

## The Play Intended: Giraudoux's *L'Apollon*

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As spectators and readers of drama, many of us evolve an active historical consciousness. Confronted by the text of what inevitably seems a very static *Prometheus Bound*, we widen our readings by wondering what the fifth-century Athenian audience would have been thinking and feeling while watching the play. An oblique interchange in *Dr. Faustus* leads us to consider how an Elizabethan house might have responded to it. When Nora loudly slams the door of her once happy home at the end of *A Doll's House*, we try hearing it bang shut through the ears of theatre-goers of a century ago.

In such a way is our understanding of what we are doing in the present assisted by an awareness of how audiences perceived it in the past; in such a way is our construction of significance guided not merely by our current values and frames of reference but also by notions of what others in different times and places might have made of a play. As my examples suggest, we tend to resort to such hypothesizing when we experience some difficulty in making sense of the dramatic text, at moments when our understanding of what is or what would be happening on stage for some reason becomes problematic.

However, if we are able to follow a play without any problems, we may not readily think of activating our historical consciousness. Instead, we may watch or read with the deceptive confidence which emerges from the belief that because what transpires on stage or page seems to make sense to us, we are able to comprehend what it means. Spectators and playreaders alike are very susceptible to such a view because drama offers the appearance of being so immediate and so all-consuming an experience. Plays, despite any trappings of period, always occur now, and thus we may be prone to perceive and interpret them in the present tense. Similarly, no matter where they may be set, plays always unfold and take place in front of us.

Yet if spectators or readers feel too comfortable with a play, they may arrive at the erroneous belief that the work belongs exclusively to what they think of as the here and now. Their interpretations may thus reflect a certain cultural imperialism. This sort of self-appropriation may be especially easy for

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playreaders. As Kirsten Nigro relates, when North American readers approach a Latin American playscript, they "often operate as if the signified were totally transcultural or free-floating" or may "impose [their own] signification system and values on others, regardless of cultural peculiarities." She quotes Juan Villegas on the dangers of readers looking at a playscript outside its social, historical, and theatrical context.<sup>1</sup>

Yet this phenomenon is not limited to playreaders: a similar, though possibly less easily detectable, misapprehension might, for example, be made by a 1990s New York theatregoer who refuses to recognize in the performance of a realistic Broadway drama of the 1950s the product of a very different time and, in many respects, an utterly different place. Productions which try to make the classics seem contemporary—Shakespeare or Sophocles in modern dress and settings—may succeed in obliterating the audience's awareness of the play's original significance. For spectator and reader alike, the misleading accessibility of a play allows one to confine one's understandings to what one already knows, to limit one's interpretations by (seemingly) goading one to consider only the topically and temporally familiar. Such interpretations are bound, ultimately, to be reductive; to do justice to the playscript or the performance, readers and spectators must be able to consider too the *intended* play.

The intended play may be thought of as the playwright's notion of how his or her script, when performed in a theatre, will play in front of the audience whom he or she has in mind. We may, then, divide the intended play into two separate but intimately related components: *the intended production* and *the intended audience*. Both take on obvious importance when a play remains unproduced for a significant period of time. A number of examples come to mind: Büchner's *Danton's Death*, Kleist's *Prince of Hamburg*, Shaw's *Heartbreak House*; for each we are obliged to speculate about how the audience whom the author had in mind might have reacted to the production that the author envisioned.

Speculations of this kind lead to new interpretations of plays that until now have been deemed meaningful only within the contexts of actual past and present or potential future productions. Our attempts to formulate the responses of an imagined audience, a group of spectators who in reality never saw the play, to an imagined production, one which was never mounted, can move us closer to an understanding of what the play, at least in its playwright's own terms, may have been meant to mean.

A playscript whose significance deepens from just such a reading is Jean Giraudoux's *L'Apollon de Bellac* (translated into English as *The Apollo of Bellac* or *The Apollo de Bellac*), first written and produced under the title *L'Apollon de Marsac*.<sup>2</sup>

Regarded by theatre reviewers and literary critics as minor Giraudoux, this one-act, when considered in light of its intended enactment and intended audience response, presents a subtle but pointed commentary on France during the German Occupation. In fact, as soon as we think of *L'Apollon* as we may imagine Giraudoux himself originally did, performed by Louis Jouvet and Madeleine Ozeray and company before a Parisian audience in the winter of 1942, we gain fresh insight into the meaning of this play.

*L'Apollon* was written sometime after November, 1941, when Giraudoux resigned as Chair of the Vichy Government's Information Council. He completed it by February, 1942: in a lecture he gave at the end of that month in Lausanne, Switzerland (posthumously published in *Visitations*), he quotes rather freely from an early version of the play,<sup>3</sup> a revised draft of which he then mailed from Geneva to his director and longtime collaborator, Louis Jouvet, who was then in Brazil.<sup>4</sup> *L'Apollon* opened in Rio de Janeiro in June, 1942 and formed part of the repertory with which Jouvet's company toured Latin America.

As I shall discuss in detail later in this study, there is much to indicate that Giraudoux wrote the play especially for Jouvet and his company; thus, one may argue that the Rio production in some way realized at least one component of the intended play—that is, the intended production. Yet that other component of the intended play, the intended audience, was clearly absent. Even though *L'Apollon* had been produced with the cast whom Giraudoux had in mind while writing the play, it was performed in French for Latin American audiences who were, for reasons of language, culture, and history, far different from the spectators whom the playwright had had in mind. In fact, the discrepancies between the intended and actual audiences had a clear and concrete impact on the visual appearance of the Rio production; this impact will become all the more evident at the conclusion of this study through a comparison of the stage sets used in the Rio production and the one used in Jouvet's subsequent production of the play in Paris.

When, in February, 1945, Jouvet returned to France from Latin America, Giraudoux had been dead for more than a year. The following December, Jouvet produced *La Folle de Chaillot*, and not until a year and a half later did he mount *L'Apollon* in Paris. By this time, Ozeray and he had parted company.<sup>5</sup> In the role of Agnès, Jouvet now cast a young actress, Dominique Blanchard; for the set, he retained the Brazilian designer he had used for the Rio production, Eduardo Anahory. To complete the evening, Jouvet settled on a playscript by Jean Genet which Jean Cocteau had asked him to read.<sup>6</sup> After requesting specific cuts, Jouvet agreed to use a shortened version of Genet's *Les Bonnes* (*The Maids*) as a curtain-raiser for *L'Apollon*.<sup>7</sup> The plays opened at the theatre at which Jouvet had presented so many of Giraudoux's works, the Athénée, in April, 1947.

In contrast to Genet's masterpiece of role-playing and ritualized violence, *L'Apollon* seems exceedingly tame: Agnès, a girl looking for work, arrives in the waiting room of the International Bureau of Inventors Great and Small. While trying to get past the male Receptionist, she is advised by a nondescript Man from the village of Bellac (or in the original version, Marsac<sup>8</sup>), who suddenly appears, that to get what she wants from the men in power here she must tell each that he is handsome—as handsome as the made-up statue, the Apollo of Bellac. With coaxing and practice, Agnès praises the Receptionist, Vice President, President, and board members. The President brings out his secretary, Mlle Chevredent ("Goat's-tooth"), who insists the President is ugly; he hires Agnès in her place. The President's mistress, Thérèse enters; she maintains the President is *not* a handsome man, argues with the President, Agnès, and the Man from Bellac, then leaves. The President places the diamond engagement ring intended for Thérèse on Agnès's finger.

Still, Agnès feels uncomfortable having complimented these men, who have all believed her. Rather than succeed through flattery, she tells the man, who she pretends *is* Apollo, that she wants a man whom she finds truly handsome. As they converse, she is asked to close her eyes, and then she suddenly begins to believe that the Man from Bellac is in fact Apollo; confronted now with the image of divine beauty, she must admit that she is only human and thus chooses to live on a far more human scale. Yet upon opening her eyes, she declares that the nondescript Man *is* really handsome. He quickly departs, leaving a saddened Agnès to face the dubious success of her new job and wealthy suitor, while the bureaucrats on stage search for Apollo.<sup>9</sup>

Though interesting, the plot of *L'Apollon* pales beside *Les Bonnes*.<sup>10</sup> In fact, recalling Claire and Solange, their real and imagined attempts against Madame and their bizarre end, modern readers may find the double bill of *Les Bonnes* and *L'Apollon* utterly incongruous. Apparently it did not seem so to Jouvett, although his associate, Léo Lapara, who appeared as the Receptionist in both the Rio and Paris premieres of *L'Apollon*, maintains that the director had ample misgivings about this odd coupling and that the audience more than shared this uneasiness.<sup>11</sup>

In any case, in 1947 critics found this a disconcerting evening in the theatre.<sup>12</sup> "Certainly, one understands and approves Jouvett's intentions in wishing to precede the Giraudoux play with a work of a newcomer," complained René Lalou, who went on to ask, "But what did he have in mind in choosing *Les Bonnes* by Jean Genêt [sic]?"<sup>13</sup> Having sat through the Genet piece, some critics found the Giraudoux play rather light-weight. "A dessert by Giraudoux . . . [.] a little insipid, terminates the evening," commented Robert Kanter.<sup>14</sup> "It is simplicity, innocence, candor," wrote Roger Lannes, ". . . transparent as the air."<sup>15</sup> Gabriel Marcel thought its charm "a little too insistent."<sup>16</sup>

Some critics implied that the double bill should have been reversed: Thierry Maulnier, for example, went so far as to call *L'Apollon* "nothing more than a light comedy in one act, a 'curtain-raiser' in which the dramatic substance is rather slender . . ." <sup>17</sup> Francis Ambrière concurred that *L'Apollon* was nothing more than a "perfect curtain-raiser." <sup>18</sup> J.-J. Rinieri, who thought it an "incomparable curtain-raiser," was incredulous that one could "seriously think that it was for this [Giraudoux] entertainment that the production [double bill] has been created." <sup>19</sup> Interestingly, even most of the reviews which preferred Giraudoux's play to Genet's tend in some way to subordinate it—perhaps inevitably—to *Les Bonnes* in their discussions of the two. And while *Les Bonnes* has gone on to become a classic of the modern theatre, *L'Apollon*, in spite of its subsequent successes on stage, both in France and other countries, has remained a decidedly minor piece.

Similarly, critics writing in English, responding largely to their readings of the written text rather than to performances of the play, illustrate a tendency to diminish the importance of the work. Reviewing Giraudoux's career in the first number of *Yale French Studies* to be devoted entirely to drama, Georges May summarily dismisses *L'Apollon* as "mediocre." <sup>20</sup> Far kinder, Donald Inskip calls the play a "witty, light-hearted fantastication." <sup>21</sup> Robert Cohen, who finds some serious matter in it, admits that much of *L'Apollon* is "a frothy jest." <sup>22</sup> Agnes Raymond offers a penetrating biographical approach to the play but refrains from critical judgment. <sup>23</sup> Significantly, a number of important writers on modern French drama, including Joseph Chiari, <sup>24</sup> Wallace Fowlie, <sup>25</sup> Jacques Guicharnaud, <sup>26</sup> Bettina Knapp, <sup>27</sup> and David Bradby, <sup>28</sup> mention *L'Apollon* but say nothing at all about it.

It is perhaps a little too easy to declare, with all the certainty granted by hindsight, that *Les Bonnes* pointed toward the future, what David Bradby calls "The New Theatre," <sup>29</sup> while *L'Apollon*, as Robert Cohen, puts it, "was profoundly of the past." <sup>30</sup> We must remember that in 1947 "the past" amounted to a mere five years, a relatively short time for a work by a major dramatist—who during the previous season had posthumously scored an enormous success with *La Folle de Chaillot*, itself written about the same time as *L'Apollon*—to seem antiquated.

The reason these five years made such a vast difference was because the production as Giraudoux had conceived it was no longer producible and because the audiences for whom *L'Apollon* had been written had ceased to exist. As noted above, by 1947 Ozeray had left Jouvét's troupe and thus could not play the role of Agnès which had been written for her; the Jouvét troupe, so triumphant before the fall of France, had (along with France itself) altered utterly.

More important, though, the audience's reception of the play, even if Ozeray and Jouvét could have performed it as intended, could never measure up to what

Giraudoux had anticipated: the feelings of humiliation and deprivation of 1942, though not completely forgotten, were by 1947 in the process of being revised and to some degree obscured. The passage of time and the inevitable influence of the present on memories of the past had seriously altered the sensibilities of the spectators. The subtle references in the script to the Occupation and the strong but guarded thematic content, which had been carefully and sufficiently understated so as to slip past the censors, seemed to audiences after the Liberation so slight as to be unremarkable.

In 1947 French audiences failed to see themselves as an intrinsic part of the play. Such involvement was, as Giraudoux had meant the play, crucial because on both a thematic and a theatrical level, *L'Apollon*, at least the *intended play*, is about mirrors, about images of oneself presented by others. This reflection motif is obvious even on a basic "storyline" level of this "frothy jest." Throughout the play, we watch as Agnès throws back to the men of the Bureau images of themselves which are positive—images which they not only like but that they choose as their own. We are, moreover, told that the board members, whom Agnès has praised, have all taken out their pocket mirrors, and we even hear them (offstage) cheering when a member proposes a three-way mirror for the men's washroom.<sup>31</sup> Choice is perhaps most evident in the President's rejection of Thérèse in favor of Agnès. As Cohen puts it,

[R]eality is too difficult to define by any one mirror: that being the case, the president may as well accept Agnès's version as Thérèse's. Neither woman is telling "the truth," both are reflecting what they see through the filter of what they want to see. . . . The president has the right to pick the mirror that flatters him the most. . . .<sup>32</sup>

In the end, the Man from Bellac too serves as a mirror for Agnès. Through him she comes to confront an image of herself—of the person she no longer is and the person she has become.

Yet on another level, one more related to the audience and their role in the play, *L'Apollon* sets about cracking the very mirror on which this and all plays rely, the metaphorical mirror of the stage. The decided lack of realism which prompts Inskip's "witty, light-hearted fantastication" and Cohen's "frothy jest" is included in *L'Apollon* not merely for the effect of whimsy. As in many of Giraudoux's works, the playfulness in the drama is included to alert the audience that they are indeed watching a play.

The metatheatrical experience is further extended by the author's insistence on specific actors to play the lead roles. As I have stated earlier, there is ample evidence that Giraudoux wrote *L'Apollon* especially for Jouvet's company. A

lecture on theatre which the playwright delivered in Lausanne, Switzerland in February, 1942, just before he sent the manuscript to Jouvet in Rio, includes a passage of the work in progress which uses Jouvet's name instead of the character's.<sup>33</sup> Pointedly, the letter that accompanied the manuscript to Rio instructs, <<Cher Jouvet, Cher Louis, trouvez-vous même le nom d'Apollon . . .>> ("Dear Jouvet, Dear Louis, find the name 'Apollo' your own. . .")<sup>34</sup>

Giraudoux further notes in his lecture (though not in the published versions of the play) that Agnès "singularly resembles Madeleine Ozeray."<sup>35</sup> This second casting cue harkens back to Giraudoux's earlier *L'Impromptu de Paris* (1937), a one-act in the tradition of Molière's *L'Impromptu de Versailles*, in which the actors of Jouvet's troupe play characters bearing their own names, and Ozeray is cast as Ozeray playing Agnès in *L'Ecole des Femmes*. As Molière's Agnès (both Inskip<sup>36</sup> and Cohen<sup>37</sup> attest), Ozeray scored one of her greatest successes. Thus, in the intended play of *L'Apollon*, Madeleine Ozeray is every bit as much Agnès as Louis Jouvet is M. de Bellac and/or Apollo.<sup>38</sup>

Having identified at least two of his characters with specific performers, Giraudoux clearly felt that he had to give his play to those for whom he had intended it. He felt the same about *Sodome et Gomorrhe*, a play completed about the same time as *L'Apollon*:<sup>39</sup> written for Edwige Feuillere, who had remained in France (and for whom he also wrote at about this time the screenplay of *La Duchesse de Langeais*), *Sodome et Gomorrhe* was staged in Paris in 1943, the last new play by Giraudoux to be performed in France during the playwright's lifetime. Having learned his craft as dramatist from his director, Jouvet, with whom his relationship had always been highly collaborative, Giraudoux (unlike Claudel, who for years had refused to allow productions for many of his plays) had always felt an intense connection between his scripts and their realizations—or, to put this more in the terminology with which I began this study, Giraudoux wrote his dramatic works with a strong sense of the intended play. Thus, the dramatist believed it vital to the play which he had intended that *L'Apollon* be produced with Jouvet and Ozeray. As with *L'Impromptu de Paris*, this one-act was designed to exploit the self-conscious interplay between the actors/characters and the audience.

This metatheatrical experience, which Giraudoux seems to have considered so crucial, is palpable even in the published versions of the playscript, both Marsac and Bellac, in which M. de Marsac and M. de Bellac have, respectively, replaced Jouvet's name. In its published versions, *L'Apollon* is a play that comments self-reflectively on itself and on theatre in general. Raymond implies as much about all of Giraudoux's wartime dramaturgy when she observes,

After the defeat of 1940, [Giraudoux] saw the theatre as a radiant confessional where [and here she quotes from the Lausanne lecture] "the crowd comes . . . to listen to its own confessions of cowardice and sacrifice, hate and passion."<sup>40</sup>

The ambiguity of the stage, on which confession masquerades as fictive dialogue, allows the crowd to listen; at the same time, the sanctioned pretense of drama permits the crowd (if they so wish) to dismiss the play as "just a play."

Giraudoux reminds the audience of this paradox when, toward the conclusion of *L'Apollon*, the Man from Bellac/Jouvet (or Apollo/Jouvet) tells Agnès/Ozeray, "Let's pretend that what happens in a traditional play happens to us . . ." (943). By gesturing toward the expected happy ending (which the audience will be denied), the playwright calls attention to the conventions through which audience members are usually able to separate themselves from stage plays. Thus Giraudoux warns the audience that the words they have heard and the images they have glimpsed, in spite of the seeming levity of the dramatic action, must not be discarded.

In order to understand *L'Apollon*, then, it becomes crucial to consider the audience for whom Giraudoux wrote the play—the audience of German-occupied Paris. If we shift away from the actual productions (the Latin American of 1942-45 and the Parisian of 1947) and those who attended them and imagine a house of French people in the spring of 1942 responding to a Jouvet-Ozeray production of the play, our understanding of *L'Apollon* begins to change, to expand. From this perspective, the play begins to seem more substantial, more relevant to the dire circumstances that existed when the play was composed. Indeed, the significance of *L'Apollon*, even as I have so far discussed it, begins to deepen through the responses of its intended audience of Parisian theatregoers of the 1941-42 season.

These were people who had lived under Nazi rule for a year and a half. As David Pryce-Jones describes them, they were familiar by now with rationing and shortages: coal, cloth, leather goods, food—most of all food. They had no oil for heating, and as gas reserves dwindled, they resorted to kerosene, also in short supply, for cooking. Anti-Semitism was on the rise: Jews, this audience knew, had to register with the authorities. By the end of May, 1942, these registrants would be made to appear visually different from their fellow French citizens by being required to wear yellow stars on their clothing.<sup>41</sup>

Compelling Jews to wear yellow stars was only one of a variety of ways to exclude them from French society. Summarizing the period from the summer of 1941 to the late spring of 1942, Jeremy Josephs begins with the August 31, 1941 discriminatory measures denying Jews radios, telephones, and bicycles and goes



on to enumerate the many public places that were shortly thereafter closed to Jews, including parks, museums, cafés, cinemas, concert and music halls, and, of course, the theatre.<sup>42</sup> By February 7, 1942 Jews would have had a difficult enough time getting to and leaving the theatre because of the curfew that restricted them to their homes between eight at night and six in the morning.<sup>43</sup> What Patrick Marsh calls "[t]he most infamous policy that the Germans imposed on the French theatre by means of the COES" [the Comité d'Organisation des Entreprises de Spectacle, which effectively controlled the theatre in occupied Paris] was the June 6, 1942, anti-Jewish legislation banning Jews from working in the theatre. Thus, by the end of the 1941-42 season, Jews could not be part of either audience or performance.

The city of light was darkened, figuratively and literally. The 34 playhouses opened by 7:30 so that customers might dash for the last métro. The previous season, the first following the French defeat, saw a few notable revivals, including Corneille's *Le Cid* and Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan*. Some of the new plays offered were Jean Giono's *Le Bout de la Route*, Anouilh's *Léocadia*, Stéve Passeur's *Le Marché Noir*, and Jean Cocteau's *La Machine à écrire*.<sup>45</sup> Also came Michel Duran's *Boléro*, Germaine Lefancq's *Vingt-cinq ans de Bonheur*, and *L'Amant de Bornéo* by José Germanin and Roger Ferdinand, to all of which Hervé Le Boterf applies a phrase coined by collaborationist critic Robert Brasillach, "comédie sans tickets" or "no-coupon comedy," describing the sort of play which failed to depict such everyday aspects of the Occupation as the inevitable books of ration coupons.<sup>46</sup> In fact, during the theatre season of 1940-41, in spite of censorship and limited funds, some theatres reported their highest receipts since the early 1930s.<sup>47</sup>

The next season, 1941-42, when French audiences might have seen *L'Apollon*, brought Vermorel's *Jeanne avec nous*, regarded by many as the one play staged in Paris during the Occupation to raise a clear cry for resistance.<sup>48</sup> Also among the offerings were Anouilh's *Eurydice*, Puget's *L'Echec à Don Juan*, Sacha Guitry's *N'Ecoutez Pas, Mesdames*, and Marcel Archad's *Mademoiselle de Paname*. At the Comédie Française, notes Forkey, there was "a notable *Hamlet* with Jean-Luis Barrault, and the Odéon produced *Don Carlos* by Schiller . . . [,] one of the rare presentations of German drama."<sup>49</sup> Yet the more famous dramatic works written during the Occupation, plays by Sartre, Anouilh, Montherlant, Camus, and by Giraudoux himself, were yet to come.

What would this audience have made of *L'Apollon*? Certainly they would have seized upon a number of references which other audiences would have missed, most notably perhaps this insult which the President flings at Thérèse: "Women were not torn from men's ribs so that they could buy stockings without coupons . . ."<sup>50</sup> This remark, which would sound obscure to a Latin American

house in 1942 and curiously dated to Parisians in 1947, would inform Giraudoux's intended audience that his was no "comédie sans tickets." Certainly all women and most men in occupied Paris would have laughed at the very idea that hosiery could be purchased without ration coupons. In spite of the play's fantastical setting, then, Giraudoux's intended audience would have understood immediately that its author was indeed commenting on the present.

They would have noted some irony, too, in the Man from Bellac's invention, the "légume unique," which he claims can serve as meat and bread, wine and chocolate to feed the world (920); they would have construed in it a reference both to the current Parisian obsession with food, which, as Pryce-Jones tells us, the well-to-do preferred not to discuss,<sup>51</sup> and a satirical comment on the frequent (and highly unsatisfactory) use of food substitutes, like the "loathsome ersatz coffee called *café national*" which Collins and Lapierre recall was "made from acorns and chick-peas."<sup>52</sup> Similarly, the statuette of the Dying Gaul, which Thérèse keeps on her mantle and which the President says he will have melted down (940), would have reminded this audience of how many of the bronzes adorning Parisian parks and squares had been transported to the Reich to be turned into shell casings.<sup>53</sup> Even the depiction of the Bureau in which *L'Apollon* is set, bland as it appears to us, might have conveyed to these spectators some parody, even a send-up, of the bureaucratic hierarchy built by the German occupiers and the Vichy regime.

All of these small but pointed references were calculated to seem innocuous enough to slip past the German and Vichy censors. Nonetheless, the references would have been heard by a Parisian audience in 1942 as scattered yet persistent signals indicating that this play was on some level seriously addressing the world in which they, the spectators, found themselves. The metatheatrical dimension, which I note earlier, would have both verified and amplified the audience's suspicions that the play was carefully, perhaps even cautiously, gesturing to them amid what might otherwise have been mistaken for pure whimsy, pointing toward important and very contemporary concerns.

Take for example the whole notion of the mirror, so central to the play's action, both dramatic and theatrical. We may suppose that after France's defeat in the "phoney war" of 1940, many Frenchmen and Frenchwomen had some difficulty confronting themselves in the glass; this certainly may be inferred by what Giraudoux himself reveals in a book begun in 1942 but not published until 1973:

June, 1940

Is this the first time I've ever been defeated?

A friend entered my room.

He was the first defeated Frenchman whom I saw,  
for I hadn't yet taken a look at myself in the mirror.<sup>54</sup>

In keeping with the mirror imagery in *L'Apollon*, Giraudoux suggests that we see ourselves through others. Even before he can gaze at himself in the glass, the playwright manages to catch a glimpse of his country's and his own personal defeat in the face of a friend. The friend becomes the instrument through which he recognizes a reflection of reality and beholds the truth about himself.

As Cohen points out, mirrors are obviously subjective in *L'Apollon*; each must choose which mirror he or she is to believe. Yet for a Parisian audience in 1942, the scene in which the President decides to believe Agnès's view of him and rejects Thérèse's would have carried both strong public and private implications: Thérèse's apartment is stiff and formal and above her hearth stands (as noted above) the bronze of a Dying Gaul, which would have easily been perceived as a symbol of an enslaved and moribund France; Agnès's small flat, however, is simply yet comfortably decorated, and over her mantle hangs (of course) a mirror (940). Thus, the President takes Agnès's positive image of self-confrontation rather than the defeatist one offered by his mistress. For the French in 1942, choosing one's mirror becomes a personal and political act which is nothing short of existential.

On this level, then, we may imagine a Parisian house in 1942 drawing from this play a strong statement about what it truly meant to be French, what it truly meant to view oneself as the subject of the Nazi occupiers. Read from this perspective, *L'Apollon* suddenly appears to be arguing against the self-image of defeat and the breast-beating propagated by Marshall Pétain in his public speeches—speeches which had, Agnes Raymond reminds us, been published in book form in 1941 (under the title *La France nouvelle*) and with which Giraudoux, having served in the Ministry of Information, was very familiar.<sup>55</sup> If, as Raymond contends, "all of Giraudoux's writings during this period [of the Occupation] reflect his reactions to the Marshall's public utterances,"<sup>56</sup> we may surmise that in direct contrast to Pétain's defeatist instructions on self-portraiture, Giraudoux in *L'Apollon* offered the public a very different set of directions: Create your own self-image, and base it upon a positive notion of what it means to be French, the playwright appears to be telling the house, at least the intended house who might have been able to hear this plea.

Is there any evidence that the meaning I have just ascribed to the play was shared by anyone else? I believe so: In fact, if we consider Eduardo Anahory's set designs, we may find that my reading is not totally unfounded. His first set, for the 1942 production, appears highly functional but rather unrevealing.<sup>57</sup> The use of French windows, two at stage left, two at stage right, and two upstage,

each framed by Ionic columns, is neatly balanced, even classically symmetrical. The scene feels light—doors left and right are hung between flats—and, in spite of the way it harkens back to conventional box sets, stylized. This set was, of course, designed to travel throughout Latin America with Jouvét's troupe.

Interestingly, when Jouvét opened the show in Paris, he kept Anahory as scene designer (although he gave *Les Bonnes* to Christian Bérard), but he requested a change in the set. The French windows were retained as a motif, though without the Ionic columns; those windows hung at stage left (without glazed panes and thus more like doors) and at stage right (without door handles and thus more like windows) were increased in number; Anahory's sketch for the 1947 production<sup>58</sup> seems vague about exactly how many, there being seven stage right and six stage left. Yet even as drawn, the increase brings into play the use of perspective, for the two lines of French windows converge at a central point.

The difference between the two designs is remarkable. Implicit in the 1947 sketch is a reference to an architectural site with which virtually everyone in France would have been familiar: the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles. And although this room is not named directly in the script itself, such an association is indeed implied; when Agnès reveals that, in contrast to Thérèse's Dying Gaul, there stands over her mantle a mirror, the President replies,

Thank you, mirrors. Thank you, reflections, Thanks to all that which hereafter throws back my image or my voice. Thank you, reflecting ponds of Versailles! Thank you, echo! (940)

To a French, rather than a Brazilian, audience this allusion would, of course, have offered yet another sign that the play was preoccupied with reflections. Thus, through the 1947 set, Jouvét was attempting to offer a visual interpretation of the play he had read back in 1942 and to put on stage—as well as he could—for a later French audience a rather pointed reminder of what he recalled as the intended Occupation production.

A Parisian house in 1942 would have associated Versailles with a positive image of France and of things French. Images of the golden age, of the pomp and power of the rule of Louis XIV and the classical French theatre would have posed a marked contrast to the then-current image of the Vichy regime, which in an age of shame and of vanquished agonizing, desperately tried to deny its own powerlessness. And of course, as the director must have hoped, the very thought of Versailles should have carried with it the memory of the end of the last war, when a conquered Germany had been forced to sign a treaty named for the great palace.

Giraudoux's intended audience of 1942 would no doubt have seen more in the play than I can begin to relate here. Certainly, however, as the reviews of the 1947 production in Paris suggest, the Parisian audience who attended the curious double bill of *L'Apollon* and *Les Bonnes* saw a lot less. Without the active context of the Occupation, the play might easily be mistaken for froth.

As we move back through time, to the production as Giraudoux envisioned it and to the spectators whom he imagined seeing *L'Apollon*, different meanings begin to emerge. For the 1942 audience whom I have attempted to reconstruct, this play would have carried some message of hope. At its most meaningful, *L'Apollon* does not shrink from dramatizing how self-respect—notably French self-respect—can be achieved only through the active pursuit of French choices. In context, it is not mere froth or jest.

At the same time, the play can hardly be viewed as one which would have been construed as advocating resistance. While Giraudoux's play seems to suggest that German influences were worth discarding, we would do well to recall that the playwright himself had always, often rather uneasily, felt attracted to them. On trial for collaboration, Robert Brasillach (who was later executed) complained that during the Occupation he and Giraudoux had lunched many times at the German Institute and that now he, the critic, was being tried as a traitor while the playwright had virtually become a saint.<sup>59</sup> Jacques Body, in his extensive assessment of Giraudoux's lifelong interest in Germany, explains how French intellectuals were compelled for official documents such as passports into the Vichy-controlled Free Zone, gasoline vouchers, and food coupons to go to the Institute and that in spite of his lunches there (which he eventually curtailed), Giraudoux never participated in any of the official receptions.<sup>60</sup> Nonetheless, Body's evaluation of Giraudoux's relationship with Germany may be summarized with the adjective "ambivalent."

More seriously, perhaps, Michael Marrus and Robert Paxton identify a tangible strand of anti-Semitism that manifested itself even before the Occupation in Giraudoux's 1939 book of "political reflections," *Pleins Pouvoirs*: their analysis of his elitism and prejudice<sup>61</sup> shed light on views which the dramatist to some degree shared with Brasillach and other anti-Jewish collaborators. Body's assertions that Giraudoux was never a proclaimed anti-Semite but had, as a member of his class and culture, inherited his bigotry<sup>62</sup> seem a little feeble in this context.

Nonetheless, it would be as reductive (and fallacious) to think Giraudoux a collaborator as it would be to label him (as Brasillach reminds us many were eager to do after the Liberation) a resistor. The man who lunched at the Institute and expressed such despicable feelings about Jews was the same man who drove

his son across Spain so that he could join de Gaulle in London; this is the very complex person who wrote *La Folle de Chaillot*.

Marsh points to comments written by Giraudoux and printed in the collaborationist weekly *Comoedia* in the summer of 1941—comments which certainly appear consonant with "the cult of the body beautiful which the Nazi propagandists promoted through the pages of the daily press" and, at least out of context, sound rather pro-Aryan and even anti-French.<sup>63</sup> Such "attitudes and opinions which, in the rapidly changing circumstances," Marsh concludes, Giraudoux might not have expressed had he known how his writings would eventually be viewed.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, Marsh is right to mention "the rapidly changing circumstances," for the Occupation was not a static time. Circumstances changed enormously, not only from the beginning (when many believed Germany would quickly and easily win the war) to the end (when most knew the Allies would eventually attain victory), but from week to week, even from day to day.

In order to understand what Giraudoux wrote, we must come to terms with the playwright and his play. We must accept that the playwright, in the context of this period during which his life (though not his career) came to an abrupt halt, remains rather problematic. Given this, we must look not to the bare text of *L'Apollon*—that is, to the playscript out of context—but to the play intended, comprised of the intended production and the intended audience, in order to consider the play's meaning.

### *The College of St. Rose*

## Notes

1. "On Reading and Responding to (Latin American) Playscripts," *Gestos* 2, no. 4 (Nov. 1987): 108-9.

2. Giraudoux originally called the play *L'Apollon de Marsac* and this was the title under which both the world premiere (in Brazil in 1942) and French premiere (in Paris in 1947) were produced. However, sometime before his death in January, 1944, the playwright revised the version sent to Rio, renaming the play *L'Apollon de Bellac* (Bellac being Giraudoux's native village in the Limousin); when the play was first published by Grasset, it was under this revised title.

Although the *Marsac* script was used for the two productions discussed in this study, the text of this version is not readily available. *L'Apollon de Marsac* was published in French in Rio de Janeiro as a theatre supplement to the newspaper *Dom Casmurro*; see Jean Giraudoux, *L'Apollon de Marsac: comedia em um ato* (Rio de Janeiro: Dom Casmurro, 1942, theatre supplement 5). Another edition of the same text was apparently printed two years later in Mexico by Editorial Castillo; for a complete list of Giraudoux's published works through 1982, see Brett Dawson, *Bibliographie de l'oeuvre de Jean Giraudoux: 1899-1982* (Bellac: Association des Amis de Jean Giraudoux, 1982). Because the *Bellac* script has become the standard version and is easily available, I refer to it (unless noted otherwise) as it appears in the now definitive Pléade edition of Giraudoux's plays, edited by

Jacques Body; see Jean Giraudoux, *L'Apollon de Bellac* in *Théâtre Complet*, ed. Jacques Body (Paris: Gallimard, 1983) 917-946.

In order to avoid using two names for what is essentially one work, in this study I will refer to this play as *L'Apollon* and, when necessary, will try to use *Bellac* when a place name is required.

For a thorough and penetrating discussion of the play's production and textual history, see Body's "Notice" and "Note sur la texte" in *Théâtre Complet*, 1702-1717.

3. *Visitations* (Neuchatel: Ides et Calendes, 1947) 27-44.

4. Jean Giraudoux and Louis Jouvet, "Correspondence," *Cahiers de Jean Giraudoux* 9 (Paris: Grasset, 1980): 110.

5. The breakup apparently began long before Jouvet, Ozeray, and the company left for Brazil. Evelyn Ehrlich explains that

Louis Jouvet took his company to Switzerland in January 1941 to make a film of their production of *l'Ecole des Femmes*. The Film's director, Max Ophuls, offended the star by having an affair with his mistress, Madeleine Ozeray. [In a note here, the author cites Ozeray's *A Toujours Monsieur Jouvet* (Paris: Buchet/Castel, 1966) 164-84.] Jouvet left Switzerland with the film uncompleted. He and his company had previously contracted for a South American tour and, once there, found they could not return.

See Evelyn Ehrlich, *Cinema of Paradox: French Filmmaking Under the German Occupation* (New York: Columbia UP, 1985) 9.

6. Léo Lapara, *Dix Ans Avec Jouvet* (Paris: Editions France-Empire, 1975) 192.

7. Odette Aslan offers a detailed discussion of how the play changed and indicates Jouvet's influence on the early rewrites; see Odette Aslan, *Jean Genet* (Paris: Seghurs, 1973) 38-43.

8. As indicated above, here and throughout the plot summary, *Bellac* is used for the sake of readers who have come to know the play through its later form (both in French and translation). In the earlier edition, *Marsac* is used.

9. Readers familiar with the most readily available version in English, in Jean Giraudoux, *The Apollo of Bellac*, adapted by Maurice Valency, *Four Plays* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1958) 73-101, will detect a different ending. Robert Cohen correctly observes that readers of the Valency version will notice that

Valency . . . created a new character, "the Chairman of the Board," who is *really* handsome (in the eyes of the audience and Agnès), one to whom Agnès never needs to say the magic line ["how handsome you are"] in order to captivate. Valency also eliminates Apollo's remark about Agnès getting "a little fatter" after her conquest, and makes Thérèse [in this version the president's wife rather than his fiancée or mistress] return to the president after learning a lesson. Agnès then may wholesomely marry the Chairman.

See Robert Cohen's note in *Giraudoux: Two Faces of Destiny* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1968) 9.

Ronald Duncan's version, adapted from Valency's and offered in an abridged form, is in many ways truer to the original; see Jean Giraudoux, *The Apollo de Bellac*, trans. Ronald Duncan, *The Best One-Act Plays of 1956-1957*, ed. Hugh Miller (London: Harrap, 1957) 9-35.

10. I examine the role of *Les Bonnes* in this peculiar double bill in the final chapter of my book on playreading; see Kenneth Krauss, *Private Readings/Public Texts: Playreaders' Constructs of Theatre Audiences* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1993) 97-128. I would like to thank Carol Rosen, in whose tragicomedy seminar at Columbia University I first began to explore these plays, for her encouragement and insights.

11. Lapara claims Jouvet was pressured by Cocteau and others to produce the play. He adds that the director knew the double bill "would not have a long run." Thus, he says, Jouvet began rehearsing *Dom Juan* two days after the first reading of *Les Bonnes*, and, insists Lapara, "His

presentiments proved exactly right"; see Lapara, 195. Having defended the director, Lapara describes in some detail how the house reacted over the course of the plays' six-month engagement:

The first few performances [the play opened on April 19, 1947] unrolled without incident. The audience contented itself with a show of hostility to Genêt's [sic] work—listened coldly and greeted the end with scarce and meager applause—and acclaiming more than reasonably the Giraudoux play. . . . Starting with the eighth performance, things deteriorated. And then, up until the last, rare were the evenings on which *Les Bonnes* was not the object, during the course of its performance, of jibes, jeers, snickers, or whistles. Finally, mixed in with the booing and whistling in response, there were a few bravos and some applause from Genêt's [sic] champions.

Each day carried with it a miniature version of the battle in *Hernani*. But the palm-branch of audience censure came back during the sixty-fourth performance, on Sunday, September 21, 1947, in the evening: the curtain fell on *Les Bonnes* in a glacial silence which no applause came to break.

It did not rise again.

See Lapara 195-96; the translation here is mine. There is more than a detectable trace of defensiveness here: the audience's adoration for Giraudoux (Jouvet's favorite and author of the play in which Lapara himself was appearing) is contrasted with their loathing for Genêt (of whom, we are told, Jouvet had been wary). Still, this account of the reception of the two plays seems consistent with the contemporary drama reviews.

12. With the exception of Ambrière's, every other review of this double bill which I use here is listed in Richard Coe's excellent bibliography of the drama criticism of the first production of *Les Bonnes* in "Unbalanced Opinions: A Study of Jean Genet and the French Critics Followed by a Checklist of Criticism in French," *Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society*, 14.2 (June 1970) 67-68. Coe himself summarizes the coupling of the plays by remarking that *Les Bonnes* premiered "in a perversely antithetical double-bill with Jean Giraudoux' precious-pastel-coloured *Apollon de Marsac* . . ."; see Coe 36.

13. René Lalou, Review in *Gavroche*, 1 Mai 1947, 4.

14. Robert Kanters, Review in *Verger*, I, no. 3 (Nov 1947), 86.

15. Roger Lannes, Review in *Le Figaro Littéraire*, 26 Avril 1947, 6.

16. Gabriel Marcel, Review in *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, Mai 1947, 10.

17. Thierry Maulnier, Review in *Revue de la Pensée Française*, Août 1947, 42.

18. Francis Ambrière, Review in *L'Opéra*, 30 Avril 1947, 1

19. J.-J. Rinieri, Review in *La NEF*, 30 Mai 1947, 158.

20. Georges May, "Jean Giraudoux, Diplomacy and Dramaturgy," *Yale French Studies* 5 (1950) 93.

21. Donald Inskip, *Jean Giraudoux: The Making of a Dramatist* (New York: Oxford UP, 1958) 148.

22. Cohen 76.

23. Agnes Raymond, *Jean Giraudoux: The Theatre of Victory and Defeat* ([Amherst:] Massachusetts UP, 1966) 93-95. In a 1991 letter, Dr. Raymond summed up her judgment of *L'Apollon* with the word "delightful."

24. Joseph Chiari, *The Contemporary French Theatre: The Flight from Naturalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1959) 114-131.

25. Wallace Fowlie, *Dionysus in Paris: A Guide to Contemporary French Theatre* (London: Gollancz, 1961) 298.

26. Jacques Guichamaud, *Modern French Theatre: From Giraudoux to Genet* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1967; Yale Romanic Studies, 2nd Series, 7; rev. ed.) 312, 324.

27. Bettina L. Knapp, *French Theatre, 1918-1939* (New York: Grove, 1985) 184.

28. David Bradby, *Modern French Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984) 19, 54.

29. Bradby 54ff.



30. Cohen 77.

31. *L'Apollon* 934. As noted earlier, here and throughout, all references to the text of *L'Apollon* are to the 1983 (Pléade) edition. Subsequent references to this text utilize parenthetical citations. All translations are my own.

32. Cohen 80.

33. *Visitations* 27-44.

34. *Cahiers* 110.

35. *Visitations* 27.

36. Inskip 78.

37. Cohen 78.

38. It is tempting to speculate about Giraudoux's personal knowledge and meanings here. In light of the information summarized in the note above on Ozeray, we may wonder whether the playwright was commenting, through Agnès, M. de Bellac, and the President, on Ozeray's drift away from the brilliant but not remarkably handsome Jouvet and her attraction to Ophuls, the internationally-known film director. Ozeray had the affair with Ophuls while she was playing Molière's Agnès. This reading of the play, coupled with the recollection that Ozeray as Giraudoux's Ondine had remarked how very handsome Jouvet (as Hans) appeared, might view *L'Apollon*, at least on one level, as a plea to Ozeray not to break with Jouvet.

39. Giraudoux & Jouvet, *Cahiers* 110.

40. Raymond 95; she quotes *Visitations* 128-29.

41. *Paris in the Third Reich: A History of the German Occupation, 1940-1944* (London: Collins, 1981) 82-131.

42. *Swastika Over Paris: The Fate of the Jews in France* (New York: Arcade, 1989) 39-40.

43. J. Lubetski, *La Condition des Juifs en France Sous l'Occupation Allemande, 1940-44: La Législation Raciale* (Paris: Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, 1945) 186.

44. Patrick Marsh, "The Theatre: Compromise or Collaboration?" in *Collaboration in France: Politics and Culture During the Nazi Occupation, 1940-44*, eds. Gerhard Hirschfeld and Patrick Marsh (New York: Berg, 1989) 147-48.

45. Leo Forkey, "The Theatres of Paris During the Occupation," *The French Review*, 22 (February, 1949) 301-2.

46. Hervé Le Boterf, *La Vie Parisienne sous l'occupation, 1940-1944*, Vol. I (Paris: Editions France-Empire, 1974) 185.

47. Forkey 301.

48. In spite of the pro-resistance messages many say they saw in Vermorel's play, Gabriel Jacobs offers a fascinating (and skeptical) critique of the play's reception; see Gabriel Jacobs, "The Role of Joan of Arc on the Stage of Occupied Paris," in Roderick Kedward and Roger Austin, eds., *Vichy France and the Resistance: Culture and Ideology* (London: Croom Helm, 1985) 106-21.

49. Forkey 303.

50. This line, changed by Giraudoux when he revised the play and retitled it *L'Apollon de Bellac*, remains in the Marsac version and was thus part of the script for both the 1942 and 1947 productions. It is retained in the Ides et Calandes edition of Giraudoux's plays; see Jean Giraudoux, *Le Théâtre Complet de Jean Giraudoux* Vol. 16 (Neuchatel: Ides et Calendes, 1951) 181. The translation is my own.

51. Pryce-Jones 100.

52. Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, *Is Paris Burning?* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1965) 16.

53. Collins & Lapierre 15.

54. *Souvenir de deux existences* (Paris: Grasset, 1973) 75.

55. As Jean-Pierre Azema notes, after the war some of Sartre's admirers "would insist that *Les Mouches* was a play about the Resistance since it attacked one feature of the prevailing ideology [i.e. Vichy's], namely its breast beating"; see Jean-Pierre Azema's note in *From Munich to the Liberation, 1938-1944*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 232. Although I cannot go so far as to call either *Les Mouches* or *L'Apollon* "resistance" plays, both seem to comment on the institutionalization of self deprecation through repentance and remorse.

56. Raymond 100.

57. Included on page 2 in *Dom Casmurro* printing; no photographer is given credit.

58. Eduardo Anahory, Maquette pour *L'Apollon de Bellac*, in Jean Giraudoux, *Théâtre*, Vol. 2 (Paris: Grasset, 1954) 433.

59. Pryce-Jones 42.

60. *Giraudoux et l'Allemagne* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 73 [1976]) 435-36.

61. *Vichy France and the Jews* (New York: Schocken, 1983) 52-53.

62. Body 329.

63. Marsh 157-58.

64. 161.