire to illuminate all his fears and his bravadoes. The difficulties are innumerable for Duverger; he faces not only the village, the police, and his ecclesiastic superiors, but also "... la folie, la peur, les doutes qui l'assaillent; une solitude totale, face aux hommes, face à Dieu, dans l'écroulement de ce qui constituait son univers, dans l'angoisse de voir se dérober à chaque pas toutes les notions apprises, admises jusque-là comme l'expression d'une 'morale' ...". Planchon's performance as Duverger left out none of these conflicting forces: "Tourmenté ou lâche, colèreux ou dégoûté, décidé à se battre ou obsédé et vaincu par son geste, l'abbé Duverger-Planchon émeut et envoie, fascine et amuse ...." The quality of Planchon's compassion for the criminal priest had misled critics into seeing, on the one hand, an attack on the church, on the other, a play filled with faith - on the one hand, a madman, on the other, a cynic:

Le spectacle ... laisse ... l'impression,

Planchon was able to portray a human being whose beliefs have helped to make him into a criminal; he was able to sympathise with his anguish without sharing the faith behind it. Jean-Jacques Lerrant\(^2\) commended both the portrait of Duverger by Planchon the writer and the portrayal of Duverger by Planchon the actor. The priest alternately defies his milieu and complies with its demands; ultimately he is indefinable:

... un personnage traîné, poussé dans le sacerdoce par une mère à la tendresse accablante, à la piété naïve et refoulée, un homme torturé jusqu'à la folie par les exigences de la chair, un prêtre accablé de remords par ses péchés de luxure, un curé de village révolté contre la hiérarchie. Un homme, enfin, en proie à des contradictions fondamentales et cependant attaché à son caractère sacré comme à une promotion sociale et à une protection magique. Mais ... Planchon ... sait que personne n'est entièrement démontable et démontrable.

The humaneness with which Planchon treated this being, a criminal struggling for self-respect, vindicated his choice of the topic. Lerrant knew that the subject of the play was shocking and sensational; Planchon could use the story not only because it had had a profound effect on French people but because "C'est le privilège et je dirai même le devoir du poète de faire ... son œuvre avec le pitoyable matériel humain, le sang corrompu et la boue des charnières." Planchon had succeeded in transforming such material into a supremely understanding portrait of a hunted criminal and a lapsed priest.

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2. Progrès (Lyons), March, 1969.
Le Cochon noir

La veuve:
Tout rentre dans l'ordre: les filles sont mortes.
L'exorciseur est parti. Le curé sera rendu aux
prêtres des villes. On dit qu'à Paris tout
s'arrange....................................................
..........................................................
La vie est douce, mon trésor.

Le Cochon noir was written in 1973 after La Langue
au Chat; it is thus chronologically beyond the scope of this
study. It is included for two reasons: the first is that it
is the first play which Planchon published almost as soon as
he had written it; the second is that it develops themes which
preoccupied Planchon in La Remise and in L'Infâme.

Le Cochon noir is the third of Planchon's peasant
plays. In a discussion after a presentation of the play,¹ he
said that he had written it in seven days: "elle [la pièce]
me fut 'donnée". As in La Remise and L'Infâme, Planchon
shows in this play a self-assurance as a writer, a confidence
based on his thorough knowledge of and feeling for the setting.
The play is set in the provinces, once again in a small village
in an area like the Ardèche; it takes place during the Semaine
sanglante during which the Parisian Commune of 1871 was defeated
and the communards unceremoniously executed. Like the other
two plays, it depicts the peasants apparently isolated from
historical events by their poverty, their isolation, and their
ignorance. Planchon was eloquent when he described to Colette
Godard the unique situation of the people:

Le Cochon noir se situe à la campagne, en
Ardèche peut-être, puisque j'y ai passé mon
enfance, en tout cas dans un pays séparé du
monde par la pauvreté: l'Ardèche a toujours
été tellement pauvre qu'elle n'a pas même

¹. At the Comédie de Caen, December 1973, information kindly
communicated by Dorothy Knowles.
Planchon's picture recalls the description of the modern-day Ardèche by Gabriel in *La Remise*; he too complains of tourists who come to admire the scenery and leave behind nothing but their rubbish. Like the characters of *La Remise*, those of *Le Cochon noir* are affected by historical forces beyond their comprehension. Planchon told Colette Godard that he considered the Commune of 1571 as a historical turning point, the beginning of our modern industrialized world: "La Commune représente le commencement du monde industriel; un moment idéologique extraordinaire: pour la première fois, le prolétariat prend la parole, c'est le début de la mort des compagnes." The peasants of *La Remise* thus live through the final results of a process of economic and ideological development which begins during the time of *Le Cochon noir*. There is a similar link between *L'Infaîte* and *Le Cochon noir*, which Planchon himself explained:

The affair of the curé of Uruffe was the starting point for *L'Infaîte*. I'm convinced that this was the last time a Mass of Atonement was said in the whole of France. It wouldn't be possible nowadays. I have the same feeling about *The Black Pig*. After 1671 there couldn't be any more sorcerers, at least not like before. This particular juncture was at once their high point and the beginning of the end. The triumph of the Church in *L'Infaîte* is just the prelude to the great thaw — they knew it had to come.2

This is the first of Planchon's peasant plays in which we see the action taking place directly, and in the


present, rather than having to piece it together from an enquiry into the past. The characters are defined not through the memories of others or through their own accounts of themselves, but through their actions. We see the incidents in the village, while the events of the Semaine sanglante take place in the background. In a way, Planchon's Le Cochon noir is to Adamov's Le Printemps 71, (a 1961 play on the communards) as his Bleus, blancs, rouges is to Ariane Mnouchkine's 1789; in neither instance did Planchon concentrate like his fellow writers on the major events of the revolutions. Instead he showed the point of view of ordinary people not involved directly or consciously in creating these events.

The programme sets the tone of the play:

Une noce paysanne au temps des cerises... Le promis s'en vient par-delà les collines, les violonneux en tête du cortège, un beau mariage, un fils de propriétaire, le jeune Toin, et Violette, une héritière bien dotée. Mais où est l'idylle en ce mois de mai 1871? Le fiancé est blessé et la France a perdu la guerre. Les Versaillais marchent sur Paris, c'est la Semaine sanglante.

Planchon showed in a few of the tableaux between the scenes of the play what was happening in Paris. In his productions of Bleus, blancs, rouges, tableaux between the scenes developed into a separate comment on the revolution from the point of view of the common people. In Le Cochon noir, the historical sequences are far more subdued; they merely remind us that a revolution is being quelled while the villagers go about their affairs. There is, at the start, a short prologue, taken from Adamov's La Commune de Paris - 18 mars au 28 mai 1871, in which a group of young communards beg for money to support orphaned children of their dead comrades. The background noise of gunfire blends in with the sound of a violin playing "Le Temps des cerises". The sound of the explosions

grows louder and that of the violin softer as the first scene of the play opens, with Gédéon teasing his daughter Eulalie. Again, after Scene VI, in which Gédéon struggles with one of his visions, there is a short interlude during which a group of wounded communards line up against a wall and fall, probably shot by a firing squad—sound effects are optional in Planchon's stage direction. John Burgess, who attended the rehearsals of the play and saw it in performance, described another of these silent scenes:

Two communards, stripped to the waist, drag a huge red cloth down the sloping ramp. The red material spreads out until it covers nearly a third of the stage. The communards kneel, holding the corners over their shoulders, pulling the material taut. One by one the villagers enter, holding pine branches in front of their faces. They form up in a solid phalanx on the red material. Two shots are heard. The communards fall forward on their faces.¹

The revolution, and especially the recent Franco-Prussian War, have had their effects on the villagers directly. Just as in La Remise the gassed simple-minded Gaston appears as a victim of the First World War, and then Gabriel, lamed, as evidence of the Indo-Chinese war, so young Toin, the bridegroom, comes to his wedding leaning on a cane; he has been wounded, and he is not demobilised but only on leave. There are far more women than men at the wedding feast. During this scene of wedding preparations, the conversation turns to the events in Paris. The villagers are not only interested in the events; they are strongly against the revolutionary communards. A peasant woman says of the young groom, "Il a raison de vouloir se marier. La guerre est loin d'être finie. Il se passe trop de vilaines choses à Paris. Avec cette Commune, c'est la guerre civile qui commence."² When someone tells of the

². Le Cochon noir La Remise, Collection Le Manteau d'Arlequin (Paris: Editions Gallimard for the NRF, 1973), Scene III, p.26. Further quotations from the text will give only the scene and page numbers.
march of the Versailles on Paris, people's anti-revolutionary feelings come out; someone says that the communards killed children; for the villagers, the revolutionaries are "... ceux qui voulaient nous prendre nos terres." (III, p.30) The peasants are against any threat to the established order.

Planchon inserted into this conversation a human perspective also; when le Solitaire speaks solemnly of the honour of the nation, la veuve, who has lost two sons at war, protests drunkenly: "Je me fous de la patrie. Rendez-moi les enfants que j'ai perdus. Qu'est-ce que j'ai à foutre de toutes vos médailles." (III, p.31), and she stamps the medals into the mud. This is the most immediate effect of the war on the countryside: it maims or kills its young men. Planchon himself said during rehearsals that la veuve's "... outburst ... though soon stifled, is politically very important."^1

Gédéon also refers to historical events during his fantasies. He has visions of a return of Napoleon. He integrates his knowledge of the recent war and of the revolution in Paris into his sexual fears and fantasies. The emperor appears in the form of le Grand Charretier, whose wife Gédéon has raped and killed; Gédéon attempts to frighten off the threatening form: "À Paris, tuez si vous le jugez bon tous les méchants qui font le désordre, tuez tous les socialistes. Mais ne tuez pas le laboureur, il aime l'Ordre." (VI, p.48)

Even Gédéon is on the side of order although he himself sows discord by his behaviour in the village. When another emperor appears in the form of Eulalie, his daughter, Gédéon gives him similar advice: "Allez combattre les Prussiens. Le front français est enfoncé et c'est pour ça qu'à Paris, c'est la pétaudière." (VI, p.45) For Gédéon the revolutionaries are really little more than faraway scapegoats; he wants them defeated, but only as part of a general policy of removing any threat to his safety.

Once again Planchon's feeling for the Ardèche and its people suffuses the entire play. One of the characters, the

brutal Rank (*le Grand Charretier*) was based on a real person well-known in the Ardèche were Planchon spent part of his childhood. Backward, superstitious, and ignorant, the Ardéchois of 1871 are not very different from medieval characters, and, significantly, they are not so different either from the characters of *La Remise* or of *L'Infâme*. Planchon's style had matured when he wrote *Le Cochon noir*: the customs of the region, its prejudices, its mentality, are presented with the greatest possible economy of means. Eulalie, like Marie Giffard in *La Remise*, loses her hopes for marriage, but her own expression of her bleak prospects is far more succinct than that of *la Giffard*. Eulalie is moved by anger at her father:

> Le fils Toin n'était promis. C'est toi qui me l'a fait perdre. Maintenant, je vais rester toute ma vie à traîner, sale, dépêpillée, pour te servir, pour racle ta merde.

> Un riche ne donnera jamais son fils à une fille dont le père viole les femmes des voisins et se bat comme un fou avec tout le village.

(I, p.16)

In the same way, Planchon presents Violette's moral dilemma in one venomous speech by Gédéon: "Ne parle pas, si tu es maligne. Si tu parles, ils me tueront mais toi, tu ne trouveras jamais de mari. On n'épouse pas une fille violée."

(IV, p.34) Planchon also defines the villagers through their actions. Their superstition is evident in their acceptance of the exorcism. In all their decisions they show a sense of communal responsibility for good or evil. They can be persuaded to believe that the possession of one village girl threatens the welfare of everyone. Family unity is also very strong. A fear of staining the family honour keeps the young bridegroom from intervening while Violette is "exorcised". Children are punished for the sins of their parents. *Le Solitaire* claims that the innocent Violette is expiating the sins of her mother Mme Victorine; the *Grand Charretier* avenges the death of his wife on Gédéon's daughter. Nothing extraneous is added to this play for the sake of "local colour"; the characters define themselves and their condition in dialogues reduced to essentials, and through their behaviour.
The language which most of the peasants use is powerful in its very starkness. During a discussion of the play, people complained that the language was coarse, but Planchon explained that he had used for inspiration Geneviève Bollème's *La Bibliothèque bleue*, a compendium of the popular literature of France from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Indeed, he admitted that he had used entire sentences from the book. The speech of the peasants was thus authentic, even in its crudeness. Its directness and energy reflects the hardness of the peasants' lives and of their outlook. Their sentences are in general short and crisp, with no attempt at a literary flourish. When they use imagery it is usually taken from the bible or from the liturgy. They use scriptural references even to insult one another. Eulalie calls her father "... l'hameçon du diable." Plus méchant que Cain qui tua son frère et que le Pharaon qui fit mourir tous les enfants mâles des Israélites." (I, p.13) Violette considers him more cruel than "Les esprits méchants qui volent par bataillons..." (IV, p.35) As it was for the characters of Lauzun, in *L'Infâme*, the world is filled with living forces for good or evil.

In *L'Infâme*, Planchon opposed the liturgical phraseology of the priests to the vivacious terminology of the peasants. In *Le Cochon noir*, a conventional picture of women is given by the curé, the Solitaire, and to some extent by Gédéon. It is put into perspective, however, by the extreme vitality of the women characters in the play. The men's attitude to women is medieval. In *La Remise*, a wife is a beast of burden and a source of sexual gratification; in *L'Infâme*, a woman is a source of temptation and a victim, a


2. An oath borrowed from Bollème's *La Bibliothèque Bleue*, p.166.
a servant and an irresistible influence; in Le Cochon noir, she is a source of sin and of sexual delight. The dying curé evokes the most primitive myths about women:

Certains disent que quand les femmes ont leurs règles, de leur vue elles empoisonnent les animaux, infectent les enfants au maillot, tachent le miroir le plus propre, donnent la vérole et le chancre à ceux qui les connaissent pendant ce temps-là. (II, p.2)

Le Solitaire quotes Ecclesiastes to support his condemnation of the old priest's lechery: "Le commencement du péché a été fait par la femme. Et par elle nous mourons tous."¹ (II, p.23) Gédéon, when he wishes to impress the other villagers, boasts that he looks upon women as little more than a sexual prey:

Il y a deux sortes de femmes. Les moites, les humides qui se tiennent près des ruisseaux. Et celles qui baissent de préférence au mois d'août. Celles-là sont plus après. Mais quand elles s'y mettent, elles se déchaînent. Elles aiment qu'on les prenne par derrière, dans les lieux protégés du soleil, Les autres c'est le contraire. Elles ont le cul plus étroit et plus rouge. (III, p.27)

During rehearsals, Planchon told Jean Bouise that this speech should be extremely "pontifical": he even suggested that Bouise think of de Gaulle as he spoke.²

The women characters in Le Cochon noir, however, are magnificently strong. In a play in which the ability to use language well is a powerful tool, all the women characters speak with extraordinary energy. Eulalie taunts Violettes, after she has been raped, with vigour and cruelty:

Je sais pourquoi tu veux te pendre: le fils Toin est reparti chez lui. Celui-là, c'est trois fois moins qu'une bouse de vache. Pourquoi pleures-tu? Parce que le diable t'a mordu les fesses? Faut croire que ce jour-là, il avait bon appétit. (IV, p.36)

Violette herself, alone to face the entire community, and

1. 19 Vers. 19 Another borrowing from La Bibliothèque bleue, p.166.

questioned by a frightening Solitaire, shows a solid resistance at first to him and to his suggestions; she even seems to enjoy insulting those who accuse her:

Tous à me harceler. Tous à se vautrer dans les malice du solitaire. Tous vos coeurs sont des bourbiers. Si Dieu disait à haute voix ce que vous faites en secret, on entendrait des choses qui vous ferait renfrogner le nez. Rachat d'ordures! (V, p. 41)

Mme Victorine too, when she has decided on a course of action, shows an irresistible will; she has to obtain the corpse of the curé from la boîteuse who offers some objection; she has the woman beaten, suggests that she has had immoral relations with the curé, and finally states her will categorically:

Confiez-moi la charogne de votre curé une couple d'heures. Je ne le rendrai pas endommagé. C'est mon dernier mot.
Maintenant, les garçons vont distribuer l'or ou les coups de trique. Choisissez. (VII, p. 55)

The hardness of these women comes from their need to resist cruel conditions of existence.

The play includes a portrait of a woman lustily reminiscent of Chaucer's Wife of Bath. In each of his two peasant plays, Planchon created the figure of a lonely and frustrated woman, the hate-filled Marie Giffard in La Remise, the emotional Thérèse Ménelon in L'Infâme. The character of la veuve in Le Cochon noir surpasses both these portraits in intensity and colour. La veuve is passionately attached to life. She first appears at the curé's bedside when her husband has just died, ready to pit all the supernatural forces which she can command against his death; her words are almost an incantation:

J'invoque le nom sacré de Dieu. J'invoque le nom sacré de Dieu. Je frappe aux portes de ses maisons. Ah! monsieur le curé - tenir Dieu par le revers de sa veste et lui dire: "Rendez-moi mon homme".

J'ai couru toutes les églises de la vallée. Dans toutes, j'ai fait brûler des cierges. Il est froid depuis deux jours déjà. Mais si partout on prie très fort, si on dit des messes, si on brûle des cierges, Dieu le retirera du royaume des morts...
Faut-il que je me jette tête en avant contre la pierre du maître-autel pour que Dieu m'entende? Allumez les cierges, je vous dis. Faites-moi crédit, je paierai plus tard, je vendrai mes cheveux à la ville. (II, pp. 20-21)

She begins to pursue Gédéon with as much energy as she used to try to have her husband returned to her. The vitality of her grief and of her desire is almost overpowering. She spins poor Violette around and pinches her in a fit of anger; she persists in courting Gédéon in the face of his professed indifference. She finally wins him over not only by threatening to denounce him to the police, but also, and especially, because her own healthy positivity seems to afford protection from his visions and comfort after his daughter Eulalie's death.

It is not only the women themselves who make the Solitaire's estimation of them seem limited and irrelevant. Gédéon's attitude toward them is ambivalent. In the presence of Eulalie, he is far more conciliating toward them than the two holy men:

Certains disent que les femmes sont un abîme de bêtise. Je crois le contraire. Je ne dis pas que les femmes soient sans défaut ou de moindre vice que les hommes. Mais quoi! nous sommes tous enfants d'Eve et d'Adam. (IV, pp. 35-36)

In his incestuous relations with his daughter there is even a tenderness absent in other people's speeches:

Tu as le ventre de ta mère. Des belles cuisses bien douillettes. Ton corps a mille belles qualités. Moi, je t'ai toujours prise avec beaucoup de plaisir. Je te suis redevable d'une infinie de bonheurs. Tous ceux qui te prendront après moi seront de mon avis. (I, p.16)

Planchon said in a discussion after the play that incest was relatively common in peasant areas in the past, as a way of keeping the patrimoine intact. Their relationship is thus not intended to seem shocking. Moral prohibition of incest is

1. At the Comédie de Caen, Dec. 1973, information kindly communicated by Dorothy Knowles.
simply irrelevant to them. Indeed, during rehearsals, Planchon pointed out that because Gédéon and Eulalie are living outside the community, they are immune to the power of the Solitaire: "... his power is the power of convention."^1

Gédéon's paternal authority is thrust upon him. Planchon said in the same discussion that Gédéon dreams of the emperor because the emperor is head of the nation just as Gédéon is head of his household. In one of his visions, Eulalie his daughter appears as Napoleon and takes the "masculine" role, treating Gédéon as a weak woman to be protected. Jacques Rosner, who produced the play at Avignon described the characters' gestures during the scene:

Pour moi, le moment capital de la pièce est le rêve de Gédéon, celui où la jeune fille qu'il vient de violer accouche d'un cochon noir. Il la fait taire en lui couvrant la tête d'un voile. L'empereur est là sous l'aspect d'un charretier qui, dans la réalité, le poursuit de sa vengeance. Il est recouvert d'une grande cape et porte un manteau napoléonien. Il tire l'oreille de Gédéon, [Le] menace de le dépecer, de boire son sang. Gédéon appelle sa fille à l'aide, lui transmet le chapeau de l'empereur, lui ordonne de le châtrer. La fille rejette la cape, découvre une plaie béante. Elle grimpe à califourchons sur Gédéon. Les symboles sont clairs.2

This exchange of roles reveals Gédéon's doubts about his position; his authority stems not from innate superiority but from social convention, and in his innermost being he finds his power terrifying. Colette Godard was certainly right when she wrote that "Roger Planchon n'est pas un auteur misogynne."3 Through Gédéon and Eulalie, Planchon showed how little social and even religious conventions are related to human behaviour. Morality is invoked by Gédéon and Eulalie without real reference

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to their behaviour, which is that of lovers. Eulalie uses conventional moral precepts to try to shame her father for failing as a provider; Gédéon quotes religious commandments of filial obedience and respect in order to seduce Eulalie. The play thus gives a perspective on moral codes; they may be used to explain behaviour but never to determine it.

Jacques Rosner said in an interview with Colette Godard\(^1\) that, having moved away from Villeurbanne and looked at Planchon's work with a greater perspective, he had become sensitive especially to a quality which Planchon often neglects when he speaks of his own plays, "Ce qu'il [le théâtre de Planchon] contient d'ombre, de mystère, son aspect mythique..." Planchon tends to emphasise the political and social dimension of his work rather than this mythical side of it. Rosner's reading of the play at Avignon in August, 1973, emphasised the personal relations between the characters ("Qui peut prétendre ne pas connaître la culpabilité, la peur de la castration, la fascination de la violence?") and the presence of the village as almost a character in itself: "Le village lui-même éternel, indestructible, calme, un protecteur, une image de la mère et de la mort, face aux images caricaturales du bruit."

The picture of life in this Ardèche village is very hard. Luciano Damiani's design for Planchon's production of the play in Caen in December 1973 reflected this hardness. It suggested a bleak countryside: "La terre est un plancher de bois noir, vaste comme la lande du roi Lear, qui rejoint le ciel, un ciel de brouillard, fait de rideaux fluides, qui neutralise les couleurs. Tout est gris, rongé, rude. ...", "... le tragique est surtout dans le décor de Lucien Damiani, un cosmos où les hommes patinent sur des mondes glissants, dans une musique paysanne (petits violons, clochettes, crécelles) qui donne aux exorcismes, aux chimères collectives du village, un air de tristesse profonde, déchirante."\(^2\) The sloping wood

stage suggested the hill where Violette is raped. A large "sail" was suspended above the stage. It could be stretched into different shapes, lowered to produce a claustrophobic, brooding feeling, or raised to create an atmosphere of lightness and relief. André Diot the lighting technician, borrowed an idea which Chéreau had used in his production of La Dispute. John Burgess described the method of lighting chosen and its effect: "He's rigged up 32 small quartz lamps in the flies, angled up onto reflectors, which give a general diffused light seeping down from above—just like daylight in fact. ... Ordinary tungsten lights can then be used to mould-in areas as required."¹ Four musicians also provided, according to Planchon, "... authentic French folk music ...", "... using stuff they've got from the musée des traditions populaires." "French folk music is slow, sad, desperate, and very serene."² The tone was set by the rustic music as in L'Infâme the atmosphere was created by the sing-song voices of children.

In La Remise, we see in passing how pagan celebrations have survived, integrated into religious festivities. Planchon believes that catholicism used the old superstitions of the countryside in order to implant itself into people's minds; once religion was established, paganism took the outward forms of catholicism in order to survive: "Lorsque le catholicisme a voulu s'ancrer dans l'esprit des gens, il a dû reprendre à son compte les cérémonies païennes. Pour survivre, le paganisme a dû adopter le vocabulaire chrétien, parler de Dieu et des apôtres."³ In this play, paganism is a positive force incarnated in the human figure of le Solitaire, and the main conflict is between him and the representative of catholicism. The programme summarises the principal struggle in the play: "Dans la province, au village, le Solitaire, un ermite, dispute au vieux curé de campagne moribond le pouvoir sur les esprits

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2. Ibid, p.58.
et les âmes avides de surnaturel." Planchon pointed out in a discussion in Rheims that the curé and the Solitaire invoke the same saints. Planchon said that every era has a certain sum of ideas; even people violently opposed to each other must use the ideas of their own time: "Le curé et le Solitaire prient les mêmes saints. Une époque pense 'dans la même caisse'; forcément piquant dans la même caisse on se divise en deux."

He said that catholicism still impregnated the mentality of even the most revolutionary thinkers of the Occident today: "Même dans les oeuvres violemment révolutionnaires je vois des schémas catholiques." Planchon had already made this point in 1969, when he explained his reasons for choosing to write about l'Abbé Desnoyers in his play L'Infâme.

Le curé is almost a medieval caricature of a parish priest, a lecherous old man who, even on his deathbed, cannot resist embracing all the women who visit him. He has denounced le Solitaire as a charlatan in public, and thus made an enemy of him. The curé has little mastery of language; because he is ill, like the bishop in L'Infâme, his words and phrases tend to refer to his own body, to his suffering and his fear of death:

Les feux dévorants, ces brasiers ardents, ces puanteurs, le soufre qui fume, mais une main douce qui se pose sur mon front. L'évangile est là depuis la venue de Notre Seigneur jusqu'à la fin des mondes. Où sont donc les pays où les Saintes font des signes et posent leur main douce sur nos fronts? Les yeux de Dieu me voient. Les yeux de Dieu brûlent.

(II, p.21)

Planchon said that "What the audience should see in the scene (II), is a man literally dying of fear." When he confronts le Solitaire, he has little resistance against the venomous accusations of his enemy. He is unable to persuade the villagers to chase the Solitaire away. The Solitaire has the

1. With drama students of the Théâtre Populaire de Reims, after a reading of Le Cochon noir, October 26th, 1972.
great oratorical advantage of good health:

le curé:
La vie est lourde. Ma tête, ma poitrine me brûlent, mais je suis surtout fatigué, fatigué. Si Dieu veut m'arracher la vie, je la lui remets volontiers. (Le curé s'écroule au sol.)

le Solitaire:

Finally the curé's only resource is to threaten to tell the gendarmes of the illegal exorcism ceremony; such a warning can have little effect on a community so isolated and so introverted.

The Solitaire is a magician, a "holy man" almost in the primitive tribal sense: he is revered and feared for his supernatural powers. He reveals that his practices really stem from a paganistic tradition:


By mingling with his magical terms a few religious words, using "saint" for a sorcerer, he convinces his audience that he is religious. In his words, religion and paganism are curiously combined; he has Mme Victorine swear, for example both on the cross and on his boar's foot, a combination of Christian symbol and pagan amulet. The Christian virtues of self-abnegation which he shows in his life make him a convincing saint, especially in comparison with the curé. He capitalises on the difference between their way of life: "Les curés dorment dans de bons lits. Les solitaires ont une botte de paille pour poser leur tête!" (I, p.14). He also preaches Christian virtues, making the Grand Charretier forgive Gédéon for murdering his wife.
There are more practical reasons for his power over the villagers. He is able to persuade them that they can determine their fate by complying with his commands. Like the curé he can conjure up terrifying images of hell, for evil people. More importantly, he convinces the villagers that he can see portents of future events; he describes them with the sensitivity bordering on madness of a visionary. In the Solitaire's visions as in la veuve's angry prayers, there is a lyrical power which stems from the density and sonority of the words:

Ce matin, j'ai vu un accroc dans les nuages.
Une rougeur terrible. Comme si tout le firmament se rompait le dos. Allégresse des âmes. Io. La mort a manié sa faux.
Io Io Io. (Le Solitaire danse.) (II, pp.23-24)

He entreats people to look around them as though the movements which he sees in nature must be visible to all. His language often has the sensual resonance which would touch them:

Le monde a un centre, savez-vous? Si je mens, qu'on me foute une braise sur la langue.
Regardez-donc autour de vous: la montagne palpite. Regardez ses fesses, ses flancs, ses seins. (VIII, p.56)

He repeatedly mentions a kind of joy, and promises to talk about it in more detail later. He is also clever enough to create goodwill in practical ways: he has Mme Victorine give a quarter of her riches to the poor, and buy each villager's consent to the exorcism. To a considerable extent, however, the Solitaire takes power through the sheer vitality and poetry of his language.

The Solitaire also owes his ascendancy over the others to his ability as a stage manager. He builds up suspense around the exorcism by making preparations for it the first time and then deciding that he cannot go through with it. The ceremony itself is full of colour and solemnity; the physical circumstances surrounding it are horrific. A dog is beaten to death in order to obtain blood for the ceremony, the curé's cadavre, still in its blood-stained sheets, is placed nearby, seven candles are lit; to frighten away devils, the villagers smear
themselves with blood and soot, and beat their sabots together in rhythm; the Solitaire removes his shirt to reveal chains around his chest. He draws a magic circle, and as he does so a peasant woman (formerly the curé's housekeeper), fascinated, invents a "religious" reason for his movements: "Regardez-le. Il marche lentement. Il hésite avant de poser le pied à terre. Il craint de piétiner les âmes qui jonchent le sol, les âmes des petits enfants morts sans baptême." (X, p.64) By getting the spectators to participate by dressing up and making noises, he increases their faith in the ceremony. He builds up an incantatory spell with his words of exorcism:


As the critical moment passes, he has the witnesses throw water over him. It is a well staged ceremony.

For Violette, the victim, the exorcism has the barbarity of the age of the Inquisition. She is unwilling to admit that she has been raped, but unwilling to agree to the Solitaire's allegations that she has been possessed by the soul of the dead curé. She is first tortured for a week, tied up and whipped every seven hours until she is willing to cooperate. During the ceremony she is made to lie on the curé's corpse. It is not only her pain, but also the collective belief of the assembled witnesses which gives the Solitaire his power over Violette. He tells them that "Si je ne vous sens pas autour de moi, mon âme aussi devient froide." (VIII, p.57) In fact the first attempt at exorcism (VII) fails because of the scepticism of one person, la boîteuse. Violette is at first desperate and begs to be left alone: "Laissez-moi, ne me tourmentez plus." (X, p.64) Her first concession is to ask of the Solitaire, "Qu'est-ce qu'il faut que je dise?" (X, p.64) When she tries to humour them by pretending to be the demon and saying "Je sors" (X, p.64,) the Solitaire feels her lack of conviction. He
wants power over Violette's mind as well as over those of the villagers. Her next concession is to ask: "Par pitié, dites-moi les mots qu'il faut que je dise." (X, p.65) In Orwell's 1984, the hero reaches a point, under torture and persuasion, at which he no longer wishes only to pretend to believe, but really wants to believe sincerely in what his tormentor tells him. Violette also reaches this point when she begins to repeat the Solitaire's sentences. When she cries, "Je me soumets" (X, p.65) three times, her inner resistance to the false story finally wavers. Planchon said early on in the rehearsals that after the exorcism, there should still be tension between the Solitaire and Violette because the girl "... refuses to play along and won't accept the exorcism."; he explained her suicide as an attempt to break out of the isolation imposed on her by her community: "She thinks of death as her bridegroom, and going to meet him she will no longer be alone." Although Planchon believed that she rejects the exorcism, Violette is nevertheless finally overcome by it. Like the Nogier girl in La Remise, in the scene of the fête des violettes, Violette becomes the object which others make of her; she is possessed by their idea of her. In a discussion after the play, Planchon was asked why the exorcism scene was so long. He answered that he had wanted to show the very opposite of an exorcism: he had wanted to show how Violette is the victim of a possession complète. In one of Gédéon's dreams, Violette gives birth to his "child", an ugly pig (which is actually pink, but which Gédéon sees as black); the Solitaire's spiritual rape of Violette also produces a monster: her own insane belief that she is engaged to a dead soul. The Solitaire's idea takes hold of Violette only gradually; the ceremony had to be long if it was to be authentic.

During the same discussion, one spectator complained that all the characters in the play seemed abnormal. Planchon

1. Ibid, pp. 83, 71.
2. At the Comédie de Caen, Dec. 1973, information kindly communicated by Dorothy Knowles.
said that he considered them all normal, and thought that most of us were like them. He admitted that he had a certain tendresse, however, for insane people, and that he often found it hard to distinguish between normality and abnormality.

On the one hand, spectators were incredulous at the picture of backwardness and ignorance which the village presented; these characters were, after all, meant to be living in the late nineteenth century. Planchon again explained that the Ardèche was an isolated region which had retained many customs long disappeared in other regions. In his own childhood, he had seen old women lying down in the road to laugh, for instance. On the other hand, no doubt, the characters' acceptance of and belief in exorcism seemed unlikely to some in the audience. At the time when *Le Cochon noir* was being presented, however, the film *The Exorcist* was attracting crowds of "normal, modern" cinema-goers. Perhaps the characters of *Le Cochon noir* are not so far removed from the realities of our day as many spectators wanted to believe.

One of Planchon's constant preoccupations, evident in his treatment of such plays as *Tartuffe* and *Troilus et Cressida* as well as in *L'Infâme* and *Le Cochon noir* is the idea of a lack of connection between people's ideology and their behaviour. When he wrote *Le Cochon noir*, Planchon had come to believe that people's "morality" or "ideology" were abstractions with no real effect on their behaviour:

> Les moralités ne servent à rien. Elles atteignent seulement le superficiel de la vie. On s'en sert pour expliquer, pour justifier. On s'en sert à tout moment, et partout, y compris dans le domaine de la politique. Mais elles ne changent rien aux actes. La réalité se situe hors de ces codes abstraits.

The characters in this play are certainly ambivalent in their attitude to moral codes. They are very human. Mme Victorine's priority is that her daughter should marry well, and she will sacrifice part of her fortune, seize the curé's body, and

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endure the screams of her daughter being whipped, so that the exorcism and the marriage can take place. Planchon asserted during rehearsals that "Mme Victorine thinks the Hermit [Solitaire] is a fool but she needs his help so she disguises her contempt and flatters him." Privately, she hesitates, invoking her dead husband as a witness to her decisions and to her good intentions: "Sur le conseil du Solitaire, je viens répandre l'eau bénite. Il faut désinfecter les lieux. Du fond de ta tombe, tu as tout vu, mon pauvre Emile, ... Et tu n'as rien dit. Les morts se moquent trop des vivants. Pourquoi m'as-tu laissée seulette pour affronter tous ces gens, toutes ces affaires? ... Le Solitaire est un homme savant. Expérimenté dans les mystères. Mais,Emile, faut-il lui faire confiance?" (VII, p.52)

Planchon shows an underlying compassion for his characters as he depicts them caught in this sort of indecision. He often shows beings faced with a conflict which cannot be resolved by their own moral code. Old Chausson in La Remise is loyal to the land of his ancestors and therefore destroys his family; l'abbé Duverger has saved face for the church at the cost of breaking its most basic commandment. Violette, if she says that she has been raped, condemns herself to spinsterhood and shame; by remaining silent, she unwittingly becomes the Solitaire's tool in winning the parishioners' good will from the curé. Even the Solitaire hesitates. Roger Blin played the role with a convincing uncertainty: "Roger Blin montre un Solitaire fragile, déjà usé, qui mène les exorcismes comme une danseoubliée, dont il essayerait de deviner les pas, mêlant le vrai et le fabriqué." During the ceremony, when he tells the others to pray with him, they stand about uncertain what to do. The exorcism is a bogus ritual;

their hesitation and that of Le Solitaire lend it, the central scene of the play, an air of fraudulence.

Gédéon despite his visions and his cruelty is eminently human and believable. Through him, a rapist and a murderer, a certain tenderness intrudes into the play. Unlike Le Solitaire, he loves women; despite his swaggering he is able to conceive of affection as well as desire. Even his rough advances to Eulalie mix tenderness with cruelty:

Je t'avais apporté un bouquet. Un jour, la tendresse de ton côté aussi viendra.
La tendresse, c'est pas l'œuvre d'un jour.
D'un mois. D'une année. Il faut du temps pour la rendre ferme. ...1 Je vais à ce mariage pour que les gens reconnaissent tes droits sur le fils Toin et pour que cette fille abandonne son projet. (I, pp. 17-18)

To such a character as Gédéon, and as to Célestin in L'Infâme, moral categories are irrelevant; people are driven by needs and desires. When Gédéon and la veuve look forward to their life together, they too speak of tenderness:

La veuve:
Chacun a son humeur. Ses défauts. Il arrive parfois qu'un mari et une femme se brouillent. Mais nous ne pousserons pas les choses trop loin.
Gédéon:
Non. Après une querelle poussée trop loin la tendresse n'est plus la même.2

(VI, pp.50-51)

The last words are theirs. The life in the village will carry on despite the deaths of the two young girls, which

1. Cf. (from Bollême's La Bibliothèque bleue, p. 178): "Ne crois pas aussi que cette tendresse soit l'œuvre d'un jour, d'un mois, d'une année. Il faut bien du temps pour la rendre ferme et constante..."

2. Cf. (from Bollême's La Bibliothèque bleue, p.178): "... chacun a son humeur et ses défauts. / Cependant, il arrive tous les jours qu'un Mari et une Femme se brouillent sérieusement ... il est certain qu'après ces querelles, pour peu qu'elles aient été poussées loin, la tendresse n'est plus la même."
Planchon called a "massacre of the innocents". In Paris too, the troubles are over; the revolution has been put down. Colette Godard concluded that "Dans cette histoire sombre et ironique, c'est la vie qui compte, c'est finalement la vie qui gagne, au-delà du rationnel, au point de jonction du bien et du mal, du ciel et de la terre." Lucien Attoun also saw that in this play, "... à la longue, la vie est plus forte." Certainly Le Cochon noir leaves one with a sense that elementary positivity will endure; la veuve is the character who triumphs.

In these three plays, Planchon continued his endeavour to present the individual in relation to history. Because he knows the Ardèche so well, he was able to recreate accurately the speech, mentality, and behaviour of the peasants of this region. The human portraits in these plays are authentic and intensely moving. Because this human side of the plays is so striking, some critics found that it overshadowed their historical content.

The historical interest of the plays, however, lies in the very preciseness of the pictures of human beings shaped by and shaping their circumstances even as they struggle against them. Old Chausson's stubborn resistance to change stems from his quasi-primitive attachment to his land, a love justified in his eyes because of the numbers of his ancestors who have worked themselves to death upon it. The dilemma of l'abbé Duverger is that he is ill-suited to live by the precepts imposed on him by the church and by his own milieu; he kills in order to safeguard the outward dignity of his role as a parish priest. In Le Cochon noir, an entire village is swayed by a self-proclaimed mystic because he capitalises on their need for spiritual

beliefs. In La Remise and Le Cochon noir, references to external events act as parallels to the action; the futility of the Indo-Chinese war is like that of Chausson's struggle; the general indifference to the bloody suppression of the communards is like the apathetic acceptance of the death of two young girls, Eulalie and Violette. Like the allusions to the nationwide press coverage of Duverger's crime, these references to the outside have another role to play: they serve as reminders that the local setting in which the villagers are immersed is part of a larger community. By showing how backward, poor, and hopeless each village is in relation to the rest of the world, Planchon creates a perspective on the actions of its inhabitants. The characters struggle against their own social and economic context, against their own ignorance, their own poverty, their own powerlessness. Within the small apparently closed village community, the peasants of these three plays come face to face with history in its ordinary and human manifestations.
Planchon wrote two plays in which he wished to portray contemporary people, *Patte blanche* and *Dans le Vent* ...*grrr*... The plays are similar in many ways. In both, the characters live partly in a fantasy world which reflects their reality and gives it another dimension. In each of the plays, Planchon tried to incorporate into the text a technique which he had used as a director, particularly in his productions of *Bérénice* and *Tartuffe*: he tried to define the characters through their actions. Furthermore, the actions of a character do not, in *Patte blanche* and *Dans le Vent*...*grrr*..., seem to be determined by psychological characteristics as much as by social circumstances. In neither play is there a conventional plot. In *Patte blanche*, one moment follows another and we are left not with a feeling of progression, but with a sense of day to day repetition. *Dans le Vent*...*grrr*... is constructed like a boulevard play on a series of situations. In both plays, Planchon did his utmost to avoid a tragic or even a very lyrical tone; despite the undercurrent of sadness in each of them, and their basically serious themes, Planchon insisted many times that these two works were comedies.

*Patte blanche*

... *la politique?* ... tout le monde s'en fout.  
- *Patte blanche*

*Patte blanche*, Planchon's fourth play, was written in 1965. Jacques Rosner, in collaboration with Planchon, directed the production.
The two men discussed their method of working together in a press conference before the play opened.\(^1\) Planchon explained how his writing had been influenced by the need to make another understand its implications:

J'ai retouché ma pièce et je lui ai donné sa forme définitive après que Jacques Rosner eût lu, étudié et vivement critiqué la première version ... Puis il a fait la mise en scène, et sa façon de regarder la pièce me l'a fait découvrir à nouveau ... cela m'a obligé à préciser les intentions de Patte blanche, cela m'a contraint à m'avouer certains sens plus ou moins cachés de l'œuvre ...

Years later, Rosner was to interpret Le Cochon noir in a poetic way very different from Planchon's own rendering of the play. It will be interesting to see how other directors deal with Planchon's plays when, eventually, more of them are published. Rosner said that during the first three weeks of rehearsals for Patte blanche, Planchon had observed without intervening. Then, he had helped, not by interfering in Rosner's direction of the actors, but by explaining, after each rehearsal, his own intentions in the text. Planchon in fact took the role of a German dramaturg, clarifying for the company the psychological, literary, and political implications of the text or of the relationships between the characters in the play. He respected the independence of his colleague and his ultimate authority over the stage language. He had even been tempted to leave everything to Rosner and to see the play presented for the first time on its opening night. "Il est certain", said Planchon in the same press conference," qu'à la reprise de la pièce, Rosner reverra, et seul, toute la mise en scène."

Planchon's aim had been to write about the Algerian war, and he had found no way of doing this except by presenting it through the eyes of children. The play speaks only indirectly of the war itself, but this reticence in itself was

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historically accurate. Rosner, in the press conference, explained: "Ce n'est pas une pièce sur la guerre d'Algérie; le problème algérien n'est même pas abordé ... c'est une pièce sur la façon dont la guerre d'Algérie a été vécue par une grande partie de la population française." Set in a large provincial town, the play refers to Algeria only intermittently: a young soldier returns from the front, an Arab boy is murdered... The killing of an Arab was a very common occurrence in France during the Algerian troubles. The programme for the play includes a montage of newspaper cuttings from the dailies of cities and towns all over France, with such headings as "Fusillade à Drancy: Cinq musulmans algériens tués", "Un Nord-Africain abattu à Saint-Chamond", "Le corps d'un Nord-Africain retiré de la Saône", etc. The programme points out:

La guerre d'Algérie occupe une place assez mince dans cette petite chronique ... mais, si l'on veut être juste avec la vérité historique, il conviendrait de la gommer davantage, car qui s'en préoccupait dans ces années-là? Peut-être l'auteur s'est-il mis au travail pour cette première raison?

There were several interconnected themes in the play. Planchon had put them into the context of day to day life; "... le quotidien sans noeud dramatique." was his own way of describing the play to reporters. Rosner, with him to introduce the play, spoke of the themes which he had tried to bring out in the staging:

Les thèmes ... dans cette pièce s'entrecroisent, se mélangent et s'épaulent comme dans une symphonie très orchestrée ... je me suis efforcé de faire sortir très pudiquement ces thèmes plus pudiquement enfermés encore par l'auteur dans la "pâte" de la pièce ... ces thèmes: le racisme inconscient et enfantin, la jalousie, les rapports des enfants et de leurs familles ... et tout cela sans un seul aspect scandaleux. "C'est vraiment une comédie très moderne, et cela parce qu'à la réalité banale viennent se mêler les phantasmes des enfants ...

1. Ibid.
The play is about three young boys, who have nicknamed one another King, Al Capone, and Ben-Hur. They meet regularly in a wooden shed in an empty lot, a refuge which they have named L'Igloo-Plaque. They have a strict rule that, in order to be a king in their little kingdom, in order to enter L'Igloo-Plaque, one has to show patte blanche; they let no others in. Each boy's dreams, and the boy's games, are depicted alongside their real situations at home. Their parents and families, and all the adults in the play, go about their business in a way which is both familiar and mysterious for the children. King's older brother Gilbert returns from the Algerian front embittered, boastful, and unwilling to settle down. Their father, M. Blanchot, is a widower thinking of remarrying. Ben-Hur's parents, the Prévieux, keep up a marriage which is no more than convenient for both of them. Capone's uncle sells the pension which he ran with his sister and buys the café across the street; he and one of the pensionnaires decide to marry; he sends Capone off to boarding school. Just before Capone's departure, a young Arab boy who sells peanuts in a café near L'Igloo-Plaque is shot and killed near the shed, and his death frightens the boys more than they wish to admit.

There is thus no central line of action. In one of Planchon's talks with the actors after a rehearsal, he emphasised that the play simply followed a number of situations:

Cette pièce a été écrite comme un morceau de musique. Les dialogues sont comme une musique de fond, dont s'élèvent parfois des thèmes, le racisme, la guerre, la vieillesse .... A peine apparus, ces thèmes disparaissent presque aussitôt dans le flot de paroles. Je vous demande donc de jouer l'instant: comme dans la vie, un mot en entraîne un autre, l'événement particulier a la même importance que l'événement historique. Le mot, dès qu'il a été prononcé se perd, oublié, dépassé ... Rien ne reste, rien ne se résoud, tout demeure en suspens. Aucune structure ne soutient la pièce, aucune progression dramatique ne la même. Il y a des enfants avec leurs rêves, il y a des adultes avec leurs problèmes: l'ensemble constitue un fragment de vie quotidienne. Tout a l'air normal, et pourtant c'est à l'intérieur de ce normal qu'il y a tous
Planchon made a point of saying that he did not want
the boys' fantasies to be easily distinguished from their
reality; the dreams are not tragic. The children are simply
reinterpreting their reality. The typescript includes a
preface with one major suggestion about the staging of the
play:

Si l'on veut fausser le sens de la pièce,
il suffit de transformer les phantasmes des
enfants en cauchemars sous prétexte qu'ils
ont des résonances psychanalytiques ....
l'auteur, lui, a peiné pour montrer que ces
phantasmes (qui ne sont pas des rêves au sens
précis du mot) insérés dans le quotidien sont
du même tissu.
Le travail du metteur en scène doit con­
sister à réaliser les passages sans coupures
avec élégance, en refusant de prendre au
tragique ce qui n'est qu'ironie.

Although the fantasies are sometimes quite sadistic, Planchon
wanted them acted out as realistically as the other scenes in
the play.

The boys' dreams are inspired by real situations and
by their reactions to them. King, whose real name is Jean
Blanchot, has lost his mother and baby sister in a fire years
ago. He creates for the benefit of his friends a fictitious
older sister who is beautiful and popular:

... c'est Suzy, ma frangine, la plus belle
des mémères avec son sourire, ses cheveux
blonds et ses gestes de star.

Des Cadillac, des Rolls, des Alfa-roméos et
des Ferraris grand sport la prennent sur
leurs coussins pour faire des ballades sur
le bord des lacs. (Part I, p.7)

1. Recorded by Otto Hahn, "Patte blanche, de Roger Planchon,
vu des répétitions", Cité-Panorama No. 4 N.S. (Jan.-Feb.
1965), p.5.

2. From the text of Patte blanche, archives of the Théâtre
de la Cité de Villeurbanne (now the Théâtre National
Populaire). Further quotations from the script give
the page and the part of the play; the typescript is
not divided into scenes, but only into two parts.
Pressed by Ben-Hur to say where she is, King invents another story: "En Floride, sur la plage. Elle est championne de ski-nautique. En Amérique, on entraîne les reines de beauté pour les jeux olympiques." (Part II, p.99) King also finds it difficult to accept his father's interest in another woman, Anna. When he and Capone, one evening, overhear M. Blanchot and Anna coming in, King invents more and more desperate stories to try to convince his friend that his father is really alone:

Il a peur dans le noir. Il parle, il bavarde, pour se gonfler.


C'est un vieux clown. Il fait semblant de parler avec ma mère. La nuit, il lui dit des trucs d'amour; comme il devait faire avant qu'elle meure. (Part I, pp. 36, 38)

King is the only one of the boys who lies to his friends. Like Capone, and Ben-Hur, he also has private fantasies, in which his deepest fears come out. He imagines, for example, a scene between his father, Anna, and himself; a few passages in this fantasy touch on his most painful preoccupations:

Anna:
Vous n'avez pas honte de retenir votre père, Monsieur Jean? Toute la soirée j'attends dans mon lit. Nous avons des rapports sexuels, votre papa et moi.

Tu es un sale petit gosse. Tu es très jaloux. Tu as très mauvais caractère. Et ta maman est morte. C'est à cause d'elle que tu ne veux pas que ton papa vienne avec moi.

King:
... mon Père est drôlement malheureux. Madame, soyez gentille avec lui. Il a perdu Maman et ma petite frangine, qui était une chouette petite même, dans un incendie. (Part I, pp. 72-74)

Mixed in with this fantasy scene are elements of an incident which possibly has taken place, in which M. Blanchot, angry because of his son's poor progress at school, tears up King's comic books. This mundane scene of a paternal scolding blends
in with the child's fears of having to compete for his father's affection. It is a tableau in which the day to day and the imaginary are very skilfully counterpointed.

Capone, Georges Chausson, is an orphan being brought up by his aunt and uncle; his fantasies make up for the lack of generosity from which he feels he suffers. In reality, he steals money in order to buy himself something; in his imagination, the adults bow to his every demand. In one of his dreams, he gathers them around him and obtains their agreement to a complicated plan to collect his uncle's insurance money for himself. Sophie, a servant at the pension, volunteers to have her arms broken in order to make a faked car accident look authentic. Capone, however, finds a miracle cure for her, and they lose the chance of getting the insurance money. Capone consoles himself by imagining that he is a great and successful doctor. In a few sentences, Capone then expresses the frustrations, both childish and adolescent, which the boys try to forget in their fantasy worlds:

... Tout ça n'est pas sérieux, je m'en raconte tant et tant parce qu'il va falloir aller en pension tous les jours et toutes les nuits, et faire 5 millions de lignes .... Je grandis trop, je suis désespéré, vous comprenez, de ces manches de veste qui m'arrivent aux coudes. (Part I, p.42)

Capone's fantasies are provoked not only by a need to escape, but by a desire to clear up the mysteries which the adults deliberately create for him. He is the last to learn that Sophie is pregnant; he reacts with a mixture of anger at being left out, and wonder at the idea that someone he knows will be giving birth. He imagines a hospital scene in which the adults of the pension are going to deliver Sophie's baby. Before they begin, they blindfold Capone and tie him up. He overhears their rather sadistic plans for delivering the child; one method is to press her stomach with an iron, the other to cut into it.... When Capone succeeds in freeing himself, he finds that everyone has changed from a hospital uniform to a marching band uniform, and is playing a musical instrument. The entire episode is filled with Capone's sense of frustration
at not being told anything.

When he awaits Sophie in the Igloo-Planque, Capone imagines that M. Tayssière, who has been keeping Sophie, enters with other men dressed as miners and carrying pickaxes. They introduce themselves as "... Tayssière, Lambert et Cie, Société Anonyme à responsabilité rudement limitée pour l'exploitation de Sophie-la-mine-d'Or;" (Part II, p.93) He then imagines himself proposing marriage to Sophie and being accepted. This fantasy, in which his resentment of the men who have taken advantage of Sophie is wittily demonstrated, shows also his own boyish sense of protectiveness and affection for Sophie.

Of the three boys, Ben-Hur, Gérard Prévieux, has the most "normal" home, for he still has both his mother and his father. His father is, however, a philanderer, and his mother relieves her boredom by indulging in a Lesbian relationship. Ben-Hur's daydreams are the most far-fetched. When he tells his friends that his mother is an "abandoned wife", he imagines her shooting his father. When he explains to them that his father thinks like a Jesuit, he imagines M. Prévieux in a Jesuit habit, insisting that he is really an atheist. Even in the midst of the boys' games, Ben-Hur imagines his parents appearing; M. Prévieux comes in dressed as a cowboy, Mme Prévieux with a parachute on her back, M. Prévieux again as an international spy... He dreams that his parents intrude in his games when, in fact, they take little interest in him. He is, like his friends, compensating in his imagination for an inadequate reality.

After the killing of "Salut-mon-Z'ami", the Arab boy, Ben-Hur becomes haunted by the fear that he is in some way responsible for the death. In one of their games, he has imagined himself killing the Arab. When, one evening after the shooting, he is left alone at home, Ben-Hur begins to feel the child's sudden fears of once familiar objects:
He imagines Gilbert, King's older brother, accusing him of having killed "Salut-mon-Z'ami", and he becomes genuinely terrified that Arabs will avenge the boy's death on him. He has visions of his friends and his parents, after his own death, and of himself returning to loose the "loup-Garou" on his mother as a punishment for leaving him alone.

During a party given by Sophie, the three boys get drunk together, and they have a collective fantasy in which they avenge themselves on the forms of authority to which they are subject. They imagine the adults entering, looking threatening, and being suddenly cowed by the sound of a pirate ship's trumpet! The children thereafter take command over the adults, who are compelled to row the ship, and then to provide a show: Sophie sings a song, Tayssière blows up a piece of furniture with dynamite, M. Blanchot imitates Anna's voice, René, Sophie's brother, juggles some plates.... After a sea-storm during which everyone is sick, all the adults join in a mock-Wagnerian song. The sequence has the intriguing discontinuity of a real dream, and the amusing absurdity of Vitrac's *Victor ou les enfants au pouvoir*, a play which Planchon produced in 1955 at the Théâtre de la Comédie.

The boys, of course, share in the ordinary imaginary games of childhood... Planchon specified in the script that some aspects of these games should be dramatised; they were not to be seriously presented like the dreams, but the staging should sometimes assist in creating for the spectator the situation which the boys see very well in their imagination. When the boys take off in an imaginary rocket, for example, the audience was to hear the port-holes clap shut and the engines start up; by exaggerating the boys' own sound effects, the staging was to create a comical perspective on their games;
for the rocket sequence, the stage direction is as follows: "Une fumée invisible prouve aux sceptiques que la fusée a démarré. Dans leurs jeux les enfants imitent le bruit des autos et autres engins! Ces bruitages repris et amplifiés donnent un montage de musique de film si possible cocasse." (Part I, p.5)

When the boys imagine themselves entering a getaway car after a robbery, again the sound effects are slightly funny: "Les portières claquent, la voiture démarre au frein. Avec la bouche ils [the boys] imitent les bruits de portières, moteurs, etc. Ces bruitages sont amplifiés par un haut-parleur; à en juger par le son, le modèle est superbe et doit atteindre des vitesses de compétition." (Part I, p.46)

This kind of accompaniment was to be totally subject to the boys' imagination; sound effects could be amended:

King:
Faites sauter le coffre. (Explosion d'une bombe de quelques mégatonnes)

Capone:
Non, juste une toute petite explosion de Nitroglycérine, pour la serrure. (Bruit d'une cartouche de dynamite dans un dé à coudre.)

(Part II, p.91)

Using his own boyhood as inspiration, Planchon succeeded in entering into the child's world of fantasy, both the personal fantasies born of individual fears and preoccupations, and the collective imaginary games prompted only by the need to play. The adults in the play are quite indifferent to the boys' ideas, and indeed to the boys themselves. Only Sophie, the servant in the pension, is young enough to retain a little sympathy for them. Their lives are divided into two parts, the reality which they share with their parents, and their personal existence in the Igloo-Planque. The children cannot understand the adults' complicated world. Each of the adult scenes in the play excludes them. In the pension where Capone lives, his uncle persistently courts one of the pensionnaires; Tayssière, another boarder, makes Sophie his mistress; and Capone's aunt Amélie invents tall stories of family crimes in order to interest the others. The adults' petty rivalries
and jealousies are too complex for a young boy to understand. King rightly says, at the beginning of the play: "Le sexe, c'est pour les vieux pervers de vingt ans." (Part I, p.7) In Ben-Hur's home, the adults' conversation and behaviour is even more incomprehensible for a child. The left-wing intellectuals Bernard and Jackie discuss with the Prévieux such topics as the third world and the rise in popularity of primitive art; left alone with an old girlfriend, Mme Prévieux attempts to seduce her;\(^1\) when they go to the cinema, they choose "... un film plein de trucs tristes à pleurer et qui les font rire. Ils aiment les grimaces." (Ben-Hur, Part I, p.11). In King's home, there is only one scene of a conversation between adults; M. Prévieux tells Anna that his previous wife killed herself and her daughter, and admits that he has not had the courage to tell his sons the truth. In each case the adults' speeches are unsuitable for the boys or inaccessible to them; they are too salacious, too intellectual, or too frightening.

Between the adult world and that of the children there is one common ground; the boys are already, in the play, shown to be acquiring their parent's prejudices. At the beginning of the play, the three boys discuss the possibility of introducing a young Arab, "Salut-mon-Z'ami" into their Igloo-Planque; the two arguments in his favour are that he sells peanuts (which are very good), and that he seems nice. Capone decides, however, that no Arab can be trusted: "Des gars comme "Salut-mon-Z'ami" ont l'air gentil, mais ils ont des rasoirs pleins les poches." He then has a daydream which confirms this statement for him and shows the audience where he acquired this notion: Chaussonet, Capone's uncle, appears as a television announcer and introduces his sister, Amélie, covered in bandages, who testifies that she has heard "through

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the grapevine" of someone attacked by a North African with razor blades. Her story is obviously little more than a rumour, but the confidence with which she testifies is an indication, not only that her belief is strong but also that she is certain of the good faith of her audience. By having her wear unnecessary bandages, Planchon made her more dramatically truthful for Capone, and, at the same time, more absurd for the audience. The prejudice against Arabs is shown as so deeply ingrained that it is nearly unconscious. "Nord Africain" is in itself a term of contempt. Amélie, jealous of one of her boarders, cries: "Cette femme ne me plaît pas; elle vient d'Indochine, mais elle a certainement du sang de Nord Africain. Pouah!" (Part I, p.23) Later, she almost repeats in a real scene the lines which Capone gave her in his fantasy: "Tous ces Nords Africains attaquent les femmes, Il faut faire très attention, ce sont des sauvages ces gens-là!" (Part I, p.23). Algerians in general are called by the derogatory term bicots; the boys use this word as much as the adults.

The general attitude to the war itself is very cynical. Most of the characters ignore it. When Gilbert returns from Algeria, he tells people that the war there is less than nothing. Chaussonnet then exclaims: "C'est de l'eau de vaisselle! 10 morts par jour! Avec 20 000, les voyous de notre Gouvernement seraient toujours aussi cons, mais, au moins, ils se croiraient héroïques." (Part I, p.60) The reasoning recalls that of Hector in Troilus et Cressida: the greater the number of people who have been sacrificed, the more necessary it is to go on fighting. Like Shakespeare, Planchon wished to show that the choice between war or peace is in the hands of men. In this play, however, the men place the responsibility for the war on the shoulders of le Gouvernement, and make no connection between their own racism and the imperialistic policies of their country. Gilbert, like Chaussonnet, feels that the French should be more ruthless; he says to his little brother King: "Il y a deux jours, ils sont venus me relancer avec leurs histoires de 'Paix en Algérie'."
S'ils veulent la paix, ils n'ont qu'à la prendre, avec des fusils." (Part II, p.100). Gilbert's own experience of the fighting is far from glorious; he missed being killed by a mine because he stopped to relieve himself while others went on. In front of the children, however, he treats the war very seriously. He visits them in the Igloo-Planque, refuses to laugh at his uniform, shows them a fighting hold, and tells them of the reprisals between Frenchmen and Arabs in France. His influence over the boys is great because they admire him; his account of killings on French soil fills them with terror and makes Ben-Hur especially fear Arab revenge on him after the death of "Salut-mon-Z'ami".

"Salut-mon-Z'ami"s death is such a commonplace sort of occurrence that it gets little coverage in the newspaper. Ben-Hur finds the reference to the murder in the news and tells his friends: "Capone, as-tu vu, le journal parle de la mort de "Salut-mon-Z'ami". Seulement, il faut être très malin pour la trouver; il n'y a que trois lignes et il s'appelle Mohammed-quelque-chose-impossible-à-prononcer." (Part II, p. 133) The newspaper's readers are indifferent to such a killing. It is this indifference which interested Planchon in the play; the questions of the war and the reprisals on French soil are treated obliquely, by showing how they could be ignored even as they went on. In Pette blanche, as earlier in La Remise, and later Le Cochon noir, or Bleus, blancs, rouges, the characters see history only in a fragmentary and distorted way. Because the Algerian war had taken place so recently, however, this play had a greater relevance to the actual experience of Planchon's public. He was trying to make them conscious of their own tendency to ignore historical events of importance.

Because the action of the play alternated between the realistic and the fantastical, the stage sets were stylised and yet gave the impression of an almost realistic setting. It was Planchon's custom to seek this kind of balance between realism and stylisation in the sets, as in his productions of Troilus et Cressida and of Richard III for example. The sets
for Patte blanche were in a pop art style, and designed by Michel Raffaelli. The boys' Igloo-Planque, represented by a stylised silhouette, was on wheels and could be pushed off the stage to be replaced by a few symbolic elements of the bourgeois interiors in which the families live. Around the stage was a neon panel with which the lighting was changed to indicate whether a scene was a fantasy or not. The fantasies required a variety of costumes, from a Jesuit's robe for M. Prévieux, to a paratrooper's outfit, to hospital uniforms, and even to a hairy Frankenstein disguise.

Because Planchon wanted the fantasy scenes to flow smoothly into the realistic scenes, Rosner indicated the difference between the two with only a subtle lighting change. It is true that in this way he was able to maintain a good pace, shifting from one scene to the next with no pauses; Pierre Biard \(^1\) even compared the rhythm of the production to that of the Villeurbanne presentation of Schweyk dans la deuxième guerre mondiale. At the same time, however, the production confused critics used to a more traditional division between scenes; Biard wrote that

\[...\] Il [Planchon] contraint, au moins durant toute la première partie de la pièce, les spectateurs à se livrer à une incessante gymnastique de repérage. Les temps morts sont évidemment réduits; une astuce d'éclairage permet, à la longue, de situer les scènes, mais on aimerait un mot de passe plus significatif.

It seemed to several reviewers that the play lacked a fil conducteur. Jean Beaumont\(^2\) resented having had to do a "... gymnastique de l'imagination..." in order to follow the play: "Planchon ... ne voulait que juxtaposer des scènes comme dans la vie, et ce devait être une sorte de "Rhapsodie"! Hélas, à toute rhapsodie il faut un thème conducteur." Robert Butheau\(^3\) also reproached Planchon and Rosner for having in-

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sufficiently underlined the transitions from dream to reality in the play.

Butheau however was particularly interested by Planchon's use of fantasies in the play. He saw in Patte blanche two dream worlds coexisting:

Les adultes ont leur Frankenstein, leurs fusées, leurs mitrailleuses et leur parachutistes; les enfants leur Zorro, leurs fusils en matière plastique, leurs poignards de bois et un arsenal d'objets usuels que leur imagination suffit à transformer en armes redoutables.

Le monde des adultes est clos comme celui des enfants: pour pénétrer dans l'un ou dans l'autre il est nécessaire de montrer "patte blanche", d'être initié. Là s'arrête le parallélisme, car ce qui est cauchemar pour l'homme n'est, pour l'enfant, que fantaisie. Les enfants vous délivrent le mot de passe par amitié, les adultes par calcul.

The importance of the fantasy world was reflected in the language which characters use; the text is allusive and rich in images:

La pièce est terriblement riche. Rien dans le texte ne paraît gratuit; ... cette densité s'accompagne (et peut-être commande) une écriture serrée, implacable où tout est dit en un minimum de mots et où les mots, pesés, sont chargés d'intentions bien définies, De plus, une tendance très nette à l'éllipse rend difficile l'intelligence immédiate des répliques qui ne suivent pas toujours un processus logique. ^

This terseness characterised both the speech of the adults and that of the children; for each group, however, words had different connotations and resonances. They were divided by their very language. Gérard Guillot thought that the children's speech was a distorted version of that of their elders; by misusing the terms which the adults use, the children exposed their parents' clichés:

... les adultes sont prisonniers de toutes les conventions du langage, de tous les symptômes des pensées toutes faites tandis que, réfugiés

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Jean-Jacques Lerrant\(^1\) discerned Planchon's sympathy for his characters, and for their inability to communicate with each other: "Sous la sécheresse de l'exposé, une écriture en apparence implacable, se dissimule blessée et pudique, une œuvre en réalité pleine de tendresse pour les adolescents qui vont entrer dans le jeu des hommes et pour les adultes étrangers à l'adolescence, et pis encore, incommunicables les uns avec les autres."

The play was meant to give an accurate picture of middle class and working-class people in a large provincial city during the Algerian war. Ossia Trilling\(^2\) thought that the play could have been written about any country in a similar situation; no doubt, in England in the 1960's and the 1970's, it would only be necessary to change Algeria to Ulster:

Transposed, say to Smithwick, the play would have almost as much point, provided that due allowance was made by the adaptor by altering the implications of the Algerian war to an indigenous setting. Planchon obliquely criticizes the elders' apathy and irresponsibility against a background of the kind of education that the children get from the flics, from the telly, and from the gang warfare — with toy guns and all the trappings of war — which they engage in as a childish pastime and which remains childish only as long as they remain children.

Despite its gaiety, the play showed Planchon's concern about the kind of cruelty which the children were acquiring, and about the "... irresponsibility with which adults feed their offspring with the false ideology that encourages them to indifference and, ultimately, to inhumanity."\(^3\) The Times correspondent\(^4\)

2. The Stage, Apr. 22nd, 1965.
praised Planchon's sensitive treatment of the boys and his sympathy for their problems: "Planchon's schoolboy trio, like any child on the threshold of puberty who is baffled by the nightmarish world of make-believe for which he is destined, take refuge in the protective gregariousness of their gang and its headquarters." The den, however, offers no real protection; the death of "Salut-mon-Z'ami" shocks the boys into a momentary awareness of the realities which they would, like their parents, be content to ignore. The play was officially a comedy, but its themes were serious, said the Times critic:

"But crass brutality is no joke; nor is murder in any shape, and what, in essence, was the Algerian war, we are invited to ask ourselves, but a logical extension of the naive gang warfare of the nursery and the uncaring blindness of the generation whom the children learn to copy, to faraway events in which they believe they have no hand?"

Robert Butheau pointed out that after the killing of "Salut-mon-Z'ami" the tone of the play changed: "La guerre d'Algérie, tout d'abord toile de fond, s'installe au premier plan, sans que personne ne s'en préoccupe." He showed how Planchon had treated a number of serious themes by looking at them from an angle:

Le racisme, la torture, la guerre, la bêtise, la lâcheté, l'exaltation de l'intellectuel de gauche, les tourments du philosophe, tout est noyé dans cette chronique: tout paraît marginal dans l'indifférence que se manifestent deux mondes, celui des adultes et celui des enfants.

History was, in a sense, taking place beside the lives of the characters, and the boys were simply adopting the general attitude of indifference to it. Xavier Salomon caught the spirit of Planchon's analysis when he wrote: "L'événement contemporain montre le bout de l'oreille entre deux portes." As he had done in La Remise, as he would do in later plays, Planchon here was depicting "... l'inextricable labyrinthe des destins individuels et de l'histoire." He was thus

attempting to do what Adamov had done in Paolo Paoli. Claude Roy, giving a talk on Armand Gatti, likened Planchon's talent to that of Gatti and Brecht; like them, Planchon was able to write plays which had a social meaning but which were human enough to be moving. Roy compared Patte blanche to Gatti's La Vie imaginaire de l'éboueur Auguste Geai: "C'est un peu le même cas...: il [Planchon] a réglé ses comptes avec son enfance même s'il est gauche, s'il a des maladies."

The play was representative of many of Planchon's ideas on the theatre and on writing. He is fascinated by the world of dreams and the imagination, and in the play a great part of the action is based on children's fantasies. He loves the theatrical medium for its life-like transience; in Patte blanche he captured a sense of the ephemerality of childhood. He has always felt that art should portray ordinary life to show its underlying mystery; by using children in this play, he created a new perspective on superficially banal incidents. The children do not understand the adults or their ideas; they see them with the naïveté of the very young. The audience were shown the events of the play through the eyes of the children; compelled to share this fresh vision of the "typical" adults depicted, they were provoked to judge them and their "typical" values as well. Planchon had been worried about putting children on the stage. When the play was produced, he considered that the adult level of the play did not work, but that the children's scenes did!²

Rosner said in a press conference: "Cette oeuvre décrit la réalité quotidienne dans toute son épaisseur, telle qu'elle existe dans une grande ville de province."³ The épaisseur was perhaps that margin between the boys' dreams

1. At a youth meeting, reported in La Marseillaise, July 22nd, 1965.
2. Planchon gave drama students at the Théâtre Populaire de Reims his own view of Patte blanche in a discussion after a reading of Le Cochon noir, on October 26th, 1972.
and those of the adults into which real events intrude. Otto Hahn, after attending rehearsals for the play, summarised its theme in a few words:

Dans Patte blanche, Planchon aborde la vie au niveau du quotidien ... Des problèmes ordinares agitent ce petit monde, des problèmes sans importance, que rien ne viendra résoudre, qu'ils devront donc continuer à affronter de sorte que par sa répétition, l'existence superficielle devient le cours même de la vie ... Le tragique, c'est que les grands problèmes fassent surface à ce niveau mêlés au reste, passant presque inaperçus. 1

The play was meant as always with Planchon, to faire prendre conscience, to show how easy it is to ignore the larger problems, such as the Algerian war, and to think of trivial problems as more important. Planchon, as he had done in La Remise, and as he would do in his other plays, was trying to present a description of reality so authentic that it was in itself a call for change.

Dans le Vent...grrr...

C'est extravagant. Les uns meurent, les autres naissent. On se quitte, on se marie...
Dans le Vent...grrr...

Planchon wrote Dans le Vent ... grr..., his sixth play, in the winter of 1967, and presented it in Villeurbanne in 1968. He wrote two versions of the play, and finally used the first, slightly modified after he had seen the reactions of the actors to it.

Jacques Rosner and Gilles Chavassieux assisted in directing the play. At a press conference, 2 Rosner told

reporters that Dans le Vent...grrr... belonged to the world of boulevard theatre:

On y retrouve tous les éléments du type: téléphone blanc, cigarettes, portes qui claquent, homme en caleçon, couple au lit. Le titre lui-même décrit ce que l'on va trouver dans la pièce, tout ce qui tient la une des journaux, le LSD, les beatniks, les hippies, les barbouzes et l'amour. Il s'agit en effet d'une comédie d'amour qui se termine par trois mariages.

Planchon explained on the same occasion that he had used the boulevard genre for his own ends, however; in fact this play was similar in many ways to Vitrac's works; Planchon, as we have seen, put on Victor ou les enfants au pouvoir in 1955 at the Théâtre de la Comédie:

"Je voudrais insister ... sur la communauté de préoccupations qui existe dans cette pièce et dans le théâtre de Roger Vitrac que j'aime beaucoup et qui, à mon sens, est le meilleur théâtre de l'entre-deux-guerres. Lui aussi, était fasciné par le boulevard qu'il soumettait à d'autres préoccupations. Les rebondissements d'intrigue devenaient pour lui jeux de hasard, et je me suis aperçu, après avoir terminé ma pièce, que j'avais utilisé du même procédé."

Planchon's purpose was to describe a certain social class in contemporary French society. In an interview, he described the play's characters in these terms: "... un groupe de jeunes bourgeois qui fréquente les 'drugstores', qui danse le jerk dans les boîtes à la mode et qui répète (avec un peu de mauvaise foi) 'Hitler, connais pas'". (This was the title of a 1963 film by Bertrand Blier, a documentary in which several young people were interviewed and revealed themselves to be generally apolitical and pleasure-seeking.) Planchon insisted, on the same occasion, that his play was not a satire. He was genuinely sympathetic toward these people, "... qui, dans leur petit monde factice bombardé par les slogans de publicité, découvrent l'amour et en sont émerveillés." The play was "... une comédie qui parle d'amour dans le monde moderne."

1. Interview given to J.M.T., Vie Lyonnaise, Feb. 2nd, 1968.
The figures in the play were part of a privileged social group. As in Marivaux's plays, the apparent frivolousness of the characters might be seen as a result of their circumstances: they have no financial worries, and they have time to concentrate on their own problems. Their lack of activity in itself has tragic possibilities; like Chekhov's characters they are idle and bored. Planchon defined his play as "... une comédie qui part d'un burlesque accentué pour parfois frôler la tragédie pendant quelques minutes." The characters' eagerness to be fashionable makes them vulnerable to prevailing ideas. Through them it was possible to touch on the current climate of thought in French society.

One contemporary trend which worried Planchon was the tendency of the French and of Europeans to adopt American customs:

Il me paraissait important de voir comment le monde moderne est intégré dans la bourgeoisie. L'Europe est envahie par les moeurs américaines. Avec celles-ci, on avale le puritanisme et une forme d'angoisse qui nous était étrangère. On se moque des Américains, on s'amuse de les voir perdre la face. En même temps, on est influencé par eux. La pièce parle de ce changement de moeurs.

Planchon saw this process as the historical domination by an economically and politically stronger power over smaller nations. America's superstructure was insinuating itself into the French mentality: "J'ai voulu montrer comment cela entre dans la vie, se consome, se fait avaler. Tous les peuples, depuis Rome, ont toujours été snobés par les grandes puissances." Girlie magazines, Playboy and its imitators, were on sale all over Europe. Planchon simply saw the Americans as the new Romans: "Les États-Unis, un empire qui s'écroule, de l'extérieur et de l'intérieur, comme s'est écroulé l'empire romain. Il colonise l'Europe et la petite France, provoquant un boule-

2. Ibid.
versement des moeurs."

The play revolves around several interconnecting groups of people. Jacques the businessman and Mackie, the girlie magazine photographer, both wish to marry Anne, a reporter who is already Mackie's mistress. Charles, Mackie's personal assistant, is supposed to provide models willing to pose in the nude; he meets Lou and Jojette, tries unsuccessfully to make them agree to pose for Mackie, and then kidnaps Jojette. Frédéric, a rich idle young Oxford graduate, visits Mackie's studio while Charles and Jojette are there. Jojette runs off with Frédéric and they spend the night together. Frédéric's family is in a turmoil. His widowed mother Françoise wishes to remarry, with a government minister, and his sister Lou has left home because she refuses to accept the marriage. Régis, Françoise's father, insists that Lou's opposition to the marriage is political. Lou meanwhile meets a drop-out, Joë, who is Jacques's cousin, and Joë takes her to Jacques's apartment.

Anne spends a night with Jacques, is discovered by Mackie, and then leaves both of them. Jacques experiments with LSD, and buys a model guillotine to play with. Mackie, rejecting Geneviève, an old friend who wants to marry him, leaves for Alaska. Joë abandons Lou and she tries to kill herself; meanwhile her grandfather Régis has succeeded in finding her by questioning Charles.

Frédéric plans to marry Jojette, who is expecting his child. Joë and Anne leave together for Cuba, but Régis dies as he accompanies them to the airport, and they return to tell the family. Lou finally accepts her mother's decision to remarry.

A very thorough and detailed account of the creation of Dans le Vent...grrr... exists in the thesis of Jacques Blanc,\footnote{Recorded by J.-M.T., Vie Lyonnaise, Feb. 15th, 1968.} Frédéric plans to marry Jojette, who is expecting his child. Joë and Anne leave together for Cuba, but Régis dies as he accompanies them to the airport, and they return to tell the family. Lou finally accepts her mother's decision to remarry.

\footnote{Jacques Blanc, an unpublished thesis on Planchon's production of Bérénice and of Dans le vent...grrr... for the University of Lyons, 1969. Archives of the TRP (Villeurbanne).}
who worked in Villeurbanne at the time and who was present virtually from the first reading of the play to its final staging. Blanc gave an outline of the amount of time which Planchon spent on each phase of production. He and the actors spent ten days around the table, reading and discussing the play. They spent four days working out a basic mise en place which would eventually be completely transformed. Approximately twenty-one days were spent on what Blanc called "assimilation et intelligence des rôles", and then five days on "objectivation des rôles", a period during which Planchon acted out each role for the actor playing it. The final eight days were used to establish the continuity and the rhythm of the show.\(^1\)

Blanc's account of the rehearsals includes many of the references to other playwrights which Planchon made while he directed his actors. As he attempted to explain the meaning, tone, or atmosphere of various scenes, Planchon referred again and again to Shakespearian examples. An argument between Charlie and Mackie, for example, was to be played like one of the quarrels between Toby and Monsieur André in La Nuit des rois... In another instance (V), Jacques lies in order to give Anne, whom he loves, the impression that he is strong. Planchon told Roger Jacquet, the actor, to play the moment like a character from Aeschylus or Shakespeare; Jacques' attitude was to be like that of Shakespeare's Richard III: "Les mensonges de Richard III sont dénoncés mais de l'échec, il passe aussitôt au triomphe. L'accusé ... ne cesse de dominer son accusateur, même lorsque celui-ci lui inflige une défaite."\(^2\)

In the final scene of the play, there is an abrupt change of tone when Joë suddenly announces that Régis is dead. Planchon thought that this scene was like a similar sequence in Peines d'amour perdues, when Mercade interrupts a happy scene to announce to the princess of France that the king her father is dead [V.ii.] Planchon said: "C'est un coup de gong au milieu d'un morceau de musique d'Eric Satie."\(^3\) Planchon also used

\(^1\) Blanc, pp. 128-129.
\(^2\) Fourth rehearsal, Jan.1st, 1968, recorded by Blanc, p.85.
\(^3\) Fifth rehearsal, Jan. 15th, 1968, recorded by Blanc, p.86.
Shakespearian examples to explain more general concepts. At one point he wanted to define **lyrical acting**: "Un personnage de théâtre ... devient lyrique lorsqu'il est en plein accord avec la situation qu'il est en train de vivre. ... Le roi Lear est lyrique lorsqu'il est en accord avec la tempête: c'est là une des sources de la poésie théâtrale et du ton épique."^1

There were references, also, to Orson Welles and to Truffaut. Planchon wished to show the modern world as it is shown in the cinema, but with the insight of Shakespearian plays.

When he was directing plays other than his own, Planchon always looked at the *fable* in order to determine the themes which he would develop on the stage. In the course of readings and rehearsals of *Dans le Vent... grrr...*, Planchon showed that he was concerned to underline, in his own work, the importance of the action rather than of the psychology of the characters. This play is of course based on situations rather than characters because it is written like a boulevard comedy. Nevertheless, Planchon's repeated attempts to bring out plot before character, to emphasise what the characters do rather than what they are, were consistent with his ideas on such plays as *Tartuffe* and *Troilus et Cressida*. As in *Patte blanche*, he based the play on a series of moments rather than on a group of characters. On the day of the fifth reading, he decided to make a major alteration in his script. One of the characters in the play, Jacques, had been conceived at first as an ex-university lecturer; during the readings, Planchon realised that he had gradually made Jacques into a spokesman for his own opinions, thus writing "... une seconde pièce dans la première." He admitted: "Je sais qu'il y a beaucoup trop de 'littérature' dans mes pièces. Il faut que j'arrive à m'en débarrasser."^2

The character of Jacques was changed; he became a rich young industrialist, and his importance in the play was drastically reduced.

Just as he wished to avoid too verbose a style of writing, Planchon wanted his actors to avoid too emotional a

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style of acting. Repeatedly during rehearsals, he asked the actors not to make value judgments of any kind about the characters at first: "N'essayons pas ... de prêter un caractère aux personnages. Essayons de nous en tenir à ce qu'ils font." Each scene was to be played as a whole, unconnected with a character's other scenes: "Il faut jouer chaque séquence dans la plénitude de sa situation." Hélène Bleskine attended the rehearsals as a stagiaire and wrote an account of them. She explained why Planchon wished his actors to play each scene in and for itself: he thought that the spectator's judgment of a character should be based on the sum of that character's actions and attitudes throughout the play, rather than on his appearance in his first scene:

Roger Planchon citait l'exemple du personnage d'Othello non pas donné d'emblée lorsqu'il entre en scène, mais addition de comportements, tout au long de la pièce, qui le dessine comme Othello pour le spectateur. Le lien entre tous les comportements, c'est le comédien, par sa présence, qui le donnera.

Life is unpredictable, and Planchon wanted his play to reflect this unpredictability. The audience must therefore never know in one scene how a character would react in the next. The actor was to give the impression that he was free and capable of taking an initiative; Bleskine wrote: "Ainsi la fable pourrait prendre toute son importance, et la vie toute sa relativité." Continuity was to be created by the mise en scène: the characters' only real consistency lay in their inconsistency. Jacques Blanc thought that Planchon considered their lack of "character" typical of our day:

Les héros ne sont pas des héros traditionnels qui progressent dans leurs décisions. Ils sont impuissants à appréhender la vie et à l'ordonner. L'auteur pense qu'aujourd'hui il est impossible d'organiser sa vie sur des critères ou des principes (quelle que soit leur valeur), que les temps modernes ont

1. First rehearsal, Jan. 8th, 1968, recorded by Blanc, p. 54.
2. First rehearsal, Jan. 8th, 1968, recorded by Blanc, p. 61.
apporté une liberté trop nouvelle encore
pour qu'on puisse l'ordonner.

One of the young people in Bertrand Blier's film "Hitler? Connais pas" made a comment which lends support to Planchon's views; the girl speaking was a sexually promiscuous nineteen-year-old, known only as "Nicole":

Les gens cherchent toujours à comprendre les raisons. "Pourquoi faites-vous ça? - Alors qu'en réalité il n'y a aucune raison ... Je fais ça parce que ça se trouve comme ça ... C'est un concours de circonstances, sans rien de volontaire de ma part.

Planchon was thus continuing the sort of experiment which he had tried with Patte blanche; to present on the stage a series of day to day situations. Indeed, during the third reading, Bouise suggested that Dans le Vent ... grr... was "...Patte blanche réussie." For the later play, Planchon stressed the importance of the stage language in creating the impression of a succession of "ordinary" occurrences from everyday life. The mise en scène like the acting was to emphasise the characters' tendency to change without warning from one form of behaviour to another. Planchon made the pace of the production alternate between very fast, eventful sequences in which everyone took action, and slower scenes, during which little happened and the characters hesitated to make decisions.

Hélène Bleskine wrote:

Le spectateur devait saisir à travers les différents rythmes combien les comportements dépendent des situations, et combien dans une société où toutes les valeurs sont confondues, il est difficile de trouver un équilibre.

Planchon would even have liked to entitle his play Delicate Balance or Équilibre instable, but the title had been determined before he wrote the play, for administrative and publicity

1. Fourth rehearsal, Jan. 11th, 1968, Blanc, p.84.
reasons.\(^1\)

At the time of the first readings, Planchon gave René Allio a page from the magazine *Lui*, showing a pop art picture montage, to use as inspiration for the sets. Because the play was based on the boulevard genre, the sets had to create the atmosphere of this sort of comedy. Allio and Planchon created an elaborate *machine à jouer* (a term which Planchon first used to describe the sets for *Trollus et Cressida* in 1964) which, like Raffaelli’s designs for *Patte blanche*, was influenced by pop art:

Cette machine est faite d’un assemblage de trois boîtes mobiles qui se disloquent et s’unissent d’un tableau à un autre pour figurer des cabines téléphoniques, une entrée de boîte de nuit ou les multiples recoins des appartements modernes. Les chariots porteurs les déplacent parallèlement à la rampe sur des rails...

Du lointain vers l’avant-scène d’autres chariots apportent le mobilier intérieur. Le bureau du P.D.G. Jacques Demyères constitué d’une table, de fauteuils "Olivier Mourgue" et d’un ensemble d’étagères avec livres, gadgets, chaîne "Haute Fidélité" ... La chambre de Frédéric: un lit bas, immense, à colonnes, deux chaises de bois rouge, quelques coussins aux couleurs vives ... Le studio du photographe Mackie: une table-bar avec bouteilles et verres, un fauteuil à piétement de métal et trois coussins de "simili cuir" noirs, une chaise chromée, un appareil photo monté sur pieds.\(^2\)

The doors in the set had to be opened abruptly and slammed frequently in the course of the play; their frames, however, were free standing, and attached to movable trolleys. The doors and frames were fixed very firmly to the trolleys so that they would not shake; also, in order to ensure the actors’ safety when they ran and leapt in and out, a very efficient braking system was installed on the trolleys. The setting of various scenes was indicated not only by the props

\(^1\) Blanc, p. 51.

\(^2\) Blanc (assisted by René Allio), p. 207.
brought in on trolleys, but also, by those lowered from the flies. For the airport scenes, for example, two clocks, and the silhouette of the tail of an airplane appeared. During the street scenes, the background included the neon-lit entrance to a nightclub, the silhouette of a car, and traffic lights; in Mackie's photographic studio, the audience could see two huge enlargements of scantily clad girls, and a cut-out silhouette of a nude, her back decorated with a flower. All these elements were visible, slightly illuminated, even when only a few of them were lowered and clearly in use.

In the sets, Allio attempted, therefore, to give a visual background to the kind of mentality which Planchon described in the play. The bourgeois order was suggested partly by referring to boulevard sets, although in Allio's design, the comfortable interiors were reduced to a few stylized elements. Middle class ideologies and preoccupations, shaped by and reflected in modern advertising, were expressed on the stage by the exceptionally large posters and photographs exploiting women. The looming presence of the props suspended from the flies was meant to create an oppressive atmosphere, that of a materialistic era in which people are almost submerged by consumer goods. The set looked forward to that of Planchon's Richard III in 1966, in which instruments of torture and of warfare were to remain menacingly visible throughout the production. The set of Dans le Vent...grrr... was clearly the forerunner to the overcrowded pandemonium of La Mise en pièces du CID, and finally to the claustrophobic and infernal vision of La Langue au Chat, in which humanity is literally suffocating under piles of industrial waste.

Planchon did not treat the characters in the play satirically, but to a certain extent he showed up the boulevard genre. He used boulevard conventions; in Dans le Vent...grrr... coincidence follows upon coincidence, and chance meetings are the rule rather than the exception; characters meet, pursue, love, and leave one another or marry. Jacques Blanc¹

¹ Blanc, pp. 193-194.
noted, however, that instead of creating the reassuring atmosphere of a boulevard play, Dans le Vent...grrrr... filled the spectator with a growing unease, "... un malaise, une angoisse d'abord indéfinissable." Planchon had deliberately eliminated from his play the feeling that all will come right in the end; he was thus going counter to one of the basic assumptions of boulevard theatre, the belief that the plot, for all its surprises, is being guided by a playwright's will toward a happy conclusion. He gave the impression in Dans le Vent...grrrr... that events and situations were really succeeding one another in a haphazard way; Blanc wrote: "... le hasard est alors devenu un véritable hasard comme dans les comédies de Vitrac, non plus poussé par la nécessité interne et tyrannique de la narration, mais par celle de la fluidité et de l'indétermination des personnages." Already in Patte blanche, Planchon had captured, in the scene of the boys' drunken fantasy, this Vitrac-like sense of unpredictability; here he used it as the premise of the entire play.

As we have seen, Planchon wanted the characters to be seen through their actions. There was, however, no clear and linear plot through which they could define themselves. In Bérénice, Planchon had underlined the characters' hesitations, their inability to decide, and their threats, as the elements of the fable through which they reveal themselves. In Dans le Vent...grrrr... he wrote into the play a series of projected actions rather than a central plot; the staging was to emphasise the relations between these dreams and the actions which the characters really do or do not take:

... l'action devenait une "contre-action" ou une fausse action. Ce sont toutes ces anti-actions, ces faux-récits, ces informations erronées, toutes ces directions possibles et aussitôt avortées qui vont permettre à l'auteur de décrire ses personnages. Ce qui devenait alors le point central de l'œuvre était le rapport de l'action fictive, inventée ou même amorcée par les personnages avec leur vécu, leur véritable histoire.1

1. Blanc, p. 185.
The text of this play is full of the fantastical, of stories begun and never finished. As in Patte blanche, the characters live partly in a world of daydreams. Here, however, the characters express their fantasies constantly in fashionable clichés or in self-consciously clever terms. Although they seem less likeable than the children in Patte blanche, these characters are never totally ridiculous; their dreams express human inadequacies too believable to be funny. "Personne", said Planchon, "à son propre niveau, n'est ridicule."¹

In this play particularly he created characters who are too vulnerable to be dismissed with mockery. Some of the characters seem unable at times to distinguish between their private truths and the reality around them. Language for them is an unreliable means of communication, and they use it with suspicion: "Les personnages ne parlent souvent que par peur du silence, parce que le langage est une amarre fragile à laquelle on se raccroche et qui seule pourra retenir l'autre, attirer son attention."² The characters are turned inward upon themselves; during one rehearsal, Planchon suggested: "Les comédiens ne doivent pas se regarder, mais chacun doit chercher à savoir si l'autre le regarde ... les personnages jouent leur propre caricature."³ When he directed Bérénice, Planchon had made his actors emphasise whether they looked at each other or not as they spoke; he surrounded them with mirrors and sometimes had them stare at their own reflections as they addressed other characters. In Dans le Vent... grrr..., the characters were surrounded with reflections of themselves as a social group rather than as individuals (the photographs, the gadgets, the slick furnishings...); when they looked away from each other they showed not only a sense of personal narcissism, but a kind of class narcissism.

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¹ Recorded by Xavier Salomon, Résonances - Le Spectateur Lyonnais, March, 1968.
³ Fourth rehearsal, Jan. 11th, 1968, recorded by Blanc, p.80.
Planchon emphasised the characters' diffidence about words in two ways: in the written text, he had them express their feelings only in extravagant metaphors, and in the production, he underlined the silences. In his production of Bérénice, Planchon had given more importance than usual to the pauses in the dialogues, in order to show that some questions remained unanswered. In Dans le Vent...grrr..., similarly the characters spoke through their silences and their physical attitudes as much as through their words. Planchon was to say, almost ten years later (during the rehearsals for Le Cochon noir) that he thinks of most of the speeches in his plays as "... coming out of a huge well of silence and subsiding back again as soon as the impulse has passed..."¹ Jacques Blanc pointed out that in the love scenes of the play, love is often not mentioned at all:

Voilà pourquoi toute l'attention de l'auteur-metteur-en-scène se porte sur le temps, l'espace: la durée devient l'élément dramatique fondamental. L'entre-deux atteint sa plénitude dans le geste, le silence et la distance, distance de l'objet à un autre objet, d'un personnage à un autre, d'un personnage à un objet.²

Few of the characters are able to express love directly. Jojotte, from the moment of her first meeting with Frédéric, disguises her attraction toward him in fairy tale terms; she tells him: "... un prince est entré dans ma vie. Tu es mon prince, mon chevalier..."³ Frédéric responds by confusing Jojotte with one of his fantasies, which his mother later explains to Jojotte:

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2. Blanc, p.203.
3. From the text of Dans le Vent...grrr..., archives of the Théâtre National Populaire (Villeurbanne), Tableau III, p.17. Further quotations from the script will include scene and page number.
L'année dernière, Frédéric a voulu se suicider. Il était désespéré, enfin je veux dire malade nerveusement; une nuit, il s'est enfui pour se tuer. Pourquoi ne l'a-t-il pas fait? L'instinct de vie devait être encore le plus fort. Mais lui raconte tout autrement sa guérison. Il prétend avoir rencontré dans un bar une fille qui l'a empêché de se tuer. Vrai ou faux, ce rêve lui a donné envie de vivre ... Maintenant il va bien, mais il traîne dans les bars pour retrouver Bécassine. [Miss Mustard Seed] 1 (T IV, p.26)

When he calls Jojoette Miss Mustard Seed, Frédéric is almost making a declaration of love implicitly. Like Jojoette and Frédéric, Lou finds a childlike metaphor for her feelings. She is attracted to Joë, and she romanticizes their friendship into a predestined relationship:

Joë, comment te faire comprendre que nous sommes nés tous les deux dans un pays protégé?
(T V, p.40)

Nous nous retrouvons car l'étoile du matin nous guide. Tu es un fils de la nuit, un mage, et moi, l'ambre de la nuit, son image.
(T VIII, p.63)

The characters are diffident about expressing pain, in the same way as they are afraid to make declarations of love. Lou realises that Joë is not interested in her, and as a defence, she invents an anecdote:

Notre rencontre était fabuleuse, n'est-ce pas Monsieur Joë? Prévue de toute éternité, n'est-ce pas Monsieur Joe"? Mais notre nuit s'est enfoui au loin comme un rat. Pour dire le vrai, je m'en moque, car maintenant je suis amoureuse d'un Hollandais merveilleux, un génie bourré d'idées extraordinaires et poétiques. Il m'a invité en weekend, mais j'hésite car il aime, paraît-il, que les filles le fouettent.
(T VII, p.65)

Even the respectable and conservative Jacques hides behind language when he is hurt. When he sees that Anne is leaving him, he gives vent to his increasing despair in a speech which becomes more and more extravagant as his hope fades:

1. During the rehearsal of Jan. 16th, 1968, Planchon changed the reference to Bécassine into a reference to Miss Mustard Seed. Recorded by Blanc, p.104.
Anne; j'ai besoin de toi. Comment faut-il te le dire? Faut-il te l'écrire? Ecoutez-moi: dans dix secondes cette lampe va s'éteindre et vous allez rouler à mes pieds. 1, 2, 3, ..., 10. Je n'étais pas assez concentré. Je compte jusqu'à dix. Si à dix ce mur s'écroule, vous êtes à moi. 10, 9, 8, 7. Vous entendez, ça craque. Si je vous aime assez fort, cela peut se réaliser, je le sais. 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 0. Cela prouve quoi? Que le dérisoire tient le sublime par le petit doigt. (T V, p. 34)

Régis, the grandfather, uses a language no less extravagant than that of the younger characters, but he is quite in control of it. Speech is not for him a way of disguising personal feelings; his fantasies are an intellectual game in which he opposes to a sordid and depressing political reality (that of France in the 1960's) the dream of a Greek republic: "Un jour les cosmonautes découvriront que les dieux grecs ne sont pas morts et qu'ils sont installés dans une autre galaxie où ils jouent tranquillement à saute-mouton." (T IV, p. 31) Régis is powerless because of his age to transform society, and so he creates in his own mind, and for the benefit of the others, a spiritual opposition to it:

... ce ne sont pas les jeunes qui sont dangereux, ce sont tous ceux qui espèrent me laver le cerveau, qui veulent exirper ma singularité. J'ai la liste de tous ceux qui appartiennent à ce complot, une gigantesque machination internationale qui est décidée à liquider les derniers Grecs afin qu'il ne reste plus face au récepteur de télévision que des petits bourgeois dépolitisé et aseptisé. (T VI, p. 57)

Régis claims to have supernatural powers, to have for example "... un rader à la place du nombril branché sur le noyau cosmique avec lequel je capte toutes les radiations et explosions atomiques." (T VI, p. 57) Through these fantasies, Régis is able to give himself a little importance and even dignity, and especially to derive some amusement from the world around him.

It is difficult to determine from the script how much some of the characters believe in their own fantasies. Planchon certainly did not want his actors to speak their
fanciful lines, even those with a highly metaphorical content, as lyrical passages detached from the action. Just as the dream sequences in *Patte blanche* had been played as a part of the realistic scenes, so the poetic speeches in *Dans le Vent-...grrr...* were to be delivered with an emphasis on the literal meaning of the words. For example, Frédéric complains of a headache by saying: "J'ai un clou planté au sommet de l'occiput." (TVI, p.59). It was imperative that the actor play this figure of speech literally. Jacques Blanc described how the actor was to render the idea of an actual nail in his head:\footnote{Blanc, pp. 163-164.}

Almost as in Planchon's productions of *Les Trois Mousquetaires*, and *La Mise en pièces du CID*, the actors carried each figure of speech to its logical conclusion, and acted out their fantasies. When Jojotette, intoxicated, decides that she can walk on water, she actually goes into the bathroom to attempt it. When Jacques says "J'en suis rouge de confusion"... (TV, p.36) he wipes a hand over his face and covers it with red paint. Planchon wanted to do more than to produce laughter with this technique; by having his troupe follow the letter of the text, he hoped to prevent them from sursignifier. As early as in 1958, when he was putting on Henry IV at Villeurbanne, Planchon was insisting that his troupe avoid pathetic acting; during the rehearsals for *Dans le Vent...grrr...*, he again explained that it would be overstatement to act out a pathos already implicit in the words. Jacques Blanc wrote an account of Planchon's suggestion to the actors:

Généralement les comédiens ont tendance à jouer de façon poétique, c'est-à-dire sans se rapporter directement à la situation concrète, en jouant comme des parenthèses dans le déroulement de l'action tout ce qui
Throughout his work at Villeurbanne, Planchon continued to demand this intelligent, powerfully unemotional style of acting from his company. Even when the text was straightforward, Planchon invented concrete images during rehearsals, to show the actors which mood or which technique he wanted in particular scenes. For example, Mackie at one point is in a painful situation when he hears Jacques asking Anne to marry him; Planchon gave Jean Bouise, who played Mackie, a picturesque direction for this scene: "Tu es assis sur un brasier. On vient te demander si tu vas bien. Tu réponds oui, en essayant de sourire ..." Planchon also referred to specific sequences from the cinema as examples. He suggested that an argument between Jacques and Joê be played like a fight between Laurel and Hardy: Laurel tears off Hardy's shirtsleeve; Hardy looks on passively, and then tears Laurel's coat as Laurel watches; Laurel then tears off Hardy's other sleeve, while Hardy again looks on serenely, and the sequence repeats itself. In the same way, Planchon said, Jacques and Joê "... essuient leurs insultes réciproques

avec le plus grand calme."\(^1\) In another scene, Planchon compared Mackie's attitude toward Anne with a performance by Harpo Marx: "... il fait des grimaces mais ses yeux restent rieurs."\(^2\)

Because they try hard to be fashionable, the characters sometimes actually become clichés themselves. Joë especially seems a victim of the drug revolution. He has "dropped out" of his marriage and of respectable society; he dresses as a hippy, and he rebels vociferously and ineffectively.

Instead of using a boyish actor for the role, however, Planchon chose Claude Brasseur; no doubt the actor's maturity made the character's adolescent rebellion seem all the more ludicrous.

Most of Joë's political speeches have the willful cynicism of a young man enjoying his despair; he dresses as a Nazi:

> Je ne suis pas fasciste. Je suis nazi. Je suis un partisan de la merde hitlérienne. Vive Hitler et ses assassins, car alors le capitalisme agissait à visage découvert. (T II, p.12)

> C'est l'uniforme de ma tribu ... je suis le dernier des Mohicans, l'avant-dernier a été fusillé pour avoir déclaré que cette planète était humoristique. En 1945, les plombs ont sauté à Hiroshima. Depuis, la terre tourne dans le noir. (T II, p.12)

Even when he insults his cousin Jacques, he seems filled with family resentment as much as political conviction; Jacques gives him a cheque, and Joë says:

> Faut-il que la bourgeoisie se sente gluante pour donner un chèque aussi facilement. Si je reviens un jour je te rendrai ça! Mais j'espère qu'entre-temps les communistes auront pris le pouvoir en France et que les bêtes de la pré-histoire dans ton genre, seront parquées dans les réserves. J'irai te porter des cacahuètes. (T VII, p.61)

In the play, Planchon makes a malicious comment about the hippy "revolt" in which Joë is taking part. Jacques tells Joë how he rid himself of some hippies who had camped in his flat during

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1. Third rehearsal, Jan. 10th, 1968, recorded by Blanc, p.76.
2. Fourth rehearsal, Jan. 11th, 1968, recorded by Blanc, p.79.
his absence:


Régis and Joë are the only characters who really talk about politics; the one is a harmless old man indulging in humorous daydreams, however, and the other is an overaged rebel whose "cause" has already been récupérée.

Planchon's calculated misuse of boulevard convention surprised and interested critics. Juan Bonal was especially amused at the idea of depicting the bourgeoisie through its own favoured form of theatre. The boulevard genre, with its comings and goings and generally breathless pace, was also a genre suitable for a picture of "... la turbulence absurde de notre société." Planchon had recreated not only the trappings of the boulevard play (the doors to be slammed, the modern decors, the stylish clothes), but the artificial and exciting rhythm of the genre. A reviewer for Lettres Françaises, Gerard Guillo, made this comment:

... une parodie pleine de verve et rehaussée par une mise en scène ... très animée, très agitée, mouvementée et bruyante, colorée et envahie d'accessoires: on court, on saute, on bondit, on danse, on se cherche, on s'étend, on s'enlève, on fuit, on se véhicule, on se baillonne, on se sauve, on se donne ou l'on se prête, etc. Le vaudeville est là, totalement présent avec tout ce qui fait ses illusoires succès et ses brillantes complaisances.

Dans le Vent...grrrr... was different from the usual boulevard play, however. In traditional boulevard comedies, the characters are usually motivated by specific ideals or goals: self-interest, pleasure, the wish to keep one's social rank, or even bourgeois morality. Guillot felt that Planchon deliberately deprived his characters of any such ambition or desire.

The play, he thought, lacked a plot because it was based on totally empty characters:

Ils [les personnages] sont à l'état végétatif, ballottés entre leurs dépressions et leurs impuissances, écartelés entre la drogue et les maladies "consommatrices". En un mot prisonniers d'eux-mêmes et de la prison qu'ils se sont construite... comment pourraient-ils ou comment pourraient-elles être les tensions, les forces et les énergies d'une intrigue, d'une action ou même simplement d'une aventure?

More than one critic thought that by emphasising the boulevard-like artificiality of his characters, Planchon had made the play uninteresting. According to Lerrant^1 "L'oeuvre écrite objectivement sur des gens futilis ne prend-elle pas quelque chose de leur futilité?" Daniel Bard,^2 too, although he understood Planchon's intentions very well, thought that he had failed to realise them:

... c'est cet imprévisible du boulevard qui a sans doute séduit Planchon. Ou mieux ce drame qu'on frôle à chaque fois et qui se dérobe par le sortilège d'une mécanique salvatrice.

L'auteur a précisément voulu démontrer cette mécanique et faire vivre à nu les guignols boulevardiers. Mais en les dépouillant de leurs artifices, ils deviennent inconstants, mous, sans vrai raison d'être, réels en revanche. ... à force de réalité inconsistante, les pantins de Planchon n'émeuvent guère.

In general the critics seemed to ignore the motivation behind those actions which the characters do take: Jojotte and Lou, Joë, Frédéric, Jacques, Mackie, and Anne, every one of the characters expresses a need for affection, often an almost pathetic need for love. Planchon had said that he was writing a play about modern people in a publicity filled world, who suddenly discover love and are amazed and delighted. Although relationships in the play begin and end abruptly in a frenetic pattern of pursuit, discovery, and rejection or acceptance, Planchon was not only using a boulevard convention when he chose to speak about love. It is in their desire to love and to be loved that the characters of Dans le Vent...grrr... are most

human and believable.

One after the other, Planchon's critics said that he should have taken a more definite stance in relation to his characters. The play, said one, was "... ni comédie de boulevard, ni satire, mais parodie incertaine de ces genres." It was, wrote another, "... un pétard mouillé." In the opinion of Pierre Biard,

... on attend d'un auteur une prise de position résolue, même discutable, qui entraînait au moins l'exploration d'un mécanisme, à défaut d'une satire. Sans plus d'intrigue, de fil conducteur, d'articulation, sans sacrifier à une dramaturgie bourgeoise, toutes choses dont se méfie Planchon, il aurait pénétré avec plus de cœur dans la vie de ses personnages et dans les mobiles de leurs actions ou de leurs inactions. Il aurait pu les rendre cohérents et véritablement représentatifs d'une certaine société qu'il connaissait mal pour ne pas vouloir la juger."

Certainly Planchon had attempted a difficult feat: to portray people who were fashionable and upper middle class, and who were at the same time caricatures of fashionableness, and to show up the falseness of their values without making them seem either worthless or dull themselves.

He had not failed completely, even in the eyes of his critics. There were moments in the play when the seemingly puppet-like characters suddenly came alive. Even Biard admitted that "... le plus irritant dans tout cela est de sentir une tendresse pour les personnages, une pudeur à parler de l'amour qui, libérées, contrebalaînceraient la sécheresse de l'exposition." Juan Bonal saw in a few isolated scenes a kind of tender irony beneath the comedy. He mentioned in particular the scene in which Charles tries to persuade Lou and Jojotte to do some modelling for Mackie, begins to find his own work deplorable, and dreams, sorrowfully, of escaping and becoming a shepherd in Provence. Bonal also singled out other scenes:

4. Ibid.
Celle où Françoise, après une séquence délirante où Anne quitte Mackie, où Frédéric rompt ses fiançailles et Jojotte déchire sa robe de mariée, s'accroupit dans le silence auprès de son fils et retrouve soudain la présence familière des objets domestiques... Celle encore des retrouvailles de la mère et de la fille qu'accélère l'annonce de la mort subite du grand-père. Ici, la vie reprend tous ses droits, sa complexité, son obscurité, sa fuyance et son immobilité.

For even such characters as these, Planchon showed a sense of compassion: "On sait bien, d'ailleurs, que sous des allures et un/parfois cyniques, il y a toujours chez Planchon une tendresse secrète et un intérêt passionné pour les êtres et pour leurs comportements." Already in La Remise Planchon had showed his ability to treat very humanely people with whose point of view he disagreed. In l'Infième, written in the year after Dans le Vent...grrr..., Planchon was to paint an extraordinarily compassionate picture of a catholic priest who has committed a horrendous crime. It is his interest in people which makes it possible for Planchon to regard his own ideology as irrelevant; like Balzac, he attempts only to make his picture of reality as accurate and true to life as possible.

The sets for Dans le Vent...grrr... were meant to give the audience an idea of the kind of world which could create such characters as Jojotte and Frédéric, Jacques and Joë... The critics understood that the boulevard-like slickness of the sets corresponded to the empty sophistication of the beings who moved within them:

Ils [les personnages] font irruption sur le plateau dans un tourniquet de portes ouvertes par celui qu'on n'attend pas, claquées par celle qu'on voudrait garder auprès de soi, dans un jeu de construction dont les cubes représentent des cabines téléphoniques, des placards, des coins-cuisine, des blocs-douche et des coins-bar. Les vieux ressorts du vaudeville sous-tendent les drames de cette

2. Lerrant, Progrès (Lyons), Feb. 15th, 1968.
The posters and photographs were illustrations of the mental universe into which the play penetrates. Juan Bonal thought that the set corresponded to both the material and the spiritual level of the play: "A l'aissance matérielle, au plus près des acteurs, correspondent les meubles douillets d'Olivier Mourgue tandis qu'à l'indigence mentale correspondent, accrochés aux cintres, le monde publicitaire." We see once again an example of Allio's distinction between those props used for la représentation, that is for the purpose of clarifying the action of the play and supporting the actor's performance, and props used for la présentation, that is as a comment on the ideas of the play as a whole. In this case, the comfortable furniture helped to situate the characters and their behaviour immediately, contributing to la représentation; the signs and photographs and various other elements lowered from the flies were a comment on the characters' society, they were obviously theatrical rather than realistic like the furniture; they made a critical comment on the présentation, on the themes of the play as a whole. The gadgets which Jacques tends to like belonged more to the second kind of props: they were the material equivalent of the ironic speech with which he defends himself, and, in a sense, a symbol of the inadequacy of words for him; at the same time they were examples of Americanism creeping into Europe. When Jacques wants to "seduce" Anne at the airport, he takes out an inflatable sofa and almost asks her to join him on it before he deflates it again. It is a rather good example of slightly obscene American gadgetry and of Jacques' inarticulateness. He finally deals with all his painful feelings by pretending to execute his friends on a model guillotine, "made

in America... The set and the props incarnated the values which the upper middle class has created, and to which they are finally subjected almost in spite of themselves.

The text was a rather difficult one to understand because of its deliberate artificiality. It confused many people. Pierre Biard made this point:

Factice, artificiel, ces qualificatifs reviennent à propos de la langue employée, fabriquée même, pourrait-on dire, par Planchon: les images, les comparaisons déconcertantes et arbitraires, les raccourcis, les déclinaisons, tous les procédés peu naturels qu'il [Planchon] emploie ici et dont il avait déjà usé dans О Man Chicago m'irritent au plus haut point et, si j'en juge par les réactions du public, manquent absolument d'efficacité.

Juan Bonal described the characters as "... enferrés dans ces reflets du langage qui ne les avancent guère." The characters are indeed prisoners of the clichés which they feel they must use; Planchon saw their language as another aspect of their quasi-enslavement to fashion. However, Lerrant thought that Planchon had tried too hard to make the characters' vocabulary sound fashionable, and that the result was laborious and unconvincing. Only Gérard Guillot seems to have appreciated the text, but even he had reservations about its suitability on the stage:

Autour de quelques mots d'auteur (pour rappeler le boulevard), de quelques facilités dans les jeux de mots, de quelques clins d'œil aux spectateurs, il [Planchon] a élaboré un langage original dont les retentissements humoristiques fonctionnent au second degré. Rien n'est pris à la lettre, mais au contraire tout est apprêté pour que le sourire surgisse ou le rire fuse après une démarche de l'esprit. Je serais presque tenté d'écrire que cela est parfois trop intelligent, trop subtil, trop fin. Ce qui expliquerait que ce langage soit si mal entendu par certains.

Certainly Planchon had tried to make his actors deliver their lines in as clear and as literal a way as possible, in order to offset the humorous and poetic complexity of the text. As a play is written to be heard once, however, and as Planchon intended *Dans le Vent...grrr...* to be a comedy, perhaps he should have made it a little more immediately comprehensible. The script is elliptical and difficult to read; one wonders whether a Villeurbanne public could have followed it easily on the stage.

Some critics thought that, although the play touched on many themes, it did not present them in depth. Pierre Biard, for example,\(^1\) said that no one could make a serious social statement through such superficial characters. Another reviewer\(^2\) did see Planchon's intention of exposing the influence of America on France: "Notre Marianne républicaine est piétinée par des bataillons de jeunes filles nues sorties des pages de *Playboy*. Toute la société française est touchée par ce déferlement de puritanisme." This critic saw *Dans le Vent...grrr...* as a political play in the sense that it was a critical portrait of a social class: "Sans passion, avec une objectivité rigoureuse, Planchon dévoile l'ensemble mystificateur que représente cette classe technocratique et la société de consommation que ce mouvement prône." Like Biard, however, he complained that the lack of a positive standpoint from which to look at the characters made the portrait far less effective. Lerrant\(^3\) thought that this play belonged to a phase in Planchon's career, a "... période d'ascétisme ironique..." which he, Lerrant, did not appreciate. It was written at the beginning of 1968, the year of the événements in France, the year which was to inspire the company to produce *La Mise en pièces du CID*. One of the most serious charges levelled at *La Mise en pièces* was that it lacked a positive basis for its satire; perhaps this lack of a definite position was merely the culmination of

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a process of standing back and "taking stock" which Planchon had begun even before May 1968. Possibly Planchon already had started to doubt the possibility of a permanently valid viewpoint.

Planchon had wanted to make a straightforward picture of the upper middle classes which would raise consciousness by its very accuracy. In a discussion after a presentation of Le Cochon noir in 1973,\(^1\) Planchon was to say that he did not like to prendre position in his works; he was to explain that, like Balzac, he preferred to make a faithful description of reality, in which his own ideology was irrelevant. He used this comparison with Balzac when he spoke about Dans le Vent... grrr... and it was recorded by Blanc:

Pour Planchon, l'idéologie de l'auteur dans le processus de la création finit par être "secondaire". Balzac est un grand auteur parce que ses descriptions sont justes et qu'il ne donne aucune solution imaginaire. Balzac lui paraît exemplaire, bien qu'ayant été un monarchiste et un légitimiste.

...un écrivain comme Zola, progressiste, n'a pas su peindre les convulsions du capitalisme et ses contradictions avec autant d'acuité que Balzac, écrivain légitimiste catholique.\(^2\)

Blanc recorded that Planchon finally said: "A la limite, l'être et le destin de mes personnages m'échappe." Planchon wanted to depict a social class so authentically that people would necessarily judge it and themselves in relation to it as they watched the play. It was necessary for his own vision to be as objective as possible; Juan Bonal\(^3\) noted that Planchon had presented his characters without judging them: "Il [Planchon] lui [la bourgeoisie] laisse sa chance sans s'y asservir. Ce sera donc une bourgeoisie ruisellente d'argent, couronnée de chromes, échangeant ses névroses sous un ciel

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1. At Caen, Dec. 1973, information kindly communicated by Dorothy Knowles.
d'où photos à la mode ont balayé toute idée platonicienne."
Jacqueline Cartier\(^1\) understood the production well; she called it "... un album d'instantanés avec des personnages dont on peut dire que leur réalité dépasse la fiction. ... Planchon n'a pas même fait de caricature. La comédie vaut par l'acuité du dessin." Ossia Trilling congratulated Planchon for leaving behind him the "... didactic, Brechtian type of theatre..." to present a "... realistic picture of the burden of capitalism triumphantly enslaving the minds of the young."\(^2\) As we have seen, Planchon felt that he was one of the first in France to have followed Brecht's theories, but also one of the first to have departed from them; he had taken a new direction because, precisely, he had begun to feel that Brecht's plays were too didactic. Planchon's contempt for the system, if not for the people caught in it, was implicit in the play.

It was Gérard Guillot\(^3\) who best understood the kind of social statement which Planchon made in this play. Planchon proposed, according to Guillot,

De porter à la scène, et avec une tendresse presque complice, des "produits" de notre monde, des "résultantes" de ce qui nous envahit et nous assaille quotidiennement. D'enfermer dans un cadre vieillot (mais qui existe encore) des spécimens fabriqués et façonnés par notre société de consommation, par nos avalanches publicitaires, par nos fausses révoltes face à la tragédie viet-namienne ou face aux réseaux des polices parallèles spécialistes des enlèvements en plein jour. Des échantillons que nous côtoyons tous les jours et dont nous faisons partie, parfois, sans le savoir. Des modèles d'une colonisation américaine, les moyens colonisateurs étant la drogue et les gadgets morbides de genre guillotine, les pilules et le whisky.

Admittedly, it was a difficult play which had alienated many critics; even the usually sympathetic Claude Sarraute called it an act of provocation.\(^4\) Nevertheless, Guillot was confident

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that Planchon's public would follow him:

... après dix ans d'expériences à Villeurbanne... il [Planchon] peut entraîner ce public dans des aventures difficiles, exigeantes et passionnantes. Il sait qu'il peut faire de ce public le complice de son aventure personnelle, de ses recherches scrupuleuses d'auteur dramatique... Le public, la plus grande partie du public, le suit.

Guillot even hoped that the play would be the point of departure for a new style of comedy. Perhaps he was being a little too optimistic. The play was not an outstanding success with Planchon's audiences. It was important nevertheless as an ambitious experiment to use an old comedy genre as the medium for a basically serious examination of our society.

In both these plays, as in most of Planchon's work, historical forces are at work which the characters choose to ignore. The characters in them are modern, and they are wealthy enough or far enough from the capital to feel protected from any social or political changes. The children in Patte blanche, however, are brought into a momentary, painful contact with the Algerian war when an Arab boy familiar to them is murdered. The characters in Dans le Vent...grrr... have adopted the clichés and the attitudes of America because that great power is colonising Europe spiritually as well as economically.

In each of these two plays, a sense of the transience of human existence gives the text a tinge of ironic sadness. The boys in Patte blanche eventually leave behind not only the Igloo-Planque, but also the childish sense of protective camaraderie which it gave them. In Dans le Vent...grrr..., relationships begin and end, and people reject or accept one another with a painful suspicion that even superficially made decisions may have irredeemable effects. They do not seem to control their own destiny because, like the children of the first play, they are not fully conscious of the forces which help to shape it.
Neither of the plays was a great success in terms of audience response. In a discussion in Rheims after a reading of *Le Cochon noir*, Planchon said that he always knew when he had failed in achieving his aims in a play: he felt like rewriting it immediately after it had been presented. Perhaps *Dans le Vent...grrrr...*, written just two years after *Patte blanche*, was an attempt to do more successfully what he had tried to do in the first play: to base a play on unstructured situations rather than on characters. Certainly Planchon was satisfied with neither of the two plays. When, during the Rheims discussion, a drama student claimed that people would be more interested in plays about contemporary people, Planchon disagreed. He said that he himself had written three contemporary plays (the third was *La Langue au Chat*, which was being presented in Rheims at the time of the discussion), and that the first two were *ratées*.

Possibly the weakness of the plays lay in their total lack of structure; Planchon had attempted to reduce the emotional and psychological importance of the characters, while at the same time refusing to write a linear plot. The only play in which he succeeded in doing both these things was *Bleus, blancs, rouges*, and here the audience's knowledge of the historical events which transform the characters' lives gave the play a structure external to itself. Of Planchon's two modern *comédies*, *Patte blanche* is the more moving; it is set, unlike *Dans le Vent...grrrr...*, in a provincial milieu which Planchon knows well, and the characters are therefore more believable. Despite the structural weakness of the plays, and although Planchon considered them as failures, both are examples of an interesting part of his career as a playwright; in these plays he moved away from the intense human portraits of *La Remise*, to experiment with situations and actions rather than psychology.

1. With drama students of the Théâtre Populaire de Reims, after a reading of *Le Cochon noir*, on October 26th, 1972.
In Planchon's work as a playwright, there are two distinct currents. Firstly, there are the spectacular shows created with the collaboration of the entire company, and including many songs and dances; these are the créations collectives, *Les Trois Mousquetaires*, *O M' Man Chicago* and *La Mise en pièces du CID*, as well as *La Langue au Chat*. Secondly, there are the more traditional dramatic works to which Planchon claims individual authorship, namely the peasant plays and the modern comedies, as well as *Bleus, blancs, rouges*. Planchon reveals similar preoccupations in both types of production but he presents them in a different way. The spectacular shows are openly satirical and they ask questions explicitly. In the other plays, ideas are presented more implicitly, within the fable, and usually they are treated more seriously. Planchon's method of portraying the French revolution in *Bleus, blancs, rouges* exemplified his approach to history in his peasant plays and in his modern comedies. His colourful and irreverent presentation of the myths of contemporary society in *La Langue au Chat* carried on the burlesque tradition which he had begun in his earliest musical comedies.

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**Bleus, blancs, rouges**

*Face aux grands mouvements de l'Histoire, les sentiments et les idées des êtres sont dérisoires. Les individus sont maniés en tous sens.* - Programme for *Bleus, blancs, rouges*

The play, *Bleus, blancs, rouges ou les Libertins* was first written and produced in 1967. It was rewritten and put
on again in 1971 under the short title, *Bleus, blancs, rouges*.

The programme for the 1971 production contains Planchon’s extensive notes on the sources of the play and on his own intentions in writing it. His first inspiration for *Bleus, blancs, rouges*, came from an anecdote in a contemporary biography of the Maréchal de Richelieu, *La Véritable Vie privée du Maréchal de Richelieu*. The story tells of a young aristocrat, the duc de Fronsac, who refused to acknowledge the wife forced on him by his family, choosing instead to continue keeping several mistresses. He was imprisoned for some time, but nevertheless refused to accept his wife when she came to visit him. Planchon had planned to turn the scene of the prison visit into a one act play as a dramatic exercise. He became interested in the era, however, and finally wrote a full length play which included the prison scene. He read his play seven times to actors and critical friends, and he changed it according to their reactions.

When he first wrote *Bleus, blancs, rouges*, Planchon had personally written only *La Remise* and *Pâte blanche*. He was particularly interested in using the French revolution as a subject in order to avoid the autobiographical inspiration of his two previous plays. In the programme he said that he deliberately chose to write not about peasants or petits-bourgeois, but about aristocrats and wealthy and powerful 18th century bourgeois: "Grâce à ces riches 'aristos'... j'abandonnais un temps les quartiers modestes et les remises."

At the same time, Planchon wished to retain the provincial basis of his work. He gave several reasons. Firstly, the writing of great authors whom he admires, such as Chekhov and Faulkner is steeped in their own provincial surroundings. Secondly, Planchon humbly claimed that he must describe what he himself knows best. Thirdly, and most importantly, he stated in the programme that he was writing for a provincial public: "... engagé dans l'aventure de la décentralisation théâtrale, c'est au niveau du spectacle qu'il me semble nécessaire que l'implantation en province soit inscrite..."

Planchon showed in the programme that his constant
concern was to include the point of view of his audience in his plays: "Il faut ... faire en sorte que les beaux personnages en habit parlent ... aux gens de l'immeuble où l'on vit."

In Bleus, blancs, rouges, the characters' provincialism was a first link between them and the public of the provinces. Moreover, Planchon sought to make his characters intelligent beings. The events must not defeat the characters because the characters are weak or stupid; that kind of psychological fatalism would lead the audience to dismiss the play as irrelevant to them. Planchon presented "... des gens intelligents qui se trompent à chaque instant. Aucun n'est coincé dans sa médiocrité ou ne barbote dans sa stupidité. Ils barbotent dans les préjugés de leur classe, de leur situation."

Thus the play showed "... l'échec d'une classe (ou de tel groupe politique) mais en aucune façon l'échec d'individus." By showing intelligent people acting according to their principles, and being defeated, Planchon cast doubt on the principles rather than on the characters, and thus retained his public's interest in the beings on stage.

In Petite blanche and in Dans le Vent...grrrr..., Planchon experimented with the dramatic structure, placing the characters in a series of situations not connected by a linear plot. In Bleus, blancs, rouges, the events of the play are similarly unpredictable for the characters, but they are familiar to the audience as history. The plot is not linear, but made up of a number of interconnecting stories which Planchon gleaned from biographies of the day:

"Je n'y voyais pas clair," telle pourrait être la devise de chaque personnage. C'est l'addition et la confrontation de leurs myopies qui sert de ressort dramaturgique à chacun des dix-sept tableaux qui composent Bleus, blancs, rouges, et à la pièce dans son ensemble. Il serait donc inutile d'en chercher la trajectoire: Planchon opère par décentrements successifs, et l'on chercherait vainement, dans Bleus, blancs, rouges, le ou les héros qui en seraient la ou les clés...

The key to the plot was in the historical knowledge which a French public would have of the revolution; the play was unified by historical events not central to it.

The first version of the play was divided into twenty tableaux, the second into seventeen. Both versions range in time from the year 1789 to the year 1800, and in place from France to the émigré routes in Florence and Milan. The play is difficult to summarise except in general terms. The characters can be divided into three groups: firstly, that of Aubier d'Arbonne, (the aristocratic young husband in the original anecdote) and his libertine friends; secondly, that of Aubier d'Arbonne's brother, who is a homosexual archbishop, and his associates; and thirdly, that of the rejected wife Maurille, her mother Mme Renoir, and their servants. Aubier d'Arbonne is imprisoned through the influence of Mme Renoir, who is incensed that he refuses to accept her daughter as his wife. He is freed when the revolutionaries break open his prison and liberate the inmates. During her husband's imprisonment, Maurille takes a lover, Édouard de Thierry, the Archevêque's favourite. When the revolution begins to gain ground, Aubier d'Arbonne, Maurille, the Archevêque, Édouard de Thierry, and Mlle Mignot, an old companion of Mme Renoir, emigrate. Mme Renoir insists on staying behind. Aubier d'Arbonne's libertine friends, the Archevêque's associates, and Mme Renoir's servants join different camps in the revolutionary struggles. Mme Renoir is guillotined; Hilaire her servant and Édouard de Thierry are both killed fighting for the royalist cause. Aubier d'Arbonne, Maurille, and Mlle Mignot sink into greater and greater poverty, and are finally compelled to depend on charity, prostitution, and arms trafficking in order to subsist. The libertines, aristocrats, and revolutionaries who survive become respectable citizens of Napoleon's empire.

In the 1967 script, the story of Aubier d'Arbonne and Maurille is central; the play dwells on their attitudes to love and on their relationship as much as on their reaction to the revolution. In the later version, Planchon increased the importance of the other characters, reducing that of Aubier d'Arbonne and Maurille. The emphasis is not on their personal
ideas and sentiments but on their ill-timed passivity and their inability to analyse historical events as they occur.

The second version of the play was written after the événements of 1968; Planchon had become even more interested in people's attitude to extreme historical moments. Previously in 1967, Planchon had told Robert Butheau that he had not intended to write a historical play:

A l'origine je voulais écrire Les Libertins, mais petit à petit la Révolution a envahi la pièce et j'ai découvert que c'est là le problème qui préoccupait tous les personnages. Mais je ne pouvais pas abandonner mon projet et écrire une pièce historique. En réalité, ma pièce possède deux versants: une histoire qui est la grande histoire, et des aventures individuelles, souvent anecdotiques, dont le libertinage est le moteur.

In 1971, Planchon suppressed the second title Les Libertins. The historical side of the play became the more important side.

In the 1971 play, Planchon indicated more carefully than in the 1967 play the specific events of the revolution. There is a greater feeling of movement; events succeed one another quickly and upset people's plans. For example, Des Rougettes, who is in this version an officer in the Archevêque's household, interrupts a conversation between Aubier d'Arbonne and the Archevêque (in Tableau V) to announce that the Parisians are marching on Versailles and that the king is prisoner in Paris. Adélaïde, Maurille's maid, appears a few moments later, having left her position to go and marry Cyprien de Nobili, an officer and friend of the Archevêque. Planchon added an episode at the end of a later tableau which underlined the growing violence and hatred in France at that time. Cyprien de Nobili, Adélaïde, Judrin, formerly the Archevêque's secretary, Borian one of Aubier d'Arbonne's friends, and others, are having a last evening together before the men sign up to fight in the revolutionary army. Planchon added a sequence in which shots are heard and a man runs in and collapses wounded in their midst.

1. Monde, April 7th, 1967.
pursued by several people; he has escaped from a revolutionary prison; Adélaïe puts her hand in the dead man's blood and denigrates it as aristocratic blood. Planchon was also more precise in the second script; in a scene in which the émigrés are begging, the Archevêque tries to convince his brother to fight to regain their privileges. His speech gives more definite details in the second version:

| Es-tu capable de te battre?  \ Es-tu capable,  
| une épée à la main, de reconquérir nos biens? |
| (XIII, p. 68, 1967)  |


The title refers to the different camps into which France was divided during the revolution, that of the aristocrats, les blancs, of the bourgeois, les bleus, and of the people, les rouges. In the second version of his play, Planchon made the rivalry between aristocrats and bourgeois far clearer, by making each character sharply aware of the group to which he or she belongs. Every quarrel and discussion in the second play is politicised; rather than simply arguing, the characters make generalisations about one another's social origins. In the programme, Planchon described the economic situation before the revolution:

Le pouvoir était déjà aux mains de la bourgeoisie ou aux mains des nobles directement engagés dans l'industrie ou le commerce. Dans la pièce, la riche Madame Renoir marie sa fille avec un noble ruiné. Elle détient déjà le pouvoir financier.

The 1971 version of the play emphasised to what extent the quarrel between Mme Renoir and Aubier d'Arbonne represented the conflicting interests of two social classes. Aubier d'Arbonne resents Mme Renoir's power to buy his title for her daughter. Mme Renoir is furious that her attempt to advance her child

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1. From the texts of Bleus, blancs, rouges ou les Libertins, 1967, and of Bleus, blancs, rouges, 1971, archives of the Théâtre National Populaire, (Villeurbanne). Further quotations from either script will include the scene and page numbers and the year.
socially is thwarted by Aubier d'Arbonne's aristocratic libertine ideas. In the 1967 script, she rages against her son-in-law personally; in the 1971 play she includes his entire class in her imprecations, and shows that her sense of business ethics has also been offended: "ma fille, je sollicite ton pardon. Et je te jure que ces aristocrates viendront à genoux demander grâce. Un contrat est un contrat." (I, p.3, 1971) In the 1971 version, it is clear that the marriage is a business transaction. Gabrielle, Aubier d'Arbonne's mistress, calls Maurille a "Sale bourgeoise qui vend son cul pour un titre!" (II, p.13, 1971) Indeed, Mme Renoir's business-like outlook was underlined later in the play as well. She decides to stay behind when the others emigrate because she does not believe Planchon attributed a more profit-minded reason to her:

Un peu de désordre dans les rues, mais les affaires sont florissantes. Tous les biens des émigrés vont être vendus aux enchères. C'est le moment d'echeter des terres et des fabriques. Déjà mes régisseurs s'en occupent. ... Nous ne fuyons pas, nous. Nous n'avons rien à nous reprocher.

(VIII, p.46, 1971)

Aubier d'Arbonne is opposed to what Mme Renoir represents. In the 1967 script, he rages against Mme Renoir as a kind of person who is too typical:

Je bâtirai mon âme, mes goûts, mes appétits, sur la mesure imposée par cette guenon rageuse. Plutôt prendre une cravache ou un fouet et faire galoper cette belle âme nouée par la vertu. Ce pays pue une forte odeur de chèvre. Pour continuer à y vivre sans suffoquer, il faudra ouvrir les portes et les fenêtres. (III, p.13, 1967)

His speech in the 1971 version shows far less self-indulgent anger and makes a political point more explicitly and concisely:


The Archevêque is on the side of the king because of his birth as well as his ecclesiastical position. In the 1967 script, when Aubier comes to see him after being released from prison, he is irritated at being seen with disreputable people,
but nevertheless amused by his young brother. In the 1971 script, their meeting is more bitter. The libertines Borian and Gabrielle challenge the Archevêque to leave the priesthood and admit his homosexuality openly; he takes a defensive and rigid stance:

C'est la fraternelle alors? Mais nous ne sommes pas de la même classe, ma fille.
Embrassons-nous. C'est la fraternelle de la confusion, de la dérision, de l'écume, de l'insignifiance. Embrassons-nous à la parisienne. (V, p.31, 1971)

Cyprien de Nobili is the illegitimate son of a nobleman and a kitchen maid. In one scene, he opposes a group of officers who are planning to desert the revolutionary army and align themselves with the prince d'Artois. Edouard de Thierry who is Cyprien's friend, holds him back in order to allow the officers to leave. In the 1967 script, nothing more happens. In the 1971 script, the officers return to disarm Edouard de Thierry and drag away Cyprien de Nobili; they are not only angry that he has opposed them but contemptuous of his impure blood:

Le Colonel:
... Par considération pour le vieux Nobili nous ne tuerons pas son bâtard, mais nous allons le battre comme plâtre. Accordez-moi cette satisfaction. Messieurs, vos ceinturons.
(VII, p.45, 1971)

In the 1967 play, a few tableaux were set in Paris, but in the 1971 play, all the action takes place in the provinces or in Italy. In the 1971 play, for example, Aubier d'Arbonne is arrested not in the Théâtre des Italiens, but in the theatre of Chalon, a town on the Saône River, north of Lyons. His brother's archbishopric is not in Paris but in Dijon. Borian signs up not in Paris, but in a bar on the banks of the Saône. The critic Arturo Lazzari rightly pointed out that by setting the entire play in the provinces, Planchon "distanced" the revolution: "Ainsi peut-il [Planchon] d'une certaine façon, mettre mieux en relief, les faits historiques, et seconder son récit selon les phases ascendantes puis descendantes de ceux-ci."¹ Certainly by making the play completely

provincial, Planchon was able to show how different the revolution would seem from a provincial point of view, and thus to create a perspective on the traditional Parisian interpretation of the events. The main incidents of the revolution take place far away and so it is not surprising that characters misinterpret their importance. Adélaïde compares her own situation with that of the Parisians:

C'est à Paris que tout se passe. A Paris il y a Marat et tous les grands patriotes. En province ... il ne se passe jamais rien, rien. (A Judrin) Viens. Allons faire un tour en barque. Va, va, tu as le temps, tes gazettes de Paris n'arrivent qu'en fin d'après-midi. (VI, p.42, 1971)

In the 1971 version of the play, Planchon made his characters more cruel and their relations more bitter. Maurille appears as less of a victim. She shows her opposition to her mother from the start: "Cette lettre de cachet est grotesque. Vous m'amusez follement." (I, p.4, 1971) Whereas in the 1967 script she at first rejects Édouard de Thierry's advances, in the 1971 version she shows an immediate interest in him; when they have just met she makes a speech which appears only in the 1971 script: "Vous parliez des respirations de la nuit, de ses brûlures. (Ils s'embrassent.) C'est palpitant, Monsieur le Comte, je vous vole à Monseigneur." (I, p.6, 1971) Édouard de Thierry is also more obviously jealous of Aubier d'Arbonne in the 1971 version. After a nocturnal scene in which everyone gets up because Maurille has had a nightmare, he stays alone with her. In the second version of the play, as they speak he massages her neck, and he becomes so irritated by her repeated allusions to her husband that he almost strangles her. Mme Renoir then enters, reproaches her daughter for becoming a libertine, and has her servant slap Maurille. The bitterness between the two women is shown to be acute.

In the 1967 play, when Maurille visits Aubier d'Arbonne to warn him of his imminent arrest, their conversation is hardly
interrupted. In the 1971 version, Gabrielle, Aubier's mistress, taunts Maurille fiercely, and provokes angrily condescending retaliation. When Maurille visits Aubier in prison, she is attempting to seduce him. In the 1967 script, she remains helpful and gently provoking. In the 1971 play, her dance of seduction is more apparent. At his bidding she removes her dress, and she sits on his knees to speak to him. He twists her arm as he asks her about her lovers, and when he promises to have her and them whipped, she is triumphant: "Ah je savais bien que d'une façon ou d'une autre je vous donnerais du plaisir." (III, p.18, 1971) In the 1967 play the scene ends with Aubier d'Arbonne's request for more warm clothing. In the 1971 version, it ends with Maurille's curt retort to her husband's request that she write to him; she cries: "Non et crève de froid." (III, p.20, 1971)

In the 1967 script, Gabrielle decides to leave Aubier d'Arbonne because he is paying too much attention to Maurille. He has decided to leave France because there is nothing left for him, and because he is beginning to be afraid of the revolution. Mlle Mignot comes to tell him how they have planned the escape. In the 1971 version, Maurille herself comes to tell Aubier of the escape plan, offering Gabrielle a place in their carriage. Gabrielle then leaves. The offers and refusals are thus made directly rather than being reported, and the sense of immediacy is increased. The departure scene itself is more cruel. When Aubier d'Arbonne insults Mme Renoir, her servant Hilaire advances on him with a knife. In the 1967 script Hilaire is ordered back, but in the 1971 version he surges ahead despite a threat, and Aubier d'Arbonne shoots him in the legs.

Judrin, the Archevêque's secretary, is a character with strong political views who is defeated by events; he is an important figure in the play. Planchon considered him as a misguided intellectual:

"Judrin, dans les premiers événements, voit "la belle Raison" en marche. ... Et c'est un matin assez exaltant pour un intellectuel que celui où il croit voir enfin "Raison", "Justice" et "Histoire" marcher du même pas."
Mais notre héros prendra peur lorsqu'il découvrira le masque sanglant et tragique de cette Histoire en marche.1

In the 1971 play, Judrin is depicted as even more idealistic than in the 1967 script. When he learns of the march on Versailles, he decides in both versions to leave the service of the Archevêque. In the 1971 version he also resolves impetuously to go to Paris at once. Judrin's lack of interest in women is also made clearer in the second version of the play; Adélaïde tries unsuccessfully to seduce him:

Tu essaies de m'apprendre à lire et à écrire, tu m'expliques les affaires de la nation, de la constitution, et tu m'embrasses les mains en roulant des yeux ronds. Cela ne peut plus durer. ... Ou nous dormons ensemble, Monsieur Judrin, ou tu ne m'embrasses plus les mains.

(VI, p.41, 1971)

In the last scene of the 1971 play, Judrin recalls this incident pathetically in a speech to an inmate of a mental hospital:

Oui j'ai eu une fiancée. Elle s'appelait Adélaïde. Elle était agréable. Tu es meilleure qu'elle. Elle se moquait de moi lorsque je lui baisais les mains. Toi, tu acceptes que je t'embrasses les chevilles.

(XVII, p.92, 1971)

Judrin is unable to face the violent side of revolution. In the 1971 incident in which a man dies before his eyes, he is paralysed with terror. In the 1967 play, during a visit to Mme Renoir, Judrin reacts strongly to some of her words:

Mme Renoir:
Le people était à terre, les nobles avaient les pieds dessus. Alors l'idée de justice s'est mise en marche.

Judrin:
De quelle justice parlez-vous? Celle des rats dans les égouts?

(XII, p.64, 1967)

The scene finished with Mme Renoir being led slowly back to her cell. In the 1971 version, the lines quoted above are all spoken by Judrin; he thus shows more clearly his own disillusionment with the course of the revolution. At the end of the visit, Judrin offers to carry messages and letters to the outside for any of the crowd of prisoners around Mme Renoir. The gaoler objects strongly. Prisoners shout their messages and the visitors are pushed out by the guards. This less

dignified conclusion is not only more vivid; it puts the fate of Mme Renoir into perspective, for she is only one of many to be sentenced to death.

Even minor characters were made more cruel in the 1971 version of the play. The émigré group is at one point reduced to begging for bread at Gabrielle's inn on the road to Florence. In the 1967 script, she agrees with little argument to take them in and feed them. In the 1971 script, she humiliates them, making Maurille kneel before her, taking a jewel from her, and taunting her and Aubier d'Arbonne. She amuses herself at their expense before she takes them in. Aubier in this version evaluates their situation bitterly: "On peut en somme se pendre, se prostituer, ou travailler." (X, p.61, 1971) When he later offers his services to a royalist officer, he is rejected; he learns of the death of Mme Renoir and he faints. In the 1967 version, the officer orders that the unconscious Aubier be brought to an inn and fed. In the 1971 version, Aubier d'Arbonne offers not only himself, but the promise of 3000 Italian guns to the officer, in return for an advance of cash. The officer is even harder in this second version. Not only does he refuse Aubier's offer; when the young man faints, he suggests that a few kicks in the stomach from his soldiers will revive him. Like other characters made desperate by their situation, he has no sympathy to spare.

The final scenes of the play were significantly changed in the second version. In Venice, the émigrés meet Des Rougettes, who has helped many aristocrats. In the 1967 script, they meet during a ball in Des Rougettes's palace. Des Rougettes asks Maurille to leave her husband for him. Aubier d'Arbonne appears and, to Maurille's surprise, claims his rights over her as a husband. Maurille wonders why he has broken his vow never to accept her as a wife. Des Rougettes retires. Aubier d'Arbonne and a Venetian lady exchange affectionate glances, and he admits that he has just slept with her. He and Maurille are reconciled when he promises to work for a living, like a good bourgeois. They go off to eat cakes before leaving the ball.
In the 1971 version of the play, this scene is far more bitter. Maurille, Aubier, and Mlle Mignot live in a garret in Venice. Maurille is a prostitute: "Notre titre de Marquise fait beaucoup pour notre prestige. Si maman savait, elle serait comblée: notre titre enfin rapporte un peu, car le commerce vénal n'est pas des plus productifs." (XV, p.82, 1971). Des Rougettes has arranged to meet the Archevêque in this garret to give him money; the Archevêque, irritated when Maurille asks him for money, leaves quickly. Des Rougettes reproaches Maurille for her infidelity to him, reminds her of his generosity to her, and asks her to leave her husband. Aubier d'Arbonne enters with a Venetian lady and her attendants, threatens Des Rougettes, obtains money from him, and tries to make him leave. Aubier tells Maurille that he has just slept with the Italian woman. Maurille throws a sheet over them all, and everyone is amused except Des Rougettes who leaves angrily. Aubier surreptitiously hides a necklace which he has stolen from the Italian lady, and for which she is searching. Before setting to work to rob her, Maurille and Aubier kiss. They are thus depicted as thoroughly depraved by their circumstances.

The structure of the last half of the play was considerably altered. In the first version, in Tableau XIV, Édouard de Thierry and Hilaire, both royalists, visit a mental asylum run by Des Rougettes, and accuse him of arms trafficking. They reproach Judrin, who works in the asylum, for his cowardice. In Tableau XV, Aubier d'Arbonne is rejected by the royalist army. In Tableau XVI, Adélaïe and a friend, Julie, arrive at a republican camp where Cyprien de Nobili is in command, and Borian is one of the officers. Cyprien de Nobili accuses Adélaïe and Borian of disloyalty to the Comité de Salut Public. Royalist prisoners including Édouard de Thierry and Hilaire are brought in and Cyprien de Nobili has them all executed. Tableau XVII is the scene with the émigrés at Des Rougettes' ball. We return in tableau XVIII to the republican camp. Julie, with the aid of Borian has been distributing
hébertiste pamphlets; Cyprien de Nobili has her executed and Borian imprisoned. Tableau XIX takes place after thermidor. Cyprien de Nobili is demoralised by the news of the deaths of Robespierre, Couthon, and Saint-Just. He resolves to go home and live quietly until he is killed. He arranges Borian's escape and promises to marry Adélaïde.

In the 1971 version, these events are arranged differently. Tableau XII is the first scene in the republican camp. Cyprien de Nobili accuses Adélaïde and Borian of being hébertistes. The regiment moves off. In Tableau XIII, Aubier d'Arbonne is rejected by the royalist army. Tableau XIV takes place in the mental asylum. Édouard de Thierry and Hilaire are recruiting soldiers for the royalist army. Aubier d'Arbonne (instead of Des Rougettes) claims to be working for the royalists, but Édouard de Thierry mistrusts him. Hilaire shoots an inmate and attracts local republicans to the asylum. As the royalists run away, Aubier d'Arbonne tells the pursuing republicans to shoot them on sight, and he denounces the asylum as a refuge for émigrés. After everyone has left, Cyprien de Nobili passes judgment on prisoners who are brought in blindfolded. They include Borian and Adélaïde, arrested because they worked for Hébert. Borian, more explicitly than in the 1967 script, claims that Robespierre is protecting the bourgeoisie. Adélaïde scorns Cyprien de Nobili's advances. He keeps Borian prisoner and allows her to escape. Royalist prisoners including Édouard de Thierry and Hilaire are brought in and Cyprien de Nobili has them executed. Thus the events of three tableaux in the 1967 version (the asylum scene, XIV, and two scenes in the republican camp, XVI, XVIII) are gathered into one tableau in the 1971 script. The rhythm

1. Hébert was, like Danton, a rival of Robespierre. Hébert and his followers the hébertistes were violent and atheistic, whereas Danton's party was more moderate. Hébert and his disciples were arrested and guillotined in March 1794, and Danton and his followers were executed in the following month. Robespierre, Couthon and Saint-Just were the principal forces behind the reign of terror which began in September 1793; it ended with their execution in July, 1794 (le 10 thermidor, An II).
is more rapid, creating the atmosphere of a battlefield. Tableau XV is that of the émigrés in a garret in Venice. In Tableau XVI, we return to the camp of Caprien de Nobili. He tells Adélaïde that he has been demoralised by the events of Thermidor. Borien is brought in and claims that Marat and Hébert had denounced the bourgeois when they began to take over the revolution. Cyprien de Nobili, with Adélaïde's help, arranges Borien's escape.

The last scene was transformed in the 1971 version. In the 1967 script, it is set in a requisitioned palace in Milan, in 1800. An aged Borien enters, followed by the émigrés in rich clothing. Borien has become one of Napoléon's officers charged with stealing Europe's art works and bringing them back to France. He tells the others that Judrin has been in a Spanish convent for three years. Maurille and Aubier d'Arbonne say that they are faithful to each other because of complicated sentiments, but not from love. Cyprien de Nobili, now an officer of Napoléon, enters and tells the émigrés that they will not be able to go back to France yet. He still believes in the revolution and praises Napoléon's emphasis on reconciliation, but he regrets having had Édouard de Thierry and Hilaire killed. Mlle Mignot has died. Des Rougettes, a double agent, has been killed. Adélaïde, married to Cyprien de Nobili and expecting his fifth child, comes to get her husband; they go with the officers to attend a Te Deum celebrating Napoléon's victory at Marengo. Maurille, Aubier d'Arbonne, and the Archevêque decide to follow, but Borien goes out in the other direction.

In 1971, Planchon gave the last scene a multiple setting. In Venice, the Archevêque tells his friend and host Des Rougettes that Judrin is now an attendant in a mental hospital. In the mental hospital, Judrin is trying to write, interrupted by one of the inmates. In Vienna, an officer of the empire pays court to a bored Gabrielle. In Lyons, Descombes, a policeman, visits Borien, who is an embittered war invalid.

In Venice, the Archevêque and Des Rougettes discuss
the fidelity of Maurille and Aubier d'Arbonne to each other. In Milan, Aubier d'Arbonne, Maurille, and Cyprien de Nobili discuss the revolution. Judrin in the asylum speaks to a woman inmate.

The Archevêque reminisces about Édouard de Thierry. In Milan Aubier d'Arbonne tells Cyprien de Nobili that he is under contract to supply arms to two of Napoleon's armies. He now writes his name without the **particule**. Maurille is shaken when Cyprien de Nobili regretfully speaks of her mother's death.

In Venice, Des Rougettes attributes Napoleon's accent on reconciliation to his political shrewdness. In Milan, Maurille and Adélale are reunited and greet each other emotionally. In Lyons, Borian rails against Napoleon and the death of the revolution. In the asylum, Judrin begins to read his latest pamphlet aloud.

The scene ends to the accompaniment of Bonapartist songs. Cyprien de Nobili and Adélale lead a procession across the stage. The amused aristocrats join them. In Venice, the Archevêque and Des Rougettes seat themselves for dinner. In Vienna the officer takes his leave of Gabrielle. In Lyons, Borian's nurse sets the table. Judrin writes on his knees while the inmates play about him.

Thus the end of the play is far more cynical in the second version. Not one character seriously defends the new era. Aubier d'Arbonne is more clearly a merchant careful of his interests. The Archevêque's reminiscences indicate that his day had come to an end and that another era has begun. The play states its ironical conclusions through a strong visual image: a procession of officers of the new order followed by mocking aristocrats restored to power by their talent for trade.

The sets for both productions were designed by André Acquart. The 1967 sets included a backdrop with bands of different shades; the lights were used to form patterns on it. There were two suspended lateral walls made of wooden battens.
which separated to allow the actors to come in and out. Props were lowered from the flies to indicate specific settings. The 1971 sets were more elaborate. In a tract distributed at the performance in Mâmes, Planchon described the feeling which these sets were meant to produce:

Devant vous un décor planté. Nous l'avons choisi pour évoquer les divers lieux où va se dérouler l'action qui vous est ce soir présentée. Il est resté longtemps au soleil et à la pluie. Les rideaux sont déchirés, le plancher est effondré. Ces éléments ont servi à une des grandes fêtes de la 1ère République Française.

Planchon described the civic ceremonies organised by the young republic from 1790 to 1793, with crowds lining up to see decorated open carriages on which stood young girls dressed in togas and representing "Justice", "Reason", etc. Planchon suggested in the same tract that those present at these ceremonies were dreaming of the future, of us: "Que reste-t-il du sens qu'ils donnaient à la société qu'ils inventaient et dans laquelle nous vivons?" The proletariat, although they were not represented in the play itself, were given a voice between the scenes; this was the most important alteration which Planchon made in the 1971 play. He explained in the programme both the absence of the people in the main scenes of play and his reasons for presenting it in a special way between the scenes:

Les gens qui firent les grands événements (prise de la Bastille, marche sur Versailles, etc...), les masses populaires et leur porte-parole n'apparaissent pas dans la pièce, car, précisément, le pouvoir passa des mains de la noblesse à celles de la bourgeoisie et que le peuple se trouva, lui, exclu.

L'événement et ceux qui le firent sont absents de Bleus, blancs, rouges mais leurs idées, leurs rêves sont présents dans ces "Estampes populaires", petits tableautins rapides dans lesquels défient ces rêves et ces idées sous forme de guignols populaires. Chacune de ces estampes se boucle sur une question posée aux spectateurs. ...

The stage was divided into three movable platforms at the sides and the back, and one fixed central platform. The
movable areas were pushed away from the centre or towards it according to the needs of the action. The "estampes populaires" were highly visual episodes which occurred between the scenes of the play. When a scene finished, a white curtain was lowered. On it a banner was attached which read "La Liberté ou la mort". Through an opening at the back, surrounded by tricolours, cannon-balls and pikes, the people of Paris then marched onto the stage. Some were pulled in on open carts like those of the civic celebrations of 1790-1793. The "people" carried enormous puppets made of broom handles, string and old sheets. They sang or recited speeches related to the events of the previous scene. Music for the songs, composed by Claude Lochy, was full of rhythm and it echoed the satirical content of the lyrics, with excerpts from La Marseillaise and parts written in the style of a Carmagnole, a kind of roundelay popular in the years after the revolution. After the songs, one of the revolutionaries on the stage called out a question to the audience, relating the events of the play to the more recent revolution of 1968: "Citoyens, ne voyez-vous pas, aujourd'hui, d'autres bastilles à détruire?" When the company was on tour, the questions were written in the language of the audience on large banners held aloft by the members of the people on stage. Giorgio Prosperi wrote: "De la pancarte de Brecht, on passe au tableau plastique parlant." The revolutionaries were then drawn off the stage on their carts, frozen into models of revolutionary allegories. Planchon also had a sans-culottes and a tricoteuse brandish standards to indicate the order and the subject of the scenes in the play. Through the "estampes populaires", Planchon challenged the audience to evaluate the French revolution, and its historical impact, and to judge what had become of its ideals in the twentieth century. In his productions of George Dandin and of La Seconde Surprise de l'amour, Planchon had already used extras to represent the silently toiling peasants or servants alongside those wealthy enough to employ

them. In Bleus, blancs, rouges, these moving tableaux became a counter-production, explicitly commenting on the themes of the more traditional play.

In 1971, Planchon made the text more concise and lively; long speeches, for example, were divided into dialogues. He had hoped that his attempt to write a language like that of the 18th century would purify his style. In Bleus, blancs, rouges, the language is clear and straightforward, and it reflects ideology very sensitively. The Archevêque, for example, uses terms and expresses concepts peculiar to his educated and effete group; when he reproaches Maurille, Aubier d'Arbonne, and Édouard de Thierry, his delicacy of language is remarkable:

Je n'aime pas vos polissonneries à tous les trois. Non. Il faut prendre garde: si le coeur est trop avide de sensations on devient une grande coureuse ma belle-soeur ou un grand fripon, oui Édouard, oui mon frère. Or, il importe de garder une humeur, une politesse du coeur. C'est si difficile. La crapulerie du coeur vient si vite.

(VIII, p. 43, 1971)

Maurille's language, when she has sunk into prostitution, is not only coarse but also business-minded; she has become more like her mother:

Donnez-moi un petit capital et je l'investis dans d'autres branches plus fructueuses, plus sûres. Je partage votre avis, Monseigneur, une putain défrochée ...

(XV, p. 51, 1971)

When Judrin speaks of the march of reason, he uses seminarist's terms; the other characters even chide him for it. Other characters too, however, speak of the revolution with a quasi-religious fervour. The more misguided they are, the more zealous their speeches sound:

Cyprien de Nobili:

(XIV, p. 78, 1971)
In the 1967 version, Cyprien de Nobili continues to use this sort of language to the end: "Et que fait Buonaparte qui vous agace tant, sinon mettre l'accent sur ce qui nous rassemble et non sur ce qui nous divise. La grande réconciliation de tous les Francais, ne vous en déplaise Monseigneur, c'est Buonaparte qui la réalisera." (XX, p.103) In the 1971 version, there is no such praise for Napoleon; instead Des Rougettes makes a cynical appraisal: "Buonaparte est un malin. Il met l'accent sur ce qui rassemble et non sur ce qui divise. C'est un malin." (XVII, p.95, 1971) Cyprien de Nobili's language in the final scene of the 1971 script is far more subdued and disillusioned: "On se perd et on se retrouve. Le jeu serait dérisoire s'il n'y avait entre nous des cadavres: Thierry et cet intendant, Hilaire, que j'ai fait fusiller en Vendée." "Oui des cadavres. Couthon. Mes soldats de Vendée. L'horrible tragédie de votre mère." (XVII, p.94, 1971) Only Judrin continues to write sincerely in praise of the revolution, but his only audience is a few mental patients, and his words ring false in the face of a changed world. The failure of the revolution to fulfil the idealistic hopes of its supporters is thus reflected in the transformation of their prophetic and optimistic language into pragmatic resignation.

In La Remise, Planchon experimented with space and time; in Les Trois Mousquetaires, he used a story which moved from place to place geographically; in Patte blanche he tried basing a play on day to day situations. In Bleus, blancs, noirs, he did all three things. The plot carries the characters to many different settings, it alternates between various groups at similar times, and it depicts the everyday effects of the revolution on people's lives. In 1967, some reviewers were dissatisfied with the structure of the play. Poirot-Delpech, who saw the play at Avignon, was bored by the "... construction en tableaux identiques ..." and exhausted by "Le trop grand nombre de personnages et la froideur intellectuelle de leur analyse..."¹ By reversing the usual

Paris-centred picture of the revolution, Planchon surprised many critics and confused a few:

... Bleus, blancs, rouges se transportes d'un lieu à l'autre, sans jamais faire halte, pas même un instant à Paris. ... la révolution n'est jamais présentée en mouvement, mais plutôt insérée, et on pourrait dire glacée dans l'immobilité d'images populaires ... intercalées dans le spectacle et contre-possées presque à un commentaire des moments culminants d'une série d'histoires privées: celle de la famille des marquis d'Arbonne fouillis aristocratico-religioso-libertin où se reconnaître n'est pas aisé.¹

Even some provincial critics, unaccustomed to the idea of presenting a historical period through the eyes of those on the sidelines, found the characters uninteresting because they were too passive:

Libertins, nobles, officiers, ecclésiastiques, soldats et roturiers défilent et filent au vent d'une histoire qu'ils subissent, dont ils ne sont pas les acteurs mais les jouets. Ces tableaux de la vie de tous les jours n'offrent qu'un intérêt non suivi et très relatif.²

Some spectators claimed that the themes of the play were treated too superficially: "Mais nous avons été gênés par la dimension toujours anecdotique du sujet, par la présentation schématique et caricaturale des catégories sociales..."³

The critics may have felt uneasy for another reason than that of the play's provincialism. The "estampes populaires" interrupted the action of the play, putting the petty problems of the characters in perspective against the main events of the revolution. The Théâtre du Soleil's production 1789, which they put on in 1971, was, like Planchon's play, centred on the time of the revolution and written in an epic style. Planchon himself ex-

plained the differences between the two productions, however. The Théâtre du Soleil travelled easily and put on 1789 in any sort of large building, from the Cartoucherie de Vincennes in Paris to London's Roundhouse. Planchon's play, on the other hand, was conceived to be presented in a theatre on a conventional stage. The most important difference was that "1789 montre des moments-clés de la Révolution, Bleus, blancs, rouges des personnages qui la vivent de loin."

Planchon's play alternated between the point of view of the people and that of the bourgeois and aristocrats who profited from the revolution. The audiences of 1789 became the people, and could identify with the cause of the people; when the theatre gave a free performance on July 14th, 1971, at Vincennes, an actress said of the 5000 strong public: "We felt we could take them with us to storm the Bastille all over again." In Bleus, blancs, rouges, the audience could not attach itself wholeheartedly to the cause of the people, for these were not the main characters; on the other hand, the principal characters' actions were shown up by the questions which the peuple shouted to the audience during the estampes. Planchon demanded that the public judge one viewpoint by juxtaposing it to another; even more than Brecht, he refused to give a simplistic presentation of history.

Those who liked the staging of the play praised its rhythm in particular: "Dans une mise en scène débordant de vitalité et d'audace, Roger Planchon a orchestré avec une rigueur et une précision remarquables les tableaux et les décors." Critics compared the flow of movement to that of a film, as they had done from the time of Planchon's earliest production: "C'est un chef-d'oeuvre de découpage, d'enchaînement, d'équilibre; chaque tableau, chaque interlude, chaque

séquence en un mot, est une réussite de montage ...\(^1\)

Planchon attempted to make the language of his characters authentic. A few critics thought that, at least in the 1967 play, he had tried too hard:

Embarrassés d'adjectifs et de tournures fleuries, les mots d'auteur se cherchent sans se trouver, comme dans les pires comédies de Boulevard ... Quant aux propos libertins qui animent la pièce et devraient faire son charme, ils se résument, ... à quelques trivalités modernes ...\(^2\)

Provincial critics were more sympathetic both in 1967 and in 1971. Pierre Biard, for example, thought that Planchon had created the perfect tone with "... une langue vigoureuse et gaillarde, tout à fait théâtrale...\(^3\) The text was certainly improved in the second version; it was simpler, more direct, more explicit, and more concise. It was "... une langue pleine de santé ...", a "... texte ... bien écrit, avec style et distinction, avec verdure et sans métaphores...", a "... langue ... claire, directe, vive, drue...".\(^4\)

Planchon said to Robert Butheau in 1967 that even the first version of the play had a strong historical element: "J'ai le sentiment d'avoir écrit une pièce qui montre que la marche de l'Histoire est implacable. Mais pour certains individus le hasard ou l'ironie s'y glisse. Si la pièce fait prendre l'Histoire au sérieux ma pièce est politique." Je crois qu'elle est politique."\(^5\) In the same interview, Planchon insisted, however, that the play was not didactic; he had already moved away from Brecht:

4. L'Indépendant (Perpignan), Nov. 2nd, 1971; Claude de Breuilh, La Croix (Toulouse), Oct. 31st, 1971; Robert Tathereaux, Progrès-dimanche (Lyons), Nov. 14th, 1971.
556.

... elle n'est pas une pièce à thèse. Aucun personnage n'est véritablement le porte-parole de l'auteur. Placés en face des événements, les personnages réagissent. Ils sont bourrés de contradictions parce que l'histoire avance et que les faits les obligent à se remettre en cause. En ce sens, je suis directement sous l'influence de Brecht. Je n'aime pas le théâtre où le personnage prend la place de l'auteur. Je pense plutôt que les personnages sont coincés par des situations. La pièce est à déchiffrer par le public. Elle ne comporte pas de leçon.

At that time, Poirot-Delpech saw in Bleus, blancs, rouges ou Les Libertins a theme which Planchon had been interested in from the time of his early mises en scènes; he was analysing, through a theatre which was less didactic than descriptive, less Brechtian than Balzacian, the different possible reactions to a given historical situation. In 1971, Planchon again insisted that the play did not have a "lesson"; as usual he refused a prise de position. He warned in the programme against oversimplifying Bleus, blancs, rouges in order to find a theme: "Il serait grotesque de voir ... une condamnation de l'Histoire qui broie les individus." He summed up his main preoccupation in the play in one question, also in the programme: "Comment est-il vécu ce moment "historique" qui va plus tard bouleverser nos vies qui, présentement, nous paraît insignifiant?"

In this play, critics could finally see clearly what Planchon had been saying even in the days of the Théâtre de la Comédie, with such plays as Adamov's Paolo Paoli: the individual is the creator and the product of history even when he wishes to ignore it. From the peasants of La Remise whose reason for living is slowly destroyed by the movement of the French economy to the bourgeois of Dans le Vent...grrr... whose entire ideology is determined by their comfortable financial and social situation, Planchon's characters are buffeted by history, against their will and sometimes without their knowledge. In Bleus, blancs, rouges the effect of historical forces is

more radical: the characters and their lives are transformed in the space of a few years:

Chacun à sa manière, ils essaient de survivre à la tempête. À coups d'opportunisme, d'héroïsme, de crimes, de débauches, ou d'assignats. Quand l'orage est passé, ils sont toujours là mais ils ne sont plus les mêmes. Cette révolution-là était aussi la leur. 1

The play crystallised Planchon's approach to history.

Although the beings portrayed in this play are compelled to respond to the social upheavals of their day, they are free to choose the way in which they will respond; a critic wrote that "Aucune Force autre que la force des événements - et elle renvoie à des enjeux, à des antagonismes et à des contradictions (de classe souligne allusivement l'auteur) - ne détermine les décisions, les actes et les comportements des personnages." 2 Although the characters belong to different classes and are representative of them, their relationships to one another are as complex and indefinable as in real life. They make choices constantly which, although often misguided or taken lightly, may have serious long-term effects. Because the characters are free, they are more convincing both as people and as representatives of an era. Poirot-Delpech could well congratulate Planchon for having created a perfect balance between the personal lives of the characters and the historical pattern into which he integrated these lives:

Les comportements des personnages correspondent à la vraisemblance historique, tout en paraissant librement dessinés. Il ne tient qu'à eux de mieux décider de leur avenir singulier ou du sort commun. La netteté et l'objectivité du constat n'exclut pas un bel humour dans les recoupements feuilletonistiques des destins. 3

In his analysis of Planchon's characters, Claude

2. L'Indépendant (Perpignan), Nov. 2nd, 1971.
Dubois, a critic from Perpignan, noted another of Planchon's preoccupations: the question of the relation between people's ideology and their actions. Planchon had painted well...

... l'extrême confusion des actes révolutionnaires qui embrassent ou assassinent les purs mais aussi les profiteurs, les mythiques, mais les baffeurs, et la propension des êtres à enrober dans l'idéologie les actions les plus louche. C'est vrai que les hommes sont ballottés par les événements et n'en perçoivent qu'une image déformée et partielle.

In Bleus, blancs, rouges, the characters who profess sincerely to have an ideology have no more chance of surviving or of being crushed by events than the libertines. The libertines were depicted as in a kind of limbo: "Personnages en rupture avec leur classe, qui ne croient plus aux valeurs morales et à l'idéologie de leurs pères, et qui sont somme toute perdus, ils se recherchent dans le libertinage et s'essayent à penser révolution." Aubier d'Arbonne and his friends are proud of their rebellion against the moral standards of the day; Aubier tells an officer, "Je vis pour vivre: c'est osé, n'est-ce pas?" (XIII, p.70, 1971). His moral independence is meaningless, however, without the privileges which a social revolution has abolished. When they are penniless, Maurille's and Aubier's libertinism becomes a sordid and compulsory means of survival, real prostitution. The characters who believe firmly and sincerely in a political philosophy, Jadrin, Cyprien de Nobili, Dorian, Hilaire and Edouard de Thierry, Adélaïe, are also overcome by the revolution; they are killed, maimed, embittered or embourgeoisées. Jean-Jacques Lerrant thought that the play was about "... la difficulté d'être de ces personnages dont les aventures de coeur et de sexe sont inextricablement liées à la difficulté d'être révolutionnaire,

c'est-à-dire d'admettre, quand il le faut, la violence et le sang versé."1 Cyprien de Nobili has two people executed because of his beliefs, but he later regrets their deaths. No ideology seems adequate in this play in which events have the upper hand.

Planchon left the question of the characters' sincerity to the audience. It is difficult to determine to what extent each decides his own fate. They are intelligent and their actions often have the impenetrability of real intelligence:

Chaque interprète a su rendre son personnage intelligent et attachant, même et surtout lorsqu'il s'abuse, et le metteur en scène intervient alors pour dire aux spectateurs, presque furtivement: "D'où vient que Untel est aveugle?" Jamais: "Untel est aveugle, c'est scandaleux." À chacun de s'interroger sur les sincérités successives de chacun — ce qui est flagrant chez Aubier d'Arbonne, aristocrate en rupture de classe, n'est pas moins apparent chez les autres personnages.1

The characters are finally to be judged on the succession of mistakes and misjudgments which they make in the course of the play. No doubt Planchon would have regarded as the highest praise the following judgment of his play: "Les créatures de Planchon s'apparentent au modèle shakespearien, le spectateur n'en a jamais fini avec elles."2

It was after writing Bleus, blancs, rouges for the second time that Planchon became aware of the deep-seated provincialism of his work. He was able to write about the revolution only through the eyes of provincial characters. Certainly he created a new perspective on the revolution in this way: "Vue par un provincial convaincu, attaché au battement de la vie individuelle plus qu'aux grandes tragédies, la Révolution française prend une densité que les manuels

The play revealed as much about Planchon the playwright, however, as about the revolution: he was rooted in the French provinces. He himself remarked, in the programme, at the very ordinariness of his characters:

"Drole de monde où dans la banalit\'e la plus totale, chaque \^etre, chaque chose, chaque geste, chaque forme dit quelque chose d'unique, d'exceptionnel." From the presentation of the day to day effects of a historical upheaval on ordinary people, Planchon achieved an intense feeling of authenticity:

"II [...Planchon...] a su montrer la v\'erit\'e de l\'\'ev\'enement dans ce qu\'il a de plus directement palpable, son influence sur les personnages r\'eellement attachants qui le vivent au jour le jour en \'evaluant, comme ils le peuvent, sa port\'ee."^2

Was Bleus, blancs, rouges a popular play? It was first presented in 1967, the year before the theatre directors met in Villeurbanne to reconsider their work in the light of the May 1968 events. When it was put on again three years after 1968, it was noticeably politicised. The "estampes populaires" were the most important addition in the second version of the play. They illuminated Planchon's intentions in the play as a whole: "Gr\'ace \`a ces interm\'edes la pi\'ece appara\'it comme la d\'emonstration de la mani\`ere dont la r\'evolution, faite par le peuple, a \'et\'e confisqu\'ee par les bourgeois."^3 More than this, they called upon the spectator to compare the 1789 revolution to the present day and to the 1968 revolution:

Le plus clair ... est la pens\'ee politique exprim\'ee sur les banderoles brandies entre chaque tableau. On y trouve Ubu, l\'approche surr\'ealiste de l\'histoire, enfin les questions gauchistes sur les \'mechanismes de notre soci\'et\'e. Bleus, blancs, rouges est une mol\'ecule de p\'eriode r\'evolutionnaire, examin\'ee \'a travers le microscope fabriqu\'e, semble-t-il, en 1963.^4

Critics objected to the play however, for several reasons. They claimed that it was a play for intellectuals:

Pourquoi mêler le drame et le vaudeville qu'point d'étouffer l'un par l'autre? Pourquoi la facilité et la démagogie de certaines répliques? La place démesurée accordée au marquis de Sade? L'homme nu? Seul un public intellectuel est apte à goûter ce genre de spectacle. Théâtre populaire? Plus exactement théâtre à la mode.¹

Exactly the same objections were made in 1969 to La Mise en pièces du CID: its mixture of genres, its use of slogans, its mockery of contemporary styles and fads had annoyed critics. One reviewer complained that the characters in Bleus, blancs rouges were atypical, and that the masses were unrepresented:

Le fait de réunir dans une pièce une brochette de faits d'exception, si vécus soient-ils, sans laisser soupçonner par ailleurs la vue parallèle et passive de ce que l'on nomme aujourd'hui la "majorité silencieuse", fausse l'optique de beaucoup sur les événements qui nous concernent tous.²

Another critic objected to what he claimed was an overstatement of the comparison between 1789 and 1968: "... Planchon met trop les points sur les 'i' de l'actualisation".³

The very juxtaposition of two different genres to which the first critic objected was the play's strength. The libertinage presented on the stage was one symptom of a decadent era; by contrasting to it the noisy and hopeful exuberance of the "estampes populaires", Planchon created a moving picture of a justifiable revolution. The masses were most certainly represented in these scenes. Furthermore, the characters of the play, libérines, servants, officers, were very like the silent majority in their desire to remain unscathed by history. When Planchon likened 1789 to 1968, he was not suggesting that

1. Ibid.
the political issues and situations were identical. He was provoking his public to see in the characters' inability to cope with their revolution a reflection of its own myopia in relation to the current historical situation. The comparison was not between the two revolutions as much as between people's reactions to them:

C'est en cela que la dramaturgie de Planchon est neuve, inattendue, déconcertante: Planchon a supprimé toutes les références qui auraient pu servir de points d'ancrage, et tout se passe comme si nobles et bourgeois, révolutionnaires et réactionnaires, vivaient les événements auxquels ils sont confrontés à la façon dont nous vivons les événements auxquels, hic et nunc, nous sommes confrontés.¹

Pierre Favre stated simply and accurately the resemblance between the characters on the stage and the people in the audience; he thought that the play was more intelligent than intellectual:

Très intelligente même, oeuvre d'un auteur traitant son public en adulte, le considérant comme sinon responsable, du moins concerné, pris dans le filet de l'histoire, et même s'il ne participe pas directement à celle-ci. Dans Bleus, blancs, rouges, les personnages ne sont pas les grands hommes de l'époque de la Révolution de 69. Mais malgré eux, après coup, ils constatent qu'ils ont été marqués par elle. Combien de gens sont également passé à travers les mailles de mai 68 sans savoir ce qui allait les bouleverser?²

The changes which Planchon made in the second play emphasised not only its political side but also the human tendency of the characters to be passive, "... une certaine manière de ne pas agir, de se trouver trop tard là où il s'est passé quelque chose."³ Provincialism in this play as in Planchon's peasant plays, in a sense a state of mind, that of people who feel that the political initiatives taken elsewhere

are of little consequence to them. Bleus, blancs, rouges has a universal applicability which stems from this very provincialism. Planchon himself, in the programme, put the play's theme succinctly and well. Bleus, blancs, rouges illustrates perhaps more than any other play the basic paradox on which he has based his work as a director and as a playwright: "L'Histoire est profondément la trame de nos jours et ce qui semble le plus extérieur à nos vies."

La Langue au Chat

Sur cette planète, il semblerait que tout soit à la fois banal et mystérieux. Mystérieuse banalité. Elle englue les indigènes, elle me charme et me terrifie en même temps.

- La Langue au Chat

Planchon called La Langue au Chat his sixth play. Although he excluded from the list of his plays the three créations collectives (Les Trois Mousquetaires, O M'man Chicago, and La Mise en pièces du CID), La Langue au Chat is their successor: it relies on song and dance and spectacular effects, and it openly asks questions about the current preoccupations of French society. Planchon had the idea for this play when he reread Ben Jonson's The Alchemist. He was fascinated by the subject of fraud, and interested to note that Jonson wrote during a century not unlike our own. The Alchemist, written in 1610, at the time of the plague, belongs to an era when scientific and technical advances were taking place alongside a growth in the popularity of mysticism. In our day, television is, according to Planchon, the most appropriate method of mass deception. He spent months watching literally everything on television. On July 12th, 1972, he again reread The Alchemist, on the 17th, he began writing, and three weeks later he had finished the play. His previous method of writing had been to make an outline, and then insert dialogues under precise headings, but for this play he worked in a different way:
"Le Chat a été écrit très vite. En trois semaines. J'ai travaillé sans barrière, j'ai laissé venir sans réfléchir avant l'écriture. Je n'ai réfléchi qu'après." He was later to write Le Cochon noir in the same way.

Planchon wished to create a character in which the essential features of a deceiver of the masses would be condensed. He built up the main character of the play, the Chat, from genuine examples around him:

Cherchant de quelle manière aujourd'hui pouvait se développer une vaste escroquerie intellectuelle, il en arrivait à la conception du faux grand mage, du soi-disant maître spirituel. ... Le Chat, un "animateur" au sens qu'on donne au mot aujourd'hui dans un studio de télévision ou dans un club de loisirs et au sens étymologique puisqu'il a charge, dans la pièce, d'apporter à la société le supplément d'âme dont on imagine qu'elle a besoin. Étant entendu que ce Zarathoustra, ce visionnaire ... n'est qu'un prophète de pacotille, littéralement un escroc.

Michel Bataillon, who became the theatre's dramaturge when it was made the new TNP, gave a light-hearted account of Planchon's reasons for choosing a cat rather than another animal as a symbol: "Tout simplement parce que le chat a une vue perçante, qu'il courbe bien l'échine, qu'il se promène toujours la queue dressée et qu'il retombe toujours sur ses pattes." Planchon amused himself by giving reporters a mock warning about the feline population as a whole:

1. Interviewed by Michèle Grandjean, Provençal-dimanche (Marseille), October 15th, 1972.
3. The term dramaturge, normally used to mean a playwright, has been acquiring over the last few years a significance closer to that of the German word Dramaturg (a drama specialist, as opposed to the Dramatiker, or playwright). Gabriel Garren and Jacques Rosner first employed dramaturges at their theatres a few years ago. According to Michel Bataillon, the function of the dramaturge is ideally to "... préparer, promouvoir, organiser, synthétiser la réflexion qui tend à se dégrader spontanément sous la pression des problèmes quotidiens innombrables...". ("Les finances de la dramaturgie", Travail Théâtral No. 7 (Apr.-June 1972), p.55.)
... vraiment je vous assure, j'aime beaucoup les chats. Les gens pensent que les Martiens pleins d'antennes vont nous envahir [envahir]. Les envahisseurs, à mon avis, ils sont déjà là. Ils sont en place, installés chez nous, dormant sur nos lits. Ils sont tout prêts, ils attendent le signe: ce sont les chats.1

The characters of La Langue au Chat can be divided into five distinct groups. Firstly, there are the staff, the Chat, his two colleagues Aphrodite Bretzel and Louis, and a group of dancers and singers. Secondly, there are the governmental authorities, le Ministre de la Culture et de l'Information pour un environnement aux petits oignons, his rival for power Docteur Braun, and a very important medical expert, le Professeur Balotin. Thirdly, there are the visitors to the studio, who make guest appearances on the television programmes, and also become involved in the personal lives of the three studio personalities. Fourthly, on a different level, a down-to-earth old lady, La Grosse, appears from time to time in her old-fashioned flat. La Grosse communicates by telephone not only with Louis in the studio, but also with the fifth group, the Transparents. These are explorers from another planet who have landed on earth by chance and who wander about, invisible to human beings, and bemused by the behaviour which they observe. None of these five groups represented a point of view which the audience was to adopt uncritically. Planchon said that he did not speak through any of them in particular: "Je ne me pose nullement en moraliste; jamais, dans cette création, quelqu'un parle en mon nom et pourtant je crois que je suis dans tous les personnages."2

Tableau I. The play begins with a political broadcast. The government, after a civil war in which half the population has been exterminated, have decided to save the

remaining masses from despair by instilling a new spirituality into them. As a pilot project in the Rhône-Alpes region, a new television personality is to be introduced, the Chat.

Tableau II. The Chat, in his first appearance, advises viewers to put steel wool under their arms in order to remain cheerful, and tells them to send their opinion of the result to him on postcards. Off camera, he begins to doubt the role which he has been given. He then turns the cameras on and addresses a message of despair to the public before slipping away. Off camera, Aphrodite Bretzel expresses her disappointment in the behaviour of her two colleagues, the Chat and Louis. The Chat turns the cameras on again to announce that he and Louis are going to draw straws for the privilege of sleeping with Aphrodite Bretzel. She plays for time by organising a commercial.

Tableau III. The next programme is preceded by the arrival of the guest speaker, Alligator, one of the Chat's childhood friends. The programme, part of the series Les Grandes Croisades, is "literary"; Alligator, a writer of pornography is interviewed by Louis and then allowed to ask the Chat two questions: "L'art et l'esthétique ont-ils encore une utilité? Ou sont-ce des notions dépassées?" and "... je sexe et resexe tant et plus mais sexuellement suis-je réellement libéré?"\(^1\) Neither question is answered to his satisfaction but he is comforted by the promise that in the next show, "... la croisade du cul sera ouverte." (III, p.7)

Tableau IV. The next programme follows immediately. Entitled "Jeux de mains, jeux de vilains", it is a symbolic judo match between the Chat and a young capitalist, Neyron. The Chat wins by biting Neyron's ear. When Neyron refuses to say "Bourgeoisie foutue", the Chat is furious. To prove that capitalism cannot detach itself from its shadow, the Chat

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1. From the text of La Langue au Chat, archives of the Théâtre National Populaire, Villeurbanne, Tableau III, pp. 3,6. Further quotations from the text will include the scene and page number; in this text each scene is paginated individually.
nails Neyron's shadow to the floor. When Neyron jumps, the shadow follows and the Chat draws a lesson for the television audience; they must try to do away with the old systems of thought to which they cling.

Tableau V. Off camera, the chat complains that the studio staff are dying one by one. By cheating when he and Louis draw straws, the Chat wins the right to sleep with Aphrodite Bretzel and leads her into the broom cupboard. To console himself, Louis plays with the telephone and accidentally rings la Grosse; she listens sympathetically but speaks with common sense. The Transparents appear for the first time in the studio, and briefly establish contact with la Grosse.

Tableau VI. The next morning, as Louis reads the news bulletin, the Chat has his first vision "Les poubelles de l'histoire". All his visions are perceptible only to him and to the theatre audience; the back wall of the set opens to reveal them and then closes again with a loud grinding noise. Guests then enter for the next programme, "Un problème du jour, un problème par jour". Professeur Balotin enters with patients wrapped in bandages and walking on crutches. He explains that they are the victims of "political leukemia": they were journalists, politicians and revolutionaries, but they have ceased to believe in their own ideologies. Rejecting Professeur Balotin's solution, the Chat orders the sick to get up, throw away their crutches, and walk. There is just time for everyone to cry "Miracle" before they all collapse again. Docteur Braun taunts the Chat and so infuriates him that he tears down a backdrop. Aphrodite Bretzel is revealed standing behind it, in tears; she insists on confiding to the cameras that she is frustrated because she never expresses her own ideas. She then climbs out of the studio onto the rooftops, and the studio people follow her progress through a periscope. The Chat suggests that the television viewers go out like Aphrodite Bretzel and search for their véritable moi.

Tableau VII. Later in the studio, off camera, Louis and the Chat try to cheer Aphrodite Bretzel up by telling
her she has many admirers. She is impressed that Professeur Balotin is one of them. She rejects both Louis and the Chat, who leaves. She and Louis quarrel and begin to make peace, but the Chat reenters to tell them they were being filmed. The Transparents enter while Louis telephones la Grosse. They are surprised that the human beings, unaware of their presence, ignore their offers of help.

Tableau VIII. After the morning news bulletin, the Chat makes fun of contemporary fears that civilisation is dying. For the programme "Qui êtes-vous?", the first person to enter is l'abbé Comac, who really wants to ask discreetly whether someone whom he represents may participate in the show. He is told to define his moi profond, but he fails to do so; he then participates in a so-called "mystical experiment". After the guests depart, Aphrodite Bretzel suggests to Louis and the Chat that they share her favours equally.

Tableau IX. Neyron, the young capitalist, appears for another showing of "Jeux de mains, jeux de vilains", exhausted, unwilling to fight, and nostalgic for the "good old days". His dreams of a country retreat materialise briefly in the studio. After the show, Aphrodite Bretzel again declares that she loves both Louis and the Chat.

Tableau X. Louis and Bretzel, in the empty studio, quarrel. The Transparents enter. Louis telephones la Grosse for sympathy. He and Aphrodite Bretzel make peace and retire into the broom cupboard, unaware that they are accompanied by the Transparents' blessings.

Tableau XI. The Chat taunts Aphrodite Bretzel the next day by telling her that her episode with Louis was filmed. He says that she and another girl he knows are both the love of his life. Aphrodite Bretzel leaves angrily. The Chat's second vision, "Le Chat botté", appears and disappears before he can understand it. L'abbé Comac and the pope enter for an interview in the series Un Homme, un passé. The pope now lives in lodgings in Rome because Fiat has bought St. Peter's as an exhibition hall. All his priests except l'abbé Comac are either married or revolutionaries. The pope is twice interrupted
by commercials. The Chat advises the pope to let the dead bury the dead. The programme ends with a rousing song and dance sequence to cheer the pope, and everyone comes to congratulate him. This is a scene similar to one in Michel Parent's play Catharsis (put on at the Festival des Nuits de Bourgogne in July 1964) in which the pope appeared on television and performed an ascent of Calvary, attempting to look "mystical" and playing up to the cameras. In both plays the pope is used to create an artificial effect on the screen. In La Langue au Chat, this scene ends the first part of the play.

Tableau XII. The second part begins with a scene similar to the opening scene. The Ministre de la Culture et de l'Information pour un environnement aux petits oignons defends the merits of the pilot project introduced in the first scene. He is more obviously senile and finally must be carried off. Docteur Braun, disgusted, leaves to tell the government of the situation.

Tableau XIII. Alligator the pornographer enters to announce the impending arrival of his sister Dorothy. He collides with l'abbé Comac who is now on drugs. Neyron enters, pursued by industrial spies, and shoots them down. The pope appears, dogged by an aggressive abbé Comac preaching drug-inspired religion. The pope steps out of his robes and leaves in the costume of an undertaker's assistant. The show finishes with the signature tune and a dance. The Chat in an empty studio sees his third vision, of a man with a cat's head, half-buried in some soil, like Winnie in Beckett's Oh les beaux jours.

Tableau XIV. Louis is jealous of Aphrodite Bretzel's success in high society and he wants to become a cat. He telephones la Grosse who promises that the world will be better when the Martians land. Unable to become a cat, Louis denounces the Chat as an impostor and leaves. The Chat admits to the television audience that he is not a cat, and then he sees his fourth vision, "Un savant montre la maquette". Louis
reatters and argues with the Chat until Aphrodite Bretzel arrives. She and Louis quarrel. Aphrodite Bretzel brings Louis's wife Lucy into the studio and each of the three explains his or her case to a different television camera. Meanwhile, the Chat has his fifth vision, "Le Mémorial du couple". Everyone falls asleep. The Transparents enter; la Grosse picks up her telephone but gets no answer. The Transparents try to warm up the limp bodies by hugging them but decide that pity is useless and leave.

Tableau XV. The next morning, the Chat wakes everyone up for a new show starring Professeur Balotin and Bretzel, and entitled "L'Auberge espagnole". In a Spanish inn setting, Professeur Balotin tries to seduce Aphrodite Bretzel. Louis and Lucy interrupt them on their way to the projection room for a second honeymoon. Aphrodite Bretzel finally takes Professeur Balotin out to show him the way to a pornographic cinema.

Tableau XVI. Alligator's sister Dorothy, a voluptuous blonde, arrives on a marble coffin on wheels, accompanied by a "chorus" in Grecian dress. She reveals her past, strips, and plays her own death in front of the cameras. Alligator entrusts her to the Chat and leaves. The Chat and Dorothy retire into the coffin together.

Tableau XVII. The Transparents enter and establish communication with la Grosse. She holds her stomach as she speaks to them on the telephone. Louis telephones her and she explains that she has been hit in the stomach by the propeller of Neyron's helicopter. She dies. Louis sadly announces her death on television. If the Transparents become visible they die; nevertheless, because la Grosse asked to see them, they decide to make themselves visible for her and they collapse slowly.

Tableau XVIII. The Chat and Dorothy emerge from the coffin. The Chat sees his sixth vision, "Mémorial aux boxons de grand-papa." The Chat then opens the "Croisade du cul." Alligator and Professeur Balotin exclaim enthusiastically, but Neyron stops them, deprecates pornography, and describes his
dream of happiness; with Lucy, Louis, and Aphrodite Bretzel, he organises a honeymoon sketch. Neyron's pursuers attack but he shoots them down. Dorothy tries to slash her wrists but l'abbé Comac stops her; as his only reward he asks for a little publicity for drugs. The Chat sees his seventh vision, "Le Psychanalyste". Louis enters, and nearly strangles the Chat, demanding that he say "... à quel niveau la vie se vit?" (XVIII, p.6)

Tableau XIX. Sirens sound and armed men led by Docteur Braun invade the studio. They shoot Alligator when he comes in scantily dressed for the "Croisade du cul". Docteur Braun orders that the Chat, Louis and Aphrodite Bretzel be taken away and electrocuted. The pope enters to appeal to men of good will but he is thrown out. Dorothy mourns her brother. Everyone is taken away except Docteur Braun and Professeur Balotin. Docteur Braun tells the viewers that the "Croisade du cul" has been cancelled, but she stops the immediate cries of disappointment by promising regular morbid pornography shows for family viewing instead. As she announces drug reform measures, she begins to waver under the strain of authority. She refuses Professeur Balotin's advice to change her life and she refuses his hand. She is finally carried out by attendants.

Tableau XX. Most of the studio staff enter, exhausted. The Chat tells the viewers to celebrate spring by placing sticks of dynamite everywhere and setting them off at his signal. The eighth vision, "La partie d'échecs" appears and remains visible. The Chat counts down and explosions are heard; he suggests that it is the sound of spring bursting out. The play ends on the sound of waves and seagulls which accompanied the appearances of the Transparents during the play.

Planchon gave very precise directions in the script on the appearance and purpose of the sets. The atmosphere of the studio was that of an air-raid shelter:

Le studio est installé dans un lieu souterrain blindé, d'architecture métallique - aussi bien à l'abri d'une trop facile invasion que des radiations variées dues à la récente guerre civile. L'installation doit son aspect
The sets were designed by Max Schoendorff, with a scrupulous regard for Planchon’s intentions. Schoendorff decided, after reading the play, to emphasise the claustrophobic feeling of the universe of La Langue au Chat. He did so not only by limiting the number of entrances, as Planchon recommended in the script, but also by filling the internal space of the studio with bulky machinery and props. There was a camera in each corner of the studio, and three more were suspended from the ceiling in a more central position, one of them facing a large chair in which Louis or Aphrodite Bretzel sat to read the news bulletins. The chair, and the controls for the cameras, were on a small platform on wheels, usually in the centre of the stage, but pushed to the back during special shows. On the left, towards the back, there was a small mock-kitchen with a sink and a refrigerator, which was used for some commercials. For each television programme, a small "set" was brought in on a wheeled platform, and the participants sat, stood, or moved within it and within the range of the camera facing it. These sets could have important effects. The backdrop for the pope’s appearances, for example, was designed to make him look shrunken and pathetic: he sat on an extremely low armchair, his chin nearly touching his knees, dominated by a large photograph of St. Peter’s behind him, by
the large furniture around him, and by the Chat and l'abbé Comac who were both seated slightly higher than he. Most of the action took place within the crowded studio, but there was a second set as well. Suspended in mid-air outside the left wall of the bunker, was the apartment of la Grosse; it was a room with a large wood stove, pots and pans, and a decor which included pink linoleum, numerous yellowing photographs, and a prominent wall telephone. Max Schoendorff gave his opinion of this contrasting set: "Ce 'décor' dans le décor c'est la fenêtre suspendue hors du temps, c'est le soupirail de la tendresse dans un cycle se défaissant dans un monde se poursuivant. C'est le rêve éclairant la nuit de la défaite."\(^1\)

I was able to attend the last weeks of rehearsals for La Langue au Chat, in Villeurbanne. It gradually became clear that, although we see only the studio, we are intended to be constantly, and sometimes uncomfortably, aware of the world outside. The cameras are ubiquitous and watchful, transforming a love scene into soap opera, Aphrodite Bretzel's temper tantrum into a cry of despair... The imaginary television audience receives only a partial image of the actions which the theatre audience sees; Michel Bataillon explained how the play demystified television shows: "On ne connaît donc... que la vie spécifique du studio sous son aspect double: on voit comment se comportent les forces de travail qui produisent et "ce" qu'elles produisent. Nous avons sous les yeux une machine à fabriquer un spectacle."\(^2\) The presence of the television viewers is suggested by the characters' concern for the cameras. Generally they are a silent presence: when the Chat wants applause, he uses recorded sounds of cheering and applause. In some instances, however, we actually hear the television public directly. When Docteur Braun takes over the studios and cuts short the "Croisade du cul", they boo and hiss until she promises that they will get controlled doses of pornography. At the end, the Chat succeeds in making the viewers blow themselves up with dynamite, and the explosions

are more than audible.

Planchon opened up the studio in other ways. La Grosse is a part of the outside world, although she is atypical. Planchon's habit of making figures of speech materialise on stage brings into the studio images of the outside:

Planchon ... metteur en scène fait éclater les limites géographiques du plateau, introduisant des fantasmes, des rêves, ramenant le monde entier dans un espace étroit par un jeu de lumières, de chariots à roulettes portant les plus étonnantes apparitions, tel un trio d'hommes nus jouant du trombone, "les trombones de Jéricho pour faire tomber les murs de votre cloisonnement cébral." 

Furthermore, the studio literally splits open to carry us into the borderline world of the Chat's visions; the Chat's control over his world and ours suddenly seems to break down and we find in his overpowering images of violence, sexual depravity, frustration, and death, the fears and preoccupations of our own society.

The play is, in theory, set as the year 2000 is about to begin. The costumes, however, varied in style from those of the 1920's to those of our day. The Transparents wore "... d'invraisemblables costumes d'égypologues..." (T. V, p.5); for one rehearsal (October 2nd, 1972), Planchon even tried having them come in with their faces covered in blue make-up. Thus although their superior wisdom suggested that they were more advanced than human beings, they were dressed in a style taken from our past. The Chat, in a long, rough-textured, cream-coloured robe, his hair standing on end, enormous glasses on his nose, was the occidental version of a guru-figure. La Grosse wore a pink patterned dress under a blue and pink apron, both hanging almost to her ankles; she looked like a very old-fashioned grandmother. Dorothy's skin-tight sheath and blonde wig belonged to another era, either that of Rita Hayworth or that of Marilyn Monroe, but not to the 1970's. Neyron's nostalgic visions included both

a dream of the fifties, a honeymoon yacht with champagne, like a Hollywood set, and the ever-recurring ideal of a simple life close to nature. The Chat's preoccupations, and indeed the play's preoccupations, included the fears of the sixties and the seventies. For example, the line of chorus girls appeared for their dance numbers in black leotards with small fringed skirts; as soon as they stopped dancing, they put on military khaki jackets and trousers, reverting from glamour girls to servants of the state. Their artificial glamour suggested a decadent age, their severe uniforms the rule of an authoritarian state. The play seemed to suggest both our past, our present, and our future; the programme attempted to determine whether it was a science fiction play:

Cet an 2000 dont on rêve à travers les bandes dessinées est étrangement vieillot, suranné, "entre deux guerres" pour ainsi dire. A peine s'imagine-t-on ce demain, noyé dans la mousse chimique et le jus vert des usines, qu'il ressemble déjà à hier. À une même date, dans un même pays, une partie de la vie, de la réalité, une partie de la population a encore un pied dans le 19ème siècle tandis que l'autre partie semble déjà procéder du 21ème. L'instant présent contient à la fois les années trente et l'an 2000 et La Langue au Chat nous raconte l'avenir sur le ton du récit d'autrefois.

Music for the play was composed by Karel Trow. Because it was meant to reflect the television medium, it consisted of many short pieces, signature tunes, atmosphere music, or jingles for commercials. The sound effects were of all kinds, and they helped to open the imaginary scope of the set; they included gun shots, the howling of cats, explosions, recorded applause, booing, and cheering, the cries of seagulls, the sound of waves lapping against the shore, the grating noise of the studio wall as it opened or closed for the visions... Thus the noises also suggested a world or worlds beyond the studio, from the dark realm of the Chat's mind to the lost innocence of the Transparency world.

Planchon insisted that his play was not directly a parody of television. It simply used this medium as a reflection of our modern world. In the sixties, Marshall McLuhan
attracted considerable attention with his theories on television in the contemporary world. According to McLuhan, the consciousness of modern man has been reshaped by the television medium. Partly because of the immediacy of information which television provides, people have become more aware of the world around them:

Information pours on us, instantaneously and continuously. As soon as information is acquired, it is very rapidly replaced by still newer information. ... We can no longer build serially, block-by-block, step-by-step, because instant communication ensures that all factors of the environment and of experience co-exist in a state of active interplay.¹

Planchon too thought that television had transformed people's outlook, as he told Michèle Grandjean in an interview:

La guerre vue à la T.V. devient un spectacle. Les mêmes images vues par les gens il y a cinquante ou cent ans auraient provoqué une prise de conscience devant l'horreur. Les gens, aujourd'hui, sont à la fois plus adultes devant ce spectacle et en même temps se sentent impuissants. Ils ont pris conscience de l'importance des véritables forces en présence, et cela leur donne un curieux regard. Une conscience planétaire est en train de se former. Jadis, la politique était de clocher. Maintenant, elle prend des dimensions mondiales.²

He wished to make people aware that television shows, even news broadcasts, are reconstructed elements of reality and not faithful or total reflections of it; the best way of provoking such a consciousness was to reveal how television shows are prepared. He said in the same interview that he had chosen, as is his custom, to describe rather than to criticise: "S'il y a quelque chose de monstrueux dans la T.V. c'est en

le montrant qu'on peut en faire prendre conscience aux gens, et
non pas en le critiquant."

Television, therefore, was not a target in itself; Planchon depicted it as an agent of the advertising world and a major tool in the trivialising and vulgarisation of every aspect of our lives by publicity. Planchon's ways of showing up ideas in this play are typical. By materialising the characters' words, he made an ironic comment on them or reduced them to a ridiculous level. Sometimes of course, words were given a visual illustration simply to produce a laugh. When Louis cried, "Ainsi s'achève en queue de poisson notre émission médicale.", the Chat held up an actual fish in front of the cameras, adding, "Voici le poisson, c'est un brochet." (VI, pp. 7-8) In a memorable scene, Aphrodite Bretzel tried to appease her two colleagues by suggesting that they share her; she stood between them, arms outstretched, and made a symbolic offering: "Prenez mon chewing gum. Un petit bout chacun. Il a été un peu machouillé mais il a gardé toute sa saveur." (VIII, p.7) In a similarly outrageous moment, the Chat approached Dorothy the vamp, with dishonourable intentions, offering her an asparagus. Planchon also made fun of himself in this way. After a particularly complex scene, the Chat came to the front of the stage holding a lamp and said to the theatre audience as much as to the cameras: "J'offre cette lampe tempête au téléspectateur pour lui permettre d'avancer dans cette obscure forêt de symboles ..." (XIV, p.4) The line provoked much laughter among the public in Rheims where I saw the play.

The objects and the characters' gestures did not always accord with the text, but sometimes undermined the lyricism of certain lines. At one point Aphrodite Bretzel confessed, almost affectionately, to Louis, "Ce soir, j'aimerais me frotter à vous pour une petite bouffée de tendresse", and added in a forlorn voice, "La tendresse aujourd'hui coûte un prix fou, n'est-ce pas M. Louis?" (X, pp. 495) The painful emotion in her words was counterbalanced not only by Louis's wilfully cynical response, but also by their gestures: as they spoke, both were energetically scratching themselves.
They were expressing a need of the flesh as much as of the heart.

Entire scenes were materialisations of themes and ideas. The judo match between the Chat and Neyron, as a symbolic battle between capitalism and its opponents, was the most striking example. When the Chat wanted to prove that capitalism cannot detach itself from its "shadow", he used a real hammer and literally nailed Neyron's shadow to the floor. In another "show", the Chat provided an elaborate answer to Alligator's question on the usefulness of art and aesthetics today. He had Alligator sit cross-legged holding a balloon in each hand, one representing our ideas in favour of aesthetics, the other our aversion to aesthetics. Two chorus girls burst the balloons with lighted cigarettes, and Alligator, asked what was left in his hands, replied, "Deux bouts de caoutchouc dégueulasses." (III, p.4) The Chat then assured him that he was liberated, no doubt meaning liberated from sterile controversy.

Planchon's experience in showing up myths and fashionable ideas served him well in this play. The text of La Langue au Chat constantly debunks itself. The language of the political characters, like the system which they try to defend, is deteriorating. The Ministre de la Culture et de l'Information pour un environnement aux petits oignons uses the language of political persuasion. In the first scene, he promises the television audience that a new age is beginning after the terrible "hecatomb" which they have undergone. His words include a possible reference to the events of May 1968: "Ils pourrissent dans les charniers aujourd'hui ceux qui disaient: 'Changeons de système politique'. Notre système est bon, c'est le meilleur. Puisque c'est le seul qui se soit imposé." (I, p.1) In the production, as he proposed a new spiritual master to his audience, his attitude revealed decay and senility; he sucked his thumb, played with a strand of his hair, and eventually collapsed. His very words deteriorate into nonsense: "À la Société du consommable, nous voulons offrir du Non-consommable. Du Nan-Nan spirituel. Du Non-Non consommable non-non-non, notre cervelle n'est pas
When he reappears in the second part of the play, his condition, like everyone else's, has worsened. He concludes in the face of strong evidence to the contrary that his experiment has been a success, even if "Certains d'entre vous se suicident toujours aussi bêtement, les imbéciles sont les imbéciles." (XII, p.2)

The Ministre is not alone to fall prey to this debilitating disease. When Professeur Balotin brings in important figures turned invalid, he says that nearly all the political personnel in the western world is affected by this "political leukemia". The Chat explains their illness:

... Ces hommes avaient une façon d'expliquer le monde dans leurs discours, dans leurs éditoriaux et voilà que le monde est parti au galop. Ces petits vieux ne peuvent pas suivre. Ils s'essoufflent. Le monde parti au galop a laissé des questions sans réponse et les questions sans réponse ont sécrété des microbes insidieux qui ont pourri leurs idéologies. Le sang idéologique qui irriguait leur cerveau s'est décomposé, a pourri. Maintenant leurs artères craquent. C'est ça la leucémie.

(VI, p.5)

All these people made their living by using words. Like Beckett's characters they collapse as their language becomes ineffective. As the Chat points out, the failure of speech is also the failure of old forms of thought to cope with a rapidly evolving world. The Chat's home remedy consists of giving the patients a dose of their previous verbal produce: "... la balayette du chiotte grâce à laquelle vous pouvez laver les dents de vos malades." (VI, p.6) In this play, political commentary is looked at with a despairing but satirical eye.

Docteur Braun is a remarkably strong character. Off camera, she uses an aggressively scatological language, especially when she speaks to Professeur Balotin. Her rudeness to the bumbling Balotin is devastating; she repeatedly reduces him to silence with a few well chosen words:
The double act of these two characters was made even funnier in Planchon's production by the fine acting of Jean Bouise as the conciliating old Balotin, and of Michèle Marquet as the uncompromising Docteur Braun. Docteur Braun's incisive logic makes her want to unmask the Chat. When she finally succeeds, however, and gains control over the airwaves, her language immediately begins to lose some of its firmness. She begins to sound like her predecessor, the Ministre de la Culture et de l'Information pour un environnement aux petits oignons:

"Si notre société part à la dérive c'est que nous n'avons plus de foi, plus d'espérance. Cherchons un idéal. Cherchons une spiritualité qui convienne à notre société. Cherchons ..." (XIX, p. 4)

She collapses physically, like the Ministre, and like the sufferers of "political leukemia", as her words fail her. Even someone apparently as strong as Docteur Braun is destroyed by the void beneath language.

Professeur Balotin's speech is a reflection of his own situation: it is impotent. His initiatives never succeed, and his speeches are usually interrupted and often ridiculed. As a government official, he participates in the "medical" programme; Louis interrupts Balotin's explanation of "political leukemia", and when he protests: ("Cette définition est grossière, aberrante scientifiquement"), he is silenced by Louis: "Elle est adaptée au petit écran." (VI, p.2) When Professeur Balotin suggests that a team of specialists should diagnose the disease, the Chat ridicules him: "C'est cela. Ensuite, dans les rues, l'équipe à poil, annoncera la bonne nouvelle avec des trombones" (VI, p.3); he illustrates his words by having three nude men actually enter playing the trombone. Professeur Balotin's language has an outdated flavour. His happiest lines are those in which he reminisces: "La Belle Dame arriva en carrosse, Larirette, Larirette, C'était
Jeanneton avec sa faucille. Nous allâmes couper des joncs et toutes les filles de Camaret avec leur âne nous rejoignirent sur l'herbe, nues, éblouissantes." (XVIII, p.2) There is a clear reference here to certain student songs of a somewhat bawdy nature. Juxtaposed with the vulgarity of the "Croisade du Cul", these verses nevertheless seem innocent and pathetically anachronistic. Professeur Balotin's dreams are tinged with the romanticism of the past; he says to Aphrodite Bretzel: "Te prendre sur les bords d'un lac aux eaux limpides." (XV, p.3). Because the world is covered with industrial waste, and because Balotin is too old, his hopes are finally given an ironic fulfilment: Aphrodite Bretzel takes him to a pornographic cinema.

Louis, the Chat, and Aphrodite Bretzel have an advantage over the other characters: their profession demands that they speak in clichés. Their speech must be part of their glib television image. Planchon gave Pierre Vernier, who played Louis, a detailed explanation of the role during the rehearsal of September 30th, 1972, which I attended. The character's essential quality is to be able to play different personalities well: "Louis est tellement caméléon qu'il peut prendre différents caractères; ... toutes les images ensemble donnent le caractère caméléon de Louis." Each of the personalities should be played so perfectly that it became a caricature; Planchon told Vernier to think of examples of actual television or radio broadcasters, and to think for each of the programmes, "I'm imitating Mr. So-and-so..." Planchon added: "Le caractère caméléon de Louis, ça dit quelque chose de très riche sur la télévision." Louis becomes superficial by playing superficial characters with great seriousness; he himself believes in each of them. In tableau XIII, for example, Louis's role as a master of ceremonies is threatened by Neyron's hostility and by l'abbé Comac's constant interruptions, and Planchon explained that Louis is very upset: "Pour Louis, Comac est une interruption. Louis veut reprendre, maîtriser le plateau. Le personnage de présentateur est devenu fou - Louis se dédouble pour s'en pendre
Aphrodite Bretzel is, at first, an immature girl dazzled by her new status as a television personality. Even when her speeches are not aimed at the cameras, her way of speaking reveals her desire to keep up with fashion. Her outcry when she is annoyed by her two colleagues' cynicism shows both her naivety and her tendency to use colloquial terms:

[41c]

.... Mierde alors! Moi qui ai abandonné une carrière de chanteuse de variétés pour faire la conne en speakerine. J'y croyais à notre petite équipe. Je me disais:

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Monsieur Louis c'est un terrible. Le plus zip des imprésarios. Si, si, Monsieur Louis, vos chansons publicitaires sont du tonnerre. Pour mettre en valeur la connerie, vous êtes champion. Et Mister Cat. Je me disais, c'est un big, big, cat. En le disant, je défaillais. II, p.5

She takes on a television image at first because she is too childish to retain her own. On September 29th, 1972, Planchon explained the role to Colette Dompiétrini who played Bretzel. He said that beside the Chat, Aphrodite Bretzel feels like "... une petite chose auprès d'un monstre; elle ne sait pas où se mettre quand le Chat lui parle." In tableau VI, Aphrodite Bretzel rebels; Planchon said that the key to her speech in front of the cameras was the question: "Qu'est-ce que je suis? Une planche à baiser? (VI, p.7) He said that the Chat's nonchalant way of sleeping with her has angered Aphrodite Bretzel: "Après avoir eu le sentiment d'être choisie, elle se révolte: elle a été choisie avec indifférence. Elle se révolte non dans la force mais dans la timidité, en pleurnichant..." Significantly, her rebellion is a purely verbal one; it consists of searching for "... les mots qui m'appartient..." (VI, p.7) During her monologue, the atmosphere alternates between comedy and pathos as she confesses to the camera, with Louis adding nervous advice: "Souriez, Bretzel, souriez, restez photogénique." (VI, p.7) Both characters live for the camera in this instant; Aphrodite Bretzel becomes an emotional exhibitionist, and Louis panics, not because she is unhappy, but because she is showing her unhappiness in front of the cameras.

Aphrodite Bretzel's words in tableau VII indicate a real change in her character. During the September 29th rehearsal, Planchon called the scene "... une ligne de partage" for her. She is asked whether Professeur Balotin pleases her, and in her answer ("Pour savoir, faudrait coucher." VII, p.2) Planchon said that "... l'évidence est vraiment adulte." For the first time in this scene she injects into her speech "... un grain de mensonge." : she tells the Chat "Je vous aime
plus fort que dans un photo-roman." (VII, p.2) Furthermore, she resists Louis's attempt to assert his authority over her:

Louis:

... Et maintenant sortez! Vous n'avez pas le droit de dormir ici.

Bretzel:

Louis, quittez vos manchettes amidonnées. Ce que j'aime chez les chats c'est leur façon de se glisser en vous sans manière. Seriez-vous capable d'une telle désinvolture Louis? Non. (VII, p.3)

Her disconcerting answer is an example of a kind of dialogue which Planchon admires: one character says something, and the other replies on a totally unexpected level. During rehearsal on September 30th, Planchon mentioned that he wished to include this kind of Shakespearian saute de niveau in his own plays: "J'arriverai à bien écrire quand entre deux répliques il y aura un trou." Aphrodite Bretzel becomes a social success, but as she does so she finds that even "very important personalities" are disappointing. In the Spanish Inn scene, she loses her respect for Professeur Balotin, and even for the cameras:

Gentils télespectateurs, je suis confuse, je vous avais oubliés! À votre santé.

(aux caméras, montrant Balotin) La chance de ma vie! C'est donc ça, une V.I.P.? Je lui file un gnon sur la cafetière? (XV, p.4)

Aphrodite Bretzel's progress from innocence to maturity begins when she loses her reverence for her two colleagues in the studio. She then destroys her happy television image by crying in front of the cameras. When she becomes a celebrity herself, she is disillusioned even with the society which admires her, and she treats her television audience with a familiarity very like contempt.

The Chat's speeches include nonsense, obscenity, pure fabrications, and flights of poetry. His words, like those of Fafurle in La Mise en pièces du CID, are powerful. If he asks for applause, it comes, accompanied by a song and dance, a "raplapla d'honneur". If he orders gaiety, the chorus sings a cheering song. When he wishes to create tableaux vivants, they appear immediately; at the snap of
a finger, a group of "Grands Initiés du Berry" arrive to answer l'abbé Comac's questions, or a portrait of Millet's L'Angélus is incarnated to satisfy Neyron's nostalgia. The Chat asks many of the 1,200 questions in this play, but he is unwilling or unable to answer them; instead he tells viewers to send in their answers on postcards. They often reveal his doubts about the world and his role in it: "Mais quel est donc ce monde?" (IX, p.3) He repeatedly tells the television audience that they are being fooled; at the same time, almost as seriously as Louis plays his own roles, the Chat maintains his pose as a visionary. His vision of the world is expressed with an anguished cynicism:

Si, tout le monde se paie votre tête et depuis toujours. Aujourd'hui, un homme totalement dérile vous parle. Un cinglé adresse un sourire de complicité à tous les timbrés de la terre. Aux saints, aux mystiques, aux demeurés qui aboient la nuit dans les couloirs du métro. À tous les aliénés qui se jettent tête en avant contre le mur de leur cellule. Cette civilisation va sombrer mais je m'en fous, je suis un chat. (II, p.5)

The Chat is not altogether in control of his words' repercussions. His eight visions are brought on by his own statements or by his reaction to those of the other characters. Their content is usually obscure and often frightening to him. On the one hand, they show his lucidity, for they are images of the horror beneath the glib world of publicity in which he lives. On the other hand, they reveal his incapacity to change that world, for he cannot control their appearance and often he cannot understand them before they flash away. They are intuitive and not intellectual, a possible truth sensed but not rationally grasped.

The visions in which the Chat is attempting to define himself are ambiguous and yet they reflect his actual situation. The third vision, for example, comes after a disastrous showing of "Cherchez votre moi". The Chat complains that people cannot find their "real selves": "Aujourd'hui, impossible de trouver votre moi authentique." (XIII, p.3). Immediately the back of the studio opens up to reveal a man with a cat's head, buried up to his waist in a tub of earth, and waving a blank sheet of
paper. Calves' heads on butchers' hooks and human skulls on stakes surround him. He tears the paper with an atrocious noise, and the wall closes again. The paper may be a moi profond, or the attempt to uncover it in a world half-buried in its own waste and filled with death. The Chat is confused by the symbol: "Il n'y a pas de traces sur la feuille blanche. S'il y avait des traces le papier aurait déjà servi. Faudrait-il alors jeter son Moi au trou et tirer la chasse?" (XIII, p.9)

Perhaps the Moi profond is something essentially elusive, which becomes trivialised as soon as one sets out consciously to discover it. Certainly by reiterating the term in the play, Planchon made it sound totally ridiculous.

When Louis uncovers the Chat as a fraud, the fourth vision appears. If the Chat is not a cat, who is he? The vision seems to be a scientific investigation of this question. A scientist points to a blackboard filled with equations, and to a laboratory table on which there is a miniature replica of the studio. The scene is lit by a billiards lamp with a green shade. An inscription reads: "Studio de télévision préhistorique avec, se prenant pour un chat ..." (XIV, p.4)

The vision may be Planchon's way of thumbing his nose at scholars who would analyse his play. It reveals the Chat's, and perhaps Planchon's fear of being récupéré, even in the future.

In the seventh vision, a psychoanalyst with a cat's head is sitting in a cane armchair, in a jungle setting. On a couch near him lies a client, between whose legs we see a long chrome stem with a crystal ball on the end. The psychoanalyst holds an identical crystal ball in his hand. Both balls revolve. This is an image of power, and yet it comes unwilled and unexpected by the Chat. He has, before this vision, admitted that he is a fraud. He has been toying with the most personal concerns of an anonymous "patient", the television viewer, by pretending to possess greater powers than he has. Certainly in these visions the Chat exposes his self-doubt and insecurity in the role of spiritual leader which he plays.

The various visitors to the studio all speak a language whose clichés or recurring themes betray their obsessions.
The pope's appearance was one of the scenes which most amused the audience in Rheims. In the play, political power may lead only to decay, but the power of religion is non-existant. The humour of the pope's speeches stems from the décalage between what he has been and what he is, and between what he says and the way in which he says it. When he describes his life in Rome, he speaks extremely sadly. Flanchon, in the rehearsal of September 29th, 1972, called the pope "... un personnage perdu. Il démarre dans le désespoir." In contrast to his station and to his tragic tone, however, colloquial words, and the occasional pun, give his speech an amusingly inappropriate flavour:


[of his curés] Tous mariés. Grignotés par la psychanalyse ou la politique. Les derniers obscurantistes espagnols sont devenus militants. La Révélation a été remplacé par la Révolution. (XI, p.4)

His reappearance as an undertaker's assistant is fitting, for he is the last representative of a long dead institution. As we have seen, Flanchon said in his discussion of La Langue au Chat in Rheims¹ that even radical atheistic thinkers in France often base their thinking on a framework which is Catholic. Because of this, and because 84% of French people still call themselves Catholics, he feels that it is necessary to present Catholicism as a totally dead ideology, a thought system beyond redemption, and thus to give people a perspective on their own belief.

L'abbé Comae depends on prefabricated ideas to sustain his beliefs and his actions. His speech is full of outdated business clichés which reveal his hopeless desire to revive the Catholic church through advertising: "Oui, Saint-

¹ At the Théâtre Populaire de Reims after a reading of La Cochon noir to drama students, Oct. 26th, 1972. See supra, p. 476.
Père, nous repartirons d'un bon pied. Nous connaîtrons l'ÉTÉ DE LA RÉSURRECTION. Le come-back du catholicisme."

(XI, p.4) When he chooses drugs as a solution to the world's problems, he simply adopts another set of clichés, the gospel of the drug-pushers: "... Un petit sucre de L.S.D. et Jésus fait bom dans vos tempes. Une petite pincée de poudre blanche et c'est Dieu les gars en bombe atomique sous votre crâne." (XIII, p.5) Through Comac, Planchon also ridiculed another sort of cliché, the idea of a moi profond. As the first guest in the programme "Qui êtes-vous?", Comac stands perspiring profusely trying to find his véritable moi as a metronome ticks away the second. When one of the drama students in Rheims asked about the point of the play, Planchon said that he had recently heard a radio programme in which several young people said they were going to Africa to find their moi profond. The Rheims group of course immediately laughed, and Planchon suggested that before seeing La Langue au Chat we might not have found the concept so amusing. He had thus given us a sense of perspective, at least on this phrase, and hopefully on many similar concepts.

In the play, the two positive representatives of the system which the Chat occasionally debunks are Docteur Braun and Neyron, the young industrialist. During the rehearsals, on September 30, 1972, Planchon clarified the position of Neyron for Philippe Clevenot who played the role: "Il y a deux forces d'opposition dans la pièce - le Docteur Braun et Neyron; quand Braun n'est pas là, Neyron est l'opposition. L'opposition de Braun est évidente dans le texte, celle de Neyron doit être montrée. Il est un personnage principal." Neyron's speech is the image of the society of which he approves: he speaks in a series of clipped phrases, full of anglicisms and business terms, and with a staccato rhythm. He classes himself, for example, among the "... révoltés, désespérés, mais adaptés à la société", and dreams of a "... new society industrielle, jeune, dynamique, fiable, où tous tirerions dans même sens." (IV, p.3) Undeterred by the Chat's riposte " Tirerions quoi? Pour aller où?" (IV, p.3), he is
willing to defend his position in the judo match. Planchon's alterations in the script in the last few weeks made Neyron's lines even crisper. Neyron's angry query after the Chat has bitten his ear was changed on October 4th, 1972, from "Est-ce combat idéologique ou combat de ruse?" to "Est-ce judo ou séance hara-kiri?" (IV, p.4) Neyron's nostalgia in later scenes is the typical reaction of a successful businessman to the unacceptable conditions which his success perpetuates. Through him, Planchon ridiculed the contemporary trend to possess weekend retreats in the country, in order to discover "L'authenticité champêtre", or one's "Assiette morale"... Despite his nostalgia, it is evident that Neyron retains his hard business sense; his account of his collision with la Grosse is callous: "Vieille battait tapis sur balcon. A réussi à se glisser entre palmes hélicoptères. Salope m'a éclaboussé. Cherche chiffon pour essuyer pare-brise."

(XV, p.1) On September 30th, 1972, Planchon made the speech more bitterly funny by changing the last sentence to "Cherche travailleur émigré pour essuyer pare-brise." The humour in Neyron's lines is extremely cynical. When he suffers a second bout of nostalgia in his last appearance, he searches for "Images joie rêve bonheur"; Planchon suggested to Clevenot that it would be best that "... le mot bonheur soit le plus désespéré."

Alligator and his sister Dorothy show what the world of La Langue au Chat has done to sexual relationships. Alligator the pornographic novel writer is ridiculous because of his pretensions to literary seriousness. Planchon during rehearsals on September 29th, 1972, told Roland Bertin, who played the part, to enter at first looking extremely timid, a "...petit monsieur ..." whose subdued demeanour would suggest a "... jeune homme maniaque". Planchon applied one of his principles of acting to the role of Alligator: "Au théâtre il faut toujours être au maximum au moment où on se montre - pour être au maximum il faut s'en dégager de temps en temps." On the 30th September, Planchon developed his explanation of Alligator further; the character should be "... par moments
déchaîné, par d'autres rétréci, petit, ça dit quelque chose de plus poétique." For the interview, he should be "... d'abord timide et triste, (... un petit comptable, un gratte-papier) puis sérieux pour parler, puis dégonflé...". Roland Bertin expressed this timidity by looking ill at ease in front of the cameras; for example, Louis positioned his guest's head in front of the camera, and Alligator froze for fear of moving out of view. Planchon suggested that Alligator should "... avoir toujours l'air d'arriver à la dernière minute..." (October 1st rehearsal). The earnestness of the interview places Alligator's perversions in a quasi-respectable context and makes them seem ludicrous rather than shocking. It includes, for example, a careful analysis of the process of creation:

Louis:
Comment partant d'un merveilleux rêve intérieur,1 vous en êtes venu à publier des textes aussi bassement pornographiques?
Alligator:
J'écris des contes de fées, mais les contes de fée ont toujours un arrière-plan érotique. Alors, je mets l'arrière-plan au premier plan et mes textes deviennent exclusivement pornographiques. (III, p.3)

Alligator also claims with dignity that his books are based on careful research:

... j'ai voulu étudier scientifiquement les personnes âgées. Savoir si à partir d'un certain nombre d'années, elles se déchaînent, si elles prennent le temps de poser leur dentier dans le verre à dents ... (III, p.5)

Planchon could not resist poking fun at the current situation in which filmed versions of books often ensure their popularity: "Oui, toute ma vie j'ai rêvé ce roman. Je ne l'ai pas encore écrit mais j'en ai préparé l'adaptation cinématographique. Je me propose de la mettre en scène..." (III, p.2) For Alligator, words are more exciting than experience. Even when he is

1. On October 3rd, 1972, the words rêve intérieur were changed to conte poétique.
completely déchaîné, he carries a sexual dictionary around with him, and he passionately declares his fascination with "Le discours du sexe. L'érection du sexe dans le discours. La linguistique libidineuse..." (XIII, p.2)

Dorothy is the exhibitionist par excellence, for she not only uses words to reveal her sexual adventures, but takes her clothes off as well. Planchon said in an interview that scenes similar to Dorothy's were quite common at the time when his play was produced: "Il y a, à notre époque, un besoin d'exhibitionnisme. Des gens s'amusent, ils ont envie de tout dire, comme ça. C'est dans l'air." In the same interview, he explained this phenomenon in terms of his own play:

Dans la pièce, les gens savent que la télévision est un moyen de communication terrible, mais en même temps, ils sentent que c'est toujours "triché". Dans la vie, c'est pareil. Il arrive, un jour, qu'ils aient envie de crever le truc, mais cela aussi entre dans le spectacle. Ils ont envie de crever le truc, comme si la vérité pouvait éclater.

Dorothy is frustrated because nothing she can do has the power to shock. Her words are inadequate, nudity is just as ineffective, and suicide is no more than a theatrical gesture.

When Planchon had Dorothy and the Chat retire together into her huge marble coffin, he was no doubt making fun of the directors and playwrights, Genet, Arrabal, who identify death imagery with sexual fantasies on stage. He may also have been suggesting through Dorothy that breaking down barriers to artistic expression is not a valid end in itself; one must have something to say once they have been broken down. In Planchon's opinion, certainly, some contemporary theatrical experiments showed a surprising fascination with things which seemed unimportant to him:

Take Arrabal ... For him, a woman making love with a monkey is something terrible, it frightens him, it excites him. [A reference to an episode

in which a woman and a monkey make love in
Arrabal’s play Le Jardin des délices, produced
by Claude Régy at the Théâtre Antoine in
October 1969. Well, it leaves me feeling
pretty indifferent. I’ve seen plenty of
shepherds screw their calves. In the Ardèche
it was more comic than anything else. 1

Alligator and Dorothy are both fundamentally funny characters
because Planchon wanted to put their ideas into perspective.
Even Dorothy’s perversion is ridiculous: she takes excessive
care of her hair. One might question, however, how appropriate
the use of a nude scene as a parody of nude scenes was to a
provincial audience. Certainly the public in the Rheims Maison
de la Culture sat stiff and silent, and seemed very shocked,
when Dorothy removed her clothes. In this instance the humour
may have been for a public well acquainted with contemporary
theatre trends, for a Parisian or a London public, for example,
who would now consider nudity on the stage as normal. It did
not suit a popular or a middle class provincial audience.

Completely separate from the life of the studio,
certainly far removed from the preoccupations of Alligator or
Dorothy, la Grosse is a character who exists in her own world.
Her language, like Aphrodite Bretzel’s, is strongly colloquial,
but it reveals a working class contact with reality rather than
a wish to be fashionable. Possibly it is through her that
Planchon included the point of view of a popular public. For
example, she confuses the Transparents inadvertently by ex-
claiming: “Ecoutez les rigolos, vous commencez à me courir sur
l’haricot!” (V, p.6). Like Balotin, la Grosse is an anachronism,
but unlike him she has no wish to compete in the present world.
Her words have a warmth and a sense of humanity absent in the
speech of the other characters, and that is why she attracts
Louis; she tells him: “Si j’avais gardé mon petit bistro—
j’avais un pied humide sur la place, ouais—si j’avais gardé
mon troquet, tu serais venu siffler un vin chaud.” (V, p.4)

1. Interviewed by Michel Kustow, "Creating a Theatre of Real
life," Theatre Quarterly, II, No. 5(Jan.-Mar., 1972),
54-55.
Her language like her old-fashioned flat suspended in mid-air is a world apart because it reflects faith and optimism rather than cynicism and despair.

The Transparents like la Grosse have sympathy for the beings they meet. Their language, however, is not only elegant but poetic, and its innocence is in sharp contrast with the rest of the text. The leader, the Transparent, evaluates what they see in sweeping philosophical terms: "Ils [humans] se considèrent sans doute comme des intrus dans l'écrasante et hostile immensité de l'univers." (V, p.7) One of his followers, la Transparente, looks more closely at the human beings and considers them with a shocked tenderness. During a reading of their scenes conducted by Gilles Chavassieux, Planchon's assistant, on October 3rd, 1972, Chavassieux explained the difference between le Transparent (le chef) and la Transparente: "Elle pressent les choses, tandis que le chef en donne une explication logique, large, humaniste. Il est universaliste, elle s'intéresse aux individus. Elle n'est pas satisfaite de ses explications, elle affirme et réaffirme ses questions." The words of the Transparents have the detachment of scientific observation; seeing Louis at the telephone and the Chat with Aphrodite Bretzel in the broom cupboard, the Transparente says: "Regardez: dans un placard obscur deux autres de sexe différent, les jambes en l'air, poussent de grands cris." (V, p.5) Their scientific assessment of what they see can be painfully accurate. When the Transparente points to Louis and asks why he is trimming the hairs in his nose, the Transparent answers: "L'attention qu'il porte à ce travail éloigne un instant son esprit du placard à balais, je présume." (V, p.7) These characters have the fresh vision of outsiders: Chavassieux said that their response to the world is like that of a Lyonnaise landing in New York for the first time would be. Their role, he said, is to give a greater significance to the events of the play by putting them in a new perspective:

Les Transparents disent aux spectateurs que tous les petits incidents de la vie sont
Commenting on the Transparent’s line in tableau V ("S’agit-il d’accidents? D’épisodes postiches? De grands événements historiques?" p.5), Chavassieux once again explained their innocence: "Les grands événements historiques peuvent être déclenchés par un petit incident. Ces diverses hypothèses le fascinent. Le chef note bêtement tout ce qu’ils trouvent; ils ignorent les mécanismes de pensée des êtres de cette civilisation étrangère."

Planchon tempered the beauty of the Transparents’ speeches by having them all sneeze in unison occasionally, and by having them converse briefly and at cross purposes with la Grosse. Juxtaposed with that of the other characters, however, their language still did not ring true. On stage, they seemed superfluous, their scenes unconvincing. Planchon was aware of the difficulty of staging the Transparents’ scenes. It was in the nature of their relation to the world of the play. The Transparents suggest a world other than that of the studio and the television audience, and superior to it in wisdom and kindness. Nevertheless they are unable to affect the world of human beings because that world is beyond redemption. Not only are its inhabitants oblivious to offers of help; they ignore the truth about themselves: ("L’évidence est là devant leurs yeux, ils ne semblent rien soupçonner. Ils n’entendent pas nos musiques." [VII, p.5]), and they create emotional obstacles for themselves ("Il y a donc, posé sur ce monde, un monde inutile créé par les indigènes. Dans ce second monde ils se perdent..." [X, p.3]) The Transparents try unsuccessfully to help the humans, by warming them against their own bodies, by depositing in the studio large stones (possibly symbols of their knowledge about our planet) which they carry, and which increase in size during the play; finally they give up their lives to make themselves visible for la
Grosse who is already dead. They have no effect on the fable, however. They serve only to interpret it for the audience. Their analysis, because it is explicit and because it is beautifully worded, appears to be that of Planchon. This is a serious weakness in a work by a playwright who wishes to avoid giving his audience the answers.

The play presents a horrifying picture of our future society, a world too similar to our own in many ways to leave a modern spectator indifferent. It is torn by wars, and submerging under industrial waste. The news and weather broadcasts give physical details of life in the year 2000:

Bretzel:
Les vents putrides qui se déplacent d'est en ouest ne parviendront pas à soulever - on s'en doute - le couvercle de plomb que nous avons sur nos têtes. Ainsi vivrons-nous aujourd'hui comme hier sous les fluorescents. (II, p.2)

Le Chat:
... la zone de dépression s'étend vers l'ouest et dans tous les coeurs. Les brouillards crasseux se lèveront à minuit. Mais alors, une pluie de suie tombera sur toute la région. (VII, p.4)

Louis:
Les usines déversent des flots de jus vert sur nos sympathiques cités. Ce matin toutes les surfaces de béton armé sont couvertes de mousse chimique. (VIII, p.1)

While Louis is reading a news bulletin about the wars, the Chat sees his first vision, "Les poubelles de l'histoire", which also gives a frightening picture of the world. Two large cubic dustbins appear, one containing the rubbish of our consumer society, the other, blood-covered fragments of human bodies. A bell tolls and a searchlight revolves over the dustbins. In an over-populated, over-industrialized world, human lives are of little value, and corpses are of no more importance than the superfluous damaged objects thrown away as waste. Despair is rife both in the studio and outside it. During the Ministre’s opening speech, a young man collapses and he is immediately thrown into the rubbish-chute. All the servants who provide for the studio are dying; one of them dies on stage of la peur viscérale, as the Chat advises him: "Allez vite mourir près d'une chaudière. Ca évitera à Louis du travail." (VII, p.1)
The human world is watched by an infinitely indifferent universe; le Chat warns the television audience: "Si la connerie nous cloue, le cosmos s'en moque et l'infini s'en fout infiniment." (IV, p.6) Where faith exists, it is shown up. L'abbé Comac veers from traditional religion to drug-inspired fantasies and shows the same enthusiasm for both. The Chat does pretend for a moment that advertising might help religion: "Vous déconnez Saint-Père. Une religion qui a franchi deux millénaires c'est du solide. Prenez un bon directeur commercial. Faites du marketing. En six mois vous revollez premier au box office." (XI, p.4) Only l'abbé Comac believes him, however, and the Chat himself finally advises the Pope that there is really no hope for such an outdated system as Catholicism. Real faith survives in La Grosse; she believes that the Martians will come and that the world will then be saved: "Actuellement on n'en parle plus des soucoupes volantes, mais ne t'inquiète pas, les Martiens reviendront. Ils se sont éloignés. Ce monde pue trop la merde chimique. Mais ils reviendront." (V, p.5) By depicting her solid belief in the Martians, Planchon created a perspective on belief in itself. He explained in Rheims that "Chez la Grosse, tout ce qu'on ne comprend pas est investi aux Martiens. Pour ceux qui ne croient pas aux Martiens ça donne une espèce de recul."

Possibly because of her faith, only La Grosse can still see possibilities for fun in the society of La Langue au Chat. She tries to cheer up Louis: "Allô, c'est le matou? Et si dimanche on allait à la fête de l'aéro-postale? On verrait décoller les satellites et les saucisses. ... Tous les solitaires qui s'y rendent reçoivent du ciel une carte postale à leur nom." (X, p.3) She is almost alone, too, to believe in love; Louis surprises her by complaining when he has reasons to be happy: "Ah l'imbécile. Il tient un coeur à portée de main et il sanglote." (X, p.4) For most people

At the Théâtre Populaire de Reims after a reading of Le Cochon noir to drama students, October 26th, 1972.
in *La Langue au Chat*, basic human appetites have been regulated by social necessity to be satisfied with synthetic substitutes:

*Le Chat:*

... il est maintenant vingt heures. Toutes les familles sont réunies autour de la bonne soupe synthétique. Le néon flambe au dessus de vos têtes. C'est chouette. Bouffez rapidement votre sou-soupe. Et glissez-vous dans le chat aséptisé de vos compagnes. (IX, p.3)

The Chat has three visions which show what his world has done to love relationships. One of them, his second vision, is brought on by his attempt to make Aphrodite Bretzel jealous. He tells her that he has met a girl whose internal organs have all been replaced by crystal instruments. He tells Aphrodite Bretzel that this girl is "... l'amour de ma vie..." (XI, p.2). Aphrodite Bretzel leaves, and the vision appears: Puss in Boots, on a small bicycle, is controlling a merry-go-round with three large horizontal wheels from which dozens of stemmed glasses are suspended. On his left is a Vermeer lace-maker, on his right a Chardin peasant woman churning her butter. Overhead, transparent letters form the word Amour, while a woman's voice says the word in the caressing tones of an announcement at Orly airport. The Chat's relations with the girl of crystal, represented by the wheels with stemmed glasses, are both fantastical (he is dressed as a fairy tale character) and mechanical (he activates her like a machine.) The Vermeer and the Chardin paintings present an image of woman which is both more realistic (both are working) and more idealistic, for their daily activity has been transformed into a work of beauty. These are paintings of women from another era, however, doing work which has long been dehumanised.

The romantic concept of the "love of one's life" is reduced to insignificance not only by the Chat, but by Aphrodite Bretzel, who wants to be shared by two men: "Je vous aime tout les deux. ... Et je suis prête à en aimer trois, quatre, cinq, douze. Pourquoi pas? Pourquoi j'en aimerais un seul? Je veux tout à la fois, un grand amour et des aventures sexuelles par douzaines." (XIV, pp. 7-8) This speech brings on the Chat's fifth vision, entitled "Le mémorial du
couple". On a plinth there is an unmade bed with a perforated target at its head and a mirror for a bedtester. On the bed lies a naked girl with a small portable television between her thighs. The Chat himself explains the nostalgia which has given rise to this vision:

Où est le football de table familial? Où sont les deux brosses à dents dans le même verre, où sont les tendres copulations dominicales? Rien vous ne verrez plus rien. Vous ne trouverez plus la jarretière de la mariée. Trop d'images publicitaires se ruent à l'assaut de ses cuisses.

(XIV, p.6)

The next vision on love, "Mémorial aux boxons de grand-papa", appears after the Chat steps out of the coffin with Dorothy. On the same plinth as in the fifth vision, there stands a rather worn Second Empire couch, framed by two curtains. On the sofa, hands caress the transparent legs and the combinations of an invisible prostitute. This image is in direct opposition to the previous one, of relationships cheapened by over-exposure. This is a prurient, half-censored dream, from an era in which publicity had not yet invaded private life, and in which sexual activity was considered illicit and preferably hidden.

One horrifying aspect of the world which Planchon created in this play is the way in which people have adapted to inhuman circumstances. When Neyron first appears, Louis asks him how he succeeded in reaching the studio through the mounds of uncollected rubbish; has he used one of the tunnels which the boy-scouts are digging through the waste? Neyron proudly answers that he is the owner of the first ". . . turbo-aérotrainflottant. Muni à l'avant d'une balayette japonaise en platine qui repousse saloperies sur côté." (IV, p.2) Louis immediately turns to the cameras to add: "Vous trouverez bientôt ce gadget dans des magasins attrape-couillons-à-succursales-multiples . . . " (IV, p.2) Industry has transformed cities into impassable waste heaps by producing too many consumer goods, and instead of clearing the rubbish, it creates another product to get people through it. The gadget is more than a joke. It is a symbol of accommodation to
unacceptable conditions of life.

Neyron complains that it is impossible to find serenity in a world with "Six habitants au mètre carré. Dans vingt ans 84." (IX, p.2) but he remains firmly convinced of his ideal of industrial expansion, and when he dreams of returning to the past, it is to the conditions which have led to over-population: "Femme. Honnête. Pas pilule. Tous les ans baby." (IX, p.3)

Government programmes to change the situation cannot improve it. The conscientious Dr. Braun uses a circular argument in her speech for reform:

Certes, tout n'est pas parfait dans notre société. Prenons un exemple: les stupéfiants chimiques se répandent sur notre douce Europe. Certes. Mais votre Gouvernement a signé des accords avec les principaux responsables. Dorénavant, industriels et trafiquants verseront des impôts qui nous permettront d'ouvrir des institutions où l'on étudiera les moyens les plus efficaces de combattre la drogue, la pollution et tout ce contre quoi nous devons lutter. À coups de réformes successives, l'un après l'autre nous réglerons nos problèmes. (XIX, p.3)

The elaboration of reforms is thus made the financial responsibility of those for whom reform would be financially disadvantageous.

Despite the widespread despair and the horrifying state of the cities, the world of the studio is a resolutely "cheerful" one. During a rehearsal on September 30th, 1972, Planchon said that he wanted all the news bulletins, even the most horrendous, to be read in a euphoric tone of voice.

Planchon used his talent for split-second timing and enlisted the aid of René Golliard's precise choreography to create the illusion of a never-stopping series of television programmes with quick commercial breaks. Through the television studios, despair is fought with constant injections of gaiety, often in the form of a song and dance:

chanté:
Autour de nous
un peu plus loin que chez nous
la lutte des classes fait rage.
parlé:
Chez nous ça marche.
chanté
Autour de nous,
un peu plus loin que chez nous,
les bombes atomiques éclatent.
Chez nous ça marche.
Les ouvriers sont dans les ateliers,
les patrons sont dans les bureaux,
la lutte des classes est dépassé...

Even death is pictured as no more than a slightly ludicrous process of decaying gradually away. The Chat can thus console the Pope: "... ne vous frappez pas pour la mort. Il y aura toujours de bravos pommes pour vous faire bouffer, vous faire faire pipi, et même pour vous tenir gentiment la main lorsque vous entrerez en agonie..." (XI, p.9) The jingle which the chorus sings to cheer up the pope is an ode to empty joy; Karel Trow, who composed the music, found an intentionally and irritatingly catchy tune for it:

Allez allez
Ne vous laissez pas démonter
Allez allez, soutenez, soutenez.
Allez allez, la page est tournée ...(XI, p.9)

Le Ministre de la Culture et de l'Information pour un environnement aux petits oignons also exhorts everyone to keep things looking bright. In order to avoid epidemics, the dead are cremated, and because there is no room for their ashes, these are put into jam jars. The Ministre has an idea: "... cher producteur; sur les pots de confiture funéraires metsez des étiquettes en couleur. Ça apporte un peu de gaiété." Repeated again and again the word gaieté becomes gratingly ironic. The deformation of reality by television is crystallised in this image of a brave empty smile over a world of horror.

The last vision, "la partie d'échecs", which was used for the posters advertising the play, epitomises the final frustration which leads to self-destruction. Under a classical arch, partly covered by a drawn curtain, two men with cat's heads face each other across a table. They are in straight-jackets, gagged, and blindfolded. They are straining forward over a chess board, as if they wanted to play, but they are held back by chains. The vision stayed until the end of the final scene. The questions of the play have not been answered.
They may not even have been the right ones. Yet, after the explosion, one heard the sound of seagulls and waves, which had accompanied the Transparents whenever they appeared. Perhaps this is the note of hope in the general despair. Planchon admires Shakespeare because there is always a sense of tomorrow in his plays: "People change, they don't just decline—well, yes, they do, but at the same time something else begins which has no connection at all. That's what I admire so much in Shakespeare: at the end there's always a kind of call, life goes on, a new baby is born. . . . for me it's profoundly true."¹ The sound of seagulls may have been the call of tomorrow in La Langue au Chat.

The production was made up of such a complicated series of events, shows, gags, etc., that many critics faced with the task of reviewing it finished by summarising it instead. The text was regarded as explosive and startling: "Planchon écrivain fait éclater les barrières au niveau du langage, et son lyrisme accidentel parsemé de verdure n'est pas sans rappeler certains bons moments d'Henry Miller."² Jean-Jacques Lerrant thought that the text was too cynical:

... Roger Planchon a volontairement dépourvu son style de toute littérature pour que la dérision elle-même soit nue. On ne voit plus rien que le dégoût. Un dégoût qui ne semble pas viscéral mais participe d'une opération intellectuelle, d'une délectation solitaire et renvoie, en fin de compte, à cette littérature que Planchon voulait sans doute proscire de son discours.³

Both opinions suggest that Planchon's text did not have the utter bareness which Lerrant felt was Planchon's aim. Certainly throughout the play, Planchon used stage ruses or sudden humour to offset the emotional weight of lyrical passages; perhaps the fact that the Transparents, who are not cynical,

were not convincing, made the play seem totally satirical. No doubt their innocent outlook was meant to counterbalance the bitterness of the text, and of the Chat's speeches in particular.

The sets were a central image in the production rather than a background, and they provoked strong reactions. In the opinion of Bernadette Bost, this "décor hyper-culturel..." showed a total mastery of stage design:

El [Max Schoendorff] se livre à une célébration surréaliste et symboliste à propos des visions du Chat et des diverses apparitions, et, dans le décor proprement dit, honore la beauté magique, et les signes de puissance des objets audiovisuels d'aujourd'hui et demain.  

Jacqueline Cartier, thought that the studio looked like a submarine filled with cameras, and suggested an "... univers concentrationnaire." Colette Godard compared the studio to the inside of a camera, "... un monde fermé qui se suffit à lui-même." Jean-Jacques Lerrant saw it as a set from a horror show: "... l'horrifique cabine du Docteur Caligari, conçu par Schoendorff, tient à la fois du bunker hitlérien et du crématorium." Edmée Santy saw the play as a descent into the underworld: "... nous avons les entrailles de cette divinité toute puissante, "Juke Box" permanent de la culture et de l'information qu'est le petit écran." Schoendorff certainly succeeded in his aim of creating a claustrophobic atmosphere; that is the feature of the sets which everyone noticed.

As they had in the créations collectives, music and dance numbers contributed to the lively pace of the production:

"C'est enlevé sur un temps de pas redoublé; cela tient de la revue de papa ou de grand-papa, du numéro de chansonnier et de la technique cinématographique."\footnote{1} The spectacular side of the production impressed critics. Despite any reservations they might have about the text or the ideas of the play, they could only admire Planchon's skill as a director:

Dans cette pièce d'anticipation, les choses sont [vont] vite, le rythme est animé, et si le rôle du texte et ceux des comédiens sont importants, tout ce qu'il peut y avoir autour bouge, bouge, danse, chante. On peut faire confiance à Planchon pour monter un spectacle vivant. Quelles que soient les idées contenues dans ces réalisations même si elles ont une portée sociale, voire politique, certaine, le spectacle en tant que tel reste roi, pré-texte magnifique et indispensable vecteur.\footnote{2}

The curious characters of Planchon's play were discussed at length. The Chat especially attracted comment. Like Schweyk, he is an ambiguous character, neither collaborating completely with the authorities nor resisting them absolutely. Planchon played the role of the Chat, and Bernadette Bost thought that he identified with him:

Reconnaître, ou croire reconnaître un peu de l'auteur sous le masque du personnage qu'il est censé condamner, cela fausse les cartes, le personnage devient plus fascinant, la moralité plus douteuse, et le spectateur moyen se perd dans l'ambiguïté des symboles.\footnote{3}

Every reviewer had a different definition of le Chat. He was described as a "... super-supersuper-vedette à l'imagination et aux audaces inépuisables dans le processus d'intoxication (mais en même temps de démystification)..." and as "... un suppôt du Pouvoir encore plus pourri que tel mais sorti du Songe d'une nuit d'été, un mégalomane de la parlotte et de la pellicule."\footnote{4}

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
\item Alex. Mattalia, Méridional (Marseille), Oct. 13th, 1972.
\item Michèle Grandjean, Provençal-dimanche, Oct. 8th, 1972.
\item Dernière Heure Lyonnaise, Oct. 14th, 1972.
\item Méridional (Marseille), Oct. 5th, 1972; Edmée Santy, Soir, Oct. 10th, 1972.
\end{itemize}}
Michael Kustov saw him in less political terms, as a "... Maharashi-type acid-tripping oversexed spiritual master who's been given a television channel..." It is not surprising that the judgments of his character were so varied. The Chat is the main debunker in the play, asking most of the questions and making the most bitter comments on his society. At the same time he is a prisoner of the system which he tries to uncover: "Entraîné dans l'engrenage de la moulinette, comme les autres, il est contraint de cabotiner, de se falsifier. Seul avantage, amère consolation, il peut truquer les règles du jeu à son profit." After interviewing Planchon, Michèle Grandjean was able to sum up the basic ambiguity of the Chat's role: "Il [Planchon] y tient le personnage du chat maître-a-penser vendu au pouvoir, pris au filet de son propre personnage, assez honnête pour se savoir un peu pourri, et assez malhonnête pour n'en point souffrir."

The other characters who invited discussion, possibly because of their peculiar position in relation to the play and to the other characters, were la Grosse and les Transparents. La Grosse was described as a "... ménagère chez qui la simplicité des tâches quotidiennes et le bon sens n'étouffent pas le rêve et le merveilleux...", a character "... en prise direct sur le bon sens." Edmée Santy asked "... si toutes les 'Madame Soleil' ... avaient la tendresse, le bon sens, la maternité de Paulette Dubost [who played the role], ne saurions-nous pas notre horoscope par cœur?" Although critics saw her as an extremely likeable character, few of them made a connection between her faith in the Martians and faith in general. Colette Godard nevertheless caught in a few words the position of la Grosse and les Transparents in relation to the other characters:

En contrepoiné à cet univers concentrationnaire, une attendrissante petite cuisine avec une cuisinière en fonte et sa propriétaire une attendrissante vieille dame... qui ne connaît pas la télévision, qui se trouve reliée par hasard au téléphone éparou du présentateur, et par sa saine naïveté aux "Transparents" ethnologues des années 30, explorateurs des temps passés et futurs, qui regardent, prennent des notes, essaient de comprendre. Ni eux ni la vieille ne peuvent rien pour les fous qui s'agitent dans la boîte noire, ils ne vivent pas au même niveau.

By pushing some television programmes to their logical conclusion, Planchon revealed their absurdity. The play was seen partly as a satire of television, but also, and more importantly, as a criticism of the authorities and the ideas controlling television. The play was remarkable because of

... l'extraordinaire tragi-burlesque, de cette télévision précisément dénoncée dans l'outrance même du geste, comme une fabuleuse arme d'intoxication que nous saurons au service du Pouvoir — ou plus précisément des Pouvoirs, et à son tour servie par des hommes et des femmes déshumanisées, eux-mêmes objets et prisonniers de ce Pouvoir.

Television in Planchon's play is a powerful medium of propaganda, "... l'arme absolue, et personne ne refuse de s'en servir, même sous la surveillance policière de la redoutable Docteur Braun...", Michel Bataillon explained that the world portrayed was one in which power shifted continually, a society whose leadership was crumbling:

Comme dans Bleus, blancs, rouges, il s'agit d'une société dont les fondements sont pourris. Une société à la dérive. Le pouvoir politique cherche à maintenir un ancrage, défendant un système auquel il ne peut plus croire. A contre courant il essaie de maintenir l'ordre établi en tentant, par une opération de télévision, d'imposer un grand maître spirituel.

It was recognisably our own world: "C'est une pièce d'anticipation qui a pourtant l'air de se dérouler aujourd'hui dans nos villes frontières. On y parle (à flots) de 'pollution'... et de 'spiritualité'..."\(^1\)

Although they recognised many themes and references in it, however, most critics were a little overwhelmed by the length and the density of the fast-paced production, and much of the public was lost as well: "Le public de la première a, semble-t-il, été dérouté par une œuvre foisonnante, quelquefois hilare, constamment désespérante et... malheureusement très longue."\(^2\) Many people mistook the interval for the end. Alex Matallia complained that Planchon had said too many things: "... trop de choses se télescopent, se masquent les unes les autres."\(^3\) Many reviewers, such as Bernadette Bost, were simply bewildered: "Parmi les symboles planchonesques, à l'écoute des exhortations ambiguës du mage dit 'Le Chat'... j'ai eu un peu de mal, par instants, à comprendre le message, à déchiffrer les intentions."\(^4\) Michèle Grandjean too was almost discouraged by the play: "L'extraordinaire foisonnement d'idées, de propositions, de suggestions, de points d'interrogation lancés par Planchon dans un génial fouillis, est déroutant, voire épouvantant..."\(^5\) Some suggested that the second part of the play could have been integrated into the first: "Peut-être parce que justement, la première partie est démente, folle, shakespearienne dans sa poétique drôlerie, que la seconde nous a paru tourner en rond, plaquer outrancièrement les effets dévidés au galop dans la première."\(^6\)

Planchon himself was aware that the play was too long and too complex:

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Le public est dérouté ... Il se demande ce qu'est ce paquet mal ficelé. Pourquoi le ton change sans cesse, passe de la satire à la tendresse, de la dureté au fantastique. Je suis trop hanté par le camarade Shakespeare. En tant que spectateur, j'aime qu'une pièce soit une aventure et je ne veux pas savoir, pas pouvoir deviner où l'auteur me mène, ni par quels chemins. ... Il y a trop de choses, je le sais. 1

However, there were other reasons for the play's confusing effect. Like La Mise en piéces du CID, it satirised a great number of current myths; no one viewpoint was safe from attack: "C'est une pièce qui est peut-être difficile à 'raconter' parce que sa qualité essentielle est précisément de tout bousculer; le temps, les hommes et jusqu'au récit qu'on pourrait en faire." 2 This play was a direct successor to the three créations collectives because it borrowed from every genre and indeed used several at once; Michèle Grandjean tried to list some of them: "... il faut que je vous dise que La Langue au Chat n'est ni une pièce de boulevard, ni un spectacle de chansonnier, ni une oeuvre surréaliste, ni une oeuvre réaliste, ni une comédie musicale, ni un show télévisé, mais — qu'elle est quand-même un peu de tout cela." 3 Michèle Grandjean touched on another important point in her review of the play. Because she considered the play too abundant in its themes and styles, she concluded that "... je suis sans doute trop cartésienne." 4 Cartesianism is Mc Luhan's term for the logically analytical bias of Europeanized man. Planchon tried to portray on stage the fullness and immediacy which makes television a challenge to that Cartesianism. It is not surprising that he confused some spectators.

Planchon's aim was to include his public's conscious and unconscious fears in a play which would make them laugh; he said in an interview that he wrote La Langue au Chat "...

à partir de l'angoisse des gens, des peurs qu'ils ont devant le monde moderne; au début, évidemment, c'est drôle et tout à coup tout bascule, tourne et c'est alors fantastique."¹ He found writing it a liberating experience, and he added, in the same interview, that afterward he felt free to write the more poetic play, Le Cochon Noir: "Le Chat a été un fourre-tout qui a cassé des barrières en moi." La Langue au Chat was meant, like all Planchon's plays, to give the spectator a sense of perspective. Some critics saw how Planchon provoked a critical awareness in relation to television: "... La Langue au Chat en réaffirmant que la télévision est le moyen le plus efficace de mystification des masses, aidera les téléspectateurs à évaluer plus facilement ce que transmet le petit écran."² Seeing such a satirical presentation of an often irritating medium could be immensely relieving:

... c'est tout de même rassurant de voir les hommes troncs tout puissants de notre petit écran, dévoilés dans leur stupide anatomie, c'est désopilant de savoir qu'on peut croquer, mordre, déguster et tirer à la courte paille une speakerine: gorgés de télévision que nous sommes, nous voilà vengés.³

Not as many critics, however, understood the production's aim of debunking current myths.

Planchon wished to open up his audience's everyday assumptions to question. In a discussion in the acting school in Rheims, at which I assisted, a student actress objected that the play did not give spectators any stimulus to action, but allowed them to watch passively. Planchon answered that he did not intend to make people take direct actions through his plays, but only to make them think: "Je vous ai donné des armes très sérieuses pour que quand un discours fumiste apparaît on s'en rende compte ... La pièce donne un regard, une façon de réagir, pas de solutions."⁴ He wished to stimulate a

¹ Recorded by Grégoire Miloyan, Marseillaise, Oct. 10th, 1972.
⁴ At the Théâtre Populaire de Reims, after a reading of Le Cochon noir to drama students, Oct. 26th, 1972.
prise de conscience in his audience, but to avoid an obvious
prise de position in the play. This is the sense of the
title of the play; there are no answers provided: "Je donne
ma langue au chat."

Both Bleus, blancs, rouges and La Langue au Chat are
plays of revolution. In Bleus, blancs, rouges, Planchon most
clearly demonstrated his approach to the individual within
history. The play, more explicitly than any other shows how
people are involved in history, how they are changed by it, and
how the decisions which they take in relation to it can affect
their lives drastically. Because the play is set during the
French revolution, the events which its characters attempt to
ignore are totally encompassing. Because the characters are
intelligent provincials uncertain how to react, the play has
a remarkable authenticity; when it was recreated after the
events of May 1968, the public could not help comparing its
own reactions to the recent revolution with that of the
characters to the events of 1789.

With La Langue au Chat Planchon continued a series
of plays which had begun with Les Trois Mousquetaires. In
Les Trois Mousquetaires he had debunked mainly theatrical fads;
in O M'man Chicago, he had staged the fantastical world of
gangster novels; in La Mise en pièces du CID, he had satirised
new theatrical fashions and social myths arising from the
events of May 1968. In La Langue au Chat, he pastiched not
only television in the 1970's, but the myths which television
reflects and creates. He showed how the mass media can distort
genuine needs or grievances to provide superficial remedies.
Both Bleus, blancs, rouges and La Langue au Chat illustrate not
only Planchon's preoccupation with history and the contemporary
social situation, but also the care which he takes to give his
audience a fresh and intelligent outlook on their own society
and the historical present in which they live.
CHAPTER XI

FROM THE THÉÂTRE DE LA CITÉ DE VILLEURBANNE TO

THE THÉÂTRE NATIONAL POPULAIRE

In the course of his career at the Théâtre de la Cité de Villeurbanne, Planchon has shown both a concern to reach wider audiences and a desire to experiment artistically with new ideas. In 1972 when his theatre became the Théâtre National Populaire, he said that he had begun his work at Villeurbanne with this double aim: "... la recherche d'un nouveau public ..." and "... la recherche scénique et dramatique ...".¹ At that time, he said that the new Théâtre National Populaire was to be provincial in spirit and in practice, touring the cities of France throughout the year. Indeed, from 1972 until May 1974, the troupe put on only one of its plays in Paris (Marivaux's La Dispute, directed by Patrice Chéreau, in October and November, 1973). In 1974, J. Gousseland pointed out the truly national character of the new TNP: "Théâtre réellement 'national': implanté à Villeurbanne, le nouveau TNP n'est pas pour autant lyonnais. Il a éclaté sur le pays entier: ses spectacles rayonnent à travers la France. Paris est devenue une ville de tournée comme une autre."²

In the summer of 1972, at Villeurbanne, the new TNP was still en préfiguration. At that time, Patrice Chéreau put on his own production of Marlowe's The Massacre at Paris (Le Massacre à Paris) which I saw. For this production, Chéreau used a stage covered with several inches of water, and surrounded by looming buildings. Characters appeared in a half-light, walking ankle or knee-deep in water. During the long sequence of the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre, "corpses" were thrown

¹. Reported by Robert Butheau, Monde, Feb. 5-6th, 1972.
². Le Point No. 85, May 7th, 1974, p.145.
into the water or fell in and "floated" away, in some cases only to reappear as live characters a little later. The central interest of the production seemed to be in the dramatic and even in the humorous possibilities of an accumulation of murders. Many of the killings were carried out with guns, the shots reverberating loudly in the theatre. Two unifying figures were a couple of Charlie Chaplin-like killers, who performed in unison, like marionettes, adding a note of grotesque humour to the unrelenting violence. The stage language in the production dominated the text which, despite the fine acting of Planchon as the duc de Guise and of Alida Valli as Catherine de Médici, became almost a mere sound effect among others.

After Chéreau's production of _Le Massacre à Paris_, Planchon put on his own play _La Langue au Chat_; its première was in Marseilles on October 10th, 1972, and the company then took it to Rheims, to Velleurbanne, and to Nice. In January 1973, at Velleurbanne, Patrice Chéreau put on Tankred Dorst's _Toller_, which he had first produced at the Piccolo Theatre in Milan in 1970. He was to put the play on again in Paris in May 1974. Dorst's play gives an account of the abortive République des Conseils established in Germany in April 1919 under the leadership of Ernst Toller, a young poet. The republic was defeated and most of the ringleaders executed, but Toller, because he was a poet, was spared, and given a five year prison sentence instead. In his Milan production, Chéreau had staged the play as the story of a failure, but in his 1973 and 1974 presentations, he showed it to be the story of a success: "Un gouvernement généreux et utopique qui se maintient un mois, c'est une réussite." The stage sets, like those for _Le Massacre à Paris_, were designed by Richard Peduzzi. The stage represented an empty baroque palace as the setting for the short-lived government, and a badly lit street as the place where people learned of its establishment and its fall. The production, according to Colette Godard, was remarkable.

for its beauty and for the authenticity of the human relationships depicted.¹

In March 1973, Planchon produced Michel Vinaver's Par-dessus bord at Villeurbanne. Vinaver's play depicts the rivalry between a long-established French firm of toilet paper manufacturers, Ravoire et Dehaze, and a powerful American company, United Paper, which is trying to capture the French market. The stage language in Planchon's production of the play was extremely important. Planchon's mise en scène emphasised that the struggle was between American marketing techniques and French traditionalism. He filled the stage with the national symbols of both countries, on the one hand the French cockerel, poilu, and their "Madelon", on the other, the bald eagle, tommy-guns, Mickey Mouse, majorettes, and chewing gum. As he had done in Dans le Vent...grrr... in 1968, Planchon deplored American ideological imperialism in Europe; as he had done in La Langue au Chat in 1972, he satirised the bright and artificial world of modern advertising. Karel Trow, who had composed the music for La Langue au Chat, created for Par-dessus bord another stylish and rhythmic accompaniment, with many music-hall sequences. Louis Dandrel, writing for Le Monde² thought that Planchon took sides in his mise en scène, whereas Vinaver's play does not. Planchon's treatment of the play, however, was quite legitimate; Vinaver's text would have taken six hours to present in its entirety, and he himself said that he wished that "Chacun taille sa pièce dedans, improvise à l'intérieur."³ The company of the new TNP tried to remain faithful to Vinaver's ironical approach, establishing in their stage presentations "... un contrepoint permanent entre des intermèdes chantés, dansés et mimés, et le récit mémorable de la lutte, de la réconciliation et de l'union de la société

¹ Colette Godard, Monde, Jan. 5th, 1973.
³ "La genèse de Par-dessus bord", leaflet, archives of the Théâtre National Populaire at Villeurbanne.
The production, with its emphasis on staging, was more like Planchon's own musical comedies than like the other modern plays which he has directed.

In June and July 1973, Planchon took a new version of Tartuffe with himself in the leading role, on a tour of South America; the tour was undertaken as part of the celebrations for the tricentenary of Molière's death. As in Planchon's first production of the play, Orgon (played this time by Guy Tréjan instead of Jacques Debary) was shown to be sexually attracted to Tartuffe. The decorator for this new production, Hubert Monloup, used some of the ideas which René Allio had conceived in the original sets: as it had in the first version, the curtain opened on a detail of a baroque painting, representing the deposition from the cross. In this production, however, the painting was then raised to reveal Orgon's house, and the audience did not, as in Allio's design, see greater and greater details from the same painting as the play progressed. The house revealed in the 1974 version was almost a palace, its size suggested by echoing sounds from above and around the room in which each scene was set. This palace was filled with scaffolding and ladders; baroque religious frescoes and marble sculptures were partially hidden by tarpaulins; in one scene the covered shape of an enormous equestrian statue was in evidence with only one hoof showing. It was as though some work of renovation or redecoration had been begun and then interrupted. Meanwhile the family made use of the rooms as they were; indeed, Planchon created the atmosphere of daily existence by having the characters put on coats to go out, and remove them when they come in, and by having them appear, amongst one another, in shirtsleeves and petticoats, innocently informal in their family setting. The feeling of a house in transition reflected the ideological uncertainty of the seventeenth century, divided between the age of faith and the age of science. The family live in their century as they do in their uncomfortable surroundings, compelled by the simple necessity of going on living; they contend as

1. Ibid.
614.

best they can with the nearly disastrous effects of Orgon's infatuation, itself made possible by the extent and nature of religious dévotion in his age. Thus even more clearly than in his first productions of Tartuffe, Planchon showed the social and spiritual dilemmas of a century through the relationships of ordinary people in their day to day setting.

From November 1973 to May 1974, the TNP toured France with productions of Le Cochon noir, the new Tartuffe, and Marivaux's La Dispute directed by Patrice Chéreau. Chéreau put on his version of La Dispute during the autumn festival in Paris in 1973. In his production, as in Planchon's production of La Seconde Surprise de l'amour in 1959 and 1960, the sensuality of Marivaux's characters was brought out. At the same time, Chéreau attempted to have his actors convey the innocence of the four young people; he thus made their progress in the art of hypocrisy more tragic than amusing. The actors wore smoking jackets and long New Look evening gowns, like citizens of a decadent place and time; the sets were made up of a classical building on one side, and virgin forest on the other, as though the characters were moving between their innocence and the civilised forms of art and behaviour of their society. Like Planchon, Chéreau made Marivaux's characters both fully human and socially connected beings. A critic, Matthieu Galley, said that the production showed the pessimism of the play's theme, that men and women are equally perfidious, and brought out its tragical side.¹ After La Dispute, several months elapsed before the company again visited Paris. In May and June 1974, the TNP presented four plays in the capital, putting into practice its principle of having two parts of the troupe put on two different shows contemporaneously. Thus Chéreau put on Toller at the Odéon while Planchon presented Le Cochon noir at the Porte-Saint-Martin, and then Planchon put on Par-dessus bord at the Odéon and performed Tartuffe at the

The question of Planchon's engagement has always been a controversial one. Early in his career, Planchon imitated the work of Bertolt Brecht in order to learn from it. Quite soon, however, at the time of his first creation of Tartuffe in 1962, he began to move away from Brecht's didacticism and, he claimed, toward Aristotelian classicism. He began to feel that, although theatre can ask questions about reality, its role is not to provide the answers as Brecht's plays do. Planchon's goal became that of creating a new outlook for his spectators, making them think about what they saw by presenting it very accurately, giving a critical picture of reality without forcing any conclusions upon his spectators. In 1964, Michel Vinaver, sensing the direction which Planchon's work was taking, spoke of this "... démarche tâtonnante ...":

Il ne s'agit plus de montrer où, à coup sûr, est le mal ou le bien, où est la réaction et où est le progrès, mais de décrire la "matière" même dont nous sommes faits, de raconter le "tissu" de l'histoire, et de laisser les ponts se faire, les jugements se former. Un tel repli, loin de signifier une dépolitisation du théâtre, est la condition même d'une action politique qui soit en prise sur la situation réelle d'aujourd'hui ...

The question was whether or not Planchon's unsophisticated public would appreciate such a subtle dramatic approach. Vinaver was writing after seeing Planchon's controversial production of Troilus et Cressida, which he understood only when he saw it a second time. In his opinion, the ill-received production was an illustration of the difficulty of creating truly experimental drama without frightening away a popular audience. Vinaver suggested that Planchon alternated between spectacular popular shows and more serious experimental plays, because the two were

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In an answer to Vinaver's article, the editorial team of Théâtre Populaire (Denis Bablet, Bernard Dort, Françoise Kourilsky, and Antoine Vitez) challenged his assumption that experimental theatre is not popular. They unfortunately gave as examples of popular dramatic experiments the productions of Meyerhold (whose audiences of workers, as we have seen, asked to be sent to traditional ballet and opera instead), Piscator (who depended for support on the wealthy middle classes), and Vilar (who admitted that his public was never more than 6% working class). They argued that experimental theatre could have the goal of finding the forms appropriate to a popular audience. The weakness of this argument is that, while the theatres were trying out various forms of drama, they might lose the public which they were trying to attract; one evening of boredom might alienate a new spectator from the theatre for a long time.

The appointment of Patrice Chéreau to the new TNP as a co-director with Planchon and Robert Gilbert in 1972 was an attempt to maintain the theatre's high artistic standard. It was also meant to help the theatre to "... sortir de l'impasse historique contre laquelle les créateurs, et avec eux le théâtre, allaient buter."² In 1968, theatre people had seen the need to take a new direction, to find a way of making progressive artistic endeavour relevant to the working classes. Even before the events of May 1968, Ariane Mnouchkine spoke of an impasse:

Depuis vingt ans, des hommes comme Vilar, comme Planchon, ont réalisé un travail énorme, efficace. Sans eux, d'ailleurs, on ne parlerait pas aujourd'hui de théâtre populaire. Mais on est arrivé à une limite due aux structures sociales, aux critères de notre civilisation. .... la notion de profit et de production est encore primordiale.³

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Chéreau, as we have seen, had worked for a popular public at Sartrouville; in his work there, and in his productions at the Piccolo Teatro in Milan, he showed, according to Michael Kustow, "... a scenic insolence which recalls early Planchon."¹

Le Massacre à Paris, his first production at the TNP, was a theatrical experiment of considerable impact, and it provoked a controversy amongst critics and spectators. At a presentation of the next play in the season (La Langue au Chat), the leaders of popular associations brought up the subject of Chéreau's production and complained that it was not properly a popular show: a young woman explained that the abonnés had felt uneasy and confused:

Sur le plan esthétique Le Massacre était extra-ordinaire: mais le texte était totalement incompréhensible, inaudible. Toutes les personnes qui ont vu ce spectacle ont maintenant un a priori contre le TNP. Certains se refuseront à y revenir.²

Indeed, the production was extremely difficult to follow because the characters wore dark clothing and moved about on a stage which was only sombrely lit; it was often impossible to determine who was speaking, and therefore difficult to concentrate on the text. On the night of June 8th, 1972, when I saw it, the audience booed at the end of the evening. Perhaps, as for Planchon's Troilus et Cressida, one would need to see the show twice in order to understand it. At the meeting of spectators, Michel Bataille, the theatre's dramaturge, defended the artist's right to experiment in order to keep his work fresh and adapted to changing realities. Later, in an article, Bertrand Poirot-Delpech accused Chéreau and Planchon of having abandoned the popular ideal, and he used Le Massacre à Paris as an example of non-popular art.³ Chéreau wrote a vehement reply. He said that ideas on popular theatre had changed since 1968, and that he and Planchon, as well as their colleagues Ariane Mnouchkine, Antoine Vitez, Jacques Rosner, Jean-Pierre Vincent, and Bernard

2. Reported by O.C., Progrès (Lyons), Sept. 27th, 1972.
Sobel were confronted with the task of defining a radically new role for the theatre. In a society whose mentality had changed, they had to face the old problem of "... faire coïncider la recherche intellectuelle et la recherche du public."¹

In 1968, as we have seen, the popular theatres re-evaluated their past work, and tried to determine what direction their efforts should take from then on. They had to acknowledge that they had succeeded in attracting only a small proportion of working class people to their theatres. A large non-public remained untouched. Nevertheless, most of the directors and troupes could also say, as Vilar had done of his own work, that they had been successful in bringing to the theatre many people who had not previously gone, or who went very infrequently. In many areas, the presence of a resident troupe in a community gave a continuity to the programme from year to year; the company developed a repertoire which became more sophisticated as the audience became more demanding. In 1966, for example, Herbert, (of the Tournées Karsenty-Herbert) noted the increased receptiveness of the public in the provinces, and attributed it directly to the many theatres of decentralisation which had been established: "... depuis dix ans, mieux informé, éduqué par le travail des centres dramatiques, il [le public] est plus ouvert."²

The fact remained, however, that a vast number of people were not interested in the theatre. Already before 1968, the dilemma of the popular theatre directors was becoming apparent; even when they themselves were of humble origins, the culture and education which they needed in order to participate in a theatrical endeavour separated them from the potential public which they were trying to attract. Ariane Mnouchkine, before the events of May 1968, touched on a number of the problems which beset the leaders of the popular movement:

... faire du théâtre populaire consiste à s'adresser au prolétariat... Ce qui frôle le paternalisme, et se révèle aussi dangereux que de s'obstiner à faire

¹. Monde, July 20th, 1972, p.11.
du bien aux gens malgré eux. Car, ce prolétariat dépossédé du théâtre s'en passe fort bien et ne le réclame pas, et il a bien raison! Son besoin de spectacle est largement comblé par le cinéma, la télévision, le music-hall, les manifestations sportives ... Ne connaissant pas le théâtre, il ne peut en éprouver le besoin, et si l'on enquête sur ses goûts, on va vers le médiocre.  

Directors could, on the one hand, choose the traditional culture developed to meet the needs of the middle class, and boulevard plays are generally considered to belong to this category. Some directors go as far as to include in it the classics; for example, André-Louis Périmetti, the young director from the theatre of the Cité Universitaire who was to succeed Jack Lang at the Palais de Chaillot in 1974, said that the classical theatre is "... sécurisant parce qu'il place un écran entre nous et ce dont il parle: la distance dans le temps, les paravents de l'histoire, et tout le jeu des références culturelles."  

Theatre should not be sécurisant, but thought-provoking, inquiétant. Even for those who believed, as did Vilar and Planchon, that the classics could be staged in such a way that they would speak directly to a modern audience, a problem arose after twenty years of decentralisation: "... les classiques à leur tour s'épuisent, pour un temps ..."  

Whatever the genres which they included in the term "traditional" or "bourgeois" art, directors of popular theatres esteemed it to be unrelated to the needs and to the interests of their potential audience.

On the other hand, the wish of the directors of the popular theatres to present dramatic works of immediate interest to the working class made many of them liable to the accusation of ouvrierisme, i.e. the tendency to glorify the worker as the

2. "Il n'est de théâtre que contemporain", Nouvelles Littéraires, Feb. 11th-17th, 1974, p.11.
only possible leader of the revolutionary movement. In 1965 a statement emanating from the Théâtre de l'Est Parisien maintained that the only real problem of working class theatre was that of "... l'accès à la culture ..." and that "La notion de la culture populaire ne recouvre pas un contenu mais un objectif ..." The same article, however, claimed that the true culture is *inquiétante*. This ideal of stimulating thought in the public was common to young directors of the time. It was an aim which must be met not only by bringing people into the theatre, however, but by choosing very carefully the plays which they would then see. The problem was more than that of l'accès; it was one of repertoire.

Most of the popular theatres worked with trade unions in order to contact their potential public; in a few instances, they obtained support from communist municipal authorities, as in the case of Gabriel Garran at Aubervilliers, or of Pierre Debauche in Nanterre. The directors and the troupes interested in reaching a working class public were themselves generally leftist to a greater or lesser extent. It is not surprising then that the repertoire and the productions of the Troupes Permanentes, Centres Dramatiques, Maisons de la Culture, and unsubsidised popular theatres, were often politically left-wing. Nor is it surprising that the political sympathies of the theatre people often irritated either the middle class local authorities or the gaulist Ministry of Culture. Malraux, who had begun the movement of decentralisation, was succeeded as Minister of Culture by Edmond Michelet (1969), Jacques Duhamel (1971), Maurice Druon (1973), and Alain Peyrefitte in 1974. We have seen in Chapter II (p.?) how Michelet angered the subsidised troupes by asserting that poverty was a stimulus to artistic creativity. When Maurice Druon took office, he too made a statement which infuriated the theatres: he warned that subsidies would not be forthcoming to those in disfavour with the government: "Les gens qui viennent à la porte de ce ministère avec une sébile dans une main et un cocktail Molotov..."

Dans l'autre devront choisir.  

A number of theatre troupes, including the Théâtre du Soleil and the Théâtre de Gennevilliers, organised a demonstration of several thousand people in Paris to protest against Druon's decision to "bury freedom of speech." Druon's statement, however, like that of Michelet before him, was representative of the Ministry's general attitude to the policy of subsidising theatre. Revolutionary artists were far less likely to receive support. When Jo Tréhard was opposed by the authorities of Caen, when Gabriel Monnet was dismissed at Bourges and Maurice Sarrazin at Toulouse, the Ministry of Culture did nothing to help them: "Le ministère ... donne des subventions: les villes savent en général comment faire la cour à l'État, ce qui permet d'harmoniser les circuits de la culture officielle." The government's point of view was stated in 1971 in terms less pointed than those which Druon was to use; Claude-Gérard Marcus, U.D.P. representative for Paris, considered it reasonable to withhold subsidies from révolutionnaires: "Certes la création artistique doit être libre, mais, entre la liberté et la subvention d'État, il y a un pas. Beaucoup pensent ... que les fonds publics ne sont pas destinés à priori à préparer la désagrégation de l'État et que, si le théâtre révolutionnaire a le droit d'exister il n'est pas évident que cela doit être aux frais des contribuables." The government, then, was reluctant to subsidise those who seemed bent on destroying the kind of society which it represented. The theatres, however, believed that drama is a basic need and that it should be publicly sponsored so that it could be available for everyone; furthermore, their activities and their repertoire should not be subject to a financial censorship which would reduce them to putting forward the values and interests of those in power.

When Planchon mocked l'auto-censure in his production La Mise en pièces du CID, he touched on a sensitive issue.

Was it possible for the directors of subsidised theatres to retain their independence if they were subsidised by authorities whose views they often opposed? It would seem that since 1968, under government scrutiny, the directors of the Maisons de la Culture and of the Centres have become less revolutionary, or, in some cases, they have been replaced by more moderate successors. These new directors speak of a liberal humanistic tradition, and assert that they are politically uncommitted. Louis Dandrel, critic for *Le Monde*, expressed his concern about this trend:

Ce langage fraternel et de bonne foi prononce la condamnation de l'action culturelle des dix dernières années. Au nom de l'ouverture, les institutions culturelles retournent à leurs propriétaires de toujours ou pire, deviennent le relais d'une "production de consommation"... L'intellectualisme — vocable métaphorique — est présenté comme un maléfice: les hommes politiques de la majorité ont trouvé depuis longtemps dans le communisme une arme identique.1

There are still those, however, who believe that the non-public may be reached, in ways slightly different from the traditional ones. Not only do they go out to their audiences, and give shows where they find them, creating not street theatre as much as council flat and factory theatre; they also base their productions more closely than ever before on the concerns of their spectators. The new tendency is to avoid a paternalistic attitude at all costs: either shows are great spectacles appealing to a mass of people on a variety of levels, (such as le Théâtre du Soleil's 1789 and 1793, or the productions of the Grand Magic Circus), or they are smaller shows, addressed to a number of people who can be talked to or even who can participate (as in Benedetto's productions with his Nouvelle Compagnie d'Avignon). Such troupes will try to get their potential audiences' opinion rather than giving them lectures, and to in-

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volve them in dramatic manifestations as much as possible. Jean Hurstel, a director, described the work which his company did in a working-class suburb of Belfort, a city near the eastern border of France, north east of Besançon; it included going from door to door to invite people to public discussions, and basing dramatic productions closely on the ideas and the interests which emerged in the course of these discussions. In Hurstel's opinion, "La création est un échange entre personnes et non une marchandise à placer."¹

In 1969, as we have seen, Patrice Chéreau thought that the next phase of popular theatre was to be that in which the working class public felt a need to create its own drama. In the next year, Dominique Nores made a similar suggestion: "Ce que les Maisons comme celle d'Aubervilliers devraient permettre, c'est la prise en charge d'une créativité native à retrouver dans l'individu tenu jusqu'ici à l'écart de toute culture ou étouffé sous le poids de l'idéologie dominante."²

This desire to give working class people the chance to express their personal and common interests could be fruitful if a troupe was capable of giving these ideas an effective dramatic form. André Benedetto spoke of a strike of railwaymen in Avignon in June 1971, during which his actors, wearing placards identifying them as trade unions, strikers, police, management, etc., played out various conflicting newspaper reports of the industrial action in front of the strikers. As strike-breakers are known in Avignon as renards, one actor, wearing a yellow mackintosh and a fox's mask, played a silent character who danced with the boss, embraced him, swept the floor in front of him, etc. Benedetto was interested in the reaction, for the railwaymen were struck by this image in particular:

Nous avions représenté un concept, une réalité qui est terrible pour eux; et le renard prenait une force caricaturale très importante. C'était l'image tangible de ce qui circule dans les consciences, la projection d'un imaginaire

populaire. C'est la caractéristique et la force du théâtre de proposer des images que le discours politique sécrète, qu'il peut exploiter, mais qu'il ne peut pas créer.

Thus a creation by a company could express concepts meaningful to a working class audience, if the company had prepared it by keeping closely in touch with that public for a length of time, and if they were able to dramatise the concepts convincingly.

Could the individual playwright still have a role in such a system of dramatic production? Already in 1965, Vilar had seen the direction which playwrights would have to take:

Il y a le problème du théâtre d'avant-garde, pour une élite, et du théâtre nouveau, à large audience, populaire. ... le fossé qui sépare encore ces deux sortes de théâtre doit se combler, la fréquentation massive, quantitative, déterminante, à la longue, le perfectionnement du goût, la suppression du "goût" en tant que privilège des classes aisées. Mais il faudrait que les auteurs à venir connaissent le nouveau public, le fréquentent, s'y mélangent, ne restent pas toujours à Paris. [my underlining]

Armand Gatti's first plays were often about specific historical events and situations (V comme Vietnam for example), and he believed that spectators should be ready to learn about these events before seeing the plays; he was in favour of preparatory debates and readings in factories and council estates. Since 1968, he has gradually changed his ideas, saying in 1971 that he despaired of ever escaping his own cultural "ghetto" to find a language for a working class audience; he even considered working in a factory himself: "Où et comment trouver un 'langage approprié'? Où? Bien entendu à l'usine. Et comment? Comment le susciter? Les ouvriers, chez eux, je ne sais pas, à l'usine ils ne se parlent pas; ils ont autre chose à faire


que du théâtre."¹ There is a gulf separating people for whom long hours each day are spent on menial, repetitive, and often physically exhausting work, and those who are involved in a profession which, however precarious its conditions, however demanding its practice, has the undeniable human advantage of being creative. How can this gap be bridged? Gatti's dilemma is that of the individual author trying to speak to a class which is no longer his own. His 1974 production at Avignon, La Tribu des Carcana en guerre contre quoi? was staged with a number of amateurs including four who had worked with him in a similar experiment in Louvain, La Colonne Durruti-Gatti (1971).² The 1974 play consisted of a discussion of the alternative possible ways in which the life of a Spanish revolutionary could be staged; the "hero" was represented by the limbs and various separate parts of an enormous puppet, which the actors tried to assemble in different ways. Aside from this one prop, there was little effort to illustrate the action dramatically. This non-play, or verbal presentation of the problems of making a work of art, may be an indication that Gatti is losing his confidence as a playwright for the working class.

The trend away from a theatre of texts, in the work of theatre people as different from each other as Jérôme Savary, Ariane Mnouchine, or André Benedetto, is perhaps a sign of mistrust for the words which embody a cultural "message" too representative of the predominant middle class ideology. The productions of the Grand Magic Circus and of le Théâtre du Soleil radiate a joy and exuberance which the serious plays of

¹. Recorded by Colette Godard, Monde, April 28th, 1971. In Feb. 1971, Gatti said: "C'est à l'usine qu'il faut apprendre le langage en train de se créer, c'est là qu'il faut en vivre les pulsations et sentir à quoi correspond l'univers qu'il crée. Si l'on n'entre pas dans ce langage, on reste un intellectuel détenteur d'un privilège ... Il vaut donc mieux que j'aie travaillé à l'usine, non pour faire de l'ouvriérisme, mais pour apprendre un langage, une respiration qu'actuellement je n'ai pas."

the popular theatres have lacked. Both are, and confess to be, politically committed (although it must be admitted that this is less apparent in the work of the Grand Magic Circus) but they have a joie de vivre which makes their serious ideas accessible to varied audiences. Already in 1967, as we have seen, José Valverde had deplored the popular companies' tendency to be solemn. Jack Halite, at that time mayor of Aubervilliers, also saw the need for laughter in popular productions: "Ce n'est pas d'un rire de circonstance, mais du rire de la vie dont nous avons besoin. Planchon, avec ses Trois Mousquetaires, y avait réussi ... Ce qu'il faut, ce n'est pas passer du sérieux au rire, c'est mélérer dialectiquement - comme dans notre quotidien ... le rire et le sérieux." The ideal popular play, then, may be that which embodies the real preoccupations of the popular audience, but in a form which seems directly relevant to them (as Benedetto's renard did to the strikers at Avignon), or which meets their natural human need to be entertained.

It is interesting that a few years ago, Planchon was slightly embarrassed by the memory of his slapstick Trois Mousquetaires, the very production which Jack Halite singled out as an ideal combination of humour and seriousness. By becoming a dramatist himself, and by taking an important official position as the head of a national theatre, Planchon has taken a very different direction from many of his colleagues. It may of course be that his tendency to avoid an actual prise de position in his work was an important consideration in the government's decision to make him the new director of the Théâtre National Populaire in 1972. The grass roots activity of companies such as Hurstel's may provoke consciousness and reflection far more than agit-prop techniques or traditional theatrical production; it is this kind of raising of political awareness from which Planchon may now be debarred by his official

status.

It is true that Planchon has not lost any of his sense of solidarity with fellow theatre directors and playwrights. During his Latin American tour, Planchon was told that the playwright Cesar Vieira was being held without being charged by the Brazilian authorities. When the company arrived in Buenos Aires, Planchon said in the press conference before the opening of Tartuffe in that city that he was dismayed by the news: "Si la nouvelle de son emprisonnement est exacte, je suis désespéré de devoir jouer dans une ville où un homme qui exerce ma profession est prisonnier." The next day Vieira was freed. The fact that he was co-director of an officially sponsored national French theatre no doubt made Planchon's moderate statement doubly effective. In his work as a writer and director, however, Planchon may be limited rather than strengthened by his position.

In 1974, Planchon acknowledged in an interview that he had benefitted artistically from Chéreau's presence at the TNP:

Je ne peux pas répondre pour Patrice Chéreau mais, pour moi, je vois clairement ce que j'y ai gagné: d'abord une exigence artistique qui peut me retenir de m'endormir, ensuite une obligation de me définir et, par là, d'établir une différence avec le travail de Patrice Chéreau. Sa présence au TNP est artistiquement excitante.

With Chéreau, however, Planchon seems to have decided that the ambition of creating a theatre which would attract the working classes in representative numbers is unrealistic in our present society; he mentioned in the same interview that the obstacles to popular theatre were inherent in the social system:

Je l'ai souvent dit, les ouvriers ne vont dans les théâtres que pour les construire. J'en suis d'autant plus déchiré que d'une manière très autobiographique, je sais bien qu'il existe une coupure culturelle et qu'elle

est forte, réelle, brutale. Je ne crois pas que le théâtre puisse agir sur un état de fait que seul un changement de civilisation pourrait modifier. De ce changement, je souhaite voir l'aube, mais, en attendant, ce que peut faire un théâtre comme celui que je dirige, c'est rappeler constamment qu'il y a une coupure culturelle violente. Notre rôle est de maintenir la plaie ouverte.

As a writer, Planchon remains sensitive to the changes in the viewpoint and the interests of his audiences:

Notre travail est très complexe, car le public populaire auquel nous voulons nous adresser arrive dans nos salles formé par des émissions d'"Au théâtre ce soir" et par les feuilletons de la télévision. Nous devons aujourd'hui tenir compte de cette formation, ce qui n'était pas le cas il y a dix ans.¹

Ten years ago, as we have seen, Planchon himself acknowledged that his public came to him educated by the cinema. A noticeable change in the public's attitude, especially since 1968, has been its growing demand for a political stance in the theatre, in plays, and on the part of directors. It has never been Planchon's principle to take a definable and limited position in relation to the political issues of the day; instead, his plays throw light on those issues and try to spur the public to reflect on them. He has never created a militant theatre, a call for revolution.

Je crois tout à fait à la fonction politique du théâtre, mais je ne pense pas que l'on puisse parler d'un problème politique au moment où il se pose. Je crois que le théâtre se doit de reprendre les problèmes et les débats politiques quand, d'une certaine façon, ils ont été tranchés dans la vie. C'est là, il me semble, que se situent la force et la faiblesse du théâtre.²

Planchon sees a political role for the theatre, and in all his productions and his plays, he has shown his awareness of the historical dimension of theatre. It is true, as Vinaver

¹. Ibid.
². Ibid.
noted, that Planchon's work alternated between great spectacular or popular "draws", and more difficult plays. Nevertheless his productions cannot be divided into the two categories of "popular" or light entertainment and of "experimental" or serious art. The productions of Les Trois Mousquetaires and of La Mise en pièces du CID, both inventive, funny, and full of action, music, and dance, were in fact accused more than Planchon's other plays of being elitist theatre. Planchon and his company always replied to these criticisms by saying that the plays could be taken on many different levels. La Mise en pièces du CID, for example, was a production in which avid theatre-goers noticed many references to current dramatic trends and to specific plays; it was also a political satire in which people who had lived through May 1968 in Paris were able to recognise many of the recently-discussed revolutionary and reactionary ideas; furthermore, the play's slapstick humour was funny in itself. In every one of his plays, Planchon tried to include the point of view of his provincial, popular public. In L'Infâme, for example, he referred to a common religious heritage by having children's voices reciting lessons during the scene changes; in Bleus, blancs, rouges, he depicted the dilemma of provincials affected by a revolution which they do not understand; even in such a mad modern satire as La Langue au Chat, he included the common sense and down-to-earth humour of la Grosse. This concern for his public's interests and opinions, as well as the basic themes which recur in his directed and written work, give Planchon's career at Villeurbanne a direction and a continuity which may have been essential in retaining the interest of his public.

Like Brecht, Adamov and Armand Gatti, and like directors such as Gabriel Garran and José Valverde, Planchon shows in all his work a preoccupation with the individual in relation to history. In the plays which he has directed, as in his own plays, Planchon has attempted to underline the
historical context of the action through the day to day appearance and activities of the characters. In Shakespeare's plays the historical element is evident, but in productions of French classical plays it has often been neglected in favour of a purely psychological interpretation. Planchon's mise en scène of the French classics were new in that he emphasised the social and historical context in which they were set; at the same time, he reexamined traditional interpretations of the characters by following the Aristotelian principle of studying their actions rather than their words. Through the sets, the costumes, and the staging, he suggested the mentality of the era in which a play was set or of the time in which it was written. The characters were presented as ordinary human beings representative of their society and of their age, but at the same time helping to shape the mentality and the historical events of their day through their own behaviour. Each technique with which Planchon demystified or humanised characters was at the same time an indication that they were living through their specific time as we live through ours, unconscious of many of the premises of their attitudes and ideas, of the effects of their decisions, or of the importance of contemporary historical events.

Usually the sets which Planchon and his designers (notably René Allio) created, tended to underline a theme or to show up the ideology behind the play whether it was classical or modern. The sets for Adamov's Paolo Paoli at the Théâtre de la Comédie in Lyons in 1957, for example, represented the small crowded office in which Paoli works; the office space, however, was deliberately placed in one limited part of the stage; just as his office was only part of the entire stage area, so the business in which Paoli is engaged was shown to be part of the larger context of world trade. In the next year, in the Théâtre de la Cité's production of George Dandin, the stage was again divided, this time into two distinct and separate worlds, that of the farmyard (including silent, toiling extras) where Dandin belongs, and that of the comfortable house of Dandin, representing the society into which he has tried to marry.
In 1959, Planchon carried the idea of adding serving class extras still further; he had the characters of Marivaux's *La Seconde Surprise de l'amour* quarrel and flirt with servants working around them, and thus showed up their aristocratic idleness; because Planchon also showed them indulging their sexual desires, their frivolity ceased to appear as a word-game, and instead became a symptom of the irresponsibility which their class situation encourages. The houses of the Marquise and of the Chevalier were also reflections of their social standing; each was designed with careful attention to their relative social rank, their financial situations, the fashions of the day, and their probable tastes. In his production of Adamov's adaptation of *Les Ames mortes* in 1960, Planchon again wished to suggest a double context, the geographical and the human; with Allio's help he created the feeling of the great expanses of Russia's plains through which Tchitchikov travels by showing transparencies projected on a screen above the stage proper of the bleak countryside and the small towns. He made fun of the grasping, petty landowners amongst whom Tchitchikov moves by projecting on the screen Allio's comic sketches of Russian faces, and by having all the characters on stage wear ridiculous false noses. In the 1962 *Tartuffe*, Planchon placed the psychological play within its social and ideological context; the sets with large baroque religious paintings suggested the seventeenth century's confusion of erotic and religious love, and thus placed Orgon's attraction to Tartuffe in perspective. In the 1974 version, as we have seen, the sets also created an atmosphere of transition reflecting the philosophical uncertainty of the century. In *Bérénice*, which the Théâtre de la Cité created in 1966, the sets were again meant to suggest two settings, that of Versailles (the era of Racine) and that of the Rome depicted in the play; a silent, watchful court, which included both Roman senators and the cardinals of Louis XIV's court, surrounded the lovers. Like the servants in *George Dandin* or in *La Seconde Surprise de l'amour*, they recalled the social rank of the principals, and the effect of that rank on their behaviour; they also suggested the repercussions which the love affair between two individuals could have on the world.
Mirrors around the stage recalled Versailles and also suggested the narcissistic side of Titus and of Bérénice. In Planchon's production of Richard III in the same year, the stage was dominated by large machines, for the most part instruments of torture; they recreated visually the oppressive cynicism of Richard III's world, in which murderous intrigue is the best means of gaining power.

By paying careful attention to the fashions of each era, and by applying common sense to the problems of dress, Planchon and his costume designers created clothes which were appropriate and believable, and which often recalled both the style of the time in which the play was set and that of our own day. Thus in Henry IV, the prince was dressed as an elegant young rebel in a leather jacket, and Poins, his friend wore a cheaper imitation of his outfit. George Dandin is wealthy and he considers himself important, but he is usually presented in rags; in Planchon's production, he was richly dressed; the Sotenville, instead of being overdressed, wore clothing of good quality, appropriate for the country. In Planchon's productions, the characters also changed their clothing when it was appropriate; after going to bed together, Marivaux's lovers appeared in dressing gowns and without their wigs. In his production of Brecht's Schweyk dans la deuxième guerre mondiale, Planchon broke slightly with his realistic approach to costumes; all the costumes were made from the same grey cloth, creating on the stage a newsreel-like picture of the war; only the scenes in the inn, and those of Schweyk's dream, were in normal colours, as these scenes represented warmth and friendship; the scenes set in the higher regions, in which Hitler and his acolytes appear, were staged in a uniform blood red. In Planchon's production of Tartuffe, clothes were an important indication that we were seeing Orgon's family in their everyday pursuits; their changes of clothing for various times of the day were underlined in the 1974 production: Orgon's family even appeared in night-dress, clutching shawls, when Tartuffe invaded their house at night.

The question of a character's ideology, and of the
extent to which it affects his behaviour, has always fascinated Planchon. It is the point at which historical and psychological forces join. In Planchon's opinion, behaviour may be motivated by personal reasons or by circumstances, but people usually invoke an ideology or a philosophy in order to explain or to justify their actions. When he read other people's plays, Planchon looked attentively to see whether a character's actions correspond to the author's explanation of them. In his production of *Henry IV*, he ended by emphasizing that the Prince's famous "reformation" from a delinquent to a king is little more than external; experience as a bully, a thief, and a liar is a fitting preparation for kingship. Furthermore, Planchon underlined in this play that even personal relationships have a political dimension: Hal uses Falstaff and then abandons him, Hotspur plays with his wife and then exacts feudal respect from her. When the company of the Théâtre de la Cité rewrote Marlowe's *Édouard II* in 1960, they gave it a greater historical scope; King Edward II was not only the weak homosexual monarch of Marlowe's play, but the idealist looking forward to a new age, the Renaissance. In his 1962 production of *Tartuffe*, Planchon cast the young and attractive Michel Auclair as Tartuffe and thus made apparent the homosexual fascination which underlies Orgon's religious attachment to his mentor. In *Troilus et Cressida*, in 1964, he emphasised the fact that, although the warriors pretend to fight for a cause, they are aware of the immorality and of the futility of that cause; they are motivated by personal and family vanity. In 1966, in his production of *Bérénice*, Planchon cast young actors as Titus and Bérénice, and set them amidst a middle-aged court; transforming the tirades into emotional outbursts alternating with uneasy silences, he accentuated the adolescent pride in their quarrels. In defiance of previous interpretations of the play, he showed Titus as a man tired of his mistress and glad of the excuse of the raison d'État to end an old affair. In the same year, in his production of *Richard III*, Planchon created a world of vipers in which personal sentiment exists as nothing more than a politic means of hiding or excusing crimes, and in which the most thorough liar is the
most successful politician.

Because he always sees history on a human level, Planchon staged the great battles of history in such a way that the concept of "glory" seemed totally irrelevant. In his adaptation of Les Trois Mousquetaires, for example, duels and fights, and even the battle of La Rochelle, were deliberately and wittily transformed into dances or childish quarrels. In his own play O M'man Chicago, the St. Valentine's Day Massacre was alluded to only through Al Capone's plans for a victory celebration afterward; here too, gun battles were changed into song and dance sequences. In the English classical plays especially, Planchon brought the idea of battle down to a personal and sometimes a ridiculous level. In the Villeurbanne version of Marlowe's Edouard II, the King was taken to his officers after the battle of Bannockburn, bedraggled and shaken, having been found hiding in a ditch. The warriors of Troilus et Cressida were placed in sets which moved, making their efforts to find one another and fight clumsy and ludicrous. In Richard III, the battle of Bosworth Field was treated with irony and dramatic economy; soldiers changed sides to represent first one army and then the other, and finally only four of them grappled with one another momentarily before falling "dead".

In the modern plays which he directed as well as in his classical productions, Planchon immersed the characters in their historical context. He showed how they pretend to ignore or succeed in ignoring the implications and the true motivations of their activities. In Paolo Paoli, the characters never discuss the realities of their trade, the unpleasant facts that they use convict labour, trade in human beings, and encourage strike-breaking. Paoli himself, until the end of the play, professes to be uninvolved in the realities of economic oppression. In Adamov's adaptation of Les Ames mortes, the inhumanity of trade in human souls is shown up when Tchitchikov capitalises on the landowners' greed; by making them physically ugly with false noses, by emphasising class distinctions in the characters' treatment of one another, Planchon showed their basic
pettiness and created an atmosphere of social decadence appropriate to the age and the place in which the novel is set. In both Paolo Paoli and Les Ames mortes, the very business-like way in which the main character worked showed up the callous pretence of moral respectability. In La Bonne Ame de Sé-Tchouan, Brecht demonstrated the inadequacy in the real world of an ideology based on charity; in his successive productions of the play, Planchon made this lesson clearer and clearer by bringing out the fable itself rather than allowing the spectator to feel sympathy for Shen-Te. In Schweyk dans la deuxième guerre mondiale, the ambivalence of Brecht's Schweyk toward ideology of any sort made him an extremely controversial character, apparently motivated by his instinct for survival and nothing else; he showed up both the ideology of war, (by participating only reluctantly and as far as he was forced to do so) and that of organised resistance, by cooperating as much as necessary to save his own skin. The opportunism of the character no doubt interested Planchon, but he set against it, in the production, the spirit of resistance of other characters; he also had Jean Bouise play the role as an archetypal man of the people, finally justified by his own survival.

When Planchon began to write his own plays he created characters whose practice of their own beliefs is always problematical. Emile Chausson in La Remise persists in living according to a code made redundant by economic developments and he destroys himself and his family in doing so; even Célestin, the son who escapes to the city, faces guilt and remorse for a decision which he knows was the right one. In L'Infâme, the abbé Duverger has lived for years in opposition to the vows which were meant to guide his life; finally, ironically, he breaks a basic law of humanity in order to preserve the outward dignity of his priesthood; even more ironically, the Church finds a way of reintegrating him into their fold as a sinner. When the Solitaire of Le Chohon noir is able to get a spiritual ascendancy over the villagers, they turn for a moment from catholicism to violent pagan ceremonies; after the death of two young girls, they are left to continue
their harsh existence, grasping at whatever tenderness is available; ideology is irrelevant to their immediate needs. In *Patte blanche* and in *Dans le Vent ...grrr...*, characters are buffeted unconsciously by prevailing ideas and prejudices; in both plays, the characters find some consolation in their personal fantasies. In *Bleus, blanches, rouges*, the characters who profess to live without an ideology, and those who are most radically revolutionary, are finally completely transformed by events; in the end there is little difference in the behaviour of the survivors from either camp, and the few who oppose the new empire are powerless to fight it.

Like Adamov, and like Gatti, Planchon attempts in his own plays to portray history through its effects on believable human beings. Because he, and the public for which he is working, are both provincial, the plays in their setting and in their themes are basically provincial. In a highly centralized nation such as France, where great historical events are usually initiated in Paris, the provincial view of history is always marginal and oblique. The citizen from the provinces, and especially from the rural areas, is usually concerned eventually by historical forces, but often in spite of himself and without understanding how. The effects of social or economic upheavals, new attitudes and progressive ideas, come from the Parisian centre to a province unready and often unable to assimilate them into its own mentality. The characters in Planchon's plays are constant outsiders.

With few exceptions, Planchon's plays are all set in the provinces. *Les Trois Mousquetaires* and *O M'man Chicago* are not provincial, but they are both adaptations of other stories. Of his own plays, only *Dans le Vent ...grrr...* is set in Paris. Because he was using the forms of boulevard theatre, Planchon had to make his characters wealthy Parisians; as the play shows the emptiness of fashionable middle class life in Paris, however, the viewpoint is again that of an outsider. In the peasant plays, the characters are not only provincial but poor; their poverty is grinding and constant, and apparently
inescapable. Even the characters of Bleus, blancs, rouges are driven to despair and prostitution by temporary destitution.

As much as they are prisoners of their economic situation, many of Planchon's characters are prisoners of their language. In the peasant plays, Planchon created a beautifully stark poetry to convey the old-fashioned grandeur of his characters' speech, but at the same time he made the limitations of their speech apparent. The concepts of progress or of revolution are unfamiliar and suspect to Emile Chausson, as they are to the peasants of Le Cochon noir, because they are a threat to the established order. In Emile Chausson's mind, the words "Tout change" mean only that the land is not being cared for as it was in the past. The peasants of L'Infâme, educated in the language of simple faith from their earliest infancy, easily accept the Church's récupération of Duverger's crime through religious ceremonies of penitence. In Le Cochon noir, the Solitaire's skill as a speaker gives him power over a village credulous because of its ignorance, an ignorance expressed in a powerful but denuded speech.

In Patte blanche, the adults and the children are separated by their different use of the same language; the children use their parents' fashionable expressions to the letter in their own fantasies, and thus debunk them. The characters of Dans le Vent...grrr... are trapped, by their wish to speak stylishly, into thinking in fashionable clichés; even their love relationships are made superficial because they cannot express them simply or even seriously. In Bleus, blancs, rouges, the characters' language is more politicised than in the previous plays; they mix class-consciousness with personal vanity and political speeches with protestations of love or desire.

In Planchon's four "spectacular" productions, language exploded into a display of burlesque humour and convoluted wit. In Les Trois Mousquetaires, Planchon used and sometimes deliberately misused the patriotic and romantic speech of Dumas, juxtaposing to it the patois of workers, and the ruffians' slang of the musketeers themselves. In O'M'man Chicago, Planchon
presented the world of the mass media, a world in which the image counts more than the content of words or of programmes; he made the surrounding world one in which leading speakers and writers have become completely debilitated by their inability to cope with the changes in their world. In all four plays, Planchon used to some extent the burlesque technique of having people's words materialise on stage, in a momentary union between stage language and text; he even made fun of his own propensity for doing this, in *La Mise en pièces du CID*. The technique is a way of pushing language, idioms, and especially fashionable slogans, to their absurd extremes. In these plays as in the others, the language which characters use is a reflection of their social situation, but in the musical comedies it is a comic reflection which magnifies the absurd or dishonest uses which people make of words.

These recurring themes in Planchon's plays, the relation of ideology to behaviour, the relation of the individual to his or her social and economic context at a specific point in history, the discrepancy between traditional interpretations of history and the way in which it is lived by ordinary people, all these concerns reveal a belief in the dialectical interaction of the human being and his society. Planchon's work is deeply rooted in a specific time (the second half of the twentieth century) and a specific place (provincial France) because he takes his inspiration from the milieu which he and his Villeurbanne public know. In this way, he is distinct from the absurdist movement of the 1950's. With Adamov, with Gatti, and, to a certain extent, with Arrabal, he belongs to the other avant-garde, that which is descended from Brecht. Gatti once made the distinction between his own work and that of Beckett and Ionesco; his words apply well to the work of Planchon as a writer and as a director:

*Le théâtre de l'absurde est un théâtre d'aujourd'hui et, à ce titre, indiscutablement intéressant. C'est même, je crois, une exploration très poussée vers certains problèmes de certains hommes. Mais la démarche que nous faisons est diamétralement*
opposée. Le théâtre de l'absurde se situe sur le plan de l'absence de l'homme sur la terre, tandis que dans le théâtre que nous essayons de faire, c'est plutôt la présence de l'homme dans la création et comment cet homme devient à son tour créateur, forgeant lui-même son destin, sa propre face d'homme.

In 1974, the Arts Council in Britain gave a subsidy to three arts associations, in Birmingham, Sheffield, and Bristol, so that through increased publicity (at factory gates and on housing estates), they could "... attract the cloth cap worker..." to the theatre. A newspaper report of the project concluded innocently with the comment of a Mr. Miller, the public relations officer at Bristol: "If at the end of the experiment, the people still don't go to artistic events, it will not be because they don't know about them ... It will be because they don't bloody want to." Although Planchon too has concluded that working class people don't want to come to the theatre, he remains sympathetic to the public which he has failed to attract in very great numbers, and he blames their lack of interest on the educational and social divisions of society. He has, no doubt, retained his belief in people's besoin latent for theatre and culture. The TNP has carried out its intention of touching as wide a public geographically as possible, by touring the provinces regularly.

As we have seen, even at the beginning of his career, Planchon wished to create a theatre with a permanent base in Lyons. When he and his troupe established themselves at the Théâtre de la Comédie, they believed that, in order to create a valid and lasting relationship with a new public, it was necessary to present plays in a stable theatre and on a


regular basis. Planchon's ambition then was to create a permanent provincial theatre, and he eventually succeeded in doing so. The government's plan at that time, on the other hand, was firstly to create a dozen centres dramatiques which would tour the regions, and then to found a few permanent theatres in the main cities, while sending other troupes out to small towns and villages. Denis Gontard compares Planchon's idea with that of his predecessors in the provinces; "Dans le travail de Dasté, de Sarrazin, de Clavé ou de Gignoux, ... On est ... en présence d'une première forme de décentralisation que l'on pourrait appeler horizontale. Avec la tentative de Roger Planchon à Lyon, il s'agirait plutôt de décentralisation verticale." ¹

It would seem that Planchon's notion of starting with "vertical" decentralisation was the more effective method of attracting a new, provincial audience, whether or not that audience included a representative number of working class people. Dasté, Sarrazin, Clavé, and Gignoux, as we have seen, quickly found that continual touring was an unsatisfactory way for a young company of reaching a new public, or even of creating good theatre. Since 1972, the TNP under Planchon and Chéreau has toured the cities of France regularly, but its appearances in each city are prepared ahead of time by the resident theatre companies. In each of the cities which the TNP visits, the "in depth" work of building up links with various clubs and associations and maintaining close contacts with the public has already been done. Planchon considers these connections with the public as essential: "... dans notre action en province, nous devons essayer de faire en sorte que les syndicats ouvriers et enseignants, que les mouvements de jeunesse soient notre soutien. Ce soutien est important parce que le théâtre court toujours le risque très grave de devenir marginal." ² The "horizontal" decentralisation in which the TNP is now engaged

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follows from and complements the "vertical" decentralisation undertaken by individual troupes in various cities. The role which the TNP has taken since 1972 under the direction of Planchon is thus a vindication of the aim with which he and his company began their work in the tiny Théâtre de la Comédie in 1952.
This list is supplied for the convenience of the reader. For specific dates of productions and performances in France and abroad up to 1969, see Émile Copfermann, Roger Planchon (Lausanne: Editions l'Age d'Homme, 1969), pp. 283-287.

**Théâtre de la Comédie (Lyons)**

1953 - 
Rocambole (burlesque, after Ponson du Terrail),
La Balade du Grand Macabre (Ghelderode), Le Sens de la Marche and Le Professeur Taranne (Adamov),
Burlesque-Digest, Liliom (Ferenc Molnar),
Cartouche (burlesque).

1954 - 
La Cruche cassée (Kleist), Édouard II (Marlowe),
La Bonne Ame de Sé-Tchouan (Brecht), Casque d'or (after Jean-Marie Serrure).

1955 - 
La Belle Rombière (Jean Clervers and G. Hannoteau),
L'Alcaide de Zalaméa (after Calderon), Comment s'en débarrasser (Ionesco), L'Ombre de la ravine (Synge),
La Famille tuyau de poêle (Prévert) Victor ou les enfants au pouvoir (Vitrac).

1956 - 
Grand-peur et misères du troisième Reich (Brecht),
La Leçon and Victimes du devoir (Ionesco), Aujourd'hui ou les Coréens (Michel Vinaver).

1957 - 
Paolo Paoli (Adamov).

**Théâtre de la Cité de Villeurbanne**

1957 - 
Henri IV.

1958 - 
Les Trois Mousquetaires, George Dandin, Henri IV, 
La Bonne Ame de Sé Tchouan.
1959 - La Seconde Surprise de l'amour, On ne saurait penser à tout, Henri IV, Les Trois Mousquetaires.


1962 - Schweyk, Gatti's La Vie imaginaire de l'éboueur Auguste Geai (directed by Jacques Rosner), La Remise, Tartuffe.

1963 - La Villégiature, after Goldoni (directed by Rosner), O'Man Chicago, Georges Dandin, Les Trois Mousquetaires, George Dandin, Tartuffe, La Remise.

1964 - Troïlus et Cressida, Tartuffe, La Remise, Auguste Geai (directed by Rosner) George Dandin, Schweyk.

1965 - Maupassant recital by Gérard Guillaumat, Patte blanche, Marivaux's La Fausse Suivante (directed by Yves Kerboul), Henri IV.


1968 - Dans le Vent...grrr..., Les Trois Mousquetaires, Tartuffe, George Dandin, Vitrac's Le Coup de Trafalgar (directed by Rosner).

1970 - La Mise en pièces du CID, George Dandin, Bérénice.

1971 - May-June - tour of Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Austria, and Rumania with new Bleus, blancs, rouges, Tartuffe, and Maupassant recital by Guillaumet.

Sept. - Patrice Chéreau becomes co-director of the Théâtre de la Cité de Villeurbanne.


1972 - March - The government announces that the Théâtre de la Cité de Villeurbanne is to become the new Théâtre National Populaire, with Planchon, Chéreau, and Robert Gilbert as its co-directors.

Théâtre National Populaire (Villeurbanne) en préfiguration


1973 - January - Chéreau directs Tankred Dorst's Toller at Villeurbanne.

March - Planchon puts on Michel Vinaver's Par-dessus Bord at Villeurbanne.

June-July - Planchon tours Chili, Uruguay, and Brazil with a new production of Tartuffe.

Théâtre National Populaire


December - Planchon puts on Le Cochon noir in Caen.

1974 - January-March - The TNP tours French cities with Tartuffe, Le Cochon noir (both directed by Planchon) and La Dispute directed by Chéreau.
May–June — Chéreau's production of *Toller* and Planchon's production of *Le Cochon noir* are put on simultaneously in two Parisian theatres, the Odéon and the Porte Saint-Martin.

June–July — Planchon puts on *Par-dessus bord* at the Odéon and *Tartuffe* at the Porte Saint-Martin.
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Bleus, blancs, rouges ou Les Libertins (1967)

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Dans le vent ... grrr... (1963)

Édouard II (after Marlowe, 1961)

L'Infâme (1969)

Henri IV (Shakespeare, 1957)

La Langue au Chat (1972)

O M'Man Chicago (1963)

Patte blanche (1965)

La Remise (1962), (1964)

Richard III (Shakespeare, 1966)

Troilus et Cressida (Shakespeare, 1964)

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1. As well as the sources listed here, I am indebted to Miss Dorothy Knowles who kindly allowed me to use her personal collection of files on Planchon and on the popular theatre movement.
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______. Richard III.
______. Troilus and Cressida.

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Dans le vent ... grrr...
L’Infrâme
Mai 1968 - action culturelle.
0 M'Man Chicago
Patte blanche
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¹ In the autumn of 1972 when I used them, the press cuttings in the archives of the TNP were grouped into dossiers under the general titles given here. The theatre has since then reorganised its archives.
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Objet et ordre des fêtes décadiennes de la République française. Proposés par Marcoz, membre de la représentation nationale. Nivôse, an III.

Opinion de Marc-François Bonguion, Député du Jura, Sur l'organisation des fêtes civiques. Nivôse, l'an III.

Opinion de Jean-Pierre Picqué, Député des Hautes-Pyrénées, sur les Fêtes décadiennes. Nivôse, l'an III.

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