

Le Dernier Voyage

ÉCRIT ET MIS EN SCÈNE PAR
DOMINIQUE VALENTIN



AVEC

FRED PASQUALI ET MADO MAURIN



Mado et Fred, une émouvante histoire d'amour.

Le bonheur n'a pas d'âge

ELLE a soixante-dix ans, il en a quatre-vingt trois. Faites le total : cent cinquante-trois ans à eux deux et ils viennent de remonter en scène pour faire vivre une histoire d'amour.

Une histoire comme on en rêve. S'aimer comme au premier jour alors que l'on arrive au bout du voyage, superbe, non ? « Le dernier voyage », c'est justement le titre de la pièce que présente Dominique Valentin au théâtre Déjazet, et qu'interprètent Mado Maurin — la maman de Patrick Dewaere. — et Fred Pasquali. Mais pour nos deux amoureux éternels, ce n'est sûrement pas le dernier

parcours. C'est au contraire une cure de jeunesse qui commence. Et l'on souhaite qu'elle dure longtemps.

**Mado Maurin
et Pasquali
ont 153 ans
à eux deux !**

D'abord parce qu'ils sont tous deux d'excellents comédiens. Ensuite parce que leur dynamisme fait fi des outrages du temps.

Vincent REAL

Ami. C. Sam. Rimonta. CP

THÉÂTRE

« LE DERNIER VOYAGE », de Dominique Valentin

La fraîcheur des ombres

Deux amoureux. Tout beau tout nouveau, ils sont prévenants, patients, souriants. Ils se font des surprises. Mais c'est comme cela depuis... un bon demi-siècle. Ils ont dans les soixante-quinze ans, par là.

Dans les années 30, il a été aide-cuisinier sur les paquebots des Messageries maritimes. Elle, aux Folies-Wagram, chantait des opérettes.

Aujourd'hui, ils vivent de pas grand-chose, campent dans une sorte de remise. Il a gardé un smoking, un feutre noir élégant, et des serviettes de table damassées qu'il dispose joliment, sur les assiettes, comme des oreilles de lapin. Elle a gardé une robe de strass, un grand éventail de plumes d'autruche roses, un diadème de faux rubis. Les soirs d'anniversaire, ils s'habillent.

Ils ont dans la tombe au moins un pied chacun, le monde ne leur dit plus grand-chose, mais chaque matin à 7 heures ils écoutent les informations, sur une vieille grosse TSF d'autrefois, à lampes. Ils écoutent ça debout, presque au garde-à-vous, les trois juges d'instruction de M. Badinter, la remontée des recettes du Concorde, l'interview de Gorbatchev. Quand c'est fini, ils restent là, immobiles, un bon moment, comme s'il leur fallait un délai pour se retrouver les pieds par terre.

Parfois, il y a comme une sonnerie fêlée, et il descend quelques marches, au fond de la remise, nous entendons le souffle du vent, en bas il a sans doute ouvert une grande porte parce que son ombre se projette, là-bas, sur une tache claire. Il revient, et personne n'avait sonné, semble-t-il.

D'autres fois, il grimpe une échelle de fer, et là-haut, sous le toit, à travers une vitre ronde toute dorée

de poussières, il observe, dans une longue-vue, les enfants qui courent, qui jouent, pendant la récréation. Elle, en bas, cesse de se coiffer : elle l'écoute, il lui dit que tel garçon est absent pour le second jour, que tel autre n'a plus le genou bandé. Mais nous n'entendons pas les cris et les rires des cours de récréation.

Ils se retrouvent l'un contre l'autre, ils dorment assis, elle a la tête posée de côté sur l'épaule de son bonhomme. Leur mémoire s'en est allée, mais les bruits et les images qui, d'autrefois, leur restent, sont presque plus nets que ceux qu'ils perçoivent aujourd'hui. Ils ne sont pas diminués, pourtant, ils ont des voix, des gestes, nets, jeunes, et ils ont des mots très justes, inattendus, pour se dire leur attachement... parce que, c'est incroyable, on a besoin d'être rassuré.

Dominique Valentin, jeune comédienne, a écrit là, avec cette pièce, *Le Dernier Voyage*, quelque chose de beau, qui échappe à tous les lieux communs sur le propos. Une pièce comme une ombre portée, et comme des « silences portés ».

Il faut dire que Fred Pasquali, qui doit avoir pas loin de quatre-vingt-dix ans, oui, et qui a tout joué, depuis qu'il entra au Conservatoire en 1915, les grands classiques, les modernes, l'opérette, les revues, les films muets et parlants, tout, est un acteur magnifique, une grande présence, et que Mado Maurin, plus jeune de beaucoup tout de même, est remarquable aussi.

Une belle leçon de théâtre, forte, délicate, singulière, fraîche, tout à fait neuve.

MICHEL COURNOT.

★ Théâtre Déjazet, 21 heures.

Translation of the article of « Le Monde »

"THE LAST JOURNEY BY DOMINIQUE VALENTIN"

In the cool of shadows

There are two lovers on the stage. Both beautiful and as good as new; they are attentive, patient, all smiles. They give surprise gift to each other. And it has been so for ...a good half century thereabout. They may be 75 years old or thereabout. In the thirties, he was an assistant-cook on a "Messageries Maritimes" steamboat. She was an operetta singer at the "Folies-Wagram" Theater.

Today, they live on next to nothing, they camp out in an kind of shed. He has kept a dinner-jacket, an elegant black soft felt hat, and damask napkins which he displays nicely like rabbit ears on the dishes. She has kept a strass dress, a big fan of pink ostrich feathers, a diademe of false rubies. On the evening of anniversaries they dress up.

They have both of them at least one foot in the grave, the world doesn't mean to them very much any longer, but every morning at 7 o'clock, they listen to the news, on a big old valve radio set from the old days. They listen, standing, nearly at attention: Mister Badinters three examining magistrates, an increase in profits for the Concorde, an interview with Gorbatchev. When it's all over, they just stand there, motionless, for a good while, as if they needed some time to come back to their senses.

Sometimes, there will be the sound of a cracked bell, and he will go down a few steps, toward the bottom of the shed. And we can hear the wind blowing. He must have opened a big door downstairs as his shadow is being projected against a lighter spot. Then he returns, which goes to show that no one rang, or so it seems.

At other times he will climb an iron-ladder, and from the top, right under the ceiling, through a round-shaped glass pane, all gilded from the dust, he will observe through a telescope school children running and playing at break time. Downstairs, she has stopped combing her hair: she is listening to him, as he tells her that this boy or other is away for the second day in a row,

that another one has no bandage on his knee anymore, but we don't hear the cries and the laughter in the school yard.

They end up leaning against each other, and they sleep sitting there, with her head resting in her man's shoulder. Their memory has gone, but the sounds and the images which they still remember from long ago, are nearly nearer than those they perceive today. They are not diminished for all that; they have voices and gestures which are clear and young, and find very the right words, which are unexpected, when they tell each other of their mutual attachment, because, unbelievable as it is, people need to be reassured.

Dominique Valentin, a young actress, has written here, with this play, *The Last Journey*, something beautiful, which escapes all the commonplaces on the subject. This is a play which is like projected shadows and like "projected silences".

It must be said that Fred Pasquali who is not far from being 90 years old, no less, and who has acted in about everything, since he entered the Conservatory in 1915 – in the Classics, the Moderns, in Operettas, in revues, in the silent movies and the talkies – is a magnificent actor, a great presence, and that Mado Maurin though much younger is remarkable too.

A beautiful lesson in theatre: strong, delicate, fresh and thoroughly new.

Michel Cournot

A l'affiche de septembre

par Christine Masson

Théâtre :

premières

**L'Age
de Monsieur
est avancé**
de Pierre Etaix

(Comédie des Champs-Élysées)

La dernière mise en scène de Jean Poirot est arrivée et réunit François Périer, Caroline Cellier et Bernard Haller. Sûr qu'il faudra se battre pour décrocher un fauteuil.

L'Arbre de Mai

de Marcel Maréchal

(Théâtre de l'Atelier, jusqu'au 5 octobre)

Un dompteur de puces (Daniel Gélin) et une presque femme (Catherine Bena-



Le Dernier voyage avec Mado Maurin et Fred Pasquali.

diens, Fred Pasquali et Mado Maurin, sont merveilleusement chaleureux.

Lily et Lily
de Barillet et Grédy

(Théâtre Antoine, à partir du 5 septembre)

Mis en scène par Pierre Mondy, Jacqueline Maillan et Jacques Jouanneau devraient faire merveille. D'autant que leur texte est très drôle.

**Balise de toi ou y faut
que j'me calme**

de Jean-Pierre Bisson

(Comédie de Paris, à partir du 6 septembre)

Un seul être lui manque et il sombre dans l'alcool et le désespoir. Classique ? Certes. Mais le vocabulaire est insolite et l'issue pleine d'humour. Les ruptures ne sont pas toujours ce que l'on croit.

**Comme
de mal entendu**

de Peter Ustinov

(Théâtre de la Madeleine, à partir du 11 septembre)

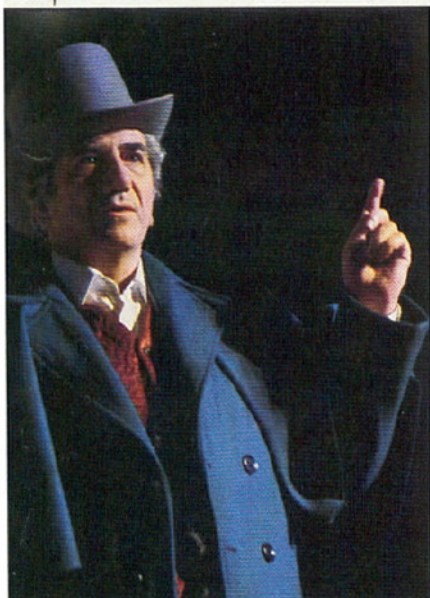
L'irruption inopinée, dans une ambassade britannique des pays de l'Est, d'un jeune poète dissident qui croit se trouver à l'ambassade des États-Unis déclenche une série d'événements cocasses dont Jean Desailly et Simone Valère devraient tirer avantage.

Journal

de Katherine Mansfield

(Théâtre Essai, à partir du 11 septembre)

Adapté et mis en scène par Victor Viala, interprété par Sylvie Faure (avec en contrepoint la voix de Laurent Terzieff), un très beau témoignage de femme et d'écrivain.



Daniel Gélin : dompteur de puces.

mou) promettent leur tendresse et leur poésie dans l'Amérique des années cinquante. Tout un programme de drôleries mises en scène par François Bourgeat qu'il ne faudra sûrement pas manquer.

Le Dernier voyage

de Dominique Valentin

(Théâtre A. Dejazet)

L'amour au troisième âge ou la solitude à deux ? Que reste-t-il après quarante ans de mariage ? Un sujet pas vraiment gai. Heureusement, les deux comé-



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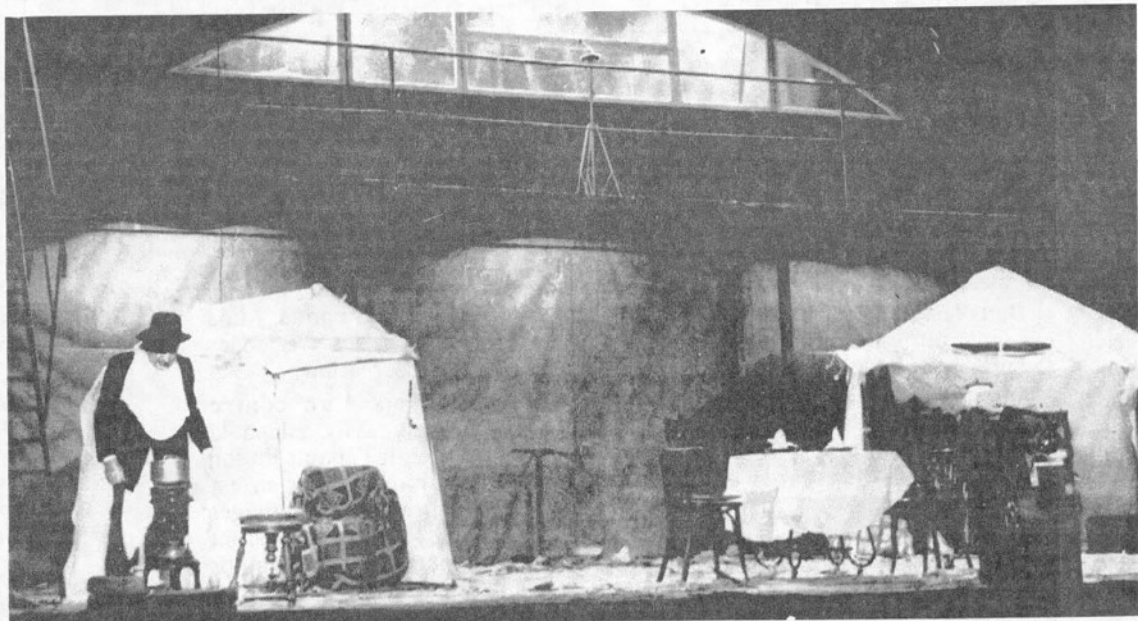
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ARTS ET CULTURE

"Le dernier voyage"... comme on dit le premier amour...



Dans un ancien théâtre.

DE l'ancien théâtre subsistent une passerelle métallique et une lucarne en demi-lune. Deux tentes ont été dressées où vont camper les personnages. Un vieil homme, seul, épluche longuement, silencieusement une pomme de terre devant un feu sur lequel chauffe une casserole.

Image de la pauvreté, de la solitude et ce silence pesant, presque insoutenable à force de durer et de s'opposer à notre société bruyante, qui nous dit que nous sommes dans l'univers de l'inexprimable.

C'est qu'à bien l'écouter, il en fait du bruit ce silence, marque du temps qui passe...

L'homme interpelle sa femme qui lui répond avec lenteur et décalage, comme si la pensée, donc la vie, fonctionnait au ralenti et venait se nicher dans les intervalles du dialogue pour empêcher, peut-être, le temps de fuir. Pantoufles aux pieds, enveloppée dans une robe de chambre, la femme est âgée, mais belle encore. Tous deux se déplacent à pas lents dans le bruissement des vieux papiers jonchant le sol, qui sont comme les feuilles d'automne de l'existence.



Charmant tête-à-tête.

(Ph. "La Voix du Nord")

Une journée de la vie d'un vieux couple commence, avec son lot de gestes quotidiens, leur répétition presque ritualisée, les remarques banales sur le temps qu'il fait... Une journée ponctuée par la préparation des repas, la table à mettre, la petite sieste, les bulletins d'information de la radio, les potins qu'on lit dans le journal avec sa rubrique nécrologique, histoire de parler de la mort des autres...

Bref un univers qui pourrait n'être que celui de l'enfermement dans l'habitude et l'ennui, s'il n'y avait l'indéfectible passion qui unit ces deux êtres.

Car, splendeur et misère de la vieillesse, "Le dernier voyage" est avant tout une authentique histoire d'amour entre deux personnes âgées.

Lui, ancien chef cuisinier, fut un aristocrate des fourneaux. Elle, ancienne chanteuse d'opéra, fut une reine des planches.

Tous deux vivent au présent dans le souvenir de ce qu'ils ont été et dans le rappel des moments heureux qui constituent encore le ciment de leur existence.

Ainsi portent-ils sur eux, comme des attributs, les vestiges de leur passé : lui a gardé ses ustensiles de cuisine, ses nappes, ses serviettes et son smoking ; elle a conservé son piano, son miroir, ses robes du soir et son éventail en plumes d'autruche.

Défilent ainsi les pages d'un livre touchant et émouvant, celles de deux vies qui s'achèvent, mais ne veulent pas mourir. Ou alors ensemble, d'une crise cardiaque, comme le demande la femme dans sa prière à Dieu, en fait une déclaration d'amour adressée à l'homme qui lui a donné tant de bonheur.

Alors, l'un et l'autre, entièrement modelés par ce souvenir commun, passent leur temps à faire revivre celui-ci, jouant à jouer leur vie et restituant ainsi l'illusion qui est l'essence même du théâtre. Ils organisent de charmants tête-à-tête, reconstruisent des soirées somptueuses, reparlent de leurs anciennes conquêtes, se font des crises de jalousie, chantent en duo cette "Heure exquise". Car même si le champagne a la couleur de l'eau, le civet de lièvre le goût de la soupe et si les chaussettes ont remplacé les collants, l'imagination est ici au pouvoir et peut transcender la réalité...

Cette imagination, parfois, vient combler les trous d'une mémoire défaillante parce que la nature, on le sait, a horreur du vide.

Et pourtant le néant est partout. Il cerne de plus en plus ce vieux couple placé hors du temps entre le passé qui s'efface et la mort qui vient. Quant au présent, il est tellement fait d'incertitude qu'on peut se demander s'il est bien réel.

Le monde extérieur nous parvient de manière distanciée et parcellisée à travers une longue vue, une radio ou un journal, comme médiatisé, donc interprété au point qu'on s'interroge sur sa réalité. Existents-ils vraiment ces enfants qu'on nous décrit en train de jouer dans une cour de récréation alors que la lucarne donne sur un mur ? Les messages laconiques de la radio et les informations anecdotiques du journal nous parlent-ils réellement du monde d'aujourd'hui ? Et cette porte que l'homme ouvre à chaque coup de sonnette, d'où jaillit une lumière verdâtre et par où personne n'entre jamais ne donne-t-elle pas sur un monde détruit et froid dont nous ne percevons plus que le souffle du blizzard ?

Blizzard, blizzard, vous avez dit blizzard et il est vrai que l'impression est étrange : celle du vide absolu que seuls les mots et l'amour du vieux couple ont l'air d'habiter. Et puis toutes ces sonneries qui ponctuent leur journée avec la régularité d'une pendule, celle qui ronronne au salon, qui dit oui qui dit non, qui dit "je vous attends..."

La grande sensibilité des deux acteurs qui ont l'âge de leur rôle (Fred Pasquali et Mado Maurin), leur fabuleux métier au service d'un texte intelligent, simple et tendre, de Dominique Valentin, laquelle sait éviter, y compris dans sa mise en scène, tout effet touchant à la sensiblerie, font merveille jusqu'à ce final poignant où le couple tombe dans les bras l'un de l'autre.

Ils échangent alors un long baiser tandis que la radio annonce, à grand fracas d'hymne national, la destruction du mur de Berlin, symbole à la fois d'un tabou sur les amours sénescences qui s'écoule et de tout l'amour du monde.

Comment ne pas penser, à cet instant précis, à Chateaubriand écrivant dans "La vie de Rancé" : « La vieillesse est une voyageuse de nuit : la terre lui est cachée ; elle ne découvre plus que le ciel... ».

F. ROLET

Translation of the article of « LA VOIX DU NORD »

THE LAST JOURNEY - AS YOU WOULD SAY FIRST LOVE .

From the old theatre there remains an iron-footbridge and half-moon-shaped attic-window. Two tents have been pitched where the characters are going to camp. An old man, alone, spends a long time, peeling a potato, silently in front of a fire a sauce pan on it. An image of poverty, of loneliness, with this heavy silence, which is nearly unbearable the longer it lasts, and contrasts with our noisy world, meaning that we are in a universe beyond expression.

But if you listen well, this silence does make noises which are tokens of time passing...The man calls his wife who answers slowly after quite some time, as if her thought and life along with it were operating in slow motion and came to nest within the gaps in the dialogue in order possibly to fight the passing of time.

With slippers on, wrapped in a dressing gown, the woman is old but beautiful still.

Both move around with slow steps in the rustling of old papers strewn the ground, which are like the autumn leaves of their lives.

A day in the life of an old couple begins with its lot of everyday gestures, repeating themselves almost like as many rites, with banal comments on the weather. This is a day punctuated by the cooking of meals, by the dressing of a table, the little nap, the news bulletin on the radio, the gossip columns read in the newspaper, with its obituary notice, so that they can speak about the death of others.

In one word, a universe which could just be a confined universe of routine and boredom if there was not the indefectible passion between those two people.

Indeed, because it is the expression of the splendour and the misery of the old age, *The Last Journey* is first of all an authentic love story between two old people.

He used to be a top chef, an aristocrat of the kitchen. She was an operetta singer and a queen of the stage. Both live now in the memory of what they were, and in the remembrance of the happy moments which still make up the cement which holds their existence together.

And so they wear on themselves like genuine attributes the vestiges of their past: He has kept his cooking utensils, his tablecloth, his napkins and his dinner-jacket. She has kept her piano, her mirror, her evening-dresses and her ostrich feather fan.

So the pages of a touching and a moving book go by, those of two lives which are ending but don't quite want to die. Or else they would die together, from a heart attack, as the woman is asking in her prayer to God – which is in fact a declaration of love addressed to the man which gave her so much happiness.

So, each of them completely modelled by this common memory spend their time reviving it, playing at acting out their lives and restoring the illusion which is the essence of theatre. They organise charming tête-à-têtes, they reconstruct sumptuous evenings, speak again of their conquest of former days, they act out fits jealousy for each other, sing in duet this "Exquisite Hour" tune. All this even though the champagne has the colour of water, their jugged hare the taste of the soup, and simple socks have replaced the tights of old, their imagination is all powerful and can transcend reality... Sometimes, their imagination fills the gaps of declining memory because nature, as we all know, hates emptiness. And yet emptiness is everywhere, encircling more and more this old couple situated outside of time between the past which is wearing away and death which is coming. As for the present, it is so much a matter of uncertainty that we could easily wonder whether it is at all real.

The outside world is reaching us from a far and divided into fragments as if perceived through a telescope, a

radio set or a newspaper – that is grasped as though through some sort of medium and therefore needing interpretation to a point that its reality may be questioned. Do these children really exist, who are described playing games at break time even though the attic window looks onto a wall? Do the laconic messages on the radio, and the anecdotic pieces of news in the newspaper really refer to this world? What about the door the man will open whenever the bell rings, where a greenish light flashes and through which

Nobody ever enters: doesn't it lead out into a destroyed and cold world of which nothing is sensed except a blizzard blowing?

A blizzard yes a blizzard, how very bizarre! True enough the overall impression is a strange one of an utter vacuum that only the words and the love of the old couple seems to inhabit. And then all theses ringing of bells which punctuates their day like ringing of clockwork, the clock purring away in their sitting-room, which says yes, and no, and "I'm waiting for you" – in Jacques Brel's words – so to speak.

The great sensitiveness of the actors, Fred Pasquali and Mado Maurin, whose age is that required by their parts and their fabulous experience both serve the intelligent, simple and tender text by Dominique Valentin. She knew how to avoid, throughout, down to her direction of the play, every effect, however slight or sentimentality. All this work wonders until the agonizing final when the couple falls into each others arms.

Then they exchange a long kiss while the radio with the help of a vehement national anthem is announcing the destruction of the Berlin-Wall, a symbol both of the taboo about senescent love collapsing and of all the love in the world.

How not to think, at this very moment of Chateaubriand writing in *The Life of Rancé* : "Old age is like a traveller in the night: the earth lies hidden to his eyes; he can see nothing but the sky."

F. Rolet

**Currents in Comparative
Romance Languages
and Literatures**



Our Voices, Ourselves

Women Writing for the French Theatre

Celita Lamar

Peter Lang

Celita Lamar

Our Voices, Ourselves

Women Writing for the French Theatre

*A
Dominique
Valentin avec
ma sincère admiration
Celita Lamar
6-11-91*



PETER LANG

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Dominique Valentin

Diametrically opposed to the rather pessimistic outlooks on love represented in the preceding plays is Dominique Valentin's *Le Dernier Voyage*, which opened in Paris in the summer of 1985. Valentin both wrote and directed this play, her first, although she had earlier been a member of Ariane Mnouchkine's troupe at the Théâtre du Soleil, to whose original methods and productions she had been drawn.²²

Valentin's intention in writing *Dernier Voyage* was to challenge society's taboos concerning love and sexual relationships among old people. The couple in this play are in their late seventies and are still passionately in love after half a century together. While it is true that they are old, it is their love and not their age or its attendant difficulties that is the foundation of the play. The man was formerly an assistant cook on a ship, and the woman sang in operettas at the Folies-Wagram. Their present life is divided between selective glimpses of the world outside their home (a sort of shed-like building) and the reliving of the sounds and images of their former lives.

The play begins with a silence that can seem interminable to an audience accustomed to noise and conversation. The old man slowly peels a potato while sitting in front of a casserole that is heating over an open fire. Finally, he calls out to his wife, who in turn is slow to respond. The effect is that of a scene taking place in slow motion, a slackening of the pace of life. When the woman appears, she is wearing slippers and a robe; she is still beautiful. A day in the lives of these two people begins, with the almost ritualistic repetition of their daily gestures and movements: setting the table, listening to the news on the radio, preparing meals, taking a little nap. At one point the man climbs up a ladder to look through a small dusty window to a schoolyard where children play. He describes to his wife the children's actions: one has now been absent for two days; another is no longer wearing a bandage on his knee. Periodically throughout the day a doorbell rings and

the man goes to answer it; no one is there. The outside world is kept at bay while the far more vivid world of their memories is celebrated.

The couple live in the memory of what they once were. The fact that their memories are shared, that they are able to embellish them together, makes possible the drama of their otherwise uneventful existence. The man has kept his kitchen utensils, his tablecloths, his damask napkins and his tuxedo. The woman has kept her piano, her mirror, her evening gowns, a handsome fan made of pink ostrich feathers and a coronet of fake rubies. He spends part of his day preparing a frugal meal made elegant by its service and by the imaginative names given to the simple dishes, usually a soup or stew. Damask napkins are folded to resemble rabbit ears and are lovingly arranged on the plates. The man is by far the more active of the two. It is he who cooks, prepares the table, climbs up to watch the children and answers the mysterious doorbell. She, on the other hand, spends a great deal of time dressing and adorning herself, actions that, given the couple's former occupations, are equivalent to his cooking and setting the table. When they finally appear in their finery — he in his tuxedo and she in a sequined evening gown that leaves her back and shoulders bare — they appear overwhelmed by one another. The revealing dress shocks the audience until they begin to see the woman through her husband's eyes.

As they eat, and drink their "champagne," they plan intimate dinner parties, reconstruct in their memories sumptuous soirées, talk about past conquests and evoke jealous outbursts from one another. Their imagination fills in the spaces where their memories fail. Elements of past, present and future intermingle: their conversation and trappings evoke the past; the radio news broadcasts, the report of children playing and the doorbell, are indications of the distant, unreal present; and at the end, the radio announcement that the Berlin Wall has been torn down adds another surreal element.²³

What appears most real in the play is the attachment of these two people, who still experience all of the joys and insecurities of lovers. The

woman prays to God to allow them to die together (but not now!) of a heart attack; her prayer is in fact a declaration of love to the man who has brought her so much happiness. The evening comes to an end when he takes her in his arms and gives her a long, slow kiss, while the radio announcement of the fall of the Berlin Wall is played, "a symbol of the destruction of the taboos surrounding senescent love affairs and of all the love in the world, according to critic F. Rolet."²⁴

The kiss provides a dramatic ending to the play, but not so dramatic as Valentin's original ending. In it, the play would end with the couple making love, as graphically as theatrical convention would permit and with an element of the surreal, in accordance with all of the couple's actions during the play. The censorship of this final scene came from an unexpected source — the leading man! In his late eighties and from an altogether different theatrical tradition, Fred Pasquali adamantly refused to play the scene; ironically, his refusal reinforced the very taboo which the play intended to invalidate.²⁵

Valentin's play is innovative in both its premise and its presentation. The couple's lasting affection is based on a combination of *shared* memories (unlike Louise and Léopold's disparate remembrances) and the fact that each has independent memories of a satisfying career. They are a source of fantasy that spices their present lives. It is the man who takes it upon himself to keep the world at bay, thereby intensifying their idyll. The slowness of his actions in the first scene, the principal indication of his advanced age, symbolizes a life that has slowed down in its rhythms but not in its intensity. The woman uses her body sensually and so naturally that there is no more than a fleeting moment of shock when she appears in her backless evening gown. *Dernier Voyage* successfully demythifies our society's taboo against the display of passionate love by the aged, while providing an example of the union of two people who have remained individuals and sustained their love over time. Perhaps this view of love and marriage from a woman author's perspective may appear naïve in its cavalier rejection of the stereotypes regarding love and

passion among the elderly, but it does indeed illustrate the range of possible visions that exist when such stereotypes are set aside.

Anne-Marie, Louise and Guss are all portrayed as unhappy women whose unhappiness derives from each one's relationship with a man. Similarities end there, however, for each has arrived at her own moment of truth by a unique path. Guss retreats into insanity while Anne-Marie reaffirms her separateness from a Michel who desperately wants her back. Louise tastes independence and rejects a romantic reunion, recognizing it as an eventually demeaning trap. Love does not triumph in these plays; rather it appears at best as impossible to sustain, and at worst as a smothering, tentacled monster. Only Dominique Valentin presents a positive view of love, and that is so far out of the ordinary, so unexpected in its defiance of taboos that it disquiets more than it reassures us. In an unbalanced world, ideal simplicity tends to be disturbing, even shocking. The other three plays are a far cry from the romantic stories where love triumphs and the beautiful heroine is united with her poor but noble suitor to live happily ever after. This is another face of love, and one that many women will recognize, albeit reluctantly and unhappily. It is not the negative view of love and marriage that makes these plays unique; after all, men have written on this subject for centuries. What distinguishes them is their presentation of the woman's struggle to maintain an identity separate from that of the man she loves. These women are not looking for a father figure or a knight in shining armor to solve their problems; they are struggling to be themselves and to maintain some measure of self-esteem as they confront paternalistic condescension, emotional manipulation and conflicting value systems.