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A comparative study of Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme of Molière and Turaret of Lesage

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LE BOURGEOIS GENTILHOMME OF
MOLIÈRE AND TURCARET OF LESAGE

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

BY
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DEPARTMENT OF FRENCH

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In this study the writer has pointed out similarities and differences in two distinguished French writers, Molière of the seventeenth century and Lesage of the eighteenth. To demonstrate these similarities and differences the writer has explored *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* of the former and *Turcaret* of the latter, with emphasis on theme, style, and character development. Although *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* is a comedy of character and *Turcaret* is a comedy of manners, both depict the faults and follies of mankind as their authors saw them exhibited.

Even though Lesage is not usually considered as great a writer as Molière, it has been stated by some critics that *Turcaret* is probably the best of its kind to be found outside the works of Molière and some have even said that *Turcaret* really equals Molière's creations. The writer has attempted to prove the validity of these and similar statements.

The study is divided into three chapters. The first serves as an introduction, consisting of a biographical sketch of each author and significant details concerning their milieu. Chapter two consists of the analysis of the two works. And Chapter three is devoted to a comparison of the two works. This is followed by a summary of the similarities and differences discernable in the two works and the relative merits of the two plays.

The writer realizes that this study would have been impossible without the help of certain other people. Therefore, she would like at this time to acknowledge Dr. Benjamin Hudson, for his untiring efforts
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moral support and financial aid have been indispensable to the writer's
success.

I. J. W.
CHAPTER I

THE WRITERS AND THEIR TIMES

A thorough knowledge of the life of the author and the period in which he wrote is essential to the understanding of any literary work. With this view in mind the writer of this thesis feels it is expedient to give a tableau of the essential social and political phenomena of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that affected the writings of Molière and Lesage together with a biographical sketch of each of the authors.

For the sake of convenience the seventeenth century can be divided into three main periods: from 1600 to 1660, the period of pre-classicism; from 1661 to 1668, the period of pure classicism; and from 1688 to 1715, the transition. The period with which we are most concerned is that of pure classicism because it is the period in which Molière wrote his Le Bourgeois gentilhomme. This period, however, is in many ways an outgrowth of the first one. Therefore the writer feels it wise to examine both periods.

The pre-classical period was one of struggle and preparation. Henry IV had brought peace to France after the country had been wrecked by the Religious Wars of the sixteenth century. Among other accomplishments, he signed the Edict of Nantes which guaranteed the Protestants the right to worship in certain places, equality before the law and the right to enter any profession of their choice. He succeeded in stabilizing the government and France began to prosper politically as well as economically.
After the assassination of Henry IV in 1610, France was once again in a state of turmoil. The nobles tried to regain the privileges that they had enjoyed during the Middle Ages and the Protestants began to rebel after the Counter Reformation. It was left to Richelieu, Prime Minister of Louis XIV, to restore peace. Richelieu was a very able administrator. Some of his exploits include the destruction of the last strong-hold of the protestants at Rochelle, the reduction of the power of the nobility and the weakening of the House of Austria, thereby making France the strongest European power. Seeking national unity in everything he established the French Academy for the purification of the language and he encouraged the presentation of plays and literary works.

After his death in 1642 and that of Louis XIII in 1643, the Civil Wars of the Fronde erupted. These were revolts of the parliament and the nobles against the regent Anne of Austria, mother of the young Louis XIV and against her Prime Minister Mazarine, who was as deeply determined to bring the nobles under royal control as Richelieu. These attempts ended in failure for the nobility and the nobles never again attempted to regain their power during the seventeenth century. The success which Mazarine and Richelieu had achieved in destroying the power of the nobility paved the way for the absolute monarchy of Louis XIV.

This period was fruitful principally in the development of social form or etiquette. Good manners, grace and refinement were encouraged because of the distinction they gave. The movement had its beginnings at the home of Catherine de Vivonne of Rome who married the Marquis de Rambouillet of France. Upon entering the court of Henry IV, she was astonished by the coarseness of manners and the freedom of the courtisans.
In order to create a comfortable environment for herself she left the court and opened her home to writers, artists, and people of "high society." Her salon was referred to as the Hotel de Rambouillet, where social graces, charm, and elegant language were perfected. This effort for distinction became an effort for novelty at all costs and this new development of highly affected manners came to be known as preciosity.

In literature the pre-classical period was the time in which the baroque flourished. It was characterized by freedom. The stages were decorated with bright and lively colors and the authors permitted murders, blood, fights, and scenes of torture on the stage. The dominant types were the tragedy, the tragi-comedy and the pastoral.

The tragedy had its best representative in Corneille and did not become regular until 1634 when Mairet applied the unities of time, place and action to his play, Sophonisbe.

The tragi-comedy was a sort of melodrama whose ending was happy. The authors of this type chose freely their subjects, the extent of the action and the scenes. Along with Alexander Hardy, who is considered the father of this type, the best writers of the tragi-comedy were Rotrou, author of Saint Genest and Venceslas, and Tristan L'Hermite, author of La Marianne.

Alexander Hardy also borrowed the pastoral from Italy and popularized it in France. Honoré D'Urfé's L'Astrée is considered the best pastoral novel of the time. It was important for the novelties that it presented. It has the distinction of being the first pastoral novel that contained military episodes, the first whose action took place in Gaul, and the first to present a multitude of characters.
Malberbe is considered by many critics as the best poet of the period. An exponent of obedience to rules he preached that the French Language should be purified and that poets should be governed by very strict rules. His reforms became the basis for the aesthetic principles of the following period.

These were by no means the only important writers of this period, for Descartes wrote *Discours sur la méthode*, the first philosophical work in French literature, and Blaise Pascal wrote an apology for the Christian religion in his *Pensées*.

As a result of the highly refined society and the development of the salons, the literature of the classical period became mundane. That is to say that the main purpose was to please and it was *la société polie*, that the writers sought to please. The fundamental characteristics were clear, logical reasoning; the desire to reach human truths through a deep psychological analysis, proceeding from the particular to the general; and stress being put on clarity, exactitude, and simplicity. The sixteenth century had been instrumental in setting the stage for the freedom of style that was visible in the pre-classical period and for the obedience which characterized this period. The writers of the sixteenth century had demanded a new freedom and obedience by breaking with medieval tradition and proposing the ancient Greeks and Romans as models. Those of the classical period regarded them as masters rather than as models. They adhered very closely to the strict rules imposed by the Greeks and Romans.¹

This period has been referred to as *le Grande Siècle* and for good

reasons, for the absolute monarchy of Louis XIV extended not only to
literature but to all spheres, enforcing stability, order, and unity. France gained a dominance in European affairs that has since been match-
ed only briefly.

Paris became the intellectual capital of the world as French taste imposed itself on the western world. The king himself encouraged artist-
tic and literary productions and he protected and accorded pensions to writers and artists. Under his control two academies, l'académie des
inscriptions and l'académie des sciences, were established and one, l'académie de peinture et de sculpture was reorganized. Louis XIV took a special interest in these institutions so as to raise the dignity of the men of science and art who had been scorned before this time.

The four great writers whom Louis XIV protected and favored were Boileau, author of "L'Art Poétique," Racine, the great tragedian, who remains alive primarily because of his Phèdre and Andromaque; La Fontaine, author of the famous animal stories, Fables; and Molière, the superb writer of comedy who became the king's personal friend. In addition to his masterpiece Le Misanthrope, he is famous for several works which will be mentioned in the development of this study.

Now that a tableau has been given of the period in which Molière wrote and the preceding period which influenced his writings, the writer feels it appropriate at this time to discuss the life of this French genius.

The oldest of six children, Jean-Baptist Pocquelin was born in Paris in 1622 into a family of the moyenne bourgeoisie. His father was a prosperous upholster and tapissier-valet-de-chambre of the King, Louis
XIII. His mother was a Parisian bourgeois whose father was also a prosperous upholster. She was of frail health and passed her weakness on to each of her children. It is believed, however, that she was the "symbol of motherhood."¹ Her life was very short, for she died when young Jean was only ten years old.

Therefore, as early as eleven years of age the boy knew the cruelty of a stepmother. His father remarried one year after his mother's death and his stepmother, having two children of her own was harsh toward Jean and the older Pocquelin children.² This burden, however was not long to be endured, for the stepmother, too died within a few years after the marriage, leaving the rearing of the children to Monsieur Pocquelin who desired Jean to become an upholster like himself. For this reason the boy was apprenticed in his father's shop until the age of fourteen, receiving only the rudimentary education accorded artisans, that of learning reading, writing, and some arithmetic.

During his childhood, Jean's maternal grandfather, who loved him dearly, used to carry him along to watch the performances at the Hôtel de Bourgogne and the Théâtre Marais. There the desire to become an actor originated in him and continued to increase when at the age of fourteen he became dissatisfied with his father's shop and expressed his desire for a formal education. Monsieur Pocquelin, wanting the very best for his son, sent him to the Collège de Clermont, a school à la mode.


under the direction of the Jesuits. While at the Collège de Clermont, Jean made the acquaintance of Chapelle, through whose influence he had the opportunity to witness the lectures of the famous philosopher Gassendi. The latter's ideas of freedom and independence of thought greatly influenced young Jean who was naturally skeptical, who thought for himself and formed his own ideas. ¹ According to the custom of the time whereby one should terminate his education by taking a law degree, it is said that after the completion of the boy's education his father bought a law diploma for his son from the Université d'Orléans and that after a few months of practice he abandoned the law profession. ²

Determined that his son should follow in his footsteps, Monsieur Pocquelin requested the King to accord his position as tapissier-valet-de-chambre du roi to his son who accompanied the king on a trip to Narbonne in 1642. This position did not interest the young Jean and when he returned to Paris in 1643, he expressed his desire to become an actor to his father. M. Pocquelin then accepted the fact that his son would not become an upholster like himself.

Before going to Narbonne, Jean had met Madeleine Bejart who was to become a lifetime friend. She was from a family of actors with whom Jean formed a troop, called l'Illustre Théâtre. Jean became director of the troop and took the name of Molière. After suffering many failures in Paris the troop moved to the provinces where, from 1645 to 1658, they led a nomad existence traveling from province to province. There they

¹Trollope, op. cit., p. 108.
made a name for themselves and became quite popular. It was during this traveling in the provinces also that Molière became the keen observer of human nature that was to be revealed in his later works. It was there that he wrote his first two plays, L'Etourdi, which the troop acted in 1652 and Le Dépit Amoureux, acted in 1656.

In 1658, after having suffered many failures and hardships including imprisonment for debts, but also after having won fame as an actor and having begun his authorship, Molière, with his troop, returned to Paris where they took the name of Troupe de Monsieur under the protection of the King's brother. Through the influence of Monsieur the troop played Corneille's Nicanor at the Louvre in the presence of the King. After the performance Molière appeared on stage to thank the King personally for his presence and his cause was won for the King judged the performance excellent and granted Molière use of the Petit Bourbon for his future performances.¹ In 1659, when reparations were being made at the Petit Bourbon, the King's brother granted him use of the Palais Royal where henceforth, all of their performances were given.

Molière became a very good friend of the King. In fact they became intimate associates, so much so that after Molière's marriage to Armand Béjart, younger sister of Madeleine in 1662, the King became godfather to his first son. And, from 1662 through 1665, Louis XIV protected and defended him in the presentation of his works, L'Ecole des femmes and Tartuffe, which were criticized severely by the faux devots, by the public, and by the other troops who were jealous of the favors shown Molière.

by the King. They maintained that the characters of these plays were unreal and accused Molière of triviality, plagiarism, attacking marquises, disrespect for religion and for being a pupil of the Italian actors.¹ The greatest proof of the King's admiration for Molière was shown in 1665 when he expressed his desire to have the troop called Troupe du roi under his personal protection.

The years 1658 through 1667 were relatively prosperous for Molière, for during that time he wrote his best plays and the troop met with its greatest success. But as always, the wheel of fortune reversed. From 1668 through 1672 he suffered terribly. In 1668 he became very ill and did not write another play for three years. And in the same year he and his wife were separated. The following year his father died and three years later, in 1672, his longtime friend and fellow actress, Madeleine, died.

In 1673 he made a re-entry on the stage, insisting on playing the role of the invalid in his last play Le Malade imaginaire, and ironically enough he became ill during the last act of the play. Although he completed his role, he died shortly afterwards.

And so on February 17, 1673, France lost her greatest comic actor and dramatist. He left to his country and to the world such masterpieces as Le Misanthrope, L'Avare, Tartuffe, L'Ecole des femmes, Les Femmes sevantes, and Le Bourgeois gentilhomme. However, when France lost the comic genius of Molière in 1673 she had gained another in 1668 with the birth of Lesage.

Though he was born during the seventeenth century he wrote his most representative works during the beginning of the eighteenth century while Louis XIV was yet King of France. Emile Henriot states:

Lesage est un homme du dix-septième bien que du dix-huitième siècle. Son Turcaret est un sujet de Louis XIV. 1

This fact therefore gives the writer the opportunity to explore the last period of *Le Grande Siècle* which is called the transition.

It was during these declining years of Louis XIV's reign that France lost the European prestige that she had won during the first years of his reign. The ambitions of the great roi soleil led France to economic and political disaster. He sought, at all costs, to extend French territory and to make France the most illustrious country of Europe and himself the most illustrious king that France had ever had.

The large sums which he had used from the public treasury in building his extravagant court at Versailles, the many wars into which he led France, all contributed to the economic distress of the country. Men, territory, munition and money were lost. But the greatest economic lost resulted in Louis XIV's attempt to bring religious unity to the country. With this purpose in mind he revoked the Edict of Nantes, taking away the privileges that had been granted the Protestants, who were primarily the artisans, skilled laborers and businessmen. Thousands of them left the country carrying their skills and knowledge with them to enrich other countries, and leaving France in the most disastrous economic state that the records of her history have recorded.

Because of such conditions taxes had to be raised to oppressive

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heights. The royal governors called, fermiers généraux or traitants, to whom Louis XIV sold the right to collect taxes, increased them to unbearable heights so as to increase their own profit. Soon these men and the entire government of Louis XIV came to be despised by the public. The writers began to criticize the government, an attempt which no one dared make during the earlier years of the absolute monarchy.

The earliest of such writers were La Bruyère, Saint Simome, and Fénelon. La Bruyère's Caractères painted a violent and sarcastic picture of the social abuses and injustices of the time while Saint Simome saw only the defects and errors of Louis XIV's reign and his Mémoires exposed the worst aspects of Louis' politics and Court and the baseness of his courtiers. In Télémaque, Fénelon further criticized the King by attempting to show him the road to the best form of government. These writers set the stage for the eighteenth century which was to be a reaction against all institutions of the Old Regime.

Whereas the seventeenth century was an exponent of traditional beliefs in politics, art, and religion, the eighteenth century was to refuse to accept anything without having examined it by the application of reason and free speculation. It was to be a century of progress and change, and of practicality. Therefore, writers such as Regnard and Lesage should dare to write such works as Légataire Universel and Turcaret. Political and social criticism was to reach its height in the latter part of the century in Beaumarchais' Le Mariage de Figaro. However, it is primarily in the first years of the century that we are interested since this is the time in which Lesage wrote his Turcaret.

Alain René Lesage was born in Brétagne into a family of the meilleure
bourgeoisie. His father was a barrister and solicitor of the royal court at Rhuys. His mother was also the daughter of a royal notary. She died when the boy was only nine years of age.

After the death of his father, at the age of fourteen, the young Lesage was left poor because his relatives seized his father's possessions as their "so-called" inheritances. He was left to the guardianship of his uncle, Gabriel, who had no interest in the boy and therefore sent him away to the College at Vannes to rid himself of the responsibility of caring for him.

Little is known of Lesage's life after the completion of his education at Vannes except that he went to Paris where he studied law and became an avocat du parlement. Afterwards, he married Marie-Elizabeth Huyard, of Parisian bourgeois stock. He then renounced the bar to return to the provinces where he worked as secretary to a fermier général. It was during his stay in the provinces at the home of the fermier général that he gathered most of his knowledge for his comedy, Turcaret.

After his return to Paris he began his first works which were mere translations and met with little success. In 1695 he translated Lettres galantes of Artistenete, a Greek writer, and in 1700, under the title of Théâtre espagnol, he published two plays of Lope de Vega and Francisco de Rojos. In 1702 he produced Point d'honneur, a comedy of Francisco de Rojos and in 1704, he translated Don Quichotte of Avellaneda. His first works to meet with any success were his first original work, Crispin rival de son maître and a novel Le Diable honteux in 1707. In 1709 he wrote his theatrical masterpiece, Turcaret.

In 1712 he became a writer for the Théâtre de la Foire, hoping to
earn money and fame. He wrote some one hundred plays for this theater, none of which have survived.

With the exception of Turcaret and Crispin rival de son maître, Lesage's name is usually not associated with the theatre. He is remembered instead for his long novel, Aventures de Gil Blas de Santillane which he began in 1712 and did not complete until 1735. This novel has given him the distinction of being the father of the picaresque novel in France. According to Vinet:

Lesage n'est pas un grand esprit. C'en est même un médiocre, de peu d'étendue, de peu de portée, qui n'a jamais pensé bien haut ni bien profondément, ni pensé peut-être du tout. Mais c'est un observateur exact et pénétrant qui sait voir, qui rend bien ce qu'il voit.

And it is in this vein that he strikes the writer's interest, in his ability to observe and record accurately, realistically and artistically his observations.

After an obscure and laborious life Lesage died poor at the home of a son in 1747. It has been said that he was too proud to beg and too honest to borrow.

It has been pointed out above that both Molière and Lesage were geniuses in their ability to observe and record their findings and in their ability to paint the men and manners of their times. In the following chapter the writer will explore their plays.

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CHAPTER II

ANALYSIS OF LE BOURGEOIS GENTILHOMME AND TURCARET

Le Bourgeois gentilhomme, acted for the first time in 1670 at Chaumont, is a musical comedy in five acts. It is said that Molière wrote this play at the request of the King who had been offended by a Turk visiting the Court. To avenge his offense the King asked Molière to write a satirical play about Turks. Afterwards he asked him to produce a musical comedy for the entertainment of his hunting party. Thus Le Bourgeois gentilhomme was written to serve both purposes.

It is moreover a character study of Monsieur Jourdain, the monomaniac whose ridiculous attempts to rise above his bourgeois class to become a gentilhomme threaten the happiness of his wife and daughter and in the end cause his own disillusionment. He takes lessons in dancing, music, fencing and philosophy while his extravagant clothes make him the laughing stock of his servants. He allows himself to be swindled by the impertinent nobleman, Dorante, who flatters his vanity. He refuses to permit the marriage of his daughter, Lucille, to the worthy Cléonte because he is not a nobleman. However, Cléonte's valet Covielle resorts to disguising his master as the son of a "Grand Turk" who has come to ask the hand of Lucille. The foolish father gladly consents to marry his daughter to the very man whom he had already rejected.

1 Molière, Le Bourgeois gentilhomme, with an introduction and notes by Fernand Gache (Paris: H. Didier. Librairie-Editeur, 1928), pp. 17-18. All other references will be made to this same work unless otherwise indicated.
Although Molière loved his work, as a dramatist there was one part of it that he neglected. That was the putting together of a plot.\(^1\) This is very evident in *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* where the plot is very loosely constructed. His loose plot was due, no doubt, to the fact that Molière was interested primarily in painting the character of M. Jourdain rather than telling a story.

Act I of the play serves as the introduction in which Molière introduces M. Jourdain. He does this first of all in scene 1 through the music and dance teachers who discuss M. Jourdain's ignorance and vanity. They also reveal the advantage that his ignorance gives them. In scene 2, M. Jourdain makes his appearance and confirms everything that has been said about him.

Each scene of Act II serves to reinforce the characteristics of M. Jourdain which were presented in Act I. By the introduction of more teachers and employees Molière depicts M. Jourdain as more ignorant, and vain in each successive scene. In scene 2 he introduces the fencing master and shows the naivenees of the teachers themselves. In scene 3, he introduces the philosophy teacher who helps to reveal the naivenees of all of the teachers. Scene 4 is perhaps the most comical of them all, for here Molière shows the limited extent of M. Jourdain's knowledge during his first lesson in philosophy. In scene 5, the tailor enters to bring M. Jourdain's ridiculous looking suit.

In Act III Molière introduces the other members of the Jourdain household and the other characters of the play. He shows in this act

the effect of Jourdain's vanity upon his household. In scene 2 the servant, Nicole pokes fun at his ridiculousness and in scene 3 Madame Jourdain and Nicole reproach him for his foolish actions and the neglect of his parental responsibilities. In scene 4 Molière shows, with the introduction of Dorante how insignificantly M. Jourdain regards his wife and how important the nobility is to him. The author shows also in this scene how M. Jourdain's vanity leads him to attempt to betray his wife and scene 6 is used to intensify his disrespect for his wife's wishes and his admiration for the nobility. Scenes 7, 8, 9, and 10 have no particular bearing on the plot for they involve the argument between Cléonte and Lucille and between Covielle and Nicole. Scene 12 is a very important one for here Molière shows how M. Jourdain's vanity can ruin his daughter's future happiness. Scene 13 in which a stratagem is planned serves as an introduction to Acts IV and V. In scene 15 M. Jourdain's attempt to betray his wife is confirmed and he is shown more ridiculous by allowing himself to be easily duped. In scene 16 Molière introduces the marchioness to accentuate the vanity of the foolish M. Jourdain who tries to utilize all the graces that he has learned from his dancing teacher.

The first scene of Act IV serves as a reinforcement of M. Jourdain's amorous affectations and scene 3 begins the denouement in which Molière depicts M. Jourdain at the height of his stupidity. In this scene M. Jourdain meets, for the first time, Covielle, who is disguised as a Turkish diplomat. In scene 4 M. Jourdain meets Cléonte who is disguised as a Turkish nobleman while scene 5 contains the ridiculous ceremony of which M. Jourdain is elevated to the Turkish nobility.
Act V is a continuation of Act IV. It is the most comical act of all, for it contains the actual denouement. In scene 1 Molière shows M. Jourdain under the illusion that he has been elevated to one of the highest ranks in Turkish society. In scene 2 Molière emphasizes the ridiculousness of such an assumption in the conversation of Dorante and Dorimène and in scene 6 he again points up the ridiculousness of such an illusion by having Mme Jourdain reproach her husband. At the end of the act Molière ridicules Jourdain by having the characters triumph over him and by having them amuse themselves at his expense.

Molière constructs the play so that it conforms to the classical unities of time and place. He observes the unity of time in as much as the time required for the action is the same as that required for the performance of the play, while the scene is a room in M. Jourdain's house. The single action could possible be the monomania of M. Jourdain and its affect on his family but there are some scenes that have no direct bearing upon the plot. Therefore Molière does not strictly observe the unity of action.

His style is conversational. The language is primarily simple, familiar and lively, each character speaks the language that is natural to his social position or rank. For example, Molière gives to the learned instructors the elegant language of preciosity:

Maitre A Danse. - Pour moi, je vous l'avoue, je me repais un peu de gloire ... Il y a plaisir, ne m'en parlez point, à travailler pour des personnes qui soient capables de sentir les délicatesses d'un art; qui sachent faire un doux accueil aux beautes d'un ouvrage et, par de chatouillantes approbations, vous régaler de votre travail.¹

¹Molière, Act I, scene 1, p. 48.
He gives to Mme Jourdain the coarse speech of the uncultured bourgeois:

\[ \text{À Dorante, Je n'ai que faire des lunettes, monsieur, et je vois assez clair; il y a longtemps je sens les choses, et je ne suis pas une bête.}^1 \]

M. Jourdain also speaks naturally as the uncultured bourgeois:

\[ \text{À Mme Jourdain, Peste soit de la femme. Elle n'y a jamais manqué. Si votre père a été marchand, tant pis pour lui; mais, pour le mien, ce sont des malavises qui disent cela.}^2 \]

However, when he wants to give the impression of being a gentilhomme he speaks a language that is highly affected. The misuse of the words and expressions make him sound ridiculous. No one, not even the most affectatious précieux would even speak in such a manner:

\[ \text{À Dorimène, Madame, ce m'est une gloire bien grande de me voir assez fortuné pour être si heureux que d'avoir le bonheur que vous ayez de la bonté de m'accorder la grâce de me faire l'honneur de m'honorer de la faveur de votre présence ...}^3 \]

Molière uses in Le Bourgeois gentilhomme, a technique that is found throughout his literary production. That is the use of the "mask" whether it is a physical disguise or a psychological one.\(^4\) In this play he uses both. M. Jourdain wears a "mask" throughout for in his affected mannerisms and awful looking clothes he pretends to himself and to others that he is a nobleman. The "mask" is also worn superbly by Dorante, pretending to be the devoted friend of M. Jourdain and also by the various instructors who flatter M. Jourdain's vanity only to remain in

1Molière, Act IV, scene 2, p. 132.


employment. The physical "mask" is seen in the burlesque strategem where Covielle and Cleonte actually disguise themselves in Turkish costumes.

The theme of *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* is also one that is found throughout Molière's works. It is the effect of monomania on the family and on society. He deeply believed that one's guide in life should be his own instincts. He repeats again and again in his plays that the rule of life is to be natural and to follow one's normal impulses. This injunction carries with it the logic that one should be forever conscious of the fact that he is living in a society and his conduct should be in conformity with the rule of the common sense and sound judgment of this society. Whoever tries to suppress or distort the natural impulses becomes ridiculous.¹ This is exactly what happens to M. Jourdain.

Jacques Guicharnaud defines the Molièresque character in the following manner:

A person who is powerfully unified by the domination of a passion or vice that destroys or subdues all other likes or dislikes of his soul and this quality becomes the motivating force of all of his thoughts and actions. Love, alone, can sometimes resist this tyranny. And the comic springs forth from the resistance, from its partial defeat or its unforeseen compromises.²

M. Jourdain, then is a true Molièresque character for he is no more than a puppet, dominated by vanity and manipulated by his flatters. His various instructors delight in the opportunity to be employed by one who knows absolutely nothing about their art but who gladly recompenses


²Guicharnaud, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
them for their flattery. When he first appears on the scene in Act I, M. Jourdain reveals his ignorance by calling the ballet that has been prepared for him "une petite drolétrie" and his vanity by showing off his extremely ugly costume which, according to his tailor, men of quality wear. Ignorant of the fact that the word "écolier" does not always mean a child, M. Jourdain becomes furious when he is told that un écolier de musique has composed a song for him. Instead of this neatly composed song he offers one that is extremely simple and senseless. He consents to becoming a music student, himself after being told that nobleman learn music. He consents to having a concert at his home every Wednesday night because he is told that men of quality do the same.

His deep admiration for noblemen stimulates his desire to imitate them. He declares that he will learn all that he can, but he refuses to learn logic, moral science or physics. Instead he chooses orthography. His conversation with the philosophy instructor comprises one of the most comical scenes of the entire play. In the following excerpt, M. Jourdain appears to be culturally and intellectually deprived:

Le Maître De Philosophie. - M'avez vous quelque commencement de science?
M. Jourdain. - Oh! oui, je sais lire et écrire.
Le Maître De Philosophie. - Voulez-vous que je vous apprenne la logique?
M. Jourdain. - Qu'est-ce que c'est que cette logique?
Maître De Philosophie. - C'est elle qui enseigne les trois opérations de l'esprit ...
M. Jourdain. - ... Cette logique-là ne me revient point.
Maître De Philosophie. - Voulez-vous apprendre la morale?

Elle ... enseigne aux hommes à modérer leurs passions ...
M. Jourdain. - Non, laissons cela. Je suis bilieux comme tous les diables; et il n'y a morale qui tienne, je me veux mettre en colère tout mon soul, quand il m'en prend envie.
Le Maître De Philosophie. - Est-ce la physique que vous voulez apprendre? ... La physique est celle qui explique les principes des choses naturelles et les propriétés du corps ...
M. Jourdain. - Il y a trop de tintamarre la dedans, trop de brouilliamini ... Apprenez-moi l'orthographe.¹

M. Jourdain is indeed an ignoramus. He knows only how to read and write and does not even know the meaning of such simple terms as logic, moral science and physics. He wants to become refined but he is too intellectually lazy to occupy his mind with anything that might cause him mental strain. He calls himself un diable and refuses to study anything that might teach him to moderate his passions.

In the middle of his orthography lesson he stops to try on another flashy suit, on which the flowers have been placed upside down. After being told that noblemen wear them that way, M. Jourdain outright refused to have the flowers changed.

In Act II he admits Dorante into his house against his wife's wishes, and extends to him the best of hospitality, lending him unbelievable sums of money only because he is a nobleman. In the following passage he expresses to Mme Jourdain that he considers it an honor to be able to lend money to a nobleman:

N'est-ce pas une chose qui n'est tout à fait honorable que l'on voit ... une personne de qualité qui m'appelle son cher ami et me traite comme j'étais son égal.²

Finally, M. Jourdain's vanity leads him to contemplate adultery for he becomes infatuated with a beautiful marchioness to whom he sends valuable gifts by Dorante. He even has the audacity to invite her to his home and there, in Act IV, scene 2, insults his wife for having spoken harshly to her.

¹Molière, Act II, scene 6, pp. 72-73.

²Molière, Act II, scene 3, p. 92.
M. Jourdain demonstrates the depths of his conceit when, refusing to permit his daughter to marry the man she loves, he consents in Act IV, scene 2, to her marriage with a foreigner about whom he knows absolutely nothing. Again, his reason lies in the fact that he has vowed to marry her to a nobleman, and the son of a "Grand Turk" is for him a dream come true. It is in Acts IV and V that Molière pushes the ridicule of M. Jourdain to its highest point. M. Jourdain's dream has not, however, come true; it is Cléonte in disguise whom Lucille marries after all and la belle marquise, Dorimène, marries M. Jourdain's cher ami, Dorante, while he, himself, is left in a state of disillusionment.

Some writers have stated that Molière has used the character of Dorante to indicate that M. Jourdain's favorite class is no better than his own. This assumption, however, is quite improbable because the petits marquis and comptes of Molière's day were often members of the lesser nobility or those who, because of their bad conduct, had been disowned by their families and consequently lived by their wits. This then makes it doubtful that Molière intended to ridicule the nobility. Dorante probably evoked a great deal of laughter from the nobility who were no doubt delighted to see him swindle a rich bourgeois whom they scorned because of the financial competition that the latter offered them.

Dorante is a parasitic swindler, needy, but like all noblemen, whether of the upper or lower rank, too proud to work. He is a hypocrit who wins M. Jourdain's confidence by pretending to speak favorably of him to the King and to Dorimène whom Dorante himself loves. He is an imposter who makes Dorimène believe that he is rich by giving her fabulous gifts that M. Jourdain has bought for her. He carries her to an
elaborate dinner party that has been prepared at M. Jourdain's expense, under the pretense that he is responsible for everything. In these and all of his actions Dorante shows himself to be very clever.

He cannot, however, deceive Mme Jourdain who recognizes him for what he really is. She is the antithesis of her husband and represents bourgeois common sense. She is willing to accept her station in life and tries energetically to lead her husband back to the road of common sense:

... Je suis scandalisée de la vie que vous menez. Je ne sais plus ce que c'est que notre maison; on disait qu'il est c'éans carême-prenant tous les jours.1

She is very outspoken for she does not hesitate to voice her feelings in the presence of her husband, nor Dorante, nor even Dorimène whom she chases away from her home.

She seems to be primarily interested in her parental responsibilities for she is very concerned about marrying Lucille whom she says is of "âge d'être pourvue." Her long tirade concerning this matter summarizes her feeling and gives the clearest indication of her character:

... Les alliances avec plus grand que soi sont sujettes toujours à de facheux inconvenients. Je ne veux point qu'un gendre puisse à ma fille reprocher ses parents, et qu'elle ait des enfants qui aient honte de m'appeler leur grand'maman... et je veux un homme, en un mot, qui m'ait obligation de ma fille, et à qui je puisse dire: "Mettez-vous là, mon gendre, et dînez avec moi."2

She objects to her husband's idea that their daughter should marry a nobleman because she is afraid that her grandchildren will not respect

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1 Molière, Act III, scene 3, p. 86.

2 Molière, Act III, scene 12, pp. 117-118.
their bourgeois grandparents and she is concerned about what conclusions people might draw. She is also concerned about the relationship that would exist between her son-in-law and herself for she wants to be completely comfortable when in his presence. Although her motives might appear to be a bit selfish one cannot overlook the fact that her argument is much more sensible than her husband's.

At her side is Nicole, the traditional type of servant found in Molière's plays who assumes a role almost equal to that of his master. She is straightforward and frank in her dealings with Monsieur Jourdain, agreeing with Mme Jourdain that his social ambitions are foolish. In reprimanding him for having so many people enter the house she speaks to him as though she were speaking to another servant:

... Je ne saurais plus voir mon ménage propre, avec cet attrait de gens que vous faites venir chez vous. Il ont des pieds qui vont chercher de la boue dans tous les quartiers de la ville, pour l'apporter ici ...

She is honest and reliable, for Mme Jourdain and Lucille depend upon her to perform several tasks which she always succeeds in accomplishing. She completes the succession of characters who reveal the effects that are produced by M. Jourdain's social ambitions.

Covielle is also one of Molière's traditional characters. He, like Nicole, seems to be more of a companion than a servant. His own invention of the Turkish stratagem assures his master's happiness.

His master, Cléonte, seems to be Molière's mouthpiece. He is a loyal, sympathetic and honest young man who, like Mme Jourdain, is proud of his bourgeois class. Even though he loves Lucille and wants very

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¹Molière, Act III, scene 3, p. 87.
much to marry her, he refuses to lie to her father about his birth. His reply to M. Jourdain's question as to whether or not he is a noble confirms his devotion to his class as well as his honesty:

... Pour moi, je vous l'avoue j'ai les sentiments sur cette matière un peu plus délicats. Je trouve que toute imposture est indigne d'un honnête-homme. ...Et je vous dirai franchement que je ne suis point gentilhomme."

Lucille appears very few times in the play but she plays a significant role for she serves to reinforce the absurdity of her father's vanity. Molière does not give very much information concerning her, however she does appear more refined than her mother and she, too, is satisfied with her bourgeois station in life.

The role of Dorimène is a minor one but also a necessary one. It is M. Jourdain's love for her that accentuates his vice. She is honest and innocent for she receives M. Jourdain's gifts and accepts his invitation to the dinner party because she is led to believe that Dorante alone is responsible for these favors.

In the development of his characters Molière's technique is one of progression and intensity, for in each successive act M. Jourdain appears more ridiculous. He paints all of the characters so that they serve to bring out the ridiculousness of M. Jourdain's vanity.

Molière, in Le Bourgeois gentilhomme, has shown what effects the ambition to rise from one's own social class can have on others and on oneself. In Turcaret Lesage will show the effects that the love of money can have on an entire society.

Turcaret, a comedy in five acts, was presented for the first time

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1Molière, op. cit., p. 115.
in Paris in February, 1709. In this play, Lesage depicts M. Turcaret, a former servant who has become extremely rich as a fermier général or traitant. Under the pretense of being an honest financier and widower he pays court to a young baroness who has been left a widow. M. Turcaret gives expensive gifts to the baroness who in turn lends to the chevalier. The latter pretends to be in love with her but he has only one purpose in mind, that of ruining M. Turcaret. His valet, Frontin pretends to be in his service but he, too, intends to become rich at M. Turcaret's expense. However, everyone's plans are distorted except those of Frontin for Turcaret is revealed by his sister whom he has banned from his home, and by his wife who is introduced at the home of the baroness. Frontin announces that M. Turcaret has been ruined by his creditors, leaving the baroness without subsistence and the chevalier to find another prey on which to feast.

Lesage constructs this play so that it appears to be a comedy of character. That is to say that the situations are subordinated to the painting of the main personage. Some of the scenes seem to have no other purpose than to depict the character of M. Turcaret. However, the author depicts meticulously contemporary manners and because of this the play deserves to be called a comedy of manners.

Act I serves as the introduction in which one receives his first impression of all of the principal characters. In scene 1, Lesage uses the servant Marine to describe Turcaret, the baroness, and the chevalier and to explain also their relationships to each other. In scene 2, the baroness and the chevalier confirm what Marine has already said about them. It is also in this scene that Frontin is introduced. In scene 4,
M. Turcaret's extravagance is revealed by his valet, Flamand, when he brings a billet au porteur to the baroness that has been sent by M. Turcaret. In scene 5, M. Turcaret, himself appears and his words and actions confirm his extravagance. In scene 8, the baroness and the chevalier reveal their dishonesty by planning to dupe Turcaret. And in scene 9 the chevalier further reveals aspects of his character when he confesses that his goal is to ruin M. Turcaret. The last scene of this act is perhaps the most important for here Frontin, in his conversation with his master indicates what is going to happen in the play and also reveals his own dishonesty.

Now that Lesage has introduced the main characters and defined the plot, he develops the play. In each succeeding act and scene he progressively builds up the character of M. Turcaret and accentuates the personalities of the other characters.

In Scene 1 of act II Frontin is shown in his first attempts at betraying his master and at personal gain. In scene 3, Turcaret is shown in his first outburst of anger and then in a state of complete naiveness by humbly accepting the lie that the baroness tells and by apologizing for his jealousy. In scene 4, M. Turcaret is shown in his first meeting with Frontin where he employs him as his valet. This scene as well as scene 5 also serve to point up the dishonesty of the baroness. In scene 6 Frontin, in his monologue, reveals his own plans for the first time in the play. In scene 7 Frontin's cleverness is shown by his success in having Lisette employed as the baroness's servant and in scene 8 Lisette is used to give a physical description of the chevalier and he gives a description of her.
Act III serves as a verification of ACT II. In scenes 1 and 2, the baroness shows her increasing naiveness about the chevalier. In scene 3, M. Turcaret's extravagance is further shown by his boasting about the valuable gift that he has bought for the baroness. In scene 4, the marquis is introduced for the first time to reveal M. Turcaret's dishonesty to the baroness. In scene 6, with the introduction of M. Rafle, his business associate, M. Turcaret confirms his dishonesty and is seen for the first time in the actual act of trickery and fraud. In scene 10 his naiveness is again brought into focus by Frontin and Lisette who take advantage of his desire to impress the baroness. In scene 12 Lisette's social ambitions are revealed.

Avt IV is the actual body of the play and it serves to reinforce the preceding acts. Scene 5 serves to reveal M. Turcaret's social ambitions more explicitly and scene 6 shows him duped again by Frontin. In scene 9, M. Turcaret's sister is introduced to verify what the marquis has said about M. Turcaret.

In Act V the marquis' accusations of Turcaret are further verified. This act contains the actual denouement. In scene 6, M. Turcaret's wife is introduced to help complete the development of his character. In scene 2 the fickle character of Mme Turcaret is brought to light by the chevalier, who has previously made her acquaintance. In scene 8 Mme Turcaret's character is made more explicit by her sister-in-law, who reappears in the play. In scene 9 there is an actual confrontation of M. Turcaret with his wife and sister before everyone. And Turcaret is presented at the height of absurdity. It is in this scene also, that Frontin announces the ruin of M. Turcaret.
In the construction of Turcaret Lesage observes the classical unities of time, place and action. The action takes place in the home of the baroness in a single day while M. Turcaret's defeat gives it sufficient unity. The style is clear and lively. Both the introduction and the plot are simple and clear while all events move swiftly towards the comical denouement. The dialogue is rich in witticism, containing many puns and wagers which serve to make the scenes more comical and interesting. The speech of Turcaret is very interesting for he assumes the role of a nobleman in society and to "show off" he take a light, free tone that is at times almost rude. He demonstrates this in the following passage where he offers to pay a debt for the baroness.

Non, madame, vous ne vendrez rien. Je me charge de cette dette-là; j'en fais mon affaire.¹

Frontin's speech is also interesting for it contains most of the witticism to be found in Turcaret. A good example of his witty statements is found in the following passage where he tries to persuade the baroness to send the money that the chevalier has requested:

...C'en est donc fait, madame; vous ne verrez plus M. le chevalier. La honte de ne payer ses dettes va l'écarter de vous pour jamais ...²

Turcaret has been called the masterpiece of French dramatic realism³

¹Lesage, Turcaret, with an introduction and notes by Fernand Duval (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1938), Act IV, scene 7, p. 98. All subsequent references will be made to this same work unless otherwise indicated.

²Lesage, Act I, scene 2, p. 28.

because it presents a thoroughly realistic description of the role that money played in French life during the early part of the eighteenth century. It is, moreover, an exact and penetrating study as well as a sharp and biting satire of the selfish pride, the baseness, the cupidity and the moral disorder of the fermiers généraux of eighteenth century France. It contains two striking themes. One, which was to be found in many of the comedies to follow during this century, is that of a valet triumphing over his master and the other, which was common during the preceding century as well as in other contemporary comedies, is that of social ambitions. There is, in Turcaret, a mixture of social classes and social ambitions. All of the principal characters express an ardent desire for luxury and an insensible lack of idealism especially in love affairs. Not one of them appears likeable.

M. Turcaret is the pivotal character whose money or deception affect each of the characters in some manner. Having become rich by ursury and fraud he is the prodigal, crafty financier who thrives on extortion. Ashamed of his lowly birth he wants to give the impression of being a gentleman and a lover, and therefore, he denies the fact that he was once a servant:

Me venir dire le marquis au nez que j'ai été laquais de son grand-père! Rien n'est plus faux: je n'ai jamais été que son homme d'affaires.1

He shows no concern for his family, especially his wife whom he pays a pension to remain in the Provinces while he pays court to various women leading them to believe that he is going to marry them. Not only does he detest his wife but he has estranged himself from his sister,

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1Lesage, Act III, scene 5, p. 72.
who leads a very meager existence and truly needs his assistance. Yet in his vanity he shows the best of favors to the baroness and is as short-sighted and naive in her presence as he is cruel and shrewd in matters concerning his business and family. He is blind to her affair with the chevalier and even after being informed of it he goes to re-proach her but ends by accepting her lies as the truth. He gives his own valet another position and hires Frontin in his place, only because the baroness desires him to do so. Under the impression that he is doing favors for the baroness he allows himself to be swindled out of large sums of money by Frontin and Lisette. Under the assumption that a gift is to be bought for the baroness he willingly gives Frontin all of the money that he has in his pocket:

Volontiers. Tu me parais assez étendu; je m'en rapporte à toi... Voilà soixante pistoles que j'ai de reste dans ma bourse, tu les donneras à compte. ¹

Petit de Juleville makes this analysis of Turcaret's double personality:

La force de Turcaret est dans son audace, et dans son insensibilité absolue. Il ne ressent ni peine ni plaisir du bien ou du mal qui peuvent arriver à autres; il considère les hommes seulement comme des sources de bénéfices, des fonds à exploiter. Mais cet homme si dur cherche le plaisir en même temps qu'il veut l'argent; cet homme sans foi et sans pitié est homme un enfant niais et crédule en face de la baronne. ²

The novelty in Turcaret lies in the fact that he is a commoner whom the power of money has elevated to a milieu that is not his own and in which he suddenly finds himself helpless against men and women who are more

¹Lesage, Act III, scene 11, p. 83.

²Juleville, op. cit., pp. 262-263.
ingenious than himself.

The baroness is one of these people. She is a coquette who pretends to admire M. Turcaret only to be the recipient of his valuable gifts. She is seen flattering him from the very beginning:

Je suis ravie de vous voir, monsieur Turcaret, pour vous faire des compliments sur les vers que vous m'avez envoyés ... Vous êtes capable de tout, monsieur et il n'y a rien d'impossible pour vous.\footnote{Lesage, Act I, scene 5, pp. 32-33.}

She knows that the poem which M. Turcaret has sent her defies all rules of poetry but she insists on paying him extravagant compliments in order to assure his generosity. She takes every advantage of his naivety. She introduces her lover, the chevalier, as her cousin and even has the audacity to ask M. Turcaret to employ his valet. She pretends, however that she is first of all interested in Flamand, M. Turcaret's valet.

Faites avoir une communion, pour l'amour de moi, à ce pauvre Flamand, votre laquais. C'est un garçon pour qui j'ai pris de l'amitié. ... Je veux mettre auprès de vous Frontin, le laquais de mon cousin le chevalier.\footnote{Lesage, Act III, scene 3, p. 54.}

In her cleverness, the baroness succeeds in having him pay many debts for her. She usually does this by playing on his sympathy. In the following lines she gives a good example of her attempt to evoke M. Turcaret's sympathy and thus to have him pay the debt that her deceased husband has supposedly left:

Il faut donc se résoudre à payer, puisque vous m'y condamnez, monsieur ... Cela m'incommodera un peu; cela déranger la destination que j'avais faite de certain
When one considers her attempts in scene 5 to restore M. Turcaret's relationship with his wife, she does not appear totally corrupted:

Je devine votre pensée, monsieur et je vous pardonne une tromperie que vous avez crue nécessaire pour vous faire écouter. Je passerai même plus avant; au lieu d'en venir aux reproches je veux vous raccommoder avec madame Turcaret.  

One must remember, however that at this point she has extracted practically everything that she wants from him and therefore she can afford to be generous.

Although the baroness usually appears brave and clever in the presence of M. Turcaret, she is a weakling in everything that concerns the chevalier. She is well aware of the fact that the chevalier's loans will eventually ruin her and she desires to discontinue aiding him but her deep passion for him is more powerful than her will. She indicates her plight in her conversation with Marine:

... ce que tu me vois faire n'est point l'effet d'une volonté libre; je suis entraînée par un penchant si tençon, que je ne puis y résister.  

The chevalier exploits her just as she exploits Turcaret. He is impoverished and hopes to live on the wealth that the baroness can extract from her suitor. He states that this is his only reason for continuing to pay court to her:

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1 Lesage, Act IV, scene 7, p. 98.
2 Lesage, Act V, scene 9, pp. 117-119.
3 Lesage, Act I, scene 3, p. 29.
As early as scene 1 of Act I he reveals his parasitic motives, for after having lost the money which the baroness has already lent him, he sends to make another loan from her. As a means of confirming his pretended fidelity he sends to her the portrait that a countess has sent to him. However, Frontin reveals later that the chevalier sacrifices the countess only because she does not have any money.

The chevalier has a blind trust in Frontin for he trusts him with the billet au porteur which the baroness has given him and is naive enough to accept whatever reasons Frontin offers for not having cashed the billet. Not only does he trust him in this matter but he trusts Frontin with all of his affaires.

He does however appear naive when in the presence of M. Turcaret, for then he assumes the role of the clever hypocrite that he plays in his love affair with the baroness. He pretends to be M. Turcaret's devoted friend and flatters him by pretending to consider it an honor to be in his presence:

Monsieur Turcaret veut bien permettre qu'on l'embrasse, et qu'on lui témoigne la vivacité du plaisir qu'on aura tantôt de se trouver avec lui le verre à la main.\(^2\)

The chevalier continues to lie and cheat to the very end of the play without giving the slightest impression of ever regretting his dishonesty. He is saddened at the end only because he has not been able to succeed in ruining M. Turcaret and because he can no longer obtain

\(^1\)Lesage, Act I, scene 9, p. 42.

\(^2\)Lesage, Act IV, scene 5, p. 92.
loans from the baroness.

Frontin is just as dishonest as the chevalier but he is the most ingenious of all of the characters. He is the type of valet that is to be seen in later plays of the eighteenth century and who has already been seen in a few plays of the early part of this century. He is presented as a dishonest character when he first appears on scene. He is depicted lying for the chevalier and trying to bribe the baroness into lending the requested money to the chevalier. Nevertheless, he succeeds in making himself trusted by her.

His role in the play is a very important one for the action depends primarily on him. He also serves to define the plot of the play:

J'admire le train de la vie humaine! Nous plumons une coquette; une coquette mange un homme d'affaires; l'homme d'affaires en pille d'autres: Cela fait un ricochet de fourberies le plus plaisant du monde.¹

After having made himself trusted by the baroness and the chevalier he succeeds in Act II to impress M. Turcaret by his ingenuity. And after being employed by Turcaret, Frontin reveals his own plan which is to become rich at the expense of M. Turcaret, the baroness and the chevalier. His monologue shows that he, too, is just as socially ambitious as the rest of the characters of the play:

Courage! Frontin! mon ami; la fortune t'appelle. Te voilà chez un homme d'affaires par le canal d'une coquette. Quelle joie! L'agréable perspective! Je m'imagine que toutes les choses que je vais toucher vont se convertir en or ...²

He succeeds in accomplishing his next feat in Act III when he

¹Lesage, Act I, scene 10, p. 43.
²Lesage, Act I, scene 6, p. 59.
persuades the baroness to employ his bride-to-be as her servant. And also in this act he succeeds in persuading M. Turcaret to give him money to purchase horses and a carriage for the baroness, a large part of which will go into his personal savings.

N'est-ce pas une chose honteuse que vous n'ayez pas encore songé à lui faire présent d'un équipage? Il ne serait pas honnête que l'on sut dans le monde que vous donnez un carrosse à madame la baronne. Servez-vous d'un tiers, d'une main étrangère, mais fidèle. Je connais deux ou trois selliers qui ne savent point encore que je suis à vous: si vous voulez, je me chargerai du sois ...

He succeeds in the execution of a stratagem in which he secures the services of a friend, M. Furet. Under the pretense that he is an old creditor of the baroness' late husband, M. Furet comes in the presence of M. Turcaret to demand payment. In the final analysis Frontin obtains the payment. The final reward of his cleverness comes at the end of the play when he announces that M. Turcaret's creditors have come to seize him and that they have robbed Frontin, himself of the billet au porteur that the baroness had lent to the chevalier, as well as ten thousand francs that he was to use for the payment of the horses and carriage. At last his entire plan is accomplished and his last speech reveals his sentiments:

J'en ai touché l'argent; il est en sûreté j'ai quarante milles francs. [Lucille] Si ton ambition veut si borner a cette petite fortune nous allons faire souche d'honnêtes gens.

Like Frontin, Lucille has no moral scruples. She is ambitious and wants to become rich. She encourages and helps Frontin in his scheming.

1Lesage, Act III, scene 10, p. 82.

2Lesage, Act V, scene 14, p. 123.
Her intentions are seen from the very beginning when, acting under the direction of Frontin, she persists in encouraging the baroness to continue her affair with the chevalier. This is because Frontin realizes that it is this affair that sustains his employment as M. Turcaret's valet. Her monologue in act III reveals her ambitions:

Je ne saurais m'empêcher d'aimer ce Frontin' c'est mon chevalier, à moi; et, au train que je lui vois prendre, j'ai un secret pressentiment qu'avec ce garçon-là je deviendrai quelque jour femme de qualité.  

The other characters of this play serve only to put in greater relief the character of M. Turcaret. The marquis, a wreckless drunk serves to reveal M. Turcaret's dishonesty and the fact that he has not always been a financier but was once a servant. He also serves the purpose of introducing Mme Turcaret into the play. A coquette, like the baroness and dishonest and money-loving like her husband, pretending to be a countess, Mme Turcaret reveals her husband's irresponsibility in family matters and also the fact that he does not intend to marry the baroness as he says. Mme Jacob, needy sister of Turcaret, a seller of toilet articles serves the same purpose as Mme Turcaret, that of disclosing M. Turcaret's true identity. However, she serves also to disclose the true identity of Mme Turcaret. Each of them as well as the principal characters also serve to complete the picture of contemporary society that Lesage has hoped to paint.

Both Molière and Lesage, in the development of their characters present aspects of the society in which they lived. In Le Bourgeois gentilhomme, Molière makes mention of the dinner party, the musical concerts

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1 Lesage, Act III, scene 12, p. 84.
and private tutors that were all popular during the seventeenth century. He has given a brief indication of the manners and sentiments of nobility in Dorante and Dorimene; the bourgeois in M. and Mme Jourdain as well as Cleonéte and the servants in Nicole and Covielle.

Lesage, on the other hand gives a more thorough picture of the French society during his time because he hoped to depict manners rather than character. He depicts the life of the nobility in the baroness, the chevalier, and the marquis; the fermier généraux or the rich bourgeois in Turcaret; the servants in Frontin and Lisette; and the peasants in Mme Jacob, Turcaret's sister.

In the following chapter the differences and similarities in these characters will be pointed out as well as the differences and similarities in the theme and style of the two plays.
CHAPTER III

A COMPARISON OF LE BOURGEOIS GENTILHOMME AND TURCARET

There are striking similarities in the theme and style as well as in the characters of Le Bourgeois gentilhomme and Turcaret. In this chapter an effort will be made to point out these similarities as well as the differences found in the two plays.

The themes are the same in both plays. The difference, however, lies in the treatment. Both authors treat the theme of monomania in the form of social ambitions, where one attempts at all costs to become a member of another class. Molière treats the rich bourgeois who wishes to become a nobleman while Lesage depicts the former servant who wishes to shine as the rich bourgeois. Molière depicts ridiculous, but honest attempts at social elevation while Lesage depicts extremely dishonest ones and while Molière depicts social ambitions primarily in only one character, Lesage develops this personality trait in practically all of the characters in Turcaret. He depicts them so that not a single one appears admirable.

The other theme found in these two plays is that of the valet triumphing over a master by his own ingenuity. It is more explicit in Turcaret, which was written when this theme was à la mode, but it is also evident in Le Bourgeois gentilhomme even though it is doubtful that Molière had the intention of depicting such a theme per se. The difference in the treatment of this theme is that Lesage permits the valet in Turcaret to triumph by deceit, treachery, and callousness while the valet in Le Bourgeois gentilhomme, although his means are not entirely
honest, has entirely good intentions. Although he does not triumph over his own master he triumphs over a rich bourgeois who is in a position to be his master.

There are also striking similarities in the style and technique of the two authors. Both of their plays are written in prose, include five acts, and observe to a certain extent the classical unities of time, place and action. In both plays the first act serves as an introduction while the fifth act contains the denouement. Molière's plot however is somewhat loosely constructed for beginning with scene 8 of Act III through scene 10 the spectator is completely lost because these scenes comprise a separate plot within themselves. Lesage, on the other hand, presents a well constructed plot from beginning to end. All of the events and all of the characters are related in some way to the principal character. While Molière's dialogue is simple and familiar that of Lesage is figurative.

There is also a similar technique found in these two plays. It is the use of the "mask," worn by the principal characters of both plays. The physical mask is also found in these two plays. In Acts IV and V of *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*, Molière shows Cléonte and Covielle in disguise while in *Turcaret* Lesage only lets one hear of a masquerade ball where Mme Turcaret and the other characters were disguised. Although the primary objective of Lesage is to paint manners, that is the corruptions and evils of society. He does this through the painting of a single character and therefore the primary similarity in the style of the two plays is that both authors endeavor to satirize a character by making him appear more ridiculous in each successive act to the very end.
The most striking parallels in these two plays are those found in the characters. These parallels are seen between Monsieur Jourdain and Monsieur Turcaret; Dorante and the chevalier; Nicole and Marine; to a certain extent Madame Jourdain and Madame Turcaret; and Covielle and Frontin.

Both Monsieur Jourdain and Monsieur Turcaret appear ridiculous in their phony actions, from the beginning to the very end. Both are infatuated with a "woman of quality," and they stop at nothing to prove their passions. Monsieur Jourdain sends his wife to have dinner with her sister while he entertains the marchioness at his house and M. Turcaret gives his wife a pension to live in the Province while he pays court to the baroness and other women. There is a dinner party at Monsieur Jourdain's home accompanied by a concert and one is planned at the home of the baroness that is to be accompanied by a concert. Both M. Jourdain and M. Turcaret pretend while preparing for the concert to have a passion for music. Monsieur Jourdain prepares to send a love letter to the marchioness while M. Turcaret sends one to the baroness. Both of them sound ridiculous but represent Monsieur Jourdain and M. Turcaret well. Both M. Jourdain and M. Turcaret are negligent in their family responsibilities. M. Jourdain refuses to concern himself with his daughter's future or to respect his wife's opinion or to show any affection toward her while M. Turcaret also shows nothing but contempt for his wife and refuses to acknowledge his own sister because she is poor. Both of these characters allow themselves to be swindled by a nobleman; M. Jourdain by Dorante, and M. Turcaret by the chevalier. The striking difference between the two characters, however is that Molière has given
no vicious or fundamental evil traits to M. Jourdain while Lesage has painted M. Turcaret almost as dishonest as any character in the play.

Just as Dorante takes advantage of the vanity of M. Jourdain, the chevalier, through the baroness takes advantage of M. Turcaret's vanity. A smoother comparison, however could be made between Dorante's exploitation of M. Jourdain's admiration of the nobility and the chevalier's exploitation of the baroness' love for him.

The servants and valet, too, are very similar in the two plays. Nicole and Marine appear to be the same type of servants. Both of them assume a sort of authoritative role in the household of their masters. As one sees in Act III, scene 3 of Le Bourgeois gentilhomme and in Act I, scene 1 through 4 and in scene 7 of Turcaret, both of them very readily criticize their masters. Nicole, however, takes a lighter tone than Marine who is very stern and speaks very harshly to the baroness.

Covielle and Frontin, though very different in character, can be compared in some ways. Both of them portray the clever valet who designs a stratagem from which his master could profit. However, Covielle creates his stratagem to aid his master while Frontin creates his in order to ruin his master.

There is also another parallel between the servants and valets. This parallel is the love affair that exists between them. Frontin is in love with Lisette (who has not been mentioned in this chapter because no parallel can be drawn between her and any of the characters in Le Bourgeois gentilhomme) and although Molière has not given the spectator a clear picture of the love affair that exists between Covielle and Nicole he has indicated that there is one by the dialogue between Covielle and
Cleonte in Act III, scene 9.

Even though there are obvious similarities between the two plays, after studying each work carefully, the writer feels that there are more differences to be found than similarities.
CONCLUSION

There are significant similarities in the lives of these two authors as well as in their works. It has been pointed out in chapter one that both of them were of bourgeois stock and that both were deprived of a mother's affection at a very early age. Both were deprived of a formal education until they were young teenagers, at which time both were sent to very good schools where they made excellent progress. Some time after the completion of their education both men had the occasion to spend some time in the provinces. This experience had a great effect upon each of their works for there Molière became thoroughly familiar with men and manners while Lesage acquired most of his knowledge about the fermier généraux.

Their works are similar because Lesage is a disciple of Molière. That is to say that he has borrowed a great deal from the Molièreresque comedy, just as most French dramatist did during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Both of them were moralists and both had the same aim, seeking to instruct their audience through laughter. Their basic difference, however is that while Molière was interested in teaching a moral lesson by advising the public to avoid extremes and to follow the path of bon sens Lesage, who was more of a realist, actually condemned the society of his time; while Moliere's play is filled with comic humor, Lesage's is mordant and cutting. Nevertheless, Lesage borrowed from Molière the theme of monomania, the character of the rich bourgeois, the impoverished nobleman, the clever servant and the technique of the disguise. He also borrowed his type from Molière, for although Turcaret is
a comedy of manners while *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* is a comedy of character, Lesage developed it in the style of a comedy of character.

Molière is considered the "father of the French comedy" with the distinction of being the first great writer of this genre. He was the first, with the production of *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* to depict the 
parvenu in comedy. In this play he has done an excellent job of combining music and farce with a burlesque upon Turkish manners. His seriousness, farce and personal freedom of thought are unique as well as all of his characters. It is evident that he achieved his aim which was de faire plaisir for *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* was acted at La Comédie Française nine hundred times between the years 1680 and 1958. ¹

This is not to say, however, that Turcaret does not have any original characteristics. On the contrary it presented for the first time since Molière a new and lasting character.² Emile Faguet states that Turcaret presented for the very first time in a noteworthy comedy "une fille entretenue et ... un favoré de fille"³ while A. Vinet states that "l'originalité des pensées et la fidelité des caractères font de cette comédie la meilleure de dix-huitième siècle et une ouvrage digne de Molière."⁴ It has also been stated that Lesage is the "father of French realism"


²Juleville, *op. cit.*, p. 262.


⁴Vinet, *op. cit.*, p. 69.
and that realism dates from *Turcaret*. Therefore, as one can readily see Lesage also contributed significantly to the French theater.

Some critics have placed Lesage next to Molière in literary merit while others have placed him farther down the list, naming Beaumarchais as second. Nevertheless, Lesage, too, was a genius in his own right. Both he and Molière have played dominant roles in the development of French comedy.
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**Articles**

