

MOLIÈRE AND LA RENARDIE

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by

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INTRODUCTION

The intent of this thesis is the recording of evidence in support of the proposition that the renardie element is prevalent in the comedies of Molière, that it exists in every type of comedy that he wrote, and that, as portrayed by Molière, it has new and sometimes complex aspects.

The plays herein examined are limited to the comic because the term renardie may be associated only with this genre, and they are grouped by type for purposes of showing the existence of renardie in each. As these comedies, not unlike those of other authors, are controversial as to classification, the listings of Félix Hémon¹ have been followed.

The term renardie is an old one. It calls forth an image, which, in reading Molière, comes consistently to mind; this image is that of the theatre mask, but the face which grins in one direction and weeps in the other is that of

¹Félix Hémon, Cours de Littérature..., VI: Molière, Deuxième Edition (Paris; Libraire Delagrave,...)

Monsieur Renart. What causes this image?

La renarderie is defined by Larousse as "ruse, finesse, trait de renard."² The authors of Eight Centuries of French Literature³ use the term renardie, and describe its obvious connection with the Roman de Renart. The direct association of the term with the thirteenth-century Roman de Renart is evident, and the continuity with which its spirit appears and reappears in French literature may be attributed to its humorous appeal and to its raison d'être, which is social in nature.

The appearance of the Roman de Renart was coincidental with the rise of the bourgeoisie, because it is the literary expression of a new social and economic group for whom the courtly literature had little appeal. During the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, nobles and royalty were still socially dominant, but the middle class attained new heights of recognition

²Pierre Larousse, Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX^e Siècle (Paris; P. Larousse, 1875), Tome Treizième, 946.

³Eight Centuries of French Literature, ed. R. F. Bradley and R. B. Michell (New York; Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1951), p. 13, hereafter cited as Eight Centuries.

and wealth. Note this description of a social structure which varies considerably from the feudal:

Great social changes occurred, or were completed during this period. Serfdom nearly disappeared, urban communities became prosperous and powerful, commerce was stimulated by the great fairs of Champagne, commoners gained in influence; and, though outwardly maintained, feudalism became outmoded.⁴

The sentiments of this growing middle class are literally expressed in the Roman de Renart through use of ruse to circumvent the powers of the existing social hierarchy, and by satiric parody of existing institutions. Renart is the hero who emerges continually triumphant by means of expedient ruse. The episodes in the beast epic are linked by the perpetual feud between Renart, who violates all existing rules, and Isengrin, the wolf, who represents brute strength. Of Renart's character, one writer says:

His master quality is shrewdness, his renardie, which enables him to triumph over brute force, symbolized especially

⁴Columbia Encyclopedia, ed. William Bridgewater and Elizabeth Sherwood (Morningside Heights, N.Y.; Columbia University Press, 1956), p. 1532.

by the wolf, Isengrin, with whom he
 is engaged in an almost perpetual feud

 Renart is obviously intended to stand
 for the bourgeoisie struggling by
 their wits against the powerful barons.⁵

The tone of this satire is not bitter, but
 light, even gay. Mr. Besant describes it as
 follows:

As for the satire, all that the Middle
 Ages venerated, all that they practiced
 with faith and with love--pilgrimages,
 crusades, miracles, pious legends, ju-
 dicial duels, confessions, chivalry,
 all are parodied here without indigna-
 tion, without violence, with a gentle
 irony which is none the less profound
 for its lightness.⁶

One might submit that renardie is an action
 which erupts with a growing bourgeoisie; but that
 it is motivated by a class spirit, l'esprit gaulois,
 which is inherently lighthearted. Note this version
 of l'esprit:

It is the quintessence of that spirit of
 mockery of established institutions and
 traditions which is known as l'esprit
gaulois. However the general tone...is

⁵Eight Centuries, p. 13.

⁶Walter Besant, The French Humorists from the
 Twelfth to the Nineteenth Century (Boston;
 Roberts Bros., 1874), p. 43.

not particularly⁷ bitter: gaiety is the dominant note.

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish this renardie, or shrewdness, from l'esprit gaulois, for on a cause-and-effect basis, both terms are seemingly resultant of the same cause, but the one is an outgrowth of the other, i.e., the feeling of mockery of established institution (l'esprit gaulois) must underlie the shrewd action (renardie) which circumvents the power (established institution) which is not conquerable by direct means.

What, then, is le renardie? Renardie is the use of shrewdness and wit to circumvent power. The wit is inherent to the rogue character who so circumvents the power, but additional humor and appeal result from its achievement. There are darts in the wit, but they "...are wrapped in flowers; their poison is harmless poison enough--it is administered in wine."⁸ The Renart mask is the mask of the theatre itself, but the tears are an obvious fakery and the laughter is the laughter of ruse. Often

⁷Eight Centuries, p. 13.

⁸Besant, p. 11.

rude, often cruel, it outwits from a sense of need, but never sermonizes. Related to satire, it lacks its bitter edge. While no moralist would justify it ethically, its appeal is universal for its spontaneous gaiety and for the ruse and effrontery with which it outwits established institutions or power.

During the years since the beast epic, Renart has aged gracefully, for it is his nature to stay in rapport with his age--and he is with us still, for the very circumstance which produced him--a circumstance of man in his society--is with us yet; nor was he in hiding when the quizzical Molière wrote his inimitable comedies. Scan, for a moment, the France of Molière's productive years. If one begins with his establishment, with Madeleine Béjart, of the Illustre Théâtre, and ends with his death after acting in Le Malade imaginaire, the period is 1642-1673.

In 1643, Louis XIV, the warrior Sun King, expander of the empire, absolute monarch, patron of the arts, inherited the throne under the regency of his mother, Anne of Austria. With the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, the strength of

the Holy Roman Empire was lessened, and France emerged as the dominant European power. With the administrative assistance of Richelieu, Mazarin, Fouquet and Colbert, there were centralization and strengthening of government, reduction of the power of nobility and Protestants, expansion of commerce, control of the economy, and encouragement of the arts.

We have, then, an era of prosperity, with a growing middle class, and of great military power; we have an age of authority, with control over nobility, Protestants, and local government; and a time of greatness in literature, encouraged by the crown. What better climate for Renart?

Prosperity + control = dissension, large or small

Literary growth = expression of the dissension, in an atmosphere wherein Renart might well deign to show his face, grin with glee, and grow quite bold.

We also have a great comedian of tremendous insight who knows peasantry, nobility, and bourgeoisie; Renart appears, and emboldened, reappears again and again in the plays of Molière.

THE FARCES

Le Médecin malgré lui--Sganarelle--George Dandin--
Monsieur de Pourceaugnac--La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas

The use of laughter, which was beginning to emerge from the primitive and spontaneous to the purposeful and intellectual--as the weapon of the lower classes against dominating institution or annoying home tradition--was not confined to the beast epic. Its utilization by the bourgeois in a literature which began to emerge in the thirteenth century was extended to beast epic, fabliau, and farce. L'esprit gaulois, or l'esprit bourgeois and la renardie pervade much of this literature. Note, for example, the gentle irony and agility of the Villain who talked St. Peter into a place in Paradise. Curés and friars, jealous husbands, religious tenets--all were made less burdensome by wit and intrigue.

By the seventeenth century, French farce had been influenced by the Italian. Complexity of intrigue and more characters--the blustering soldier, pedant, valet, parasite, etc.--along with some completely French characters--such as the astrologer, alchemist, pickpocket, caviller, etc.--had been added, but gauloiserie still pervaded this farce. "Cette tradition gauloise de la farce va, sous des

formes diverses, se perpétuer jusqu'à Molière..."¹
 These farce characteristics pervaded even the pastoral and the tragi-comedy. By 1630, the farce was still popular, but its grossness had been attenuated by contact with Italian culture, préciosité,² and the interest of Richelieu in the theatre. Comedy of intrigue, manners and character had been added, the intrigue was more decent, women were represented as chaste, and the buffoonery was modified. Such was the French theater when Molière began to write. In examining his plays for renardie, one might logically begin with the farce, since its literary origin was in beast epic, fabliau, and farce.

Le Médecin malgré lui is a farce of intrigue which ridicules the medical profession. Lucinde, who wishes to marry Léandre in preference to father Gêronte's choice of a wealthier man, pretends a

¹Félix Gaiffe, Le Rire et la Scène française (Boivin et Cie, Editeurs; Paris 1931), p. 74.

²Affectation of manners and language. This movement originated in the salon of the Marquise de Rambouillet, who sought to improve French cultural life. It was at the height of its popularity during the second quarter of the century, when many of the great minds of France gathered at her Hôtel de Rambouillet.

speech-loss to avoid the unwanted marriage. Upon the failure of several different doctors to achieve a cure, the servants bring in Sganarelle, who "cures" her with wine-soaked bread--and by smuggling in her lover disguised as an apothecary. The couple forfeit a planned elopement upon discovery of Léandre's inheritance, and subsequently gain permission to marry.

Now Sganarelle is not a doctor at all, but a fagot-maker. Wife Martine, angry over having been beaten, has told the servants that he is a brilliant but erratic doctor who will admit his true vocation only upon being beaten. The plot of the play therefore rests upon the trickeries of Lucinde and Martine, which, in turn, provoke the trickery of Sganarelle. It is based on Lucinde's delaying trick against a stronger force--her father, and that of Martine against a stronger force--her husband. This irreverence for the institution of marriage is typical of l'esprit gaulois, and this shrewdness in circumventing a stronger force is la renardie. Martine, humorous in the tart candor of her speech and ingenuous in her plot against her husband, could qualify as a female Renart, but the rogue personality which dominates the play is

that of Sganarelle. With adeptness, skill and humor, he adapts to his doctoral role, gains an immediate reputation as a doctor, and is in popular demand. His tricking of G ronte is accomplished with ease, and his compensation of error, with agility:

Or, ces vapeurs, dont je vous parle, venant   passer du c t  gauche o  est le foie, au c t  droit o  est le coeur, il se trouve que le poumon, que nous appelons.....

G ronte

On ne peut pas mieux raisonner, sans doute. Il n'y a qu'une seule chose qui m'a choqu ; c'est l'endroit du foie et du coeur. Il me semble que vous les placez autrement qu'ils ne sont; que le coeur est du c t  gauche, et le foie du c t  droit.

Sganarelle

Oui, cela  tait autrefois ainsi; mais nous avons chang  tout cela, et nous faisons maintenant la m decine d'une m thode toute nouvelle.³

This flexibility in roguery stems from unconcern. As a rogue character, Sganarelle circumvents the forceful G ronte from a sense of need, but he outwits others for the pleasure he finds in his role. It is this flexibility which distinguishes

³Moli re, Œuvres Compl tes en Six Volumes, ed. Emile Faguet, ed. Lutetia, Tome Troisi me (Paris; Nelson, Editeurs,...), 446-447, hereafter cited as Œuvres Compl tes.

his trickery from that of Lucinde, who is not clever enough to resolve her situation alone, and from that of Martine, who is seen only as the shrewd instigator of an action which Sganarelle must complete. Thus one finds an engaging renardie in the characters of Martine and of Sganarelle, with that of Sganarelle dominating the play.

Sganarelle, ou le Cocu imaginaire is a series of small entanglements which confuse, temporarily, all of its characters. Gorgibus, breaking his promise to give daughter Célie in marriage to Lélie, insists upon her betrothal to the wealthy young Valère. She faints, and is assisted by bourgeois Sganarelle; his wife, looking through a window, thinks he is betraying her. She picks up a picture of Lélie inadvertently dropped by Célie; Sganarelle, upon seeing it, believes she is deceiving him. Lélie, rushing home in hopes of still marrying Célie, sees Sganarelle with the picture and thinks he has married his own beloved. A servant clarifies all plot confusion, Valère is found to have already married in secret, and the young lovers are permitted to marry.

As there is little plot, no planned intrigue,

and almost no character development in this one-act play, most of the humor comes from confusion evolving from confusion. For example, when, in the sixteenth scene, an angry Sganarelle thinks L  lie has been seeing his wife, and L  lie believes Sganarelle to be married to his beloved C  lie, the dialogue is quite funny. In another situation, the comic element stems from Sganarelle's cowardly character. Enraged, armed, and ready to attack, he meets L  lie:

Sganarelle,    part.

Ma col  re    pr  sent est en   tat d'agir;
Dessus ses grands chevaux est mont   mon courage;
Et, si je le rencontre, on verra du carnage.
Oui, j'ai jur   sa mort; rien ne peut l'emp  cher.
O   je le trouverai, je veux le d  p  cher.
(Tirant son   p  e    demi, il approche ce L  lie.)

L  lie, se retournant.
A qui donc en veut-on?

Sganarelle
Je n'en veux    personne.

L  lie
Pourquoi ces armes-l  ?

Sganarelle
C'est un habillement que
j'ai pris pour la pluie...⁴

The play is, as illustrated in this excerpt,

⁴O  uvres de Moli  re, ed. M. Auger, Nouvelle Edition, Tome Premier (Paris, Th. Desoer, 1825), 272, hereafter cited as O  uvres.

primarily situation comedy, with no hint of planned intrigue. It is therefore devoid of renardie, for Renart, though innocent in appearance, never acts without deliberation.

Ridicule of a bumbling peasant who has married out of his social class is the key to most of the humor in George Dandin. He is the scapegoat of the plot, and of the typical farce devices--the mix-up of lovers in the dark, the stick-beating, etc.. There is occasional wit from servant Claudine's acrid personality, and from the unexpected. Again, Lubin's personality causes what appears to be situation comedy, but the incident is actually a plot catalyst, used to introduce the woe-be-gone George and to reinforce his woe:

(Having delivered a billet to Dandin's wife, Lubin meets Dandin himself outside, unaware that he is the husband.)

Lubin

C'est que je viens de parler à la maîtresse du logis, de la part d'un certain monsieur qui lui fait les doux yeux; et il ne faut pas qu'on sache cela. Entendez-vous?

George Dandin

Oui.

Lubin

Voilà la raison. On m'a enchargé de prendre garde que personne ne me vit; et je vous prie, au moins, de ne pas dire que vous m'avez vu.

.....

Le mari, à ce qu'ils disent, est un jaloux qui ne veut pas qu'on fasse l'amour à sa femme; et il ferait le diable à quatre si cela venait à ses oreilles. Vous comprenez bien?⁵

Thus the play begins with laughter at George's expense.

In situations where the caricature of the nobility is so heavy that it should be the object of the laughter, the dialogue is so contrived that one laughs at George instead, as illustrated in the following dialogue. (George has made a just accusation: that Clitandre has been flirting with his wife.)

Monsieur de Sotenville
Cela est juste, et c'est l'ordre des procédés. Allons, mon gendre, faites satisfaction à monsieur.

George Dandin
Comment! Satisfaction?

Monsieur de Sotenville
Votre bonnet à la main, le premier; monsieur est gentilhomme, et vous ne l'êtes pas.

George Dandin, à part, le bonnet
à la main. J'enrage!

Monsieur de Sotenville
Répétez avec moi: Monsieur..

George Dandin
Monsieur..⁶

⁵Oeuvres Complètes, Tome Quatrième, 234.

⁶Ibid., pp. 253-255.

So progresses the marital life of George. A pathetically stupid peasant who has married the daughter of M. and Mme Sotenville so that his children will be "gentlemen", George spends the entire three acts of this farce in repeated clumsy attempts to prove to her parents that his Angélique is an unfaithful wife. He ends in greater despair than that in which he began, for she outwits him at every turn, with continuous help from servants Claudine and Lubin. When he knows that Angélique has received a message from Clitandre, that noble creature denies all, and the parents use his "nobility" as a crutch for credence. When George actually see the suspects in a rendezvous, Angélique avoids accusation by pretending great indignation at Clitandre's avowals of love. The final chagrin comes when George, missing his wife, locks her out of the house in the middle of the night. She pretends to kill herself, he goes out to see, she slips in, locking him out, and accuses him of drunken indiscretion.

Angélique's defense is that she was the victim of money-hungry parents and a social-climbing peasant --that no one consulted her about the marriage. The moral of the story would then seem to be that

anyone so foolish as George deserves deceit, ridicule, and misery.

Renardie humor usually involves trickery by an "underdog" to achieve a desired end. When Renart attempts to take advantage of someone weaker than himself, he is usually unsuccessful. While Angélique, in one sense, holds this position in the play, George Dandin would appear to hold it too, for he is continually crushed by the Sotenvilles, so that he is caught between intrigue on one side and social rank on the other. The plot-pattern of renardie is therefore lacking, as is the customary note of gaiety. This farce goes beyond renardie, to out-and-out total disparagement of a foolish man.

A somewhat similar situation occurs in Monsieur de Pourceaugnac. M. de Pourceaugnac is a ludicrously-dressed, not too bright, Limousin. Aside from his very existence as a person--his being what he is--he seems to have done nothing to deserve the drubbing he receives in this play except to have planned marriage. As he is the direct victim of all the comedy in the play except that reserved for the medical profession, the humor assumes a certain baseness, i.e., the ridicule is so out of proportion

to his "sin" that he seems victimized in a malicious and negative manner. This imbalance of cause and roguery, this emphasis on heavy ridicule rather than light merriment, seem characteristic of a very primitive humor rather than renardie, for Renart, who must remain sufficiently engaging to maintain audience rapport, has no need of a bludgeon.

Oronte plans to wed his daughter to a wealthy lawyer from Limoges, M. de Pourceaugnac. Lover Eraste engages a Neapolitan man-of-intrigue and the scheming Nérine to prevent the marriage. Pretending friendship when M. de Pourceaugnac comes for the marriage contract, Neapolitan Sbrigani and lover Eraste make him the butt of repeated low intrigue. They leave him in the care of doctors who bleed and purge him, tell Oronte that he has an illness which should prevent the marriage, bring in women and children who accuse him of polygamy, disguise him as a woman to get him out of town, and make him pay bribe money to avoid being hanged for the polygamy he did not commit. Needless to say, Julie and Eraste marry in the end.

Nérine, early in the play, appears to provide humor as a character, when she delivers an exaggerated harangue of the Limousin she has never met.

Actually, she is laying the groundwork for the indignities to be suffered by M. de Pourceaugnac. In another scene, Eraste, pretending that the Limousin is an old friend, ferrets information from him, then repeats it. The gullibility of the lawyer from Limoges becomes the source of the humor.

Monsieur de Pourceaugnac
Le connaissez-vous aussi?

Eraste
Vraiment! si je le connais! Un grand garçon bien fait.

Monsieur de Pourceaugnac
Pas des plus grands.

Eraste
Non; mais de taille bien prise.

Monsieur de Pourceaugnac
Hé! Oui.

Eraste
Qui est votre neveu?

Monsieur de Pourceaugnac
Oui.

Eraste
Fils de votre frère ou de votre soeur?

Monsieur de Pourceaugnac
Justement.

Eraste
Chanoine de l'église de...Comment l'appellez-vous?

Monsieur de Pourceaugnac
De Saint-Etienne.

Eraste
Le voilà; je ne connais autre.

Monsieur de Pourceaugnac, à Sbrigani.
Il dit toute la parenté.⁷

This dialogue produces laughter based on Eraste's baiting of a clumsy creature. It illustrates the mood of this play, which seems rowdy rather than light, probably because the humor which dominates it is the primitive humor of direct personal ridicule. The tricksters are not sufficiently engaging to maintain audience rapport, and renardie is rarely evident.

La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas is a pleasant contrast to Monsieur de Pourceaugnac. In this one-act comedy of provincial manners, Julie and the viscount (Cléonte) cannot marry because their families are feuding. Cléonte joins the ranks of the suitors of the countess of Escarbagnas to enable them to meet at her home, thus providing a "cover" for their courtship. The play ends when the family feud is settled, Cléonte announces his love for Julie, and the countess, left with one suitor, marries him.

The intrigue in this pleasant little play-- Julie and Cléonte's use of the countess' home as

⁷Oeuvres Complètes, Tome Cinquième, 30-31.

a place of rendezvous--is used as a device to display, through the characters and their writings, a gentle mockery of provincial manners. The supercilious vanity of the Countess of Escarbagnas--who, just returned from a trip to Paris, affects a total knowledge of any subject of discourse--is projected with a whimsical humor which is accentuated by her placement in the midst of other provincial types and by the sometimes deliberate stupidity of her much-berated servants. The innocuousness of Criquet's replies in this dialogue, for example, is sufficiently heavy with deliberation and lack of respect to create an image by itself:

La Comtesse
Où étiez-vous, donc, petit coquin?

Criquet
Dans la rue, madame.

La Comtesse
Et pourquoi dans la rue?

Criquet
Vous m'avez dit d'aller là dehors.

La Comtesse
Vous êtes un petit impertinent, mon ami; et vous devez savoir que là dehors, en termes de personnes de qualité, veut dire l'antichambre.....⁸

⁸Oeuvres Complètes, Tome Sixième, 125.

Julie, too, plays upon the countess' vanity, as in this scene where one of her sons has just been introduced:

Julie

Qui dirait que madame eut un si grand enfant!

La Comtesse

Hélas! quand je le fis, j'étais si jeune, que je me jouais avec une poupée.⁹

Other provincial types are met in the home of the countess. Acquaintance with M. Tibaudier is achieved primarily through his earnest verse of unequal stanza, and his billet to the countess, written in a kind of labored précieux style, while M. Harpin, Angoulême tax collector, is portrayed as an insensitive egoist who charges into a play performance and publicly berates the countess.

One must conclude that the renardie spirit of this play is primarily that of the author, as, using a trick as the raison d'être, Molière achieves a series of animated "portraits" whose juxtaposition reinforces the happy mockery of certain provincial types.

Of this group, only Le Médecin malgré lui,

⁹Oeuvres Complètes, Tome Sixième, 143-144.

with its rogue characters Sganarelle and Martine, has typical renardie action, unless one wishes to include La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas, in which the renardie spirit is primarily that of the author. Sganarelle lacks all elements of this type of humor, while the mood of both George Dandin and Monsieur de Pourceaugnac, is more fourbe (cheating, deceitful, knavish) than rusé, the one for lack of typical plot pattern, and the other for its imbalance of cause and roguery.

THE FARCE-COMEDIES OF MANNER AND INTRIGUE
Les Fourberies de Scapin--Le Malade imaginaire

Having found little renardie in the straight farces, we shall examine the "heavier" farces of manner and intrigue--those which verge on comedy--for the very word "intrigue" hints at renardie.

Les Fourberies de Scapin, true to its title, is the story of the rogue Scapin, and his scapineries.

No challenge is too great for Scapin. Unmindful of moral principle, but loyal to any cause which takes his fancy, Scapin engages in perpetual and joyous roguery for the sake of roguery. Incredibly fluent and as incredibly quick-witted, he achieves audience rapport and audience empathy with his audacious spontaneity and blithe spirit.

The situation in which he acts is complex. Argante and G ronte have left their sons Octave and L andre in the care of valets Sylvestre and Scapin while they make an extended trip. Octave has married Hyacinthe, whom he has found, accompanied by an old nurse, at the side of her dying mother. He dreads his father's return because Argante has betrothed him to the daughter of G ronte, who is being brought from Tarente. L andre has fallen in

love with an Egyptian named Zerbinette. Because both young men are badly in need of money, Octave, for the expenses of married life, and Léandre, for the purchase of Zerbinette from her Turkish captors, Scapin, using various stratagems, extorts money from both fathers for the young men. Zerbinette is found, by means of a bracelet, to be Argante's daughter who was kidnapped as a child, and Hyacinthe learns that the miserly G ronte is her father. Thus all ends well, and Scapin is forgiven.

Scapin excels in roguery because he is a master showman. When Scapin takes up a cause--such as Octave's--no simple request will do: he wants to be begged on bended knee. When he himself has offended L andre, he manipulates the conversation to a point where L andre has offended him. With Argante, he uses a planned impertinence:

Argante

Cela m'aurait donn  plus de facilit    rompre ce mariage.

Scapin

Rompre ce mariage?

Argante

Oui.

Scapin

Vous ne le romprez point.

Argante

Je ne le romprai point?

Scapin

Non.¹

When this conversational maneuver fails and he decides to extort money from the fathers for Léandre and Octave, he invents and masterfully enacts some original and fantastic tales. To Argante, who wishes to annul his son's marriage, he pretends that Hyacinthe's non-existent brother, an able swordsman, will consent to such an annulment only in exchange for funds to join the army. Scapin increases his demands to the point of refusal, persuades, and asks for more.

The scenes with Géronte are doubly funny in their display of scapinerie, and in their mockery of Géronte's miserly nature. Géronte has been told that his son is held for ransom on a Turkish galley. Géronte successively:

1. wants Scapin to take his son's place.
2. wants him to sell his old clothes to raise the money, which he has in his purse all the time.
3. takes out the purse and "forgets" to give it to Scapin.

This exaggerated miserliness serves only as stimulus to Scapin, for, by dint of provocation, it inspires

¹Oeuvres Complètes, Tome Sixième, 34-35.

him to greater performance. Note his use of the melodramatic in this passage:

Géronte

Mais que diable allait-il faire à cette galère?

Scapin

Oh! que de paroles perdues! Laissez là cette galère, et songer que le temps presse, et que vous courez risque de perdre votre fils. Hélas! mon pauvre maître! peut-être que je ne te verrai de ma vie, et qu'à l'heure que je parle, on t'emmène esclave en Algier. Mais le ciel me sera témoin que j'ai fait pour toi, tout ce que j'ai pu; et que, si tu manques à être racheté, il n'en faut accuser que le peu d'amitié d'un père.

Géronte

Attends, Scapin, je m'en vais quérir cette somme.

Scapin

Dépêchez donc vite, monsieur; je tremble que l'heure ne sonne.

Géronte

N'est-ce pas quatre cents ecus que to dis?²

The placement of scapinerie and miserliness in the same dialogue serves, by contrast, to underscore Scapin's dexterity. He maintains this character to the finish, when he attains forgiveness for his escapades by pretending to have been mortally wounded by a falling hammer. Thus endeth the tale of Scapin, personification of Renart.

²Oeuvres Complètes, Tome Sixième, 74-75

Of the most poignant of the Molière comedies, Maurice Rat makes this comment:

...il accumule, dans Le Malade imaginaire, les traits les plus violents et les plus comiques, non seulement contre les médecins, mais contre la médecine.³

Félix Hémon classifies it as one of the "farces plus approfondies"⁴. These moods of violence and profundity, by their very presence would seem to eliminate the probability of a dominance of renardie in the play. Molière's imaginary invalid has become so obsessed with his non-existent illness and daily medical attention that he lives for nothing else, and will force his daughter to marry a dolt because he is a doctor. Argan is comic because of the extremity of his hypochondriacal and dogmatic pursuit of things medicinal; but he is pathetic in his obsession, and in his gullibility to the shameless encouragement of his malady by his wife and doctors. This characterization of Argan, together with the heavy satirization of doctors (at its best in the

³Théâtre Choisi de Molière, ed. Maurice Rat (Paris; Garnier Frères, 1954), p. 596, hereafter cited as Théâtre Choisi.

⁴Félix Hémon, Cours de Littérature, VI, Molière, Deuxième Edition (Paris; Librairie Delagrave,...), 13.

delineation of Thomas Diafoirus), helps to create a mood which is a mixture of the comic with the bitter and the profound.

Argan, the imaginary invalid, thinks he cannot exist without continuous care by two doctors and an apothecary. His illness is encouraged by second wife Béline, who is waiting to inherit his money. She wants daughters Angélique and Louison put into convents (the better to feather her nest), and he wants Angélique to marry the oafish son of Dr. Diafoirus, to assure himself of free medical care.

Servant Toinette arranges a fake death scene to prove Béline's "love". She proves it by expressing her gratitude at his death, while daughter Angélique and her lover Cléante mourn. The aftermath of this action is that Argan is persuaded to study medicine himself, and Angélique is allowed to marry the man of her choice.

The force and impact of this play are partly due to the unexpected renardie which exists throughout in the character of Toinette. Less joyous and more acrimonious than Scapin, she is almost his female counterpart.⁵ She delights in heckling the stronger

⁵Note that her technique and dialogue with Argan in act 1, scene 5 is almost a duplication of that between Scapin and Argante in the sixth scene of Les Fourberies.

force--Argan--and she is ingenious in her manipulation of his "death" scene in order to expose Béline's hypocrisy. She is equally clever in her impersonation of a doctor for the purpose of disillusioning Argan with doctors Diafoirus and Purgon. Note the authority with which she plays this role:

Toinette

Qui est votre médecin?

Argan

Monsieur Purgon.

Toinette

Cet homme-là n'est point écrit sur mes tablettes entre les grands médecins. De quoi dit-il que vous êtes malade?

Argan

Il dit que c'est du foie, et d'autres disent que c'est de la rate.

Toinette

Ce sont tous des ignorants. C'est du poumon que vous êtes malade.⁶

Thus Toinette, in a play where the humor ranges from the pathetic to the bitter, adds the comic impertinence and agility which characterize renardie.

Of the two "heavier" farces of manners and intrigue, the renardie characters are similar in personality; but Les Fourberies is consistently

⁶Oeuvres Complètes, Tome Sixième, 683.

light in mood and is dominated by the Renart character Scapin, while Le Malade imaginaire is sometimes bitterly satirical, with comic relief provided by the scapinerie or renardie of Toinette.

THE COMEDIES OF INTRIGUE AND EPISODE

L'Etourdi--Le Dépit amoureux--Amphitryon-- Les Fâcheux

Comedy, as a type of drama, has more plot and character development than farce. Whether or not these dramatic characteristics will affect the presence and form of the renardie element is yet to be seen.

L'Etourdi is the story of the heedless Lélie, who manages to "put his foot in his mouth" at every turn, even when it is to his own detriment. It is probably even more the story of the knavish valet Mascarille, whose schemes to help his young master are continually and unerringly foiled by l'étourdi --Lélie himself.

Lélie and Léandre are both in love with a young Egyptian named Célie, who has been left with old Trufaldin as loan-security. Both young men are being urged by their respective fathers to marry Hippolyte. Lélie's valet Mascarille devises nine different schemes for obtaining Célie for his master, but Lélie unwittingly thwarts him at every turn.

Plot resolution begins when an old gypsy who raised Célie introduces young Egyptian André, who

has known the young girl before, and wishes to marry her. Her recognition, by an old woman, as the gypsy who kidnapped Célie in her infancy, helps establish Célie's identity as the daughter of Trufaldin (Zanobio Ruberti), and that of André as his long-lost son Horace. All is thus resolved without Mascarille's schemes, with Horace wed to Lélie's sister, Lélie to Célie, and Léandre to Hippolyte.

Mascarille's qualifications as a rogue character of the Renart type are somewhat debatable. His spirit is willing, for he has a reputation as a con- niver and his schemes are ingenious. On one occasion, having heard that rival lover Léandre has ransomed Célie, he pretends to have been abused by his master in order to secure employment with Léandre. He then takes Léandre's token ring to call for Célie, intending to hide her for Lélie. L'étourdi, unaware, stops the sale and ruins the plot by sending a letter to Trufaldin stating that the captive is really the daughter of a Spanish nobleman. One is inclined to think that these failures occur because Mascarille does not confide in Lélie--until the fourth act, when Lélie does everything wrong in a scene in which he has been carefully rehearsed.

Repetition of this type of sequence comprises the plot of the play, and the final solution is accidental, rather than by any solution of Mascarille's. Thus, while appearing clever in his scheming, he seems somewhat unwise in never forewarning his master, and lacking in sufficient agility to avoid being thwarted in his roguery.

Mascarille keeps audience sympathy in spite of the unethical aspect of many of his schemes, probably because the object of his scheming is assistance for a young lover, and for the repetitiousness of his failure; but the engaging wit and joie-de-vivre of a Scapin are not here, nor the ability to circumvent any issue at any time. Hence Mascarille, though a fourbe character, seems incapable of the fourberies of a Scapin, or of the scapineries of a Renart.

In Le Dépit amoureux, Mascarille reverses and assumes the étourdi role. Although the framework of this verse-play consists of three planned deceptions, their ensuing complications, and their resolution, there is no single character of the Renart type.

Valère and Eraste, in this five-act comedy,

are both in love with Lucile, whose "brother", Ascagne, is really a girl. (Father Albert, needing a son to secure an inheritance, had adopted a son when Ascagne [Dorothée] was born, leaving the daughter with another family.) Upon the death of the adopted son in infancy, the mother, unbeknownst to Albert, substituted her daughter for the deceased boy-child. Ascagne, seeing sister Lucile courted by Valère and Eraste, falls in love with Valère; she impersonates Lucile by night, and her courtship with Valère ends in secret marriage. Complications involving both fathers, the courtship of Eraste and Lucile, and the parallel courtship of servants Gros-René and Marinette then result from Valère's belief that he has married Lucile. Plot clarification is achieved after confidante Frosine's research has resulted in the finding of a letter written by the deceased mother, and all couples are happily reunited.

The first of three acts of deception is by Albert, who has conspired in order to inherit; he, in turn, has been deluded by his wife; daughter Ascagne, ensnared by this dual duplicity and unaware of her origins, adds to the intrigue by masquerading as Lucile by night. None of these is inherently

a rogue character, however, nor is either valet. Mascarille is a cowardly slap-stick comic whose bungling "help" causes further complication, while Gros-René, the possessor of an earthy and sometimes humorous common sense, is a declared pacifist.

One cannot, however, ignore the fact that Ascagne, who does not normally engage in duplicity of action, does so in order to ensnare the object of her affections. She says:

Je voulois que Lucile aimât son entretien;
 Je blâmois ses rigueurs; et les blâmai si bien,
 Que moi-même j'entrai, sans pouvoir m'en défendre,
 Dans tous les sentiments qu'elle ne pouvoit prendre.

 Enfin, ma chère, enfin, l'amour que j'eus pour lui
 Se voulut expliquer, mais sous le nom d'autrui.
 Dans ma bouche, une nuit, cet amant trop aimable
 Crut rencontrer Lucile à ses vœux favorable,
 Et je sus ménager si bien cet entretien,
 Que du déguisement il ne reconnut rien.¹

Whereupon Frosine, surprised exclaims:

Peste! les grands talens que votre esprit possède!
 Dirait-on qu'elle y touche, avec sa mine froide?²

Inspired by love, she is clever enough to fool Valère by day and by night, and to delay Lucile when, angry with Eraste, she expresses her intention of pursuing Valère. This role is played with skill and grace

¹Oeuvres, Tome Premier, 130-131.

²Ibid., p. 132.

until the very end, even after the problem of her origins has been resolved, as shown in this passage where Ascagne and Valère are about to duel in defense of Lucile's honor.

Ascagne

Et, dans cette aventure où chacun m'intéresse,
Vous allez voir plutôt éclater ma faiblesse,
Connoître que le ciel qui dispose de nous,
Ne me fit pas un cœur pour tenir contre vous,
De finir le destin du frère de Lucile.³

It is not, however, Ascagne's deception which solves the problem, but Frosine's research. While Ascagne wears the Renart mask for a while, the renardie is temporary rather than inherent to her nature. While plot resolution and some of the play's humor evolve from her ruse, she is serious, rather than humorous, in disposition, and neither the basic plot nor the comedy stem from the sly scheming or spirited personality of a Scapin.

In Amphitryon, wherein Jupiter and Mercury perform dual impersonations of mortals, Molière achieves the expression of an inverse renardie through Mercury.

Jupiter, having fallen in love with Alcmène,

³Oeuvres, Tome Premier, 195.

whose husband Amphytryon commands King Créon's Grecian troops at Télèbe, instigates a morally questionable plot to which Mercury adds a spontaneous--if surface--acceptability.

Sosie, sent at night by Amphytryon with news of victory, is met at the door by himself (Mercury), who guards the home portals while Amphytryon (Jupiter) makes love to Alcmène. Frightened and confused, he returns the same day with Amphytryon himself. Both men have understandable difficulties with their wives, which are further complicated by the reappearance of Jupiter and Mercury. Jupiter clarifies all at a dinner, and tells the couple they will have a son Hercules, whose feats will be known through all the universe.

The renardie in this play is inverse because the deception is performed by gods, and the deceived are both mortal and helpless. It is even more inverse because the deception is completely immoral. While the acts of Renart are frequently unethical, Renart maintains audience rapport because he utilizes ingenuity in the circumvention of the power of brute strength and because he does so with humor and impertinence. One portion of this formula is applicable to Amphytryon, but in a completely

inverse manner, because the deception has as its target the disruption of a happy marriage and the humiliation of an esteemed and heroic man who is defending his country. Both ingenuity and force are aligned in opposition to an idealistic situation which would not appear to have need of disruption, even by a god. Yet this trickery is achieved with an air so engagingly merry that it maintains audience rapport, and might hence be termed renardie.

If one were to further speculate on the possibility of Renart intention on the part of the author, the possibilities become even more broad. For example, if one were to consider Jupiter as symbolical of Louis XIV, one might find it conceivable that Molière was using a weapon of the lower classes--laughter brought about by trickery--as an indirect means of making royal immorality more acceptable to the public at large.

The mythological characterization of this play helps to clothe the impact of its immorality, but so, too, does the hilarity which results from the mischievous nature of Mercury. Mercury intrigues at Jupiter's command, but he elaborates his intrigue for pure love of mischief. Ordered

to impersonate Sosie, and uninterested in sleeping with Sosie's wife Cléanthis,⁴ he deliberately provokes her to outraged anger. Bored while standing around, he insults Amphytryon, knowing that Sosie will bear the brunt of his wrath; when Jupiter, as Amphytryon, has issued dinner invitations, poor hungry Sosie is deliberately barred. This blasé delight in roguery and repartée is typical of a Scapin or a Toinette, as illustrated in this passage:

Sosie

.....
Laissons aux deux Amphytryons
Faire éclater des jalousies;
Et, parmi leurs contentions,
Faisons en bonne paix vivre les deux Sosies.

Mercur

Non, c'est assez d'un seul, et je suis obstiné
A ne point souffrir de partage.

Sosie

Du pas devant sur moi tu prendras l'avantage;
Je serai le cadet, et tu seras l'aîné.

Mercur

Non: un frère incommode, et n'est pas de mon
goût; et je veux être fils unique.

Sosie

O cœur barbare et tyrannique!
Suffre qu'au moins je sois ton ombre.

⁴This act may, in the mind of the author, have seemed justifiable only for Kings and/or gods.

Point du tout.⁵ Mercure

Molière has taken a god, who controls and drubs a mortal throughout the play, and so endowed him with comic rogue appeal that he emerges with full audience rapport.

The love interest, in Les Fâcheux, is used as a frame for the display of different types of boring extremists of seventeenth-century France, most of whom are yet with us in the twentieth.

Eraste, in love with Orphise, has trouble seeing her because of the disapproval of guardian Damis, and continuous interruption by "bores". Damis, having learned that Eraste will secretly visit his niece, waits to ambush him. A group led by Eraste's valet, unknown to Eraste, attacks Damis, and Eraste goes to his defense. Grateful for the chivalrous act which has saved his life, he consents to the marriage.

One meets, in sequence, the effusive boor who noisily interrupts a play while intruding on a private party, the composer-choreographer who sings,

⁵Oeuvres Complètes, Tome Quatrième, 214.

dances, and re-sings, while seeking praise, and the outraged acquaintance who wants Eraste to take up a cause in a manner which is against the law. They are followed in the second act by the piquet player who details each hand and play, two friends quarreling over the merits of jealousy in love, and the "horse-and-hunt" enthusiast whose rules have been violated by an oaf. Next on display are the pedant who is outraged by current poor spelling, and the would-be economist who wants political assistance in securing ports on every coast of France.

As there is no intrigue, little plot, and no rogue character in this drawing-room comedy of character, there is no renardie.

There is evidence of a greatly modified renardie in the comedies of intrigue. In Le Dépit amoureux, Dorothée, inspired by love to assume a role not native to her personality, thoroughly complicates a plot which someone else resolves. Fourbe Mascarille, in L'Etourdi, plays the role of a man whose enthusiasm surpasses his ability, while Les Fâcheux is a satirization of seventeenth-century manners. Only in Amphitryon, where the renardie is performed by god rather than mortal, is one exposed to a spirit worthy of a Scapin.

THE COMEDY-BALLETS

Le Mariage forcé--La Princess d'Elide--
L'Amour médecin--Mélécerte--La Pastorale comique--
Le Sicilien--Les Amants magnifiques

In seeking the renardie element in the comedy-ballets--all command plays written for fêtes given by Louis XIV--one must immediately disallow Mélécerte, and La Pastorale comique. The unfinished Mélécerte is a heroic pastoral. Piquant in places, it is a love story with no scheming by any character, and hence without renardie. La Pastorale comique, a brief ballet on love, is of a similar mood. Of the remaining five, there is one in which one views the results of a ruse without ever seeing the action itself, two which contain a cooperative renardie effort, and two in which one finds Renart-type court jesters who are not fools at all, but who are possessed of infinitely more wisdom than that generally accredited to a person of this type.

The coquette Dorimène, in Le Mariage forcé, could conceivably have been developed into a female rogue character. The entire focus of both play and ballet, however, is on satirization of an aging Sganarelle who realizes, too late to escape a marriage contract, the mistress Dorimène is a coquette

for whom the sole purpose of marriage is escape from paternal liens. As there is no real development of Dorimène as a character, one could scarcely substantiate complete analysis. One does, however, through Molière's use of a technique later masterfully developed by James Joyce, have a partial image of Dorimène and of her action, which is gleaned through the words of others. One knows that she is artful enough to have used ruse against a stronger force, her father, and against a weaker one, Sganarelle. Then, too, it is ^{her brother} ~~the father~~ who insists that a reluctant Sganarelle fulfill the terms of the marriage contract. A consideration from this point of view leads one to conclude that, while Dorimène has used ruse to escape the stronger force, she ^{the assistance of} ~~this same~~ force to deliver the coup de grâce. One has, finally, an image of artifice, used in conjunction with strength, to victimize an aging fool. The deceit traditionally associated with renardie is there, but the customary plot-pattern has been shifted.

The most obvious trickery in L'Amour médecin is performed by Clitandre disguised as a physician. Sganarelle, father of his "intended", will give

his daughter anything of her asking--except that which she most wants: marriage. He wishes to keep his wealth and his daughter for himself. Under the careful tutelage of servant Lisette, Lucinde becomes "ill". When four physicians disagree over diagnosis and treatment, lover Clitandre disguises himself as a doctor, diagnoses the illness as one of fantasy involving marriage, and urges Sganarelle to humor the fantasy. Sganarelle subsequently signs the marriage contract, and the couple leaves.

Clitandre is sufficiently adept to propose to Lucinde with her father in the room, and, by using a negative approach to marriage in conjunction with a proposed remedy, to make of Sganarelle a willing accomplice to his own undoing.

Note the smoothness with which he leads up to the idea of marriage through medical diagnosis--thus appealing to Sganarelle's concern for his "ill" daughter--and the skill with which he plays upon Sganarelle's opposition to the idea of marriage:

Sganarelle, à Clitandre
Eh bien! notre malade? Elle me semble un peu plus gaie.

Clitandre
C'est que j'ai déjà fait agir sur elle un de ces remèdes que mon art m'enseigne. Comme l'esprit a grand empire sur le corps, et que

c'est de lui, bien souvent, que procedent les maladies, ma coutume est de courir à guerir les esprits, avant que de venir aux corps. J'ai donc observé ses regards, les traits de son visage, et les lignes de ses deux mains; et, par la science que le ciel m'a donnée, j'ai reconnu que c'était de l'esprit qu'elle était malade, et que tout son mal ne venait que d'une imagination déréglée, d'un désir déprivé de vouloir être mariée. Pour moi, je ne vois rien de plus extravagant et de plus ridicule que cette envie qu'on a du mariage.

Sganarelle, à part
Voilà un habile homme!

Clitandre
Et j'ai eu, et aurai pour lui, toute ma vie,
une aversion effroyable.

Sganarelle, à part
Voilà un grand médecin!

Clitandre
Mais, comme il faut flatter l'imagination des malades, et que j'ai vu en elle de l'alienation d'esprit, et même qu'il y avait du péril à ne lui pas donner un prompt secours, je l'ai prise par son faible, et lui ai dit que j'étais venu ici pour vous la demander en mariage.¹

.....

Although Clitandre demonstrates skill in action, it is Lisette who is the rogue behind the action, and therefore the instigator of the plot. It is she who masterminds the scheme from the beginning, and it is she who remains ready to intercede and smooth over any little difficulty which may arise. She declares, with authority, both her willingness and

¹Oeuvres Complètes, Tome Troisième, 284-285.

her ability to resort to intrigue to solve the problem:

Allez, encore un coup, je veux servir votre
passion; je prends, dès à présent, sur moi, tout
le soin de ses intérêts, et vous verrez que je
sais des détours.....²

It is interesting to note that Lucinde has not confided in Lisette because she believed her situation to be hopeless--i.e., that she has been unaware of Lisette's talents. One might therefore assume that Lisette does not, like Scapin or Toinette, practice habitual roguery for the pure joy of being mischievous, but, that when her indignation and loyalty are aroused--when father Sganarelle becomes "un vilain homme"--she takes over with complete efficiency to protect her charge and "servir votre passion". She states her position early in the play:

Par ma foi, voilà un vilain homme; et je vous avoue que j'aurais un plaisir extrême à lui jouer quelque tour. Mais d'où vient donc madame, que jusqu'ici vous m'avez caché votre mal?³

It is thus evident that, while the actual enactment of the plot is achieved through her partnership with Clitandre, it is Lisette who has masterminded the whole. Her irreverence for the tyranny

²Oeuvres Complètes, Tome Troisième, 257.

³Ibid., p. 256.

of paternal authority is typical of l'esprit gaulois, but her quick-witted and piquant humor and her efficient strategy in the solution of the dilemma of the hapless Lucinde are typical of renardie. It is therefore Lisette in whom culminates la renardie of the play.

Again, in le Sicilien ou l'Amour peintre, there is a collaboration of talents. Le Sicilien is Don Pèdre, who jealously guards the young Grecian Isidore, whom he has freed from slavery for the purpose of matrimony. Frenchman Adraste, (l'amour peintre), is hopelessly in love with Isidore, and unable to get near her, except by posing as a portrait painter. After several fruitless attempts, Adraste and valet Hali attain Isidore's release by the substitution of a veiled young slave.

Now Hali is mischievous in nature, and takes pride in his skill in intrigue, as shown in this statement:

Le courroux du point d'honneur me prend; il ne sera pas dit qu'on triumphe de mon adresse; ma qualité de fourbe s'indigne de tous ces obstacles, et je prétends faire éclater les talents que j'ai eus du ciel.⁴

⁴Oeuvres Complètes, Tome Quatrième, 82.

Although he seems never to run out of ideas, he appears to lack the efficiency of a Lisette, for he customarily tries one plan after the other in a haphazard manner, convinced of eventual success.

He says:

Laissez-moi faire seulement. J'en essayerai tant de toutes les manières, que quelque chose enfin nous pourra réussir.⁵

While willing, even eager, to be a fourbe, he lacks the spontaneous flexibility of Scapin or Toinette, or the poise in artifice of a Renart, who can weep convincing tears while laughing within. On one occasion, for example, he takes a troupe of slave musicians to the home of Don Pèdre, hoping to get employment there. The song, alternating love-verses to Isidore with appeals for employment, is so obvious that the jealous Don Pèdre evicts the group. Heli then loses his temper and gives himself completely away when he shouts:

Eh bien! oui, mon maître l'adore. Il n'a point de plus grand désir que de lui montrer son amour; et, si elle y consent, il la prendra pour femme.⁶

⁵Oeuvres Complètes, Tome Quatrième, 82.

⁶Ibid., p. 90-91.

It appears, at this point, as though Hali is an étourdi who does more harm than good. It is Adraste who substitutes himself for a portrait-painter friend, and gains admission to the house, and it is Adraste who makes loquacious, double-entente conversation while posing his charming subject. It is also he who plans the substitution of the Egyptian for Isidore, but it is Hali who, posing as a Spanish nobleman, calls upon Don Pèdre and gives his master an opportunity to speak to Isidore more freely. Hali and Adraste therefore combine their talents to outwit the forceful Don Pèdre, achieving a partnership renardie, which, in all probability, neither could have achieved alone.

A court jester who does more than jest helps resolve an apparently insolvable love quadrangle in Les Amants magnifiques. In the plot nucleus, the noble and courageous General Sostrate, too modest to declare his love for the beautiful princess Eriphile, is asked to intercede for two rival princes who vie for her hand.

A love-idyl set in the valley of Tempé during the Pythian games, this comedy-ballet is filled with gaiety and love poetry, marivaudage, light satire

and mild fourberie.

The fourberie is provided by pedantic astrol-
oger Anaxarque, in whose predictions the queen
mother believes, and the princess and court jester
do not. A bribable schemer, he "fakes" an appear-
ance of Venus, who announces that the princess'
husband-to-be will be named from the heavens. His
plan includes a subsequent staged attack and rescue
of the queen, from which prince Iphicrate--best in
bribery--will emerge a hero. The plot is inter-
rupted by an act of God when General Sostrate, after
rescuing the queen from a wild boar, marries the
princess to whom he had never intended to declare
his love.

Lacking sense of humor or sense of honor,
Anaxarque is more fourbe than fox, and is out-maneu-
vered by Clitidas and an act of God. A perceptive
observer of the human race and the possessor of a
penetrating humanity and wit, court jester Clitidas
attempts to resolve the love quadrangle by telling
the princess of General Sostrate's love for her.
His adaptability and wit are especially evident in
the scene with the haughty princess. Note that he
changes his tack three different times in a single
dialogue:

Eriphile
Comment, amoureux! Quelle témérité est la
sienne! C'est un extravagant que je ne verrai
de ma vie.

Clitidas
De quoi vous plaignez-vous madame?

Eriphile
Avoir l'audace de m'aimer! et, de plus, avoir
l'audace de le dire!

Clitidas
Ce n'est pas vous, madame, dont il est amoureux.

Eriphile
Ce n'est pas moi?

Clitidas
Non, madame; il vous respecte trop pour cela,
et est trop sage pour y penser.

Eriphile
Et de qui donc, Clitidas?

Clitidas
D'une de vos filles, la jeune Arsinoé.

Eriphile
A-t-elle tant d'appas, qu'il n'ait trouvé qu'elle
digne de son amour?

Clitidas
Il l'aime éperdument, et vous conjure d'honorer
sa flamme de votre protection.

Eriphile
Moi?

Clitidas
Non, non, madame. Je vois que la chose ne vous
plaît pas. Votre colère m'a obligé à prendre
ce detour; et, pour vous dire la vérité, c'est
vous qu'il aime éperdument.⁷

⁷Oeuvres Complètes, Tome Cinquième, 135-137.

Clitidas is thus sufficiently adroit to not only make the general's love known to the princess, but, by the momentary arousal of her jealousy, to make the princess aware of her own feeling for the general. Although the final plot resolution is by act of God, and one may not, therefore, credit Clitidas with its achievement, one may safely credit him with serving as its catalytic agent. As such, he is lovable.

La Princess d'Elide is in many ways similar to, if less developed than, Les Amants magnifiques. The setting is again a Grecian fête, to which King Iphitas hopes to attract the most valiant princes from near and far, that his daughter may fall in love; but the princess is a beautiful and disdainful huntress who scorns submission to love as a cowardly act. Prince Euryale of Ithaca, intrigued by the unattainable, gains her love by duplicating her role and pretending a total disinterest in love.

Jester Moron is the only rogue character in the play. While he does not plan the strategy used by the prince, his help in its implementation is so great that it probably would not have been achieved without him. An adept go-between, he helps establish the image of a haughty prince who is disinterested in love, and he sustains the prince when

he is tempted to step out of his chosen role. His strategy is performed with such adeptness and his humor is so beguiling that one could term it renardie.

One thus finds a diversified but frequently evident renardie in the comedy-ballets of Molière.

THE COMEDIES OF CHARACTER AND MANNERS

Les Précieuses ridicules--L'Ecole des maris--
L'Ecole des femmes--Le Bourgeois gentilhomme--
Don Juan--Les Femmes savantes

Les Précieuses ridicules, a comedy in one act and seventeen scenes, was presented at the Petit Bourbon in 1659. The setting is the Paris house of Gorgibus, who has brought his daughter Magdelon and niece Cathos from the provinces for a visit. They, smitten with préciosité,¹ and incensed by the non-gallant approach to courtship of the young men La Grange and Du Croisy, have dismissed them with scorn. Gorgibus, having intended marriage arrangements, is very annoyed. The young gentlemen gain revenge by sending their valets, disguised, respectively, as marquis and valet, to court in the true précieux manner. The play ends when La Grange and Du Croisy strip the valets of their borrowed

¹The précieux movement had spread throughout the provinces, and reached the point of the ridiculous in the salons of the imitators of Madame de Rambouillet. Current salons were those of Mlle de Scudéry, Mme Aragonais, Mlle l'Héritier. After this play, which aroused a lively storm of criticism and defense, the Précieux of Paris changed their name to the Illustres, and the précieux movement gradually died out.

finery in the presence of two indignant young ladies.

The theme of this play, a comedy of manners, is satirization of the précieux movement. The mood of light satire, established in the introduction with Molière's innocent commentary on authors, is maintained throughout. Little barbs of humor, aimed with the most nonchalant of grins, fly throughout the play, and their aim is the extremist imitators of Madame de Rambouillet. The device upon which this humor rests is the revenge-trick of La Grange and Du Croisy. Their plan at first appears to have been inspired by gauloiserie, because it is a revenge trick. La Grange expresses his outrage in this passage:

Du Croisy
Il me semble que vous prenez la chose fort
à coeur.

La Grange
Sans doute, je l'y prends, et de telle façon
que je me veux venger de cette impertinence.²
.....

La Grange also plots against the strength of a social movement. This is renardie. Outraged and affronted, sufficiently perceptive to see the social cause of his discomfiture, he will oppose the manner

²Théâtre Choisi, p. 7.

through caricature which "pourra leur apprendre à connaître un peu leur monde".³ He says, in the same speech:

Je connais ce qui nous a fait mépriser. L'air précieux n'a pas seulement infecté Paris, il s'est aussi répandu dans les provinces, et nos donzelles ridicules ont humé leur bonne part
Je vois ce qu'il faut être pour en être bien⁴
reçu.....

He does not, however, play the Renart role himself.

He enlists the aid of Mascarille and Jodelet:

J'ai un certain valet, nommé Mascarille, qui passe, au sentiment de beaucoup de gens, pour une manière de bel esprit; car il n'y a rien à meilleur marché qui s'est mis dans la tête de vouloir faire l'homme de condition. Il se pique ordinairement de galanterie et de vers, et dédaigne les autres valets jusqu'à les appeler brutes.⁵

La Grange, then, plots a renardie action against a social force, using Mascarille and Jodelet in its implementation. This trickery is then used as a framework for a complete mockery of préciosité-- of its artificiality, its devious language, its madrigals and portraits, the egoism of its adherents-- all are parodied without a note of rancor, and with an air of innocuous and spontaneous fun. Molière

³Théâtre Choisi, pp. 7-8.

⁴Ibid., p. 8.

⁵Ibid., p. 8.

thus entertains his audience at the expense of préciosité, using a trick as the basis of the plot.

The humor, in L'Ecole des maris, is not so airily gay as that in Les Précieuses ridicules. This is probably because Isabelle, in the Renart role, is calculating and quick-witted, but lacking in the spontaneous sense of humor of a Mercury or a Mascarille.

Sisters Isabelle and Léonor have been left in the care of brothers Sganarelle and Ariste, to marry or to give in marriage, as discretion may indicate. Ariste, some twenty years older, and apparently wiser, than Sganarelle, has raised his charge with a kind of gentle permissiveness and trust, and will not force an unwanted betrothal. Sganarelle, inflexible and opinionated, has raised Isabelle in accordance with his own very severe dicta. He intends to marry her in eight days. She, desperate, utilizes Sganarelle himself in a series of involved trickeries in order to marry the man of her choice, Valère. The plot of the play therefore rests on the force and extremeness of Sganarelle's character, as it is the cause of all intrigue. In one situation, for example, Isabelle, aware of Valère's interest in her and

desperate in the face of her approaching marriage to Sganarelle, seeks to relay her sentiments to Valère. Pretending indignation at Valère's interest in her, she sends Sganarelle himself, with a deceptively emphatic message:

Valère

Qui vous a dit que j'ai pour elle l'âme atteinte?

Sganarelle

Des gens à qui l'on peut donner quelque crédit.

Valère

Mais encore?

Sganarelle

Elle-même.

Valère

Elle?

Sganarelle

Elle, Est-ce assez dit?
Comme une fille honnête, et qui m'aime d'enfance,
Elle vient de m'en faire entière confidence,
Et, de plus, m'a chargé de vous donner avis
Que, depuis que par vous tous ses pas sont suivis,
Son coeur, qu'avec excès votre poursuite outrage,
N'a que trop de vos yeux entendu le langage;
Que vos secrets désirs lui sont assez connus,
Et que c'est vous donner des soucis superflus
De vouloir davantage expliquer une flamme
Qui choque l'amitié que me garde son âme.⁶

Later, pretending to have received a love-note, she sends Sganarelle to return it unopened, that her honor may not be tarnished. Its content is a plea for help:

⁶Théâtre Choisi, p. 58.

Cette lettre vous surprendra sans doute, et l'on peut trouver bien hardis pour moi, et le dessein de vous l'écrire, et la manière de vous la faire tenir; mais je me vois dans un état à ne plus garder de mesure. La juste horreur d'un mariage dont je suis menacée dans six jours me fait hasarder toutes choses; et, dans la résolution de m'en affranchir par quelque voie que ce soit, j'ai cru que je devais plutôt vous choisir que le désespoir ⁷

Again, in scene 9, Isabelle uses duplicity for a purpose, when she tells Valère of her love while pretending loyalty to Sganarelle:

Isabelle
 Mais, en l'état où sont mes destinées,
 De telles libertés doivent m'être données;
 Et je puis, sans rougir, faire un aveu si doux
 A celui que déjà je regarde en époux.

Sganarelle
 Oui, ma pauvre fanfan, poubonne de mon âme!

Isabelle
 Qu'il songe donc, de grace, à me prouver sa flamme!

Sganarelle
 Oui, tiens, baise ma main.

Isabelle
 Que sans plus de soupirs
 Il conclue un hymen qui fait tous mes désirs,
 Et reçoive en ce lieu la foi que je lui donne
 De n'écouter jamais les vœux d'autre personne.
 (Elle fait semblant d'embrasser Sganarelle, et donne sa main à baiser à Valère.)⁸

⁷Théâtre Choisi, pp.62-63.

⁸Ibid., pp. 71-72.

The successful culmination of Isabelle's maneuvers occurs when, toward the end, she pretends to shut herself in her room while her sister, purportedly in love with Valère, goes to avow her love in Isabelle's voice. Sganarelle, gleeful over the presumed deception to his brother's charge, helps to deceive himself by aiding in the marriage of his own "intended" to Valère. So ends a renardie action which, more calculating than spontaneous, has been both skillful and successful.

The general point of L'Ecole des femmes is satirization of some of the very strict rules for women and wives of the day, and most especially the school which was confusing ignorance with stupidity and education with deception, as does Arnolphe. He, an extremist advocate of this school of thought, is the force which stimulates the esprit gaulois and the renardie, because it arises from his extremism.

The play opens with Arnolphe's announcement that he will marry the young and enchantingly naïve Agnès. He has had her convent-raised in ignorance in the belief that this precaution will assure innocence on her part and dominance on his, thus preventing his ever becoming a cuckold. (A peasant

woman, unable to provide for the child, had entrusted her to Arnolphe's care at the age of four.) Horace, son of Arnolphe's good friend Oronte, has met and fallen in love with Agnès. Plot intrigue is based on the fact that Arnolphe, unknown to Horace, has changed his name to M. de la Souche. He is a willing confidant of Horace, who relates, step-by-step, his efforts to court the girl, who is a virtual prisoner of M. de la Souche. Love conquers all when it is found that Agnès is the long-lost daughter of Arnolphe's friend's brother-in-law, and has already been betrothed to Horace.

The major deception of the play has been attempted by the extremist who presumably controls the situation. Arnolphe takes gross advantage of young Horace by pretending sympathy when he confides in him. Having thus attained advance knowledge of Horace's planned night-rescue of Agnès, he lays an ambush and, still feigning friendship, takes the "escaped" Agnès off for "protection". His role is a fourbe one, performed by master rather than servant.

There is a renardie spirit, and an esprit gaulois, which develop as a reaction to this fourbe aspect of Arnolphe's character. The esprit gaulois is frequently demonstrated by wily servants Alain

and Georgette. Apparently lacking in devotion for Arnolphe, but subject to his bribery, they are often deliberately stupid about his orders. On one occasion, having been asked to bodily evict Horace should he reappear, they innocently demonstrate on Arnolphe. Agnès, enchantingly and maddeningly honest in her conversations with Arnolphe, is not lacking in l'esprit de Renart. Having been ordered to throw stones at Horace should he appear again, she does so--with love note attached. It is also interesting to observe that she has somehow, in spite of Arnolphe's orders, learned to write, as revealed by Horace in this conversation with Arnolphe:

Horace

.....
 D'une telle action n'êtes-vous pas surpris?
 L'amour sait-il pas l'art d'aiguïser les esprits?
 Et peut-on me nier que ses flammes puissantes
 Ne fassent dans un coeur des choses étonnantes?
 Que dites-vous du tour et de ce mot d'écrit?⁹

Agnès' little deceptions, as evidenced by her letter, spring from her inherent kind-hearted nature, from her love, and from Arnolphe's unyielding nature. She maintains complete audience rapport because of this character contrast. Though plot solution does not occur

⁹Théâtre Choisi, p. 132.

as the aftermath of her strategy, its spirit is one of renardie.

Le Bourgeois gentilhomme, true to its title, ridicules a member of the nouveau riche who seeks to imitate the aristocracy. The mood is one of airily prancing gaiety, which is probably enhanced by the musical-ballet intermedes. M. Jourdain, in this prose comedy-ballet, romps through five acts of music lessons, dancing lessons, fencing lessons, and wife-scooldings. He unwittingly finances Count Dorant's courtship of a marquise, believing him to be acting as his own intermediary. Having refused to permit his daughter to marry anything less than a marquis, he is tricked by her lover's valet, who disguises lover Cléonte as the son of a visiting Turkish "great" in order to achieve the marriage.

M. Jourdain meets his downfall through two kinds of intrigue: the fourbe deception of Count Dorant, who cleverly persuades him to finance his courtship of the marquise, and the valet's disguising of lover Cléonte as the son of a Turkish potentate. In the third act, M. Jourdain has angrily refused to let his daughter marry Cléonte:

Voilà bien les sentiments d'un petit esprit,

de vouloir demeurer toujours dans la bassesse. Ne me repliquez pas davantage: ma fille sera marquise, en dépit de tout le monde; et, si vous me mettez en colère, je la ferai duchesse.¹⁰

Covielle, sympathetic to his master's predicament, then plans his deception:

Covielle

Il s'est fait depuis peu une certaine mascarade qui vient le mieux du monde ici, et que je prétends faire entrer dans une bourle que je veux faire à notre ridicule. Tout cela sent un peu sa comédie; mais, avec lui, on peut hasarder toute chose; il n'y faut point chercher tant de façons, et il est homme à y jouer son rôle à merveille et à donner aisement dans toutes les fariboles qu'on s'avisera de lui dire. J'ai les acteurs, j'ai les habits tout prêts; laissez-moi faire seulement.¹¹

The successful enactment of this subterfuge concludes the play.

All paths of wit in this play lead to a very funny picture of someone trying to be something that he is not. The renardie, though a minor portion of the picture, is artful because the audience laughs with a clear conscience. Since no one could conceivably be so ox-like as the exaggerated M. Jourdain, one laughs at a character and not a person, and one laughs a carefree laugh.

¹⁰Théâtre Choisi, p. 478.

¹¹Ibid., p. 479.

Don Juan is a five-act comedy of character, in which most action develops from the very complex character of Don Juan. Completely unscrupulous in love, to the extent of "marrying" several different women, he escapes all punishment so long as he is true to his own rather diabolical self. When, in an effort to make people think he has reformed, he deliberately plans to become a hypocrite, heaven intervenes, and he meets his end.

Beyond an occasional bit of farce humor, most of the play's comedy develops from the characters of Don Juan and his servant Sganarelle. Don Juan, occasionally kind-hearted, sometimes heroic, is generally so avowedly wicked as to be unbelievable. Hence a kind of inverse and incredulous humor springs from the wickedness itself. Sganarelle, inherently somewhat less than brave, is rather emphatic about his moral beliefs, but lacks the consistency of fortitude and reasoning power necessary to their sustenance in the face of Don Juan's maliciously wicked personality. He repeatedly lectures his master on moral principle, but so clumsily as to become funny in the process. Speaking of proof of the existence of God, Sganarelle begins in a serious vein; then, flustered by Don Juan's unruffled indifference

to his reasoning, he becomes confused, excited--and ridiculous. This mockery of religious explanation is non-serious in vein, and it evokes the laughter of ridicule by subtly indirect means. It is therefore satirical.

The méchant trickeries of Don Juan are performed against a stronger force--society, but most frequently do harm to a character less powerful or less clever than Don Juan. They are thus not apt to engage or to hold audience rapport. The most supreme trick of all--that of the statue who comes to dinner and issues a fateful return invitation--is an act of the heavens. In addition, it is a single, ironical blow, rather than contrived wit or intrigue. One could scarcely label it renardie.

Les Femmes savantes is a far more "heavy" comedy than the others in this group; more time is devoted to character development, some in a rather serious vein, and there is consequently less time for incidental humor. Barring an occasional bit of this incidental comedy, which has no essential connection with character or plot, and which serves to lighten the mood, all humor is aimed at the femmes savantes,¹² the

¹²The femmes savantes, probably an outgrowth of

grammarian Ménage,¹³ and précieux Abbé Cotin.¹⁴ The femmes savantes themselves are made to look ridiculous through the expressed ideas of the mother and of her daughter Armande, who wishes to marry philosophy, leaving the "low amusements"¹⁵ of love and marriage to the coarse and vulgar. These ideas, although seriously expressed, are sufficiently exaggerated to evoke, in the audience, a feeling of ridicule. This feeling of the ridiculous which has already been established is then built into even further exaggeration--and hence a lighter vein--when so simple a thing as a lackey's falling off a chair is stretched into a discourse on gravity. This lightly mocking, sometimes sharply satiric, ridicule is made more hilarious by the

the précieuses, were reputed to be more interested in culture, with emphasis on the scientific, than in the accepted feminine role of marriage and homemaking.

¹³Grammarian Ménage, associated with Mesdames de Sévigné and de Lafayette, signed his writing AEgidius Menagius; he was noted in some circles for pedantic erudition and plagiarism, and is represented in this play by Vadius.

¹⁴Abbé Cotin, Trissotin in this play, engaged in a war of epigrams with Ménage. One group of verse he entitled la Ménagerie.

¹⁵Théâtre Choisi, p. 522.

asperity of Philaminte, the nagging wife, and of servant Martine, both of whom are typical of gaulois farce.

The setting of this five-act verse-comedy is the Paris home of bourgeois Chrysale. His wife Philaminte and daughter Armande, femmes savantes, play in opposition to daughter Henriette, who cares naught for science nor epigram, but does want to marry Clitandre. Mother Philaminte, determined to betroth Henriette to the pedantic Trissotin, is thwarted by Uncle Ariste, who exposes him as more interested in money than in Henriette or culture.

The renard element is introduced by Uncle Ariste. Sympathetic, from the beginning, to the plight of the young lovers, he has pledged his assistance early in the play: "J'employerai toute chose à servir vos amours."¹⁶ Recognizing that father Chrysale lacks sufficient moral courage to uphold the defense of Henriette against her mother, he quietly plans an exposé of Trissotin. With all central characters present, with the marriage contract about to be signed, delivery is made of "fake" messages indicating loss of a court suit, with resultant costs, and loss of all

¹⁶Théâtre Choisi, p. 580.

financial assets through bankruptcy. The "ardent" Trissotin disappears, and Clitandre marries Henriette.

Ariste, a level-headed and reasonable man, is not a typical rogue character, nor is he comic. He does, however, make quiet use of an effective ruse in order to achieve a desired end. He is Renart, refined.

It is apparent that the renardie element, in the comedies of manner and intrigue, has been refined and further varied. With the exception of Covielle, in Le Bourgeois gentilhomme, it is no longer represented by a quick-witted rogue. In Les Précieuses ridicules, the ruse is performed by Mascarille and Jodelet, but the planning has been done by Le Grange. There is no longer a wily female servant planning to save her innocent mistress from a dreadful fate. Agnès and Isabelle attempt their own scheming, and Isabelle succeeds. Ariste, in Les Femmes savantes, is a reasonable and level-headed man who uses ruse as a last resort. What, then, will one find in the hautes comédies?

THE HAUTES COMÉDIES

Le Misanthrope--L'Avare--Le Tartuffe

Tartuffe, ou l'Imposteur is a kind of comic Pilgrims' Progress, wherein Fourbe Hypocrisy, in alliance with Blind Stupidity, battle Rash Youth, l'Esprit Gaulois, Common Sense, Overly Meek, Chivalry, and Artfully Sensible. The character development is greater, and the mood is more serious than one finds in the majority of the Molière plays. There is a parallel minimizing of farce device, but fourberie, esprit gaulois and renardie are both present and important to the characterization.

Father Orgon is so taken in by Tartuffe's too-humble mien that he not only makes him a member of his household, but is willing to sacrifice family, wealth, and word of honor to keep him happy. Plot solution is achieved through a staged performance by Artfully Sensible wife Elmire, and an act of the king.

Servant Dorine could probably have played the renardie role in this play. Observant and quick-witted, she immediately defines the hypocrisy of Tartuffe, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of other members of the household. When she learns that Orgon will actually break his word and make

daughter Mariane wed Tartuffe rather than Valère,
she tries:

pretending it's a joke

lecturing him on the unfortunate
probable results of such a marriage

making caustic remarks about what she
would do in a similar situation.

When these verbal attacks fail to produce results,
she plans her campaign. Mariane is to stall for
time by pretended illness, invention of omen dreams,
and, as a last resort, outright refusal to acquiesce;
she herself will enlist the aid of stepmother Elmire,
while Valère is to secure the aid of friends in hold-
ing Orgon to his word.

Spirited, witty, perceptive and clever, Dorine
plays an important role in her delineation of char-
acter of others. She may be capable of solving the
family problems, but it is Elmire who does so. Cog-
nizant of the fact that Orgon is "blind" and "deaf"
to the acts and words of anyone except Tartuffe, and
that only direct evidence will suffice to awaken him,
she resolves to secure a re-enactment of Tartuffe's
declarations of love. She states her plan, to which
Orgon consents, and Dorine objects:

L'erreur trop longtemps dure,
Et c'est trop condamner ma bouche d'imposture.

Il faut que, par plaisir, et sans aller plus loin,
De tout ce qu'on vous dit je vous fasse témoin.

Orgon

Soit. Je vous prends au mot. Nous verrons
votre adresse,
Et comment vous pourrez remplir cette promesse.

Elmire

Faites-le-moi venir.

Dorine

Son esprit est rusé,
Et peut-être à surprendre il sera malaisé.

Elmire

Non; on est aisement dupé par ce qu'on aime,
Et l'amour-propre engage à se tromper soi-même.¹

So plans Elmire, and, with Orgon hidden under the
table, she achieves a full exposé of Tartuffe's mon-
strous hypocrisy:

Tartuffe

Je puis vous dissiper ces craintes ridicules,
Madame, et je sais l'art de lever les scrupules.
Le ciel défend, de vrai, certains contentements;
Mais on trouve avec lui des accommodements.²

.....

and, again:

.....
Vous êtes assurée ici d'un plein secret,
Et le mal n'est jamais que dans l'éclat qu'on
fait.
Le scandale du monde est ce qui fait l'offense,
Et ce n'est pas pécher que pécher en silence.³

¹Théâtre Choisi, pp. 229-230.

²Ibid., p. 234.

³Ibid., pp. 234-235.

This exposure is the climax of the play, and it is achieved through the artful poise and subtlety of Elmire. The planning and performance of the ruse has, in this play, been transferred from a spirited and loquacious servant to a quietly effective mistress.

We have seen, in Tartuffe, a refinement and variation on renardie in the person of Elmire. A new and fascinating aspect is evident in Le Misanthrope. This renardie varies from the original in humor and in result. Célimène utilizes her wit and humor to circumvent the prudishness of a stronger force: society. She cleverly manipulates people in general, using tart portraiture in combination with quick-witted gaiety. The end result is defeat, rather than victory, although the reader is left with an impression of an unconquerable Célimène.

A popular young widow courted by many, Célimène amuses one and all with feminine grace and clever portraiture of social notables. She skillfully avoids commitment to any one suitor, and answers direct accusation with subtle change of issue. When, for example, an outraged Alceste complains about her being at home to one and all:

C'est pour me quereller donc, à ce que je voi

Que vous avez voulu me ramener chez moi?⁴

Later, she turns Alceste's argument to her own favor:

Célimène

Mais de tout l'univers vous devenez jaloux.

Alceste

C'est que tout l'univers est bien reçu de vous.

Célimène

C'est ce qui doit rasseoir votre âme effarouchée,
Puisque ma complaisance est sur tous épanchée,
Et vous auriez plus lieu de vous en offenser,
Si vous me la voyiez sur seul ramasser.⁵

When Alceste confronts her with a letter written by her, purportedly to Oronte, she suggests that it may have been to a woman, and acts offended at his distrust of her. Her defeat--with her current group of friends and suitors--occurs when Clitandre produces a letter, this time undeniably authentic, which satirizes each of them, including Alceste.

Typical renardie characteristics are inherent to Célimène. She delights in trickery, and performs it with grace, with ease, and with humor. She has no specific goal, such as the circumlocution of one, single instance of tyranny. Hers is a more intangible war against the ridiculous in man and his society. While momentarily nonplussed by the discovery of her

⁴ Théâtre Choisi, p. 274.

⁵ Ibid., p.275.

letter, one feels that she has, simultaneously, scored a certain victory with her "portraits"; and that, like Renart, she will not for long remain quiescent.

Scheming and trickery are rampant in L'Avare. With everything in the play geared to displaying the character of a ludicrous Harpagon who values money more than life, family, or love, much of the conniving has a connection with money. Most of the rest is concerned with love difficulties deriving, like the first, from the character of Harpagon. Cléante tries, unsuccessfully, to borrow money without his father's knowledge; servant La Flèche steals Harpagon's buried treasure to assist Cléante; for purpose of revenge, Maître Jacques deliberately accuses Valère of a crime he didn't commit, and cleverly tricks Harpagon into describing the location and container of the treasure. Harpagon, to determine his son's feelings concerning Mariane, deliberately suggests that he might permit their marriage.

The only one of these schemers who seems sufficiently quick-witted for the renart role is Frosine. Having originally made clever arrangements for the marriage of the aging Harpagon to the young and innocent Mariane, in hopes of a fee, she becomes

sympathetic to the plight of Cléante and Mariane, who are in love. She here reveals her willingness to help:

Cléante

Frosine, ma pauvre Frosine, voudrais-tu nous servir?

Frosine

Par ma foi, faut-il le demander? je le voudrais de tout mon coeur. Vous savez que, de mon naturel, je suis assez humaine. Le ciel ne m'a point fait l'âme de bronze, et je n'ai que trop de tendresse à rendre de petits services, quand je vois des gens qui s'entr'aident en tout bien et en tout honneur. Que pourrions nous faire à ceci?⁶

Then, knowing that no reasoning will sway Harpagon, she plans to find an impersonator of a rich marquise who will fall madly in love with Harpagon. Frosine is thus prepared to use trickery to circumvent a stronger force, but the probability of her success remains speculative, as plot solution is by act of God. While her renart characteristics are evident, the frequency of her success may be determined only in the mind of the reader.

One finds, in the hautes comédies, a renardie characteristic of that seen before in the persons

⁶Théâtre Choisi, p. 384.

of servant Dorine (Tartuffe) and go-between Frosine (L'Avare). In Célimène (Le Misanthrope), who, using wit and humor to satirize social mannerisms, earns a questionable and temporary defeat, and in Elmire (Tartuffe), who, with artful poise and subtlety, achieves a re-enactment of a love-declaration, one sees new variations on an old theme. Célimène is the only Molière heroine who utilizes her cleverness to maintain a rank of suitors, and as a kind of social defiance; his other heroines are usually oppressed by a single person, such as a parent, and each utilizes indirect means to achieve a love-goal. Elmire is his only heroine who, in a wifely role, uses play-acting to make her spouse aware of his folly.

Molière, in developing his greatest comedies, did not ignore the renardie aspect of the Gallic spirit...he utilized and developed it.

.....

CONCLUSION

The intent of this thesis has been the recording of evidence in support of the proposition that the renardie element is prevalent in the comedies of Molière, that it exists in every type of comedy that he wrote, and that, as portrayed by Molière, it has new and sometimes complex aspects. Renardie has been described as the expression of a social reaction, an outgrowth of l'esprit gaulois. It has been defined as the use of wit and intrigue to circumvent the power of established institutions. The mood of the expression, while often satirical, is gay.

A character strictly confinable to the renardie role would be a member of the lower classes; he would successfully outwit a representative or representation of a domineering institution or manner, and he would maintain audience rapport through humorous appeal and the quick-wittedness of his thought and action. One finds, in the plays analyzed here, that only six (Sganarelle, Les Fâcheux, Mélicerte, La Pastorale comique, Le Mariage forcé, Don Juan) contain no character who is not at least partially of this description. There are three others to which

it would be difficult to apply the term. There is deceit in George Dandin, but its only discernible goal is ridicule of a man who has married out of his social class, and vengeance of a wife who is a victim of an arranged marriage. There is no plot resolution. The object of the deceit in Monsieur de Pourceaugnac would appear to be circumvention of parental authority, and this object is achieved. One loses sight of the objective throughout the play, however, for it is buried in a complex series of intrigue designed to ridicule a Limousin. There is mild deception in La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas, but its sole use is that of a device for the display of provincial manners. All of the other plays contain two or more of the above-described criteria for renardie.

If one outlines the remainder of these plays according to these criteria, one finds that the scheming, with the exception of that in Le Dépit amoureux and La Princess d'Elide, is turned against a controlling force, social institution, or manner. It is not always, as in the Roman de Renart, representative of the bourgeoisie. A servant, or a member of the lower classes does the plotting in six of the plays,¹ the planning and enactment of the

¹Appendix A

deception is by other than servants in seven,² and there is co-operative effort between master and servant in five.³

Molière did not, then, ignore the gauloiserie--or its frequent companion and aftermath, renardie--which were traditional in his century, for both are evident even in the hautes comédies. It would be illogical to assume that he simply erased from his mind the literary and social inheritance of time and place. This observer of life--of peasant, bourgeois, and noble--this master of theatre--of acting, directing and writing--gave to the renardie the scope and depth which resulted from this observation and talent of expression. His addition of the breath of human life to his caricature-symbol of the dominant institution or manner (Tartuffe), his replacement of Renart with an Agnès or a Toinette, do not obliterate the pattern of, or the public empathy for, la renardie.

This pattern, this renardie image, could conceivably be extended to include the author himself. His masterful and recurrent use of the most innocuous-looking dialogue and situation to ridicule--and thus

²Appendix B

³Appendix C

undermine--a current manner or custom may not be ignored. Whether he produced his plays as a medium of social commentary, or whether he utilized the society and manners of his time for good theatre, Molière does make social commentary. Mr. Gaiffe tells us:

...les ordinaires victimes du rire molièresque sont judicieusement choisies parmi les gens que le spectateur moyen n'aime point, parce qu'il les craint, ne peut les comprendre ou se sent dépassé par eux.⁴

Paternal authority, artificiality of manner, pedantry, and hypocrisy are all exposed to a laughter based on ruse. While the specific intent of the author may not be known, the renardie pattern is there.

There is an image which, in reading Molière, comes consistently to mind: this image is that of the theatre mask, but the face which grins in one direction and weeps in the other is that of Monsieur Renart. The image merges with that of the author, for the psychological complexity, the depth and warmth of humor that are Molière's are unforgettably his own; but it is yet distinguishable as renardie.

⁴Gaiffe, p. 113.

APPENDIX A

Social manner or institution	Audience rapport through humorous appeal	Credit for success of scheme	Major variation from traditional pattern
<u>Les Amants magnifiques: Clitidas</u>			
society in which commoner may not marry royalty; court in- fluence of pedantic astrologer	great	partial; he makes princess aware of love; the rest is through act of heaven.	wisdom of Renart given to court fool
<u>Le Médecin malgré lui: Sganarelle</u>			
dominant father	great	almost total	was forced into situation by wife
<u>Les Fourberies de Scapin: Scapin</u>			
parental authority	great	none, save as a delaying agent	
<u>Le Malade imaginaire: Toinette</u>			
parental authority, aggravated by hypochondria, doctors	good	total	

APPENDIX A (Continued)

Social manner or institution	Audience rapport through humorous appeal	Credit for success of scheme	Major variation from traditional pattern
<u>Le Bourgeois gentilhomme: Covielle</u>			
parental authority, father obsessed by desire for social prestige	good	total	minor role in play
<u>L'Avare: Frosine</u>			
parental authority, miserly obsession of parent	good	none; due to fate and cir- cumstance	very minor role

APPENDIX B

Social manner or institution	Audience rapport through humorous appeal	Credit for success of scheme	Major variation from traditional pattern
<u>Le Dépit amoureux: Ascagne (Dorothée)</u>			
none: she seeks marriage to a man who fancies himself in love with her sister; must untangle family intrigue	none	partial: she successfully woos Valère; family intrigue untangled through Frosine's re- search	plotting done by girl raised as a boy
<u>Le Misanthrope: Célimène</u>			
society	great	no	Célimène attacks the manners and restriction of a group as a whole, without any specific ob- jective except that of the non- conformist

APPENDIX B (Continued)

Social manner or institution	Audience rapport through humorous appeal	Credit for success of scheme	Major variation from traditional pattern
<u>L'Ecole des maris: Isabelle</u>			
authority of guardian, inflexibility of his beliefs	great, but more calculating, less spontaneous than some	total	role played by young lady who has been raised in isolation
<u>L'Ecole des femmes: Agnès</u>			
authority of guardian, his fear of being cuckolded, belief that ignorance insures innocence	tremendous, outgrowth of candor of innocence	fate	role played by a girl who has been raised in a convent
<u>Les Femmes savantes: Uncle Ariste</u>			
assumed authority of wife, les femmes savantes	none	total	his role is minor, his appeal is through reason, rather than humor

APPENDIX B (Continued)

Social manner or institution	Audience rapport through humorous appeal	Credit for success of scheme	Major variation from traditional pattern
<u>Tartuffe: Elmire</u> authority of husband, his obsession with a hypocrite	nearly none	total	rogue humor is provided by ser- vant Dorine; Elmire's appeal is to reason
<u>Le Mariage forcé: Dorimène</u> paternal authority	none	total	the father whose authority she escapes helps deliver the coup <u>de grâce:</u> <u>Dorimène</u> is met through other people, not directly

APPENDIX C

Social manner or institution	Audience rapport through humorous appeal	Credit for success of scheme	Major variation from traditional pattern
<u>Les Précieuses ridicules: La Grange, Mascarille, Jodelet</u>			
personal revenge, opposition to social manner	Mascarille Jodelet	total	plan by master, execution by servant
<u>Le Sicilien: Adraste, servant Hali</u>			
authority of another male	both have it	total, more credit to Adraste	Hali's impetuosity, lack of poise
<u>L'Etourdi: Lélie, valet Mascarille</u>			
authority of another male	both have it	fate and circumstance	valet is clever, but not clever enough to outwit clumsy performance of master

APPENDIX C (Continued)

Social manner or institution	Audience rapport through humorous appeal	Credit for success of scheme	Major variation from traditional pattern
<u>La Princess d'Elide: Prince Euryale, jester Moron</u>			
princess' scorn of love	Moron: great Prince Euryale: none	both, more credit to prince	a humorous jest-er lends moral support to a serious prince; they do not combat a social institution
<u>L'Amour médecin: Lisette, Clitandre</u>			
parental authority	both	both, planning done by Lisette	both servant and master are comic in deception; but it is the servant who mas-terminds the scheme
<u>Amphitryon: Mercury, Jupiter</u>			
moral belief of the masses regarding sanctity of marriage	Mercury: great Jupiter: none	both	deception by those who rule, rather than the ruled

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