

## Molière's Precedence over Shakespeare

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It is a design of the present study that Molière has taken firmly established precedence over Shakespeare who was once both in thought and in writing a forerunner or a master of the French playwright. In other words, close such a conventional norm as the apprenticeship of the former could afford well through the two processes of imitation or as well as of plagiarism of the latter in improving his dramatic craftship, there is the third factor which is utterly different from these two served to mature the dramatic craftship of the French. According to G.L. Strachey, his artistic maturity is "sweeping over the whole range of comic emotion, from the wildest buffoonery to the grimmest satire and the subtlest with, touched like too closely and often to attain to that flawless beauty to which it seems to aspire."<sup>1)</sup> His art matured and even consummated in consequence of the debt to these two stages of apprenticeship consolidating his literary craftmanship, which is afterwards to become so advanced as to produce those masterpieces which rank among the highest. I do mean to imply, by writing this, that among the followers of Shakespeare he is the first by whom a literary device of out-Shakespeare, a transcendent or supreme technique in playwriting aspects and nothing else, is represented, and hence it is in a word the creation of French comedy— 'he did for the comic element in French literature what Corneille had done for the tragic: he raised it to the level of serious art.'<sup>2)</sup>

It is natural and essential for me to expound this 'comic element' in French literature, for the sake of theorizing this subject on to the certain extent to which his plays fulfill the double or, if necessary, triple functions of superficial appearance. The intrinsic and genuine meaning or further disguised or false mien almost as much as the words spoken by the players do the triple one of material noises, intellectual signs, and harmonious sounds in his farce, as Gustave Lanson indicated in *Molière and Farce*.<sup>3)</sup> These functions are the pivot of this argument to develop and thus make clear how it resonates either by preferring one of them or by choosing the alternative results of this or that function, or by pressing those three into the blands of their mass substance, however simply or complexly, or else orderly or irregularly the selection may echo or invert the order of the

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1) G.L. Strachey (1912), *Landmarks in French Literature* (New York: Henry Holt), p.78.

2) *Ibid.*, p.81.

3) Jacques Gucharnaud(ed.) (1964), *Molière* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall), p.32.

processing things in proportion to the said strand in hand. In a more concrete concept than this explanation, it can be divided into two strands; first the outstanding device of crystallizing the way of disguise, or the misrepresentation of emotion as well as moral distinction following to usual routine manners, and those which occur in the communication of language activities between listeners and speakers. These two heads will be observed orderly and thus will demonstrate fully Molière's transcendent craftsmanship of productive technique as to excel his predecessor in these two spheres of it in defiance of such a affirmation as

Molière has been excelled only by Aristophanes and Shakespeare in the possession of the fused talents of writer and showman. As a writer, he is distinguished by wisdom, wit and grace: as a showman, by improvisation, ingenuity and vitality. His work exhibits a unique combination of intellect and spirit, of sober judgement and gaiety, of orderliness and vigor.<sup>4)</sup>

First viewed from the chronological order of the play-wrighting, the sequence the works present holds a somewhat more or less significant meaning than only the norm of the issuing year itself. This stands for such an inseparable interrelationship between the plays of *Le Misanthrope* and of *L'Avare* that this impartibility is exposed to search from what is perceptible by the optic nerve to what may be the invisible entity. This reminds us of that relative interrelationship that in Shakespeare's writing sequence *Measure for Measure*, *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Troilus and Cressida* are categorized otherwise as of certain unified peculiarity than are other comedies assured throughout his life, than which the better in quality and the worse as well exist. Such is immediately or through reference thoroughly familiar with us, not only by the said Shakespeare comedies but also Wilson Knight, who published *The Wheel of Fire* in 1930. Reflecting criticism that compares and judges in favour of an 'interpretation' that tends to merge into the work, he argued that it is wrong to select what is easy to understand and neglect the superlogical. A Shakespeare play is not true to life but a vision 'only roughly corresponding to actuality; it is the development of a central idea to which everything else, incident, thought, imagery, and poetic symbol is immediately related. Thus, it must be considered not only temporally but spatially, not only as a sequence of events but as a pattern composed of the elements related to the central idea. For example, the pattern in *Macbeth* is the conflict of life and death, while in *Troilus and Cressida* 'the Trojan party stands for human beauty and wealth, the Greek party for the bestial and stupid elements of man.' The emphasis was shifted from character and 'prolix attention to any one element' to the play as a whole.<sup>5)</sup> In this argument, as has been previously expressed in exactness, the sequence of events, the chronological order of the written plays are thus the first of the conditions necessary for forming his conception of that interpretation of Shakespeare, not of the criticism of him. Such a great author propounds only the probl-

4) John Russell Brown (1957), *Shakespeare and His Comedies* (London: Methuen), p.15.

5) F.E. Halliday (1958), *Shakespeare and His Critics* (London: Gerald Duckworth), p.36.

em of interpretation or appreciation, not criticism, which is only concerned about the writer whose literary achievement is worthy of being treated of this much weighty influence. But such peculiar and exclusive means of understanding the literary masterpieces is of course not for Molière, and this attitude is only for the few, like the gigantic master by virtue of whose contribution the literary tradition of the world has been directed and turned otherwise than what is used to be. Accordingly, in the view of Knight's argument, so rich in fecund interpretation or appreciation, not in a critical sensibility, from beginning to end, as to pay tribute only to what the author left for the readers, not criticism of it, to the general conception of criticism itself this argument seems to mock what may come about, making little of what and how it works for the sphere of literary activity.

Here and now it will be comfortable to stop lest this digression somewhat wander from the main subject, than which there is nothing more essential to argue about. In Shakespeare, it is common and familiar to us that the number of his comedies are not accurately conformed to among his students and scholars, so that their opinions are as varied and different as if to illustrate a good example of that proverb, 'So many men, so many minds.' Among such varieties of arguments about how many comedies the Elizabethan playwright had left for us, it is common opinion that E.K. Chambers has more supporters giving their adherence to his idea than any other scholar. His great achievement, *Shakespeare: A Survey*, issued in 1925 proclaims its validity of, and fidelity to the exact figure of 15, the point up to which this discussion has thus led. Little more is known particularly of the chronological order than of other related ones, or, for that matter, of the complete linear series of his whole literary products.

In all this are we correctly interpreting the real meaning of the order constituting between *Le Misanthrope* first performed in 1666 and *L'Avare* which was successfully rendered two years later? As has been already noticed, in this order of performance there is little suggestion to indicate what is significant in the writer's thought. It can be by this order that Molière so more differently than ever uses a device which contributes to excite an attention to the difference between the directly opposed or contrasting worlds operating on minds unconscious of their activity and its influence on them. Although this device of playwriting deals mainly with the occasions of concealment and of deception, so-called disguise, in all those around him, still more though, examining its aspects in origin, it harks back to such a traditional or conventional practice as if there were not any peculiarity in itself. It is really presenting a quite different one than any yet applied and devoted to such a purpose as those said occasions which are not only necessary but also essential for Shakespeare as much as Molière, and which distinguished this from that, and for yet other playwrights as well. As for the device of techniques to develop comedy, of course, both used that of disguise that they found existing ubiquitously around themselves as well as in literary works like Plautus' *Memochmi* the English mas-

ter employed repaciously in *Love's Labour's Lost*. In fact, where comedy appears, there follows that device of disguise; for without it, it is merely presumptuous to have comedy to itself and thus have it out with the explanation that the success of comedies is based, in the first instance, on their manifestation of Shakespeare's interest in character and the oddities of human nature. It is the more so for Molière's as the occasions of concealment and deception are mainly getting full fun out of what his major plays show, so to speak, the unrealistic and amusing aspect that everyone's like is a romance, a farce, a disgrace. Yet, to be fair, we must go even further to Molière than his master. To say nothing of his achievement by virtue of which he created French modern comedy, he is never extolled enough for his ability to combine a profound observation of human nature in its complexity and in its foibles with the power of presenting these in their amusing aspect. This is short of the point where they turn to tragedy, though some of his greatest comedies such as *Le Tartuffe* reach the boundary. And on the other hand, his lighter pieces, like *Le Malade imaginaire* (his last play) produced in 1673, shine by their gaiety and absurdity, satisfactorily demonstrating that he was a master both of high comedy and farce. Broadly as well as in short speaking, the contrast between the playwrights is remarkable in that the theme of Molière's more serious comedies as a whole is to expose hypocrisy and affection in all their forms; that of Shakespeare's to exploit the sentiment of a romantic narrative, give opportunity for diversions of fooling, and lead to a general reconciliation, to speak briefly, to present the last strand of Molière's thus doing.

To all this we add that we must affirm that one is based on as simple and single a theme as to imagine the skeleton as simple as the shape, while the other on the dual and compact parallel of levels could be smoothly sketched before our eyes at least twice as much folded and juxtaposed as that said skeleton in the Elizabethan period, however delicate its framework may be. And again in accordance with this duality, his comedy has received from its double generation as many procreative ways to encounter and dispose whatever could touch the imagination with hypocrisy and affection, that he could have done better, in assessing the value of a play, not only to use the technique of this double generation, but also to apply his own method so peculiar of disguise as to provide the creative power of the imagination. Accordingly, what is clearly different from Shakespeare is the existence of his duality as well as of his corresponding disguise, which is evidently connected with a characteristic or an excellence through which he can at last somewhere surpass his master, particularly in using the device of disguise whose effect can be divided into three kinds of agencies. This is not from any effect for effect's sake, but partly because it relates with its frequency as an impetus for dramatic development; partly because it makes elaborate this development in action and multiplies what it means for amusement rather than the monotony likely to come about in simple procreation; partly because, the dramatic performance being of such a manifold variety, the results from this are so variant. In consequence of this they are so broad, magnificent and profound

as to let us deliriously concentrate on them to an absolute extent to which reason itself gives in to a trance. This is why all readers' imagination too emphatically conjures up the marvels of his stage, so that throughout all the performance such conjuration as to completely win over either its audience or its readers is in operation and therefore is constantly echoing to the situation as well as to the atmosphere generatively conceivable to others as possible and corresponding competitions. Yet it is so essential that the contribution of what the disguise is bestowing to the action of the play can hardly be exaggerated and, on the other hand, be credited with far too great an influence upon the action. Without this contribution the plot is merely monotonous as thoroughly uniform as if it were only substituted by the story, various as its skeleton is, hostile to diversity which more often than not offers us amusements and interests as a characteristic invertebrate enough for the virtue of literature corresponding with the effect the comedies represent. As we can not deny that the conflict between the individual and society is central throughout the literature written by many writers in Realism as well as Naturalism, particularly Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, so it is true that Molière's uniqueness in using the technique of disguise is not less than that illustration which belongs to no community of both literary groups, but in contrast to a community of either one, even if the latter is more representative than the former. Only in the dramatic works does he make direct reference to such a technique, to speak exactly, to take advantage of it in writing them. This is, clearly enough, within much the same device as that already existing among both playwrights and public as an audience; namely, in view of its frequency of how short are the intervals between the occurring disguise scenes Molière is not only the top-most in number, like the scene of *Le Malade imaginaire* (A III), but also so peculiar, so deliberate, so exact and generative. I will add one note that this capability so varicolored in phraseology as to enliven by vanity may be acceptable as true in himself as if it were bestowed to excite an imagination whose activities are all the marks of unmistakable genius opened out for the most characteristic products of comedy in his time. This is the selection in which Fenelon expressed frankly his opinion of commendation about him:

Il faut avouer que Molière est un grand poète. Je ne crains pas de dire qu'il a enfoncé plus avant que Térence dans certains caractères; il a embrassé une plus grande variété de sujets, il a peint par des traits forts presque tout ce que nous voyons de déréglé et de ridicule. Molière a ouvert un chemin tout nouveau, encore une fois je le trouve grand: mais ne puis-je parler en toute liberté sur ses défauts? Il a outré souvent les caractères; il a voulu par cette liberté plaire au parterre, frapper les spectateurs les moins délicats et rendre le ridicule plus sensible. Un autre défaut de Molière que beaucoup de gens d'esprit lui pardonnent, et que je n'ai garde de lui pardonner, est qu'il a donné un tour gracieux au vice, avec une astérisse ridicule et odieuse à la vertu. Je comprends que ses défenseurs ne manqueraient pas de dire qu'il a traité avec honneur la variété de la probité, qu'il n'a attaqué qu'une vertu chagrine et qu'une hypocrisie détestable; mais, sans entrer dans cette longue discussion, je soutiens que Platon et les autres législateurs de l'antiquité païenne n'auraient jamais dans leur république un tel jeu sur les mœurs.<sup>6)</sup>

6) Roger Fayolle (1964) *La Critique* (Paris: Armond Colin), p.231.

What stands as the typical disguise scenes of Molière comedies is in reality Act III of *Le Malade imaginaire*, where the dramatic development is constructed on the frequent repetitions of disguise scenes. This device enjoyed wide currency in other plays, more often in *L'Avare* than the others, but the popular nature of and the role of this scheme have been over-looked as a fact of a common and wide tradition in dramatic fields in general so as not to consider its familiarity in the comedies of Shakespeare's:

*Measure for Measure*

Enter severally, Duke, disguised as a Friar, and Provost. (A II s iii)

Duke disguised as before. (A III s ii)

Pulls off the friar's hood, and discovers the Duke, (A V s i)

*Much Ado About Nothing*

Antonia masks. (A II s i)

Re-enter Antonia, with the ladies masked. (A V s iv)

*Love's Labour's Lost*

The trumpet sounds; bemasked; the maskers come. (The ladies mask.)

*The Merchant of Venice*

Enter Jessica, above, in boy's clothes. (A II s ii)

Enter Nerissa, dressed like lawyer's clerk. (A N s i)

Enter Portia for Balthaza, dressed like a Doctor of Laws. (A N s i)

*As You Like It*

Enter Rosalind for Canymede, Celia for Aliena. (A II si v)

*The Taming of the Shrew*

I will some other be— some Florentine, / Some Neaplitan, or meaner man of Pisa. / 'Tis hatched, and shall be so. Trania, at once; Uncase these; take any colour'd hat and cloak. / When Biondello comes, he waites on thee; / But I will charm him first to keep his tongue (They exchange habits.) (A I s i)

Enter Gremio with Lucentio disguised as Cambia. (A I s i)

Enter Tranio as Lucentio, and the Pedant dress'd like Vincentio. (A N s iv)

*Twelfth Night*

Enter Valentine, and Viola in a man's attire. (A I s iv)

Mar, Nay I prithee, put on this gown / And this beard; make him believe thou art / Sir Topas the curate; do it quickly. (A N s ii)

*The Winter's Tale*

Enter Shepherd, with Polixenes and Camilla, disguised; Clown, Mopsa, Dorcas, with other. (A N s iv)

*Cymbeline*

Enter Imogen alone, in boy's clothes. (A III s vi)<sup>7)</sup>

Thus the disguise scenes are being extended as seen above to nine comedies, regardless of whatever are their dramatic tendencies in which more clearly a chronological division than other elements marks the identities as proper enough for those plays. Critics have categorized them into these classes: the early comedies, the main group of them, tragic comedies and what they call the Romance plays. Of all comedies written by Shakespeare, not only the nine noticed just above, but also the others are within the limit that he has not relaxed his vigilance of applying this method for the disguise scenes. In this case it reminds us of this technique already used for the nine plays in changing appearance, and of its monotonoty and simplicity which are inferior enough to accordingly be denounced, as compared with those of Molière's counteractions I have beforehand pointed out in more or less detail in order to show what they are for the sake of the results gotten from contrasting these masters. But, admitting this, we have in the first place to remember, in imaging the disguising scenes or changing habits, that Shakespeare not only deliberately but also symbolically arranged the constructive skeleton to beautify the economy between inward and outward beauty. Its construction as well as atmosphere or situation is evidently not merely flexibly contributing to make the complex harmony of the whole play but in a condition of such abnormal excitability, as seen in *Comedy of Errons* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. That disguise in the dramatic development which simple and monotonous as it may be in its agency, is so highly countable in its effect, does not border on a relationship merely to these two comedies but to *All's Well That Ends Well*. Its structure is so different from what Shakespeare should have been in those idiosyncrasies that some critics point out that there are good reasons to believe that this comedy is too apocryphal to be Shakespearean. And, returning to that point from which this controversy of disguise began, I would now add that there is in the two comedies in advance, except the last one a reflection or anticipation, however faint, of the disguising symptom somewhat equal to that of those nine plays I mentioned beforehand. That is, although there is what takes on not the least trace or representing any of the disguising scenes, it is that corresponding substitute of such scenes which makes us misapprehend as deeply and emphatically as to enjoy ourselves in the transposition made by these scenes to beguile the audience.

The commonest form in which Shakespeare presents the mutual recognition of two lovers is the realization of the other's beauty. To take an illustrative instance, for the young lovers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, such realization carries its own conviction of exclusive truth; Hermia will not 'choose love by another's eyes' (A I s i 140), and, when Duke Theseus orders her to marry Demetrius whom her father favours more than Lysander, she answers in a single line:

7) In reference to *First Flio*, *Cymbeline*, *King Britain* is of Tragedies.

I would my father look'd but with my eyes. (A I si 56)

Not hard on the heels of this illusionary moment, rather more or less with certain interval afterwards, the vagaries of love and enchantment seemed perfectly reasonable to those who were involved, and also to those who observed, so that the whole action throughout its performance seems so real or so fantastic as to intoxicate readers to a degree to which it counts as much as the disguising scenes command. When Lysander's eyes have been touched with the magic herb, he rationalized his new love for Helena in not only the loftiest but also the most supercilious terms:

Not Hermia but Helena I love;  
 Who will not change a raven for a dove?  
 The will of man is by his reason sway'd;  
 And reason says you are the worthier maid.<sup>8)</sup>

To some extent, as we may see from this passage where Lysander's fancy alights elsewhere from its initial object, there is something so characteristic, and yet so fantastic as if to mystify readers to the point at which they would be surprised at the same reflection that the disguising device can generate in its willing act of the existing and developing consequence. That Shakespeare meant this effect to be characteristic of the magic herb is beyond question. We should be greatly surprised also to find it marked in *Comedy of Errors*; and, in fact, we find this mark in it that any equality to that reflection, even though in a sense its aspect is differently but not substantially shaped in form, functions as indispensable to the elaboration of the author's overall design to create what he contrived. If Shakespeare had applied other devices instead of the disguising device, what are now his great works would not have prevailed in the dramatic circles. So much being assumed, we come to what is doubtful enough not to hold any more; for this reason I will begin by stating what is probably so conclusive at this point as the most agreeable view. More than any other of Shakespeare's dramatic techniques, however invulnerable or otherwise they may be, the disguising scenes seem to have bestowed such an extraordinary range of his poetic achievement as if he came just at the right moment to make full and fresh use of the teeming drama of his time. On the whole points of the creating techniques, however, all the reasonable excellence can, I think, not be felt. Once again, to appreciate exactly what is his real essence in using his technical contrivance, for the sake of contrasting the difference with others, the easiest course is to consider the absolute phenomenon which I have made explicit to some extent in preceding pages. It is thus likely to be sure again the clear-cut one noticed also in advance that in accordance with his own duality method, his comedy has received from its double generation many procreative ways to encounter and dispose whatever could touch the imagination with hypocrisy

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8) Peter Alexander (ed.), *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'*, A III s ii.



and affection. In short, for Molière the greater excellence of the disguising device than his forerunner consists in how to hold the dough of disguising scenes by functioning fully as a technician, not as an ideal soakin to Muse, while the latter has early and late since Robert Greene's famous recantation, *A Groatsworth of Wit*, enjoyed much praise accorded to his literary works.

### 1. Hypocrisy

From now on in placing greater weight on it as the topic of the present controversy, the objective point of this subject is about hypocrisy that can be referred to as misrepresentation of emotion as well as moral distinction following usual routine manners and to what occurs in the communication of language activities between speaker and listeners. Molière's device for presenting it is used repeatedly in many of his works; almost every action of the play involves directly or by reference, that which echoes hypocrisy as familiar and common to the public, as possible in their daily lives. This is not so novel as it would at first appear as an extraordinary venture and the like, often easily provocative as it is on behalf of being a hypocritical or false assumption of what is going on in accordance with the time. Taken as a selection of Molière's works appropriate for this object, they include two of the greatest plays, *Le Tartuffe* and *L'Avare*; the former for what happens in the course of emotion and moral distinction; the latter for that which is suitable in the communication of language activities. To be sure, there is the very reason to accept this purport as the sincere expression of Molière's ingenuousness, which many critics have approached in the light of what they call the faithful revelation of his inward world:

Si l'emploi de la comédie est de corriger les vices des hommes, je ne vois pas par quelle raison il y en aura de privilégiés. Celui-ci est, dans l'État, d'une conséquence bien plus dangereuse que tous les autres; et nous avons vu que le théâtre a une grande vertu pour la correction. Les plus beaux traits d'une sérieuse morale sont moins puissants, le plus souvent, que ceux de la satire; et rien ne reprend mieux la plupart des hommes que la peinture de leur défauts. C'est une grande atteinte aux vices que de les exposer à la risée de tout le monde. On souffre aisément des répréhensions; mais on ne souffre point la raillerie. On veut bien être méchant, mais on ne veut point être ridicule.<sup>9)</sup>

With the aid of the precise idea above marked by himself, it is not difficult that we can get a real idea of Molière's availability for delineating objects and of what he wished to suggest for the truth that 'le théâtre a une grande vertu pour la correction.' This is so good a reason that it is a measure of his achievement that he has so often been judged not as poet, playwright, maker of acting tradition, but in terms of ideas and morals if he were a teacher, philosopher or metaphysician, even a moralist or a reformer of society. In fact what he shows to us is that men through their foibles, va-

9) Georges Couton (ed.), (1971) *Molière: Oeuvres complètes*, (Callimard), p.885.

nity, gullibility, self-obsession and achievement under the impact of laughter, and by the solvent of comedy, we experience the moment of truth, feel the impulse of reason, share his compassion for common humanity. If he does not assert a system of virtues, he identifies the reverse of them, pretentiousness, insincerity, hypocrisy; finds amusement in the contrasts between what men are and what they think themselves, what they endeavour to do and what is in their nature to be: he reveals the things which deform men, separate them from their fellows, and magnify their differences.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, in fashioning these differences into a lively, dramatic whole, particularly a commentary on character and human relationships, and a revelation of man's nature, he achieved his most concerted and considered attentiveness upon magnifying these differences, not the judgement as exact and correct on it as would be often seen in other writers, such as Shakespeare. His own views on life he reveals by implication, particularly on pretentiousness, hypocrisy, and the actual portrayal of society, the criticism of worldly existing prevailing affairs, the presentation of an exemplary humanistic life, and the like explained already as those which are not so easily discernible at a glance, rather recalls the assertion of Harpagon as he unfolds to Cléante, his son, his long cherished desire;

Un peu de patience. Ne vous alarmez point. Je sais de qu'il faut 'à tous deux; et vous naurez ne l'un ni l'autre aucun lieu de vous plaindre de tout ce que je prétends faire.

Et pour commencer par un bout: avez-vous vu, dites-moi, une jeune personne appelée Mariane, qui ne loge loin d'ici?<sup>11</sup>

This is not the only sign that Molière had been musing over that pretentiousness beneath which the real and actual portrayal of all human beings lurks, and wondering how it comes about that the real intention or innermost heart can produce such astonishingly different results in defiance of the visible features showing on the appearance, however happy or sullen it may seem. Though he here implies that Harpagon's daredevilry and perturbation or arrogance are those of anyone, not to name any special person, seen near and far, earlier or later among us, he does not suggest that all men share Harpagon's pretentiousness. What is the genuine form of the 'pretentiousness' so displayed? We can see the immense contents put upon this term of which he thought an imbalance or an absurdity of the visible aspects against the real and innermost intention brooded in the heart; yet even this is bounded by secular and ordinary or common affairs of our routine relations, not only in the time of Louis XIV. The world of his comedy extends to all human affairs; those enlarged by the high and low classes, as well beyond the limit of property, no matter how much it may be, and yet young and old alike are set at nought to its close or otherwise. That this whole lurid scene may be interpreted as the projection of Harpagon's formerly repressed instincts so inveterately constituted and so strongly conditioned by man's heritage as a representative member of an ordinary society is indica-

10) John Wood (ed.) (1960), *Molière* (London: Penguin), p.xv-xvi.

11) Georges Couton, *op. cit.*, *L'Avare*, A I s iv.

ted in Molière's description of the avariciousness, not only in light of property but also in feeling of love, the protagonist. Thoroughly nerved, then meddled, by such astonishment of his son, he is obsessed with the nature of paternalism to his offsprings and with the psychological results of arrogating this authority on them. Thus he dares to confront the realities of the external world or of the inner world in tight conformity with such tumults as if he had been inculcated with such overbearing pride as to disregard any other than himself to a degree to which his irrationalism reaches the apex of delusion in nervous disorders:

Cela ne sera rien. Allez vite boire dans la cuisine un grand verre d'eau claire. Voilà de mes damoiseaux flouets, qui n'out non plus de vigueur que des poules. C'est là, ma fille, ce que j'ai résolu pour moi. Quant à ton frère, je lui destine une certaine veuve dont ce matin on m'est venu parler; et pour toi, je te donne au seigneur Anselme.<sup>12)</sup>

As seen in this, Harpagon has been so thoughtlessly embarrassed that he is now at a loss why he has developed such a morbid compulsion as to taste psychological neurosis. Such derangement in his mind culminates to an altitude where he capitulates to the wild and avaricious evil of envy:

Harpagon: Non du côté de l'homme, on ne doit point risquer l'affaire, et ce sont des suites fâcheuses, ou je n'ai garde de me commettre. Si tu avais senti quelque inclination pour elle, à la bonne heure: je te l'aurais fait épouser, au lieu de moi; mais cela n'étant pas, je suivrai mon premier dessein, et je épouserai moi-même.

Cléante: Hé bien; mon père, puisque les choses son tainsi, il faut vous découvrir mon coeur, il faut vous révéler notre secret. La vérité est que je l'aime, depuis un jour que je la vis dans une promenade; que mon dessein était tantôt de vous la demander pour femme; et que rien ne m'a retenu que la déclaration de vos sentiments, et la crainte de vous déplaire.<sup>13)</sup>

Have I spoken at too great a length about pretentiousness and avariciousness for the sake of discerning what are the real elements Molière tried to describe in his plays? not really, for whoever reads up the point to which my story proceeds *L'Avare*, which is now in controversy, is touched with the grotesquery whose dramatic development stretches out to the furious and stormy conflict of envy between father and son. And this struggle of a tripartite love affair manifests as exactly and directly its real shape as its false identity or hypocrisy does to life. Such struggle was also just that to be devoted for his own identity and the rights of the comic genre as his peculiar one distinguishable from other playwrights' works: his literary and theatrical craftsmanship gave so much free reign to his mastery of realism that it is easy enough to explain how Molière made use of the details of his time whenever he had a chance. Of course he worked essentially in the imaginary universe of the theatre; accordingly, not even one of Molière's comedies is an exact copy of reality. In all probability, more in *L'Avare*, especially in that above quotation

12) *Ibid.*, A I s iv.

13) *Ibid.*, A N s iii.

of dialogue than in any of his other plays, tragedy is also close at hand as the avaricious Harpagon loses so much, through his own demerit, of all dignity and paternal feelings that he becomes a rival of his son in love. But what he intended to delineate in this comedy is not that loss of paternal authority, but the inner world of psychological impasse in which the central figure of the vulgar adventurer disguises his passion for love, his sensual lust under the cover of a consanguineous tie, and almost arrogantly prescribes to the inferior whatever measures please him. This method of disguise is truly different from that device I have already scrutineered in the other opportunity in which the comparisons between Shakespeare and Molière are expounded. It definitely theorizes the account that, as a device of disguise and in dramatic effect the method of disguise scenes, is infinitely simpler in Shakespeare than in Molière and thus in its exactness of and efficacy of developing the scenes on stage, the excellency of the former is a good deal the stronger.

It is that ubiquitous fragrance of the disguising contrivance which remains to us in the dramatic works written by Molière, situating the actions in social circumstances, however high or low in their levels, with a family and a community alike, or even any style of living. I mentioned elsewhere the importance I attached to the technique of disguising scenes, but I must recount this technique here in more detail than the explanation I have observed. I should particularly like to draw attention to what is generally intended to portray the scenes of hypocrisy in which real emotion and fundamental moral tradition show their false portraits different from the original ones in order to exclude certain latent duplicity, hypocrisy, pretentiousness and the like. As to his particular developing technique, Molière owes so much to the observation of men and their secularities, saying: 'Lorsque vous peingnez les hommes, il faut peindre d'après nature; on veut que ces portraits ressemblent, et vous n'avez rien fait, si vous n'y faites reconnaître les gens de votre siècle.' On the ground of this, Molière never intended to portray an abstract character and therefore so comparable a scene in his comedies as Shakespeare's simplicity and monotony in the corresponding stage scenes. It is this abstractness that as an essential object he repudiates, and on the contrary he increases the strong and vivid impression of the power and life which comes through in his comedies, so that the dramatic characters are inseparable from the milieu in which they live. In fact, that all the literature tends to be concerned with the question of reality is too normal for its substantial and significant meaning, like other corresponding monuments to mark out what it is doing for the sake of its cause. Between reality and appearance, between what really is and what merely seems, so central is the member of the clan who follows the literary trends of Realism and Naturalism. This is of tangibility or of concreteness Molière has pursued owing so much to reality, to what really is, while rejecting appearance, what merely seems in his plays. For him, disguise is the medium that, for good or bad, reveals what a real society really is not only in the light of emotion, such as feelings of love and pretentiousness

but also of moral convention, like hypocrisy, avariciousness, intrigue, deception and similar vices. In Molière's specialized world, such vices as noted just now really matter, so that 'tragedy is close at hand' notwithstanding 'he may be said to have created modern French comedy by giving it a serious basis, where there had previously been little but farces and comedies of intrigue on Italian or Spanish models.'<sup>14</sup>

## 2. Language as Disguise

In this chapter, Molière's usage will be central for that discussion which is to continue on. Molière has, as I intend to show, exploited it as no other artist has done; even his predecessor Shakespeare is far below him in exploiting it so freely and so delicately in his immense volume of literary works. On the other hand, Gustave Lanson expressed his definite opinion about Molière's language in *Histoire de la Littérature française*;

Né près du peuple, absente de Paris pendant douze années, il est resté à l'écart du travail que faisait la société polie sur la langue; et quand il revient, en 1658, il garde son franc et ferme style nourri d'archaïsmes, de locutions italiennes ou espagnoles, de façons de parler et de métaphores populaires ou provinciales, un style substantiel et savoureux, plus chaud que fin; plus coloré que pur, brusque en son allure et assez indépendant des règles ou du bel usage.<sup>15</sup>

For the language Molière used in his literary works, not only Gustave Lanson but also other well-known critics applied the comparable attitude of criticism, more severe and more censorious than him as to reveal that 'On lui a reproché du barbarisme et du jargon, des phrases forcées, des entassements de métaphores, du galimatias, des impropriétés, de chevilles, des répétitions fatigantes, un style inorganique.'<sup>16</sup> Yet Schérer, one of these critics, accused Molière more severely and strongly than any other, saying 'Molière est aussi mauvais écrivain qu'on peut être.' However severe or censorious they may be, all those blames are of the quality of his language which is based on coarseness or vulgarity, not for the exploitation of it; and this is, for good reasons, one worthy of being the point of this approach in question. This is perhaps the most fundamental of all his language problems; his comedy is virtually built on some account of how hypocritically, incompletely, and pretentiously man and his world are brought into existence by misunderstanding what he does not mean, or less, or more, than he means. Molière could not remain blind to language as disguise while he unmasked so many social disguises as hypocrisy, intrigue, pretentiousness, avariciousness, fraud and similar vices. As the practice of the society he moved in covered the normal contents of conventions with an artificial coating of politeness, so the practice of the normal language with which he made a living also did so. Molière's keen discernment penetrated into the question of language whose

14) Paul Harvey and J.E. Heseltine (ed.) (1959) *The Oxford Companion to French Literature* (Oxford), p.487.

15) Gustave Lanson (1912) *Histoire de la Littérature française* (Paris: Hachette), p.517.

16) *Ibid.*, p.516.

dualism, in normal and social spheres, contrasts profoundly in its agency of communication as a medium in linguistic activities. This same kind of idea is easily found in the Preface of *Le Tartuffe*;

Et, en effet, puisqu'on doit discourir des choses et non pas de mot, et que la plupart des contrariétés viennent de ne se pas entendre et d'envelopper dans un même mot des choses opposées, il ne faut qu'ôter le voile de l'équivoque, et regarder ce qu'est la comédie en soi, pour voir si elle est condamnable.<sup>17)</sup>

By the help of this passage we can approach one of the secrets of his arts, something that is not merely superficial grace or specious argument. It is the sign of a genuine and dynamic quality which can manage to cover such a vast literary universe that he raised French comedy to the heights of French tragedy.

This eulogy brings out an impression that Molière should be honoured in greater distinction than any others for their literary merits. There is not the slightest doubt of preference of the general public in light of the fact that he is perfectly aware of the delicacies and even of the philosophy of language. We couldn't help but assume the subtlety of his imaginative penetration into speech by his artistic use of its character. Thus speech is so much more meaningful in Molière than in any other dramatic element, like psychology and character drawing the dramatic roles of which are, to say the least, of much greater importance. Judging from those already mentioned, it seems to us that in the most instructive illustration of this speech exploitation even Shakespeare's is not as acceptable as Molière's glory.

It is no derogation to the reputation of Shakespeare to point out that as a predecessor he exercised less strenuous power over language in its exploitation than Molière. He is not, however, a layman on that exploitation, but rather subtle and adroit. 'Ten years earlier or as many years later' would have made significant differences. This statement is not so ridiculous among us, as 'that period could transfer a field of mulberry into a sea of greenness' is one of the common and widely prevailing proverbs in Korea; this would be true elsewhere too. This mode of thought is responsible for the very striking characteristic of his language exploitation. From such a great disparity in age as almost three score years or so, in the characteristics both the English and French languages contain as linguistic merits or the opposites, the English master is not preferred to his follower. This is particularly true on the practical devices of verbal acrobats called quip or quibble, as shown exemplarily below in a pun on which his genius of the language seems to have combined a unparalleled, stabilising tendency with individual liberty. This excellence could be admired enough for the following examples.

Let me give light, but lest me not be light,  
For a light wife doth make a heavy husband,

17) Georges Couton, *op. cit.*, p.886.

And never be Bassanio so for me,  
But God sort all! You are welcome home, my load.<sup>18)</sup>

Here the word 'light' is used three times so differently in meanings that its pregnancies are in far less distillity of fine language and direct appeal to the emotions of a family and social classes or the general public. Truly he exercised three unique powers respectively over each one of its conceivabilities: an illuminating agent or source, as the sun, a lamp, or a beacon in the first usage, a wanton or light and changeable situation of mind in the second, and lastly as the meaning, or on different meanings of the same word, always for the sake of ludicrous effect. In fact, this example is too poor, for his ability of language acrobats can not be understood by us as it is. Now here, to keep us from being aghast at this poor illustration, C.D. Willcock's opinion about it is, it seems to me, a suitable substitution to be taken for the good example: 'Acquisition was now in the air; there was a buccaneering spirit abroad in language as well as on the high seas. The part of Shakespeare as language-maker has naturally been more closely studied than that of any other Elizabethan author. Our debt to him in new words, new adaptations, new phrases, which by their vividness of metaphor or aptness and pregnancy of gnomic expression have become current coin, has been assessed and estimated again and again, and the tale is not yet told.'<sup>19)</sup> It will not be just a waste of space and energy to take once again such an example in behalf of applause of his invulnerable potentiality as this passage selected from *King Richard the Second*, where the word 'heaven' matches with the word 'havens', as both words had same pronunciations in Elizabethan English.

All places that the eye of heaven visits  
Are to a wise man ports and happy havens,  
Teach thy necessity to reason thus;  
There is no virtue like necessity  
Think not the King did banish thee,  
But thou the King.<sup>20)</sup>

These two selected passages belong, as I believe, to the part of his no less popular illustrations, and this is not worthy to connect with the reputation of Shakespeare, for there are good stories in which we risk to see the wood for the trees and the tree for the branches, and even the branches for the very fine capillary veins of the leaves. In a general survey of his poetic achievement, it is a too usual and familiar way to borrow the praise of a Romantic poet such as Coleridge; therefore, it is good enough not to dwell on that achievement whatever, which for this given topic seems not necessary, but rather superfluous and redundant.

18) Peter Alexander, *op. cit.*, *The Merchant of Venice*, A V s i 129-132.

19) Harley Granville-Barker and G.B. Harrison (1959) *A Companion to Shakespeare Studies* (Cambridge, Cambridge University), p.129.

20) Peter Alexander, *op. cit.*, *Richard II*, A I s iii, 275-280.

This much digression being full so far, it is indispensable for me to return to Molière's dramatic irony so brilliant that no other play wright can share it, not to mention any English one whose mother tongue can not but lose under that disparity of linguistic activities owing to the more prosaic and monotonous principle of gender than the French language. In one word, his peculiar device of comic and ironical expression is to select the utterance of what is around and in most of us is buried, suppressed and unutterable only by virtue of the verbal acrobats with emphasis on the principle of gender usage. Before a detailed explanation on it, it is more agreeable to demonstrate its concrete and material examples.

Harpagon: Ô ma chère cassette! Elle n'est point sortie de ma maison?

Valère: Non, Monsieur.

Harpagon: Hé! dis-moi donc un peu: tu n'y as point touché?

Valère: Moi, y toucher? Ah! vous lui faites tort, aussi bein qu'à moi; et c'est d'une ardeur toute prue et respectueuse que j'ai brûlé pour elle.

Harpagon: Brûlé pour ma cassette!

Valère: J'aimerais mieux mourir que de lui avoir fait paraître aucune pensée offensante: elle est trop sage et trop honnête pour cela.

Harpagon: Ma cassette trop honnête!

Valère: Tous mes désirs se sont bornés à jouir de sa vue; et rien de criminel n'a profané la passion que ses beaux yeux m'ont inspirée.

Harpagon: Les beaux yeux de ma cassette! Il parle d'elle comme un amant d'une maîtresse.<sup>21)</sup>

Knowing that his father proposed to marry Mariane, Cléante determined to win her from his father by obtaining possession of a box containing part of his father's treasure; and the old miser who once hoped to get a dowry with her is distraught by its loss. Suspicion is thrown on Valère, who, already in love with Elise, the daughter of avaricious man, thinks that he is being charged with designs on her, but this notwithstanding, his future father-in-law imputes that theft to him by an assuming misunderstanding. Such imputation at last leads him to admit his guilt by pleading the allurements to her that 'rien de criminel n'a profané la passion que ses beaux yeux m'ont inspirée.' At this point in their communications, Harpagon exclaims 'Les beaux yeux de ma cassette!' and the misunderstanding is cleared up. For Molière, 'many rudimentary comic situations are no more than interferences with such a structure of tripartite relationship' as that of a speaker, a listener and a convention. This structure is indebted to the following suppositions. 'Suppose, for instance, that the speaker is not sure who is at the other end of a chain of communication, or that he thinks the hearer is someone other than whom he really is. Suppose again that what he says is not heard, or not grasped, or misinterpreted. These elementary cases occur in Molière.'<sup>22)</sup> Indeed, in contrast to or comparison with the comedies of Shakespeare, as I have already remarked, such structure enables us to get a diff-

21) Georges Couton, *op. cit.*, *L'Avare*, A V s iii.

22) Jacques Guichard, *op. cit.*, p.40.



erent glimpse of the true nature of comedy it self. Molière is a distinguishable figure far away from a range of the circle where the former happily practices his skills, fully swaying his won absolute as well as mighty sovereignty of creative potentiality on dramatic literature; nowhere else, perhaps, has that universal genius displayed more completely the extraordinary fertility of his mind. His plays are crammed full of and are running over with the multifarious activities of human existence.<sup>23)</sup>

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23) G.L. Strachey, *op. cit.*, p.86.