MOLIERE'S DEBT TO PLAUTUS AND TERENCE

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Carmen Judith Soderlund

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THESIS

MOLIÈRE'S DEBT

TO

PLAUTUS AND TERENCE

by

Carmen Judith Soderlund

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DEDICATIO

Hoc opus dedico doctori Hermanno Thorntoni sub cuius perita directione id confeci. Gratias praecipuas ago doctori Guilelmo Seamani qui sua benignitate et admonitionibus me adiuvavit. Denique, id dedico meae matri amatissimae.

FOREWORD

An author's work is the product of what he has heard, what he has observed, or what he has read. All geniuses are in some way eclectic in temperament. Molière was no exception. A writer who wrote as rapidly and prodigiously as he did could scarcely avoid turning for inspiration at one time or another to the works of other dramatists.

In this thesis, the writer has undertaken to define the Plautine and Terentian elements in five of Molière's comedies: L'Étourdi, L'École des Maris, Amphitryon, L'Avare, and Les Fourberies de Scapin.

In the first chapter, an attempt is made to demonstrate that Molière was well acquainted with his sources and that his genius was undoubtedly akin to that of the Latin playwrights.

One cannot assess the character of Molière's debt to Plautus and Terence if one is not familiar with the plays of these writers which served as his models. For this reason, we have presented the originals of the French comedies and then, by comparison and contrast, proceeded to show how far the Latin dramatists left their mark on Molière's plays.

CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF PLAUTUS, TERENCE AND MOLIÈRE

A. Titus Maccius Plautus

Our information about the life of Plautus is very scant. The salient facts of his life have been pieced together, so to speak, from remarks made by Cicero, Aulius Gellius[1] and others.

Tradition has it that Titus Maccius Plautus was born in Sarsina, a city in the region of Umbria in north central Italy. The date of his birth is given as 254 B. C. It is said that Plautus came at an early age to Rome, where he worked in theatrical productions. Whether he was an actor, a producer, or simply a stage-hand is not definitely known. Most scholars favor the view that he was an actor.[2] After having made some money in the theater, he invested in a trading business and lost his fortune. Apparently, he travelled in this business for he returned penniless to Rome where necessity forced him to work at a baker's mill. While thus occupied, he wrote three plays, which have been lost. Encouraged by

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[1]Aulius Gellius, a Roman writer of the second century, A. D.

[2]Duckworth, The Nature of Roman Comedy, p. 51; W. Beare, The Roman Stage, p. 35; P. W. Harsh, A Handbook of Classical Drama, p. 333.

success, he gave himself entirely to the writing of comedies based on Greek originals. He died at the age of seventy in 184 B. C.

This biographical sketch of Plautus is the subject of extensive controversy. Scholars argue that most of these facts were either purely legendary or were invented by Roman biographers in view of their lack of reliable information. Beare in particular is very skeptical of these biographical accounts. He says: "the biographical details given by late writers may be nothing more than illegitimate inferences from passages in extant or lost plays."[3]

A controversial point is Plautus' name. Some scholars question whether in his lifetime he was known as Titus Maccius Plautus. They indicate that the evidence of antiquity regarding his name is inconsistent. We are told that in the prologue of the Asinaria his name appears as Maccus alone; in the prologue of the Mercator, it appears as Titus and in a manuscript of the fourth century A. D. as T. Maccius Plautus. The question is still to be settled. The most accepted view, however, is that in his days, Plautus bore all three names.[4] It is also proposed by competent scholars that Plautus' middle name was originally Maccus, which was later changed to Maccius. This, they argue, strongly suggests that Plautus

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[3]W. Beare, op. cit., p. 38.

[4]G. E. Duckworth, op. cit., pp. 49-50.

was an actor, since Maccus was the name of one of the stock characters in the Atellan farces. In the words of Mr. Duckworth:

> The exact source of the playwright's name will probably never be known but his close knowledge of the theater and his wide range of comic devices make it extremely likely that he had personal experience on the stage as an actor before he turned to the writing of plays based upon Greek models.[5]

Concerning Plautus' works, it is interesting to note that in antiquity as many as one hundred and thirty plays were attributed to him. Roman scholars drew up lists of plays which they considered the product of his workmanship. In the time of Cicero (70 B.C. - 43 B.C.), the historian Varro examined these plays and acknowledged only twenty-one which he believed were truly Plautine according to the general concensus of opinion. These twenty-one comedies were henceforth known as fabulae Varronianae. Modern editions of Plautus' plays coincide with the twenty-one plays attributed to him by Varro. The latter drew up another list of plays which he himself considered Plautine because of their style. Of this second list nothing is known. As Beare says, "it seems clear that apart from the Varronianae fabulae there were genuine plays of Plautus which have not come down to us."[6] The following is a list of the twenty extant plays of Plautus.[7]

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[5] Ibid., p. 50.

[6] W. Beare, op. cit., p. 36.

[7] For a list with their dates of production and English titles, see G. E. Duckworth, op. cit., pp. 52-53.

1. AMPHITRYON
2. ASINARIA
3. AULULARIA
4. BACCHIDES
5. CAPTIVI
6. CASINA
7. CISTELLARIA
8. CURCULIO
9. EPIDICUS
10. MENAECHMI
11. MERCATOR
12. MILES GLORIOSUS
13. MOSTELLARIA
14. PERSA
15. POENULUS
16. PSEUDOLUS
17. RUDENS
18. STICHUS
19. TRINUMMUS
20. TRUCULENTUS

The twenty-first play is the Vidularia, of which only fragments remain. Attempts have been made to establish the chronology of the dates on which these comedies were produced but scholars differ in their views. Both Beare and Duckworth

agree that definite dates are known for only two plays: the Stichus (200 B. C.) and the Pseudolus (191 B. C.).[8]

The writer wishes to impress upon the reader's mind that the authenticity of a great many details of Plautus' life are questioned by competent scholars. However, in the words of Mr. Duff, "even though few of the traditional records are unimpeached, there is left a solid basis for amazement at the greatness of Plautus."[9] The same can be said of Terence, whose life we shall discuss next.

B. Publius Terentius Afer

Our knowledge of Terence is not as meager as that which we possess of Plautus. Scholars have drawn from two main sources in studying Terence's life. These are the Life of Terence written by Suetonius and upon which Donatus based his commentary on Terence;[10] and the dramatist's own prologues to his plays.

The following is the most generally accepted account of his life.

Publius Terentius Afer was born in Carthage in the year 195 B. C.[11] In his boyhood, he was brought to Rome as

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[8]W. Beare, op. cit., p. 38; G. E. Duckworth, op. cit., p. 54.

[9]J. W. Duff, A Literary History of Rome from the Origins to the Close of the Golden Age, p. 161.

[10]Suetonius, a second-century historian, Donatus, a Roman writer and grammarian of the fourth century.

[11]Some scholars give as the date of his birth the year 185 B. C. Cf. Duckworth, op. cit., p. 57; Duff, op. cit., p. 203; Harsh, op. cit., p. 375 and Beare, op. cit., p. 81.

a slave to Senator Terentius Lucanus. The latter, won over by the talents of the young slave, educated him and gave him his freedom. As was the custom with manumitted slaves, Terence took the name of his former master and added to it the surname of Afer. Terence became a close friend of Scipio Africanus Minor and Gaius Laelius. These two aristocrats were the leaders of a coterie of writers and lovers of literature with a marked interest in Hellenistic culture. Their friendship with Terence gave rise to accusations by other dramatists that he had been aided by them in the composition of his plays. Terence is said to have started on his literary career by reading his play, the Andria, to Caecilius, an older writer of comedies. Terence wrote six plays which were produced within a six-year period from 166 B. C. to 160 B. C. The year following the production of his last play, he left on a journey to Greece. From this trip he never returned, and his death remains a mystery.

As in the case of Plautus, scholars point out many inconsistencies in the dramatist's biography. Beare is again the sharpest in his criticisms. He asserts that the methods of Roman scholarship were most uncritical and that Suetonius' Life of Terence was merely the author's invention.[12] Terence's name is one of the controversial issues. Some argue that Terence's cognomen, Afer, was an indication of African blood.

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[12]Beare, op. cit., p. 83.

As evidence to the fallacy in such an opinion, Beare gives the example of Domitius Afer, a praetor of Nîmes, who was not of African origin though he bore the cognomen Afer.[13] Mr. Tenney Frank says that the inference that Terence was African is unfounded and stems from an ignorance of the semantics of the word Afer. Mr. Frank also suggests that Terence might have been of Italian or Greek stock.[14]

As for the view that Scipio and Laelius collaborated with Terence in the composition of his comedies, it is unanimously rejected by modern scholars. The latter bring to our attention that even some Roman commentators gave evidence that Terence was older than the two young nobles and therefore could not have been aided by them.[15]

It was mentioned above that Terence's prologues to his plays were a source of information for his biographers. In them he defended himself against the attacks made by other dramatists regarding his methods of composition. Terence's most bitter enemy was the poet Luscius Lanuvinus. He and others charged Terence with plagiarism and contaminatio.[16] By plagiarism in those days was meant the reworking of

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[13] Loc. cit.

[14] T. Frank, "On Suetonius' Life of Terence," American Journal of Philology, Vol. 54 (1933), pp. 272-73.

[15] Duckworth, op. cit., p. 58.

[16] By contamination is understood the process of inserting material from one Greek play into another to make one Latin play.

material which had already been adapted from the Greek by other Latin writers.[17] Terence answered to the charge of plagiarism by declaring that if he had used material already employed by others he had done so unknowingly. Concerning the second charge, he admitted that he had been guilty of contamination but added that in so doing he was only following the example of his predecessors. This admission by Terence has led many to believe that he had made many improvements upon his Greek models.

Terence wrote only six plays. There are many theories as to the order in which his six comedies were produced. The chronology below is the most generally accepted.[18]

1. ANDRIA 166 B. C.
2. HECYRA 165 B. C. (first failure)
3. HEAUTON 163 B. C.
4. EUNUCHUS 161 B. C.
5. PHORMIO 161 B. C.
6. ADELPHOE 160 B. C.
7. HECYRA 160 B. C. (second failure)
8. HECYRA 160 B. C.

Plautus and Terence have sustained their popularity through the centuries. This fact is indeed the best commendation of their genius. It is unfortunate that our information

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[17] G. E. Duckworth, op. cit., p. 63.

[18] For more details concerning the chronology of the comedies see W. Beare, op. cit., p. 86.

about their lives is so limited, but this ignorance is more than compensated by the legacy of their works.

C. Molière

When one considers Molière, one is treading on firmer ground. Though there are gaps in his biography, the most important details of his life are quite clear. Much has been written about the French playwright and the reader who wishes to study him further will have access to excellent biographies. For this reason, we shall limit our discussion of his life.

Jean-Baptiste Poquelin[19] was born in Paris on or around January 15, 1622. He belonged to a respectable bourgeois family, his father being an upholsterer who had acquired the rights to the title of valet de chambre tapissier ordinaire du roi. He was barely ten when his mother, Marie Cressé, died. A year later, Jean Poquelin the elder married Catherine Fleurette. It has been hinted that Molière was not happy with his step-mother but this opinion is dismissed by biographers as an unjustified conjecture.

Little is known of the dramatist's childhood. We are told that he was taken to the theater by his maternal grandfather and that he took pleasure in watching the mountebanks at the Pont-Neuf. It is most likely that as a boy Molière went to the theatre but, as Mr. Taylor says, "he was obliged to spend too

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[19]Molière is a pseudonym which he adopted.

many years at school to have had much leisure for intimacy with buffoons and mountebanks."[20]

Jean-Baptiste received an excellent education. He attended the exclusive Collège de Clermont conducted by the Jesuits.[21] Here he received a thorough training in the humanities and excelled as a student of Latin. Of the curriculum at the Collège de Clermont, Mr. Taylor says:

> The course of study was devoted mainly to Latin classics: Caesar, Sallust, Virgil, Ovid, Cicero, the poets from Horace to Juvenal; and of far more importance to a future dramatist, the comedies of Plautus and Terence.[22]

This description is sufficient to make one realize how comprehensive must have been Molière's training in the classics. At the Collège, young Poquelin became acquainted with the Prince of Conti, whose patronage he later enjoyed. A good friend he acquired there was Chapelle. The story goes that it was Chapelle's father who invited the Epicurean philosopher Gassendi to instruct his son and some of the latter's friends, among whom was Molière. After he completed his studies at the Collège, Molière probably studied law at Orléans.

As previously said, Molière's father had the honorable position of valet de chambre tapissier ordinaire du roi. One of the duties of this office was the making of the royal bed, an honor not to be disdained. Jean Poquelin had obtained the

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[20]H. C. Chatfield-Taylor, Molière, p. 12.

[21]This school was later renamed Lycée Louis-le-Grand.

[22]Chatfield-Taylor, op. cit., p. 14.

succession of this post for his son. But, to his father's disappointment, Molière renounced his rights of succession to the title and declared his decision of becoming an actor.

After he rejected the future his father had prepared for him; Molière made an association with the Béjarts, a family of actors. On June 30, 1643, together with the Béjarts and some other actors, he organized a theatrical company which they called L'Illustre Théâtre. At this time, Jean-Baptiste Poquelin adopted the name Molière. To quote M. Auger, "il prit le nom de Molière, afin sans doute que ses parents n'eussent pas a lui reprocher de traîner et de prostituer le leur sur des tréteaux."[23] For a theater, the company rented a tennis-court called Le Jeu de Paume des Métayers. Here they stayed a year and later moved to another jeu de paume, La Croix Noire. But the Illustre Théâtre was a failure. In July, 1645, Molière was imprisoned for debt on charges made by his creditors. His father paid the debts and Molière was released; but this was the end of L'Illustre Théâtre. Of its members only Molière and the Béjarts remained. Together, they departed for the provinces.

From 1645 to 1658, Molière and his comrades toured the south of France. They joined the troupe of a certain Monsieur Dufresne who enjoyed the patronage of the Duc d'Épernon, governor of Guyenne. Later, they became the protégés of the Prince

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[23]E. Auger, "Vie de Molière," Oeuvres de Molière, Vol. 1, p. lxi.

of Conti. By this time Molière had assumed the direction of the troupe. These years of wandering were rich in experience for Molière and his actors. During this period he wrote many amusing farces described by M. Auger as "de petites pièces bouffonnes, qui étaient jouées a l'improvisade, comme les farces italiennes, dont elles n' étaient qu'une imitation."[24]

In 1658, no longer a group of inexperienced actors, Molière's troupe returned to Paris. Monsieur, the King's brother, accorded them his favor and in October of that year, Molière made his debut at the Louvre before the King and his court. Their performance of Corneille's Nicomède was a failure but Molière's farce Le Doctor amoureux was well liked and the pleased monarch gave Molière the theater of the Petit-Bourbon, to be shared with the Italian actors. There, the dramatist obtained his first Parisian success with the presentation of Les Précieuses ridicules in 1659. Molière did not stay long at the Petit-Bourbon. In 1660 he was forced to move. This time the King granted him the use of another theater, the Palais-Royal, which he kept till his death.

To attempt a discussion of Molière's dramatic achievements from the time he arrived in Paris until his death in 1673 would be beyond the scope of this study. It suffices to say that these fifteen years (1658-1673) were the most brilliant of his literary career. His masterpieces were written and

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[24]Ibid., p. lxiii.

produced during this period. His success earned him the jealousy of other playwrights and the hatred of many bigoted people. He had to refute many slanderous attacks against his private and professional life. But he enjoyed the friendship of some of the greatest men of the time, among whom were Boileau, La Fontaine and the painter Mignard.[25] The King called upon him frequently to perform before the court and made no effort to conceal his marked favor for the dramatist. In short, Molière had reached the peak of his career.

In 1662, Molière married Armande Béjart, sister of his leading actress, Madeleine. Contemporaries recalled that Molière had once been very fond of Madeleine and that in her youth she had had an illegitimate daughter. His enemies insinuated that Armande was the child of Molière and Madeleine and that the dramatist's marriage was incestuous. Modern scholars have made careful research on this question and their general beliefs are very well summed up by Mr. Chapman, who says:

> Although contemporary opinion did consider Armande as the daughter of Madeleine, it did not believe her to be the daughter of Molière but rather of one of the numerous lovers with whom the public credited Madeleine as well as other actresses.[26]

Molière was unhappy in his marriage. He was twenty years his wife's senior and she was an incorrigible flirt.

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[25]For a detailed account of Molière and his friends, see Chatfield-Taylor, op. cit., pp. 306-330.

[26]Percy Chapman, The Spirit of Molière, p. 113.

They separated for some time and were reconciled in 1667. After this date, Molière's health began to fail under the strain of work and his domestic problems. He had been troubled throughout his life with a constant cough. On February 17, 1673, during the fourth performance of Le Malade imaginaire his struggle with death began. After the play was over he was taken to his home, where he died a few hours later. As actors were excommunicated by the church, he was refused Christian burial; but, thanks to the king's intercession, he was buried in consecrated ground in the cemetery of the Church of St. Joseph, at night and in the presence of a few intimate friends.

Molière wrote and produced twenty-nine comedies. Below we list those which we consider most representative of his genius:[27]

LES PRÉCIEUSES RIDICULES	1659
L'ÉCOLE DES FEMMES	1662
LE TARTUFFE	1664
DOM JUAN OU LE FESTIN DE PIERRE	1665
LE MISANTHROPE	1666
LE MÉDECIN MALGRÉ LUI	1666
L'AVARE	1668
LE BOURGEOIS GENTILHOMME	1670
LES FEMMES SAVANTES	1672
LE MALADE IMAGINAIRE	1673

[27]For a complete list of his works in chronological order, see F. K. Turgeon and A. C. Gilligan, The Principal Comedies of Molière, "Biography," p. 10.

CHAPTER II

STAGE CONVENTIONS IN REPUBLICAN ROME AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURY FRANCE

It is difficult for a modern man to evaluate a Roman play written and produced in Republican Rome. To aid his comprehension of comedy as it existed in the days of Plautus and Terence, it would be profitable to consider the dramatic conventions of the time.

Roman drama received a starting impulse from the government. The latter realized the advantages of pleasing the electorate and established the public games for securing its favor. In Mr. Beare's words, "from the beginning the Roman theater was supported and supervised by the State."[1] These public games took place during the celebrations of various religious festivals during the year. The major festivals in the second century were: the ludi romani in honor of Juppiter Optimus Maximus, the ludi plebeii also in honor of Juppiter, the ludi Apollinares in honor of Apollo, and the ludi Megalenses in honor of the Magna Mater. The ludi scaenici, or dramatic performances, formed part of these religious festivals which lasted several days. Anywhere from one to four days were devoted to the ludi scaenici during the celebration of a festival. Mr. Duckworth estimates the number of days devoted to

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[1] W. Beare, The Roman Stage, p. 7.

drama each year "at about eleven, after 191 B. C. perhaps as many as seventeen."[2] Dramatic performances were also given on particular occasions such as funeral games, triumphs and dedication of temples. Scholars differ as to where the performances took place. Beare suggests that "they would be shown in an improvised theatre, erected perhaps near the temple of the god in whose honor the festival was given."[3] Most authors, however, agree that plays given in connection with funeral games were shown in the forum.

Admission to the plays was free and all expenses were defrayed by the State. There were officials, aediles or praetors, in charge of the games. These often supplemented the State appropriations with contributions of their own.

What was the procedure followed in the production of a play? The dominus gregis, or manager of a troupe, was the link between the officials in charge of the games, the dramatists and the public. The producer-manager made a contract to produce a play with the officials in charge of the games. He then bought the script from the playwright, hired the actors and made all the necessary arrangements for the production. Once the play was in the hands of the dominus gregis he kept it and could repeat its performance as often as he wished.

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[2]George E. Duckworth, The Nature of Roman Comedy, p. 77.

[3]W. Beare, op. cit., p. 154.

> The dramatist had no control over the play after it left his hands, and received nothing but the original purchase price, even though the play might be produced more than once.[4]

The producer-manager also bought the costumes which he gave to the choragus, or property-manager, who in turn distributed them to the actors.

It is often said that the manager of a theatrical company was a freedman who had most of the actors as his slaves. There are different views on the matter. The author of this work does not agree with Mr. Beare's opinion that "the very fact that actors were organized in a troupe under a dominus suggests something not far removed from slave status."[5] It is evident that Mr. Beare is thinking of the literal meaning of the word dominus. In all likelihood, the acting profession was young and offered little by way of financial rewards; but it is more plausible to assume with Mr. Duckworth that at this time actors "were mostly alien and freedmen."[6]

The size of theatrical troupes is not definitely known. The general opinion is that they must have been limited in number; perhaps six or seven actors to a company. Related to the question of the size of the troupes is that of the doubling of roles. Several scholars support the view that Roman actors

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[4] G. E. Duckworth, op. cit., p. 74.

[5] W. Beare, op. cit., p. 159.

[6] G. E. Duckworth, op. cit., p. 76.

took more than one part in a play. If one accepts the opinion that the Romans wore masks, it seems quite plausible that actors might have doubled in their roles. But caution must be exercised not to assume that a Roman comedy could be performed with an extremely limited number of actors.

Now for the structure of the theater itself. In republican Rome there were no permanent theaters like those of imperial times. Attempts had been made throughout the second century to build some but construction had been arrested because of opposition to theaters as harmful to public morals. "The first permanent stone-theater at Rome was that built by Pompey in 55 B. C."[7] The Plautine theater was structurally simple. It consisted of two main parts: the scaena or stage proper, and the cavea or auditorium. As was mentioned before, where the dramatic performances took place is not known. It is certain, however, that theaters were improvised outdoors in suitable spots as convenience dictated. The wooden stage was built temporarily for the performance and afterwards probably taken down. At first the spectators stood in the area around the stage but later seats were probably furnished for the audience. Again, whether the Roman theaters of that time had seats or not is a controversial issue. Both Beare and Duckworth favor the view that seats were provided for the public of Plautus and Terence.[8] It is interesting to note

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[7] Ibid., p. 80.

[8] See Beare, op. cit., Ch. XXI and Duckworth, op. cit., pp. 80-81.

that "reservation of seats for senators and equites had been a practice from Republican times onwards. . . ."[9]

Stage-setting in the Plautine and Terentian theater was quite rudimentary. The stage proper represented for the most part a street in Athens. The background was made of boards nailed together and painted to represent two or three houses with doors opening onto the stage. Usually, there were three doors facing the scene. In many plays, there was an altar in front of the houses. Actors entered the stage not only through the doors of the imaginary houses but also through the two wing entrances. The wing on the spectator's right led to the forum, the entrance on his left to the harbor and the open sea. The angiportum was supposedly a street off the stage and running parallel to it through which the characters could reach their houses from the back. In other words, it represented a street in the city which connected the forum with the harbor. Beare says of the angiportum:

> It is a device which enables the dramatist to escape at times from the general rule that a character who leaves the stage by a particular door or wing must return by the same door or wing.[10]

Thus scenery in the Roman theater was reduced to a minimum. As the stage represented a street, all action and dialogue took place outdoors. The stage was continuously

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[9]Beare, op. cit., p. 162.

[10]Ibid., p. 173.

open to view and the scenery remained unchanged throughout a performance. The use of the curtain was not yet known.

The costumes worn by the actors of the fabulae palliatae, as Plautus' and Terence's comedies are called, were modelled upon the dress of the ordinary Greek citizens portrayed in the plays. Their costumes may be described as follows: actors wore a long undergarment called tunica. Over this tunica was a mantle called pallium; the one worn by women was called a palla. The mantle of free persons was long; that of soldiers or slaves was short. This short cloak was called a chlamys. All characters wore the thin sandal or slipper, the soccus. The soccus was characteristic of comedy just as the cothurnus or high buskin was of tragedy. Farce actors went barefooted.

> Wigs of different colors were used, white for old men, black for young and red for slaves, but there is no good authority for the statement that slaves always wore red wigs.[11]

Masks seemed to have been used by actors of second century Rome. It must be added here that evidence on the subject of masks is confused. As was mentioned above, the choragus or property-manager apportioned the costumes to the actors. Costumes were expensive and must have been selected with care. Beare believes that the tendency was "to reduce the property manager's outfit to a limited number of costumes of as few types and as simple style as possible."[12]

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[11] G. E. Duckworth, op. cit., p. 89.

[12] W. Beare, op. cit., p. 179.

There is considerable evidence that Plautus and Terence did not divide their plays into acts. They wrote them for uninterrupted presentation. "Continuous performance which is the negation of act-division was the rule for ancient drama from Aeschylus to Terence."[13]

During the Empire, Rome built magnificent theaters. But unfortunately progress in the drama did not go hand in hand with the splendor of the buildings. Tragedy and comedy were replaced on the imperial stage by the mime and pantomime. To all indications, the dramatic standards of the Empire were far below those of the Republic.

In seventeenth-century France, Paris played the dominant rôle in the development of the drama. It was here that theaters were permanently established, plays were published, and many troupes were formed. In discussing the theatrical practices of Molière's time, we shall then focus our attention on the Parisian theatrical scene.

When Molière arrived at Paris in 1658 from his sojourn in the provinces, there were already two French troupes established in the city. These were the troupe of the Hôtel de Bourgogne and that of the Marais. The former specialized in tragedy; the latter had developed the "machine" plays. The leading actor of the Hôtel was Bellerose; that of the Marais was Montdory.

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[13] Ibid., p. 209.

There were also some foreign troupes settled in Paris by the second half of the century. They were a troupe of Spanish actors and an Italian company. The Spanish troupe had come to Paris in 1660 before Louis XIV married Marie-Thérèse, and departed in 1673. Commenting on them, M. Despois said that they failed to get the acceptance of the Parisian public and remained simply "les comédiens de la reine."[14] The Italian actors, on the other hand, made themselves felt in the capital. They had first come to Paris in the sixteenth century and did not leave the city until their expulsion in 1697. Twice the Italians shared a theater with Molière's troupe--first at the Petit-Bourbon, secondly at the Palais Royal. Speaking on their popularity, Mr. Lancaster said:

> They had no influence upon tragedy. But they may well have helped develop French farce and have made French actors realize the importance of gesture and facial expression.[15]

As for Molière's troupe, when it settled in Paris in 1658 it was given the privilege of sharing the theater of the Petit-Bourbon with the Italians. When reconstruction of the Louvre began, Molière and his troupe were forced to move. They then secured for themselves the Palais-Royal, which they also occupied with the Italian actors.

Thus, in the seventeenth century, we had three important groups of actors working in Paris. The troupe of the

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[14]Eugène Despois, Le Théâtre Français sous Louis XIV, p. 72.

[15]Henry C. Lancaster, A History of French Dramatic Literature in the Seventeenth Century, Part V, "Recapitulation", p. 12.

Hôtel, the troupe of the Marais and Molière's troupe du roi. Each company excelled in its own field; all vied with each other in friendly competition.

French actors, however, did not confine themselves to the capital. Wandering troupes traveled not only through the provinces but also went into the Low Countries, Germany, and England. "Traveling troupes became agents for the spread of French culture and an invaluable school for actors who were to enter Parisian companies."[16]

In what types of theaters did the various troupes perform? Provincial troupes played in any hall which was temporarily made into a theater for their performances. The troupes established in Paris played in buildings of a more permanent character which had been especially constructed for the performance of plays. The structure of these permanent theaters can be described as follows. They were rectangular halls divided into two main areas, the théâtre or stage and a flat auditorium called the parterre. There were tiers of boxes along the sides of the room. Benches were placed at the back of the hall, which was known as the amphithéâtre, except for the performances of "machine" plays. The stage was relatively small in comparison to the Roman stage, which was said to be as much as 60 yards long. Though the stage was reserved for actors, persons of noble rank sat on benches situated on both wings of the stage. This custom was not

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[16]Ibid., p. 13.

suppressed until 1759. A good description of the stage as it was set in those days is given by M. Despois:

> La scène est trés petite. Si les proportions sont bien observées, elle n'a guère plus de trois hauteurs d'homme. Des spectateurs placés sur le theatre permettent d'en juger; ils sont débout derrière le rideau, et l'écartent curieusement à droite et à gauche pour voir ce qui se passe dans la salle; ils sont enfermés dans une double balustrade qui partant de l'angle du théâtre où descend la toile, fait retour en arrière en décrivant un quart de cercle. On voit que cette disposition supprime absolument les premières coulisses. Les acteurs ne peuvent venir que du fond de la scène, et l'on conçoit que la décoration se trouve à peu près reduite à la toile de fond.[17]

The stage setting was quite simple. In the first part of the century, the system used was le décor simultané.[18] Later the stage setting was reduced to represent a parlor where the action took place.

Contrary to the Roman practice, French actors of the seventeenth century procured their own costumes. Each actor had his own dramatic wardrobe though it has been said that "on avait bien la ressource de louer des habits."[19]

Although French and Roman troupes were similarly organized, the former were of a very democratic character. Actors of a troupe worked on a share basis. They met frequently and decided their problems collectively. The manager of a troupe was elected by its members and received no salary for his

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[17] E. Despois, op. cit., 129.

[18] A system by which several localities are represented simultaneously on the stage.

[19] E. Despois, op. cit., p. 133.

services. "They formed stock companies in both senses of the word."[20]

Plays were purchased by the actors directly from the dramatists. They paid the writer a lump sum for the right to act his plays. At other times, the troupe gave the author two shares of the total receipts when his play was first produced.

One aspect that cannot be omitted in a discussion of the theatre in France under Louis XIV is that of government subsidy. The three Parisian troupes were subsidized at one time or another of their existence. The troupe of the Hôtel received 12,000 francs a year. That of the Marais and Molière's troupe received 6,000 francs annually.

In Rome, dramatic performances were given as part of religious festivals. The theaters were in the open air and the plays were given during the day. In Paris, performances were given also during the daytime in any of the three established theaters. Early in the century, curtain-time was at two o'clock in the afternoon. Later, ". . . cinq heures semble avoir fini par être l'heure ordinaire."[21]

Admission to Parisian theaters was not free as in Republican Rome. Actors depended on the public for financial support. There were variations in prices but in Moliere's time 15 sous was the admission price to the parterre; an ecu

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[20]Lancaster, op. cit., p. 21.

[21]E. Despois, op. cit., p. 146.

or half a louis paid for a seat on the stage or in a box. For the premiere of a play, charges were doubled. "Doubling was not employed for one-act plays and was usually limited to the early performances of new full-length plays given in the winter season, which ran from November 2 to Easter."[22]

It has been said that Roman actors performed an average of eleven days out of a year.[23] French actors performed regularly three days a week until 1680, when performances were given every day. Yet French theaters closed often. They closed two weeks at Easter, on all religious holidays, when there was mourning at court or sickness among its members. Summer was their dead season and at this time of the year theaters suffered severe competition from other places of amusement.

Recapitulating the discussion of theatrical conventions in second century Rome and seventeenth-century France, one reaches some surprising conclusions. Though centuries of civilization had elapsed between the two theaters, certain similarities are apparent. Audiences were equally heterogeneous. Playwrights wrote not for a select few, but for a mixed public. The stage setting was in both cases simple and costumes were reduced to the essentials. Though the organization of theatrical companies differed in various ways, one could almost equate the structure of the troupes as follows:

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[22]Lancaster, op. cit., p. 18.

[23]See above, p. 2.

Roman grex	French Troupe
Dominus gregis	Directeur de troupe
Choragus	Le fripier ou le décorateur
Prologus	L'orateur de la troupe
Dissignatores	Les ouvreurs de loges, de théâtre et d'amphithéâtre
Histriones	Les acteurs

The above is a very schematic equation of the organization of troupes but it illustrates the fact that, small as Roman troupes were, they had all the elements of the well-organized French company of Molière's days.

Anyone will enjoy reading a play by Plautus, Molière or Terence. But his understanding of the merits of the work will undoubtedly be increased by an appreciation of the work entailed in its composition and presentation.

CHAPTER III

MOLIÈRE AND PLAUTUS

The following works are usually quoted as illustrating Moliere's dependence on Plautus: L'Étourdi, Amphitryon, and L'Avare. In this chapter we shall examine these plays and attempt to define the Plautine features in them.

First in order of production was L'Étourdi. This play is slightly related to Plautus' Bacchides.[1] Let us turn for a moment to the plot of this Latin comedy. Two Athenian young men, Pistoclerus and Mnesilochus, live in the same vicinity where they have grown together from childhood. As the play begins, Pistoclerus is in Athens where he is leading a merry life and carrying on an affair with the courtesan Bacchis. Mnesilochus is in Ephesus where he has been sent by his father, Nicobulus, to collect a debt which a friend owed him. On his way to Ephesus, Mnesilochus stopped at Samnos where he fell victim to the charms of a courtesan called Bacchis of Samnos. This girl, however, was in the service of a captain, Cleomachus, and he takes her with him to Athens. Mnesilochus writes to his friend Pistoclerus asking him to look for his sweetheart in Athens and, if he can, free her from the hands of the captain. Pistoclerus

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[1]Critics propose that Plautus influenced Moliere in this case only indirectly, via Barbieri's adaptation of the Bacchides in Italian: L'Inavvertito.

complies with his friend's request. He not only finds the girl but discovers she is the sister of his mistress, who also bears the name Bacchis. This is the situation when Mnesilochus returns, accompanied by his slave, Chrysalus. The latter learns from Pistoclerus that, although he has found the whereabouts of Mnesilochus' girl, he cannot buy her freedom for lack of money. Chrysalus takes matters into his own hands. He invents a story to deceive Nicobulus, his master's father, and see that the latter keeps for himself the money he has brought from Ephesus. Chrysalus' scheme is successful. But, Mnesilochus overhears a conversation between Pistoclerus' father and tutor in which his friend is accused of loose conduct and of keeping a mistress named Bacchis. Mnesilochus assumes that Pistoclerus is having an affair with his girl and decides to return all the money he had to his father and tell him that Chrysalus' story was a lie. He does so and, to his distress, discovers later that there are two courtesans by the same name and that Pistoclerus had been courting his girl's sister, Bacchis of Athens. Once he realizes his mistake, Mnesilochus' chief concern is to get money to free his sweetheart from Cleomachus. He turns for help to his slave Chrysalus, who engineers a second trick to obtain money from Nicobulus. He succeeds in deceiving Mnesilochus' father and his master purchases Bacchis' freedom. It is not long before Nicobulus discovers he has been the victim of Chrysalus' intrigues. He rushes to seek out Mnesilochus and meets

Pistoclerus' father, whom he informs of the immoral behavior of their sons. In the final scene, we see the old fathers yielding to the seductions of the two Bacchides and banqueting with their sons and the two courtesans.

L'Étourdi is simply a comedy of situations. The play takes place in Messina, Italy. Two young men, Lélie and Léandre, love Célie, a pretty slave-girl owned by an old man named Trufaldin. Mascarille, Lélie's valet, devises numerous schemes to help his master win the girl he loves but each time Lélie, "l'étourdi," upsets Mascarille's plans to aid him. Some of the plans which Lélie frustrates are: 1) Mascarille causes Seigneur Anselme to drop his purse full of money in order to steal it and procure money to purchase Célie. But, Lélie finds it and returns it to Anselme before Mascarille could even steal the purse. 2) By pretending that Lélie's father, M. Pandolfe, has died, Mascarille persuades old Anselme to lend money to Lélie for defraying the funeral expenses. Anselme discovers that Pandolfe is still alive and gets back his money from Lélie by making the latter believe that he has given him false coins. 3) The cunning valet introduces into Trufaldin's house Lélie disguised as an Armenian merchant who brings the old man news of his long-lost son. Lélie gives himself away at the dinner-table by courting Célie and thus arouses Trufaldin's suspicions. Furthermore, Lélie confesses his masquerade to Célie and is overheard by Trufaldin's god-daughter, who in turn puts the old man au

courant. 4) Finally, hearing that Célie has been purchased by a gypsy called Andrès, Mascarille disguises himself as an innkeeper and offers to accommodate the couple in his place; but Lélie explains to Andrès that Mascarille is his valet and that the so-called inn is his own home. He also confesses to Andrès that he is madly in love with Célie. To all appearances, Lélie has lost Célie with his blunderings, but a series of unexpected recognitions solves his problem. Andrès, the gypsy, is discovered to be Trufaldin's son and Célie's brother, and Trufaldin turns out to be a well-to-do nobleman. Lélie marries Célie and his rival, Léandre, returns to his former sweetheart, Hippolyte.

From the above synopses, it is apparent that Plautus contributed little to Molière's L'Étourdi. The two comedies have entirely different plots. There is not one scene in the French play for which we can trace its equivalent in The Bacchides. Molière probably drew from Plautus the character of Mascarille who, like the slave Chrysalus, is the victim of his master's blunders. However, all similarity between L'Étourdi and The Bacchides ceases here.

Molière imitated Plautus very closely in his Amphitryon. The latter is modeled chiefly upon Plautus' play of the same name. The plots of both comedies are basically the same: In a prologue, Mercury explains that his father, Jupiter, has fallen in love with beautiful Alcmena whose husband, the

Theban general, Amphitryon, is away at war.[2] Jupiter has assumed the appearance of Amphitryon to deceive Alcmena and is now spending the night in her company. Mercury himself has adopted the figure of Sosia, Amphitryon's slave, and is acting as his father's valet. It is early morning and Jupiter is still visiting with Alcmena. At this moment, the real Sosia arrives with news from his master: Amphitryon has won the war and will soon return to be with his wife. As Sosia is approaching Amphitryon's palace, Mercury comes out, questions him, gives him a sound beating and drives him away claiming that he is Sosia himself. The bewildered slave goes off to tell Amphitryon the strange reception he received at the hands of his "other self." In the interim, Jupiter, still feigning to be Amphitryon, tells Alcmena he must go back to his troops, bids her good-bye and leaves. A few hours later, the real Amphitryon appears expecting a warm welcome. He is surprised when he is coldly received by Alcmena, who thinks that he is testing her fidelity with his quick return. Amphitryon asks Alcmena for an explanation of her aloofness and is startled when she tells him that he has just left her that very morning. Immediately, Amphitryon's astonishment turns to jealousy and he accuses his wife of disloyalty. Though deeply hurt by her husband's charges, Alcmena receives them

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[2]In the French play, Molière substitutes for this prologue a dialogue between Mercury and Night.

with a great deal of composure. Amphitryon, in his anger, departs to find a witness who can prove to Alcmena that he has just arrived in Thebes.[3] Jupiter then reappears on the scene. This time, he has come to pacify outraged Alcmena and win back her favor. He assures her that he has never doubted her innocence and that "his accusations" were all in fun. Alcmena forgives him and they go inside the house. Shortly afterward, Amphitryon returns, without a witness, but accompanied by a friend who has come to help him solve the mystery in his household. Mercury, still disguised as Sosia, closes the door to Amphitryon, insults him, and treats him as an intruder.[4] The true Sosia soon comes with another three of Amphitryon's comrades. At the sound of voices outside, Jupiter comes out of the palace and meets the real Amphitryon face to face. The stupified onlookers are selected as judges to decide who is the true Amphitryon. Jupiter himself, however, reveals his identity, confesses the trick he has played, and reassures Amphitryon of Alcmena's innocence.

Although Molière followed the story of Plautus' Amphitruo in his adaptation of this play, there are several differences observable between the French and Latin comedies.

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[3]In Plautus' comedy, Amphitryon offers as a witness Alcmena's relative, Naucrates; in Molière's play, he proposes as a witness Alcmena's own brother.

[4]In Plautus' Amphitruo the incidents which follow do not appear since Act III is lost and only fragments of it are extant. So, I shall relate the meeting between Jupiter and Amphitryon as it appears in the French play.

First, Molière altered the prologue of his Latin source. In Plautus, the prologue is an expository monologue spoken by Mercury. In Molière's hands, this prologue becomes an amusing conversation between Mercury and Night in which the author gives the comedy its burlesque tone. Indeed, we are made aware that the story is nothing but a play when we hear la Nuit tell Mercure who is complaining of his attire:

> Que voulez-vous faire à cela?
> Les poètes font à leur guise:
> Ce n'est pas la seule sottise
> Qu'on voit faire à ces Messieurs-là.
> Mais contre eux toutefois votre âme à tort s'irrite,
> Et vos aîles aux pieds sont un don de leur soins.[5]

Mercure replies:

> Oui; mais, pour aller plus vite,
> Est-ce qu'on se lasse moins?[6]

As we said before, Molière borrowed the plot entirely from Plautus. He has, nevertheless, made some changes in the general structure of the play by introducing various scenes. Since Molière created the character of Cléanthis, Sosia's wife, all the scenes in which she appears have been added by Molière to Plautus' play. These scenes are:

a) Act I, Scenes 3 and 4.

b) Act II, Scenes 3, 4, 5, part of 6, and 7.

In Act III, Moliere is almost completely independent of Plautus

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[5]Molière, Amphitryon, Prologue, verses 39-44, p. 359.

[6]Ibid., verses 45-46, p. 359.

and the only scene which is comparable to one in the Latin Amphitruo is the first one.[6]

It is in his treatment of the characters in the Amphitryon that Molière displays best his skill as an adapter. While keeping the case of his Classical source in its entirety, he added five characters: four Theban captains and Cléanthis, Sosie's wife. This last addition enabled him to present an excellent contrast between the ménage of Amphitryon-Alcmena and that of their servants, Sosie-Cléanthis. Molière has also transformed Plautus' Jupiter into a seventeenth century Frenchman. When he is trying to cajole angry Alcmena he sounds like Alceste reconciling himself with Célimene. Note the refinement of Jupiter's speech in the lines below:

> Mais mon coeur vous demande grâce;
> Pour vous la demander je me jette à genoux,
> Et la demande au nom de la plus vive flamme,
> Du plus tendre amour dont une âme
> Puisse jamais bruler pour vous.
> Si votre coeur, charmante Alcmène,
> Me refuse la grâce où j'ose recourir,
> Il faut qu'une atteinte soudaine
> M'arrache, en me faisant mourir,
> Aux dures rigueurs d'une peine
> Que je ne saurois plus souffrir.[7]

Amphitryon and Alcmena do not change their characters when transplanted to French soil. Alcmena is just as virtuous and dignified; Amphitryon is through and through a soldier very

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[6]Molière of course was in a way forced to be original in his third act, since Plautus' text is incomplete here and besides Molière changed considerably the conclusion of the Latin play.

[7]Molière, op. cit., Act II, Sc. 6, verses 1359-1369.

much in love with his wife. Sosia ascends a little in the social scale; in Molière's play he is a valet instead of a slave.

The last and most important change Molière made to his model was the dénouement. In the Latin Amphitruo, Jupiter confesses his escapade to Amphitryon, who is honored to learn that his wife has been loved by the gods. In the French comedy, Jupiter confesses his escapade to Amphitryon but the latter remains silent. It is Sosia who adds the last humorous touch to the play with his priceless comment: "Le seigneur Jupiter sait dorer la pilule."[8]

In short, Molière followed Plautus' Amphitruo in details of plot and development but he inserted in his imitation new scenes and new characters and imparted to his Amphitryon a completely different tone which made it more acceptable to his French audience.

The third play in our consideration is L'Avare. Molière based his comedy on Plautus' Aulularia although other sources are also quoted as his models. Below we give brief resumes of both the French and the Latin comedies.

The Aulularia is the story of a poor man, Euclio, and what happens to him after he finds in his house a small pot of gold. The play opens with an expository prologue by the household god in which the lar tells us that out of regard for Euclio's daughter he has caused her father to find this

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[8] Ibid., Act III, Sc. 10, verse 1912, p. 470.

treasure. He also informs us that he will see to it that Euclio marries his daughter to the very young man who has wronged her at the festival of Ceres. Next to Euclio lives Megadorus, an elderly, wealthy man. His sister Eunomia has persuaded him to marry and he has chosen as his future wife Euclio's daughter. Megadorus ignores that his nephew, Lyconides, has violated his neighbor's daughter. When Megadorus comes to ask Euclio for his daughter's hand, Euclio at once suspects that he knows of his treasure; he consents, however, to the marriage provided Megadorus does not expect the bride to bring a dowry. Megadorus agrees and offers to defray the expenses of the wedding feast. Euclio leaves for the forum and, while he is away, the cooks sent by Megadorus arrive at his house to prepare the wedding banquet. Euclio returns and drives the cooks out while he goes inside to make sure his gold is still safe. Once reassured, he lets the cooks back into the house but leaves, taking with him his pot of gold which he hides in the Temple of Faith. Lyconides' slave follows Euclio and sees him as he buries his treasure. Euclio discovers he has been watched by the slave and after carefully examining him hurries off with his gold to transfer it to another place of concealment. The slave has followed Euclio once more and this time succeeds in stealing the treasure. When Euclio discovers his loss, his grief knows no bounds. He bewails his misfortune in a very exalted soliloquy which is overheard by Lyconides. The latter thinks

that Euclio is lamenting his daughter's disgrace and confesses that he is the author of the offense; Euclio believes that Lyconides is confessing the theft of the pot of gold. Eventually, Euclio realizes his mistake and consents to the marriage of Lyconides and his daughter. The ending of the play is lost but it is presumed that Euclio recovered his treasure and gave it to his daughter as a wedding gift.

The plot of L'Avare bears slight resemblance to that of the Aulularia. Harpagon, a prosperous French bourgeois, lives in a fine house surrounded by servants. He has two children, Cléante and Élise. Valère, a young man who has introduced himself into Harpagon's house in the capacity of steward, is in love with Élise. Cléante, the miser's son, loves Marianne, a girl of the neighborhood who lives in penurious circumstances with her mother. To pursue his conquest of Marianne, Cléante needs money; so he turns to borrowing it from a usurer who demands a high rate of interest. Cléante is brought to meet the money-lender and to his surprise discovers that it is his own father. A highly dramatic scene ensues between father and son in which Cléante rebukes Harpagon for his unscrupulous practices. The breach between the miser and his son begins to appear inevitable. To complete alienating his children, Harpagon declares his intentions of marrying Élise to an elderly, wealthy man named Anselme, and of marrying Marianne himself. His children refuse to accept their father's plans. Cléante is determined to marry Marianne, and Élise to

marry Valère in absolute disregard of Harpagon's wishes. At this moment, Harpagon discovers the disappearance of a casket full of money which he had buried in his garden. He is beside himself with grief and his despair is beyond measure. La Flèche, Cléante's valet, has stolen the cassette and given it to his master. Harpagon suspects Valère and has sent for the police. Here, M. Anselme appears very opportunely. In the presence of Anselme, Valère declares his identity and it turns out to be that he is the brother of Marianne. It appears further that Valère and Marianne are the long-lost children of Seigneur Anselme and all are happily reunited. Anselme yields Élise to his newly-found son. Cléante, who had the lost cassette in his possession, promises to restore it intact to his father if the latter approves his marriage to Marianne. Harpagon consents and recovers his money.

L'Avare is a reworking of Plautus' Aulularia. Molière as usual handled the theme of his Latin source in his own way. Harpagon is indeed of the progeny of Euclio but there is a great difference in their characters. Euclio is a poor man who has suddenly acquired money and becomes obsessed with its possession. His avarice is not the result of innate greed but more the product of his desire to preserve his treasure at all costs. This is very well brought out in the following monologue:

> discrucior animi, quia ab domo abeundum est mihi.
> nimis hercle inuitus abeo. sed quid agam scio.
> nam noster nostrae qui est magister curiae
> dividere argenti dixit nummos in uiros;
> id si relinquo ac non peto, omnes ilico
> me suspicentur, credo, habere aurum domi.
> nam veri simile non est hominem pauperem
> pauxillum parui facere quin nummum petat.[9]

Harpagon, on the other hand, is a man dominated by his avarice. He has the means to live in relative elegance but is very close-fisted to his children and servants. He does not wish to spend money even in necessary items like food and clothes. He loves money so much that he lends it at exhorbitant rates of interest in order to increase his fortune. Maître Jacques, his cook and coachman, paints vividly his character when he says to Frosine:

> . . . tu ne connais pas le Seigneur Harpagon.
> Le Seigneur Harpagon est de tous les humains l'humain
> le moins humain, le mortel de tous les mortels le plus dur
> et le plus serré. Il n'est point de service qui pousse
> sa reconnaissance jusqu'à lui faire ouvrir les mains.
> De la louange, de l'estime, de la bienveillance en
> paroles, et de l'amitié tant qu'il vous plaira; mais
> de l'argent, point d'affaire. Il n'est rien de plus sec
> et de plus aride que ses bonnes grâces et ses caresses;
> et donner est un mot pour qu'il a tant d'aversion, qu'il
> ne dit jamais: "Je vous donne," mais, "Je vous prête
> le bon jour." [10]

Further comparison of the two plays under consideration shows that, in L'Avare, only two characters can claim a Latin origin besides Harpagon: Anselme and La Flèche. Molière apparently modeled the first after Megadorus and the second after

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[9]Plautus, Aulularia, Act I, Sc. I, verses 105-112.

[10]Molière, L'Avare, Act II, Sc. IV, p. 105.

Lyconides' slave. In the Aululariа Euclio has only one daughter and a servant; in L'Avare Harpagon has two children, two lackeys, one servant and a cook-coachman. There are eight speaking parts in the Latin comedy; there are fourteen in the French play.

It is in the plot of L'Avare that the Plautine influence is more pronounced. The Aululariа supplied Moliere with several scenes and situations. The most striking of these is the scene where Harpagon laments the loss of his cassette. The monologue is too long to quote in its entirety; below we give those lines which we think paraphrase Euclio's in the Aululariа.

> Harpagon
> . . . C'en est fait,
> je ne puis plus; je me meurs, je suis mort, je suis enterré!
> N'y a-t-il personne qui veuille me ressusciter, en me
> rendant mon cher argent, ou en m'aprennant qui l'a pris?
> Euh? que dites-vous? Ce n'est personne. Il faut, qui que
> ce soit qui ait fait le coup, qu'avec beaucoup de soin on
> ait epié l'heure; et l'on a choisi justement le temps
> que je parlais a mon traître de fils . . .
> . . . . . .
> Que de gens assemblés!
> Je ne jette mes regards sur personne qui ne me donne des
> soupçons, et tout me semble mon voleur. Eh! de quoi
> est-ce qu'on parle là? De celui qui m'a dérobé?
> Quel bruit fait on là-haut? Est-ce mon voleur, je
> supplie que l'on me dise. N'est-il point caché là
> parmi vous? Ils me regardent tous, et se mettent
> à rire. Vous verrez qu'ils ont part sans doute
> au vol que l'on m'a fait . . . [11]

Compare the above with Euclio's monologue:

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[11] Ibid., Act IV, Sc. VIII, p. 175.

Perii! interii! occidi! quo curram? quo non curram?
tene, tene. quem? quis?
nescio, nil video, caecus eo atque equidem quo eam aut ubi
sim aut qui sim
nequeo cum animo certum investigare. opsecro ego vos,
mi auxilio,
oro, optestor, sitis et hominem demonstretis, quis eam
apstulerit.
quid ais tu? tibi credere certum est, nam esse bonum et
voltu cognosco.
quid est? quid ridetis? novi omnis, scio fures esse hic
compluris,
qui vestitu et creta occultant sese atque sedent quasi
sint frugi.
hem, nemo habet horum? occidisti. dic igitur, quis
habet, nescis.[12]

Molière took from Plautus also the joke about "les autres mains."[13] In the Aulularia, too, Molière found the idea for his use of the phrase, sans dot. In the Latin play, it is to Megadorus that Euclio keeps repeating that he cannot give his daughter a dowry. Plautus also gave Molière the situation of the scene in which Harpagon mistakes Valère's sin for another. Below we cite some lines of that scene with its Latin equivalent.

Harpagon
. . . Mais,
dis-moi, qui t'a porte a cette action?
Valère
Hélas! me le demandez-vous?
Harpagon
Oui, vraiment, je te le demande.
Valère
Un dieu qui parte les excuses
de tout ce qu'il fait faire: l'Amour.
Harpagon
L'Amour?
Valère
Oui.

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[12]Plautus, op. cit., Act IV, Sc. Ia, verses 713-20.

[13]See Plautus, op. cit., Act IV, Sc. IV, verse 641-62.

Euclio
quid ego demerui
adulescens, mali
quam ob rem ita faceres meque meosque perditum ires
liberos?
Lyconides
deu' mihi impulsor fuit, is me ad illam inlexit. [14]

L'Avare then provides a good example of Molière's indebtedness to Plautus. We must admit, however, that Molière's play is superior to the Latin comedy. L'Avare is a complete character study of a miser; the Aulularia is not. Plautus seemed to stress the ridiculous aspects of Euclio's character solely to create laughter; Molière stressed the miserliness of Harpagon to make us reflect (while laughing) on the evil effects such a vice has upon human relations.

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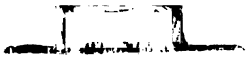
[14]Molière, op. cit., Act V, Sc. IiI, p. 187; Plautus, op. cit., Act IV, Sc. IX, verses 735-37.



CHAPTER IV

MOLIÈRE AND TERENCE

Literary historians tell us that Terence exercised some influence on Molière. They also say that evidence of this influence is noticeable in two of the French writer's works: L'École des Maris and Les Fourberies de Scapin.[1] In this chapter we shall consider what are the Terentian elements in these two comedies of Molière.

First, we shall discuss L'École des Maris. This play has a theme similar to Terence's Adelphoe. In the Latin comedy, we have two elderly brothers, Demea and Micio. Aeschinus, one of Demea's sons, has been adopted by his uncle, Micio, who has brought him up in Athens with kindness and indulgence. Ctesipho, Demea's other son, has remained in the country with his father who has educated him with harshness and restraint. Demea reproaches his brother Micio for spoiling Aeschinus. Micio in turn condemns Demea for his severity with Ctesipho. This is the central idea of the comedy, the clash between the educational policies of Micio and Demea. We soon learn, however, that both systems are equally at fault. The two young men have not come up to their parents' expectations. Aeschinus is quite the libertine.

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[1]See Duckworth, The Nature of Roman Comedy, pp. 406-407.

He has wronged a maiden and concealed the incident from his father Micio. Ctesipho is no better than his brother. He is weak-willed, secretive and shy to the point that he prefers others to carry the blame for his licentious conduct. Ctesipho has allowed Aeschinus to abduct his mistress Bacchis on his behalf and run the risk of the punishment involved in the abduction. So, both youths have been equally spoiled. Finally the distressed parents learn of their sons' escapades and this proves to them how their systems have failed.

As its title implies,[2] the merit of the Adelphoe resides mainly in the excellent characterization of Demea and Micio. Not only do they differ in their views but also in their temperaments. Micio is tolerant, sociable, and understands the ways of men. Demea is obstinate and very conservative. Terence drives home this contrast between them when Micio says:

> is meo dissimili studiost iam inde ab adulescentia:
> ego hanc clementem vitam urbanam atque otium
> secutus sum et, quod fortunatum isti putant,
> uxorem numquam habui. ille contra haec omnia:
> ruri agere vitam; semper parce ac duriter se habere....[3]

Naturally, at the beginning of the play Micio gets our sympathy; but at the end, he fades into the background and Demea draws our attention. Demea realizes that Micio's compliance has earned him popularity and the affection of Aeschinus and

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[2]Adelphoe means The Brothers.

[3]Terence, Adelphoe, Act I, Sc. I, verses 40-46, p. 246.

Ctesipho. He then decides to change his way of life and win back his sons. In an exalted soliloquy Demea reasons with himself:

> age age nunciam experiamur contra, ecquid ego possiem
> blande dicere aut benigne facere, quando hoc prouocat.
> ego quoque a meis me amari et magni fieri postulo:
> si id fit dando atque obsequendo, non posteriores feram.[4]

Then, in a few humorous scenes, Demea proceeds to give Micio a dose of his own medicine or suo sibi gladio iugulāre. He first suggests that Micio give the slave Syrus his freedom, then a plot of land for their kinsman Hegio, and finally he persuades Micio to marry Sostrata, Aeschinus' future mother-in-law. Thus Micio falls victim of his own fault--compliance. He cannot say no to Demea's propositions. Astonished at his brother's transformation, he asks Demea: "quae res tam repente mores mutauit tuos?"[5] Demea replies to him sharply and then turns to Aeschinus with the poet's solution to the divergent systems. His answer can be summed up by the old saying in mediō stat virtus. The best system is a compromise between two extreme views. Both brothers were wrong.

The plot of L'École des Maris develops a problem analogous to that of the Adelphoe. Two elderly brothers, Ariste and Sganarelle are the guardians of two young orphans, Léonor and Isabelle. These two girls are sisters. Ariste

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[4]Ibid., Act I, Sc. IV, verses 877-80, p. 283.

[5]Ibid., Act V, Sc. IX, verse 984, p. 288.

is tolerant and complaisant with his ward Léonor. He states clearly his educational policy when he says:

> Soit, mais je tiens sans cesse
> Qu'il nous faut en riant instruire la jeunesse,
> Reprendre ses défauts avec grande douceur,
> Et du nom de vertu ne lui point faire peur.
> À ses jeunes désirs j'ai toujours consenti,
> Et je ne me suis point, grâce au Ciel, repenti.[6]

Sganarelle, his brother, holds a completely different view concerning the education of his Isabelle. He keeps her in his home and deprives her of the pleasures her sister Léonor enjoys. He wishes:

> Qu'enfermée au logis en personne bien sage
> Elle s'applique toute aux choses de ménage,
> À recoudre mon linge aux heures de loisir,
> Ou bien à tricoter quelque bas par plaisir;
> Qu'aux discours des muguets elle ferme l'oreille,
> Et ne sorte jamais sans avoir qui la veille.[7]

Each tutor wishes to marry his ward. Ariste wins the heart of Léonor with his kindness and liberality; Sganarelle cannot win Isabelle with his harshness and lack of understanding. Besides, in spite of her confinement, Isabelle has fallen in love with a young man named Valère. With her clever intrigues Isabelle manages to elope with her lover and marry him under the very eyes of her duped guardian. Léonor, her sister, marries the benevolent Ariste. The latter's system of liberty and love triumphs over his brother's theory of repression and restraint.

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[6]Molière, L'École des Maris, Act I, Sc. II, verses 179-86, p. 369.

[7]Ibid., Act I, Sc. II, verses 119-24, p. 366.

After examining the plots of L'École des Maris and the Adelphoe, one can easily see that they have one thing in common: they both deal with the problem of the education of youth. Molière probably owes to Terence the idea of contrasting two divergent systems of education.

Besides this point of similarity, there are very few traces of the Latin comedy in the French play. Certain scenes in L'École des Maris parallel some in the Adelphoe in structure, situation and dialogue. But it must be observed that in these instances, Molière has adapted mainly the situation in which the characters find themselves without translating their words exactly from the Latin. Note the scenes below in which we see Ariste and Micio both replying to the censures of their respective brothers.[8]

L'ECOLE DES MARIS

Ariste

Elle aime à depenser en habits, linge et noeuds:
Que voulez-vous? Je tâche à contenter ses voeux;
Et ce sont des plaisirs qu'on peut dans nos familles,
Lorsque l'on a du bien, permettre aux jeunes filles.

ADELPHOE

Micio

fores ecfregit: restituentur; discidit
vestem: resarcietur; est - dis gratia -
est unde haec fiant, et adhuc non molesta sunt.

It is clear that here Ariste's words are a different rendering of Micio's thought.

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[8]Terence, op. cit., Act. I, Sc. II, verses 120-22, p. 249; Molière, op. cit., Act I, Sc. II, verses 193-96, p. 370.

Two other scenes in L'École des Maris could also be compared with similar ones in Terence but our comment upon them here would be superfluous. It is our belief that there is only one scene in The School for Husbands which Molière almost translated from The Brothers of Terence. That scene we quote below together with its Latin parallel in the Adelphoe.[9]

L'ÉCOLE DES MARIS

Sganarelle

Oh! que les voilà bien tous formés l'un pour l'autre
Quelle belle famille! Un vieillard insensé
Qui fait le dameret dans un corps tout cassé
Une fille maîtresse et coquette suprême;
Des valets impudents: non, la Sagesse même
N'en viendroit pas à bout, perdroit, sens et raison
À vouloir corriger une telle maison.

ADELPHOE

Demea

O Juppiter
hancine vitam! hoscine mores! hanc dementiam!
uxor sine dote veniet; intus psaltriast
domus sumptuosa; adulescens luxu perditus;
senex delirans, ipsa si cupiat Salus,
seruare prorsus non potest hanc familiam.

We have said that Molière probably adapted the theme of L'École des Maris in its main aspects from Terence and that he is indebted to the Latin playwright for some of the episodes in his play. However, Molière has made many innovations and changes in the structure of the Adelphoe.

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[9]Molière, op. cit., Act I, Sc. II, verses 251-57, p. 375; Terence, op. cit., Act IV, Sc. V, verses 757-62, p. 279.

The first change Molière has made is in regard to the characters. Though Terence's Demea and Micio are the ancestors of Sganarelle and Ariste, the rest of the characters in the French comedy cannot claim a Latin origin. For the two sons in the Latin play Molière has substituted two girls whom he has made the wards instead of the daughters of the two brothers. He has discarded all minor characters of the Adelphoe and created in their place Valère, Ergaste and the inimitable Lisette. Secondly, Molière has enriched the plot of his comedy with Isabelle's intrigues. Her schemes dominate the play in rapid succession whereas in the Adelphoe the intrigue is very slight, consisting merely of the two young men trying to hide their escapades from their parents. Thirdly, Molière deserves credit for the conclusion of his play. In the Adelphoe, neither of the two systems of education wins out; in L'École des Maris, it is clear that Moliere proposes to us Ariste's.

Finally, a consideration of the titles of the comedies may prove revealing to us. Molière called his play The School for Husbands; Terence called his The Brothers. One could infer that, without neglecting to present an excellent character study of Ariste and Sganarelle, Molière's purpose in writing his play must have been mainly didactical. Terence, on the other hand, probably intended to emphasize the psychological study of "The Brothers" first, and teach his audience a lesson second.

Since Terence contributed some of the situations and the theme of the plot of L'École des Maris, Molière cannot be credited with complete originality in the composition of this play. But, to borrow M. Despois' words, "On voit que les obligations de Molière à l'égard de Térence se reduisent à bien peu de chose."[10]

Molière has borrowed more liberally from Terence in Les Fourberies de Scapin. He has taken his plot mainly from Terence's Phormio. Briefly the plot of the Latin comedy is as follows: Two Athenian brothers, Demipho and Chremes, go away leaving their sons in the care of a servant called Geta. Chremes has gone to Lemnos to bring back his daughter in order that she may marry Antipho, Demipho's son. During the parents' absence, the two young men fall in love. Antipho has fallen in love with Phanium, a poor but respectable girl. Phaedria, son of Chremes, has fallen in love with Pamphila, a slave-girl. With the help of Phormio, a scheming parasite, Antipho marries Phanium. Phaedria, on the other hand, is on the verge of losing his tibicina since he lacks the money to purchase her from the slave-dealer. This is the state of affairs when their fathers return. The latter are not long in learning of Antipho's marriage and determine to have it dissolved. Phormio agrees with the angry old men that he will marry Phanium if he is given thirty minae--the sum needed by Phaedria to buy his girl's freedom. The parasite deceives Demipho and Chremes

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[10] E. Despois, Notice sur L'École des Maris, p. 339.

and gets the money which he gives to Phaedria. Antipho now fears he will lose his wife. However, Phanium is discovered to be the daughter of Chremes. This sudden discovery solves Antipho's difficulties since he can keep Phanium as his wife. But all is not over . . . Phormio learns that Phanium is Chremes' daughter by a secret union in Lemnos. He reveals this to Nausistrata, Chremes' wife, and gains her favor. The parasite wins another victory; he can retain the money he had given to Phaedria and the latter keeps possession of his newly acquired mistress.

The plot of Les Fourberies de Scapin is very similar. Argante and Géronte take a business trip and leave their sons with their respective servants, Silvestre and Scapin. In their absence, Octave, son of Argante, has married Hyacinthe, a poor orphan who has been left alone in the world with no one to look after her except her nurse. Léandre, Géronte's son, has fallen in love with Zerbinette, une égyptienne, whom he desires to purchase from the gypsies. The parents return and the youths turn to Scapin for help. The latter procures money for the young lovers by deceiving their fathers. He secures money from Argante, Octave's father, by persuading him to pay a certain sum to Hyacinthe's brother and avoid a lawsuit. He dupes Géronte, Léandre's father, by telling him that the Turks have carried away his son and demand a ransom of five hundred pounds. After a highly farcical scene in which Geronte keeps repeating: "Que diable alloit-il faire à

cette galère?"[11] Scapin cheats Géronte out of the desired amount--the purchase price of Zerbinette. Léandre pays the gypsies and Zerbinette is brought to Octave's house where she stays with Hyacinthe. As in the Phormio, the nourrice recognizes Géronte as the father of Hyancinthe. The gypsies tell Léandre that they had stolen Zerbinette when she was a child and give him a bracelet which proves to Argante that she was the daughter he had lost many years ago, Léandre marries Zerbinette and Octave gets the parents' approval of his marriage to Hyacinthe. Scapin, whose trickeries had become known to Argan Argante and Géronte, pretends that he is mortally wounded and gets forgiveness for his intrigues.

From the above summaries it is evident that Molière borrowed the framework of his play from Terence's Phormio. He took almost the entire first act from the Phormio; in the second act, he adapted the fifth scene from Terence, and in the third act, he took the seventh scene from his Latin source. In each of these cases, Molière generally owes the situation of the scene to Terence but changes considerably the details of the dialogue.[12] In the scenes below the situation in which the characters find themselves are identical; but observe the discrepancies in their speeches:

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[11]Molière, Les Fourberies de Scapin, Act II, Sc. VII, pp. 475-84.

[12]This is exactly how Molière handled the material he borrowed for L'École des Maris.

LES FOURBERIES DE SCAPIN

Scapin
Là, tâchez de vous composer par étude. Un peu de hardiesse et songez à répondre résolument sur tout ce qu'il pourra dire.
Octave
Je ferai du mieux que je pourrai.
Scapin
Ça, essayons un peu, pour vous accoutumer. Repétons un peu votre rôle et voyons si vous ferez bien. Allons. La mine résolue, la tête haute, les regards assurés.
Octave
Comme celà?
Scapin
Encore un peu davantage.
Octave
Ainsi?
Scapin
Bon. [13]

PHORMIO

Antipho
obsecro, quid si adsimulo? satinest?
Geta
garris
Antipho
voltum contemplamini: em, satine sic est?
Geta
non.
Antipho
quid si sic?
Geta
propemodum
Antipho
quid sic?
Geta
sat est.... [14]

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[13]Molière, op. cit., Act I, Sc. III, pp. 423-24.

[14]Terence, Phormio, Act I, Sc. IV, verses 209-12, p. 162.

The galley and sac episodes in which we see farcical humor at its best are a product of Molière's invention.[15] It was for this famous scène du sac that Boileau accused Molière of having "allié Tabarin à Térence."[16]

As for the characters in both comedies, they could be equated as follows:

LES FOURBERIES DE SCAPIN	PHORMIO
Scapin	Phormio and Geta
Silvestre	Geta
Octave	Antipho
Léandre	Phaedria
Argante	Demipho
Géronte	Chremes
Nérine	Sophrona
----	Nausistrata
----	Dorio
Hyancinthe	----
Zerbinette	----

From the above equation, we can see that Molière has eliminated Nausistrata and Dorio but has added to his comedy Hyacinthe and Zerbinette. The latter, according to Roman custom, did not appear on the stage in the Latin play. But it is in Scapin that we notice the greatest transformation. Molière seems to have created him out of two characters: Geta and Phormio. In some scenes Scapin speaks and acts like Geta; in others, like Phormio.[17] Furthermore Scapin dominates the

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[15]See Molière, op. cit., Act II, Sc. VII and Act III, Sc. II.

[16]See Paul Mesnard, "Notice sur Les Fourberies de Scapin," p. 390.

[17]Cf. these scenes:

Les Fourberies de Scapin	Phormio
Act I, Sc. III	Act I, Sc.III
Act I, Sc. IV	Act II, Sc. I

action; our interest centers on the possible outcome of his fourberies rather than on the amours of the young men. In Terence, on the contrary, Phormio's trickeries seem secondary to the difficulties of the young lovers. While Phormio appears only in the second and fifth acts in the Latin comedy, Scapin is on the stage from the beginning to end. Scapin is every inch a rascal valet, not a Roman parasite. He is more akin to the Plautine servus callidus than to his Terentian counterpart. One cannot help liking Molière's scoundrel, saying with his foil Silvestre: "L'habile fourbe que voilà!"[18] The other characters in Les Fourberies de Scapin are very much like the conventional senes and adulescentes of Roman comedy.

Thus we can say that Molière took the story of the Phormio, made in it numerous alterations, added to it new scenes and characters, and changed the tone and import of his Latin source.

What is then, broadly speaking, Molière's debt to Terence? Molière used Terence's works as a sort of quarry from which he borrowed fresh ideas that he developed in his own original way.

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[18]Molière, op. cit., Act I, Sc. IV, p. 431.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

We have examined the Plautine and Terentian elements in five of Molière's comedies. In the order of discussion, these comedies were: L'Étourdi, Amphitryon, L'Avare, L'École des Maris, and Les Fourberies de Scapin. We have verified the fact that Molière is in some respects indebted to the two Latin playwrights, and that he drew from their works the inspiration for some of his plays. What is then the nature of his debt to Plautus and Terence?

In the first place, Moliere owes to the Latin dramatists the themes of L'Avare, Amphitryon, L'Étourdi, L'Ecole des Maris, and Les Fourberies de Scapin. The themes of these comedies coincide with those of their respective Latin originals. In each of these five works, however, Molière has blended his borrowings with material of his own invention and has thus changed the plot-structure of his Latin models. Molière's comedies have more tightly woven plots than the Latin plays. In most cases, Molière has compressed the action in his comedies and eliminated superfluous scenes which the Latin writers introduced for comic effects. This last point is evident to us when we observe that, while Plautus' Amphitryon and Terence's Adelphoe and Phormio were each divided into five acts, Molière divided his Amphitryon, L'École des

Maris, and Les Fourberies de Scapin into three acts instead of five. We can thus generalize and say that, although Molière borrowed the themes for his adaptations from Plautus and Terence, he gave these themes a novel development and made numerous alterations and innovations in the plots of his Latin sources.

Molière's debt to Plautus and Terence is more apparent in connection with the characters of his plays. He borrowed from the Latin playwrights some of the conventional figures of Roman comedy. The Roman senes, adulescentes and servi all reappear in Molière's comedies though habillés à la francaise. The senes become avaricious French bourgeois; the adulescentes, young Frenchmen in love; and the servi, intriguing valets instead of the cunning slaves of Roman times. Not only did Molière transform the characters he took from the Latin dramatists and transplant them to a seventeenth century background; he also added others of his own invention to his plays. Some of the characters created by Molière are: Cléanthis in Amphitryon, Marianne, Valère, and Cléante in L'Avare, Andrès and Hyppolite in L'Étourdi, Hyacinthe and Zerbinette in Les Fourberies de Scapin, Léonor and Isabelle in L'École des Maris.

Finally, Molière's plays (except L'Étourdi) exhibit some situations which he has taken directly from the Latin comedies. This point of contact between Molière and the two Latin writers has been made clear in our discussion in Chapters III and IV.

The works of Plautus and Terence were a rich mine from which Molière drew characters and humorous situations. We can then very well limit the Plautine and Terentian elements in Molière to two clearly defined aspects: characters and situations. For these he is indebted to the Latin writers.

A far more important parallelism, however, can be established between the three playwrights. Molière's genius shows a marked affinity with that of Plautus and Terence. With the first, he shares the comic verve, the robust, spontaneous humor and his fondness for the farcical and slapstick. Molière, like Plautus, enriches his plays with jokes, puns, songs and dances. He likes to play with words and, like Plautus, makes effective use of repetition and alliteration. At times, Molière's humor is tinged with the coarseness so characteristic of some of Plautus' most comical scenes. In his use of dramatic devices and the handling of certain situations, Molière's close relationship to Plautus is very apparent. But, in his conception of dramatic art, he is obviously akin to Terence. The latter showed a marked tendency toward the creation of a higher type of comedy. His humor was more restrained, his comedies more refined in tone that those of his Latin predecessor. One has only to glance at the titles of some of Terence's plays to notice how he leaned more in the direction of character comedy. Titles like <u>The Mother-in-Law</u>, <u>The Brothers</u>, and <u>The Woman of Andros</u> are highly suggestive of Terence's preference for character study. A close observation

of Molière's career reveals to us that, although at first he cultivated the farce and the comedy of manners, he later wrote comedies of character. His masterpieces are excellent psychological studies. Delineation of character appealed strongly to Molière and in this respect he is truly Terentian in spirit. But he surpassed Terence in character portrayal and Plautus in the use of farcical effects and situations.

Moliere's debt to Plautus and Terence detracts nothing from the greatness of his genius. He will be remembered not so much by the works he adapted as by those he created. Had he limited himself to the imitation of the Latin playwrights, he would never have attained the eminent position he holds among the great writers of the world. Posterity will always see in Molière the author of Tartuffe, L'Avare, Le Misanthrope, and Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme; it will hardly remember him as the author of L'Étourdi.

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