THE hero of Le Véritable Saint Genest finds ultimate satisfaction in the afterlife—that is, in the life that begins after the death of what is religiously called “this life.” Rotrou’s early heroes find ultimate satisfaction more in this life than in the afterlife. Nevertheless, as in the transcendental play about the converted actor, in the immanentist plays of the early theater we find an A-B-A pattern of dramatic and ethical experience. There is a movement from a kind of sacramental reality into a virtually sacrilegious period and then a return to the first reality.

This broad frame of action is apparent, for example, in Rotrou’s second play, La Bague de l'Oubli, Comédie (1629). Yet, there is an interesting variation here: within the broad framework of the play there are several briefer examples of the same pattern. The framing play deals with Léonor and Léandre: the action of I.1 deals with these lovers in relation to the king, Léonor’s brother, and the play ends with the resolution of the relation between the young lovers and the king. These are the A parts of the A-B-A structure. Within the B part (the story of the king’s relation with Liliane) there are six points at which, through the effect of the ring on various characters, the action moves from reality to illusion to reality to illusion, etc. From I.1 till II.6, when Léandre manages to trick the king into putting on the ring for the first time, we are in reality. The rapid shifting between the two planes then occurs until the king throws the ring to the floor in IV.4; from this point on, except for a brief
part of V.5, when the king has Fabrice put on the ring to verify its powers, we are in reality. However, a different “illusion,” the king’s pretended enchantment, occupies most of the last scene of the play.

In order to understand in what way the king offends, we need the first scene. There, the young lovers record their happiness in the name of chaste desire and their suffering according to générosité. Like the flowers and fountains all about him, Léandre loves Léonor for her “célestes attraits.” But these perfect lovers are imperfectly matched: Léandre is lowborn, and his mistress, as he himself says here, deserves only a king. Chaste desire and générosité have gotten crossed. The virtuous but star-crossed lovers must resort to unusual means if Léandre is to be made worthy of this princess-born. Truly généreux, they refuse regicide. But extremes need not be considered, since Léandre knows an old man “que le ciel n’a fait naître/ Que pour vous faire Reine et pour me rendre maître” (1.1).

Before we meet this old man, we meet the king. We already know him as the enemy of the chaste love of the two young people. He himself is an unchaste lover. Like a later, famous Rotrou character, Ladislas (also the son of a king named Venceslas), this royal lover pursues his beloved illicitly. She who holds my heart, he tells his confident, will give me “Une heure de plaisir après ces maux soufferts,/ Eteindra tous mes feux et rompra tous mes fers:/ Voyons ce beau sujet de mes douces furies” (1.2). He hypocritically uses more pious formulas to describe his court to Liliane when she appears in the very next moment. However, Liliane reminds him that “... ces faveurs sont des crimes/ Que votre affection peut rendre légitimes”.

Here is a major tenet of chaste desire to be heard in Rotrou’s entire theater of immanence: the physical as such is not to be condemned. It is to be fully licensed so long as there is, first of all, true love, that is, spiritual love. The law of first love is nicely illustrated in Léonor’s fidelity to Léandre and her refusal to accept the political marriage with someone else that her brother has arranged. The corollary of loving spiritually first is illustrated in Liliane’s refusal here to grant the king her favors.
Alfonce subordinates all to the pursuit of these favors. His politics serve his carnal desires: he arrests Liliane’s father and Comte Tancrède (whom her father would have her wed) for treason. He will also arrest her, he tells her, so that he can keep her in the castle. By contrast, Liliane’s father and the count emphasize the king’s disgraceful character. The father is almost priggish in his moral purity, suspecting his own daughter of being “facile” as he broods “... que l’honnêteté/ S’accorde rarement avec la beauté” (I.4). The duke’s misgivings remind us that though his daughter is more honest than he believes, her angelic beauty has paradoxically become the cause of a kind of sinful compulsion.

The sin must be absolved. The magician Alcandre provides this in the form of a ring with a magical inscription beneath its stone. Alcandre is also the name of the magician in Corneille’s L’Illusion comique, a character as much playwright as magician. Rotrou’s Alcandre is more like a priest than a magician: as Léandre brings out in I.1, he exists expressly in Heaven’s name for the purpose of making Léonor a queen and Léandre a “master.” When he appears in I.5, he confirms this prediction. Léandre promises him “un avantage” equal to his own; but with a kind of priestly purity, the magician replies that “pour tout prix de ma peine, aimez-moi seulement”.

The religious construction of the motif becomes all the more striking in the resemblance between the occasion on which the ring is first put into use and certain religious practices. The king has carried through the first steps of his plan of seduction, the arrest of Liliane’s father and her fiancé. Having promised his valet, Fabrice, two thousand ducats as a reward for his help, he orders that Liliane be brought to the palace. While he waits, he orders water to be brought so that he may wash. Léandre sees his opportunity: when the king slips off his ring of state to wash his hands, Léandre substitutes the duplicate ring. During this part of the action, the alexandrine verse shifts to an incantatory series of three quatrains in eight-foot lines. The setting, the tone, the act of washing, are ceremonial.

Is it more magical than religious in spirit? Bronislaw Mali-
nowski distinguishes between magic and religion on this very question of ceremony: “While in the magical act the underlying idea and aim is always clear, straightforward and definite, in the religious ceremony there is no purpose directed toward a subsequent event.” Léandre’s purpose is so “clear, straightforward and definite” that the ritual here seems more magical than religious. Yet, the effect of the ring for Léandre is secondary in view of the effect of the ring on Alfonse. This is in keeping with the “creative” element Malinowski sees characteristic in religious rites as such: “The act establishes not only a social event in the life of the individual but also a spiritual metamorphosis, both associated with the biological event but transcending it in importance and significance.” Malinowski is discussing primitive religion and initiation ceremonies in particular. However, in the king’s washing of his hands and putting-on of the magical ring, there are liturgical overtones of a virtually Christian character. The ablution is an occasion of absolution. Alfonse experiences a baptismal washing-away of old sins, and he receives a eucharistic object creating a spiritual metamorphosis in the recipient.

This effect is immediate. The king staggers under the impact of the change, then falls into a sleep-like state that he attributes to “l’Amour,” which “ici . . . se venge.” Sleep-like, but not sleep itself. The king continues to act, but in a transcended state comparable to the religious state of grace. He begins to act according to the highest spiritual and ethical imperatives. He orders that Alexandre, Liliane’s father, and Tancrède, her fiancé, be released from prison, since they are innocent and dutiful subjects, not guilty of the ambition of which they have been accused. He condemns ambition and pride, “ce doux poison” that corrupts so many in this world. This reflection leads him to self-reproaches of a kind prevalent in French drama since the late sixteenth century; like the hero of Rotrou’s first play in his hallucinated state, the king paradoxically attains a perception of the world extreme in its Neoplatonist demotion of the material and contingent. Such perception redounds to the advantage of the prisoners, of course; but it can only frustrate the hopes of
those who are given to the material alone—like Fabrice, to whom the king refuses to pay two thousand ducats promised. Money is too much a thing of the world for this spiritually regenerated king.

So too is lust, as it proves. Liliane’s suivante, Mélite, need not warn her mistress of the wicked intentions of the lustful king. The warnings are uttered in bawdy terms. “Vous seriez le premier qu’il tâcherait d’abattre,” she warns Liliane, continuing:

\[
\ldots \text{je crains bien pour vous qu’enfin il ne dérobe} \\
\quad \text{Ce qui ne ferait pas étrécir votre robe;} \\
\quad \text{Que ce jeune Monarque à ces larcins instruit} \\
\quad \text{Ne vous ôte une fleur pour vous donner un fruit.}
\]

Such “indiscreet” talk, as Liliane puts it, only dramatizes by contrast the spirituality of the king’s new vision. When the cautious Liliane asks him about his real intentions in having imprisoned her, Alfonce can only wonder if she takes him for an “insensé.” He urges her to address such “vains discours” to “un esprit blessé”; his own soul is too “saine” to be troubled by the suspicious probings of this “stranger.” Liliane is a stranger to this changed king. He could never have loved her as she claims, since he has never seen her: “Quelle amour vos beautés aurait-elle fait naître/ En moi qui ne vous puis qu’à peine reconnaître?” (III.2). Through the divinely formed ring he wears, the king has been elevated to the truths of chaste desire. He has never really seen Liliane before because he has never really seen her spiritual beauty through her physical charms. He has only to remove the ring to revert to his former self, to the biblical vieil homme of pure carnality.

This actually happens when he gives the ring to Liliane as a “gage” to show the guards in releasing her father and Comte Tancrède. His old self shows clearly when he violently withdraws his amnesty to the prisoners and disdainfully takes the ring away from Liliane in the very breath with which he beseeches her to satisfy his desire:
The man she looks on is not a true lover according to chaste desire. Only after these verses and, as the stage directions indicate, "avec des contenances toutes changées" and with the ring back on his finger, is the king restored to what can be considered a state of grace.

In the words of the title of the play, this is a state of forgetting. One forgets "l'humaine nature," as Léandre puts it in IV.1; one rejoices in the susceptibility the "forgetful" king now shows to the entreaties of his sister and Léandre himself. Léandre thus reminds us that there are dangers as well as hopes in the state of utter innocence and pure virtue. In a world where others retain their "humaine nature," the utterly virtuous are easily victimized. Kings, in particular, are victimized by evil counselors. Already in this play we have in a somewhat minor emphasis a concept that is central in later plays of Rotrou: since a king, by definition, can do no wrong, his wrongs must be attributed to evil counselors. This is a corollary, obviously, to the notion of the king's two states of being in their relation to one another. When he is possessed of a carnal desire, the king is obviously not himself. In terms the historian Ernst Kantorovicz has studied so perceptively, the king is of two bodies, the vicious one being pure matter and the "true" one, the doer of virtuous deeds, a body informed with divine spirit. And so here, transformed by the ring, the king heeds the advice of his sister and her lover, having no reason to doubt their integrity. He would, in fact, derogate from générosité were he to entertain doubts about the good intentions of a sister who is a princess. Specifically here, the lovers urge the king to name Léandre the first among his ministers. They also urge him to execute Alexandre and Tancredé. However, in the state of innocence the king also continues to stress the utterly spiritual. Paradoxically, this stress leads to his final return to reality. Heeding Fabrice's ironical advice that gold is the root of all evil, the king invokes the


heavens ("O Ciell que ce discours met mon esprit en peine," [IV.4]) and casts away the gold chain and the diamond ring he wears. He had earlier fallen into a sinful emphasis on the material in his pursuit of Liliane’s body, all the while hypocritically using the sacrosanct formulas of chaste desire. He now moves into extreme spirituality, casting away a material object of unknown spiritual power in the very name of that power.

The “grace” of the ring does its work, but then human reason must co-operate to do its part. Thus, the king here expresses true love for Liliane at the end of Act IV, having left his ring off for the last time while it still contained the inscription. This is surprising only if one is looking for a development of character in the causal terms of a psychology based on *vraisemblance*. In the terms of what might be called sacramental psychology, the king’s behavior is consistent. This mysterious co-operation of grace with reason occurs at the end of Act IV. The fifth act provides plenty of time (1) to save the condemned prisoners from being executed; (2) to have a penitent Alfonce then propose to Liliane; and (3) playfully to rehabilitate his sister and her low-born lover. Reassurance is once again found in a fifth act tripartite in its eschatological “anti-climaxes”: a recall from the dead that is like a resurrection; a declaration of love by the king that is like a confirmation; and a confession of guilt by both king and Léandre that is like an act of contrition.

In a certain sense, the king himself is “resurrected” in the fifth act. The old man being dead, the new man of true faith is risen to repent his misdeeds. More literally, however, Liliane’s father is recalled from the death he is about to suffer on the king’s orders. Before the order is rescinded, we hear the ethical implications of Christian theology in the duke’s paradoxical thesis of life gained through death:

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Et plutôt bénissons la faveur de nos Dieux,
Qui m’ôte de la terre et qui m’appelle aux Cieux;
Il est vrai, justes Dieux, que souffrir mon supplice,
C’est pour un juste effet; permettre une injustice,
C’est vouloir par la mort, m’exempter de mourir.
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(V.1)
**Natural death** points to an eternal life and to the justification of earthly existence, where just conduct has led to unjust punishment. The spirituality is not so extreme as the king's in casting away the gold. However, there is the same fusion of Neoplatonist and Christian theses. We also have a strong Providentialist strain as the duke predicts the king's "futur et juste châtiment".

Such punishment is not in the offering for any of the principals. Having discovered that the ring was responsible for his curious changes, the king is returned to true reality. But he is now guided by the insights gained in his "transcended" state. He decides to remove the inscription but to pretend to be still under its effect by wearing the ring. With only Fabrice alerted to his trick, the king invites Léonor to assume the throne because he himself is weary of rule. As Léonor's husband-to-be, Léandre becomes king. Alcandre's prediction comes true: Léonor becomes queen and Léandre, master. Now a "subject," Alfonce asks the new "king" to adjudicate a case he has heard of: the lowborn suitor of a princess enchant's a king through a ruse, displacing the king's servitors and even inducing the enchanted monarch to order the execution of such loyal people. Exclaiming that they have been found out, Léonor panics at the example. Léandre is of cooler head and sterner stuff than his mistress. The new "king" replies in kind. He tells the story of a monarch who deceitfully promises to wed a pure beauty but concocts false charges against her father and his rival to get them out of the way and enjoy the beauty without marrying her.

The "kings" offer each other similar examples of unkingly behavior. They do so in an intercalated structure that resembles a play. *La Bague* thus looks forward to *Le Véritable Saint Genest*, but it also looks back to such a structure in the "feinte" and the "jeu" of *L'Hypocondriaque*. Rotrou's love of paradox shows itself especially strong here. We have a double pretense within a pretense within a pretense, a complicated relation best rendered schematically:

I. Outermost Frame of Reference: Rotrou's play, *La Bague*
II. Second Frame of Reference within I: the king's pretense about giving up throne

III. Third Frame of Reference within II: the king’s “case” resembling Léandre’s real behavior; Léandre’s “case” resembling the king’s real behavior.

The cases Alfonce and Léandre present for adjudication are like the real situations of Alfonce and Léandre in every detail. But the key word here is like. Once again, a feint, a play-like structure, is presented as both a reflection and an occasion for reflection.

The king creates a fiction resembling reality: in his fiction he speaks not of one Léandre, one Léonor, and one Alfonce but of “un vassal infidèle . . . la sœur d’un Prince. . . .” Because of the previous scene with Fabrice, we know that he is the author of a fiction within a fiction. Léandre quickly catches on. He momentarily interrupts the king’s fiction with its “lie like the truth,” but only to return to it with his own “lie like the truth.” He then appeals to the king on behalf of his client, the monarch who would seduce a mistress and murder her father:

Sire, vous dépouillant de toute passion,
Qu’auriez-vous estimé de semblable action?
Pour moi, je n’y vois point d’excuses légitimes
Si ce n’est que l’amour est auteur de ces crimes.

(V.8)

Like Genest’s “Ha! Lentule,” his apostrophe (“Sire”) announces that he is no longer acting. He is no longer the “king” Alfonce had made him and whom he pretended to be in giving his own example. When Léandre addresses Alfonce in this way, he once again becomes the subject; the play has ended. Its spectators, including the king who recently was also an actor, now reflect on the meaning of the play. The play is an occasion for action in the plane of true reality.

The king returns to the true reality from which he had fallen as the play begins. The virtual sacrilege of his behavior lies in
his failure to live up to the tenets of chaste desire. The king’s
derogation from this code is rendered implicitly and explicitly
in the dramatic structure of the first two scenes. The king’s sister
behaves one way, the king another. The dramatic evidence is
rendered explicitly in the very first scene in which we meet the
king: usually the repository of higher virtue, he is at this mo­
ment a slave to love in its carnal meaning, whereas his comic
valet, Fabrice, typically the repository of such low desires as
lust, is above such vice. Again, the king has heard his sister say
that in Léandré “c’est la Vertu que j’aime.” He shows himself
aware that his own soul had at one time known such motivation:

Si d'autres sentiments m'avaient l'âme blessée,
De si sages discours confondraient ma pensée;
J'accuserais à tort un vertueux amour,
Dont l'objet... Mais Fabrice est déjà de retour.

(1.6)

In the “development” of the king, Rotrou shows us the re-sacra­
mentalization of the universe of the play. This motif is also ap­
parent in the A parts of the A-B-A pattern of the over-all plot,
especially in the story of Léandré and Léonor. Having begun
with the sincere desire to achieve their ends in Heaven’s name
and with no harm to the king, they fall into a disgraceful decep­
tion of the king. They even lead him to order an execution they
know to be unjustified. The imaginative recourse to the double
pretense at the end of the play is both dramatically and doctri­
nally necessary if the play is to be the “comedy” Rotrou called it.

Now, in spite of its designation as comédie and in spite of
the presence of Fabrice, La Bague de l'oubli is “tragic” in both
its basic données and many of its developments: a sacrilegious
king; false imprisonment for purposes of seduction; unjust ar­
est ordered by a king both when he can and cannot know
better; the misuse of power by a vassal and his royal mistress,
sister of the king; and so on. As so many of Rotrou’s nineteenth­
century critics have noted, in tone and subject matter there are
very few of Rotrou’s comedies that do not veer into the “tragic”
very rapidly. La Bague is a case in point. Nevertheless, the
rubric comédie is thematically just. The play moves toward a “comic” resolution of the tragic dilemmas it poses, and it does so within “this life.” At early moments it may seem that there can be no happy ending to the lives of these or any other human beings; however, a happy solution is realized within this life. This comes out strikingly in the different ending Rotrou provided from his model in La Bague. In the French play, the offending vassal and his mistress are not punished by the denial of life in all its pleasures, including the pleasures of each other. No lonely exile for Léandre and no abstemious “old-maidenhood” for Léonor. Instead, though their king banishes them, it is as a couple whose marriage he blesses. He gives them a kingdom, Saragoce, where Léonor will be a queen and Léandre a master, not only in pretense but in reality, thanks to the Divine Will. This is only as predicted in the heaven-sent Alcandre’s prophecy.

In La Pèlerine amoureuse, Tragi-comédie (1632-33), Rotrou re-emphasizes the spiritual with an even stronger religious accent than in La Bague de l’oubli. Lucidor is a faithless lover who repents his infidelity to Angélique in the very moment that he reflects on a new object, Célie, in the first scene of the play. “Un secret repentir” draws him back to his first love. Still later, when his valet reminds him that the new mistress is quite well-to-do, the repentant hero rejects such materialistic precepts. “Une femme enrichit et la maîtresse baise,” the valet argues, observing further that even for the average wife, “un ami plus parfait est l’objet qui l’enflamme,” and if husbands possess the body, “d’autres possèdent l’âme” (II.2). In Filidan’s sly proddings of his master, we have a half-mocking, half-serious reminder of courtly love. In Rotrou’s Filidan the mocking tone cautions against giving too spiritual an emphasis to the “courtesy” of the friend the wife finds outside of marriage. However, Filidan does look on love and marriage in the “courty” terms summarized by C. S. Lewis as follows: “Conjugal affection cannot be ‘love’ because there is in it an element of duty or necessity: a wife in loving her husband is not exercising her free choice in the reward of merit, and her love therefore cannot
increase his *probitas.* Lucidor also rejects not only the unlicensed carnality ("la maîtresse baise") but also the excessive spirituality Filidan describes in separating the body and soul of a married woman:

Le respect, Filidan, qu'on doit à ce mystère
Doit retirer nos cœurs des autels de Cythère,
Rendre dessus les sens les esprits absolus
Et nourrir la vertu chez les plus dissolus.
C'est là qu'un long martyr accompagne les vices,
Et que la continence établit les délices,
Que le désordre règne en des cœurs criminels,
Et qu'on nourrit chez soi ses bourreaux éternels.
Mille fois le Soleil est pâli des carnages
Que l'infidélité produit en des ménages,
Et ce malheur qui suit un hymen vicieux
N'épargnait pas jadis les fils mêmes des Dieux:
Alcide eût tout vaincu, s'il eût vaincu la flamme
Qui contre ses beaux jours fit attenter sa femme
Et n'eût pas rendu l'amour étouffé du poison,
Si l'amour n'eût premier étouffé sa raison.

(II.2)

Like Andreas, Lucidor stresses the spiritual character of love, but he puts spirituality under the seal of marriage and marriage under the seal of heaven. Célie is pregnant before the fact of marriage, but that pregnancy is legitimized by the doctrine of good intentions. Here as in similar illegitimate unions, physical relations symbolize spiritual relations and are further legitimized by various tenets of chaste desire (loving first spiritually and remaining faithful to one's first love). Good intentions and chaste desire consecrate the marriage of lovers. "Le sacrement" (marriage) ratifies an already valid union: lovers are by definition husband and wife. In this figural view of physical union, as in Catholic doctrine, there is a sacramental basis to the indissolubility of marriage: the union of man and woman symbolizes the union of God and His church, and if one can dissolve marriage, one would thus be showing forth the dissolubility of the relation between the divine and the human."
In Céliante and Lucidor, then, we have clear evidence of the religious and often specifically doctrinal character of *La Pèlerine amoureuse*. It would be surprising if this were not most evident in the heroine. There is, of course, the personifying power of her name in religious terms: she is “Angélique.” But is this power not apparent in the very title of the play? A pilgrim is a voyager on a religious mission. Angélique is greeted and consulted in this light by all those concerned with the “derangement” of Célie. Distraught by his daughter’s seeming madness, Erasme welcomes the arrival of this “Pèlerine, illustre de naissance” whose power to penetrate mysteries is due to her special “charité.” The virtue is theological, we remember. Thus, we are not surprised that this stranger “. . . au secours de Célie, un bon Astre destine” (II.6); that “on vante partout la science divine” of this pilgrim (III.3); that she is addressed in a series of epithets whose form and intonation suggest litanies to an intercessionary figure like the Virgin Mary: “Illustre Pèlerine,/ Es­poir des affligés, céleste Médecine” (III.8) and “Rare et pieuse fille, heureuse Pèlerine,/ Jouis des longs honneurs que le Ciel te destine” (V.4). All those around her regard her as an irresistible image of beatific attraction: “Mais la voilà qui sort,” says Filidan as he sees her for the first time, “Dieux! l’agréable objet!/ Quel esprit peut tenir contre un si beau sujet?” (II.3). Little wonder that all consider and consult her as a distinctly sacred person.

All but herself. But this does not mean that she does not see herself in religious terms. Far from it: she regards herself as a virtually sacrilegious person. “Sommes nous Pèlerins des Enfers ou des Cieux?” Clorimand had asked (III.2) as they arrived in Florence. Angélique answers his question with a blunt description of her mission as hell-bound, not heaven-sent:

Que vous êtes déçu et qu’un prétexte honnête
Vous cache, heureux veillard, une honteuse quête;
Je ne visite point les temples de nos Dieux;
Vers eux notre prière arrive de tous lieux.
Je suis d’aveugles feux dont mon âme est atteinte,
Une profane ardeur prend le nom d’une sainte.

(III.2; italics added)
Later, she repeats this self-accusation: “Sous un prétexte saint, je suis, dans ce voyage,/ Les violents efforts d’une amoureuse rage” (II.3). Yet, as she goes on in this vein in an extraordinary speech of some seventy verses, we sense that she is “more sinned against than sinning.” She is in quest of a lover whom she loved according to all the imperatives of chaste desire. He apparently betrayed her, so she now seeks him only in order “de lui reprocher ce honteux changement” (II.4). Like Clori­mand, we are prepared to forgive her “hypocrisy” and, indeed, readier than he to regard this mission as a “pilgrimage.” Far from being antonymous (“profane”), “amoureuse” is really synonymous with “religious” in her case. Her pretense only re­flects what she is; her “role” only prefigures the “resurrection” from the dead that will occur when Lucidor sees her once again at the end of the play.

This ending does not depend directly on the feigning. True, Célie’s pretense of madness does prevent something from hap­pening: Lucidor gives her up. Yet, the conflict between Célie-Léandre and her father is resolved by fate: Filène’s overhearing of the pregnancy of Célie and Filidan’s eavesdropping on the daughter and the painter. Léandre then identifies himself as a Lucidor, and this identity is confirmed on the evidence of the name and the confession Céliante offers. What’s in a name? Everything, in Rotrou. Names are consubstantial with Being, and with such essentials as truth-saying and proper station. Names have only to be mentioned, signals have only to be given, signs have only to be identified, for the truth to be ratified in the depths of the soul. Céliante says of Léandre—now Lucidor:

C’est lui n’en doutons plus; que le Ciel m’est prospère
Et qu’un secret instinct me fait voir clairement
Ce bien que je retrouve en cet heureux moment.

(V.3)

Contingent events and things have been an occasion of grace and its secret powers.

The play has the air of a theorem, of a kind of Q.E.D. It is
not surprising, therefore, that it should also contain an interesting sequence of artistic self-consciousness, but this time of a literary rather than a dramatic nature. There is no play-like structure here as in previous plays. Rather, in V.5 there is a discussion of poetry between Lucidor and Filidan, in which Filidan shows himself to be a poet. Those seeking autobiographical cues in Rotrou’s plays might find this revealing. Not the master but the servant is the poet, as if Rotrou were projecting his own social situation as “poète à gages,” provider of poetic pleasures for great men of the kind to whom he dedicates his works. As Lancaster and others have noted, the views of poetry and the poem illustrating them in this scene are rather unoriginal, casting Rotrou as a moderate leaning toward reaction in the aesthetic debate provoked by Malherbe and his adepts. Filidan rejects “un mélange obscurs de termes relevés,” and frowns on a pompous dependence on mythological allusions. But if he is “modern” in prizing the “natural,” he is reactionary in asserting that dependence on the “natural” or “spontaneous” also applies to the method of poetic creation. He writes “sans beaucoup rêver,” and he asserts that “Quand nature se tait, la science est muette,/ Le travail de cent ans ne peut faire un poète.” The poem he recites to illustrate his views is addressed to “Diane.” It is a fairly conventional piece in six stanzas of sixains in eight-foot lines, rhymed a-a-b-c-b-c, complimenting Diane in an ecstatic report of the benumbing effect of her “divin aspect” on the poet who worships her.

Undoubtedly, read out of context it seems to a twentieth-century reader “like many polite love poems of the period and, though correctly versified, makes to us neither an emotional nor imaginative appeal.” But the poem does fit nicely with the themes of the play. It begins:

O rencontre agréable!
Mort, horrible fléau des humains,
Qui sur les célestes ouvrages
Porte tes dangereuses mains

(V.9)
Once again, the "convictions" are religious, only this time with strangely Manichean overtones. The spiritual force that oversees the universe is death. The "célestes ouvrages" that death menaces are human beauty and human love. In its benevolent form, the divine is totally immanent, and only its malevolent form, death, seems transcendental. Nor in the face of this evil transcendence does the poet appeal to some greater transcendence. Rather, in the last lines of the poem, he tells death: "Je puis faire, à ta honte, un généreux effort,/ Et par le fer, ou par la flamme,/ Avoir la mort, malgré la mort" (V.9). A spirit of stoical self-reliance, of atheism, informs these verses. This spirit is contradicted by the context in which the poem is read: the resurrection of the creature whose death the poem laments. The scene of literary criticism has, then, more than a critical or historical function in the context of the play.

It does nevertheless shed an interesting "critical" light on Rotrou himself, chiefly through the reactions of Lucidor to the poetic theories and performance of his valet-poet, Filidan. While Filidan is expounding his theories before reciting his poem, the master is somewhat bemused and skeptical about his valet’s pretensions to poetry, teasing him about his claims to prowess in what Lucidor describes as the allied arts of poetry and making love. "Ton esprit, Filidan, se mêle de deux arts/ Où la sagesse est rare et court de grands hasards" (V.5). But once the valet has recited his poem, the master sincerely compliments his valet on his poetry: "Je trouve en cet écrit/ Des sujets, sans mentir, d’admirer ton esprit". He discusses both the virtues of Filidan’s poem and his own fumblings along similar lines in a tone which shows that he has dropped his skepticism. He now requests a poem in honor of the dead mistress from this poet he had been gently mocking. This shift in mood is typical of Rotrou the dramatist. The early plays now succeed, now fail (or succeed only in part) in an effort to achieve what might be called the sacramental equilibrium of the material and the spiritual. After achieving this balance fairly well in L’Hypocondriaque and La Bague, Rotrou gives in, so to speak, to the materialist element in the next three plays.
especially in *La Céline*. In *La Pélerine amoureuse* he restores the equilibrium, depending on religious and virtually Christian spirituality in doing so.\(^1\)

Though I do not intend to analyze them at length, I do think it valuable to consider one motif that emerges from the contrasting moods of Rotrou’s next two plays. In *Amélie, Tragi-comédie* (1633), Lancaster sees Rotrou reworking the elements of *La Pélerine amoureuse*.\(^2\) The reworking is often bawdy. Thus the play stands in contrast to the spirituality of *La Célimène, Comédie* (1633). This spirituality is especially manifest in a motif that is obsessional in Rotrou: transvestitism and homosexual love. In showing members of the same sex falling in love with each other, especially women falling in love with women, Rotrou is, of course, pointing at the existence of this phenomenon in his own day. However, the homosexual love scenes also reflect the strong emphasis that certain plays put on one term of the recurrent conflict between flesh and spirit. A number of spiritualizing traditions—courtly love, Neoplatonism, Christianity—conflate in Rotrou and other early seventeenth-century writers. In these traditions woman is the repository of the Ideal, the symbol of the immaterial and the transcendent. Some see this conception as inevitable in the “battle of the sexes”: women propound ideal conceptions of themselves in self-defense against the brutal physical power of men bent on physical satisfaction. In the light of this heritage, homosexual love reflects the intense sublimation of sexuality; it is a desexualization of love, an intense spiritualization of it.

Now, in its attempt to maintain the equilibrium of the spiritual and material, *La Célimène* has perhaps overstated the spiritual term of Rotrou’s characteristic tension, even as plays like *Les Ménechmes* and *La Céline* overstated the material. In this spiritual emphasis, *La Célimène* anticipates more the plays of Rotrou’s late manner than those standing on either side of it. Nevertheless, Célimène does marry; she will find carnal as well as spiritual satisfactions in that state. We may thus take the play as relatively typical of its author’s early theater and
on this basis differentiate it from certain developments in French literature of the same moment.

Lancaster shrewdly points out that, though La Célimène is once again a Rotrou play without a specific model, its extraordinary plot is familiar to readers of Western European literature. He also suggests, however, that in essential features of both plot and characterization, it resembles the story of Diane in d’Urfé’s novel L’Astrée (Part I, Book VI): the presence of one Filandre, verses of a poetic lover read while he sleeps, proof of sex by baring the breast, transvestism leading to seemingly homosexual love. Lancaster conjectures that Rotrou modified this principal source under the influence of the older tradition of European literature as well as under “that of pastoral plays with their woodland setting, their attempted enlèvements, foiled by faithful lovers, their symmetrically arranged characters.”

As Marsan has also pointed out, the pastoral influence is certainly pronounced, although not so greatly as in the adaptation of La Célimène that Tristan L’Hermite wrote some twenty years later.

Yet, in view of the metaphysic of the pastoral found by Jacques Ehrmann in L’Astrée, Rotrou’s play might be seen rather as a critique of the pastoral. Contradicting a critical tradition that views L’Astrée as a series of platonic dialogues between practically disembodied lovers, Ehrmann shrewdly contends that:

Par contre, l’amour sensuel est loin d’être absent de [L’Astrée]. Au plus pourrait-on dire que L’Astrée représente un effort pour spiritualiser l’amour. Et, comme dans tout effort, on remarque dans ce roman une tension entre deux tendances: l’amour instinctif et le point vers lequel on tend: l’amour spiritualisé. C’est précisément cette tension—plus que son point d’aboutissement—qui fait l’objet du roman. L’amour spiritualisé, qui donnera à la femme la liberté à laquelle elle aspire, n’est pas un acquis, c’est une conquête, avec ses victoires partielles et ses revers.

Ehrmann sees this tension as a conflict between an “érotisme des corps” and an “érotisme des cœurs”. Reflecting on both the
length and the incompleteness of the novel, readers might well agree with Ehrmann that the whole point of the novel is in the conflict of these two eroticisms. The Neoplatonic premises of d'Urfé's metaphysic suggest that the tension is by definition unresolvable in this world. Only in a transcendence can this tension be resolved and, at that, only in favor of the "érotisme des cœurs". Speaking of the male partner's suffering under this tension, Ehrmann notes that the "érotisme des corps" and the fusion that results from it are forbidden him. The lover can rely only on, in the form of prayer, a solution that is always imperfect because words are inevitably tainted with illusion. Thus, Ehrmann concludes:

Dans la pastorale (plus que dans toute autre forme de fiction) l'amour ne se fait pas, il se parle: il trouve ainsi existence autonome, il est au cœur des mots qui séparent l'homme et la femme. Il est un malentendu sur le chemin de la permanence.¹⁰

These propositions cannot apply to the early plays of Rotrou, even those derived from pastoral models. In the illusory or B developments of Rotrou's plays, as in d'Urfé, words are indeed never "complètement débarrassés de leur noyau d'illusion."²⁰ But in Rotrou these verbal illusions are dispelled by two irrecusable guarantees, standing, so to speak, one behind the other. There is, first of all, the guarantee of the other senses, especially the sense of sight. Visual appearances prevail over auditory "appearances"; the seen has ontological and ethical priority over the heard and especially the overheard of rumor or secondhand report. Thanks to divine ordination of all conventions—biological, social, philosophical—the word is made flesh "figurally." Divine ordination of the natural order and its conventions clears up misunderstandings that separate some men and women and join others. Such misunderstandings are temporary by definition. They are due to a temporary lack of awareness, an incomplete sense or a momentary confusion about what is essential. Eventually, the two eroticisms, of corps and of cœur, are re-united.
Le Filandre, Comédie (1633), is typical of all the plays studied thus far: it shows the familiar A-B-A structure. In the A portions, lovers are joined according to chaste desire; in the B portion of the play, lovers are separated and stoically contemplate exile or suicide; certain believers "sin," claiming that the very necessity of loving the beatific vision compels them to their sacrilege; and so on. Yet, the play also marks a shift in emphases in certain elements. It is the first of a long series of plays in which physical desire is an even more serious matter than in La Bague de l'oubli. The "sign," physical beauty, is prized in itself, while its spiritual significance is forgotten in moments of possession. Also, even in repentance, many of the sinners look back on these moments with considerable indulgence. In this series of plays, the theme of sacrilege becomes increasingly important. Confronted with the infidelity of friend, mistress, or lover, men and women are driven to doubt in Heaven's justice and to a purely human reliance on stoical courage. In certain plays here, the familiar reconciliations of the fifth act occur as part of what amounts to a resacramentalized world. Nevertheless, the sufferings of the B portions of these dramas are rendered with an intensity that makes them seem less "illusory" than in previous dramas. This thematic shift is personified in the character who gives his name to Le Filandre. The play is presumed to have been drawn from a number of pastoral models, including, once again, L'Astrée. As with La Célimène, separated lovers are reconciled with the restoration of sacramental verities, violated here by the "philandering" of the eponymous hero. Again, excessive spiritual reactions to offenses against chaste desire are also corrected in the denouement.

The offenses are of two kinds. First, there are the real violations: the lies Filandre and Céphise tell about the other lovers or Céphise's robbery of the locks of hair of another's lover. Secondly, there are "illusory" violations: the unjust accusations the true lovers make to each other as a result of the lies told by Filandre and Céphise, or Nérée's destruction of her lover's lock of hair when she snatch's it from Céphise after the robbery. In this disturbed universe, all sacred relationships are violated.
Céphise and Théane are “sœurs ennemies” just as Filandre and Célidor are “frères ennemis.” So intense is the enmity between the brothers that they are barely constrained from a duel, which would violate “respect de nature” (IV.6). Again, prayers are offered more in malediction than propitiation:

Dieux! vous laissez le jour à cette criminelle?
Et vous n’avez ni mains ni supplices pour elle?
Vous punissez le vice, arbitre des mortels
Et vous souffrez Nérée aux pieds de vos autels?

(II:7; italics added)

Thus Célidor speaks of his mistress, who has given her love to Filandre, or so he has been led to believe.

Yet, the cure for the pains inflicted is not chiefly prayer, whether of a minatory or propitiatory kind. It is, rather, withdrawal either through the stoical precept of mépris or through despairing suicide. Not surprisingly, the men usually seek the latter recourse, the women the former. After his mistress’ first rejection of him, Célidor calls upon death to finish a life that is only odious to his mistress. The women are made of sterner stuff. Having learned from Filandre of Célidor’s “treachery” Nérée condemns herself for having allowed her “lâche raison” to cherish servitude to this flighty spirit. Others might not be able to support this treachery:

Mais j’ai l’esprit plus fort et partout cette rage
Est capable de tout, sinon en mon courage;
Un généreux dessein peut vaincre ces douleurs
Et je suis préparée à de pires malheurs

(II.2)

The appeal to générosité is not specifically linked to social station in this apolitical play, but the accents from Corneille are evident. Théane adopts a similar stance in her first reactions to Thimante’s reported treachery. In lovely stances at the begin-
ning of the third act, she laments the surrender of her “raison” and freedom to this treacherous lover. These *stances* are more than the ornamental verses the form usually proves to be in pastorals and tragicomedy of the period. Their seriousness here shows them to be much more in the spirit of those *stances-méditations* Jacques Morel has perceptively studied in the tragedy of the period.22 We thus have further evidence of the “serious” or “tragic” mood of this comedy whose lack of comedy Lancaster has already noted.23 But leaving the fatalistic tone of this meditation and returning to a “lâche amante” for suffering this way, she urges herself to sterner self-reliance:

Ta raison peut dompter un dessein inutile,
Puisque des maux naissants le remède est facile,
Crains l’abord de Thimante, évite ses appas
Le voilà, l’inconstant; fuis, cours, ne l’attend pas.

(III.1)

And when she meets Nérée, similarly betrayed, she urges: “Fuis, sans délibérer, un ingrat qui t’oublie;/ D’un généreux effort, romps le noed qui vous lie”. She also urges Nérée to rely on time and reason in such matters, for they work “métamorphoses” that show them to be “maîtres de l’amour qui l’est de toutes choses” (III.4). This stoical advice thus reverses certain premises of the sacramental universe concerning time and reason in early plays: that time is rehabilitative, one of the conditions in which the higher reason of divine love works things out to the benefit of all true lovers. But this is no time for such verities; Nérée’s brother has been unfaithful, so it is a time for more stoical behavior.

Neither Théane nor Nérée is capable of persisting in this stoicism. In her encounter with Nérée, Théane is far from the pride of a *généreuse* and much closer to the very despair that drives her lover to attempt suicide. She concludes her stoical advice to Nérée by saying: “Mais j’offre du remède au point du trépas,/ Je donne des avis et je n’en use pas” (III.4). Nérée also
haughtily rejects the faithless Céldor, giving him to Céphise as if he were nothing to her: “Aime ce beau vainqueur, tout coupable qu’il est”—but then she adds immediately, “Dieux! qu’il est malaisé d’oublier ce qui plaît” (III.5) The stoical perspectives of this play are canceled even as the Neoplatonist perspectives of La Célimène are canceled: by the restoration of the eternal verities.

The restorations occur in forms coming extremely close to the sacraments of the church. As the fifth act begins, Filandre and Céphise begin the rehabilitation that really constitutes the whole point of the act. The unraveling of the conspiracy had begun as far back as the end of Act III. There, Théane saw into the preposterous claims of Céphise that she, the least attractive of the three women, had won over both lovers of the other two women. Even the apparent suicide of Thimante at the beginning of the fourth act is related to the rehabilitation of Filandre and Céphise. The seeming death of Thimante is an occasion for these perfidious people to recognize the workings of the Divine. Their defeat leads them to acknowledge that, in Filandre’s words, “... le Ciel, qui sait tout, a fait voir sa puissance”; that, in Céphise’s words, misfortune always follows upon a “dessein vicieux,” because, “Quelque adresse qu’on ait à causer ces ombrages,/ La vérité paraît et force tous nuages” (V.1). Truth will out. The Divinity makes itself manifest, showing Filandre the charms of Céphise and Céphise the charms of Filandre. But sacrilege can be rewarded only after it has repentantly acknowledged itself for what it is and has been forgiven. The occasion for this development is both Thimante’s “death” and his “resurrection.” Confronted by the vengeful Théane, Filandre admits his guilt. Anticipating the great criminals of Rotrou’s theater of transcendence, Filandre shows the justice of Morel’s observation that “les grands Saints et les grands criminels ont, dans ce théâtre, la même trempe.”24 We might say of Filandre that in his confession and contrition (made, in order, to Théane, Néréée, and Thimante) the criminal becomes a saint. The same is true of Céphise, who insists on sharing her newly chosen lover’s guilt. Like Filandre, she de-
scribes herself as guilty of violating sacred objects and sacred relations.

Now, we remember that both she and Filandre had justified their perfidy in claiming they were driven to it by the irresistible beauty of those they loved. As Céphise puts it in suppressing her misgivings about betraying her sister: "... ô frivole pensée!/ Le Ciel me l'a permis, quand un Dieu m'a blessée,/ Aux esprits amoureux ces crimes sont remis" (I.3). Yet, after the fact, both she and Filandre forsake these doctrines of fatal necessity and of ends justifying means. They assume full responsibility for their "crimes." Thus, it may seem that the earlier submission to a fatal necessity was but a rationalization of a wilful love. The evidence of the play is against such an interpretation. Filandre and Céphise may be liars; they are not hypocrites. The sinner is not forbidden to worship, and when his worship leads him into violations of trust, the Divinity provides another "means" in which the sinner can be rejustified:

Le sujet importun de mes malheurs passés,
Et les crimes d'amour, après la repentance,
Ne sont ni reprochés ni punis sans offence.
Je vois cette beauté qui me tient sous ses lois,
Disposée à donner ce pardon de sa voix.

(V.8; italics added)

In sacramental theology, penance is the sacrament granting the remission of sins. As the decrees of the Council of Trent put it:

... Penance has justly been called by holy Fathers a laborious kind of baptism. And this sacrament of Penance is, for those who have fallen after baptism, necessary unto salvation; as baptism itself is for those who have not as yet been regenerated.

[But] the acts of the Penitent himself, to wit, contrition, confession, and satisfaction are as it were the matter of this sacrament. Which acts, inasmuch as they are, by God's institution, required in the penitent for the integrity of the sacrament and
for the full and perfect remission of sins, are for this reason called the parts of penance. But the thing signified indeed and the effect of this sacrament, as far as regards its force and efficacy, is reconciliation with God, which sometimes, in persons who are pious and who receive this sacrament with devotion, is wont to be followed by peace and serenity of conscience with exceeding consolation of spirit.25

There is striking consonance between these Tridentine decrees and the events of the last act of Le Filandre. On learning of Thimante’s death, the conspirators are contrite; they immediately confess their crime to the afflicted survivors; they offer to make satisfaction in an expiatory death at the hands of these survivors; their penance leads to their forgiveness and reconciliation with the community of heaven-made lovers (one of whom has been saved or resurrected through what he himself calls the “pieux office” of his rescuers [V.7]); Filandre devotedly promises to dedicate his remaining days in “éternel hommage” of the Théane who forgives him. But this is a universe in which things are as sacred as the spirit of repentance. Filandre must, therefore, be restored to full community: he, too, will join in an “heureux mariage”—with Céphise.

The freedom that Théane cherished and momentarily regretted losing was a freedom not to do; the freedom that Filandre and Céphise attribute to themselves was a freedom to do wrong. Our modern conception of freedom, the opportunity to do right or wrong, is asserted only retroactively: in the guilt the conspirators assume post facto. Posited in this way, we may wonder if it is really like our modern conception of freedom. When sacrilege is shown in its worst effects (the presumed death of Thimante), it automatically triggers a repentance that is “divinely” instituted and that determines just behavior. Illuminated in his penance as to the unjust nature of his behavior, Filandre can now act only in a just fashion. He even implies that, similarly illuminated earlier, he would have behaved justly. Like the madness of earlier lovers, the crimes and sins of the conspirators in this play are abnormal and unnatural: “horreur de la nature,” Nérée calls Filandre at one point (IV.5). Till he
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is sacramentally illuminated, Filandre is imperfect in his being. In the fullness of being, he "freely" co-operates with the Divine in attesting to the perfidy of his earlier behavior and "freely" repents that behavior. But once again, freedom is only the opportunity for a sane, natural, and normal surrender of the self to the workings of providential order. The events of the fifth act correct not only the illusory stoical precepts of the fooled lovers, Théane and Thimante, Nérée and Céphise; they also correct the imperfect faith of the foolish lovers, Filandre and Céphise.

The play lives up to its designation as a comedy, but, once again in Rotrou, thematically a comedy shows signs of being more of a tragicomedy than a play characterized by farcical humor, ridiculous lower-class types, or satirical thrusts at social conventions. As Lancaster has noted, there is relatively little of this kind of "comedy" in Le Filandre. The "funniest" scene is that in which Célidor and Céphise laugh at each other for being unable to carry through on their threats of suicide (II.7). This scene actually jars with the serious tones and dire developments of a play in which rival brothers almost come to blows and an attempted suicide actually seems to succeed. But a benevolent determinism has provided for the reconciliation of the brothers and the resurrection of the suicide. The comedy is at once human and divine.

Hercule mourant (1634), the first play designated "tragédie" by Rotrou, presents a world in which the palace is "noir" by philandering husbands and the temple desecrated by jealous wives. Yet, these are not new motifs for Rotrou. This first of his tragedies on a classical theme closely resembles the plays surrounding it in the canon, especially La Doristée. Given the uncertainty of dating the plays of this period, it may actually have preceded that play. In her passionate rage against her husband, leading to actual physical attack after she has discovered her husband's plans for divorce, the wife in La Doristée is as "furieuse" as the wife who might have given the name "Déjanire furieuse" to this play. Déjanire's husband is in the line of the
sacrilegious lover-husbands and king-figures Rotrou has depicted since *La Bague de l’oubli*. However, in his blatant lying, Hercule is much closer to more recent “infidèles” than he is to the king of the second play, whose “split” personality was due to a magical effect.\(^{29}\) Again, like recent young people in similar situations, the beleaguered young lovers of *Hercule mourant*, Arcas and Iole, cast doubts on the justice, if not the existence, of Heaven. “O cruelle beauté! trompeuse! image veine!/ Que le Ciel m’a vendue au prix de tant de peine” (I.3), laments Iole when Hercule blames her beauty for driving him to lay waste to her land and murder her father. Beauty has become the occasion of sin.

It has done so not only in the beholder but in the beheld. Iole utters her blasphemous doubts on the goodness of Heaven throughout this play. At the height of her distress in the last act, she even ignores the assurance of her lover that Heaven finally avenges the “innocent malheureux” with its thunderbolts. When Philoctète executes his “pieux devoir” in the name of Hercule, Iole throws herself upon him crying, “O sacrifice impie ô piété barbare!” and goes on in verses of haunting pathos to wonder:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Sommes-nous abordés en un séjour sauvage} \\
\text{Où l’on vive de sang, de crime et de carnage?} \\
\text{Pourquoi, cruel, pourquoi jusqu’au palais noirci} \\
\text{Hercule cherchait-il ce qu’il avait ici?} \\
\text{Quel monstre plus sanglant, quel plus cruel Cerbère} \\
\text{Que ses propres parents avait-il à défaire?} \\
\text{Que voit-on en ces lieux que des objets d’horreur?} \\
\text{Et qu’y respire-t-on que meurtre et fureur?}
\end{align*}
\] (V.3)

Here the parents of the earlier plays have become worse than avaricious opponents of young love; they have become its murderous ravagers who license the indulgence of “sales désirs” in themselves and their offspring. Worse, one of the parents is a god who has become incarnate in a beloved son not to conse-
crate this world in a grace-ful sign of the divine benevolence
but to desecrate it in a disgrace-ful sign of divine hostility.

Iole is not alone in casting doubt on divine order; so, too, do
her enemies. Philoctète’s reluctance in carrying out his master’s
wishes is only the last sign of doubt cast on the religious beliefs
he shares with his master. Ironically enough, his hesitancy is
weaker in its doubts than his master’s and his family’s. Iole tells
us that faith fails because beauty betrays; Déjanire tells us that
it fails because beauty fades: “Le temps, qui forme tout, change
aussi toutes choses;/ Il flétrit les œillets, il efface les roses” (1.2).
Time is no longer the context in which the Divine makes itself
manifest in sacramental signs. Rather, it is an evil context in
which the infuriated wife calls on objects of an antisacramental
character. Déjanire at first reminds us of the stoical heroes of
earlier plays with her appeal to her own courage here (“ . . . et
le cours de cet âge/ Qui m’ôte des attraits me laisse du courage”
[I.2]). But she uses courage not to steel herself to adversity but
to appeal to hidden forces of an antisacramental nature. The
evil garment is soaked with the “sang d’un monstre affreux.”
Again, instead of being openly shown in a holy place where
sacramental objects might normally be venerated, Déjanire has
hidden the garment from view “sous le temple, un peu loin du
palais,/ En un lieu que le jour ne visite jamais,/ Vaste, sombre
et profond” (II.2). Her courage looks down, not up; her faith is
not in Heaven but in Hell.

Hercule’s faith, too, is a weak one. In the very first lines of the
play, he appeals to his heavenly father to reward his piety and
his accomplishments by taking him to the heavens. His patient
rehearsal of his deeds has a sharp edge of indignation. In his
questions about the jealous Junon, he verges on doubt that his
heavenly father is powerful enough to carry out his son’s plea.
His determination to force the gates of Heaven in spite of its
hostile queen and weak ruler borders on the sacrilegious, but he
is too distracted by a different sacrilege to carry through on this
resolve here. He thinks of Iole and casts doubts on his own in-
tegrity: “Et ce lâche à ce nom d’aise se sent ravin” (I.1). Lâche—
which is to say, offender against the code of générosité, with
its injunctions to respect oneself in choosing one’s love. But his wife implies that one has a choice in the matter: she is furious with him because he loves a captive (II.2), loves out of place. The terms of her fury here are consistent with the concern for the self, the forgetting of Heaven we have noted in her decision to turn to the powers of Hell. The devil may be in her husband’s flesh, but, in this motif of the lovely captive, that evil being is in her soul. This is not to say that Hercule’s soul is completely absolved in the matter of his surrender to sales désirs. Still, his greater offense against true piety lies elsewhere: in his fierce pride as the very son of Heaven! Even in its most pious expressions, the faith of this demigod is at best perfunctory. Thanking his father for “guiding his arm” in recent victories, the sacrificer is more concerned with the adoration those victories have brought him. The prayer he utters on the occasion is respectful enough: it appeals for peace and fecundity on this earth and calls for blood to be shed only on altars henceforth. But it concludes with much self-gratulatory pride. Hercule seems to want to get to Heaven chiefly to displace an inefficient god there: “Et que le foudre enfin demeure après mes faits/ Dans les mains de mon père un inutile faix!” (III.1). Like his wife, Hercule thinks only of himself when speaking to the beyond.

If this is true before his fiery suffering, it is all the more so during it. His friend, Philoctète, sadly reflects that the son “porte le péché des amours de son père” (III.1). This is to accuse God himself of man’s sin, a tragic perspective perhaps hinted at by Hercule also in his subsequent lament: “O Ciel! ô dieux cruels! ô sévère destin!/ O d’une belle vie honteuse et lâche fin!” (III.2). Yet, here as elsewhere in Rotrou, the Supreme Being is exculpated. In his goodness He is distinguished from a destin or fate on whom one puts all the blame for man’s sin and suffering. But if the godhead itself is thus saved from guilt, Hercule is not to be thought of as moving toward an exemplary Christian humility or self-effacement. He regrets that a merely mortal woman is responsible for his defeat. (He presumably means Iole. Only later will he learn that it is Déjanire, a hint unwittingly given by him here as he wishes that he had

[67]
been the booty of “un centaure affreux”). He would prefer in his pride that “la haine de Junon” had done him in, for “C’est une femme aussi, mais son être est céleste” (III.2). True, he pleads for instantaneous death to relieve his sufferings:

D’un regard de pitié daigne percer la nue,
Et sur ton fils mourant arrête un peu ta vue:
Vois, Jupin, que je meurs, mais vois de quelle mort,
Et donne du secours ou des pleurs à mon sort.
J’ai toujours dû ma vie à ma seule défense,
Et je n’ai point encor imploré ta puissance.

(IV.1)

The half-god, half-man seems more man than god here—humanized in a humiliation whose terms will be the paradoxical basis of his final divinization in the last act. Nevertheless, his humiliation here is that of the man who sees himself more worthy in his achievements than the very gods. He describes his plea as “cette lâche action,” regretting that “aux prières en fin ce feu m’a fait résoudre” (IV.1).

Hercule’s mother underscores this man-centered “theology.” Alone after seeing her son in his humiliation, she describes herself as “infortunée.” Like others in the play, she invokes the heavens only to make them seem man’s creations: what, she asks, will become of her names, “mère d’un héro et d’amante d’un dieu.” Seeing her son’s mute relics beneath a tomb, she asks, “Quels si religieux priront à son autel/ Et quel ne dira pas qu’il était un mortel?” (IV.2). These doubts on her own “divine” self-importance drive her to attack Philoctète when he refuses to carry out her son’s orders (V.2). Like Déjanire’s, her faith seems stronger in the powers of Hell than in those of Heaven. Addressing the “fatales sœurs, reines des destinées”, she wonders: “Que fait Alcmène ici quand Alcide n’est plus?/ Si le fils relevait d’un pouvoir si sévère,/ Quel aveugle destin en exempta la mère?” (V.2). She doubts Heaven and believes in hostile fate.

She is wrong to do so, as are all those who complain of their fate in this “séjour sauvage.” They learn this from Hercule.
Momentarily descending from the heavens to which he has been translated, he teaches them the lesson he himself has learned in the heavens:

Admis dans le céleste rang,
Je fais à la pitié céder la jalousie,
Ma soif éteinte d'ambrosie
Ne vous demande plus de sang.

(V.4)

This is the lesson toward which the whole plot has been moving. The introduction of the love between Arcas and Iole has completely restructured the données that Rotrou has taken from Seneca. As Lancaster has shrewdly observed: "Rotrou's chief invention is to give Iole a lover, Arcas, who has been imprisoned by Hercules and who is to be put to death if she will not yield to her captor. This invention gives rise to dramatic scenes between Hercule and Iole, Iole and Deïanira, Iole and Arcas."30 In introducing the lover, Rotrou has also set the play squarely in those dramatic and thematic terms central to his vision in the comedies and tragicomedies already discussed.

For all the seemingly "inductive" nature of its dramaturgy, this first tragedy unfolds the terms of a pre-existent reality in the same way as Rotrou's previous tragicomedies. The structure is cast in the A-B-A pattern. Once again, a chaste love between legitimately linked young people becomes threatened in the fall from the twin codes of the sacramental universe by adherents who have an imperfect understanding of both. The love of Arcas and Iole is revealed in the first act, imperiled through the next three and part of the fifth, and finally restored in V.4. Iole's charge of sacrilege ("ô sacrifice impie! ô piété barbare") is vindicated; but so, too, is Arcas' confidence in Heaven, even if it is vindicated in terms that he does not quite see at the time. Heaven's mercy prevails.

This is not to say that Heaven's justice has been compromised. Déjanire dies after a debate with herself that we have already encountered. She rejects first the stoical pride of utter self-
reliance: "Mais que veux-je du Ciel? Quoi! la femme d'Hercule/
Au chemin de la mort est timide, et recule!" She then rejects
her attendant's doctrine of innocence by intention—"Celui ne
pèche pas qui pèche sans dessein"—and blames herself exclu-
sively: "... de cet accident mon bras seul est auteur". She
goes on to exculpate Heaven as if it were the punitive ecclesiast-
ical arm of a secular court of self-judgment: "Le juste bras du
Ciel sur ma tête descend." But if Heaven is a just executioner,
it is also a final court of appeals, and Déjanire asks for Heaven's
pardon: "Pardon, mon crime, ô Ciel! n'est qu'un crime d'Amour"
(III.4). And, as reported by Agis, her words just before death
show her calling both on "généreux courage" and "innocence by
intention" (IV.3).

The logic of this inner debate is no more satisfying than it has
been in previous cases: Déjanire appeals both to her own sense
of justice and Heaven's sense of mercy; she exculpates Heaven
by the assumption of guilt, and she then exculpates herself by
the doctrine of innocence by intention, which she had at first
denied. Now, in the midst of her debate, she reproaches her own
credulity for thinking that a garment of the unholy Nesse could
be anything but harmful (III.4). Given the terms in which she
herself speaks of the garment, as well as her later premonitions,
she perhaps only rationalizes in accepting the thesis of inno-
cence by intention. She spoke more truth in blaming herself, we
would say. But on the basis of his themes thus far, we can also
say that Rotrou wanted to resolve Déjanire's moral dilemma by
exculpating her on two sacramental grounds: her repentance
and her assertion of inner innocence. Though her suicide is
nonetheless sinful, Catholic theology actually permits remission
even of this sin because its perpetrator has lost the fullness of
reason. Déjanire's innocence in her crime does not thereby
incriminate Heaven in that crime. Heaven only uses this inno-
cent instrument to its own fundamentally innocent end of trans-
slating Hercule into Heaven.

Iole's beauty leads to Déjanire's jealousy which leads to Her-
cule's torment which leads to his assumption into Heaven which
leads to his resurrection and re-intervention into the world.
The world—the concepts of “this” world and “that” world are shown to be inappropriate by Hercule’s descent from the heavens. His descent is a re intervention, for the first intervention occurred when he was conceived. Half-god and half-man, Hercule is the sacramental sign of the divine become humanly incarnate. In his life before his ascension, Hercule has mistakenly thought himself more divine than human. He has had to suffer, to be humanized before he can be divinized. Divinization is complete only when he recognizes that, like the anger of previous lovers in Rotrou, jealousy is an illusion obscuring insight into true reality. That he learns this lesson “dans le céleste rang” may suggest that it can be learned only there, that in this world of desecrated temples and blackened palaces such lessons are learned too late. But this Racinian perspective is denied by the very fact that the deified Hercule returns to this “séjour sauvage” in order to suspend the savage order he gave before his ascension. The Pascalian notion of a discontinuity between the orders of cœur, esprit, and chair may have its counterpart in Racine’s theater. However, in Rotrou these orders (pitié, amitié, and désir, in his terms) are continuous: Hercule’s pity cancels his former jealousy and its illicit grounds. Chastity is as much a part of générosité as générosité is of chaste desire in this play. Rotrou had already indicated this view of the death of Hercule in La Pèlerine amoureuse when Lucidor rejected Filidan’s sacrilegious advice to marry for money and take a mistress for pleasure:

Alcide eût tout vaincu, s’il eût vaincu la flamme
Qui contre ses beaux jours fit attenter sa femme,
Et n’eût pas rendu l’âme, étouffé du poison,
Si l’amour n’eût premier étouffé sa raison.

(II.2)

Lucidor—and perhaps his creator—could not yet see that Hercule would render his life only to gain his soul.

The Christian formulation is appropriate here. As he takes leave of his jubilant worshipers, Hercule urges all the peoples
of this place to build altars to him “Et qu’ils conservent la mémoire/ De la mort qui m’a fait un dieu” (V.4). Death has made him a god—not life, as he had originally insisted in his first complaints to his heavenly father. In Seneca’s model the reappeared hero still talks in such terms, and he denies the sacramental immanence of the divine in the world of flesh:

Non me gementis stagna Cocytii tenent nec puppis umbras furva transvexit meus; iam parce, mater, questibus; manes semel embrasque vidi. quidquid in nobis tuī mortale fuerat, ignis evictus tulit; paterno caelo, pars data est flammis tua. proinde planctus pone, quos nato paret generix eterni. luctus in turpes est; virtus in astra tendit, in mortem timor.

In Seneca it is not so much the divine that has informed the human but the human that has joined, if not informed, the divine. But in Rotrou, the sanctified Hercule restores contact with the divine. The theses of Florimond de Raemond, Rotrou’s contemporary and an orthodox Catholic historian of heresy whom I quoted in my Introduction, are especially relevant here: “... Il se peut dire que la superstition des païens a été une figure, un portrait, une idée et un dessin pour venir à la vraie Religion.” I remind the reader that one of the specific “pagan portraits” Raemond considers in this light is Hercule.

Rotrou’s sanctified Hercule renews contact with the human and thus renews a spiritual contract that seemed missing at every turn of events in the action. He blesses the union of Arcas and Iole. Fulfilling his command to marry, they, too, will show the sacramental order of the world—just as those who will now build altars to his glory show that order in a more patently religious sense. Hercule mourant is an example of what Corneille calls “une tragédie heureuse.” The desecrated universe with which it began has been resacramentalized.

Except perhaps for Hercule mourant and La Pélerine amoureuse, L’Innocente Infidélité, Tragi-comédie (1634 or 1635), is the most specifically religious in language and motifs of Rotrou’s plays to date. In the struggle for possession of Félismond, “Le
Ciel" is forever on the lips of Evandre and Parthénie, and "Les Enfers" is forever on the lips of Hermante and Clariane. The fundamentally religious motif of the ring with spiritual power is central here as in *La Bague de l'oubli*, and the return to a "funeral scene," cast in an artistic or theatrical mode in *L'Hypochondriaque*, is here a specifically religious occasion, presided over by a priest.

Rotrou has significantly varied and deepened the meaning of these motifs and resolutions. The most obvious difference between the two plays about enchanted kings is in the actual effect of the rings. In Rotrou's second play, we had a ring of sacramental power. It signified and brought a kind of grace to its wearer; it made Alfonce forget his "fort instinct." In *L'Innocente Infidélité*, we also have a "bague d'oubli," but, worn by the chthonian Hermante, it has an evil effect on the observer, Félismond, making him forget that he has already overcome his "fort instinct." As the serene Parthénie brings out, this instinct is only the natural eroticism of youth. It will yield in time to the divinely sanctioned "pressant instinct" that leads her to love Félismond in spite of his passion for Hermante. The latter's ring is a serpentine object perfectly symbolic of the carnally evil wearer. It is virtually sacrilegious, a "counter-ring" to the matrimonial ring, and desecrates the sacramental rite (which, in fact, Hermante desecrates by her very appearance). The unnatural, sacrilegious object intervenes in—or, more exactly, countervenes—a divinely sanctioned natural process.

Of course, Parthénie's "natural faith," rather than Hermante's "natural power," eventually triumphs, doing so in dramatic and thematic terms familiar in Rotrou. But what gives the play special dramatic as well as thematic interest is the way in which the dramatist treats the theme of sacrilege. Lancaster has nicely observed that "the minor characters are unusually important: the avaricious and treacherous Clariane and the faithful attendants of the king and queen, who succeed in foiling the schemes of Hermante." Knutson's insight into the use of polarized types is especially apt here. For Knutson, the effect is largely aesthetic, but the thematic effect is important too: Parthénie in her virtue
is opposed by Hermante in her vice. As we have already seen, in Rotrou all is in a name; a name is a sign of value in rank and station. In L’Innocente Infidélité the warranty is given etymologically in the virginally virtuous Parthénie [παρθένος]. There is perhaps the same etymological personnification of her adversary: the name of this wicked ambitieuse might be a compound of Hermes, the scheming messenger of the gods, and amante, she who loves more through amour than amitié. Again, given the Spanish for sister, hermana, with which her name is cognate, perhaps Rotrou only means to show her as he has other sisters or sister-like mistresses—that is, rejected in the end. These interpretations of her name are perhaps etymologically fanciful, but they do point to the dramatic fate of Hermante. She is not paired with anyone at the end of the play. This is appropriate according to the “lois constitutives” of the sacramental universe that have been applied to, and illustrated by, other characters.

Hermante reminds us of Corneille’s Cléopâtre in Rodogune, a play written almost a decade after Rotrou’s. Like Cléopâtre, Hermante is true to her evil self. She is a consistent “sacrilege,” excoriated as an “horreur de la nature” (V.3). But unlike earlier “perfides,” she neither repents nor acknowledges Heaven’s supremacy. Her evil aide, Clariane, surrenders, apparently in full contrition; she regrets her offense to Heaven’s laws and calls for its punishment of her. We suspect that there is more attrition than contrition in Clariane’s penance: she fears punishment more than she regrets the offense. However, as we know from Roman theology and from frequent examples in Rotrou, attrition is sacramentally valid. (Among Rotrou’s strictly religious contemporaries, Richelieu as a theologian defended the validity of attrition and was, characteristically, opposed on the issue by Saint Cyran.)

True, at the moment of her exposure, Hermante seems penitent in her call upon the ruler of Heaven to destroy her: “Toi qui tournes les Cieux et qui soutiens la terre” is her apostrophe as she asks him to hide “à l’œil du jour cette horrible sorcière/ Dont les sales regards profanent la lumière” (V.4). Racine’s Phèdre will speak in strikingly similar terms of herself:
TEMPTATION TO TOTAL IMMANENCE

Déjà je ne vois plus qu'à travers un nuage
Et le ciel et l'époux que me présence outrage;
Et la mort à mes yeux dérobant la clarté,
Rend au jour, qu'ils souillaient, toute sa pureté.

(V.7)

But Hermante calls on “Le Ciel” as only one of the demonic forces she wishes would destroy her. “Manes, Démons, damnés je vous invoque tous,” her speech begins here. She speaks not in the “tristesse majestueuse” of Phèdre’s tragic illumination but in the accents of “une amante ambitieuse et furieuse.” She defies Heaven, for her faith is in Hell. When we last see her, it is “en une haute tour en prison, les fers aux mains et aux pieds.” She leaves no doubt that her assumption of “guilt” is neither contritional nor attritional; she calls at once on the “ténébreux habitants du Royaume des Parques.” When these fail to answer her in this profanation of prayer, she turns even lower:

Que l'Enfer pour le moins s'ouvre aux vœux que je fais,
Qu'il engloutisse tout, Roi, sorcière et Palais;
Pour réparer un crime au Ciel épouvantable
Confondez l'innocent avec le coupable,
Faites pour mes forfaits souffrir tous les mortels,
Renversez les Cités, les trônes, les autels
Par la punition faites juger du crime,
Que mon pays périsse et que l'Épire abîme.

(V.5)

Her “prayer” goes unheeded. However, if the infernal powers ignore her, the heavenly ones do not now nor will they in the end of ends. The despairing Hermante wishes that her body were already “le butin des flammes.” We are reminded of Bellarmin’s description of eternal punishment: it will be more than the deprivation of the beatific vision, for “there will be very many punishments, I say, since each power of the mind and

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each bodily sense will have its own torture.” The concept is appropriately material in its sacramental stress. Signs of this premise had already been glimpsed in the punishments Evandre saw being prepared for Clariane. To be sure, he had reminded the evil seer that she would suffer the loss of the beatific vision: “Pleure, soupire, crie et déteste les Cieux,/ Leur lumière à jamais est morte pour tes yeux” (V.8). Again, Clariane hopes for “des tourments égaux à mes forfaits,” and the destruction of her vile body by “corbeaux.” Parthénie tells her that “l’effet suivra de près ce dessein légitime.” On the other hand, the spiritual term is not denied. The conception of penance of earlier plays still holds: vice is its own punishment. In her final appearance, Hermante herself sounds it once again: “C’est trop, c’est trop, cruels, se venger d’un forfait,/ Et l’attente des maux punit plus que l’effet” (V.5). But the most dramatically apparent stress is the material one. Evandre had told Clariane that in the “affreux séjour” of her prison she was to punish herself with her own sins only as a beginning of the horrible “peine” he invited her to meditate on. And like Clariane, Hermante is in chains and in prison here. Her sufferings are as visible as the joys of Félismond and Parthénie. Hell is as real as Heaven.

The A-B-A structure applies in the familiar sense to Félismond’s story: he is cured of his lust for Hermante when we first meet him; he is then enchanted back into his lust and finally disenchanted of that lust. But his enchantress does not see the illusoriness of her “manie” or “folie.” Her mania is for power, not pleasure, and it endures: the last words we hear from her are not the complaint about vice being its own punishment but a stormy curse upon creation:

Dieux, Enfers, Eléments, faites ma sépulture
Dans le commun débris de toute la nature,
Que le chaos renaisse et que tout soit confus,
Dieux! tonnez, Cieux; tombez, Astres, ne luisez plus!

(V.5)

The chthonian Hermante, too, has gone through an A-B-A pattern: she began defeated in evil, triumphed in evil, and returned
to defeat evil. In her case the B developments of her story are not based on what Orlando calls a false datum. The datum of her evil is immanent and persistent in the universe.

In terms of the hard-headed realism that views experience as more ironic than ionic in its lessons, Hermante's consistency is the sign of a growing maturity in its author. One can understand Lancaster's enthusiasm for this play: in his compliments to its beauty and dramatic power, one senses his approval of its psychological and moral realism. Within the familiar framework of this still largely Romantic and quasi-pastoral setting, Rotrou accepts the problematic character of the universe. No deathbed confession for Hermante, who curses God and dies. But the reality to which she is restored in the final portion of her story is still one in which Evil has been vanquished. Her sacrifice is not triumphant. In being restored to his initial state of grace in the final A portion, Félimond is Heaven's king; he overcomes the reality of Hermante's enchanting evil. Already knowing the happy ending, Evandre had put it nicely when Hermante was led off to prison:

L'Enfer n'a plus de droit, son pouvoir abattu
Laisse du vice enfin triompher la vertu,
Le Ciel marche à pas levés au châtiment des crimes,
Sa Justice irritée ouvre tard ses abîmes,
Mais quand son bras enfin s'applique au châtiment,
Il répare le temps par l'excès du tourment.

(V.4)

In God's good time, the incorrigible temptress has been punished. In God's good time, the corrupted king has been redeemed by the love of a pure princess. Rotrou here gives us, without reservation, a royal redemption upon which he will look back with longing in his greatest play about a corrupt prince, Venceslas.

Amusing as Les Sosies, Comédie (1637), is, it resembles neither the rollicking comedy of Plautus nor the subtle satire of
In finally giving full dramatic vent to a theme that has obsessed him in comic and tragic moods, Rotrou does not draw the problematic moral and sociological perspectives that, with other qualities, make Molière's *Amphitryon* unique. For all Molière's "borrowing" from Rotrou here, it is a mistake to think of both dramatists as drawing the same lessons from their common subject. Viewed in this light, Rotrou draws the lesson rather poorly, whereas his imitator draws it superbly. However, interpreted in the perspective of Rotrou's own canon, the play once again offers a consistent vision rather than an imperfect realization of some other artist's vision. Preoccupied with the twin motif in this subject from Plautus as in the last, *Les Ménechmes*, the playwright once again depicts the self according to virtually sacramental notions.

Mythologically, the twin theme is directly linked with the idea of the soul. Summarizing the work of many anthropologists, psychologists, and literary critics, Otto Rank links the twin theme to the larger theme of the double as this bears on the soul in myth and religion:

> Originally, the double was an identical self (shadow, reflection), promising personal survival in the future; later, the double retained together with the individual's life his personal past; ultimately he became an opposing self, appearing in the form of evil which represents the perishable and mortal part of the personality repudiated by the social self.

Both in *Beyond Psychology* (1939), from which this passage is taken and, even more elaborately, in *Der Doppelgänger* (1914) (known to me in its French translation, *Don Juan: Une Etude sur le double*), Rank lists the last two of these three stages to civilized and specifically early Christian moments in the development of the double theme. In this religious connection, he notes, the double is explicitly linked with the idea of the devil: "Le diable, qui d'après la croyance de l'Eglise s'empare d'une âme coupable et la prive ainsi de l'immortalité, est donc un descendant direct de l'âme immortelle personnifiée qui, lentement, s'est transformé en un esprit mauvais." This view
of the self as split into a higher and a lower part, "good" and "bad," spirit and matter, is not specifically Christian; but its consonance with Christian concepts is striking, as Rank brings out in its history. He traces the theme of the double beyond its preliminary stage of shadow or reflection and into its sophisticated mythological and literary expression in the motif of twins. Both in primitive folklore as well as in sophisticated mythologies, Rank notes, the twin theme is linked to the founding of society, usually in the form of the city. In primitive forms the motif shows mother and twins being either slaughtered or driven off, and, in the latter case, founding the new city. Rank and others regard expulsion or quarantine (rather than death) as an advance toward civilized tolerance of the taboos associated with twin births. These taboos are linked with the fearful intrusion of the supernatural into the natural:

For the twins through their unusual birth have evinced in a concrete manner the dualistic conception of the soul and thereby given proof of the immortality of certain individuals singled out by destiny.

Among such specially endowed individuals, really deviates, the twin stands out as one who was capable of bringing with him into earthly existence his living double and thus had no need to procreate himself in any other form. By the same token, twins are considered self-created, not revived from the spirit of the dead, but generated through their own magic power, independent even of the mother.43

But the motherless twins can found a city, Rank goes on, only with one killing the other, with the higher self killing the lower self, the social self killing the antisocial self: "... In twin-mythology the typical motif of fratricide turns out to be a symbolic gesture on the part of the immortal self by which it rids itself of the mortal ego."44 In Christian terms, the new man kills the old man, the spirit overcomes the flesh. The soul overcomes the "diable au corps" who, in the most pessimistic extensions of Christian psychology, is not only in, but consubstantial with, the flesh.

In Les Sosies, in fact, such pessimistic thought would con-
tend, \textit{le diable au corps} does indeed triumph, the lower self wins out over the higher self. Given the ontological premises of the play (a literal distinction between two realms, divine and human), we would expect the higher self to be located in the divinity and the lower self in the human. The reversal of this pattern is rendered in the human realm as strikingly as in the divine. Amphitryon and his wife represent the higher self. However, she is a more balanced person in this respect, showing her higher worth in the flesh as well as the spirit. Not that this Alcmène is the lively creature who complains about Jupiter’s departure as we first meet her in Plautus. If anything, the wife in Rotrou’s play is at first more spiritual. Her first words in this play are only a brief query when Jupiter departs. Her extended remarks when next we meet her show that, like the old Alcmène in \textit{Hercule mourant}, she is melancholy, preoccupied with the apparent contradictions between human aspirations and the natural condition: “Par quel ordre fatal, ma chère Céphalie,/ Faut-il que la douleur aux voluptés s’allie.” Nature’s first law seems to be that “un plaisir s’achète avec usure”; it is a law of “maux . . . naturels,” common to “grands comme aux petits, aux Rois comme aux bergers” (II.2). When her husband returns for a second visit in so short a time, her anxious reflections have as much to do with chaste desire as with \textit{générosité}. “Ma chaste affection, lui serais-tu suspecte?/ Douterait-il, Hymen, combien je te respecte?” (II.3). However, this chaste wife also knows that, according to the sacramental ethos, chastity is not celibacy:

\begin{quote}
Hier, à votre arrivée, avec quelle allégresse,
Vous vins-je recevoir et vous fis-je caresser!
Je craignis, justement, que ma civilité,
Ne passât du devoir à l’importunité.
\end{quote}

(II.3)

She is actually unjust here—too hard on herself, we know. Such “importunings” are the licensed extremes of legitimate marriage, not the licentious excesses her bewildered husband attributes to her. She expresses as much later. Querying her about the
night before, distraught at the thought of what went on, the husband cries "comment, en même lit?" With more verve than elegance this time, Alcmène unblushingly counters with the sacramental law of licensed pleasure:

\[
\text{Avec la liberté} \\
\text{Qu'une pudique femme a de l'honnêteté,} \\
\text{Et par la loi d'Hymen, immuable et sacrée,} \\
\text{Qui m'y donne ma place et m'en permet l'entrée.}
\]

(II.4)

Flesh and Word: Alcmène represents the sacramental equilibrium. Her husband strives to maintain it, but he unbalances the terms of the equilibrium with a decidedly spiritual emphasis. In utter distress, he contends that a wife's deeds are the only measure of her integrity:

\[
\text{S'agissant d'honneur, l'erreur même est un crime,} \\
\text{Rien ne peut, que la mort, rétablir son estime,} \\
\text{Entrons, rompons, brisons, secouez mon dessein,} \\
\text{Surprenons, s'il se peut, l'adultère en son sein;} \\
\text{Partout, l'honnêteté repose à porte ouverte,} \\
\text{Cette porte fermée assure encore ma perte,} \\
\text{Le vice seulement aime à se cacher,} \\
\text{La femme qui s'enferme a dessein de pécher.}
\]

(V.4)

As for earlier deceived lovers at the darkest moment of their deception, the world seems more sacrilege than sacrament. Here, the husband even denies that good intentions exculpate what would otherwise be misdeeds. Amphitryon speaks of the "partout" of other doors honestly open, but for him Alcmène's is the door to the whole world. We thus border on Jansenist notions of the world as a sacrilegious trap: beauty itself is a lure into sin. Such notions must be countered by the visible sign of
the world's value. For Amphitryon this means the sign of his beautiful wife as a virtually sacramental object. This she is, in the news her servant brings forth.

The chaste Alcmène is possessed by the Ruler of Heaven for an exalted purpose. The B portion of this play does not depend on a false datum. Rotrou clearly dramatizes the distinction between his ontological realms, as Molière does not. For example, when Jupiter returns to the scene of his conquests after the husband has scolded his wife upon his return, Jupiter identifies himself in Rotrou. He does not in Molière. In Molière's Amphitryon, Sosie spots the image of the returning husband at the close of II.3:

Sosie

Amphitryon revient, qui me paraît content.

Scène IV: Jupiter, Cléanthis, Sosie

Jupiter, à part

Je viens prendre le temps de rapaiser Alcmène
De bannir les chagrins que son cœur veut garder,
Et donner à mes feux, dans ce soin qui m'amène,
Le doux plaisir de se raccommoder.

A Cléanthis.

Alcmène est là-haut, n'est-ce pas?

Cléanthis

Oui, pleine d'une inquiétude
Qui cherche de la solitude,
Et qui m'a défendu d'accompagner ses pas.

Jupiter

Quelque défense qu'elle ait faite,
Elle ne sera pas pour moi.

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Cléanthis

Son chagrin, à ce que je vois,
A fait une prompte retraite,

Scène V: Cléanthis, Sosie

Sosie

Que dis-tu, Cléanthis, de ce joyeux maintien,
Après son fracas effroyable?

Molière’s reader knows what his spectator must wonder about. Whom has he seen and heard in this return: a repentant husband or the god in the husband’s guise? In Rotrou’s play the character begins his soliloquy here with “Je suis ce suborneur, ce faux Amphitryon” and ends it just prior to his encounter with Alemène’s servant: “Chassons pour quelque temps le trouble de ces lieux,/ Mais ne la détrompons que pour la tromper mieux” (III.1). Rotrou alerts us to his distinction between divine and human as if to stress all the more the surpassing value of the human. From a certain religious point of view, this is perhaps even more irreverent than Molière’s sly, secular satire—for example, from the Jansenist point of view, whose premises Amphitryon touches on just before the fructifying burst of thunder. Rotrou’s divinization of the union is at worst pride, the sin of the order of esprit; at best, it is lust, the sin of the order of chair. This point of view would regard even mythological depictions of divine subservience as “satirical” or “secular.”

Molière’s Amphitryon can be read in this Reformational or Protestant spirit more easily than Rotrou’s Les Sosies. Not that Molière is Protestant, but his use of the gods is clearly metaphorical. Through them the playwright shows men as they are and would be. The separation between the divine and human in Molière is so total as to make it clear that the gods do not really exist. There is only man and his foibles—not the least of
which is his projection of his foibles onto gods whom he creates. This, at least, is the lesson of his Sosie. As for his Amphitryon, the same point is made more paradoxically still: Molière’s Jupiter expands a notion that is but passing in Rotrou. The husband is to blame for the pain Alcémènè has endured, he tells her. “Juge,” Rotrou’s Jupiter tells Alcémènè, “… si ton époux, ni ta fidélité/ Aux vœux d’un tel rival soustrairaient ta beauté” (III.2). Confronted with Alcémènè’s reproaches to him for wounding her “tendresse et [l’]honneur,” Molière’s Jupiter tells his wife how right she is and goes on: “L’époux, Alcémènè, a commis tout le mal;/ C’est l’époux qu’il vous faut regarder en coupable.” Five times, in twenty verses, he contrasts this detestable “époux” with “l’amant qui n’a point de part à ce transport brutal” (II.7). The terms of contrast are strictly human: husband and lover in this play whose title is appropriately in the singular.

It is significant that Rotrou’s play is plural in reference. The real Sosie and the “false” Sosie are evoked, just as, by analogy, the real Amphitryon and the “false” Amphitryon are evoked. In spite of the large role given the valets, human and divine, Rotrou’s plural title might more appropriately have been Les Amphitéryons, even as, for exactly the contrary emphasis, Molière’s play might have been entitled in the singular: Sosie. Rotrou’s valet is shown to be afraid of his own shadow. Even before his double identifies himself, his obscured presence provokes fear and doubt: “J’ignore qui je suis,/ En l’état malheureux où mes jours sont réduits;/ De peur le poil me dresse et le corps me tremble” (1.2). But there is more fear than doubt when he actually sees his double. Physically beaten, verbally harassed in the long, amusing confrontation with his double that follows, Sosie remains sure of his identity. For all the confounding resemblance, he no longer “ignore” himself:

Mais cet étonnement fait-il que je m’ignore?
Je me sens, je me vois, je suis moi-même encore;
Et j’ai perdu l’esprit, si j’en suis en souci.

(1.2)
Remembering the synonymy of feeling and knowing in earlier lovers of Rotrou, we might also conclude that for Sosie, as well, to feel is to see is to know (or be, here). Sosie's first principle is Cartesian. The further implication is still more Rotrou's: to know is to love. In this case, undoubtedly, to love oneself—Sosie is not given a wife as he is in Molière.

The metaphysical difference between the two is even more profound than the social. Rotrou's Sosie is slyly concerned with his freedom from one end of the play to the other. This concern underlies what appear to be the gravest expressions of his identity, uttered when Mercure leaves him alone: "Où me suis-je perdu? ... où me suis-je laissé? que suis-je devenu? ... Moi-même je me suis, moi-même je me chasse." But, returning to his master, he concludes with a clever hope that "... plût au Ciel aussi qu'il me pût méconnaître. / De cet malheur naitrait ma liberté." Of course, Rotrou is no more revolutionary here than with other valets and fanfarons who have expressed similar hopes and despairs. Sosie remains in the identity he has been given by the Heaven to which he appeals here. Later, even when making what might be called an existentialist appeal, Sosie, like the Catholic whom Sartre advises in L'Existentialisme est un humanisme, decides to remain what he is.45 Beaten by Mercure, he begins to know an existentialist doubt: "Et je commence enfin, non sans quelque raison, / A douter qui je suis. ... " But he dispels this doubt:

Mais, quoi! qui suis-je donc? ha! cette ressemblance
Tient à tort si longtemps mon esprit en balance;
Convaincons l'imposture et conservons mon nom:
Soyons double Sosie au double Amphitryon.
Malheureux que je suis, par une loi commune,
Cherchons le malheureux et suivons sa fortune.

(V.1)

The "common law" is more purposeful than the hostile "fortune" with which he links it here. The structure of the play makes it clear that these existentialist assertions are the instruments of
divine forces that submit Sosie and Amphitrion to their purposes.

The purposes are the enjoyment of the world as world. In this play Rotrou carries the materialist sacramentalism of earlier plays to its greatest extreme, to what an allegorical sacramental-ism would consider the point of irreligion, to real paganism. The play forthrightly presents the King of Heaven as a slave to desire.

(III.1)

Yet, the abaissement is not debasement. The doctrine of intentions assures all concerned that Jupiter follows divine, not base, desire. The “fruit” or actualization of this union will be the man-god Hercule. Jupiter’s life-giving visitation is both an act and a gift of love. To brand it as “irreligion” is to forget that the basis of Jupiter’s promise is Christian as well as pagan. The “thing-ness” of the world is justified by the Incarnation. There is no doubt, however, that the concept of Incarnation is far from the one we find in Cardinal de Bérulle, say. Theologically, Les Sosies posits no transubstantiation of the material species into the spiritual. This is a virtual consubstantiation of sign and signified emphasizing the material to an extent even beyond that found by Auerbach in Augustine’s “figuralism.”

It seemed irreverent to the intensely spiritual Christians who were Rotrou’s contemporaries. It might also seem an irrelevant literary conceit to the modern sensibility. For Rotrou, however, we know that the problematic is but an occasion through which the benevolence of the real either becomes manifest or provokes the human sufferer to awareness of the benevolent real. Like shipwreck in previous plays, so adultery in this play is a malheur become a bonheur. “Alcmène, par un sort à tout autre contraire,” says her cuckold husband, “Peut entre ses honneurs conter un adulte” (V.4). Remembering Molière’s play on the subject,
this might seem naïve. Now, this sophisticated perspective is not entirely missing in Rotrou. "Cet honneur, ce me semble," says Sosie in the last speech of the play, "est un triste avantage/ On appelle cela lui sucrer le breuvage" (V.5). But this grumbling "realism" is not a denial of the power of the gods; it is a characterization of that power by a participant who has not been presented as the guarantor of value in the play.

Rotrou carries to logical consequences one of the stresses of the sacramental ethos found both in his earlier plays and the history of sacramental theology. The theme of the Incarnation, of the Divine Immanence, leads to the kind of reverence for life itself that we find in Les Sosies. The world is justified in its "thingness" and carnality.

In its thematic stresses as well as its subject matter, this comedy takes us back to Rotrou’s first tragedy. The death of the hero in Hercule mourant is life-giving, just as the birth of the same figure is here. In Rank’s terms, “the builder of the city” triumphs after all. Arcas and Iole, we remember, were urged to live in fruitful marriage by the ascended Hercule. The stress on human life in Les Sosies is still greater. The message the god from the clouds brings at the end is not a pity or charité correcting an earlier imperfect understanding of Justice. Jupiter here brings a promise of prowess. This suggests that, according to an allegorical sacramentalism as well as biological processes, Les Sosies should really have preceded Hercule mourant. There, the flesh became word. Here the word becomes flesh and acts as if it would be forever content to remain so. The dire predictions of Junon in the prologue are not realized within the structure of this play any more than they are in Hercule mourant. Because the prologue is based on the one spoken by Juno in Seneca’s Hercules furens, it has seemed to some critics out of place here. But it fits perfectly into the tragicomic structure of this play. The movement from the dismaying prologue to the happy ending with its divine conception, annunciation, and birth miraculously takes place in a single night as long as three nights.

The material hedonism of the religion of this play flows logi-
cally from the quasi-pagan strain that both Michel and Auerbach have noted in the history of sacramental theology. Both scholars have linked this strain to Augustine.\textsuperscript{47} It is somewhat ironical, perhaps, that, in terms of other Augustinian theses, this very "paganism" is found in the Roman church of Rotrou's day. Immanentist theses, sanctifying the pleasures of the flesh, are to be found, ironically enough, within the Compagnie du Saint Sacrement itself (only seven years after Rotrou's play) in the writings of one of its partly amusing and partly pathetic members, the Abbé Colas de Portmorand. Born in 1607, this ardent Christian cleric was at first an adept of Saint Cyran. But coming to denounce this Jansenist leader and his movement, the good abbé became a member of the Compagnie du Saint Sacrement to such an un-Jansenist degree as to embarrass his companions. He restated with perhaps even greater enthusiasm than Rotrou's pagan deities the placatory view of relations between the divine and human orders heard earlier in the century in Le Père Richeome. In 1644 the ardent abbé published a book on the exemplary figure of Saint Joseph in which he seemed concerned with justifying more the material sign in the sacrament of marriage than the spiritual element signified in the Eucharist revered by his companions. He was unable to believe that God had changed His mind since creating Eve in an act by definition good of itself. He thus concluded that "les premiers regards et agréments des choses belles et bonnes sont innocens." The spirit of these pronouncements proved too much for the Compagnie. It duly announced to its branch at Marseille on October 21, 1644: "Nous avons esté contraintz de retrancher M. l'abbé de Pomoren de nostre Compagnie, de laquelle apparemment il n'eut jamais l'esprit."\textsuperscript{48} But the expelled abbé only gave voice in the 1640's to immanentist notions prevalent in the century since Le Père Richeome three decades earlier, theses that Pascal later excoriated in his writings. Attenuated by such a materialistic, humanly indulgent theology, God's direction of the human condition might as well be non-existent; this is the complaint of the Lettres provinciales. For many Jansenists a materialistic atheism is the real term of the doctrine of inherent grace. Sanctifying
the world and man, the doctrine leads them to wonder if it sees anything man has really to repent. The sacramental world itself becomes sacrilege.

These Jansenistic premises are denied in *Les Sosies*. Provoked at the use of his own name by his double during the “identity suit” before his captains, Amphitryon blurts out: “Qui suis fils de Días,” and his double retorts: “Qui suis mari d’Alcmène” (IV.4). The exchange is instructive as well as amusing. An honorable husband identifies himself as the son of his human father, and a divine lover identifies himself as the husband of human beauty. This is the measure of the immanentist extreme at which Rotrou arrives in *Les Sosies*.49