

Penguin Classics



MOLIÈRE  
THE MISER AND  
OTHER PLAYS

法蘭西文學

100-20  
5652  
E601  
MOL

7991146  
中文书库

Molière

法国文学

\*

THE MISER  
THE WOULD-BE GENTLEMAN  
THAT SCOUNDREL SCAPIN  
LOVE'S THE BEST DOCTOR  
DON JUAN

南大图书馆  
新  
Translated with an Introduction by

JOHN WOOD  
外  
资料室



PENGUIN BOOKS

✓

Penguin Books Ltd, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England  
Penguin Books, 625 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10022, U.S.A.  
Penguin Books Australia Ltd, Ringwood, Victoria, Australia  
Penguin Books Canada Ltd, 2801 John Street, Markham, Ontario, Canada L3R 1B4  
Penguin Books (N.Z.) Ltd, 182-190 Wairau Road, Auckland 10, New Zealand

---

This translation first published as *Five Plays* 1953  
Reprinted 1958, 1960  
Reprinted as *The Miser and Other Plays* 1962  
Reprinted 1964, 1966, 1968, 1971, 1973, 1974, 1976, 1978

---

Copyright © John Wood, 1953  
All rights reserved

---

Made and printed in Great Britain  
by Richard Clay (The Chaucer Press) Ltd, Bungay, Suffolk  
Set in Monotype Garamond

---

The terms for the performance of these plays may be obtained  
from the League of Dramatists,  
84 Drayton Gardens, London SW10 9SP  
to whom all applications for permission  
should be addressed

Except in the United States of America,  
this book is sold subject to the condition  
that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise,  
be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated  
without the publisher's prior consent in any form of  
binding or cover other than that in which it is  
published and without a similar condition  
including this condition being imposed  
on the subsequent purchaser

# THE PENGUIN CLASSICS

FOUNDER EDITOR (1944-64): E. V. Rieu

MOLIÈRE was the stage name of Jean Baptiste Poquelin, the son of a wealthy merchant upholsterer. He was born in Paris in 1622. At the age of twenty-one he resigned the office at Court purchased for him by his father and threw in his lot with a company of actors, to found the so-styled 'Illustre Théâtre'. The nucleus of the company was drawn from one family, the Béjarts. Armande, the youngest daughter, was to become his wife.

Failing to establish themselves in Paris, the company took to the Provinces for twelve years. When in 1658 they returned to the capital it was with Molière as their leader and a number of the farces he had devised as their principal stock in trade. Invited to perform before Louis XIV, Molière secured his staunch patronage. In 1659 *Les Précieuses ridicules* achieved a great success, which was confirmed by *L'École des femmes* three years later. With *Tartuffe*, however, Molière encountered trouble; it outraged contemporary religious opinion and was forbidden public performance for several years. *Don Juan* also had a controversial history. *Le Misanthrope*, first played in 1666, is generally accorded to be the peak of Molière's achievement. Among plays that followed were *L'Avare*, *Le Médecin malgré lui*, *Les Femmes savantes*, *Amphitryon*, and *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, one of the comedy-ballets to which Lully contributed the music.

By 1665 the company had become *La Troupe du Roi*, playing at the Palais-Royal. While taking the part of Argan in *Le Malade Imaginaire*, Molière was taken ill, and he died the same evening. The Troupe survived, however, to become one of the fore-runners of the *Comédie-Française*.

JOHN WOOD was born in 1900 and went to Manchester University. After some years in teaching and adult education he spent his working life in educational administration. Concern with the relevance of the arts in education, combined with personal predilection, led to involvement with theatre and with the work of Molière in particular, as producer and translator. He has also translated *The Misanthrope and Other Plays* and *Beaumarchais - The Barber of Seville and The Marriage of Figaro* for the Penguin Classics.



*To*

JOHN STEUART ERSKINE

\*

## *Introduction*

MOLIÈRE was born in Paris in 1622 and died there in 1673. His father, Jean Poquelin, was a merchant upholsterer and a man of some substance. He had purchased an office at court and in 1637 secured the reversion to his son. Meanwhile young Poquelin (the name Molière was assumed later) was receiving, as a pupil of the Jesuits, the best education the age afforded. Afterwards he appears to have studied law at a university, but where is not known for certain.

At the age of 21, on the threshold of the career that was planned for him, he resigned his rights in the office at court, compounded for his share of his deceased mother's estate, and threw in his lot with a company of actors. What motives there were, if any, beyond the irresistible attraction of the theatre we do not know. One thing is certain, that the choice was final and decisive. Thereafter through all the vicissitudes of thirty years on the stage his passion for acting burned unabated to his death.

The nucleus of the company to which Molière attached himself was provided by members of one family, the Béjarts. Three daughters, Madeleine, Geneviève, and Armande, and two sons, Joseph and Louis, were at various times members of the troupe and, once enrolled, never left it. Madeleine, it has always been assumed, was at one time Molière's mistress; that she was his comrade and colleague until her death the year before his own is beyond question; Armande, younger by twenty years, was to become his wife.

The project of establishing a new theatre in competition with the two companies then playing permanently in Paris did not meet with success. Molière was imprisoned for debt and released on the intervention of his father. In 1646 he and his companions forsook the capital for the provinces and, for the next twelve years, led the life of itinerant players. They have been traced in various provincial towns mainly in the South, but little is known of their adventures. It is clear, however, that it was in this school that Molière learned his trade: when in 1658 the company came back to Paris, they were an experienced team of actors, he had become their acknowledged leader, and their repertory included, with many

## Introduction

of the well-known plays of the time, a number of short farces of his own devising which had already proved popular with provincial audiences. A further turning-point in Molière's career came when his company, having established a precarious foothold in Paris, secured an invitation to perform before the young King, Louis XIV. The play chosen was a tragedy of Corneille, but it was followed by Molière's short farce, now lost, *Le Docteur amoureux*. The King was amused and the way to patronage and success was opened. The company had already come under the protection of the King's brother; they now established themselves in the hall of the Petit-Bourbon which they shared with the Italian company of the great farcical actor Fiorelli, the creator of Scaramouche. Each company took certain fixed days of the week. Molière now played *L'Étourdi* and *Le Dépit amoureux*, and in 1659 achieved a resounding success with *Les Précieuses ridicules*, a high-spirited and farcical treatment of contemporary literary enthusiasms. This success was surpassed and consolidated by *L'École des femmes*, a full-length comedy in verse which made its author the talk of the town. It also provoked the jealousy of rival companies and authors, but the box office thrived on controversy and in the war of the theatres Molière proved well able to look after himself. He showed in this play a new range of comic invention, a growing sureness of touch and, at the same time, a tendency to cut deeper than the conventional surface of things and provoke reactions other than laughter which was to make him one of the most controversial figures of his time. If *L'École des femmes* put the strongholds of convention on the alert, *Le Tartuffe*, the first of the great comedies of human obsession, went on to outrage them. It is concerned with religion and religious hypocrisy and, in *Tartuffe* himself, Molière created an unforgettable character. The play is a major achievement, as strong theatrically as challenging in its implications; but it hit the age hard on a sensitive spot and the reaction was immediate and violent. Despite the known support of the King, the author was attacked, execrated, anathematized and not only by those whom he chose to regard as the professional and organized forces of hypocrisy but by many of the truly devout. To this day there are those, not all among his detractors, who feel that in this

## Introduction

play and its successor Molière attacked not religiosity but the foundations of religion itself. The King was driven to temporize. The play was forbidden public performance. Even when reshaped and probably toned down, in the form that we know, it was not allowed to be played for nearly five years. For Molière the setback was serious and the disappointment acute, but his output did not slacken – with the limited play-going public of Paris of that day new plays were a constant necessity. Nevertheless his attitude hardens. He is no longer content to assert that the test of a play lies in its ability to please. The function of comedy is now to castigate folly and vice and when in an attempt, as it would seem, to cut a way out of his difficulties, he chose for his new play one of the most popular themes of the day, the story of Don Juan, where the known plot required that religion should triumph and unbelief be confounded, he produced one of the most enigmatic and powerful of his comedies, a masterpiece, in the circumstances, of artistic intransigence! It provoked a fierce renewal of polemics against him, but it was played to full houses. Between 15 February and 20 March 1665 the play was performed fifteen times, a considerable run for those days, but thereafter never again in Molière's lifetime and not for nearly two centuries after his death in the form in which he wrote it. It was not printed until 1682 and then in a bowdlerized version. In what form the interdict fell is not known, but the effect was conclusive.

Meanwhile Molière had been at work for some time on *Le Misanthrope*. First played in 1666, it enjoyed only a moderate success, but discerning contemporaries acclaimed the masterpiece which posterity has recognized it to be, a consummate revelation of character and human relationships within the terms of pure comedy. If, after *Le Misanthrope*, the peak of artistic achievement was past, Molière's verve and creative energy were undiminished. Spectacular plays for the court, *Amphitryon*, *Psyché*, *Les Amants magnifiques*, jostle with plays for the town, *L'Avare*, *Le Médecin malgré lui*, *Scapin*, and plays which pleased court and town alike, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*, *La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas*, *Les Femmes savantes*. In these years he exploited increasingly the comedy-ballet, seeking the ideal union of acting, music, and dancing.



## Introduction

He had experimented with this form much earlier in *Les Fâcheux* and turned to it again, after the tumults of *Tartuffe* and *Dom Juan*, in *L'Amour médecin*. Molière was himself musical and came, on his mother's side, of a family of musicians; the King was at that time passionately fond of music and dancing; the court adored ballet and spectacle, and, in Lully, Molière found a collaborator of genius, whose music lent a charm to the most hurriedly extemporized of plays and diversions. The conception of comedy-ballet was most completely realized in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* and *Le Malade imaginaire*. The former, first played in 1670, exemplifies the mood of these later years at its happiest.

Favoured by the King – he had resumed the office of Groom of the Bedchamber on the death of his brother in 1667 and his company had become *La Troupe du Roi* in 1665 – playing now in the Palais-Royal, once the private theatre of Richelieu, the ban on *Tartuffe* finally lifted in 1669, enjoying the friendship of many of the great men of his day, Molière knew success in full measure, but his personal life was unhappy. His two sons died in infancy. His relationship with his young wife, Armande, was such that for a time they lived apart. His health, which gave trouble as early as 1665, grew worse. His relations with Lully deteriorated as the Italian exploited the royal favour increasingly to his own advantage. His friends advised him to give up acting and enjoy a more leisurely life, but in vain. The road he had taken in 1643 he followed to the end. In February 1673 he produced *Le Malade imaginaire*, playing himself the role of Argan, the invalid more fortunate on the stage than his creator in life. At the third performance Molière was taken ill and died shortly afterwards. His fame did not save him from the penalty of an outcast profession and the malice of his enemies. Only the appeal of his widow to the King in person secured him burial in consecrated ground.

Molière's company, which had stood by him in good times and bad, held together and was playing again within a week of his death: it survived to unite eventually with its old rivals of the theatres of the Hôtel de Bourgogne and Le Marais, and maintain, as the *Comédie-Française*, the tradition of French acting from the theatre of Molière to that of our own day.

## Introduction

The bare facts of Molière's life are well known, but the man himself eludes us. Contemporary descriptions are fragmentary: the most complete are done by his enemies with intent to malign him. His manner in company was said to have been reserved. Boileau called him 'Le Contemplateur'. As he depicts himself in *L'Impromptu de Versailles* rehearsing his cast, he is quick, highly strung, and irascible, immersed in the immediate task of dealing with those most difficult of creatures, actors and actresses. His portraits show a man with fine eyes and wide mouth. The daughter of his colleague Du Croisy, speaking of him long afterwards as she remembered seeing him in her youth, said he was of medium build, imposing carriage, grave in manner with a large nose, wide mouth and full lips, dark of complexion, with eyebrows black and strongly marked which he could move in a way which gave his whole face a most comical expression.

Molière's relations with his father seem to have been close in spite of their early divergence of purpose. He had the loyalty and respect of his company over many years, no common thing in the theatre. With the King his relations seem to have been consistently fortunate. Louis may have found it necessary at times to set bounds to his impetuosity, but on critical occasions he gave his support with deliberate discrimination. When the attacks on *L'École des femmes* were being pressed hard he made his own position clear by the award of a pension and *L'Impromptu de Versailles* in which Molière replied to his enemies seems to have been a royal commission; at a time when personal attacks on Molière and his wife exceeded all bounds the King stood godfather to their first child: at the most critical stage of his fortunes, when *Le Tartuffe* was under interdict and the position of the company precarious, the King increased his annual subvention and conferred on them the title of *Troupe du Roi*. That such a relationship was possible attests the enlightenment of the monarch and the discretion of the subject. In dedications of the plays and the petitions he addressed to the King, Molière shows that he could play the courtier to achieve his own purposes: life at court must have made great demands on his physical strength and perhaps on his integrity but only a man of great inward serenity and

## Introduction

courage could, after the storms of *Tartuffe* and *Dom Juan* and what we assume to have been the partial disappointment of *Le Misanthrope*, have retained such zest and love of life as found expression in the later comedies and comedy-ballets. Yet he was under no illusion. 'Among all human weaknesses' – says Filerin in *L'Amour médecin* – 'love of living is the most powerful.' If it was not himself he put on the stage as Argan, the dupe of the doctors, it was his own dilemma. He who turned so many others to comic account did not except himself.

## MOLIÈRE'S ACHIEVEMENT

It is a measure of Molière's achievement that he has so often been judged not as poet, playwright, maker of acting tradition, but in terms of ideas and morals as if he were a teacher, philosopher, or metaphysician. Generations of critics, scholars, and fellow artists have commented and explained, discussed and disputed what he thought and intended – and the process goes on. One thing is beyond question, that comedy, which immediately before his time was confined to farce, vulgar and vigorous with stock situations and recognized characters or, in its more respectable forms, to plays of contrivance and artifice, he raised in a space of less than twenty years to the pitch of great art, placed it alongside tragedy – the tragedy of Corneille and Racine – in the esteem of his countrymen and set standards by which comedy and comic acting have ever since and everywhere in the western world been judged. The plays remain a source of delight, a commentary on life which men still find valid, an expression of the comic spirit which has not lost its piquancy. Delight one puts first because Molière did so himself. First and last he was a man of the theatre to whom the touchstone of success was the pleasure of the audience. No doubt, like the Dancing Master in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, he preferred discerning applause, but he was at pains to make clear that he respected all sections of his audiences. The laughter which his plays excite expresses delight not derision. There is little bitterness and no condescension in Molière and, notwithstanding the stormy history of some of his plays, and the power

## Introduction

they still have to disturb, his work as a whole is essentially happy and humane. The idea of laughter which sweeps away care, restores health and proportion, is one from which he never strays far or for long.

*Who'er would drive away  
The cares of every day,  
The sorrows, grief and pain,  
The troubles that can kill,  
Should shun the doctors' skill  
And come to us again.*

Thus sing Comedy, Music, and Ballet in *L'Amour médecin* and one cannot doubt that for Molière this expressed essential values. His joyousness is not of the surface, not a product of high spirits, wit, or buffoonery, though all these have their place in his plays. It is a part of his attitude towards his characters and to life. He laughs at his people, or has us do so, but he has for the least likeable of them – Harpagon, Tartuffe, Don Juan – an understanding which approaches compassion.

His own views on life he reveals by implication, not by assertion. He makes no protest against the nature of the world or the state of society. The heroic virtues – courage, constancy, fortitude – are not found in his plays. Such words as fate, fortune, existence occur only in joke. Love, death, and partings are objects of fun. There is no belief in perfection or perfectibility, in progress, individual or social. What his people are at the beginning of a play they are still at the end. For the great deformities of man's nature he offers no cure. Harpagon returns to his 'cassette', Jourdain is left to his folly, Don Juan goes to the fate his character made inescapable. He shows men through their foibles, vain, gullible, self-obsessed, and it is his achievement that under the impact of laughter, by the solvent of comedy, we experience the moment of truth, feel the compulsion 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,

## *Introduction*

separate them from their fellows, and magnify their differences. Certain recurrent relationships form both the material and mechanics of his plays – master and man, old husband and young wife, father and son, expert and layman, rascal and dupe – all potentially comic, and part of the immemorial material of farce which he took to himself and transformed. The achievement lies in the degree in which he used a medium previously earth bound and limited as a commentary on character and human relationships, a revelation of man's nature.

Molière accepts the rationality and sufficiency of the world and man's place in it. His is an art of deliberate limitation, and in the practice of it he is representative of his age and his country. He was French in the great age of France and his work has become part of French culture. 'Every Frenchman', it has been said, 'is born to a Molièresque constitution.' His ideas, his characters, his very words have passed into French life and come to be an accepted expression of the French genius.

Molière has no ambition to explore the ultimate reaches of human feelings – Harpagon and Alceste are not Lear or Hamlet. He does not even seek to be original or inventive. His plots, his characters, his stage business, the very words which sound most apt to their purpose he has culled from all sorts of sources, classical and contemporary, borrowing from others and from himself, using and re-using to the lengths, at times, of tiresomeness and banality. But his limited world is a real one, the parts fit together, the characters take life from the inspiration of genius, are warmed by the author's own abounding vitality and, because he is a master of his craft, they take the stage with conviction, endowed with a verisimilitude which the centuries have scarcely diminished.

## MOLIÈRE ON THE STAGE

'Everyone knows that plays are written to be acted.' There are few plays to which Molière's words can be more justly applied than his own. They read well for the most part: they are the work of a poet, a man of letters familiar with classical and

## Introduction

contemporary literature and philosophy. Nevertheless, their essential qualities are less literary than dramatic and to assess them on the basis of reading alone may well be to misjudge them. 'On one thing there was general agreement', says Jouvett of his own production of *Dom Juan*, 'that reading of the play gave no indication of what came out in performance.' Another case in point is *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, often regarded as consisting of three acts of comedy, among the finest Molière wrote, and two of only half-relevant buffoonery. That is a literary judgement. On the stage the music and dances which round off each act integrate the action, heighten the effect of hilarious abandon and sweep the play along to a triumphant conclusion where the reader may see only weak anticlimax, a petering out of the original theme. *L'Avare*, a play with many loose ends and discrepancies, has in reading an episodic quality, as if too many disparate elements had been only partially resolved, but it has great strength on the stage because of the dramatic effectiveness of so many of the scenes and the dominance of the central character which gives unity to the theme. *Scapin*, which Boileau deplored as unworthy of the author of *Le Misanthrope*, is dramatically foolproof. Molière was an actor, first and last, however much he was more than that, and his text is always closely related to practical dramatic possibilities. He wrote not for an ideal stage but for particular ones, for himself and his own group of actors, for audiences whose tastes he knew well and had to consider. Every phrase of his dialogue has its implicit movement or gesture: every dramatic effect is calculated and virtue is made even of necessities – his own cough and his brother-in-law's limp in *L'Avare*, Mlle Beauval's gift for infectious laughter in the part of Nicole, the permanent sets of the Italians which he had to make the best of when he shared their theatre with them.

The precise forms in which he saw dramatic effectiveness were determined by his peculiar genius, but also, and to a very considerable degree, by the physical conditions of the theatre for which he wrote and the traditions in which, as a man of the theatre, he had grown up. In its material shape the French theatre of the mid seventeenth century was still in the stage of improvisation. Such companies as

## Introduction

Molière's *Illustre Théâtre*, which he founded with the Béjarts, played in tennis courts, inn-yards, or the halls of great houses with little specialized setting and, originally, no proscenium curtain. The audience stood before the stage in the *parterre* or pit (not around it as in Elizabethan England) or sat in tiers on three sides of the room. The young men of fashion sat on the stage. With the development of spectacular plays the proscenium curtain came into general use to withhold the surprise of the setting, cover scene changes, and mask the *machines* which enabled gods to fly, nymphs to emerge from their fountains, and villains to go to their last account as in *Dom Juan*. The influence of a stage without front curtain is seen in Molière's openings – with individuals walking and conversing – and in his endings which so often become processions or dances. The elaborations seen at Versailles were much modified elsewhere and the contemporary inventories show how simple were stage furniture and properties. For *L'Avare*, a table, a chair, an inkstand, paper, a cash-box, a broom, a stick, overalls, spectacles, two candles on the table in the fifth act; for *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, chairs, table for the meal and one for the buffet, accessories for the Turkish ceremony; for *Dom Juan*, a trap, incense (to make smoke), two chairs, and a stool. Costumes, on the other hand, were rich, varied, and stylized according to character. The audience could recognize characters by their dress and deportment immediately they entered, master and man, mistress and maid, soldier, doctor, pedant, ruffian, poor, rich, old, young, comic, serious. There are relatively few references in the plays to the setting, but allusions to costume and personal appearance are abundant and indicative of character – as Don Juan's flame-coloured ribbons, Cléante's fashionable attire in *L'Avare*, and Jourdain's finery. Costume was used to concentrate attention on the actor, and the stage was the unencumbered space where he must create his illusion by voice, movement, and gesture in patterns of colour and sound.

The main traditions of acting to which Molière succeeded were twofold. In tragedy, speech was declamatory; the lines were intoned rather than spoken, and in gesture the emphasis was on dignity and a theatrical impressiveness. Molière

## Introduction

attempted to introduce a more natural manner, but his ideas seem to have gained little acceptance and his practice of them may account for the contemporary view that he was not seen to advantage in tragedy. The other tradition, from which in a large degree Molière developed his conceptions of comedy and comic acting, was that of the farce. Native farce had a long history in France, but it would seem that it was the Italians, long favourites of Parisian audiences, who had the greatest influence upon him. Theirs was predominantly an art of gesture and mime. Plots and characters were conventional, familiar to the audience, a framework of improvisation. Dialogue was largely extemporized, according to the inspiration of the moment and the reaction of the audience, and interspersed with stock passages of repartee which could be introduced to fit recurrent situations. The actors were commonly masked and the effect of the mask was to increase the significance of movement and gesture and at the same time to stylize it. A mask is most effective when seen in full face. Thus it was the outline, the shape of the gesture as seen from the front, which was significant and the movement had the effect of figures on a frieze. Gestures were clear cut, emphatic. The elements of such a convention are clearly to be seen in Molière's work.

Many of the earlier plays are little more than farcical scenes strung together with only the slightest intrinsic connexion or plot. Development and structural logic were never a strong point with Molière. Don Juan, Harpagon, Jourdain are revealed in loose sequences of scenes wherein the main character is the link and plot of no great significance. Characters too are taken directly from or have close affinities with the stock figures of farce. What Molière did was to deepen and enlarge their significance, to clothe them afresh with new comic traits, and to widen the range, effect, and appeal. Scenes of pure farce abound in the plays and a technique of acting derived from farce is implicit throughout, even though the form may be widened and refined. In Act III of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, for example, where master and man (Cléonte and Covielle) meet mistress and maid (Lucile and Nicole) the short sharp exchanges of speech cut down at times to single words and



## Introduction

exclamations are the notation of a series of formalized movements, a development and counter-development indicated by only the slightest of stage directions. In effect the scene is a dance. Its charm is almost wholly visual, its relevance to the plot of the slightest.

In *Dom Juan* the methods of farce are used to achieve a deeper significance, as in the first encounter of Don Juan and Elvira. The scene, so far as the principal characters are concerned, is not obviously comic – certainly not in the common sense of the word, but Sganarelle is present throughout and his interventions or rather the occasions when he is brought into the dialogue are revealing. To Elvira's inquiry as to why Don Juan had abandoned her the answer is 'Sganarelle here knows why I came away'. Now, the reader may forget Sganarelle until he is recalled by the dialogue, but on the stage, in actual production, he has to be accounted for; he must play his part all the time. If it is assumed – and there is no alternative – that Sganarelle has mimed throughout the preceding speeches his commentary upon what has been passing and, that the culmination was a mute gesture of appeal to his master in sympathy with Elvira, then the sudden ironic resort to him falls dramatically into place. Here, as throughout the play, Sganarelle, the farcical character, or the most completely farcical among the main characters, upholds not as contemporaries suggested, religion in the character of a fool, but, confused, contradictory, foolish as he may be, the cause of common humanity. Jourdain in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* appeals to us in the same way, through a kind of lyricism of folly.

Molière's language in the prose plays shows a singular range and variety suited to rank and character of the speakers. It extends, within the same play, from the heroic and the precious to the most colloquial and direct or, as in *Dom Juan*, to naturalistic stage dialect. The influence of farce is seen in the stock exchanges, some of which occur with little change in different plays, in comic situations, to express rage, surprise, and frustration – for example, those between Géronte and Scapin, Harpagon and La Flèche, where the character relationship is wholly farcical. Such passages are there primarily