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# SUNSET

A HISTORY OF PARISIAN DRAMA  
IN THE LAST YEARS OF LOUIS XIV

1701-1715

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A HISTORY OF PARISIAN DRAMA  
IN THE LAST YEARS OF LOUIS XIV

1701—1715

BY

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TO THE MEMORY OF LOUIS CONS  
TO GUSTAVE COHEN  
TO THEIR COLLEAGUES OF THE  
RESISTANCE



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## INTRODUCTION

This volume is a sequel to my *History of French Dramatic Literature in the Seventeenth Century*. It is concerned with plays that were composed in the period that runs from the beginning of the eighteenth century to the death of the Roi Soleil in September, 1715. I began to prepare it early in 1943, at a time when the occupation of France by the Germans prevented me from having access to plays published in the provinces. Consequently I limited myself to those acted or published in or near Paris, including those produced at Versailles, Fontainebleau, St. Germain, etc. These Parisian plays include all extant French plays except a few of extremely minor importance. Somewhat to my surprise, I was able to find in America all but one or two extant tragedies and comedies acted at the Comédie Française.

The bulk of the work is devoted to these productions, but a chapter is concerned with what is known of lost plays and of a few that were never acted, or were produced in private. There is also a chapter on the farces of the Foire, highly interesting as evidence of revolt against monopoly, but not deserving, so far as the texts are concerned, more extensive treatment. My method is in general that employed in my earlier work. Most of the plays are grouped under the names of their authors, the chapters on tragedies preceding those on comedies. Two chapters are devoted to general considerations in regard to tragedy and to comedy, a fact that has made it possible to reduce the length of the *Conclusion*. An introductory chapter deals with political and social background and the history of the Comédie Française. As in Part V of my *History of French Dramatic Literature*, I have added a subject index, as well as one devoted to persons and books, and an appendix of *Additions and Corrections* to my work on seventeenth-century drama.

The period is one that has received comparatively little attention from scholars. Most historians of French literature refer to Crebillon, Lesage, and the later work of Regnard, but they are apt to ignore other plays of the time. From Racine they hurry on to Voltaire, from Molière and the early plays of Dancourt, to Marivaux. The chief exceptions are those mentioned in the following paragraphs.

The frères Parfaict<sup>1</sup> discussed in greater or less detail the majority of the plays. Their fourteenth and fifteenth volumes are more reliable than

<sup>1</sup> When I refer to them without mentioning the title of their work, I mean their *Histoire du théâtre français*.

their earlier work, as they deal with plays written by their contemporaries or immediate predecessors and as the authors frequently consulted the *Registres* of the Comédie Française. To their *Histoire* they added their *Mémoires*, concerned with dramatic productions of the Foire, and their *Dictionnaire des théâtres*, which came out after the death of one of the two brothers. Occasionally their remarks may be supplemented by the publications of Maupoint, Beauchamps, Lérís, Clément et La Porte, and by the *Bibliothèque du théâtre français*.

The *Bibliothèque dramatique de Monsieur de Solenne*<sup>2</sup> gives for this period as for the seventeenth century, the most nearly complete bibliography of plays in existence. Goizet added references to some editions unknown to Paul Lacroix. Unfortunately his work covers only authors whose initials are found in the early part of the alphabet. The volumes published by Joannides and their continuation by Edouard Champion are valuable aids in regard to the repertory of the Comédie Française, as are, in connection with contemporary opinion, the *Répertoire* and the *Théâtre et Public* of M. Melese. Monval's *Liste alphabétique* and J.-J. Olivier's *Voltaire et les comédiens* give information about actors and actresses. Bonnassies and Campardon published a large number of legal documents concerned both with the Comédie Française and with the Foire. For the latter I have also consulted the *Mémoires* of the frères Parfaict and the work of Lesage et d'Orneval, Barberet, Albert, and Bernardin.

For eighteenth-century opinion I have found information, not only in the works of Mélése and the frères Parfaict but in those of Mlle Barbier Roccohoni, Saint-Simon, Grimm, Hamilton, and especially Voltaire and La Harpe. The social background of upper society was described in Dangeau's *Journal*, in Saint-Simon, and subsequently by Jullien and Desnoiresterres. I have also utilized Depping's *Correspondance administrative* and Bourquin's articles on the relations between the theater and the church. Bonnefon and Boislisle have brought to light information about unpublished plays. Bardon has discussed the debt of certain French plays to *Don Quixote*. Translations of French tragedies in Italy have been listed by Ferrari, in Spain, by Qualia.

Criticism of certain leading dramatists was expressed by Brunetière, Lanson, Lintilhac, and Lenient. Crébillon was studied in detail by Dutrait. A number of other dramatists were discussed by various scholars. La Grange-Chancel, by Nietzsche, Longepierre, by Portalis and Frantz, Hénault by Henri Lion and Fr. Rousseau, Dancourt, by Jules Lemaître and, in an unpublished dissertation by W. H. Starr, Boursault, by Hoff-

<sup>2</sup> Referred to, below, as *Solenne* or *Catalogue Solenne*. Brunet's index increases its usefulness.

mann, Baron, by Young, Brueys, by Koch, Campistron, by Hausding; Dufresny, by Vic and Domann, Regnard, by Sarcy, Parigot, and Toldo; Lesage by Léo Claretie, Lantilhac, Gutkind, and Cordier, Destouches, by Bonnefon, David, Hankiss, Ludemann, and Burner, J-B Rousseau, by Grubbs, M-A Legrand, by Miss Burnet, Pierre Charles Roy, by Polinger. Other dramatists have remained without modern biographers, nor is there a detailed account of the dramatic production as a whole, although in this period nearly a hundred tragedies and comedies were contributed to the repertory of the Comedie Française.

For the loan of books examined in the preparation of this volume I am indebted to the librarians of the Johns Hopkins University, of the Library of Congress, of the Peabody Library, and of Princeton and Harvard Universities, for permission to have a photostat made, to the librarian of the New York Public Library. A part of the expense of publication has been borne by the Rockefeller Fund for Research in the Humanities.





## CHAPTER I

### THE ACTORS OF THE COMÉDIE FRANÇAISE THEIR PATRONS AND THEIR OPPONENTS

When the eighteenth century began, Louis XIV was sixty-two. He had made France the leading power in Europe, had established himself as the model for all who aspired to absolutism, had chosen unity as the order of the day. The nobles who had troubled his youth had been brought to heel. Only one church was tolerated, and within that church the unorthodox, Jansenists and Quietists, were persecuted. He had patronized academies that tended to standardize literature, science, and art. He had even accepted, after many hesitations, the practice of monogamy. Quite naturally he was to continue to patronize at Paris one opera company, to which he granted a monopoly of professional singing and dancing, and one theatrical troupe, with its monopoly upon dialogue.

As he grew older, he became uneasy about his soul, a concern that led him to a strange compromise in regard to the theater. He subsidized actors and allowed them to play at Versailles and at Fontainebleau as well as at Paris. He let his family attend performances frequently. But he ceased favoring professional players with his presence. On Jan 2, 1703, Dangeau wrote that for several years the king had seen no plays performed. He exaggerated, it is true, for on Feb 3, 1702, Louis had been present in Mme de Maintenon's apartment when Duché's *Absalon* was played. Parts were taken in this tragedy by the duc d'Orléans and the duchesse de Bourgogne, while the duc de Berry had a rôle in a farce that accompanied it, J.-B. Rousseau's *Ceinture magique*. On Feb. 22 he again saw *Absalon*, this time followed by *les Précieuses ridicules*, with the duc d'Orléans playing Jodelet. Next day the king attended a performance of *Athalie* in which the duchesse de Bourgogne took part. At Trianon on Feb 26 he saw the troupe of the Comédie Française play *Montezumie* and *le Grandeur*. But after this he saw no more professional acting and, for ten years, no amateurs. In 1712-5, however, he saw Mme de Maintenon's musicians give in actors' costumes several comedies by Molière and other seventeenth-century authors.<sup>1</sup> What he objected to seems to have been neither plays nor acting,

<sup>1</sup> Cf Dangeau, *Journal*, Dec 21, 1712, to July 26, 1715. He notes the presence of the king at most of the performances some of which took place at Marly. The plays given were *l'Étourdi*, *le Cocu imaginaire*, *l'École des maris*, *les Fâcheux*, *le Mariage forcé*, *le Médecin malgré lui*, *George Dandin*, *l'Avare*, *le Bourgeois gentilhomme*, *la Comtesse d'Escombagnas*, Racine's *Plaideurs*, Th. Corneille's *Baron d'Albikrac*, Hauteroche's *Crispin musicien*, and *le Grandeur* of Brucys and Palaprat.

but personal patronage of professional actors, who were frowned upon by the church.

He may also have lost sympathy for professional players as a result of reports that they were acting indecently. Such rumors led eventually to the establishment of censorship. Plays had been suppressed from time to time during the seventeenth century, but it was in the eighteenth that supervision was organized. On March 31, 1701, the king had Pontchartrain write to d'Argenson that "les expressions et les postures indécentes commencent à reprendre vigueur" among the actors and that they must be warned in regard to such behavior. He added that no new play could be produced unless the text had been submitted to d'Argenson.<sup>2</sup> The actors must have supposed that Louis had in mind only short comedies, for they voted on April 11 to send to d'Argenson a list of the "petites pièces" that were to be acted the following week. They also took the precaution of asking La Thorillière to replace Mimi Dancourt as the "petit marquis" of *Le Misanthrope* in order to avoid the charge that her presence in masculine costume wounded the "bienséances."<sup>3</sup> Later in the year they suppressed in Bour-sault's *Esopé à la cour* a scene that discussed the existence of a Creator.

Such precautions, however, proved insufficient. Boindin's *Bal d'Auteuil*, accepted by the actors on July 24, 1702, with a few modifications and submitted to d'Argenson, was played at Paris, and subsequently, on Jan. 1, 1703, at Versailles. The manner in which it was acted brought from Louis XIV a fresh reproof and from Pontchartrain a new letter to d'Argenson.<sup>4</sup> The result was that regular supervision of acting was put into effect in 1706, of publication in 1709.<sup>5</sup> On Feb. 27 of the latter year Pontchartrain wrote that he would grant no further permissions to publish plays unless the authors showed them to him before they were acted.<sup>6</sup>

So long as the actors respected the proprieties, they were allowed to play at Paris and were invited to Fontainebleau and Versailles. Dangeau mentions their presence in the former palace every autumn in the years 1701-5, 1707, and 1713, at Versailles every winter except three, those of 1711-2, 1712-3, and 1714-5. The Dauphin, "Madame," and the duchesse de Bourgogne were constant attendants. "Madame" wrote frequently to her aunt about these and other court performances. The duchesse de Bourgogne, the duc de Berry, and the duc d'Orléans took part in some of them,

<sup>2</sup> Bonnassies, *La Comédie Française*, Paris, 1874, p. 274. He quotes from the *Correspondance administrative de Louis XIV*. Louis Bourquin, *RHLL*, XXVI (1919), 68, quotes the same letter, but he misdates it 1702. The letter is found in Depping's edition of the *Correspondance* (Paris, 1851), II, 738-9.

<sup>3</sup> Bonnassies, *op cit*, p. 275.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Bonnassies, *op cit*, p. 276, and below, Chapter XVI.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Mélése, *Th et Pub*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Bonnassies, *op cit*, p. 277, and Depping, *op cit*, II, 860.

as we have seen, and even engaged professional actors to play with them. Mme de Maintenon organized dramatic entertainments and wrote *proverbes dramatiques*<sup>7</sup> for her protégées at Saint-Cyr. The only member of the royal family who shared the king's scruples was the duc de Bourgogne, who seems to have gone to the theater only to please his wife and who, when he became Dauphin, refused to receive a delegation of actors because he considered them persons useless to the state. If he had outlived his grandfather, he might have seriously affected the history of French drama.

His attitude failed to influence the great nobles. The princesse de Conti had Longepierre's *Electre* played at her Versailles home in 1702. M. de Livry entertained the Dauphin by bringing the troupe of the Comédie Française to his château in 1705, where the actors gave a play that Dancourt had written for the occasion. Especially active was the duchesse du Maine, granddaughter of Condé and wife of Louis XIV's illegitimate son. She gave many dramatic entertainments in her establishments at Sceaux and Clagny and at Malezieu's home at Châtenay.<sup>8</sup> For her Dancourt wrote the *Diversissement de Sceaux* and brought the troupe to her château to produce it. She employed singers from the Opera, the Alards from the Foire, the dramatists Genest and Destouches, and especially Malezieu, member of the Academy and previously preceptor of the duc de Bourgogne. Genest wrote for her his *Joseph*. Malezieu prepared for her his translations of Plautus, Terence, Sophocles, and Euripides,<sup>9</sup> charades, a farce for marionettes, and compositions that included dramatic scenes, music, and dancing. Molière and Racine were performed. The duchess is said to have acted in *Pénélope*, *Joseph*, *Andromaque*, *Mithridate*, and *Iphigénie among the Taurians*.

The attitude of the church remained hostile, but it did not show the bitterness that had characterized Bossuet's attack upon Caffaro when the latter dared defend the stage in 1694.<sup>10</sup> Fléchier condemned attendance upon the theater as "une espèce de libertinage." Massillon warned Christians that in going there they violated their baptismal vows, but he attacked

<sup>7</sup> Cf. my *History of French Dramatic Literature in the Seventeenth Century*, Part IV (1940), pp. 931-3.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Adolphe Jullien, *les Grandes Nuits de Sceaux, le théâtre de la duchesse du Maine*, Paris, Baur, 1876.

<sup>9</sup> For his translations of Latin comedies cf. below, Chapter XVIII. He shows in the *Discours* he wrote to accompany *Joseph* that he had translated *Philoctetes*. His *Iphigénie*, a translation of Euripides's *Iphigénie among the Taurians*, preserved in a manuscript of 1714, was published by Paul Bonnefon in *RHL*, XVII (1910), 581-611. It was acted on Aug. 5, 1713. The translation, including the choruses, is in prose and follows the Greek text closely, but the heroine is given a Greek confidant, Egine, the herdsman becomes Amyntas, "intendant des troupeaux du roi," the messenger is called Arate, dialogue is sometimes substituted for monologue, and the position of certain material is altered. Such changes show little originality on the part of Malezieu.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. my *op. cit.*, Part IV, pp. 7, 8, and Bourquin, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-64.

the stage only along with other forms of entertainment. On the other hand, some preachers advised against exaggerated severity, and some abbés thought morality might be taught in plays and even desired to promote a Christian theater. The abbé Terrasson was distinctly favorable, praising the stage as a moral institution, good for the people and instructive for their rulers.<sup>11</sup> The abbés who wrote tragedies derived from the Bible or Josephus, Genest and Nadal, must have accepted Terrasson's point of view. Even Bossuet relented sufficiently to attend three private performances of plays at Versailles and Clagny in 1792-3.<sup>12</sup>

More effective than its public pronouncements for or against the theater were the church's influence upon Louis XIV, to which reference has been made, and its continuing to refuse the last sacraments and burial in consecrated ground to actors who had failed to renounce their profession. According to the *Journal des Savants*, the actors had in 1696 complained to the pope that they had been refused absolution at the time of the Jubilee. The journalist added that their plea had been rejected.<sup>13</sup> This happened again in 1701.<sup>14</sup> In 1698 la Champmeslé had repented in the nick of time, but in 1730 la Lecouvreur neglected to do so and was buried in unholy ground. Nevertheless plays continued to be given at schools under the patronage of the church. That they were religious and usually written in Latin set them apart from the kind of tragedy ordinarily presented at the Comédie Française, but an intelligent student may well have asked why he should be encouraged by his teachers to participate in an activity that led professionals to excommunication and the potter's field.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> For the opinions of these churchmen cf. Bourquin, *op cit*, pp 74, 559-62, 568-73. He refers also to the *Dialogues entre messieurs Patru et d'Ablancourt*, to the abbé Guillard du Jarry's *Recueil de poésies chrétiennes*, and (pp 78-81) to the abbé de Bellegarde, Father Soumet, and the abbé Villiers, who objected in 1711, as he had done in 1675, to the presence of love in tragedies.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Urbain et Levesque, *Correspondance de Bossuet*, Paris, Hachette, 1912, VI, 279-80.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Mélése, *Th et Pub*, p 169, and Urbain et Levesque, *op cit*, VI, 257.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Bourquin, *op cit*, p 66.

<sup>15</sup> The following list of school plays is made up from *Soleinne*, nos 3637-46, J de la Servière, *Un professeur d'ancien régime le père Charles Porée S J (1676-1741)*, Paris, Oudin, 1899, and L-V Gofflot, *le Théâtre au collège*, Paris, Champion, 1907, pp 290-2.

At Louis le Grand, 1701, *la Fontaine de Jouvenec* and *Daniel*, 1702, *Midas*, *Damocles*, *Marime*, *Adonias*, *Philocrusus*, 1703, *Posthumus*, *Celse*, 1704, *Annibal*, *Joseph rendu par ses frères* (translation of a Latin play by Lejay, possibly Péchantre's, as the *Bib du th fr* assigns to him a play with this title, as well as a *Sacriphe d'Abraham*, though both are said to have been written for the collège d'Harcourt), *Adulatores*, *Philippe le Bon*, *Moussé*, 1705, *Jonas*, *Cyrus*, 1706, *Saul*, *Marime martyr*, *Adonias*, 1707, *Menophis*, *Josephus Agypto praefectus* (by Lejay), 1708, *Philocrusus* (by Lejay), *Brutus* (by Porée), 1709, *David Saul reconciliatus*, *Josephus reditus*, *Josephus agnoscens fratres*, 1710, *Celse martyr*, *Mauritius imperator*, 1711 *Crassus* (by Lejay), 1712, *Paezophilus* (by Porée), *Damon et Pythias*, *Scaphobus Myrsa* (by Porée), *Brutus Premier Consul des Romains*, 1713, *Theocaris*

The question of the morality of drama was discussed by laymen also. As Delosme de Monchesnay, after contributing several comedies to the Théâtre Italien, had been converted, he addressed to Boileau an attack upon the theater. His correspondent replied that he ought not to condemn the stage because certain actors led immoral lives.<sup>16</sup> Chavigni de Saint-Martin published at Brussels in 1706 the *Triomphe de la comédie, ou Réponse à la critique des prélats de France*,<sup>17</sup> in which he attacked the clergy for seeking to deprive people of pleasure while they were themselves living selfishly. Tragedy and comedy were defended, respectively, by M. and Mme Dacier, whose support would have been of greater value if they had not held French plays to be greatly inferior to those of Greece and Rome. Finally, all plays, both ancient and modern, were condemned in 1713 by Fran du Tremblay.<sup>18</sup>

Whatever effect these attacks and apologies may have had, the production of plays and their presentation to the public continued. In compensation for difficulties caused by the unfriendly attitude of Louis XIV and of certain churchmen the actors must have realized that they gained prestige from court patronage and that they profited by the increased efficiency of the police. No such disturbances are recorded as there had been in the late seventeenth century. In his *Œuvres* of 1712 Palaprat stated that "la Police fait régner au spectacle un calme dont les spectateurs sont fort obligés."<sup>19</sup> The actors also believed that they profited by their monopoly upon dialogue, as their efforts to send the police after those who violated their privilege amply shows.

Some of them held, however, that there might be advantage in having at Paris more than one professional troupe. On Dec. 2, 1707, someone offered to pay 50,000 écus into the royal treasury and to give 8000 livres to the Hôpital général in return for permission to organize a new troupe.<sup>20</sup> Four years later the actors themselves brought to the king's attention a similar proposition, one that met with d'Argenson's approval. Dangeau reported on Dec. 3, 1711, that

M d'Argenson, à qui le roi a demandé son avis par écrit sur ce qu'une partie des comédiens veut se séparer de leurs camarades pour faire une troupe à part, a

*martyr au Japon*, 1714, *Paesophilus* (by Porée), *Benjamin captif*, 1715, *Plutophagus* (by Porée)

At Harcourt, 1712, *Saul ou l'Ombre de Samuel*

At Navarre, Aug. 17, 1715, *la Clémence d'Auguste* (a Latin adaptation of *Cinna*)

Most of these plays survive in a form that gives only the cast and an analysis of the text. *David et Jonathan*, "tragédie en musique" (Paris, Sevestre, 1706), produced at Louis le-Grand on Feb. 10, 1706, is an opera rather than a play.

<sup>16</sup> Boileau, *Œuvres*, Gidel edition, IV, 251-4.

<sup>17</sup> Bourquin, *op cit*, pp. 71-3, and M. Barras, *The Stage Controversy in France*, New York, 1933, pp. 151-4. Bourquin shows that Chavigni was indebted to Gacon's *Poète sans farde*, which had been republished in 1701.

<sup>18</sup> Bourquin, *op cit*, pp. 563-6.

<sup>19</sup> Cited by Mélése, *Th et Pub*, p. 222.

<sup>20</sup> *Relations véritables* of Brussels, cited by Mélése, *ibid*, p. 58.

écrit que l'on feroit une chose fort sage et fort agréable au public d'augmenter les spectacles dans Paris

The suggestion may have come from Paul Poisson, who with his son withdrew from the troupe on Dec. 16, 1711. As, at the time the request was made, the company had twenty-seven members, it might easily have been divided, but that would have violated one of Louis's cherished principles. Paris was to have only one official troupe of actors so long as the old monarch lived.

Its organization remained in principle as it had been in the last years of the seventeenth century. There were twenty-three shares in the company, divided among nineteen full-share and seven part-share members. The former were Beauval, Dancourt, Beaubourg, and their wives, la Raisin, Villiers, Champmeslé, Roséis, Du Périer, Le Comte, la Godefroy, Etienne Baron, Paul Poisson, Guérin, La Thorillière, la Desbrosses, and la Dufey. Desmares and la Duclos had each three-fourths of a share, la Clavel, five-eighths, Dufey, Lavozy, and la Grandval, a half each, la Champvallon, three-eighths.<sup>21</sup>

Champmeslé probably still exercised more authority in the troupe than anyone else and played rôles of kings and of other men supposed to be no longer young. Villiers and Roséis seconded him, while young heroes were represented by Beaubourg and Etienne Baron, leading comic rôles by Poisson and La Thorillière. The principal actress in tragedy was la Raisin, but some important rôles were played by la Beauval and la Duclos, while in comedy la Beauval retained the position she had held for many years of leading comic actress.

This state of affairs did not long endure. As the court thought it undesirable for the Dauphin's mistress to appear on the stage, la Raisin was persuaded to retire at Easter, 1701, with a pension to Normandy. Villiers died on July 14, Champmeslé, on Aug. 22. Roséis retired on Nov. 21. Dancourt probably succeeded Champmeslé as the leader of the troupe. To replace Champmeslé and Villiers as actors, Sallé was admitted in August, Ponteuil, in November. In the next few years Sallé seems to have taken the rôles that would have gone to Champmeslé, had he lived, Ponteuil some of less importance. La Raisin's share must have been divided in such a way as to give a fourth to la Duclos and a half to Charlotte Desmares, for the troupe had been ordered on Dec. 21, 1700, to give a quarter-share to la Duclos as soon as a vacancy should occur and then a half-share to la Desmares.<sup>22</sup> It is possible that the remaining quarter of a share was divided between the Dancourt sisters.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. my *Comédie Française*, Baltimore, 1941, p. 12.

<sup>22</sup> Campardon, *Comédiens du Roi*, Paris, Champion, 1879, pp. 70, 93.

Monval and others have made erroneous statements in regard to the dates when these sisters and la Desmares became members of the troupe. All three had played in it when they were children. Charlotte appeared in the *Cadet de Gascogne* on Aug. 21, 1690, when about eight. Four years later she and her sister represented the children in Longepierre's *Médée*. After the death of her aunt, la Champmeslé, in May, 1699, she was given a rôle recently created by the celebrated actress, that of Iphigénie in *Oreste et Pilade*. It must have been her success in this play that induced the Dauphin to order, on April 17, 1700, that she should take over from la Beauval and la Duclos the rôles of Pauline, Emilie, Bérénice, Laodice, Iphigénie, and Hermione and should substitute for la Duclos when she was unable to play.<sup>23</sup> The *Registres* of the Comédie Française shows, however, that she was not a regular member of the troupe before Easter, 1701. As la Raisin retired at that time, Charlotte must have entered the troupe when it began to play after the Easter recess.

The Dancourt sisters may well have been enrolled at the same time. In 1695 they had appeared in their father's *Foire de Besons*, when Manon, who danced as an "espagnolette," was eleven, and Mimi, who played Chonchette, was nine. They subsequently took part in his *Foire Saint-Germain*, *Opérateur Barry*, and *Trois Cousines*. Monval<sup>24</sup> would have it that they entered the troupe on Jan. 13, 1699, and that Manon left in March, 1702. The first date is shown by the *Registres* to be incorrect, but there is no reason to doubt the second. It is consequently reasonable to suppose that they entered the troupe at Easter, 1701.

The engagement of la Desmares, Sallé, and Ponteuil was soon known to the public, for, when the first new tragedy of the winter season, La Grange-Chancel's *Amasis*, was given late in 1701, the king's rôle was taken by Sallé, the young heroine's by la Desmares, and that of a secondary character by Ponteuil. If Sallé received a full share, Ponteuil, a half-share, and if, when Manon retired in March, 1702, her eighth was added to her sister's, the troupe would have had at its disposal a share and a half, enough to admit three new actors, each with half a share. Thus is what seems to have happened at the end of 1702, when three actors who had been refused membership in 1688-94 were finally admitted. Charles-Claude Botot, called Dangeville, the dramatist, Legrand, and Hugues-François Barrié, known as Fonpré<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 69, 70. The rôles are found, respectively, in *Polycote*, *Cinna*, Racine's *Bérénice*, Th. Corneille's *Laodice*, Racine's *Iphigénie*, and *Andromaque*.

<sup>24</sup> *Comédie Française (1658-1900)*. *Liste alphabétique des Sociétaires*, Paris, 1900.

<sup>25</sup> According to the *Dictionnaire des théâtres* of the frères Parfaict, II, 246-7, Dangeville was born at Paris on March 18, 1665, was the son of a "procureur au Châtelet," and succeeded Beauval as the actor who represented fools. He married la Grandval. For Legrand cf. Mary Scott Burnet, *Marc-Antoine Legrand*, Paris,



The next change in the membership of the troupe occurred at Easter, 1704, when la Beauval, her less distinguished husband, and Le Comte retired. The departure of the Beauval couple cut the last link that remained between the troupe and Molière, so far as those who had held shares in his company were concerned. La Thorillière and Beaubourg's wife had played under his direction when they were children, but only the Beauval couple had been members of his troupe, she creating the rôle of Nicole in the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, he that of Thomas Diafoirus in *le Malade imaginaire*. It is probable that two of the three shares renounced by these three retiring actors were distributed among older members of the troupe who had not already received full shares, and that the third was divided between two men who had been acting with the company, but had not received membership. Du Boccage, who had tried unsuccessfully to enter the troupe in 1691 and 1692<sup>26</sup> and whom Regnard had recently introduced, along with Dancourt and la Beauval, into the prologue of *les Folies amoureuses*, and Philippe Poisson, who as the son of Paul, had been granted on April 17, 1700, permission to play Achilles in *Iphigénie*, Xipharès in *Mithridate*, and Curia in *Horace*, but without remuneration<sup>27</sup> According to Monval, he was received into the troupe on Dec. 28, 1704. He subsequently became, like his grandfather, a comic dramatist, but as an actor he continued to play in tragedy.<sup>28</sup>

Between the end of 1704 and the beginning of December, 1711, the troupe lost four of its members and engaged three actresses. Du Perier, who had in 1699 introduced into France the "pompe à incendie," must have thought it more profitable to organize firemen than to continue acting, for he retired on Oct. 19, 1705. Sallé died on March 29, 1706, Fonpre, Sept. 21, 1707, la Godefroy, March 5, 1709. The three women to be admitted in these seven years were Françoise Thoury, who had sung at the Opera and had married Sallé, Anne-Catherine Desmares, and Françoise Quinault. La Sallé made her début at the Comédie on May 21, 1704, took part in *Circé* and the *Impromptu de Lully* the following year, and obtained membership in the troupe in 1706.<sup>29</sup> Anne-Catherine Desmares, sister of

Droz, 1938, my *History of French Dramatic Literature*, Part IV, pp. 862-71, and below, Chapter XIV. For Fonpré cf. the frères Parfaict, XIV, 543. He married la Clavel and died in 1707.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. my *op cit*, Part IV, p. 29. Monval, *op cit*, states that he was born at Strasbourg in 1674. His youth may explain his failure in 1691-2. Monval gives his entrance into the troupe as of March, 1704.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Campardon, *op cit*, pp. 228-9.

<sup>28</sup> In 1721 he played Tarquin in Du Ryer's *Scévole* and Abner in *Athalie*, cf. the frères Parfaict, XV, 475-6.

<sup>29</sup> According to Monval, *op cit*, she was born about 1669 and retired in 1721. The frères Parfaict (*Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des spectacles de la Foire*, Paris, Briasson, 1743, I, p. viii) declared that she "a fait & feroit encore le plaisir de Paris," if she had not retired "dans le plus grand éclat de sa gloire."

the more famous Charlotte and wife of a dancer, A. F. Botot-Dangeville, was admitted on Feb. 28, 1708; Françoise Quinault, wife of Hugues de Nesle, exactly a year later.

In December, 1711, and in 1712 there were changes of greater consequence. On Dec. 9, 1711, Etienne Baron died. Paul and Philippe Poisson retired a week later. Desmares followed their example on June 27, 1712, as did his daughter Anne and the Dufey couple on Dec. 21, 1712. La de Nesle, moreover, died on Dec. 22, 1713. The need for new members was obvious. The actors first admitted, June 25, 1712, la de Nesle's brother, J.-B. Maurice Quinault, and Dumirail,<sup>10</sup> then, July 7, Fontenay and Clavareau,<sup>11</sup> on Aug. 2 la Morancourt,<sup>12</sup> on Dec. 21 Quinault-Dufresne, the most celebrated member of his family, on Dec. 22 Durant,<sup>13</sup> on Nov. 10, 1713, Milache de Moligny,<sup>14</sup> on Dec. 14, 1713, Louise la Chaise,<sup>15</sup> and on Feb. 17, 1714, Marie Quinault, the fourth of her father's children to become a *sociétaire*. Of the twenty-nine actors and actresses who made up the company when Louis XIV died only twelve had been members of it in 1700.<sup>16</sup>

Other actors and actresses, some of them closely connected with members of the troupe, had endeavored to join it, but had failed. On March 17, 1702, Valois had played the title-rôle in Campistron's *Alcibiade* and the "Amoureux" in Poisson's *Après-souper des auberges*. He made a second and equally unsuccessful attempt on June 27, 1712, when he played

<sup>10</sup> Vincent Charles du Lestoille Dumirail was born at Paris, was tested on May 31, 1708, and on Dec. 29, 1711, both times as Jodelot in Thomas Corneille's *Géolier de soy même*, cf. Monval, *op. cit.* and the *Dictionnaire des théâtres*, III, 428.

<sup>11</sup> François Charles Bazouin de Fontenay was tested in the title rôle of *Polyeute* on May 30. He played "grands Confidens tragiques, & quelques rôles comiques" (*ibid.*, II, 614). Jean-Augustin Clavareau was tested on June 15 as Achilles in *Iphigénie* (*ibid.*, II, 99). According to Monval, he was tested on June 16 and received on July 8.

<sup>12</sup> Octavie Louise-Eléonore du Ragot d'Arceville, known as la Morancourt, was born about 1686, was tested on Jan. 13, 1711, as Cléopâtre in *Rodouane* and again in that rôle on July 3, 1712. She played "rôles de Confidentes & les Amoureuses comiques" (cf. *Dictionnaire des théâtres*, III, 459, and Monval, *op. cit.*).

<sup>13</sup> Jean Le Roux Durant was tested on July 9, 1712, as Antonin in *Géla* and *Nicodème in le Deuil* (cf. *Dictionnaire des théâtres*, II, 35), and Monval, *op. cit.*

<sup>14</sup> Etienne Milache de Moligny was born about 1685 and was tested on May 18, 1713. Cf. Monval, *op. cit.*

<sup>15</sup> Louise-Christine du Santoy de la Chaise, born about 1681, was the wife of a lawyer, Pierre Perron. She was tested on May 2, 1713. She played *servantes* in comedy. Cf. Monval, *op. cit.* and the *Dictionnaire des théâtres*, II, 71.

<sup>16</sup> The twelve were Dancourt, Beaubourg, their wives Guérin, La Thorillière, Lavoy, la Duclos, la Desbrosses, la Fonpré, la Dangeville and la Champvallion. The others were la Desmares, Mimi Dancourt, Pontcuil, Dangeville, Legrand, Du Boecage, la Sallé, Maurice and Marie Quinault, Quinault Dufresne, Dumirail, Fontenay, Clavareau, la Morancourt, Durant, Moligny, and Louise la Chaise. When Louis XIV was dead and the Regent took control of the theater, his daughter, the duchesse de Berry, persuaded Paul and Philippe Poisson to return to the troupe and dropped Clavareau, Durant, Moligny, and la Morancourt. As each of these four received a pension of 500 francs, each must have had half a share in the company.

Antony in La Chapelle's *Cléopâtre*. Anne-Françoise d'Orvay [Dorné], daughter of the distinguished actor, Dauvilliers, and wife of Dumont de Lavoy, was tested three times. as Camille in *Horace*, June 30, 1705, as Clytemnestre in *Iphigénie*, May 1, 1708, and as Agrippine in *Britannicus*, June 7, 1709. A certain Belletour played Auguste in *Cinna*, Jan. 20, 1708. Clavel, brother of Fonpré's widow, appeared in the title-rôle of *Mithridate*, March 15, 1708. Hugues de Nesle, "Officier de la Louveterie du Roi," whose wife was to succeed eight months after he failed, played Dioclétien in Brueys's *Cabine*, June 23, 1708. Morel from Berlin was directed on Oct. 16, 1708, to prepare himself for rôles of kings, but he was tested on July 19, 1709, as Gros René in the *Dept amoureux*. It may have been his rotundity that seemed to fit him either for this comic rôle or for that of a king, but other qualifications must have been lacking. Préfleury was tested on Jan. 20, 1711, as Oreste in *Andromaque* and on Aug. 2, 1712, as Agamemnon in *Iphigénie*, d'Artenay, May 4, 1712, in the title-rôles of *Pourceaugnac* and *Crispin médecin*,<sup>37</sup> Champdoré, May 23, 1712, as Pyrrhus in *Andromaque*, La Sallé, June 8, 1712, in the title-rôle of *Crispin médecin* and as Grichard in *le Grondeur*. Sévigny, who had been a member of the troupe, but had left it in 1695,<sup>38</sup> made an attempt to return to it on June 10, 1712, by taking the title-rôle in *Mithridate*. Finally, Du Lac was tested on June 21, 1712, as Ladislas in *Venceslas*.<sup>39</sup> It will be noted that most of these unsuccessful efforts to secure new actors were made in 1708 and in 1712, that Racine's tragedies were the plays most frequently selected for the tests, and that there were comparatively few attempts to take rôles in comedies.

The members of the troupe who retired or died before December, 1701, made no contribution of consequence to eighteenth-century drama. La Beauval, on the contrary, was given a prominent part under her own stage-name in the prologue of *Les Fôles amoureuses* and is known to have played the queen in *Amasis*, Frosine in *le Double Veuvage*, and Mysis in *l'Andrienne*. She probably continued to hold in the counsels of the company the important position to which her long career as a prominent actress entitled her. Nothing is known about her husband's acting in the eighteenth century except that Louis XIV recognized his worth by giving him in 1704 a pension of 600 francs.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> After his failure he played in the troupe of Saint-Edme at the Foire and subsequently in provincial companies.

<sup>38</sup> For this actor and dramatist cf. my *op cit*, Part IV, Index.

<sup>39</sup> For these actors who failed cf. the *Dictionnaire des théâtres*, I, 311, 409, II, 71, 100, III, 252, 3, 260, 460, 491, IV, 227, V, 26, 155, VI, 34.

Monval, *op cit*, states that Mlle Aubert, who was received on May 27, 1721, had been rejected on June 13, 1712.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Bonnassies, *op cit*, p. 231.

Dufey must have acquired standing in the affairs of the company, for he was sent several times in 1706-12 to protest against the encroachments of the Foire, and it was he who accompanied Dancourt when one of the theaters at the Foire was torn down. Le Comte took the part of Gautier-Garguille in Dancourt's *Opérateur Barry*, Desmares, that of the Suisse in the *Double Veuvage*, la Godefroy, that of the Suisse in the same play. The fact that they took such minor rôles as these suggests that it was not difficult to replace the three veterans.

Dancourt, who is given in the prologue of *les Folies amoureuses* a rôle indicating that he was the leader of the troupe and who took a prominent part in the attacks on the Foire, continued to supply his comrades with a large number of plays, composing more of them in 1701-15 than anyone else, but he never distinguished himself as an actor except, perhaps, in *Esope à la cour*.<sup>41</sup> His wife probably had a rôle in most of the comedies he wrote, as did his two daughters in his *Opérateur Barry*. La Dancourt also played Glécie in her brother-in-law's *Andrienne*, setting a fashion with her costume. Dancourt did not lead an uneventful life. He was threatened with assassination by one of the *forains* and had trouble with his wife's nephew, Etienne Baron, who at one time occupied an apartment in his house, rue de Condé, who failed to pay his rent, and who, like the *forain*, threatened his life.<sup>42</sup>

La Grandval took the part of a *servante* in Dufresny's *Double Veuvage* and the more important comic rôle of the Veuve in his *Coquette de village*. In September, 1702, she had married Charles-Claude Botot, called Dangeville.<sup>43</sup> La Champvallon and la Desbrosses were also favored by Dufresny, who entrusted to the former the rôle of the Countess to the latter that of the Veuve in his *Double Veuvage*. He gave la Champvallon the title-rôle in his *Journe*, while la Desbrosses appeared under her own name in the prologue of *les Folies amoureuses* and played Penelope in *la Mort d'Ulysse*. Lavoy is known to have represented Jodelin in *l'Opérateur Barry*, to have been sent in 1707 and in 1715 to protest against the actors of the Foire, and to have been accused in 1716 of purloining funds belonging to the troupe, a charge that brought from La Thorillière the affirmation that the accused was a man "de bien, d'honneur et de probité."<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> The *freres Parfaict*, XV, 475, state that this play was given on June 19, 1721, for the first time after Dancourt's retirement, and that La Thorillière then took the leading rôle. This implies that *Æsop* had been previously played by Dancourt. He is known to have taken the part of Nathan in *Athalie*.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Campardon, *les Spectacles de la Foire*, I, 81, 234-5, *les Comédiens du Roi*, p. 10. On p. 25 of the latter work there is an account of Dancourt's separating Beaubourg and a certain Mey, who had come to blows.

<sup>43</sup> For a contract in which she and her fiancé agreed to supply her parents with an income cf. Campardon, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-5.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 188-9.

Guérin d'Estriché, who had married Molière's widow and who, on Nov. 30, 1700, had buried her, had been taking elderly rôles in the late seventeenth century, some of them, like those of the protagonists in *l'Âiare* and *le Grandeur*,<sup>45</sup> of great distinction. He had fairly important rôles in eighteenth-century tragedy and comedy, those of the resourceful minister, Phanès, in *Amasis*, of the self-seeking Intendant in the *Double Veuvage*, of old Simon in *l'Andrienne*, of Licimen in *Cornélie Vestale*, and of Achitophel in *Absalon*. He took this last rôle when he was about seventy-six and did not retire until 1717, when he was over eighty.

The leading comic rôles were taken by La Thorillière and Paul Poisson, the former throughout the period, the latter nearly to the end of 1711. There was some difference between their methods, for Regnard, who had originally planned for La Thorillière the important rôle of the valet in *le Legataire universel*, was obliged to revise it when he found that Poisson, as a result of his comrade's illness, was to play it. Both took part in *la Comédie des comédiens* and probably in *la Foire Saint-Laurent*. La Thorillière played Gusmand in *le Double Veuvage* and Dave in *l'Andrienne*. Tralage had called him, about 1695, the "délices du parterre" and had added that a play "n'est bonne s'il n'y paroît"<sup>46</sup>. He probably maintained this reputation in 1701-15. In August, 1711, he went with Poisson to protest against the *forums*,<sup>47</sup> but the relations between the two comedians had not always been friendly, for in 1701 La Thorillière had drawn his sword to help his nephew, Etienne Baron, in an altercation with Poisson.<sup>48</sup> In this affair Beauval and his wife had supported Baron, while Champmeslé had made peace among the disputants. Paul claimed that the cause of the quarrel was the fact that his son Philippe had been called by Baron "l'exécuteur de la Comédie", Baron, that it was due to certain "paroles désobligeantes" uttered by Paul Poisson in regard to la Beauval. Both charges may have been correct, but Poisson's behavior off the stage did not diminish his reputation as an actor for Palaprat gave him the highest praise in saying that "on croit tous les jours n'avoir pas perdu le fameux Poisson, quand on voit son fils."<sup>49</sup>

As Beaubourg had been a member of the troupe longer than Etienne Baron, he probably retained the rôles of young hero in older tragedies, while Baron had a similar function in the majority of new ones. In *les Tyndarides*

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Tralage, cited by Mélése, *Th et Pub*, p. 204.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Mélése, *Th et Pub*, p. 204.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Campardon, *les Spectacles de la Foire*. He shows that Poisson was sent to the Foire also in 1706, 1707, and 1709.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Campardon, *les Comédiens du Roi*, pp. 223, 227-8.

<sup>49</sup> Noted by Mélése, *Rep*, p. 92. "Le fameux Poisson" is, of course, Raymond Palaprat's eulogy must have been written before Paul retired in December, 1711, though his *Ouïres*, in which it appeared, was not published until 1712.

Beaubourg had the more important rôle of Pollux, Baron that of Castor; in *la Mort d'Ulysse* Beaubourg played Telegonus, while Baron had the rôle of Telemachus, less important dramatically, but that of a youth who is supposed to win our sympathy. In the *Comédie des comédiens* they were evenly matched, each having two rôles, that of young lover and that of Italian actor, Beaubourg playing the Docteur, Baron, Pierrot. An awe-inspiring rôle, like that of Rhadamiste, naturally went to Beaubourg, while Baron played Cupid in *Psyché*, the young hero in such tragedies as *Amasis* and *Hypermnestre* and in such comedies as *le Double Veuvage*, *l'Andrienne*, and *la Foire Saint-Laurent*.

According to Voltaire, Beaubourg was an "énergumène" and played Joad "en démoniaque."<sup>50</sup> An anonymous author called his voice "terrible."<sup>51</sup> The violence he showed in his interpretations was indicative of his character, if he can be judged by Legrand's deposition of June 17, 1711.<sup>52</sup>

Dépose que la veille de la grande fête de Dieu, sur les sept heures du soir, comme on finissoit le quatrième acte de la tragédie de *Britannicus*, le sieur Mey vint demander au déposant s'il entendoit un endroit de la pièce qu'il lui récitait et comme il lui alloit expliquer, vint à passer le sieur de Beaubourg, sortant du théâtre en habit à la romaine, lequel prenant part à la conversation, dit audit sieur Mey "N'êtes-vous pas las, monsieur Mey, de critiquer Racine avec vos critiques ridicules?" A quoi ledit sieur Mey répondit "Mais, vous même, Monsieur, entendez vous ces vers là?" Que ledit sieur Beaubourg lui répliqua encore en ces termes "Ah! Monsieur Mey!" A quoi ledit Mey lui dit "Vous êtes un plaisant homme pour disputer avec un homme comme moi" Sur quoi ledit sieur Beaubourg dit "on s'en retournant sur le théâtre "Monsieur Mey, vous vous ferez ôter votre entrée à la comédie" Que ledit sieur Mey lui cria de loin "Vous êtes un plaisant juge de Pont Neuf!" ce qu'il répéta deux fois. Que ledit sieur Beaubourg vint à la charge et ne put s'empêcher de lui donner un soufflet, que le sieur Mey se jeta à sa perruque et le secoua en lui donnant quelques coups que ledit sieur Beaubourg lui rendit de son côté et le sieur Dancourt les sépara dans le moment

Etienne Baron seems to have been still more quarrelsome. I have referred to his dispute with Paul Poisson and to his threatening to take Dancourt's life. Son of a great actor, he had played as a boy in two of his father's comedies and, after his entrance into the troupe had risen rapidly to the position of full-share actor. On March 2, 1696, he had married the daughter of von der Beek, a German performer at the Foire who had died not long before the marriage. The explanation of this *mesalliance* may lie in the fact that she brought with her a dowry of 15 000 francs. In 1704 she accused her husband of wasting a part of her dowry, of gambling, and

<sup>50</sup> Moland edition, L, 353, XXVIII, 302

<sup>51</sup> Quoted in the *Œuvres de Crébillon*, Paris, 1772, III, 247

<sup>52</sup> Campardon, *op cit*, pp 24-5

<sup>53</sup> Ponteuil's deposition shows that the lines referred to are vv 1256-7 of *Britannicus*. Campardon notes that Beaubourg had been playing the title-rôle

of contracting so many debts that she had been obliged in 1701 to obtain a "séparation de biens." She charged that, as he owed Dancourt, his uncle-in-law, rent for three terms, the latter was obliged to retain Etienne's "miroirs et glaces," and she asserted that her husband had found it necessary to live in the Comédie Française in order to escape arrest for his debts. When she went to sup with him there, he had slapped her twice and had given her several "coups de pied et de poing."<sup>54</sup> It was during this forced residence in the theater that, in order that he might play at Versailles, Pontchartrain was obliged to ask d'Argenson to persuade the actor's creditors to allow him to leave the building and return to it without molestation. A week later Pontchartrain expressed the hope that, if d'Argenson liberated Baron, he would keep him from getting into similar trouble, but he was obliged on Dec. 3 to agree with d'Argenson that it was impossible to put Baron "en règle."<sup>55</sup> According to Lérin, Etienne was "un jeune Comédien, beau, bien fait & dont les talens commençoient à se perfectionner, mais un amour trop ardent pour le plaisir en priva le Public."<sup>56</sup>

To match these two men there were two distinguished actresses, la Duclos and la Desmares. The first, Marie-Anne de Châteauneuf, was born in 1668. After singing at the Opera, she became in 1694 a member of the Comédie Française, where she was an understudy for la Champmeslé. After the latter's death in 1698, she must have inherited several of her rôles. In 1699 she created the Empress Serena's rôle in Brueys's *Gabinie*. In the first twelve years of the eighteenth century she created the title-rôles in Longepierre's *Electre* and in Riupeirous's *Hypermnestre*, as well as the rôles of Tharès in *Absalon* and of Zénobie in *Rhadamiste et Zénobie*. About 1695 Tralage had described her as<sup>57</sup>

une grosse fille qui se porte bien, aimant la joye L'on dit qu'elle sait accorder Venus et Bacchus, elle est assez bien faite, la peau fort blanche, elle chante un peu, mais sa voix n'est pas très forte Si elle continue à engraisser, on ne la pourra souffrir dans quelques années C'est une actrice de génie médiocre

But improvement came. On Nov. 3, 1700, the duchesse d'Orléans wrote that la Duclos had "depuis un an si bien appris son métier qu'à présent elle joue presque aussi bien que la Champmeslé"<sup>58</sup> The same year the Dauphin noted her progress in declamation.<sup>59</sup> In 1702 the *Mercure* declared that no actress had ever displayed such force and grace as she had

<sup>54</sup> Campardon, *les Spectacles de la Foire*, I, 83-4

<sup>55</sup> Depping, *op cit*, II, 812-3

<sup>56</sup> *Dictionnaire portatif*, Paris, 1763, p 505

<sup>57</sup> *Notes et documents extraits du manuscrit de J. N du Tralage*, Paris, Nouvelle Collection Moliéresque, 1880, p 4

<sup>58</sup> Cited by Mélése, *Th et Pub*, p 202

<sup>59</sup> Campardon, *les Comédiens du Roi*, p. 93.

done in Longepierre's *Electre*.<sup>60</sup> La Motte<sup>61</sup> was enthusiastic about her interpretation of Phèdre:

Qui mieux que toi, Duclos, actrice inimitable,  
De ton art connaît les beautés?  
Qui sut jamais donner un air plus véritable  
A des mouvements imités?  
Tu feins le désespoir, la haine, la tendresse,  
Et je sens tout ce que tu feins

This was in 1714. The same year young Voltaire<sup>62</sup> called her the "aimable souveraine" of the stage and assured her that Love lies among the spectators

Quand, sous le nom de Phèdre ou de Monime,  
Vous partagez entre Racine et vous  
De notre encens le tribut légitime

He had lost his heart to her, but she had preferred the comte d'Uzès.<sup>63</sup> A few years later he transferred these verses to Adrienne Lecouvreur and, though he referred to both as typical tragic actresses,<sup>64</sup> he declared in October, 1725, that la Lecouvreur had buried la Duclos,<sup>65</sup> he commented on the latter's ignorance,<sup>66</sup> and, in *le Dictionnaire philosophique*, he condemned her as follows: <sup>67</sup>

La mélopée théâtrale périt avec la comédienne Duclos, qui n'ayant pour tout mérite qu'une belle voix, sans esprit et sans âme, rendit enfin ridicule ce qui avait été admiré dans la des Œilleta et dans la Champmeslé

It is quite possible that she was a fine actress in 1714, when she was forty-six, and that in the decade that followed her affectations increased with her age, so that she was unable to compete with Adrienne Lecouvreur when the two appeared in Voltaire's *Mariamne* on March 6, 1724, la Lecouvreur creating the title-rôle, la Duclos the rôle of Salome.<sup>68</sup> It was not long after this that she married Duchemin, an actor only seventeen years old, thirty-eight years younger than herself. The result was what she might have expected. She soon accused him of unfaithfulness, of beating her, and of giving her a venereal disease.<sup>69</sup> She obtained a separation, continued playing until 1733, retired officially three years later, and

<sup>60</sup> Frères Parfaict, XV, 321

<sup>61</sup> Quoted by J-J Olivier, *Voltaire et les comédiens*, Paris, 1900, p. 380

<sup>62</sup> Moland edition, IX, 561-4

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, X, 220, XXXIII, 28-9

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 323

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, XXXIII, 153

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, XX, 465

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, XVIII, 132. Cf. XXVIII, 302, where she is said to have sung her lines in *Athalie* and appeared as a "Josabeth fardée." In 1721 she had the title-rôle in that tragedy

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Olivier, *op. cit.*, p. 18

<sup>69</sup> Cf. the documents of 1727-30 published by Campardon, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-6.



lived until 1748. In her last days she must have looked back upon the first fifteen years of the century as the best part of her career, a distinguished one despite the facts that she had been early overshadowed by la Champmeslé and twenty years later was surpassed by la Lecouvreur.<sup>70</sup>

Even in her best period she had had a formidable rival in Charlotte Desmares. Born at Copenhagen in 1682, while her father was there as a member of a French troupe, she grew up almost on the stage, taking parts as a child and called by the actors Lolotte. I have mentioned above rôles that were assigned to her in 1690-1700, before she became a *sociétaire*. It is quite possible that Dancourt wrote his *Trois Cousines* especially for her and his two daughters. She had many important rôles in the eighteenth century, such as those of the young heroines in *Amasis*, *les Tyndarides*, and *la Mort d'Ulysse* and that of the Pythonisse in Nadal's *Saul*. She created the title-rôle in *Athalie* for the Comédie Française and the rôle of Jocaste in Voltaire's *Edipe*. She helped in the revival of "machine" plays, having the title-rôle in *Psyché* and introduced under her own name in the prologue written by Dancourt for Thomas Corneille's *Inconnu*.<sup>71</sup> In comedy she played Thérèse in *le Double Veuvage*, Marton in *la Comédie des comédiens*, Lisette in *la Coquette de village*, Lucile in *la Foire Saint-Laurent*. That she distinguished herself in comedy as well as in tragedy is shown by the fact that Coypel painted her "sous les habillements de Thalie et de Melpomène."<sup>72</sup> Palaprat declared that she recalled "toutes les idées de son illustre tante quand elle joue la tragédie, et de M<sup>lle</sup> Beauval quand elle a un rôle comique."<sup>73</sup>

The chief actors who became *sociétaires* in 1701-15 were Sallé, Ponteuil, and Quinault-Dufresne. The deaths of Champmeslé and Villiers gave opportunity for distinction to the first two, that of Etienne Baron to the third. Sallé had attempted for a while monastic life, then that of a singer in provincial opera companies. He had been tested as an actor in 1698, but had been obliged to leave for Warsaw, where he acted in a French troupe till about Easter, 1701, when he returned to Paris and was admitted to the company in August. Late in the year he created the title-rôle in *Amasis*. His fine voice and that of his wife, who sang in the Opera at Paris, made it

<sup>70</sup> Olivier, *op cit*, pp 379-80, mentions a painting and three engravings of her. Since the painting represents her as Ariadne, she must have had the title-rôle in Thomas Corneille's *Ariane*.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. the *freres Parfaict*, XIV, 308-10. The prologue was played by the Muse, la Desmares, Mimi Dancourt, Sallé, Ponteuil, and Crispin (Paul Poisson).

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Campardon, *op cit*, p 78. He shows that she owned this portrait and prints of Corneille, Racine, and Molière.

<sup>73</sup> *Œuvres* of 1712, cited by Méleze, *Th et Pub*, p 201. Her immorality is emphasized in a song of 1713 (*ibid*, p 175). Alexandre Sallé and Charlotte Damour, to whom in 1746 she made important donations (cf. Campardon, *op cit*, pp 70-85), were probably her illegitimate children.

desirable for Dancourt to give them leading parts in his *Impromptu de Lavry* and *Divertissement de Sceaux*. Sallé created the title-rôle in Nadal's *Saul* and the rôle of Danaus in *Hypermnestre*. The *Mercur* of August, 1701, declared that "tout Paris s'est empressé pour le voir jouer,"<sup>74</sup> but his death in March, 1706, soon deprived the city of this promising actor.

Ponteuil, son of a notary and born at Paris in 1673,<sup>75</sup> first played in an amateur troupe at the Hôtel de Soissons.<sup>76</sup> He next acted in Poland and at Ghent, was tested at the Comédie Française on Sept. 5, 1701, and became a *sociétaire* on Nov. 25. He seems to have taken at first comparatively minor rôles, like that of Menès in *Amasis*, but, after Sallé's death, he had the title-rôle in *la Mort d'Ulysse* and played David in *Absalon*, Pharasmane in *Rhadamiste et Zénobie*, Domitian in *Cornélie Vestale*, Phocas in *Héraculus*, and Bélus in Crébillon's *Sémiramis*. It is said that Lesage meant to contrast the naturalness of his acting with the emphatic nature of Beaubourg's when he mentioned actors who played Dido's minister and Æneas.<sup>77</sup> In 1740 Voltaire regretted that he could not be brought to life to play Mahomet,<sup>78</sup> though he and Beaubourg had been unwilling to accept *Œdipe*. He died in 1718.

The "tribu Quinault," as Voltaire called the family,<sup>79</sup> was impressive by its numbers. The father, Jean, had been tested at the Comédie Française in 1694 and had received a quarter of a share between Easter, 1695, and October, when he returned to the provinces, becoming a theatrical director at Strasbourg and living until 1728. His daughter Françoise, wife of Hugues de Nesle, has been mentioned. She was a *sociétaire* in 1708-13. Her brother, J.-B. Maurice, became a member of the troupe on June 25, 1712. He was followed by Abraham-Alexis, known as Quinault-Dufresne, on Dec. 21, 1712, by Marie-Anne-Catherine on Feb. 17, 1714, and by Jeanne-Françoise on Dec. 22, 1718.<sup>80</sup> The only member of the family to attain great distinction was Quinault-Dufresne, who became the leading *jeune*

<sup>74</sup> Quoted by the frères Parfaict, XIV, 548-51

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Monval, *op cit*, who gives his name as Nicolas Etienne Le Franc

<sup>76</sup> Frères Parfaict, *Mémoires*, I, 33

<sup>77</sup> *Gil Blas*, Book III, chapter 6

<sup>78</sup> Moland edition, XXXV, 438

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, XXXVI, 20

<sup>80</sup> Cf. my *Comédie Française*, pp. 11-2, and Moland, *op cit*. La de Nesle played Tamar in *Absalon* and the title rôle in *Cornélie Vestale*. She must have had a rôle of some importance in *Ino et Mélicerte* as her illness caused productions of the play to cease (cf. frères Parfaict, XV, 138). She probably took the part of the young heroine, for Ino was played by la Desmares and the rôle of Thémistée was probably given to an older actress. She died on Dec. 22, 1713. A song of that year, quoted by Mélése (*Th et Pub*, pp. 174-5) mentions both her and "Quinault," who is said to possess an "orgueil extrême." The reference is probably to J. B. Maurice, as Quinault-Dufresne had very recently joined the troupe, but it is certainly not, as Mélése misinforms us, to a "fils de l'auteur." On Aug. 2, 1715, in a revival of *Héraculus*, Maurice Quinault played the title-rôle, Quinault-Dufresne, the rôle of Martian, cf. the frères Parfaict, XV, 216

*premier* of the troupe and created prominent rôles in Voltaire's tragedies and in comedies by Destouches. Voltaire refers to him a number of times and declares that, when he and his sister retired, Paris talked of nothing else.<sup>81</sup> In 1778, however, when Lekain was his ideal actor, Voltaire asserted that Quinault-Dufresne had had only a "belle voix et un beau visage."<sup>82</sup> It is probable that in 1713-15 the young actor had already taken over the rôles vacated by the death of Etienne Baron. He became known for his beauty, his pride, and his indifference to alterations made by authors in the text of their plays.

The troupe suffered from the war and the poverty that accompanied it,<sup>83</sup> from the competition of the Opera and the Foire, and from the monopoly of singing and dancing that had been granted to the Opera. On April 22, 1672, the king had reduced the music of the Comédie Française to what could be produced by two voices and by six violins. He had renewed this order on Aug. 17, 1684. On Jan. 16, 1701, the prologue of Dancourt's *Trois Cousines* had been prohibited because a professional singer was employed to take part in it.<sup>84</sup> The voices had to be those of the actors, according to a brief submitted by the Académie Royale de Musique in 1717.<sup>85</sup> There were violations by the actors, but in the main they were obliged to submit to the ruling.

The Comédie Française, which had to defend itself against the Opera, passed to the offensive where the Foire was concerned. The actors were as eager to see that their monopoly of dialogue was respected as were their rivals of the Académie Royale de Musique to prevent violations of their own monopoly. They were constantly in trouble with the showmen of the fairs and appealed to the police to prevent them from giving dramatic entertainments. This controversy will be discussed below, in Chapter XIX. The actors found the competition of the *forains* so serious that Dancourt, after visiting with a police official a packed house at the Foire, once took him to the Comédie and showed him that the receipts for the day were less than the expenses.<sup>86</sup> The *Mercur* of July, 1715, declared<sup>87</sup> that

<sup>81</sup> Moland edition, *loc cit*, cf also II, 7, 534, III, 80, IX, 395, XXXIII, 199, 259

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, L, 353. For a quarrel in May, 1715, between Quinault-Dufresne and Molière and for testimony in regard to the former's extravagance cf Campardon, *op. cit.*, pp 236-41

<sup>83</sup> Also from the insolence of noblemen, as is shown by the action of an ambassador of Savoy, who insisted (June 17, 1700) that two pages and a lackey should be admitted to the theater without paying. Pontchartrain was obliged to protest. Cf. Depping, *op. cit.*, II, 764

<sup>84</sup> Cf Mélése, *Th et Pub*, pp 417-8 and 221-2

<sup>85</sup> Cf Campardon, *op. cit.*, p 282. The actors were accused of employing musicians in 1717, 1718, 1725, and 1740

<sup>86</sup> Campardon, *les Spectacles de la Foire*, II, 302

<sup>87</sup> Cited by Mélése, *Th et Pub*, p. 59

La Comédie et l'Opéra furent désertés, comme de raison. Chacun courut en foule chez les sieurs Dominique et Baxter . . . Il y a apparence que si ces spectacles se continuent sur le pied où on les met aujourd'hui qu'ils effaceront bientôt jusqu'au souvenir des autres

Then there was the "droit des pauvres." On Feb. 25, 1699, it was decreed that the actors should be taxed a sixth "en sus de la recette," the money to be paid to the Hôpital général.<sup>88</sup> As Bonnassies explained, this meant a seventh if the actors increased their charges by the amount they paid the Hôpital. They did increase them, at times even more than the tax, but, probably because their audiences diminished, they also decreased them, so that the increase in charges was not always enough to pay the tax.<sup>89</sup> They may have paid part of the tax in candles. When they sought to reduce the tax by deducting expenses before they calculated it, a decree of Aug. 30, 1701, ordered that the sixth be levied on "toutes les sommes qui seront reçues . . . sans aucune diminution ny retranchement, sous prétexte de frais ou autrement."<sup>90</sup> This ruling does not seem to have occasioned a general increase in admission charges.<sup>91</sup>

There were also pensions of 1000 francs a year to be paid to full-share actors when they retired, of 500 francs to half-share actors. These were paid, not by the troupe as a whole, but by individual actors. New actors were also obliged to pay for the privilege of joining the company and to contribute to a sinking-fund.<sup>92</sup> These expenses must have been hard to meet when the receipts were small. In 1715-16 a share in the company produced only 3671 francs, considerably less than the average for 1681-1701 and less than in any previous year when France was at peace.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Cf Bonnassies, *les Spectacles forains et la Comédie française*, Paris, 1875, p 144.

<sup>89</sup> Cf my *History of French Dramatic Literature*, Part IV, pp 44-5, and my *Comédie Française*, p 17. For instance, when the tax began to operate, in March, 1699, admission to the parterre was 18 sous, on Jan 4, 1700, it was 17¾ sous, on Feb 3 it was 17½ sous, on April 19 it was 17¼ sous, on June 1 it was 17 sous; on Jan 1, 1701, it was 16¾ sous.

<sup>90</sup> Cf Bonnassies, *op cit*, pp 146-7, and Mélése, *Th et Pub*, pp 66-8, 422. The latter published the complete text of the document, which shows that Bonnassies was mistaken in holding that the sixth did not include a levy on the increase in charges.

<sup>91</sup> This increase came in 1716, when, on account of new taxation, a "neuvième" was added; cf Bonnassies, *op cit*, p 148. New expense was incurred in 1704, when the government decided upon "le rachat de la taxe des boues et lanternes." The actors were obliged to find 2574 francs, which they did by withdrawing each day 115 francs from the receipts. Cf Bonnassies, *la Comédie Française*, pp 132-3.

<sup>92</sup> Cf my *History of French Dramatic Literature*, Part IV, pp 36, 41. The sinking-fund was first established to meet the cost of the new theater, payments on which were completed by April 27, 1699 (cf Bonnassies, *op cit*, p 132), but actors continued to contribute to it, apparently on account of maintenance and improvements. Among the latter were the addition of four "lustres" to brighten the parterre when the English Pretender visited the theater (Oct 18, 1706), architectural alterations of the same year, costing over 1245 francs, and the lengthening of the "balcon" in June, 1711, cf Bonnassies, *op cit*, p 105.

<sup>93</sup> On Feb 10, 1716, the tax for the poor was increased. In 1718 the actors, in order to show its effects, noted that "il y a trois ans, avant l'imposition du

It is not surprising to find that the less careful members of the troupe ran into debt. The question had been raised as to whether their creditors could reimburse themselves from the actors' shares. In 1693 Parlement had decreed, in the case of Paul Poisson and his wife, that one-third of such shares could not be appropriated by the creditors. In 1709 Legrand asked that, when his share was calculated, deduction be made for the cost of his costumes, but he desisted when Parlement ruled that the share of an actor in debt should be divided annually into three parts, one of which should be delivered by the troupe's treasurer to the creditors, while the other two, after the actor's part in the expenses of the troupe had been deducted, went to the debtor. On June 3, 1715, it was decided to place the third reserved for the creditors in the hands of Lavoy, Dangeville, and Du Boccage<sup>94</sup>

The first official ruling by the Gentlemen of the Chamber in regard to the troupe was issued on Oct 27, 1712.<sup>95</sup> Actors were directed to learn the rôles assigned them by authors under penalty of losing their share of the receipts. If the authors did not express their desires, the rôles were to be distributed by a vote of the troupe. A fine of one écu would be levied on actors who failed to appear at rehearsals, unless the troupe decided to excuse their absence. Actors were forbidden to discuss other matters in their assemblies than those for which the meeting was called. If quarrels arose, a fine of fifty francs might be imposed. "Semainiers" were appointed to see that these regulations were carried out. If one of these officials failed to report in regard to the events of the week, he could be fined twenty francs. In this manner new restrictions were placed upon actors. Exactions of courtiers, censorship, monopolistic practices, and financial difficulties help to explain why French drama did not reach in the eighteenth century the heights to which it had risen in the seventeenth.

In the prologue of *Céphale et Procris*, acted in 1711, Dancourt made Momus declare that none of the actors lacked talent, but that they neglected their business and attended too many suppers. We have seen that Etienne Baron, Paul Poisson, and Quinault-Dufresne were involved in quarrels. They were also accused of dissipation. La Raisin was at one time the Dauphin's mistress. Both la Duclos and la Dancourt were said to attract certain nobles. La Desmares probably had two illegitimate children. The reputation of these *sociétaires* gives some weight to Lesage's comments on actors and actresses in the part of *Gil Blas* that was published in 1715. He

neuvième," that is, from Easter, 1715 to Easter, 1716, a full share actor received 3671 francs (or 3741; Bonnassies gives both amounts in his *Spectacles forains et la Comédie française*, pp 150-1). For a comparison with the value of the shares in 1681-1701 cf my *Comédie Française*, p 19

<sup>94</sup> Cf Bonnassies, *la Comédie Française*, pp 152-3

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, pp 133-7

is supposed to be discussing Spanish actors, about whom he knew little, but his remarks may well have been inspired by the conduct of French actors, for whom he composed a number of plays. He undoubtedly referred to Michel Baron,<sup>96</sup> but one cannot so easily identify the other actors he mentions. Yet his general picture may have some truth, if we allow for the novelist's tendency to exaggerate and to satirize.

In Book III he described young nobles as spending the night with actresses "à boire et à dire des gueulées." The attendant of an actress remarks that "nous autres dames de théâtre, nous vivons sans contrainte et pêle-mêle avec les hommes." An actress is described as leading a most luxurious existence.<sup>97</sup> The illegitimate son of an actress admits that he cannot know who his father is, for, when an actress appears "le plus attachée à un seigneur, elle lui donne presque toujours quelque substitut pour son argent"<sup>98</sup> Actors love gossip. The news that an actress has won a distinguished lover spreads rapidly among them.<sup>99</sup> They are poor judges of the success a play may acquire.<sup>100</sup> They look down upon an author when he comes humbly to offer them rôles in a play he has composed for them.<sup>101</sup>

The acting of several men and women is discussed in detail. Carlos Alonso de la Ventolaria had left the stage "par fantaisie, et s'en est depuis repenti par raison." He is very old, but his hair, mustache, and eyebrows are painted black. He is said to be a great actor, but he has "une prononciation trop affectée, avec une voix tremblante qui donne un air antique et ridicule à sa déclamation."<sup>102</sup> Another actor who has a great reputation is almost always "hors de la nature, il précipite les paroles qui renferment le sentiment, et appuie sur les autres; il fait même des éclats sur des conjonctions." He plays *Æneas*, but he is considered inferior to Dido's minister, who recites naturally.<sup>103</sup> Dido is herself interpreted by an actress who knows how to "émouvoir et toucher," but who rolls her eyes excessively, raises her voice till she destroys its sweetness, and seems at times not to understand what she is saying. The critic prefers her

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Léo Claretie, *Essai sur Lesage*, Paris, 1890, pp. 396-403. He makes a curious mistake in calling "la dame Baron" of the Foire Michel Baron's sister. At the time Lesage was writing for her troupe, she was the widow of Michel's son.

<sup>97</sup> Book III, chapters 3, 5, 9.

<sup>98</sup> Book V, chapter 1.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> Book III, chapter 12. The editor of the 1828 edition (Paris, Ledoux) thinks Lesage had in mind a play by Dufresny. If this is so, the play must be *la Coquette de village*, the only recent play by that author that had been successful.

<sup>101</sup> Book III, chapter 11.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.* As the editor remarks, the old actor is Michel Baron.

<sup>103</sup> Book III, chapter 6. Beaubourg and Ponteuil, according to Claretie, *op. cit.*, p. 395. In identifying Ponteuil he follows the *Mercur de France* of 1715.

*souvante*, who is graceful and has a charming smile, though at times she interrupts a serious passage by yielding to a mad desire to laugh.<sup>104</sup>

But whatever may be said of their private lives or their idiosyncracies in acting, the members of the troupe must be praised for continuing their activities through a long period of war, despite heavy taxation and the competition of the Opera and the Foire. They kept up the traditions of the seventeenth century both in tragedy and in comedy, continued to uphold as models Corneille, Racine, and Molière, were the first to interpret Crébillon, Destouches, Lesage, and the later comedies of Dancourt and Regnard, while preparing the way for the presentation of Voltaire's tragedies and of comedies by Marivaux.

<sup>104</sup> The editor, followed by Claretie (*op cit*, pp 393-4), states that the *souvante* is la Deamares, but one would not expect her to be given in 1715 so humble a rôle. Lesage probably had in mind a less prominent member of the troupe. The emotional actress who played Dido may well be la Duclos.

## CHAPTER II

### TRAGEDY

Tragedy retained its prestige in 1701-15. If the actors considered comedy more profitable, they were not allowed on that account to neglect the more majestic genre:

Sa Majesté étant informée que les Comédiens jouent le moins possible de tragédies, ce qui est contraire à l'usage et au plaisir du public, ordre leur est donné de jouer alternativement une pièce sérieuse et une pièce comique, à peine de 300 liv d'amende payable par la Troupe en général, à moins que Nous n'en ordonnons autrement<sup>1</sup>

The king or his advisers may have felt what Dubos was subsequently to express,<sup>2</sup> that persons interested in plays spoke more often and with greater affection of tragedies they had seen than of comedies, and that they could recite a larger number of verses by Corneille and Racine than by Molière. The result was that, even though fewer tragedies were given than comedies, the former averaged about 127 performances a year at the Comédie Française, never sinking below 98 and, in 1708, reaching 152. They continued to be given also at court, and at times, as we have seen, members of the royal family acted in them.

Even if a young author had no chance of acquiring such august interpreters, he could hope to have his tragedy produced at Paris in the winter season,<sup>3</sup> when its *première* would constitute an important social event, the more so as the actors never put on more than three new tragedies in a season, sometimes not more than one. Here was a road to consideration, even to fame. Unfortunately for him this road was partially obstructed by authors, dead or living, who had written tragedies before the century opened.

Chief among these were, of course, Corneille and Racine, whose cult continued to be practised. Twelve tragedies by the older author, if we include *le Cid* and *Don Sanche*, and nine by the younger were performed during the period, but it is a mistake to believe that Corneille had become more popular than Racine, for in the fifteen years Corneille's tragedies were acted 411 times, Racine's, 427. Other seventeenth-century plays also figured in the repertory: four tragedies by Campistron, acted 107 times, and four by

<sup>1</sup> *Règlement* of 1712, quoted by Bonnassies, *op. cit.*, p. 134

<sup>2</sup> *Réflexions critiques*, fourth edition, Paris, Mariette, 1740, pp 56-7.

<sup>3</sup> The only exception to the rule for giving new tragedies between Nov. 2 and Easter was furnished by Mlle Barbier's *Arrie et Pétus*, first acted in June.



Thomas Corneille, acted 106 times, if we include his "machine" play, *Circé*, three tragedies by Pradon, two by Rotrou,<sup>4</sup> two by Quinault (81 performances), and one each by Du Ryer, Tristan l'Hermite, and Boyer. The lack of spectacle in tragedies, both old and new, may account for the great success of the "machine" play, *Psyché*, written by Corneille, Molière, and Quinault, revived in 1703-8, and then performed 84 times.<sup>5</sup>

The actors also produced old tragedies by living authors who had ceased to contribute to the genre—La Chapelle, Brueys, and Dancourt,—or by authors who had begun to write in the late seventeenth century and were still active as tragic dramatists—Belin, Ferrier, La Fosse, Péchantré, Genest, Longepierre, Riuperours, Duché, and La Grange-Chancel. Novelty, of course, had its charm, as is shown by the fact that several new tragedies were acted more frequently in a single year than any of the old ones, but, when novelty had worn off, most of the new tragedies were dropped from the repertory, while many of their elders continued to be popular.<sup>6</sup> Of all tragedies acted in 1701-15, *le Cid* was the one most frequently performed; next, if we leave *Psyché* out of consideration, five tragedies by Racine; then certain tragedies by Corneille, Campistron, Thomas Corneille, Péchantré, Rotrou, and Quinault. All of these were given more frequently than the most popular new tragedy Crébillon's *Rhadamiste et Zénobie*.<sup>7</sup>

Among the authors who had begun to write before 1701 and who continued to contribute to the repertory there were three who had had little success, Ferrier, Riuperours, and Belin, two of whom had not seen fit to publish their plays. Duché had written only for amateurs at Saint-Cyr. Longepierre and Péchantré had each composed two tragedies and met with both success and failure. Genest had succeeded with two tragedies and failed with a third. There consequently seemed to be only two authors sure to please the public of 1701-15, La Fosse, whose *Manlius* had made the greatest hit of the preceding decade, and La Grange-Chancel, not yet twenty-five in 1700, but already the author of four tragedies acted at the Comédie Française.

<sup>4</sup> His *Venceslas* was acted 41 times. His *Cosroès*, with alterations by d'Ussé de Valentiné, was played eight times in 1704. D'Ussé reduced the king's "fureurs," eliminated the hero's love affair as not sufficiently attached to the action, and added stances at the beginning of Act IV, cf. the frères Parfaict, XIV, 342-5.

<sup>5</sup> The frères Parfaict, XIV, 307, attribute its success partly to the decorations, "machines," and ballets, partly to the acting of la Desmares and Etienne Baron, thought to be in love with each other. The play was first acted on June 1, on June 8 the Opera entered into competition by reviving Quinault's *Psyché* with Lully's music.

<sup>6</sup> Out of thirty two new tragedies only seven continued to be acted twelve months after the first performance. A few of the others were revived, but only some years after 1715.

<sup>7</sup> The most frequently acted tragedies and the number of times that each was performed were *le Cid*, 111, *Phèdre*, 92, *Andromaque*, 87, *Psyché*, 84, *Iphigénie*, 68, *Mithridate*, 67, *Britannicus*, 66; *Rodogune*, 52, *Andronic*, 50, *Horace*, 50; *Polyeucte*, 49, *Arvane*, 48; *Essex*, 47, *Cinna*, 44, *Géza*, 43, *Nicomède*, 43; *Alcibiade*, 42, *Venceslas*, 41; *Agrippa*, 41, *Astrate*, 40; *Rhadamiste*, 37.

The beginners were slow to receive recognition. In the first four years of the century only one of them, Mlle Barbier, had a tragedy acted, and her play was relegated to the summer season. It attracted so much attention, however, that the author was allowed to follow it with three other tragedies. A churchman, Nadal, next came forward, early in 1705. The following winter season saw three new authors, Pellegrin, Crébillon, and Danchet, begin their careers. For several years thereafter the actors accepted only tragedies by authors of some experience, but in the period between the beginning of 1713 and September, 1715, three other men and a woman began to write, the président Hénault, Chateaubrun, Deschamps, and Paul Poisson's daughter, Mme Gomez.<sup>8</sup> Of these authors Nadal, Pellegrin, and for a while Deschamps were churchmen, Crébillon was a lawyer, Danchet a teacher, while Hénault and Chateaubrun held positions at court. Mlle Barbier was a cultivated bourgeoisie; Mme Gomez, the daughter and granddaughter of actors and actresses. The social strata they represented were about the same as those of seventeenth-century dramatists, who also included in their ranks bourgeois, courtiers, actors, and churchmen.

Their literary background was classical and French. They revered Corneille and Racine, but it is a mistake to suppose that they substituted them altogether for Seneca and the Greeks. Aristotle and Sophocles are mentioned with respect and are even cited at times in opposition to the tastes of French audiences. Certain critics longed for greater simplicity than Corneille had shown except in *Cinna*, or Racine except in *Bérénice*. A few authors, Longepierre, Genest, Duché, and d'Ussé composed or revived tragedies without sexual love, but most dramatists felt that love was essential and longed for startling situations, even if fairly complex material was required to create them.

The two points of view are represented by Malezieu<sup>9</sup> and Crébillon. According to the former, when a gentleman praised a tragedy distinguished by its extraordinary and unexpected incidents, its exaggerated emotions, and certain verses thrown into relief by the emptiness of the surrounding text, the duchesse du Maine took him to task, went through the tragedy scene by scene, and asked him to explain

comment il étoit possible que ces Personnages se trouvassent ensemble, s'il étoit bien vrai-semblable qu'ils eussent pu être tous à la fois en ce lieu, s'ils pouvoient avoir la liberté de s'y parler, quelle raison un tel Acteur avoit de confier ses

<sup>8</sup> The twelve most popular new tragedies of 1701-15 rank as follows in the number of performances given in this period: Crébillon's *Rhadamiste*, 37, his *Electre*, 32; Mme Gomez's *Habib*, 29, Mlle Barbier's *Arrie*, 28, Riuperous's *Hypermnestre*, 26, Belin's *Mustapha*, 21, Danchet's *Cyrus* and La Grange-Chancel's *Ino*, 19, Crébillon's *Atreé*, 18, Duché's *Abasalon*, 16, Pellegrin's *Polydore*, 15, La Grange-Chancel's *Amasis*, 14.

<sup>9</sup> *Discours*, published with Genest's *Joseph* in 1711.

aventures à son Ami précisément dans ce temps plutôt que dans un autre, qu'est-ce qui l'avoit amené dans ce moment sur la Scène, ce qu'il étoit devenue, & quelle avoit été sa vie pendant quinze ou vingt années d'une absence aussi peu fondée que son retour.

She went on to ask how so many extraordinary adventures could happen in the same day and if the material was clearly presented. So convincing were her remarks that the gentleman ceased to admire the tragedy, to the great delight of M. de Malezieu, faithful servant of Sophocles and the duchess.

Clarity and verisimilitude, attained by those who select simple subjects and respect the unities, are the goals. The emotional power of a tragedy and the glimpse it may give of humanity's precarious situation were of no consequence to the duchess. One should applaud, not because one is interested or stirred, but because all is limpid and reasonable, as mirrors used to be at Versailles.

The other point of view is represented by Crébillon in the preface of his *Electre*. He argues that an author is not sure to please if he holds strictly to "cette simplicité si chérie des Anciens." As for love, if Sophocles had lived in the eighteenth century, "il eût peut-être fait comme moi," but his own critics had not taken this fact into consideration. His presentation of *Electra*

a soulevé contre un Moderne inconsideré toute cette Région idolâtre, ou il ne manquoit plus au culte qu'on rend aux Anciens, que des Prêtres & des victimes. Enfin quelques Sages protestent contre cet abus, les préjugés prévalent, & la prévention va si loin, que tels qui ne connoissent les Anciens que de nom, qui ne savent pas seulement si Sophocle étoit Grec ou François, sur la foi des Dévots de l'Antiquité, ont prononcé hardiment contre moi.

As a practical dramatist and like his great predecessors of the seventeenth century, he felt that the first dramatic rule is to please. He consequently complicated the plot that a Greek dramatist had left and introduced love, following in both respects the example of Racine in *Iphigénie*. He used, it is true, devices that Racine had not employed, but he had the same problem of satisfying his own taste and that of his audience, while not departing too far from ancient usage. Let us see how he and his contemporaries sought to solve the problem of putting new wine into old bottles.

So far as subject matter is concerned, they adhered in the main to the taste of their French predecessors. Ferrier, to be sure, who had begun his career by selecting for dramatization a theme from national history, contributed a tragedy called *Montézume* that must have been derived from sixteenth-century Mexican history, but the other tragedies are concerned with real or imaginary events of the ancient world or of the Turkish empire, as were those of Racine. Twelve plots came from Greek mythology, six from Roman history, five from the Bible or the history of Palestine, three

from Persian history, two from Turkish, one each from the histories of Egypt, Parthia, and the Caucasus, while one is concerned with romantic events supposed to have taken place in Spain before the Roman conquest. As usually in the seventeenth century, it is lands bordering on the Mediterranean that chiefly attracted the dramatists, while French history and legend were neglected.

The ancient writers mainly utilized were, besides those who composed the Bible, Plutarch, Tacitus, Hyginus, Justin, Herodotus, Pausanias, the Younger Pliny, Josephus, Zonaras, and the dramatists, Sophocles, Euripides, and Seneca. Four tragedies are largely derived from the last three authors, two from the *Electra* of Sophocles, one from *Alcestis*, one from *Thyestes*, while there are minor borrowings from other ancient plays. Longepierre came closer in material and spirit to his ancient model than Crébillon and La Grange-Chancel, who altered their sources by complicating their plots and by adding a large element of love.

Spanish literature exerted no influence, Italian, only in a few details drawn by La Fosse from the *Pastor fido*. English literature, previously reflected in La Fosse's *Manlius*, was avoided except that Belin probably owed something to the Earl of Orrery, for the *Caton* of Deschamps does not resemble Addison's *Cato* except in material drawn from common sources. French dramatists and novelists were utilized by several writers. *Habib* was derived from a tale by Mlle de La Roche-Guilhem, *Tomyris*, in great part from *le Grand Cyrus*; *Idoménée*, from *Télémaque*; *Rhadamiste*, to a minor extent from Segrain's *Bérénice*, *Mustapha et Zéangir*, partly from Mlle de Scudéry's *Illustre Bassa*. Latin plays by Father La Rue and French tragedies by Du Ryer, La Chapelle, Abeille, Magnon, and Boyer were imitated in certain respects, while Corneille and Racine were considered major guides.

Some of the themes must have been well known to the audience, those, for instance, of *la Mort de César*, *Electre*, and *Saul*. Others were unfamiliar, like those of *Corésus*, *Ino*, *Pélopée*, *Mahomet Second*, and *Habib*. In two cases the subjects were partly disguised: that of *Amasis*, where, with the help of Herodotus, a Greek legend, already dramatized by La Chapelle, is presented as Egyptian history; and that of *Xercès*, where the biography of another Persian king is grafted upon that of Xerxes. Whatever may be said of such disguise, it had the advantage of sparing the author the kind of criticism that was leveled at *la Mort de Néron* when Péchantré was criticized for electing as his protagonist so odious a person as Nero, for putting his name in the title of his tragedy, and for making him less evil than he was.

There was so little respect for historical scenery that Montezuma's palace

had to be constructed in such a way that it could be used in various tragedies, including, perhaps, those in which Nero and Cleopatra appear. In the representation of manners the dramatists came closer to reality. Xerxes worships the sun. Roman institutions like the senate and the order of the Vestals are respected. Well-known characters are usually, though not always, presented in accordance with tradition.<sup>10</sup> There was little that was likely to shock the historical consciousness of the early eighteenth century, but chronology might be considerably altered, and ancient tales were modernized in regard to the position of women, the rôle of love, and social behavior in general. The plays are eminently aristocratic. The leading characters are nearly always kings or princes unless Roman history prevents. Even in *Cornélie*, where our sympathies are with the people, the author is careful to show that Cornelia was the daughter of Scipio Africanus. At the same time, a king may be represented as a weakling, or a person who has committed a grievous error, and he may be murdered like one of his subjects. There is no departure in such an attitude from the usage of the seventeenth century. Unfortunately the authors did not have Racine's ability to supply a poetic background for themes drawn from Greek mythology, Roman history, and the Bible.

The dramatists all clung to the division into five acts, the elimination of the chorus, and the use as the standard meter of the alexandrine couplet. Though *stances* had long disappeared from plays written for performance at Paris, they are found in *Cornélie Vestale*, perhaps in imitation of those in *le Cid* and *Polyeucte*, and, as we have seen, were introduced by d'Ussé into the text of Rotrou's *Cosroès*. Elsewhere other verse forms than the alexandrine couplet occur only in letters, oracles, and similar prophetic lines, where the rime-scheme may be altered and verses of eight syllables, occasionally of ten syllables, introduced.

All the tragedies respect the unities. The time never exceeds twenty-four hours and usually seems not to be more than twelve. There are tragedies in which it is pointed out that the day selected for the action is a peculiarly important one. The place is usually the hall of a palace, but it is a camp in *Absalon*, *Cyrus*, *Saul*, *Pélopée*, and *Tomyris*, the Roman senate-house in *Cornélie*, and the temple of Vesta in *Cornélie Vestale*. Only very minor violations of the unity of action are found, as the author is usually careful to give the elements of his problem in the first act, to make his action progress without external stimulus, and to lead up to his final event, described almost at the end of his tragedy.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Exceptions are found in the presentation of Ulysses, who in *la Mort d'Ulysse* has lost his cunning, of Ægisthus in *Pélopée*, who has become a young hero, and of Cyrus in *Tomyris*, presented in accordance with Mlle de Scudéry's ideas rather than those of Herodotus. Péchantré diminished the guilt of Nero and Poppæa in order to render them more dramatic.

<sup>11</sup> Minor violations occur in the uselessness of Penelope in *la Mort d'Ulysse*, the

In most of the plays there is a background of war, foreign or civil. Politics are often involved, but they are usually of a personal kind rather than of larger significance. However, the rights of the people, as opposed to those of an oligarchy, are championed in *Cornélie*, while the conflict between the same oligarchy and a dictatorship is set forth in *Caton*. There is, however, nothing to be compared with the political discussions of *Cinna* and *Sertorius*.

Sexual love is found in all the tragedies except Longepierre's *Electre*. In *Absalon* and *Joseph* it is limited to the love of man and wife. All three of these tragedies were first acted privately. Elsewhere love between persons who are not married to each other was considered essential and was at times lugged in where it might better have been omitted. The love of brothers is especially emphasized in *Mustapha et Zéangir*, *les Tyndarides*, and *Joseph*, that of brother and sister in *Mahomet Second* and in the two tragedies called *Electre*; that of a father in *Idoménée*, *Atrée*, and *Débora*; that of a mother in *Cornélie*, *Amasis*, and *Ino*. The *cri du sang* occurs in a number of plays, even in the most hardened hearts.

This mysterious voice, whispering to a parent that the child he has not seen for years is his own, is one of the varieties of the *merveilleux*, some form of which is found in three-fourths of the tragedies. It appears in oracles, omens, evidences of the gods' wrath in storms, in earthquakes, in the shaking of an altar, and prophecies of events that are to take place after the play ends. The function of such supernatural manifestations may be merely to heighten the tragic effect, but they are at times of great importance in the plot, as they are in *Idoménée*, *Alceste*, and *Coréus*. Oracles are, of course, usually misinterpreted, so that the victim, striving desperately to escape his fate, brings about his own destruction. Predictions of what is to follow the play are rarer, but they are found in *Atrée*, *Ino*, *Caton*, *Arrée*, and *Joseph*. In the first two tragedies they may be criticized on the ground that the audience was probably not sufficiently familiar with the manner in which Atreus and Ino met their deaths to appreciate the predictions. In *Caton* Caesar's end, in *Arrée* the deaths of Claudius and Agrippina are foreseen. In *Joseph*, as in *Athalie*, the coming of the Messiah is announced.

In order to make family situations more terrible, family relationships are employed, as had often been the case, from the Greeks down. They are especially conspicuous in the tragedies of Crébillon and Pellegrin. At times the effect produced is softened by the fact that the fatal blow is to a certain

late mention of Nero in *Arrée et Pétus*, the delayed reference in *Xerxès* to the king's dislike of Darius's mother, the use of a *deus ex machina* in *Hypermnestre*, and some "unfinished business" remaining at the end of this last tragedy

extent accidental. In the *Electre* tragedies Orestes does not mean to kill his mother. In some other tragedies the murderer does not know who his victim is and would not have killed him if he had known.<sup>12</sup> Crébillon saved Idoménée from killing his son and Thyestes from actually drinking his son's blood. But in a number of cases no attempt is made at extenuation. Rhadamiste remains the murderer of his uncle and the man who had stabbed his wife and thrown her into a river. Atreus drives his brother to suicide, as he did not succeed in doing in Seneca's tragedy. No attempt is made to excuse Herod for murdering his wife.

Genuine horror, as differentiated from tragic terror, appears, it seems to me, in only four plays: *Cyrus*, in which a father tells of having been forced to eat his son, *Atrée et Thyeste*, in which a father starts to drink from a cup filled with the blood of his son; *Tommyris*, in which we hear that the heroine has placed Cyrus's head in a vase filled with blood; and *Pélopée*, in which a daughter has a son by her father and falls in love with this youth. On the other hand, the authors often create an atmosphere of gloom, of impending woe, and bring about a certain number of deaths, which, however, are not necessarily those of persons with whom we sympathize. In a number of tragedies only the wicked perish, while in *Habib* and *Joseph* not only is there no death, but all the principal characters are happy at the end.

Much more characteristic of the period than horror is recognition. This device, approved by Aristotle and illustrated in various ancient tragedies, had long been employed in French plays. In tragedy Corneille had used it in *Héraculus* and *Œdipe*; Racine, in *Iphigénie* and *Athalie*. Before Corneille began to write tragedies, it had figured in plays by Dalibray and Mairet. Subsequently Du Ryer had introduced it into *Saul*, Gilbert, into *Téléphonte*; Thomas Corneille, into *Timocrate* and other plays, Quinault, into *Astrate*. Racine, it is true, had not shown it on the public stage, for the recognition of Eriphile occurs in a *récit*, and *Athalie* had been played only in private, but his successors had employed it freely, especially La Chapelle in *Zaïde* and *Téléphonte*, Genest in *Pénélope*, La Fosse in *Thésée*, La Grange-Chancel in *Oreste et Palade*. As the last three tragedies were acted and La Chapelle's *Téléphonte* imitated in the early eighteenth century, it is quite natural that recognition should be found in tragedies written at that time. What is more worthy of comment is the fact that it occurs in about half the tragedies of 1701-15, a larger proportion than French tragedy had shown in earlier periods.

<sup>12</sup> A son kills his father without knowing who he is in *la Mort d'Ulysse*; a father, his son in *Rhadamiste*, a mother, her son in *Ino*

Many situations involving recognition result in happiness. Others are ominous. The recognition may be mutual, or one person may recognize the other without being recognized. Sometimes the recognition is delayed for several acts, as in *Joseph* and *Pélopée*. In *Hypermnestre* it is effectively used to make a woman suddenly realize that the man she has promised to murder is the man she loves. It is still more striking in *Rhadamiste et Zénobie* when the hero and heroine meet for the first time after his attempt to kill her, for each not only discovers that the other is alive, but wonders what their attitude towards each other will be in the future. La Grange-Chancel, though he appreciated the scenic value of recognition and employed it in several tragedies, preferred to sacrifice the recognition scene that he would have been expected to give in *Amasis* in order to produce a more original situation. The danger, of course, in the use of recognition is that, in order to employ it, dramatists may sacrifice respect for probability in regard to character and events.

With the exception of this emphasis upon recognition and the use of horror in a few tragedies, the plays do not depart to any marked degree from the usage of the preceding decades. Characters, situations, and technique would have seemed quite familiar to Racine's generation. As this was the case, the actors were slow to substitute tragedies of 1701-15, after their first run, for seventeenth-century tragedies that had proved their value by remaining long in the repertory. The result was that the names of only two authors long survived in the minds of the general public, those of Crébillon and La Grange-Chancel. While plays of the former were acted at the Comédie Française in the nineteenth century, this can be said of no other tragic dramatist of the period.

The classical tendency towards uniformity is curiously illustrated by the publication of these tragedies, for twenty-two of the thirty-three were first printed by a single publisher, Pierre Ribou. He came nearer having a monopoly than even these figures indicate, as of the eleven tragedies he was not the first to publish one appeared in its second edition from his press, two were never published, and four were not printed till after his death. Moreover, as those that were first printed by his rivals—Le Breton, Brunet, Le Clerc, Anisson, and Ganeau and Estienne,—were either religious plays or their authors' first productions, it may be that Ribou did not consider them good risks. According to Beauchamps,<sup>18</sup> Ribou obtained a *privilege* to publish all French plays. Of the four tragedies that appeared after his death, one was published by the Widow Pissot, one by Prault, one by P. Le

<sup>18</sup> *Recherches*, II, 442. Ribou's intimate relations with the actors are shown by the fact that he and subsequently his widow received free admission to their theater; cf. Bonnassies, *op cit*, pp. 117, 165.



Breton, and one by no less a person than Horace Walpole at his Strawberry Hill Press.

Among the men and women to whom these tragedies were dedicated were Louis XIV, his sister-in-law (two), the duc d'Orléans, the Duke of Bavaria, Louis duc de Bourbon-Condé, maréchal Villars, the duc d'Aumont, the duc de La Force, the duchesse du Maine (two), the duchesse de Bouillon, d'Argenson (two), and Walpole. The acceptance of these dedications shows that tragedy still retained its prestige in high French society.

In the six chapters that follow I will discuss in detail tragedies that are known to have been written or first acted in 1701-15. The first two are devoted to La Grange-Chancel and to other dramatists who had begun to write in the seventeenth century. The next two are concerned with tragedies by women and with those derived from the Bible or Josephus. The fifth of these chapters is primarily devoted to Crébillon, but it includes a study of Longepierre's *Electre*, as Crébillon wrote a tragedy on the same subject. The chapter that follows it discusses the eight tragedies of five dramatists who began to write in the eighteenth century.

## CHAPTER III

### THE TRAGEDIES OF LA GRANGE-CHANCEL

Of the seven authors who were already known to audiences of the Comédie Française when the century began and who continued to write tragedies, the one who contributed most to the genre in 1701-15 was La Grange-Chancel.<sup>1</sup> He brought out three in those years, including his two best plays, *Amasis* and *Ino et Mélicerte*. These and his *Alceste* form the subject of this chapter.

The source of *AMASIS*<sup>2</sup> was so successfully disguised that a certain "faiseur de brochures satiriques"<sup>3</sup> accused La Grange-Chancel of imitating an episode in the *Grand Cyrus*. In reply the dramatist accused his critic of knowing neither Herodotus, nor Aristotle, nor Hyginus, who had referred to events in Egyptian history similar to the story of Merope. He explained his disguising his subject by saying that he preferred names like Amasis, Apriès, and Sésostriis, to Cresphonte, Téléphonte, and Poliphonte, which he would have had to repeat often if he had kept them as those of his principal characters. As the three names have the same final syllable, their constant repetition would have seemed monotonous, if not ridiculous, but it is also possible that La Grange-Chancel had another reason for changing them, the hope that by so doing he would conceal his debt to La Chapelle. His reference to Herodotus, Aristotle, and Hyginus means that he wished it to be believed that he took the Merope story from Hyginus and Aristotle, the Egyptian disguise from Herodotus, although the fact is that he did owe something to the *Grand Cyrus*, a good deal to La Chapelle's *Téléphonte*, and possibly a suggestion to *Athalie*.

The main source is the Merope legend, related by Hyginus in *Fables*

<sup>1</sup> For this author of my *History of French Dramatic Literature*, Part IV, pp 367-84. During the period studied he was maître d'hôtel of the duchesse d'Orléans, was married in 1708, and led a peaceful existence that contrasted sharply with his life after the *Philippiques* began to appear.

<sup>2</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1701 and 1702, 12°, *privilegé* (for the author's works), Feb 12, 1699, *achevé*, Dec 19, 1701. Dedicated to "Madame," Louis XIV's sister-in-law. Republished, Amsterdam, Desbordes, 1702, Paris, veuve de Pierre Ribou, 1729 and 1731, in the author's *Ouvres* of 1734, 1742, 1758, and his *Théâtre*, Amsterdam, L'Honoré, 1746. The changes introduced into the edition of 1758 are insignificant. The play also appeared in the *Recueil Petstot*, 1803, the *Auteurs du second ordre*, Paris, 1808, the Touquet edition, 1821, the *Chefs d'œuvre de Lafosse etc.*, 1821, the *Répertoire* of Paris, veuve Dabo, 1822-3. An Italian translation appeared in 1747. The play has been studied by Otto Nietzelt, *La Grange-Chancel als Tragiker*, Leipzig, 1908.

<sup>3</sup> Occurring in the preface of the 1758 edition, these words refer to the author of an article in the *Nouvelliste du Parnasse* quoted by the frères Parfaict, XIV, 228-31.

CXXXVII and CLXXXIV and dramatized by Gilbert and La Chapelle. As La Grange-Chancel mentions Hyginus, it is probable that he used him directly, but he certainly also imitated La Chapelle,<sup>4</sup> though it is unnecessary to suppose that he derived anything from Gilbert. As Campistron had done in *Andronic* and La Fosse in *Manlius*, La Grange-Chancel transferred this story to an entirely different period from that of his main source and to new surroundings. He learned from Herodotus that Amasis revolted against Apriès and made himself king, that he had a wife named Ladice and a son called Psammétique, and that Phanès turned against him. He kept these characters, but he made Psammétique the son of Amasis and wrote his name Psamménite. He could not have derived from Herodotus Ladice's leaving her husband and identifying Sésostris by means of a note as the son of Apriès, nor the succession of Sésostris to the throne. These themes came from the *Grand Cyrus*. Finally, the fact that Amasis is drawn into a temple, that priests assist in the undertaking, and that he dies as a result of it may well have been suggested by *Athalie*, the restoration engineered by Phanès corresponding to that effected by Joad.

La Grange-Chancel showed great skill in dramatic structure by weaving together these elements from ancient and modern writers into a play that is correctly unified and contains startling situations, rendered more effective by the use of prolonged suspense.<sup>5</sup> The character that dominates the action

<sup>4</sup> In his *Téléphonte*, as in *Amasis*, the usurper has killed several of his predecessor's children, he does not marry the queen, though there is a suggestion that he had wished to do so, a dominant part is taken by a nobleman, the widowed queen hides and uses a dagger, before each play begins, the hero and heroine have met in simple surroundings and have fallen in love without the heroine's knowing who the hero is, the tyrant, protected by his soldiers, has the hero arrested, and the young prince admits his identity. Finally, in both tragedies the faithful nobleman points out to the returning prince details in the architecture of his old home, cf. *Téléphonte*, II, 1, and *Amasis*, I, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Amasis has defeated Apriès, has put him and five of his sons to death, and has long held his widow, Nitocris, in captivity. A sixth son, Sésostris, saved by Phanès and confided to Cléophas, has been brought up at some distance from Memphis. Phanès has been making extensive preparations for Sésostris's restoration, endearing himself to Amasis, winning over the priests of Osiris's temple, concealing soldiers there, and spreading among the people news of the prince's return. He communicates these facts to Sésostris while showing him the hall of the palace where his father and brothers had been murdered. Just before his return to Memphis, the prince, acting in accordance with Phanès's directions, had, when attacked by Amasis's son, Psamménite, killed his opponent. He had also wounded the latter's aged attendant, Menès, who had received succor from Arthénice, daughter of Phanès, a girl who had already become interested in Sésostris without knowing who he is. The prince is now presented to Amasis and claims to be his son and to have killed the son of Apriès. In proof of this statement he submits Sésostris's sword as well as a ring and a note from the usurper's wife, who had left him when she suspected him of loving Nitocris. Amasis welcomes his supposed son and expresses his intention of marrying Arthénice in order to keep Phanès faithful. Arthénice, questioned by her father, promises to obey him, but she shows that she dislikes the thought of marrying the usurper. She confides in an attendant the fact that she loves the young man we know to be Sésostris. Nitocris, happy that the omens are good and that she has seen Cléophas in the temple, is told by Amasis that her son is dead. Obligated to con-

is Phanès, faithful supporter of the legitimate monarchy. He shows the greatest foresight and resourcefulness in maturing his plans. He has to win the usurper's confidence, to keep fresh among the people the memory of the royal family, to bring back the prince at the right moment, and to win over the priests. More difficult still is the task of introducing the prince into the presence of the strongly guarded usurper and of preventing him from making himself known to his mother and to the girl he loves. It is Phanès who has enabled Sésostris to encounter the usurper's son and to provide himself with the tokens that deceive Amasis. It is he who has to deceive his own daughter and the queen as well as the usurper. He is never at a loss for a specious argument to delay the course of events until the time to strike arrives. Modeled on a character in La Chapelle's *Téléphonte*, he is the first of his kind, but by no means the last, in eighteenth-century tragedy.

Amasis and Sésostris do his bidding till one is murdered and the other succeeds to his father's throne. Amasis leads a wretched existence, constantly threatened by those who, he fears, may be as disloyal to him as he has been to Apriès. In order to foil them, he keeps changing his bedroom and surrounds himself with fierce guards from the east who do not speak the language of Memphis and who obey him implicitly. He trusts only them and Phanès, but he must have some doubts about this minister, for he would make sure of him by marrying his daughter, a plan that Phanès encourages in order to lure Amasis into the temple. Sésostris has all the nobility of soul that his enemy lacks, but he runs the risk of allowing his emotions to betray him, as they would have done if Phanès had not been constantly on guard.

The two women act more independently. Nitocris speaks boldly to the usurper, lives for revenge, and forms her own plot when she sees no other way of getting it. Her plan miscarries because of her trust in Arthénice, whose love prevails over other considerations. She is willing to obey her

firm this statement, Sésostris almost reveals his identity to his mother. Deeply moved, Nitocris offers to marry Amasis if he will put to death her son's murderer, but the usurper informs her that this murderer is his own son and threatens to kill her unless she delivers Cléophas to him before the end of the day. Nitocris decides to take vengeance into her own hands and invites Arthénice to assist her, but the girl, fearing for Sésostris, tells Amasis, who rescues the prince when his mother is about to stab him. The usurper would now put Nitocris to death, but Phanès advises him to wait till she can be confronted with Cléophas and their accomplices discovered. By this time Menès is sufficiently recovered to tell Amasis that the murdered youth was the usurper's son and that Sésostris killed him. The prince makes himself known and admits the truth of the charge. Amasis has him arrested and taken to the temple, there to be slain as a victim when Amasis marries Arthénice. Phanès's soldiers, however, overpower Amasis's guards. Sésostris seizes a sword and kills Amasis. Phanès and Cléophas make known to the people the prince's return. Nitocris joyfully receives her son and prepares to celebrate his marriage to Arthénice.

father to the point of marrying Amasis, but she cannot allow the man she loves to be murdered, even though she thinks he is the usurper's son.

The plot is so skillfully constructed that the interest of the spectators is caught at the beginning and held to the end. The exposition is largely part of the action since Phanès gives most of it as a means of inspiring in Sésostris desire for revenge and of instructing him in the course he is to pursue. The love plot is carefully woven into the main intrigue of political revolution. There are several examples of recognition, some of them leading to false conclusions. The most effective is in V, 5, when Sésostris makes himself known at the same time to his mother, who had sought to kill him, to Amasis, who had saved his life because he mistook him for his son, and to Arthénice, who, after saving him, had exposed him to fresh danger.

Aristotle gives as a typical example of recognition the case of Merope when she learns who her son is just in time to avoid killing him. The corresponding scene in *Amasis* has lost the element of recognition altogether, but it is none the less striking on that account. The mother believes that her son has been murdered, mistakes her son for the murderer, and, as in the Merope legend, seeks to kill him, but she is prevented from doing so, not because she or someone else recognizes him in time, but because the usurper himself intervenes, thinking that his enemy is his own son. We have consequently a piquant situation in which a woman seeks to do the thing she most ardently desires not to do, while a man prevents her from doing exactly the thing that he would have been delighted to see done if he had known who the intended victim was (IV, 2)

Nitocris *voulant le frapper* Ah, traître, tu mourras  
 Amasis *lui retenant le bras* Arrête, malheureuse  
     Quel aveugle transport, quelle fureur te guide?  
     Quel démon, quelle rage a pû te posséder?  
 Nit Le bourreau de mon sang peut-il le demander?  
 Ses Je ne puis revenir de ma terreur extrême  
     La Reine sur mes jours, attenter elle-même!  
     O Ciel! quelle est la main par qui j'allois périr?  
     O Ciel! quelle est la main qui vient me secourir?

The setting of the play is in keeping with the action. We are shown at dawn the hall of an Egyptian palace from which can be seen on one side the city of Memphis, on the other tombs and the banks of the Nile. Within the hall are "Ces colonnes, ces arcs, ces monumens pompeux," where Apriès and his sons have been murdered. There is also a picturesque element in the queen's description of her visit to the statue of Osiris (II, 1) in a place never visited by the sun, where the god "se voit au sombre éclat d'une pâle lumière." The supernatural is represented by the oracle the queen consults, by her emotion on seeing her son before she knows who he is,

and by the hostile feeling roused in Amasis when he meets the same prince, though he is similarly ignorant of his identity. It is unfortunate that La Grange-Chancel lacked the poetic gift that was required to give full value to the dramatic situations he created.<sup>6</sup>

The tragedy was first acted on Dec. 13, 1701. Amasis was played by Sallé, Sésostris, by Etienne Baron; Phanès, by Guérin, Nitocris, by la Beauval; Arthénice, by la Desmares; Menès, by Ponteuil.<sup>7</sup> It was given fourteen times in 1701-2, was revived in 1731, and was acted until 1764, with a total of sixty-two performances at the Comedie Française, more than can be said of any other tragedy of the period except two by Crébillon. It was also acted at Fontainebleau. A Dutch journal declared that it had great success.<sup>8</sup> The frères Parfaict testified that in their time it was among the plays that the public "revoit toujours avec plaisir." They praised the structure highly, especially that of Acts IV and V, and objected only to the versification. They cited a laudatory article in the *Mercure* of January, 1731, a hostile attack in the *Nouvelliste du Parnasse*, and a reply to the latter publication in the *Mercure* of June, 1731. Apart from the evidence they give of public interest in the tragedy, these articles have little value. The last of them asserts that the play's first run was impeded by the excessive cold of the winter and by objections that an actress raised. The author, however, boasted, in the preface of his 1758 edition, of his play's success and insisted on its essential simplicity. He went out of his way to attack Voltaire's *Brutus*

On s'est fait une si grande idée du Sénat romain, que ce seroit le tourner en ridicule que de l'exposer sur notre théâtre, d'autant plus que les acteurs muets sont toujours représentés par les domestiques des comédiens, dont la figure est ordinairement choquante, & que la tragédie est assez majestueuse par elle-même pour n'avoir pas besoin de ces ornemens étrangers

Such spectacles, he thinks, represent a childish taste acquired at school, where they are preferred to the unities. Those who put them on the stage run the risk of bringing back the irregularity that existed in drama before the time of Corneille. His own tragedy respects the unities. Its time is little more than that of performance. He notes that it has been translated into Dutch by Mauritius.<sup>9</sup> He refers to Maffei's dramatization of the same subject, in which, as in *Amasis*, the hero's name is altered. He regrets that

<sup>6</sup> The rime *Memphis fils*, dear to Malherbe's followers, according to Théophile, occurs four times II, 2, 4, III, 5, V, 3

<sup>7</sup> According to the *Mercure* of January, 1731, cited by the frères Parfaict, XIV, 227-8

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Mélése, *Rép.*, p. 212

<sup>9</sup> This is *Sesostris, Koning van Egypte*, Amsterdam, Van de Gaete, 1712. In this connection La Grange Chancel notes that Corneille's plays can be translated effectively, whereas Racine's lose in translation "infiniment de leur prix"

the Italian dramatist has not been more careful in constructing his play and asserts that his "copiste," that is, Voltaire, has imitated Maffei's defects in the hope that his tragedy would efface the beauties of a work that will outlive his own.

This boast that *Amasis* would live longer than Voltaire's *Mérope*, coupled with the attack on *Brutus*, suggests that the younger dramatist had been unkind in his criticism of La Grange-Chancel's tragedy, but Voltaire's printed work does not support this supposition. He found much gallantry in *Amasis* and more marvelous incidents than those of La Chapelle's *Téléphonie*, but he considered it superior to the latter tragedy in its structure, in the art and genius displayed, and in the interest it aroused. "Elle est écrite avec plus de chaleur et de force."<sup>10</sup> Elsewhere he referred to the "grand intérêt qui règne dans *Amasis*."<sup>11</sup> La Harpe praised highly the ingenuous structure of the play, but he found that it surprised more than it moved the audience.<sup>12</sup> He objected to the heroine's sudden love of Sésostriis and considered the prince's rôle obscured by that of Phanès. He concluded that it was quite inferior to Voltaire's *Mérope*.

Returning to Euripides, whose *Iphigeneia among the Taurians* he had previously adapted to the French stage, La Grange-Chancel composed *ALCESTE*,<sup>13</sup> a very free imitation of *Alcestis*. There had been no French play on the subject since the *Alceste* of Alexandre Hardy, which does not appear to have been utilized. Quinault's opera called *Alceste* supplied at most Hercules's love of the heroine, but it may have indirectly occasioned the composition of the tragedy. When Perrault praised this opera at the expense of Euripides, Racine rushed to the defense of the Greek poet. He even published in the preface of his *Iphigénie* a few lines he had translated from *Alcestis*, and he subsequently told La Grange-Chancel that he had hoped to make a translation of the whole tragedy. After reporting this fact in the preface of the 1758 edition and even asserting that Racine had written an *Alceste* and burned it, La Grange-Chancel declared that his reading of Euripides, joined to what he had been able to "recueillir des idées de M. Racine, me firent naître l'envie de traiter ce sujet."

<sup>10</sup> Moland edition, IV, 181-2

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII, 250 Clément et La Porte, *Anecdotes dramatiques*, I, 54, point out that two lines of the *Henriade* were borrowed from *Amasis*

<sup>12</sup> *Cours de littérature*, Paris, 1825, XIII, 138-45. As the heroine fell in love with Sésostriis before the beginning of the play, La Harpe's remark about her is unjust.

<sup>13</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1704, 12°, *priv* (for the author's works), Feb. 12, 1699, approbation, Jan. 28, 1704. Republished, Amsterdam, Van Dôle, 1733, in the author's *Théâtre*, Amsterdam, L'Honoré, 1746, and in the author's *Œuvres* of 1734, 1742, and 1758. Changes in this last edition are slight. The most important of them is the addition of four lines at the end of Act IV that will be quoted below. The play has been studied by Nietzsche, *op. cit.*

*Alceste*, as it stood, would not have been to the taste of a French audience early in the eighteenth century, for its structure is irregular, it admits comic scenes, Hercules comes on the stage drunk,<sup>14</sup> and *Alceste* utters a pathetic farewell to her marriage bed. La Grange-Chancel even feared to bring the children on the stage, lest a "mauvais plaisant" in the parterre might make a disturbing comment, though Longepierre had introduced two into his *Médée* less than ten years before. He had to find for his tragedy more material than Euripides had employed, to give it greater unity, to ennoble the characters, to eliminate violations of the proprieties, to keep the gods off the stage, yet to preserve to a certain extent an element of the *merveilleux*.

His chief device was to suppose that Hercules had loved *Alceste*, had left her with Admetus's father, and had expected to marry her upon his return, but years had elapsed and she had married Admetus, so that, when Hercules reappears, he is faced with a problem similar to that of *Sévère* in *Polyeucte*. He has to conquer, not only Death, but his own passion. La Grange-Chancel had to explain the preliminary situation in much greater detail than Euripides had explained his. He had to justify the actions of the characters in their new situations, to maintain suspense, to make the action oscillate between disaster and rescue. It is now not merely a question of the heroine's dying for her husband and being brought back from the grave, but of Admetus's attempt to send his wife away, Hercules's intervention in behalf of Admetus, and increased efforts to find for the latter a substitute. It is only in V, 1 that we hear of the mother's leaving her children, a scene described by Euripides early in his play. Only the last two acts show much resemblance to the Greek original and even there the details are quite different.<sup>15</sup> Some use is made of legends not found in Euripides:

<sup>14</sup> As the play was in Greek, this incident did not diminish Racine's admiration, although he had been very sarcastic about a "héros ivre" he had claimed to find in a tragedy by a contemporary, presumably Corneille.

<sup>15</sup> After rescuing *Alceste* from her brother, Hercules had confided her to Pherès, telling him that he hoped to marry her on his return from new adventures. Pherès, fearing he would never come back, gave the girl in marriage to his son Admetus, who was as ignorant of Hercules's love as was *Alceste* herself. Angered by this marriage, Jupiter had caused the earth to open and poisonous vapors to kill many persons. Consulted, Apollo had directed that a victim should be sacrificed each year till love triumphed over death. Five times victims, including Pherès's wife, have been selected after their names have been placed in an urn in the temple. Pherès has been so deeply moved that he has abdicated his throne in favor of his son. The selection is now about to be made again. *Alceste* fears that her husband will be chosen. He seeks to send her and their children away, but she refuses to leave him. At this point Hercules returns, asks for *Alceste*, and offers to give *Hésione* to Admetus. The latter declines, but without explaining that he is married to *Alceste*, who soon tells Hercules herself and adds that, though she loves Admetus, her gratitude to Hercules for rescuing her might have persuaded her to marry him if she had known that he loved her. Hercules seeks revenge, but he refuses to punish Pherès, who takes the blame, because of his age. Instead he goes to the



Hercules's sack of Troy, his rescue of Hésione, his offering her to another man, and the murder of Alcestis's father, inspired by Medea and carried out by his relatives.<sup>16</sup> There are also a few borrowings from earlier French plays.<sup>17</sup>

The tragedy is well constructed. It is the marriage of Admetus that starts the action by causing Jupiter's anger, which results in the poisonous blast from the yawning earth and the need for selecting victims in order to placate the god. To solve the problem Alcestis's love is required, but also the heroism of Admetus, which induces Hercules to intervene and restore the heroine to her husband. To make the latter point clearer, La Grange-Chancel added in 1758 four lines to his original text, assigning them to Hercules:

Puisqu'il vouloit tantôt me céder ce qu'il aime,  
Que pour me rendre heureux il s'immoloit lui-même,  
Ce n'est qu'en ramenant Alceste à la clarté,  
Que je puis égaler sa générosité

The play becomes essentially a study in magnanimity. Not only does Alcestis, as in Euripides, offer up her life for her husband's, but Admetus is willing to die for her, and Hercules emulates his nobility by conquering his passion and saving the woman who has preferred his friend to himself. Even Pherès is given a struggle between affection for his son and desire to live, one that Euripides had not allowed him.

The first act gives the exposition and Alcestis's refusal to escape with the children, the second, Hercules's return, his learning what has happened, and the expression of his desire for revenge. In the third act we hear of his adventures in the temple and the choice that is to be made among the three names. The fourth and fifth acts are devoted chiefly to Alcestis's

temple with the intention of killing Admetus, but he finds him calm and brave near the altar, although knowing that the victim must be Pherès, Alcestis, or himself. Impressed by his attitude, Hercules feels his old affection return, destroys the apparatus that was to have been employed in the choice, and orders a sacrifice to be prepared. Poisonous vapor, however, fells two bystanders, and Apollo's priest announces that Admetus must be the victim unless someone dies in his stead. As Pherès declines to be a substitute and no one else comes forward, Alcestis proposes to die for Admetus, says farewell to her children, and goes towards the abyss. Admetus would have prevented her sacrifice, if a "nuage épais" had not caused him to faint and if Pherès had not taken advantage of the situation to have him locked up. When he is free again, he reproaches his father and is preparing for exile or death when Hercules, who has rescued Alcestis from a monster at the brink of the abyss, brings her back. As the oracle has been fulfilled by Alcestis's love, the ground closes, and no more victims will be required. Hercules leaves the family reunited and goes in search of new adventures.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Hyginus, *Fabulae* LXXXIX and XXIV.

<sup>17</sup> Le coup demeure en l'air, et n'ose retomber (I, 2, cf. Rotrou, *Antigone*, I, 2)

Oui, je vais dans le temple (I, 3, cf. *Athalie*, v 1)

Son frere déchiré, ses enfans massacrés

Du trône qu'elle occupe ont esté les degrés (III, 1; cf. *Cinna*, vv 11,12)

plans, the restraint put upon her husband, her rescue by Hercules, and the appeasement of the gods. Obviously the material is well distributed, but too much of the action takes place behind the scenes. The author omits, not only the spectacular events that occur in the temple and at the edge of the abyss, but the scenes in which Alcestis says farewell to her children and her bed. This is clearly a case in which French tragedy suffered from an author's absurd reverence for what he held to be the proprieties.

Some of the devices employed are unfortunate. Admetus is kept from telling Hercules that he is married to Alcestis, as he would have done in all probability, in order that the information may be given him by the heroine herself. In order to keep Admetus from preventing his wife's self-sacrifice, the author could think of nothing better than to have his hero faint! Some evidence should have been given of Alcestis's love for Admetus before we are told that she has agreed to lay down her life for his. Nor is Hercules's sudden change from violent indignation to willingness to conquer his love sufficiently explained. The naive egotism displayed by the Admetus of Euripides makes him a more striking character than the nobler Admetus of La Grange-Chancel.

La Harpe<sup>18</sup> thought that the character of Pherès had so much "bassesse" that the presence of this ex-king in the tragedy was enough to ruin it. As, however, the modern reader does not share La Harpe's notions of tragic dignity, he may well consider that the presentation of Pherès is the most successful in the play. He had caused all the trouble by marrying Alcestis to his son, although she had been confided to him by Hercules, who, as he knew, intended to marry her himself. His nerves had been so shattered that he had given up his throne. Subsequently he had suffered from the slights of courtiers who had formerly fawned on him and from his son's preference for Alcestis. But, however little joy his life may bring him, he will not renounce it in order to save Admetus. The portrait is more striking than the conventionally noble characterizations that La Harpe preferred.

Whether eighteenth-century audiences agreed with La Harpe, or found in the play the shortcomings indicated above, they paid it much less honor than they did *Amasis* or the tragedy that was to follow. First played on Dec. 19, 1703, *Alceste* was acted only six times, till Jan. 1, 1704. Its failure did not turn its author away from Euripides, one of whose lost tragedies was indirectly the source of *INO ET MÉLICERTE*.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *Op. cit.*, XIII, 148-9.

<sup>19</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1713 and 1715, 12°, approbation, April 6, 1713, signed by Danchet, who mentions the pleasure the play has given. Dedicated to the duc de La Force. According to the *Biographie générale*, La Grange claimed that the duke had had the tragedy acted under his own name and that, obliged to restore it to its author, he wrote the dedication in praise of himself and signed it with La

In the preface of his 1758 edition La Grange-Chancel tells us that he relied upon Hyginus<sup>20</sup> for the information that he could not derive directly from the lost tragedy. It seems that Athamas, King of Thessaly, thinking that Ino his wife, who had borne him Learchus and Melicertus, was dead, married Themisto, by whom he had other sons. Learning that Ino was alive, he brought her home, but concealed her identity from Themisto, who, desiring to kill her rivals' sons, asked Ino to dress them in black, her own children in white, but Ino did the opposite, so that Themisto killed her own children and, when she discovered what she had done, committed suicide. Subsequently Athamas became insane and killed Learchus, while Ino, with Melicertus, threw herself into the sea.

La Grange-Chancel retained Athamas, his mental affliction, his two wives, and Melicertus, but he suppressed Learchus and the king's children by Themisto. In compensation he gave the latter a son by a previous marriage and added a princess, daughter of the king's predecessor, and an officer loyal to Athamas. By altering the manner of Ino's disappearance and of her return he kept her identity concealed from Athamas until the middle of the play. He devised scenes of recognition and of rivalry between young lovers that are not in Hyginus and introduced reports of military operations that form no part of the legend.<sup>21</sup>

Grange's name Some confirmation of this accusation is found in strophe 12 of the third *Philippique*, where La Grange calls the duke a "Geai pare des plumes d'autrui" and accuses him of having in his baggage "beaucoup de vers empruntés"; cf. Labessade, *Les Philippiques*, Paris, Rouveyre, n. d. (1875 ?) The play was republished at The Hague, Van Dôle, 1733, in the author's *Théâtre*, Amsterdam, L'Honoré, 1746, in the *Suite du Répertoire*, Paris, veuve Dabo, 1822, and in La Grange's *Œuvres* of 1734, 1742, and 1768. The very considerable alterations made in this last edition will be examined below. The play has been studied by Nietzelt, *op. cit.*

<sup>20</sup> *Fables* I, II, and especially IV.

<sup>21</sup> The King of Thessaly had died, leaving his throne to a daughter, Euridice. A struggle followed between Athamas, husband of Ino, and Glaucus, husband of Thémistée. Glaucus was killed and Thémistée succeeded in marrying Athamas, who made himself king. She now hopes to make him abdicate in favor of Palamède, her son by Glaucus, and has kept Euridice locked up in a fortress for ten years in order that she may marry Palamède. Meanwhile Ino, when she saw that Athamas was preparing to take another wife, had fled with her son, Mélécerte, to her father, Cadmus, had entrusted the boy to him, had started home, and had been captured and sold as a slave to Thémistée, who had put her in charge of Euridice. After reigning for ten years, Athamas, suffering from remorse over his treatment of Ino and from hallucinations, has gone half mad and allowed much of his power to pass into the hands of Thémistée, who is in turn influenced by Ino. When the play begins, Pellé, the king's capital, is besieged by a Theban army, headed by a young man of unknown origin, Alcidas, while Thémistée's brother, Thrasille, is bringing up an army to support his sister. The queen tells her son that she has learned through an agent, Lucus, that Mélécerte still lives. She also tells him that she wishes him to marry Euridice, who, as she has fallen in love with Alcidas, refuses to marry Palamède. She accuses the latter of being inferior to her in birth and of keeping her in captivity. She is encouraged in her stand by the supposed slave, Cléone, who appeals to an officer, Clarigène, and is recognized by him as Ino. Athamas now wishes to abdicate and, despite Clarigène's protests, would have Palamède succeed him. News is brought that the Thebans have defeated Athamas's army and have slain Thrasille, but that Alcidas, entering the city too quickly,

In making his alterations he must have been aided by his memory of *Amasis* and of other French tragedies. The rôle of Clarigène resembles to a certain extent that of Phanès in *Amasis*, while Ino ingratiate herself with her rival, Thémistée, as does Phanès with the king he wishes to dethrone. Mélicerte, a disinherited prince, returns to his old home under an assumed name as does Sésostriis to his. A final prophecy had been employed by La Calprenède in *la Mort de Mithridate* and by Racine in *Mithridate*, where it had been applied to hostile Romans, whereas here, as in Joad's vision of a temple murder in *Athalie*, the prediction is of disaster to befall persons with whom we sympathize.<sup>22</sup>

The most dramatic characters are the two queens and Athamas. We see Ino at first dressed as a slave and for two scenes speechless, then, recognized by Clarigène and making plans with him to foil her rival's schemes. She dominates the action, advising Euridice, making herself known to her son in order to prevail upon him to return to the army, deceiving Thémistée in masterly fashion. Her words to this queen have one meaning for her, another for the audience. She has waited ten years for her revenge and is implacable in pursuing it, yet so evil is her opponent that she never loses our sympathy by impersonating unforgiving Justice. Thémistée has no redeeming virtue except her affection for her son and her thought that she is carrying out a scheme for which her first husband had lost his life. Otherwise she is thoroughly heartless, disloyal to the king, and scheming to lure her stepson to a meeting where she can stab him to death. The fatal flaw in her plans is due to her inability to recognize Ino, or to see through her designs. She masters the king and outwits Clarigène, but she trusts Ino, who delivers her message to the wrong person and causes her to kill both her son and herself.

Between these two able and conspiring women is Athamas, whose ambition

has been captured. Ino prompts Euridice to agree to marry Palamede on condition Alcidas be spared and advises Thémistée to consent to this arrangement, as she can break her word after the marriage. Though a prisoner, Alcidas is able to make love to Euridice and to learn that he is Mélicerte, son of Athamas. Ino gets word to the king that the captive is his son. Athamas wishes the youth to return to the Theban army, but Mélicerte, impressed by Ino, is unwilling to leave till she tells him that she is his mother and urges him to go. Thémistée, however, has learned who Mélicerte is, suspects Ino of giving information to Athamas, and tells her that she can clear herself only by luring the prince, with the hope of seeing Euridice, into a dark passage where he can be murdered. Ino agrees and shows Palamede to the designated place. Thémistée soon boasts of having killed Mélicerte, but she sees him and asks whom she has slain. Ino informs her that it is Palamede, whereupon Thémistée stabs herself and, as she dies, expresses the hope that Athamas will turn against his son and that Mélicerte and Ino will cast themselves into the sea. Ino prays that the gods may forbid and is reunited to Athamas. Mélicerte will, of course, marry Euridice.

<sup>22</sup> Nietzsche, *op cit*, p. 40, is quite right in rejecting N. M. Bernardin's supposition that the author borrowed from Quinault's *Amalasonte*, cf. Petit de Julleville, *Histoire de la langue et de la littérature française*, V, 147.

had led him to betray Ino and marry Thémistée, a step he has never ceased to regret. His mind has broken under his afflictions (I, 1):

Le sommeil pour jamais s'éloigna de ses yeux.  
Et toujours accusant les mortels & les Dieux,  
Au fond de ce palais, sa tristesse profonde  
Le rendit invisible aux yeux de tout le monde

He feels that his power has been taken from him, he knows that an enemy is besieging his capital, he longs to renounce the throne and to retire into obscurity, yet something of his old vigor remains when he refuses to sacrifice a prisoner upon his wife's demand. He is a tragic figure in the Aristotelian sense.

The other characters make less impression. Euridice and Mélicerte are typical lovers, but they are by no means inactive. Euridice resists efforts to marry her against her will and carries out suggestions made to her by Ino. Mélicerte, who does not appear until III, 5, is depicted as a successful warrior, an accepted lover, and a devoted son, so devoted that he feels a strange interest in the slave before he learns that she is his mother. Palamède has an ungracious rôle as a rejected lover, a defeated soldier, and the victim of his mother's schemes. Clarigène, who commands the royal guard, has prevented Thémistée from gaining complete ascendancy over the king. His presence accounts for the fact that she has not already carried out her diabolical schemes, and he now assists Ino in foiling them. Lucus, though given nothing to say, appears in the cast of the first edition. He may have been present in V, 1, when Palamède seems to address him, but in the edition of 1758 he disappears altogether.

La Grange-Chancel admits that he may have overloaded his subject with incidents, but he claims that they were needed to produce the scenes of recognition, which were well received. In one of these Ino is recognized by Clarigène, in another by Mélicerte, in another by Athamas and Thémistée. Mélicerte is recognized by himself, by his father, and by the woman who had supposed she had killed him. Other scenes are characterized by suspense, sharp argumentation, persuasion, love-making, or plots of vengeance. The action is rapid. Effective lines in the last act recall a celebrated situation in Rotrou's *Venceslas*. Thémistée, thinking that she has murdered Mélicerte, meets him and asks in anguish

Sur qui l'injuste sort, qui trahit mon courroux,  
Au lieu de Mélicerte, a-t-il conduit mes coups?

The play preserves the unities except for the fact that the prophecy leaves some "unfinished business." It has elements of the *merveilleux* in Athamas's dream, in the *cru du sang* when Mélicerte first meets his mother, and in

Thémistée's final prediction. It has elements of melodrama in the emphasis placed on villains and rescuers, in Euridice's falling in love with Mélicerte when from a distance she sees him fighting his way towards a fort, in the fact that the queen is gloating over the death of Mélicerte just at the moment when he appears, and in the great importance given to recognition. The tragedy lacks subtle psychology and effective expression,<sup>23</sup> but it has much that pleased the audiences of its day. The author praised the manner in which the actresses who took the part of Ino interpreted the rôle.<sup>24</sup> It was produced seventeen times in 1713, on and after March 10, and remained in the repertory until 1767, with a total of fifty-three performances, which made it, next to *Amasis*, the most successful of its author's plays.<sup>25</sup>

The play was criticized in great detail by Mlle Barbier.<sup>26</sup> She admitted that the beauty of the tragedy outweighed its defects, that Act IV was worthy of Corneille and Racine, and that the scene of recognition between Ino and Mélicerte showed that few of her contemporaries understood the stage better than La Grange-Chancel. She admired the introduction of Clarigène, the expressions of contempt put into the mouth of Euridice, and the dramatic use of an enemy as a confidant—an arrangement that made her compare the tragedy with Thomas Corneille's *Ariane*. At the same time she found fault with many details. Athamas rousés contempt and is cowardly in not seeking to avenge his son. Clarigène is not sufficiently respectful to Athamas. Thémistée should accuse Clarigène of complicity with the Thebans, confides too readily in Ino, is imprudent in declaring that she has killed Mélicerte. In order to prevent Thémistée from suspecting Euridice of love, Ino should attribute to gratitude the interest that the princess takes in Mélicerte. Ino is too fine a person to take such diabolical revenge. In most of these criticisms Mlle Barbier shows that she did not understand the stage as well as the man she was criticizing. The last one is especially inept as the force of Ino's character lies in the fact that, though admirable in other relationships, she is primarily bent upon vengeance.

Mlle Barbier shows to better advantage in other observations. She accuses the author of failing to scatter his exposition over several scenes, of devising

<sup>23</sup> In V, 6, when Thémistée discovers that Mélicerte lives, she finds no more effective words to utter than "Ciel! quelle est ma surprise!"

<sup>24</sup> The first of them was la Desmarez, cf. the frères Parfaict, XV, 248

<sup>25</sup> The author complained that the first edition was very badly printed. In 1758 he altered the text extensively, adding 20 lines (I, 4, II, 2, III, 5, V, 1, 3, 4) and supplying two missing verses (II, 2, III, 1). A reference to Thrasille as if he were still alive (V, 4) is corrected. Other changes are made to avoid repetition (IV, 5, 7), to modernize the position of a pronoun (II, 7), or to make a couplet more effective by putting the first verse after the second (IV, 5, 6, V, 1). On the other hand, a few misprints have crept into the new edition that are not in the old (I, 3, II, 3, V, 5), but these are of slight consequence.

<sup>26</sup> *Saisons littéraires, premier recueil*, Paris, Fournier, 1714, approbation, signed by Danchet, Oct. 27, 1713

too complicated a plot, of not making it clear that the subordinate themes influence the main one. She finds an anachronism in the account of Euridice's family, holds that certain situations lack proper preparation, and believes that there is too little probability in the manner in which Euridice and Mélicerte fall in love, as well as in Lycus's acquisition of knowledge while in prison. She takes up the play scene by scene to show that the author misuses certain terms, makes grammatical slips, is sometimes prosaic or "bas," fails to appreciate the value of a climax, or violates rules of prosody by allowing *enjambement*, or by admitting rimes between the sixth syllables of two successive lines.

Some of these criticisms are puerile, but most of them are justified. She admits in a few cases that the errors were due to faulty printing. There were other misprints she might have found. Some of the author's corrections in the edition of 1758, taken alone, would indicate that he was following her suggestions, but in many cases he failed to profit by her advice when he could easily have done so, and he made many changes that she had not suggested. It is consequently impossible to say whether he made use of her critique. As it is the most detailed piece of criticism made by a contemporary of a play written in 1701-15, it shows that La Grange-Chancel was then considered a leading dramatic author.

His reputation did not have equal distinction in the time of La Harpe, who, though he set down *Amasis* and *Ino* as La Grange's chief plays and considered that the latter equaled its predecessor in art and surpassed it in interest, nevertheless found that the pathetic material in *Ino* was not well handled and that there was lack of verisimilitude, especially in the rôle of Thémistée, who confides too readily in a slave and is not so wary as she would have been in the situation that precedes the death of her son.<sup>27</sup>

One cannot, however, refuse to La Grange-Chancel a place second only to that of Crébillon among the authors of tragedies first played in 1701-15. He did not, like Crébillon, Danchet, and Pellegrin, turn to the horrible. His respect for the proprieties did not seriously distort his work. He understood the classical system and was able to hold the interest of an audience and to create striking situations. He lived in close contact with the court and could see the importance of intrigue and the varying fortunes of its victims. His tragedies reflect to this extent the life about him. He needed to dig more deeply into the motives of his characters, to avoid melodramatic effects, to make more poetic use of the lessons Racine had taught him. What his future might have been if he had continued to devote himself primarily to tragedy it is impossible to say. He was only thirty-six when *Ino* appeared

<sup>27</sup> *Op cit*, XIII, 145-7.

and had many years in which to improve his art, but the text of this play indicates more hurried workmanship than does that of *Amasis*. His lost *Sophonisbe* of 1716 was a failure. It is possible that he was losing his skill as a dramatist even before his personal difficulties led him into satire that brought about imprisonment and exile. Separated from Paris, he was unable to recover the ground he had lost, or ever to equal *Amasis* and *Ino et Mélicerte*. The estimate of J.-B. Rousseau, who preferred him to Crébillon, may well be the correct one, that he "embrasse bien un sujet . . . en ménage les incidens avec adresse," and does not lack facility at writing verse, but that he has "ni force ni vigueur dans son expression" and often falls into "le plat des Danchets et des Pradons, avec beaucoup plus de génie qu'eux."<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *Œuvres*, Paris, Lefèvre, 1820, V, 170-1.



## CHAPTER IV

### TRAGEDIES BY BELIN, FERRIER, LA FOSSE, PÉCHANTRÉ, AND RIUPEIROUS

Nine authors who had begun to write plays in the seventeenth century contributed tragedies to the repertory of 1701-15. La Grange-Chancel, who was active throughout the period, was discussed in the last chapter. Duché and Genest, who wrote at this time only religious tragedies, will be taken up in Chapter VI. As Longepierre's last tragedy has a similar subject to one by Crébillon, it will figure in Chapter VII. The five men who remain were not eminently successful. Of the six tragedies they composed, all were acted at the Comédie Française before the end of 1705, but two of them were never published and are now lost, only two met with considerable initial success, and only one was revived after the first year in which it was played.

The first of the five dramatists was Belin. According to Beauchamps,<sup>1</sup> he came from Marseilles, was the duchesse de Bouillon's librarian, and "taillait au pharaon." He had already produced an *Othon*, acted on Jan. 5, 7, and 9, 1699, but never published. His *VONONEZ*, the first tragedy acted in the new century, was played on Jan. 7, 9, 11, and 14, 1701.<sup>2</sup> It probably dealt with Vononez I, King of Parthia, but, as it is lost, the subject cannot be definitely determined.

A happier fate befell his third tragedy, *MUSTAPHA ET ZÉANGIR*.<sup>3</sup> The pathetic history of Mustapha, an admirable prince, put to death by his father, Solyman II, had attracted several dramatists. Bonarelli in Italy, Mairet and Dalibray in France, the Earl of Orrery in England had told the tale of Solyman, Mustapha, Roxelane, and Rustan, each with his own romantic embellishments. Among these authors Mairet gives the version

<sup>1</sup> *Recherches*, II, 478-9. He declares that he knew this dramatist personally, but the frères Parfaict (XIV, 358-60) point out that his statements must be accepted with caution, as he prints the name "Blein," attributes to Belin Péchantré's *Mort de Néron*, and gives his second tragedy as "Volonés." In view of these errors one hesitates to accept Beauchamps's statement that, when *Mustapha et Zéangir* was acted, Solyman was played by Sallé.

<sup>2</sup> At the first performance 705 persons paid admission, at the second, 602, at the third, 286, at the fourth, when Champmeslé's *Coupe enchantée* was also acted, 358. The author's share in the receipts was 249 francs, 12 sous. Cf. my *Comédie Française*, p. 197.

<sup>3</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1705, 12°. Republished in the *Théâtre français* of 1737 and, according to the catalogue of the British Museum, at "Alep [Paris]" in 1777. Beauchamps states, without submitting evidence, that the duchesse de Bouillon collaborated in the composition of this play.

that is closest to Belin's, which probably owes him the theme of Mustapha's love for a Persian princess, daughter of King Tachmas. But Belin added the historical character of Zéangir, Mustapha's half-brother. Now Mlle de Scudéry had introduced this prince, son of Solyman and Roxelane, into her *Illustre Bassa*.<sup>4</sup> She had indicated his devotion to his brother, his love for Tachmas's daughter, and his suicide, inspired by the murder of Mustapha. The latter, however, is already married in the novel and is not in love with the Persian princess. Belin must have turned elsewhere to find the theme of jealousy between brothers who are devoted to each other.

He may have discovered it in Orrery's *Mustapha*, acted at London in 1665. In this English tragedy Zéangir swears that he will die if Mustapha is put to death, yet he has to struggle with his jealousy, for he and his brother love the same foreign princess, their father's captive. As these details are also in Belin's tragedy, they suggest that he was influenced by Orrery, though we do not know how he had knowledge of his *Mustapha*. As, however, La Fosse had made use a few years before of Otway's *Venice Preserved*, and Chappuzeau had seen a performance of Orrery's tragedy at London,<sup>5</sup> it is quite possible that Belin owed to the latter play the conflict between jealousy and fraternal affection in the soul of the younger prince. If this is true, it is the second example of influence exerted by an English play upon a French tragedy.

Belin declared in his preface that, though his subject was as dramatic as that of Eteocles and Polynices, it had not been attempted by "tant de grands Poetes qui se sont immortalisés par la Scene dans le dernier Siécle."<sup>6</sup> He added that the name of the younger brother was "Dgehanghir, qui en langue Persane d'où il est tiré, signifie Conquerant," but that he had preferred "Zéangir, comme étant plus doux." He admitted minor changes: Roxelane's offering the crown to Zéangir rather than to another son, Bajazet, the death of Rustan, which did not take place at this time; and the captivity of Tachmas's daughter, not mentioned by history, but "elle ne dit pas le contraire; & l'on doit passer quelque liberté aux Poetes."

It seems, then, that Belin employed as his chief sources Turkish history, Mairet's adaptation of Bonarelli, Mlle de Scudéry's *Illustre Bassa*, and Orrery's *Mustapha*. He composed a much simpler play than those of his predecessors, one that is free from Bonarelli's romantic tale of substituted infants, of a forgery, and of a disguised princess, as well as from the

<sup>4</sup> Part I, Book V, Part II, Book V; and especially Part III, Books I and II. L'Éras suggested that the *Illustre Bassa* was the source of the play.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. my *History of French Dramatic Literature*, Part V, p. 26.

<sup>6</sup> He may have thought that his four predecessors in drama had not put themselves among the immortals, or he may have held that Bonarelli, Dalibray, and Mairet failed to treat the subject because they left out Zéangir; Orrery, because his heroine is a widowed Hungarian queen instead of a Persian princess.

political theme found in *Orrery* and the many complications imagined by Mlle de Scudéry. He wrote a more purely tragic and psychological work, in which he dramatized influences brought to bear on Solymán to induce him to kill or to spare Mustapha, the success attained by the prince's enemies, and the suicide of Zéangir, who renders ineffective all his mother's machinations in his behalf.<sup>7</sup>

Solymán, the pivotal character, is presented as an old man who wishes to rule justly and to avoid the savagery of his predecessors, but who is easily influenced by those who are closely associated with him. He had taken pride in Mustapha and expected him to be his successor, but he is tricked into believing that the prince is conspiring with the King of Persia and is seeking to take his father's life. He is a tragic victim of misplaced confidence and misguided devotion to power. His causing Mustapha's body to be exposed may be in keeping with Oriental manners, but it is, as the frères Parfaict remark, in conflict with the traits of character previously assigned the Sultan.

Mustapha is also tragic. Though he wins our sympathy, he is by no means blameless. For the governor of a province and the Sultan's eldest son to offer peace to the enemy and arrange his own marriage would have offended a more modern ruler than Solymán. And when he is forgiven, he immediately disobeys, nor does he endeavor to quell the mutiny. The penalty, though much more severe than he deserves, is brought about in part by himself. Sophie, too, is not entirely free from blame, as she resents Zéangir's excellent advice and could have saved the situation by refusing to listen to Mustapha.

Zéangir, on the other hand, is a purely pathetic figure. He suppresses his

<sup>7</sup> Roxelane, who has persuaded Solymán II to marry her, desires to kill the Sultan's oldest son, Mustapha, in order to put her son, Zéangir, on the throne. She is aided by the Grand Visir, Rustan. They have in their possession a letter that incriminates Mustapha in his father's eyes. The young prince had defeated the Persians, captured Sophie, daughter of King Tachmas, and fallen in love with her. Without consulting the Sultan, he had offered Tachmas peace in return for his daughter's hand. It is the letter containing this offer that has been called to Solymán's attention. The Sultan has Mustapha brought in chains to his army headquarters at Aleppo. Zéangir persuades his father to allow Mustapha to defend himself. Solymán agrees to pardon him, but only on condition he leave the camp at once and without seeing Sophie. Zéangir prevails upon his brother to go, but he shows such interest in the princess that Mustapha feels he must see her in order to make sure of her love. Zéangir explains to Sophie why Mustapha must go, but she lingers and is questioned by the older prince. He is reassured as to her love, but he is discovered by his father and angrily reproofed. The Sultan might still have pardoned him, if he had not heard from Rustan that the soldiers were arming in the prince's behalf. He has Mustapha arrested in spite of his resistance, brought back to the camp, and strangled by mutes in his presence. The soldiers, when they are shown the body, mutiny and murder Rustan. Roxelane, happy over Mustapha's death, reminds Zéangir that he is now the heir to the throne, but her son reproaches her bitterly for slaying his beloved brother, stabs himself, and, before he dies, admits to Sophie that he, as well as Mustapha, had loved her. Roxelane realizes that his death takes from her the son in whose interests all her murderous schemes had been devised.

love in his brother's interests and renounces his chance of succeeding his father. His only fault lies in the fact that he is unwise to allude mysteriously to his feeling for Sophie. Contrasting with him are his mother, the ambitious and unscrupulous Sultana, and the equally evil Rustan, who fears the fate that may await him if Mustapha becomes Sultan. Belin declares that he made the Grand Visir, rather than Roxelane, advise Solymán, in order to prevent the Sultan from appearing to be influenced by a woman. He allows her to plot, however, and to make use of Rustan. In so doing she hopes to avoid the suspicion that her charges against Mustapha were inspired by her love for her son.

All of these characters contribute to the action, which is without minor episodes. The first act is concerned largely with the exposition, the second, with conflicting pleas addressed to Solymán, the third, in which Mustapha first appears, with the prince's conditional acquittal; the fourth, with his new offense, the fifth, with the dénouement. The action would have been more rapid if the first two acts had been combined and if some of the seven monologues had been omitted. The tragedy would have been more appealing if the hero and heroine had appeared on the stage together in more than one scene. Little attempt is made to reproduce the picturesque side of Turkish life, though there are references to the Prophet and his laws. The tragedy would have profited by more striking effects in situation and vocabulary, but Belin is to be praised for seeking to follow the example set by Racine in *Bérénice* rather than to imitate some of his predecessors and contemporaries, who laid much stress on disguise, horror, and recognition.

Accepted on Nov. 15, 1704, the play was first acted on Jan. 20, 1705. On Feb. 15 Belin agreed that it need not be given after Feb. 19, provided it would be acted after Easter.<sup>8</sup> This arrangement was made in order that the actors might produce Nadal's *Saul*, which they had accepted on Nov. 12, 1704. That Belin's consent was necessary shows that his tragedy was bringing in substantial receipts at the time the request was made. It had been played sixteen times—every other day—when performances were temporarily suspended. After Easter there were seven more presentations of the play, but strangely enough, it was not acted subsequently.

If French tragedies in the last quarter of the seventeenth century and the first quarter of the eighteenth seem restricted historically and geographically in their subjects, it was not the fault of Ferrier,<sup>9</sup> who had attempted in 1678 a theme derived from French history and who now crossed the Atlantic in his imagination to compose a Mexican tragedy, *MONTÉZUME*. His play was acted five times at the Comédie Française, Feb.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. the *Registres* of the Comédie Française, cited by the frères Parfaict, XIV, 349.

<sup>9</sup> For Ferrier cf. my *op cit*, Part IV, pp. 179-86.

14 to 22, 1702, and once at Versailles, Feb. 26, in the presence of Louis XIV, the Dauphin, and the duchesse de Bourgogne, but it was never published. According to Voltaire,<sup>10</sup> writing about thirty years later, the stage showed a palace "d'un goût magnifique et barbare des esclaves armés de flèches étaient dans le fond", in front of them court dignitaries were prostrate before the king, who addressed them with these words

Lever vous, votre roi vous permet aujourd'hui  
Et de l'envisager, et de parler à lui

The frères Parfaict<sup>11</sup> reproduce this information, but they give the lines as

Esclaves, levez vous, votre maître, aujourd'hui,  
Vous permet d'élever vos regards jusqu' à lui

As no such lines, in either form, and no such situation are found in Dryden's *Indian Emperour*, which also introduces Montezuma, it is impossible to establish any relationship between the two plays. The only other piece of information we have about Ferrier's tragedy is that the actors voted on Jan 16, 1702 to have a palace constructed for the play, but in such a way that it could be used for other tragedies. They evidently had no objection to housing ancient Greeks and Romans in the palace of the Aztecs. It must have been the failure of the play rather than the expense of the decorations that deterred Ferrier's contemporaries from attempting in the next score of years to produce a tragedy with an equally exotic subject.

Much more distinguished than either Ferrier or Belin was La Fosse,<sup>12</sup> who had established his reputation by producing three tragedies, all well received and all published. Though no longer young, he tempted Fortune once more, this time with *CORÉUS ET CALLIRHOÉ*,<sup>13</sup> which proved to be his first dramatic failure. He tells us that he derived his plot primarily from Pausanias, whose account had been reproduced by Vigenère in his *Annotations sur Philostrate* and by Spon in his *Voyage en Grèce*, and had been utilized by Guarini in his *Pastor fido*.<sup>14</sup> He admits that he followed Guarini in making the heroine "infidelle & parjure," because mere coldness in a girl is now considered a virtue rather than a vice. He explains that he

<sup>10</sup> Moland edition, II, 320-1

<sup>11</sup> XIV, 252-4, they refer to the *Mercur* for February, 1702, pp 398-402 La Harpe, *op cit*, XI, 300, mentions the play only to express the opinion that, as it was unsuccessful and was never printed, it should not deprive Voltaire of the credit, to which *Alzire* entitled him, of opening the New World to French audiences.

<sup>12</sup> For La Fosse cf my *op cit*, Part IV, pp 385-99

<sup>13</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1704, 12°. Republished in 1713, 1718, 1719, and in the author's *Œuvres*, 1700, 1719, 1737, and in his *Théâtre*, Amsterdam, 1745.

<sup>14</sup> Cf Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, VII, 21, 1, Blaise de Vigenère, *Les images ou tableaux de plâtre peinture des deux Philostrates*, Paris, 1614, Jacob Spon et George Wheler, *Voyage d'Italie, de Dalmatie, de Grèce, et du Levant*, Amsterdam, 1679, II, 112, *Pastor fido*, I, 2

represents Coréus as easily moved to anger in order that he may become the victim of his own error. He claims to have answered satisfactorily all criticisms of his tragedy.

According to Pausanias, Coresus, priest of Bacchus in Calydon, met with such contempt from Callirhoé that he begged the god for vengeance. Bacchus sent upon the people of Calydon a form of madness that caused many deaths. An oracle, when consulted, replied that Coresus must sacrifice upon the altar of Bacchus either Callirhoé or someone who would take her place. Though she sought to avoid death, the girl was led to the altar, but, rather than sacrifice her, Coresus stabbed himself and fell dead at her feet. Emotionally stirred and penitent, Callirhoé also committed suicide. Guarini changed the names of Coresus and Callirhoé, located the scene in Arcadia, substituted Diana for Bacchus, and made his heroine pretend to love the hero, but abandon him for another lover. La Fosse returned to Bacchus, to Calydon, and to the names given the principal characters by Pausanias, but, like Guarini, he introduced a second man, had Callirhoé love him, and had him prefer another woman, also added to the cast. He made the oracle declare that the substitute must be one of Callirhoé's lovers. He added the girl's father, minor characters, and certain military and political elements. In this way he introduced new problems and caused four of the five leading characters to suffer for their departures from proper conduct. He is the first author to make a full-length tragedy out of this tale, which had previously supplied material for little more than an anecdote.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Antinous governs Calydon while the king makes war on the Argives. Anaxile, the governor's niece, has been received into his home, as she has neither parents nor fortune. She has fallen in love with equally impecunious Agénor, from whom she has not heard for a month. She now learns that he has so greatly distinguished himself in war that the king has asked Antinous to give him his daughter, Callirhoé. The latter had been attracted to Agénor, but, as he did not respond, she had accepted her father's proposal that she marry Coréus, a priest of the god worshipped in Calydon. Antinous had sworn to give his daughter to the priest, but he now yields to the desire of the king, who objects to uniting two such powerful families as those of Antinous and Coréus. But the priest is deeply angered. After a stormy interview with Antinous, he begs the god to avenge him. A poisonous vapor comes forth from the altar and drives people mad. Those stricken communicate their mental illness to others. Many die. The people demand that the god be appeased. An oracle declares that Coréus must put to death either Callirhoé or one of her lovers who will offer to take her place. Meanwhile Agénor has returned from the war and seeks to better his fortunes by forgetting Anaxile and marrying her cousin, but, when he sees the former, his love returns and he proposes to break his engagement to Callirhoé. Antinous would escape with his daughter, but he cannot leave the country that has been committed to his charge. Coréus reproaches Antinous for breaking his word, but he tries to save Callirhoé by suggesting to Agénor that he die in her place. Agénor readily agrees, but Callirhoé refuses to accept his offer. When Coréus asserts that he must himself select the victim, Anaxile argues that Agénor's death will not placate the gods as he loves, not Callirhoé, but herself. Antinous and Agénor oppose this contention, Coréus is in doubt, and Callirhoé, distressed to learn that Agénor does not love her, is more than ever willing to be sacrificed. Coréus has her come to the temple in spite of her father's efforts to prevent her from doing so, assembles the people, rejects Agénor, and seems about to sacrifice

Backed by the power of the god, Corésus is an important person in the state. His puritanical nature is shocked by Antinous's violation of his vow, and his pride is deeply wounded by Callirhoé's preferring Agénor. He is led to make an unwise use of his power and creates a situation from which he can escape only by taking his own life. The quandary in which Antinous finds himself resembles that of Félix in *Polyeucte*, except that his daughter is not yet married. Both are governors under the authority of a sovereign who makes war and favors one of his officers. Like Félix, Antinous sees the advantage of having as a son-in-law the sovereign's favorite and is willing to undo earlier commitments in order to bring this marriage about. At the end of the play he loses his daughter's society because he has put human claims before divine. She is less guilty than he, as she has to obey both the king and her father. Her punishment seems quite out of proportion with her offense. Agénor at one time allows ambition to prevail over love, but this is true only while he is away from Anaxile. He redeems himself by his courage in regard to the sacrifice. Anaxile is entirely guiltless.

The play is well constructed. As there is much explanation to be given, the first act develops slowly, but it ends in a violent interview between the governor and the priest. In Act II Anaxile wins her lover back and tells us of the god's vengeance. Act III brings the message from the oracle and shows the temporary triumph of Corésus. The fourth act is the best in the play, with the changes in situation produced by Agénor's prompt acceptance of death, Callirhoé's effort to be sacrificed, Anaxile's report that it is she whom Agénor loves, and Antinous's vain attempts to find a satisfactory solution of the problem. The knot is tightly tied, but material is left for the fifth act, in which Agénor confirms Anaxile's report, the people become more insistent, Antinous racks his brains, and the solution is reached by Corésus's act of self-sacrifice, well prepared, but not foreseen.

But La Fosse's art availed little. He could not make his audience look upon the breaking of an engagement as a proper starting point for a tragedy, nor does he appear to have won sympathy for Corésus or Callirhoé. The play was poorly received. It was acted only four times, from Dec. 7 to 13, 1703. The *Mercure de Trévoux* noted its lack of success and declared the choice of the subject "peu heureux."<sup>16</sup> La Grange-Chancel addressed a poem to La Fosse in which, though he called him "grave et sublime auteur" and expressed surprise over the failure of his tragedy, he attributed it to "le froid qui regnoit dans ta piece" and advised him on account of his age

Callirhoé when he announces that he will solve the problem by dying in her place. He then stabs himself. Callirhoé retires to the temple of Pallas, consecrates herself to the goddess, and requests that Agénor marry Anaxile.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Mélése, *Rép.*, p. 214

to give up dramatic composition. The frères Parfaict<sup>17</sup> believe that the play failed because La Fosse did not interest his audience, which amounts to saying that it failed because it failed. La Harpe<sup>18</sup> considered the tragedy merely a "mauvais roman." If La Fosse, who died in 1708, had lived until 1712, he might have found some consolation in the success of *Callirhoé*, the opera that Charles Roy partly derived from the play.<sup>19</sup>

Péchantré's first tragedy, *Géla*, had been unusually successful. His second had been a failure. In his third, *LA MORT DE NERON*,<sup>20</sup> he might have reproduced his first success, if he had not offended public taste by treating chronology in an original way and centering attention upon characters with whom the audience was unable to sympathize. He wrote a long and interesting preface in defense of his tragedy, one that he probably composed before he gave up hope that his play would continue to be acted.<sup>21</sup> The chief objections raised by his critics were the choice of Nero as the principal character and one whose name appears in the title of the play; the depicting of events that were really separated by a number of years as occurring in a single day; and the delineation of Poppaea:

On se récrie d'abord contre son sujet, & l'on prétend qu'un titre aussi odieux, aussi affreux que celui de Neron ne sauroit jamais soutenir la dignité du Héros d'une Tragedie

He answers that, as Nero inspired, not only the artists who depicted him on medals, but the builder of a beautiful mausoleum at Rome, he might also inspire a poet. He could have referred to the facts that Nero is the principal character in *Britannicus* and that, though Athalie had as evil a reputation as Nero, Racine had made of her name the title of a tragedy. Such considerations had no influence upon the frères Parfaict,<sup>22</sup> who repeat the accusation that a prince should not be the principal character in a

<sup>17</sup> XIV, 315-8 They state that a certain Naudijon claimed, long after La Fosse's death, to have collaborated in the tragedy

<sup>18</sup> *Op. cit.*, VIII, 186

<sup>19</sup> Though this fact is stated by the frères Parfaict, E. H. Polinger (*Pierre Charles Roy*, New York, 1930, pp. 120-7) follows Lérus (*Dictionnaire*, Paris, 1763, p. 92) in asserting that Roy took his subject from the *Achaïques of Pausanias* [sic] The presence in the opera of Agénor, whom Pausanias does not mention, makes clear Roy's debt to La Fosse, though he altered considerably the plot of the tragedy. La Motte, *Oeuvres*, 1754, IV, 188-9, declares that the play and the opera are the same thing. He attributes the success of the opera and the failure of the play to the fact that in the former the threatened sacrifice and the suicide are shown on the stage, whereas in the tragedy they are presented in a  *récit*, so that the last act "n'en devient gueres plus vif que les autres."

<sup>20</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1703, 12°. Registered, March 3, approbation, signed by Fontenelle, March 21, *priv.*, March 24. Republished in the *Théâtre françois* of 1737. Copies of both editions are at the Johns Hopkins University. For Péchantré cf. my *op. cit.*, Part IV, pp. 232-5, 400-1.

<sup>21</sup> It was played nine times, from Feb. 21 to March 10, 1703. The author may have expected his play to be acted again after the Easter recess.

<sup>22</sup> XIV, 297-8



tragedy, if his name inspires only horror and contempt. They are unwilling to accept Péchantré's apology that Nero's reign is tragic in the contrast between its early and its later years, that he rouses terror and pity for those he persecutes, that his own character is tragic in that some "grandes vertus" are mingled with his criminal tendencies, and that, when he suddenly falls from his high estate into "le dernier accablement," he excites fear and pity for himself.

In reply to the accusation that he puts into one day the marriage of Nero and Poppaea, their death, and the death of Octavia, he cites the example of Corneille in *le Cid*, *Horace*, *Rodoque*, and *Ilérachus*, and that of Racine in *Mithridate*. He declares that a poet is not a slave to history, but may substitute verisimilitude for verity. To this doctrine no intelligent critic can object, and we must sympathize with Péchantré's remark that the unities are "assûrement des règles bien gehennantes," but the fact that he telescoped well-known events to a greater extent than Corneille and Racine had done may well have been one of the reasons why his play was not well received.

In reply to the criticism of his interpretation of Poppaea, he insists that he showed the mingling of love and ambition in her soul, her fear for Otho, her desire to avenge herself on Octavia. He had painted her as a "personne inégale," according to Aristotle's recommendation that, "si quidam inæqualis fuerit suppositus, inæqualem eum oportet esse." Apparently what his critics wanted was a heroine like Racine's Junie or Mlle Barbier's Arrie, who would not yield to imperial blandishments or threats.

In defending himself Péchantré shows the same reverence as his critics for Corneille and Racine, and especially for Aristotle. He claims that his method of presenting Poppaea's death, brought about unintentionally by Nero and discovered by him with horror, is in thorough accord with the teachings of the Greek philosopher. He accepts as Aristotelian the necessity that the hero should be of high rank and the belief that the moral value of a tragedy lies in the example it gives of conduct to be avoided or imitated, though these doctrines were preached by Aristotle's interpreters rather than in the *Poetics* itself. He adds a paragraph on his own style, claiming to have avoided symbolic, metaphorical, and emphatic language in order to show "la dignité sans faste, le naturel & la netteté sans bassesse," to have consulted rather "le cœur que l'esprit," and to have adjusted his thoughts "au caractère de mes personnages." Apart from his free use of chronology, his theories were quite classical, but his critics may have been unwilling to admit that he had expressed in his play all the ideas he proclaimed in his preface. Let us see to what extent they would have been justified in this contention.

The tragedy is a sort of sequel to *Britannicus*, which Péchantré seems to have had in mind when he was composing it.<sup>23</sup> There Racine had selected the moment in which evil forces prevailed over good in determining the course of Nero's career. Here Péchantré portrays the last day of Nero's life, referring back, as Racine had done, to his first years as emperor, but also to various crimes that followed the murder of Britannicus. He emphasizes especially Nero's repudiation of Octavia, his marriage to Poppaea, his killing the woman he loves, and his suicide.<sup>24</sup>

The historical background is preserved, but with considerable alterations. Many of Nero's crimes are pointed out, but the importance of his turning against the army, evidenced by the death of Corbulo, is not emphasized, though there are references to the revolt of Vindex, Galba, and others. The repudiation of Octavia doubtless weakened Nero's popularity, but it was not the cause of his suicide, nor in reality did she kill herself. Poppaea was married to Otho, influenced Nero over a considerable period of time, and was not murdered accidentally. Nor did Nero kill himself in the palace.

<sup>23</sup> The play begins early in the morning, with Otho's waiting for Nero's rising, just as in *Britannicus* Agrippina awaits her son's. In both tragedies Nero is won over to virtue before he plunges into vice.

<sup>24</sup> The empire is tottering. Revolt has broken out in various provinces. Rome still respects the imperial family, but may turn against Nero if he repudiates Octavia. Otho is troubled by the fact that Poppaea, whom he loves, has been invited to the imperial palace. Nero, haunted by his mother's ghost, informs Otho that he loves Poppaea and that he will send him to Lusitania. Poppaea loves Otho, but has been unwisely introduced by him to Nero and is tempted by the thought of becoming empress. Otho obtains permission to see her for the last time. Octavia urges Nero to show himself to the soldiers and suppress the rebels, but the emperor merely boasts of his achievements. Otho begs Poppaea to resist Nero and refers to the possibility of escaping with her to Gaul or Spain, but the emperor offers her marriage and threatens to kill Otho if she refuses. Traseas warns Nero that the people are devoted to Octavia and that to repudiate her will aid the rebellion, but the emperor believes that the rebels are checked, argues that Octavia cannot give him an heir, and sends him to get the senate's reply in regard to his divorce. Otho now tells Poppaea that Octavia has a ship on the Tiber in which they can escape, but Poppaea insists that the only way she can save him is by obeying the emperor. Otho accuses her of sacrificing him to her ambition, Octavia threatens and warns her, but Poppaea prefers to obey Nero. The emperor banishes Octavia, but she refuses to leave Rome. He feels remorse and thinks of renouncing Poppaea, but Traseas informs him that, acting on his own advice, the senate has refused to approve of Nero's divorce. The emperor bids his freedman see to it that Traseas dies and orders Nymphidius to attend to the senate, but the latter leads the Pretorians to join the rebellion and Traseas kills himself in the hope that his death may bring freedom to Rome. Nero divorces Octavia and marries Poppaea, but he is greatly troubled by the appearance at the altar of his mother's ghost. Otho is urged to seize the government, but he cannot turn against Nero and Poppaea. He resolves to leave Rome and has a last interview with Poppaea, in which she expresses remorse and he promises never to love another woman. Shortly after she has left the stage, we learn that Nero, mistaking her for the ghost of Traseas, has run her through. He comes on the stage, calls for Poppaea, discovers blood on his sword, and learns that he has killed her. He accuses the gods and orders their altars to be thrown down, but no one obeys, he learns that Galba has been proclaimed emperor, and he thinks of flight. At this point Octavia, who has taken poison, comes to advise him to follow her example. After a struggle he decides to take her advice and to die more admirably than he has lived.

Other departures from historical accuracy could be mentioned, but the general effect is reasonably similar to that of the accounts given by Roman historians. One can hardly agree with Péchantré that the deaths of Octavia, Poppaea, and Nero "*peuvent & doivent même arriver dans un même jour,*" since they did not do so, but one must grant him the privilege of altering chronology in composing his tragedy.

Nero is primarily an imperial criminal who has murdered his mother, his stepbrother, and many other persons of importance, who has degraded his office, and who now orders Traseas put to death, seeks to muzzle the senate, repudiates Octavia, and takes Poppaea from his friend. As, however, Péchantré did not wish to depict a complete villain, he made Poppaea's death accidental and gave Nero some feelings of remorse and of regret for the virtue he had displayed in the early years of his reign. In order to excite pity for him, he exaggerated Tacitus's report of his hallucinations and kept him confident of his power till he suddenly finds that his commands are answered by silence. The portrait is more dramatic than a strictly historical one would have been.

The three persons next in importance are Otho, Poppaea, and Octavia. As the first of these is not married, he is saved the humiliation of seeing his wife taken from him. He is loyal both to Nero and to Poppaea, though he has ample cause not to be. There is a tragic element in his fortunes, for it is his own introduction of Poppaea at court that causes his sorrows. Poppaea is more dramatic. She had always been ambitious, had been attracted to Otho because an oracle had predicted that he would become emperor. She is divided between love for him and Nero's offer, hesitates, and is induced to become empress partly by ambition, partly by the urgings of her confidant, partly by the hope of saving Otho, and partly by a desire to triumph over Octavia, who has treated her with contempt. When we see her last, just before she is killed, she has become empress, but only to be disillusioned. With her is contrasted Octavia, aristocratic, virtuous, loyal to Nero, but bitterly resenting the treatment she is receiving. She does not love Nero, but she has the deepest respect for his position and her own. If they cannot live as emperor and empress, they must die by their own hands. Her pride is shown when she meets Poppaea, but she is unable to silence her rival's ready tongue (III, 4).

Oc : Oui, c'est toi que j'accuse, orgueilleuse rivale,  
 Porte ailleurs les attraits de ta beauté fatale,  
 Respecte en moi les droits & le sang des Césars,  
 Garde-toi d'élever jusqu'à moi tes regards  
 Tout ce qu'à mon égard te permet ta naissance,  
 C'est beaucoup de respect & plus d'obéissance

Po : Je sçai ce que je dois à vôtre auguste rang,  
 Mais je ne m'en croi pas indigne par mon sang .  
 Devant vous cependant je ne puis m'oublier,  
 Faites venir Neron pour me congédier,  
 J'obéirai, Madame, à vôtre ordre suprême<sup>25</sup>

The minor characters, with the exception of Octavia's confidant, have functions of some importance. Traseas, the philosopher whom Tacitus had highly praised, is presented as a senator and a tribune, one who is profoundly shocked by Nero's conduct and is bold enough to tell him what he thinks of it. He represents the survival of ancient Republican virtues in the Rome of Nero. Nymphidius has no such nobility of character, but he does not pander to Nero's vices. Instead, he offers to support Otho and, when the latter declines the throne, helps to give it to Galba. The freedman, Anicetus, on the other hand, though he speaks only a score of lines, is shown to be Nero's unscrupulous agent, while Fulvie is Poppaea's evil genius as Enone is Phèdre's.

Act I is given up largely to the exposition, including Nero's desire to repudiate Octavia, exile Otho, and marry Poppaea. Acts II and III are chiefly concerned with Poppaea's decision to abandon Otho for Nero, Act IV, with Octavia's struggle to retain her position, Nero's response to her, and his condemnation of Traseas. In Act V we hear of the latter's death and that of Poppaea and we witness the deaths of Octavia and Nero, for the emperor's suicide is supposed to follow immediately the last verse of the tragedy.

There are a number of scenes in which the characters are brought sharply into conflict. The most dramatic are those concerned with Poppaea's death (V, 9, 10), scenes in which, according to his preface, the author took special pride

*Neron sortant l'épée à la main*  
 Je ne te verrai plus, Tribun que je deteste !  
 Ton orgueil a mes yeux s'est venu présenter !  
 Tu voulais m'arracher Poppée & m'insulter !  
 Mais j'ai sçu te punir de ton orgueil rebelle  
 R'entre dans les enfers l'ombre s'est dissipée  
 Et je me reconnois qu'on r'appelle Poppée<sup>26</sup>  
 Fulvie Seigneur, qu'avez-vous fait ?  
 Neron Ce que j'ai fait, grands Dieux !  
 De ce Spectre infernal j'ai delivré ces lieux  
 Mais que vois-je ? quoi donc ma main toute sanglante,  
 Ce sang dont je suis teint m'étonne, m'épouvante  
 Je ne sçai je ne puis . Fulvie, explique-moi

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Hermione's reply in *Andromaque*, III, 4

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Tristan l'Hermite, *Marianne*, V, 3. The preceding line is addressed to Agripina's ghost, seen by Nero in company with Traseas

Ce prodige confus qui me remplit d'effroi  
 Aurois-je? . . . Quoi ma main!  
 F                   Vôtre main s'est trompée  
 N D'où vient ce sang?  
 F                   Hélas! c'est du sein de Poppée

Nine performances were not enough to do justice to this play, if we compare the number accorded certain other tragedies of the period. That it was not more frequently acted may be due, not only to the critics whom Péchantré answered in his preface, but to a public demand that characters be more sharply divided into good and evil. The spectators may well have wanted to feel no sympathy for Nero or Poppaea, to see a more forgiving Octavia and a more triumphant Otho. The recognition scenes in *Amasis* and *Hypermnestre* appealed to them more strongly than Nero's asking desperately what was the meaning of blood upon his sword, especially as blood was not supposed to appear upon the stage. Péchantré was too daring for most of his contemporaries,<sup>27</sup> not daring enough for those who ultimately revolted from the conventions of his time. It is unfortunate that the kind of variation upon the classical system that he attempted was not followed up, as it might have led to sounder reforms than those that eventually prevailed.

Like Belin and unlike La Fosse and Péchantré, Théodore de Riupeirous<sup>28</sup> (1664-1706) won his chief success, not from his seventeenth-century plays, but from one he wrote early in the eighteenth century. He was born at Montauban in a Protestant family, but was converted to Catholicism, entered the church, and was introduced to Père de La Chaise, who put him in contact with great nobles. One of them persuaded him to give up his ecclesiastical profession and become a "commisnaire des guerres." He is said to have been "gulant, aimable, enjoué dans la conversation," distinguished for the mildness and unselfishness of his character. He composed a number of poems, a *Traité des Médailles*, and five plays. The first of his tragedies, *Méléagre*, written in his youth, may never have been acted. The three that followed, *Annibal* (1688), *Valérien* (1690), and *Agrippa* (1696), were performed at the Comédie Française and brought their author nearly a thousand francs, but they were never published. His dramatic talents must consequently be judged by his one surviving play.

<sup>27</sup> He not only showed blood upon the stage and altered chronology considerably in order to produce dramatic concentration, but he allowed a break in *liaison* (V, 8-9) and began V, 5 with four asides in succession. The heading of II, 4 in the first edition indicates that Tigellin is on the stage, but this must be a misprint as he is given nothing to say and is not listed in the cast.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. the frères Parfaict, XIV, 323-36, who cite at length an *Eloge* of 1745 and assert that the author's name, which appears under various forms, was written by him as it appears here, cf. also my *op. cit.*, Part IV, pp. 237-8, 400-1.

This was *HYPERMNESTRE*,<sup>20</sup> the subject of which had been dramatized by Gombauld and Abeille. The latter's *Lyncée* was, as the frères Parfaict point out, the principal source of the tragedy. Gombauld seems to have influenced it only by the intermediary of *Lyncée*.<sup>20</sup> As in Abeille's tragedy, Danaus is warned of his danger by an oracle, Hypermnestre, the king's favorite daughter, after agreeing to kill Lyncée, refuses to do so, defends her attitude to her father, and enables her lover to escape from the palace, Lyncée does not seek to avenge his brothers and is not guilty of the king's death, there are no soothsayers, and the name Iphis is given to one of the characters. There are even a few verbal similarities.<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, there are decided differences between the two tragedies. In order to fulfill the oracle and at the same time to clear Lyncée of a murder that might have prevented his marriage, Abeille had introduced a mother and son whose lines take up much of the play. Riupéroux omitted them and cleared Lyncée by the intervention of the people, stirred up by the hero's confidant. He also eliminated the account of Danaus's accession to the throne and avoided indicating that in this extraordinary tale there were as many as fifty brothers and fifty sisters. He reduced his characters to three important persons and their attendants and emphasized the relations that existed between the lovers before the time of the play. Lyncée had come to Argos under an assumed name, had saved the king's life, had fallen in love with Hypermnestre, and had caused her to be deeply interested in him without learning who he is. These facts make it easier to understand her readiness to carry out her father's brutal command. They also make possible an effective scene of recognition.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1704 and 1716, 12°. Republished in the *Théâtre français* of 1737.

<sup>20</sup> Unless he suggested for it the name of Idas, one of Danaus's ministers in *Hypermnestre*, a son of Egyptus in les *Danaïdes* (IV, 2). For the classical accounts of the tale cf. my *op. cit.*, Part II, p. 616.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. my *op. cit.*, Part IV, p. 179. The general conception of IV, 5, and of V, last scene, resembles that of *Lyncée*, IV, 5, and V, last scene.

<sup>22</sup> Lyncée, son of Egyptus, has concealed his identity, rescued Danaus, King of Argos, from the King of Corinth, and put the latter to flight. He has fallen in love with Hypermnestre, one of Danaus's many daughters, but, believing his courtship useless, has avoided making love. He is now about to leave. Danaus bids him farewell, then confides in Arcas that he has been warned by Apollo's oracle that he will die unless his sons-in-law perish shortly after their marriage. He has consequently refused to marry his daughters, a decision that has led to his battle with the King of Corinth and has induced him to send Iphis to dissuade Egyptus, Danaus's relative, from his desire to marry his sons to their cousins. Iphis now returns, tells of his failure, and declares that the sons of Egyptus will soon arrive. Danaus resolves to kill them in order to save his own life and to have revenge upon Egyptus for driving him out of Egypt. He bids Arcas urge the young stranger to delay his departure, as he may need his help, and he begs Hypermnestre to come to the temple and swear obedience. She is troubled by this request and admits to her confidant that she loves the stranger. After her visit to the temple she tells of seeing the altar shake. Danaus now bids her save his life by slaying Lyncée. She

The author's task was to tell a well-known story in such a way that Hypermnestre and Lyncée would retain our sympathy and remain united in spite of the king's violent death. This fact explains why he presents the lovers as he does and why he causes the people to intervene. When Hypermnestre agrees to do murder, she is moved by her affection for her father, her feeling that it is her duty to obey him, and the oath she has taken before the trembling altar:

Où, le fer dans mes mains trouvera son usage,  
Des sermens que j'ai faits, il faut qu'il me dégage  
Il faut, en immolant un époux odieux,  
M'acquitter envers vous, & satisfaire aux dieux

Even after she has learned that Lyncée is the man she loves, she promises to keep her oath and save her father's life, but after her marriage she sees things differently. By prevailing upon Lyncée to escape she gains enough time for the people to save her husband. Her rôle is primarily emotional, one that allows an actress considerable range in expression. The question of what punishment followed the breaking of her vow is not answered. Perhaps the author hoped it would not be asked.

He presented Lyncée as brave and devoted, a most respectful lover and a valued servant of the king. His relations with his brothers are passed over almost in silence. No explanation is given of the fact that he remains in ignorance of their arrival after it is known to the king and Hypermnestre. When he hears of their death, he cries, "laissez-moi les venger," but we hear nothing more from him on the subject. Ripeurous apparently sought to avoid the question of what kind of life he would lead with his many sisters-in-law who had murdered his many brothers. Instead, he stressed Lyncée's qualities as a lover, especially in two scenes of love-making and one of recognition. This last is especially effective, for, when Hypermnestre discovers that her fiancé is Lyncée, she suddenly realizes that she has agreed to murder the man she loves (III, 3):

hesitates, but agrees, thinking that Lyncée is unknown to her. The stranger confesses his love, but gets an ambiguous reply. Hypermnestre learns that she is to marry Lyncée. The stranger protests against her marriage till he learns the name of the bridegroom, then admits that he is Lyncée. Hypermnestre is shocked, but she tells her father that she will keep her promise. However, when the marriage has been celebrated and night has come, she cannot bring herself to do the deed, explains the situation to her husband, and begs him to escape. When her father discovers what she has done, he sends Arcas to arrest Lyncée and proposes to put him and Hypermnestre to death, but the people, won over by pity for the youths already slain and by the explanations of Lyncée's confidant, intervene when the execution is about to take place, kill Arcas, then Danaus, and demand that Lyncée succeed to the throne. He tells Hypermnestre that she is queen and assures her of his devotion. She must mourn her father, but she does not refuse to live with Lyncée.

Vous, seigneur! Quelle horreur vient frapper ma pensée?  
 Je fremis . . . Non, seigneur, vous n'êtes point Lyncée,  
 Je ne le croirai point. Mon trouble, mon effroi  
 Ne m'annoncent que trop

The presentation of Danaus offered little difficulty. He is superstitious, thoroughly selfish, cunning in his devices. He is chiefly motivated by a desire to save his own life, even though he has to sacrifice Lyncée, who once rescued him, but he is also moved by a desire to have revenge upon Egyptus. Riupeirous was criticized for having him leave the murder of his sons-in-law to his daughters, but this was so essential a part of the legend that it would have been hard for him to alter it. Moreover, the fact that the people revolt suggests that the king's hold upon them was not strong enough for him to have had the young men arrested and put to death by royal command.

The arrangement of the material is simple and effective. The first act is largely concerned with Danaus's murderous plan and other elements of the exposition, the second, with Hypermnestre's promise to carry out her father's command and with Lyncée's confession of love, the third, with her *aveu* and her discovery that the man she loves is the prince she has been asked to murder, the fourth, which follows the marriage, with her effort to save Lyncée and her father's discovery of her activities; the fifth, with preparations for the execution of Lyncée and Hypermnestre and the reversal of fortune brought about by the intervention of the people. The unity of action is not altogether preserved as the people play the rôle of a *deus ex machinâ*, and there is the "unfinished business" I pointed out in discussing Hypermnestre and Lyncée. On the other hand, the time, though it includes the fatal night, is probably less than twenty-four hours, the place is limited to the palace, perhaps to two rooms in it, as Act IV would be more properly located in Hypermnestre's chamber than in the hall where the king makes his plans. The small number of characters and the reduction of the plot to its essentials, though following the tradition of Racine's *Bérénice*, brought upon the play in 1726 the criticism that it lacked variety. It was even suggested that a rival sister, "aussi méchante qu'Hypermnestre est vertueuse, auroit fait un jeu, & un contraste admirable" <sup>33</sup>

The same critic objected to the character of Danaus as revolting and to Lyncée's ignorance of his brothers' arrival, though he admitted that the latter circumstance enabled the author to compose "une des plus frappantes situations qui aient jamais paru sur la Scène" He also suggested that Lyncée, as soon as he learned of his brothers' murder, should have rushed out and killed Danaus, thus fulfilling the oracle. This would have made

<sup>33</sup> Cited by the frères Parfaict, XIV, 320. The critic may have been thinking of Théante's rôle in Gombauld's *Danaïdes*.



the ending similar to that of Gombauld's *Danades*, but Rupeirous preferred to keep Lyncée innocent of his father-in-law's blood in order that he might have some prospect of future happiness, without bringing upon his wife the accusation that she was an unnatural daughter.

Acted first on Feb. 13, 1704, the play was given sixteen times in that year, despite the illness of la Duclos, who took the leading feminine rôle. It held the stage until 1709 and was revived in 1726 and in 1744-5. The total number of performances was forty. Only six tragedies of the period were played more frequently. It failed, however, to suit the taste of Hamilton, who wrote to Boileau with reference to *Voiture*,

Que ses rondeaux sont au-dessus  
De la Taurique Iphigénie,  
Et des vacarmes rebattus  
Que vient faire dans sa manie  
La belle-fille d'Égyptus \*\*

It is, however, absurd to compare classical tragedies with *rondeaux*. If instead of doing so Hamilton had made a serious comparison of those discussed in this chapter with others of the period, he might well have found that three of them, *Mustopha et Zéangir*, *la Mort de Néron*, and *Hypermnestre*, were equal to all but the best plays of Crébillon and La Grange-Chancel and superior to those written by other authors than Crébillon who began to compose tragedies in 1701-15.

\*\* *Œuvres complètes d'Hamilton*, Paris, 1805, III, 289. The editor identifies the first tragedy as La Grange-Chancel's *Oreste et Pylade*, the second as *Hypermnestre*, but he attributes the latter play to Longepierre.

## CHAPTER V

### TRAGEDIES BY WOMEN: M<sup>L</sup>LE BARBIER AND M<sup>M</sup>E GOMEZ

The seventeenth century produced eleven women dramatists. None of them attained high rank in her profession or wrote more than a modest number of plays, but they at least made it possible for women to have their productions accepted for performance at the Comédie Française.<sup>1</sup> The most successful tragedy written by a woman in the seventeenth century, M<sup>lle</sup> Bernard's *Brutus*, was given for the last time in 1699. The eighteenth century was not slow in finding for her a successor in M<sup>lle</sup> Barbier, whose first play appeared in 1702. Her four tragedies and one by M<sup>me</sup> Gomez, granddaughter of Raymond Poisson, constitute women's contribution to the tragedy of 1701-15. They make up almost one-sixth of the Parisian tragedies now extant, a larger proportion than women had previously supplied.

Marie-Anne Barbier, who was born at Orléans in the latter part of the seventeenth century, lived in Paris and seems to have been well read in dramatic theory and in French tragedy. She claims to have been a friend of Boursault and refers to Corneille and Racine. It was the latter's seductive style, she holds, that kept alive the controversy as to the relative merits of the two dramatists, a statement that would lead one to suppose that Corneille was the author she especially desired to imitate. Her critique of La Grange-Chancel shows that she accepted fully the doctrines of French classicists. She was a feminist who sought to emphasize in her plays the accomplishments of her sex. When an attempt was made to deprive her of the credit of writing her tragedies and the argument was used that an unaided woman could not have done so well, she listed in reply the names of such literary women as M<sup>lle</sup> de Scudéry, the comtesse de La Suze, M<sup>me</sup> Deshoulières and her daughter, and, as an author of tragedies, Catherine Bernard. Moreover, she selected as heroines for three of her own tragedies Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi; Arria, who had to show her husband how to die; and Tomyris, who conquered Cyrus. And when she published her tragedies, she dedicated three of them to women, to "Madame," Louis XIV's sister-in-law, to the duchess du Maine, and to the duchesse de Bouillon.

Besides her tragedies, she wrote a comedy, three operas, a collection of tales entitled *Théâtre de l'amour et de la fortune*, and two volumes entitled

<sup>1</sup> For these eleven women cf. my op. cit., Part V, pp. 86-7

*Saisons littéraires*, which contain literary criticism, fiction, and occasional verse. She died in 1742.<sup>2</sup>

Her first play was *ARRIE ET PÉTUS*.<sup>3</sup> Its title had already been employed by Gabriel Gilbert, but the events of his tragedy take place in the reign of Nero, those of Mlle Barbier's in that of his predecessor, Claudius. She states that Boursault suggested the subject to her and advised her to present the hero and heroine as husband and wife in accordance with history. She preferred at first not to take this advice, but she finally decided to let them marry between Acts III and IV. Though she mentions Martial, Suetonius, and Tacitus, her chief sources seem to have been the Younger Pliny and Zonaras.<sup>4</sup> From them she learned of Vinicianus, of Scribonianus, prefect of Dalmatia, of their revolt in which Petus was implicated, of the latter's hesitation at the thought of death, and of Arria's heroic suicide. She added the heroine's effort to avenge her father, Claudius's love for her, Agrippina's jealousy, the flight from Rome, and the heroine's refusal to marry the emperor. She kept Narcissus because, as he had urged Claudius to kill Arria's father, Silanus, he would naturally support Agrippina in her effort to keep Arria from reigning.<sup>5</sup>

The emperor is represented as weak, easily deceived, influenced by flattery,

<sup>2</sup> The *Biographie générale* gives a brief account of her. After publishing her tragedies separately, she brought out in 1714 her *Théâtre de l'amour et de la fortune* in two volumes and the first volume of her *Saisons littéraires*, the second volume of which collection appeared in 1722. Her tragedies were republished at Leyden by B. J. Vander Aa in 1719 and 1723, with a few eclogues and odes, and at Paris by Briasson in 1745.

<sup>3</sup> Paris, Michel Brunet, 1702, 12°. Dedicated to the duchesse de Bouillon. Republished, Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1703 and 1713, Lyons, Pour la Société, 1710, and as indicated in note 2. Dutch translations appeared in 1719 and 1774. The frères Parfaict, XIV, 258 9, insist that the abbé Pellegrin wrote the best part of the play and assert that he told them so himself. Mlle Barbier, however, flatly denies that she had a collaborator. Her word should be taken rather than that of Pellegrin, reported long after the play appeared, even after Mlle Barbier's death, by the frères Parfaict, not the most judicious of chroniclers.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Martial, I, 13, the Younger Pliny, *Ep.*, III, 16, Cassius Dio, LX, 16, Zonaras, XI, 9.

<sup>5</sup> The Emperor Claudius has agreed to marry Agrippina, but he loves Arrie, whose father he had put to death. Arrie not only refuses to marry Claudius, but she encourages Pétus, whom she loves, to murder the emperor. They have formed a conspiracy with Vinicien and Scribonien, whose army is approaching Rome. Narcisse reports that conspirators, when tortured, have implicated, not only Vinicien, who has killed himself, but many senators and Arrie. Claudius has Arrie arrested, but he refuses to grant Agrippina's request that she be put to death. Pétus explains to Agrippina that it is desirable to exile Arrie, so that Claudius may give her up. Arrie at first refuses to go, but, when Pétus threatens to confess to Claudius that he was in the plot, she agrees to marry him and escape to Scribonien's army. Agrippina arranges for Maxime, commander of the guard, to lead them out of the palace, but they are pursued, captured, and brought back. Claudius threatens that, if Arrie will not marry him, he will kill Pétus. When she answers that Pétus is her husband, he renews his offer, for emperors are above the law. Arrie asks permission to see Pétus alone, explains the situation, stabs herself, and tenders him the dagger. He follows her example. Before Arrie dies, she predicts that Agrippina will murder Claudius.

love, and jealousy. Pétus, who is a consul, becomes weak only through love, fearing for Arrie, who remains as heroic as she is in the ancient accounts. She cannot live without Pétus (V, 6):

Banni, donc, cher époux, la frayeur de ton ame,  
Et ne refuse pas l'exemple d'une femme.  
*Elle tire un poignard, & se frappe*  
P. Que faites-vous, Madame? O desespoir fatal!  
O malheur!  
A *retirant le poignard & lui le présentant*:  
Tien, Petus, il ne fait pas de mal \*

She is moved to avenge her father, takes an active part in the conspiracy, renounces the opportunity to become empress, and kills herself in order to impress his duty upon her wavering husband. She belongs to Corneille's school rather than to Racine's, except in the simplicity of her last words, borrowed from Phny.

Agrippina is an ambitious woman, endeavoring to gain power, rather than, as in *Britannicus*, seeking to recover what is slipping from her grasp. She is a hypocrite and an intriguer, sure of dominating the emperor if she can get Arrie out of the way. In representing her superstitious nature and her devotion to Nero, Mlle Barbier follows Tacitus. When she learns from the "Ciel" that Nero is to reign and to kill his mother, she cries (IV, 5):

Si mon fils doit regner, qu'il me tue, & qu'il regne \*

The fact that this is the first reference to Nero in the play shows that the author had not yet completely mastered her art. Moreover, both her Agrippina and her Narcisse, who is little more than a confidant, suffer by comparison with Racine's celebrated portrayal of these characters.

The plot is as simple as Mlle Barbier claims it to be, but the late mention of Nero and the fact that we are not told what happens to Sribonien prevent the unity of action from being altogether achieved. She makes no use of recognition and introduces no scene of horror, but she has elements of the *merveilleux* in the prediction regarding Nero and in Arrie's concluding words to the Emperor Claudius

Je vois déjà le sort que le Ciel te prepare  
Il destine une main à cet illustre emploi,  
Trop indigne de nous, mais trop digne de toi.  
Tu ne meritois pas une mort éclatante  
Agrippine . . . à ce nom, Tyran, je meurs contente

\* Cf the Younger Pliny, *loc cit* : "Praeclarum quidem illud ejusdem, ferrum stringere, perfodere pectus, extrahere pugionem, porrigere marito, addere vocem immortalis ac paene divinae 'Paete, non dolet'."

\* *Annals*, XIV, 9 "Nam consulenti super Nerone, responderant Chaldaei, fore ut imperaret matremque occideret atque illa Occidat, inquit, dum imperet."

In making her début as a dramatist Mlle Barbier had exalted her sex in its power for good and for evil by the emphasis she placed upon Arrie and Agrippina. She had prepared herself for her task by studying her sources and the methods of Corneille and Racine. Unfortunately she did not have sufficient talent to create many striking situations or phrases. Yet her tragedy was well received. Though first acted in the summer, an unusual season for new tragedies, it was given at the Comédie Française sixteen times, from June 3 to July 8, 1702, and once at Fontainebleau, on Sept. 21.<sup>8</sup> Revived in 1711, it was acted six times. Its initial success may have been helped by the fact that the actors had voted on April 24, 1702, to give a "petite comédie" after it, beginning with the first performance, though this usage was not to serve as a precedent for tragedies first acted in the winter season.<sup>9</sup> The *Gazette de Rotterdam* declared in 1703 that this tragedy and her *Cornélie* were "de la force de celles de Corneille et de Racine."<sup>10</sup>

The complete title of her second tragedy was *CORNÉLIE, MÈRE DES GRACQUES*.<sup>11</sup> It was first read before the actors on Oct 31, 1702. They insisted that the last act must be rewritten. When this was done, it was read to them again, on Nov. 14, and was accepted, but it was acted only eight times.<sup>12</sup> Like its predecessor, the tragedy has a theme drawn from Roman history that emphasizes the heroism of a woman. Mlle Barbier states that she followed Plutarch closely except that she introduced an oracle and Opimius's daughter Lucinie<sup>13</sup> in order to contrive a conflict between love and duty that would cause "cette suspension qui ne laisse respirer les Spectateurs qu'après la catastrophe." She admitted that she made Gauls of certain foreigners. She also took from Plutarch details that she does not mention,<sup>14</sup> but she brought into her play so many extraneous elements that its effect is quite different from that of its source.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Dangeau, *Journal*, VIII, 505

<sup>9</sup> Cf frères Parfaict, XIV, 258-9. An old favorite, Hauteroche's *Souper mal appêté*, was the "petite comédie" given with *Arrie*

<sup>10</sup> Cited by Mélése, *Rép.*, p. 213

<sup>11</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1703 and 1713, 12°. Dedicated to "Madame," sister-in-law of Louis XIV. Republished as indicated above, note 2. A Dutch translation appeared in 1733, a German, by L. A. V. Gottsched, in 1741

<sup>12</sup> So reports Joannidès. The frères Parfaict, who are less accurate, state (XIV, 293) that the play was acted six times, from Jan 5 to 16, 1703, and could have been presented on two more days except that "M. Ponteuil n'est pas encore en état de jouer à la Romaine," on which account Mlle Barbier accepted 40 écus from the actors in lieu of what she might have received from two additional performances. These were probably given later in the year and brought the author no share in the receipts

<sup>13</sup> Plutarch, in his *Tiberius and Caius Gracchus*, states that Lucinia, daughter of Publius Crassus, was married to the younger Gracchus

<sup>14</sup> Such as the arrest of Flavius's son, the charges brought against Caius in connection with Flagellae, the idea of sharing the "biens communs", the facts that Attalus had left his fortune to the Roman people, that Octavius was deposed as tribune, and that Cornelia refused to marry Ptolemy

<sup>15</sup> Tiberius Gracchus has been murdered, but not avenged. His brother, Caius, has

Though Cornelia is known to have been the mother of the Gracchi, ancient accounts of her do not state that she took an active part in Caius's enterprises except to bring some strangers into Rome. Mlle Barbier increased her importance by having her win her son back to the popular cause, bring into Rome a large number of Gauls, and inspire the people to attack the senate. She is unwavering in her support of popular principles, in her demand that Tiberius be avenged, and in choosing death for her son rather than compromise. She is an imposing figure, but Caius is more dramatic, for, contrary to Plutarch, he has to struggle against his love. He is represented as highly daring and emotional, but his special political views are not explained in detail. He contrasts with Drusus, a traitor to the people's interests, and with Opimius, whose aristocratic pride and contempt for the rabble recall the character of the Roman senator in La Fosse's *Manius*. He goes even farther, for he wishes to rule Rome himself, so that he is a predecessor of Sylla and other dictators. In the end, however, he weakens, for the fact that his life is saved by Caius wins him over completely. His daughter has inherited some of her father's prejudices, but she appears chiefly as a woman in love with an enemy of her house.

The subject is one that required a masculine pen. The personal element is made more important than the political. Questions of state lead to no rapid give and take in the Cornelian manner, though there seems to be imitation of Corneille both in Caius's argument (III, 3) that he must

been elected tribune and has enthusiastically supported the people against the senate, but he loves Licinie, daughter of a leading senator, Opimius. The latter has told Licinie that her marriage to Caius will bring peace and has persuaded her to lure him to the senate house. Licinie has almost conquered her love for Caius and has been troubled by an oracle, predicting that blood precious to Rome will be shed by a hand she loves, so that she fears Caius will kill her father. When she meets him, she shows her agitation and begs him never to see Opimius. He fears he has been led into a snare. His colleague, Drusus, joins him and appears to work for the people, but he is willing to support the senate if he may marry Licinie. Opimius admits to his daughter that he fears Caius, asks her to encourage the latter, and speaks proudly to the tribune's mother, Cornélie, when she demands that liberty be given to the people, conquered property shared by all, and her son, Tiberius, avenged. She urges Caius to remember his brother and have faith in the people. She wins him over so completely that he decides to renounce Licinie and escape from the senate house. Opimius and Drusus interview him while the people besiege the building. Opimius demands the head of Fulvius, who had occasioned the death of a lictor. Caius reminds the senator that his colleagues are more disturbed by the murder of this lictor than by that of Tiberius Gracchus. Drusus supports Opimius, while Caius remains a friend of the people, even though it means his renouncing Licinie. Cornélie rejoices and allows Caius to spare Opimius, as there will be others to kill him, but Caius is disarmed and arrested. Opimius leaves to Cornélie the question whether or not her son may live. She bids Caius decide for himself, but she indicates that she would condemn surrender in anyone else. He chooses death and informs Licinie, who begs her father to spare him. The people storm the senate house and rescue Caius, who promises Licinie to save her father. At the head of Gauls whom his mother had admitted to the city, Caius kills Drusus and reaches Opimius, but spares him. The senate is won over, but the people think that Caius has deserted them, so that the tribune commits suicide after he has explained to his mother, Licinie, and Opimius his reason for doing so.

resist Lucinie in order to be worthy of her and in his echo (III, 4) of *Horace*:

je renonce au grand nom de Romain,  
Si pour le meriter il faut être inhumain

Some verses do, however, depict the eternal conflict between the convinced democrat and the Fascist. When Caius is wavering, he speaks to his mother verses to which she retorts sharply:

Caius Mais si le peuple enfin au gré de son caprice  
Rejette cette paix, & veut que tout perisse,  
Il faut qu'à sa fureur je m'oppose aujourd'hui,  
Et je dois le forcer d'être heureux malgré lui  
Cor.: Le forcer d'être heureux, quel nouvel esclavage!  
Quoi! déjà du Senat vous parlez le langage,  
Tribun Eh' depuis quand tout ce peuple à vos yeux  
N'est il qu'un frenetique, & qu'un capricieux?<sup>16</sup>

Mlle Barbier showed considerable skill in constructing a plot that would cause all the minor interests to influence the dénouement. For this purpose she made Lucinie the daughter of Opimius, invented the senator's ambition to be a dictator, the rivalry of Caius and Drusus, the presence of Caius and his mother in the senate house, the capture of this building by the people. She added a touch of the *merveilleux* by her use of the oracle. It is probable that in its original form the fifth act was simpler, for we know that she altered it and that, according to her preface, it was criticized, after she had made the changes, for containing too many incidents. In reply to this charge she asks if it is not realized that nothing moves spectators more than "*les peripeties, quand elles naissent du fond du sujet.*"

The sudden changes of fortune experienced in Act V by Caius, Lucinie, and Opimius did not, however, keep the tragedy long in the repertory. Though the play was not censored, Cornelia and her son could hardly be expected to rouse much enthusiasm while France was being ruled by a royal dictator. It was only in Holland that it was said to recall Corneille and Racine. That it was not revived late in the century, when the French popular party had triumphed, must have been due to the fact that the plays of Mlle Barbier were by that time forgotten.

Her next tragedy, *Tomyris*,<sup>17</sup> is greatly inferior to her preceding plays. It marks the substitution of romance for history as the material on which she worked. Her inspiration came only to a slight degree from Herodotus, but amply from the *Grand Cyrus*. Perhaps it was her feminism that led

<sup>16</sup> II, 5 One can imagine Pétain, about 1941, carrying on a conversation like this with a French democrat, if for "*Senat*" one reads "*Nazi*"

<sup>17</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1707, 12" Republished as indicated above, note 2 A Dutch translation appeared in 1763

her to select, not only a triumphant queen as her principal character, but a novel by a distinguished woman as her source. The facts that Herodotus supplied are that Cyrus attacked Tomyris, Queen of the Massagetes; that, after some success, including the death of the queen's son, Cyrus was defeated and killed, and that the queen dipped in blood his severed head and bade it drink its fill. The characters of Mandane, Aryante, Aripithe, and Gélonide are Mlle Scudéry's creations, as are Tomyris's love of Cyrus, begun when he came to see her as an ambassador, her failure to win his affections, his devotion to Mandane, the captivity of this princess, the queen's jealousy, the final victory of the Persians, and Mandane's rescue. Unlike Mlle de Scudéry, Mlle Barbier had Cyrus perish and his own head, not that of his double, soaked in blood. She made Aryante the son, not the brother of Tomyris. She reduced the action to events that take place in a day and within the queen's tent after the death of Spargapise.<sup>18</sup>

Tomyris is violent, deeply in love, jealous, domineering, and guileful, but the author fails to give her characteristics that would prepare us for the element of horror that is introduced when Cyrus's head is dipped in blood (V, 10).

Une troupe barbare entoure Tomyris,  
Tandis que par trois fois, sans qu'aucun cri l'arrête,  
Dans un vase de sang elle plonge une tête,  
Et dit, à chaque fois, d'un ton mal assuré,  
Sauloe toi de ce sang dont tu fus altéré

Cyrus is not the great conqueror we should expect to find, but the amorous adventurer that Mlle de Scudéry had described and Boileau had held up to ridicule. Mandane is the well-behaved and devoted heroine and captive that she is in the *Grand Cyrus*. Aryante is a somewhat bewildered warrior, bullied by his mother, rebuffed by Mandane, and finally overcome despite

<sup>18</sup> Though defeated by Cyrus, Tomyris still holds Mandane in captivity. When Cyrus's ambassador offers peace if she will surrender Mandane, she refuses on the ground that she wishes to prevent the union of Medes and Persians, but really because, as she admits to her confidant, Gélonide, she loves Cyrus and is jealous of Mandane. Aryante begs her to spare the captive princess as he wishes to marry her. Tomyris agrees to this marriage, but Aryante distrusts his mother and talks of revolt. At this point Cyrus attacks and is captured. Aryante would put him to death, but Tomyris tries to win his love. She threatens to kill Mandane unless Cyrus persuades her to marry Aryante. Cyrus conquers his emotions enough to give this advice and to make Mandane believe he no longer loves her. Thinking that Cyrus will marry Tomyris, Mandane agrees to accept Aryante, but, when she sees this prince, she urges him to separate Cyrus and Tomyris, then insists upon seeing the Persian king again. Tomyris agrees to the interview in order to have an excuse for executing Mandane. The lovers meet and find that their love is as strong as ever. Each takes the blame when Tomyris questions them. She orders Mandane to be executed, but Aryante rescues her and offers to give her back to Tomyris if Cyrus is put to death. The Persians again attack, this time successfully. Tomyris bids Cyrus choose between her and death. He chooses death. Aryante is killed in battle and Mandane is set free, but Tomyris has Cyrus slain and his head plunged in a vase filled with blood. She then commits suicide.



his threats. Though the tone of the tragedy is somber, its situations are at times close to comedy, especially when Tomyris seeks to rationalize her love and when Cyrus and Mandane quarrel, then renew their expressions of affection. Cyrus even makes one think of the *Fourberies de Scapin* when he exclaims (II, 5), "Que venois-je chercher dans ce climat barbare." In short, the tragedy is a curious combination of sentimentality, violence, and horror, presented in accordance with classical regulations. It was acted only six times, Nov. 23 to Dec. 3, 1706.

The dedicatory poem published with her fourth tragedy indicates that Mlle Barbier gave up literary composition after the failure of *Tomyris*, but returned to it through the encouragement of d'Argenson. Moreover, he gratified her by weeping when she read to him *LA MORT DE JULES CÉSAR*.<sup>19</sup> Women are still important, but they do not have the two leading rôles. The source is Plutarch's *Life of Caesar*, from which most of the characters, the main facts, and some of the details are derived. The principal additions are Calpurnia's consulting an oracle, Caesar's matrimonial scheme, his being warned about the conspiracy by Brutus, his suspecting both Antony and Brutus, and his receiving a crown just before he is murdered. Much emphasis is placed upon Octavia and Portia, especially upon the part these ladies, as well as their lovers, play in the efforts made to save Caesar or to bring about his murder.<sup>20</sup>

The tragedy is thoroughly classical in form. The action requires only a few hours and takes place in a room of Caesar's palace. The various themes lead up to the main event, Caesar's murder, which is reported almost at the end of the tragedy. The play must have been criticized chiefly for the delineation of character, as the author makes a special effort in her preface

<sup>19</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1710, 12° (an edition that the catalogue of the British Museum misdates 1707, probably as a result of confusion with the date of *Tomyris*) Dedicated to d'Argenson. Republished as indicated above, note 2. An Italian translation appeared in 1724, Dutch translations, in 1728 and 1730.

<sup>20</sup> Caesar wishes to be made king. He has the support of Octavia, his adopted niece, and of Antony, but he fears the senate's opposition. He has shown favor to Brutus, who, he knows, loves Portia, Cato's daughter. As he seeks to weaken the opposition, he proposes to marry Brutus to Octavia, Portia to Antony. Brutus pretends to agree to this proposition in order to keep Caesar from discovering the conspiracy formed by himself and other senators, but by doing so he angers Portia. To soothe her he is obliged to tell her about the plot. Octavia obediently accepts Caesar's proposal, though she regrets the loss of Antony, who protests so openly to the army that he is suspected of sedition. Troubled by evil omens, Caesar learns from his wife's dream and from an oracle he has consulted that his dearest friends are conspiring against him. He questions Antony and Brutus, who deny that they are guilty, accepts their statements, and generously allows them to marry the women they love. In return Antony decides to make Caesar king, while Brutus feels such remorse that he sends an anonymous note telling Caesar of the plot, but without naming the conspirators. Caesar again consults the two men. Antony advises him to go to the senate house, Brutus, to stay away from it. Caesar goes. Brutus learns that Caesar has crowned himself, hurries to the senate house, draws his dagger, and joins the assassins. Caesar cries, "Et toi, mon fils, auras!" He covers his face and is stabbed to death. Antony promises to place him among the immortals.

to defend her characterization of Caesar, Brutus, and Octavia. Accused of making Caesar fear death too much and of keeping him in a state of continual agitation, she explained that her protagonist dreaded, not ordinary death, but the death of a tyrant, that he feared to lose in a day the labor of years, and that he was moved by omens and influenced by Calpurnia, who was no ordinary woman. She added that she could not have roused pity and terror if she had made Caesar "insensible à ses propres malheurs." She insists that she did not subordinate him to Brutus, who is moved to remorse by Caesar's generosity, and that Brutus will be considered the greater of the two only by those who put devotion to liberty above other considerations. As for Octavia, since history represents her as obeying her sense of duty rather than her feelings, Mlle Barbier did not feel that it was proper to make her, in imitation of Racine, "une Hermione ou une Roxane."

According to this apology, she violated history in order to make Caesar more dramatic than he was, but she did not dare to do so in the case of Octavia. This is the reverse of the familiar classical doctrine that an author must not alter the character of a well-known person, for Caesar is certainly far better known than Octavia. One is led to suspect that Mlle Bernard's real reason was that she preferred to attribute weakness to a man rather than to a woman. The result is that it is hard to understand how a wavering and superstitious politician could have mastered Rome, or how an audience could take much interest in Octavia, who allows herself without protest to be transferred from one prospective husband to another.

Mlle Barbier was far from writing a political pamphlet. There is no discussion of autocratic or of democratic rule. Even Brutus does not object to Caesar's power. The only point is that at Rome prejudice against kings existed and that, when a dictator attempted to make himself king, certain people, like Antony and Octavia, approved, while others, like Brutus and Portia, disapproved strongly enough to condemn him to death.

Portia is more bitterly opposed to Caesar than Brutus is. She has inherited her father's hatred of the dictator and refuses any sort of compromise, while Brutus goes so far as to warn Caesar of the conspiracy and decides to help murder him only when he hears that he has put on a crown. Octavia and Antony are similarly contrasted, she obeying Caesar blindly, he having a special reason for making Caesar king, as an oracle has predicted that only under the leadership of a king will Rome conquer Persia.

The play is unlike earlier tragedies on the subject, but it seems to have been influenced by *Cinna* in the scenes in which Caesar consults Antony and Brutus. The author's feminism is shown in the fact that each of the three principal men is deeply influenced by a woman: Caesar by Calpurnia's dream and her consulting an oracle; Brutus, by Portia's uncompromising

attitude; Antony, by the loss of Octavia and by the permission he ultimately receives to marry her. The *merveilleux* has a larger part than in the author's earlier tragedies. She claims that her last three acts won more applause than she had expected, an admission that the first two were less successful. The fourth and fifth are, indeed, more dramatic than the earlier acts, which are largely devoted to plans for marriages in which we take little interest. Where matters of large political consequence are involved, Caesar's schemes for getting support by arranging marriages seem absurdly out of place.

Like *Tommyrs*, the tragedy had only six performances, but, as the author received from them over 400 francs, some of them must have been well attended.<sup>21</sup> A lengthy criticism by "D. L.,"<sup>22</sup> written not long after the play was acted, was published by Mlle Barbier in the second volume of her *Saisons littéraires*. The critic praises the author for her constructive imagination, for verses that he considers worthy of Corneille, and for the historically accurate characters of Brutus, Portia, and Antony, but he has no kind words for the portrayal of Caesar and Octavia, as the former is easily frightened, his niece cold and tiresome. He holds that the oracle should be mentioned in the second act rather than the fourth and objects to the fact that the spectators have to wait for this fourth act before their interest is aroused. He also points out anachronisms and violations of the proprieties.<sup>23</sup>

It is with this play that ends the career of Mlle Barbier as an author of tragedies.<sup>24</sup> She had composed a larger number of them than any French woman who had preceded her. She suffered from her admiration for Corneille and Mlle de Scudéry, as the novelist led her into the absurd romanticism of *Tommyrs* and the dramatist lured her into attempting political themes that she was unable to develop. In her most successful tragedy, *Arrie et Pétus*, these influences are less apparent than elsewhere. Her creative ability, her taste, and her gift of expression are less striking than her knowledge of classical technique and her ingenuity in plot construction.

<sup>21</sup> The frères Parfaict, XV, 26, quote the *Registres* of the Comédie Française to the effect that the play was given from Nov 26 to Dec 7, 1709, and that "Mlle Barbier de Vaulx" received from it 433 francs, 16 sous.

<sup>22</sup> Analyzed by the frères Parfaict, XV, 27-34.

<sup>23</sup> Voltaire showed little knowledge of the play. He referred to it contemptuously (Moland edition, III, 310) as a tragedy in which Caesar and Brutus are "amoureux et jaloux," though neither is jealous and only Brutus is "amoureux" in the sense that Voltaire implies. He declares that Mlle Barbier had as a collaborator "un des plus beaux génies de la France," a reference to Fontenelle, according to Moland. There is no other evidence that Fontenelle had anything to do with it. Voltaire may well have confused this tragedy with another written by a woman about another Brutus, Mlle Bernard's *Brutus*, in which Fontenelle is said to have collaborated. La Harpe, *op cit*, XI, 267, repeats Voltaire's error about Caesar and Brutus and follows him in assigning the tragedy to Fontenelle and Mlle Barbier.

<sup>24</sup> Unless the "nouvelle pièce de théâtre de sa façon" that, on Oct. 2, 1710, she had come to read to Mme Le Hui was a tragedy. Cf H Omont, "Journal parisien d'Antoine Galland," *Mémoires de la Société de l'histoire de Paris*, XLVI (1919), 86.

But she must be remembered for the brave fight she made in behalf of her sex. Her Tomyris puts her Cyrus to death. Her Arrie, Cornélie, and Portia proclaim to hesitant males their duty. Her leading women never compromise their ideals. But the presentation of their strength, though gratifying to feminists, does not compensate for poverty of imagination or mediocrity of expression.

The only other woman who wrote tragedies for the Parisian stage at this time was Madeleine-Angélique Poisson (1684-1770),<sup>25</sup> daughter of Paul Poisson and wife of a Spaniard, de Gomez. She was the author of many *contes* and turned quite naturally to dramatic composition as her grandfather had written plays and her parents and grandparents, as well as her brother Philippe, were or had been professional actors. The first of her four plays was *HABIS*,<sup>26</sup> derived, according to the frères Parfaict, from a tale by Mlle de La Roche-Guilhem. They declare that she took from it her subject, the "marche" of her action, her chief persons, and the dénouement, which they consider the most successful part of the play. They reproach her for asserting that she wrote it "seule, sans aucun secours," but, as French tragedies regularly had sources, she must have meant, not that her play had no source, but that she had no collaborator. She was probably replying to the charge that she had one. As similar accusations had been made against Catherine Bernard and Mlle Barbier, it seems that there was considerable support in France for the belief that a woman, unaided by a man, was incapable of dramatic composition.

Except for the correctness of the form, which strictly fulfills classical requirements, the play resembles a romantic tragi-comedy. An oracle constitutes an important motif. The hero, condemned to death when a child and rescued from the sea, arouses his relatives' emotions before they know who he is and is recognized with the help of a birthmark. The happy ending is brought about by a sentimental change in the attitude of the principal villain.<sup>27</sup> The tale from which the play was derived was probably inspired

<sup>25</sup> Cf. the *Biographie générale* and the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale.

<sup>26</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1714, 12°. Dedicated to the Duke of Bavaria. Republished in the author's *Œuvres mêlées*, Paris, Prault, 1724, and in the *Nouveau théâtre français*, Utrecht, Néaulme, 1736. A Dutch translation appeared in 1718. Her other plays were *Marsidic*, which was not acted at the Comédie Française, *Sémiramis*, acted there in 1716, and *Cléarque*, acted there in 1717.

<sup>27</sup> Melgoris, king of a Spanish tribe, had married Axiane, his daughter, to the King of Gétulie. When she bore a son, Habis, an oracle had informed Melgoris that the child would grow into a hero and deprive him of his throne. To save his own life, Melgoris had his daughter locked up and her child thrown into the sea. The King of Gétulie, thinking that both had perished, killed himself, but the boy, rescued by a minister of state, Phestrès, and brought up in a wild country, distinguished himself in fighting against brigands, learned from his guardian that he was the son of Axiane, and won the favor of her father. Known as Hespérus, he led his grandfather's troupes to the aid of the Garamantes and brought back Princess Erixène for Melgoris to marry. Though the princess prefers Hespérus, she agrees

by Herodotus's account of Cyrus's youth, a subject dramatized by Danchet eight years before Mme Gomez's tragedy appeared, but, if this is true, geographical and historical names have been completely altered.

The only preparation for the king's final change of heart is found in a slight feeling of remorse that is assigned to him and in his growing affection for his grandson, but this is hardly consistent with his continued cruelty towards his daughter, kept in confinement for twenty years. During this period her maternal instinct has remained fresh, but she has not learned prudence and is almost tricked by her father into revealing her son's identity. This noble son and his beloved Erixène are but superficially characterized. A more interesting character is Phesrès, the wily statesman, who works in the interests of Habis while retaining the confidence of the king. He is foiled only by Habis himself. His is a type found in *Amasis* and in several other tragedies of the period. The only thing worth noting about the minor characters is that one of them, Erixène's confidant, is given nothing to say.

The author preserves the unities, maintains suspense almost to the end of the play, introduces elements of the *merveilleux*, and shows on the stage three scenes of recognition. Perhaps these last and the striking, if sentimental ending are what brought the tragedy remarkable success. It was acted twenty-five times between April 17 and June 19, 1714, continued to be performed in the two years that followed, and was revived in 1732-4. As there were in all forty-eight performances, it was acted more frequently than any other tragedy of the period except two by Crébillon and two by La Grange-Chancel. Mme Gomez was encouraged to write other tragedies, but they were most unsuccessful. Her original good fortune must have been due to the acting, or to some fancy of her audiences, weary, perhaps, of more somber tragedies and enjoying romance and scenes of recognition.

However this may be, the part played by women in French dramatic history has now become less negligible than ever. There had been great actresses in the seventeenth century. Their traditions were carried over into the eighteenth by la Beauval, la Duclos, and la Desmares. There had been influential women who showed interest in the theater. Mme de Maintenon, the duchesse de Bourgogne, the duchesse du Maine, and the princesse de

to do her duty Hespérus makes himself known to his confidant, then to his mother, then to Erixène, who assures him that he needs no high rank to win her love. Phesrès prepares an elaborate intrigue, spreads the report that Habis lives, and rouses the people, who besiege the palace. Hespérus, however, calms them, arrests the leaders, and seeks to persuade Phesrès to escape, but the minister allows himself to be seized by the king, since Hesperus has ruined his plans. Melgoris is greatly attracted to Hesperus, but he insists upon knowing where Habis is. Hespérus promises to tell him, argues that Habis is entirely innocent, and finally makes himself known. Axiane pleads for him. Melgoris is deeply moved, spares Habis, and, to fulfill the oracle, abdicates in his favor. To complete the sacrifice, Melgoris gives Erixène to the new king.

Conti were active patrons of drama in the last years of Louis XIV. It remained for Mlle Barbier and Mme Gomez to replace Mlle Desjardins, Mme Deshoulières, and Mlle Bernard as dramatists. It may be said of them that Mlle Barbier composed a larger number of tragedies than any of her feminine predecessors, and that Mme Gomez produced the tragedy that was the most frequently acted of all written by women before the end of 1715.

## CHAPTER VI

### BIBLICAL TRAGEDIES: DUCHÉ, NADAL, GENEST

The interest aroused in Biblical tragedies by Mme de Maintenon's enlisting the services of Racine for Saint-Cyr and the resulting popularity at court of *Esther* and *Athalie* had attracted other authors. Boyer had composed *Jephthé* and *Judith* for Saint-Cyr, Duché, *Jonathas*. The actors of the Comédie Française had played *Judith* successfully in 1695-6. It is consequently not surprising that Duché should compose two other Biblical tragedies and that one of these, *Absalon*, after being played at court, should be accepted by the Parisian actors. They also played Genest's *Joseph*, after it had been acted at the home of the duchesse du Maine, and Nadal's *Saul*, which they were the first to give. They subsequently produced Nadal's *Hérode*, which may be regarded as a Biblical play since it is derived from Josephus and two Biblical characters take part in it. These five tragedies, two by Nadal, two by Duché, and one by Genest, constitute nearly one sixth of the extant Parisian tragedies brought out in 1701-15, a surprisingly large number if one remembers that they appeared on the eve of the Régence.

Duché de Vancy had begun his career as a dramatist by composing in 1699 for Saint-Cyr *Jonathas*,<sup>1</sup> a play given five times at the Comédie Française in 1714. He wrote two other tragedies, the first of which, *DÉBORA*,<sup>2</sup> was acted in 1701 at Saint-Cyr, according to the *Bib. du th fr*, but never at Paris. The chief source is Chapters IV and V of Judges. A few borrowings are made from other books of the Bible, while the account of the storm that helped rout the Canaanites comes from Josephus. The author keeps the main persons and events of Judges, but he adds a number of characters and a plot of jealousy, in which are involved Heber the Kenite, Jail, Sisera, and the latter's Hebrew wife, Axa, whose name had been given by Boyer to the heroine of his *Jephthé*.

The first three of these characters are called Haber, Jahel, and Sisara. The last of them is an ambitious general who has sought to strengthen his position among the Canaanites by marrying an Israelite. He first tried to marry Jahel, then, as she refused his offer, married Axa, whom he now proposes to repudiate if Jahel will change her mind. He is presented as a

<sup>1</sup> Cf my *op cit*, Part IV, pp 325-7

<sup>2</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1712, 12°. Republished in the *Théâtre français* of 1737

calculating villain, cool to Axa's passionate outbursts, energetic, and heartless. Haber, who has adopted the religion of Israel, remains faithful to Jahel even when he believes she has ceased to care for him. She is represented as pious, patriotic, devoted to Haber, not at all the person to nail a former lover to the earth with a tent-peg. With her is contrasted Axa, ambitious, devoted to Sisara, for whom she has given up her country and her religion, jealous, murderous, and pathetic. Débora, on the other hand, is wise and serene, a Joan of Arc who foresees the triumph of her cause, but who has lost the power of poetic expression that she displays in the Book of Judges.\*

There are too many characters to allow the author to give all of them distinct personalities. The double love-intrigue seems quite out of place in what should have been primarily a patriotic and religious production. The plot is constructed with little skill. Most of the situations that might have been impressive are kept behind the scenes. While there are references to earlier events recorded in the Bible, little effort is made to give the tragedy a Biblical atmosphere, or to reproduce other Hebraic metaphors than those found in a few remarks about broken reeds, whited sepulchres, and sands of the sea. The author's respect for the unities of time and place hampered him considerably. He showed ingenuity, but no great regard for probability in combining the various threads of his action in such a way as to bring about the deaths of Sisara and Axa, the marriage of Jahel and Haber, and the triumph of Israel.

In favor at court and writing for Saint-Cyr, Duché managed to slip into his tragedy a passage that seems intended as praise of Louis XIV. The King of Canaan, according to Sisara, can be made to see through the eyes of his general. He is not the ideal monarch who sees things for himself. He is not like the king referred to in the following lines (II, 5)

\* Eliab and Amram declare their loyalty to Débora, who has been restored to power. Eliab had been forced by the Canaanites to break the engagement of his daughter, Jahel, to Haber, "chef des Cincéens." Jahel had obediently pretended disloyalty, and Haber had departed with his men. Rejected by Jahel, Sisara has married Amram's daughter, Axa, who had adopted her husband's religion and persuaded him to march against her people. Debora sends for Barac, who has assembled an army. Haber assures Jahel that he has brought 12,000 men to help the Hebrews. Sisara threatens to destroy the Hebrews unless in three days they hand over the Altar and the Ark. As Amram has little power, Sisara wishes to divorce Axa and marry Jahel. When his plans are discovered by his wife, she plots Jahel's murder, reproaches her husband to no avail, and warns Debora that Jahel may be carried off. Debora has Jahel taken by her father to a place of safety while she goes with Barac to attack the Canaanites, whose destruction she has foretold. Sisara arrests Haber, learns that Eliab and Jahel have been captured by his men, and goes off to battle. Eliab foils an attempt to murder Jahel. Haber makes his escape and with Barac utterly defeats the enemy. Fleeing from the battle, Sisara enters a tent in which Jahel has been placed, seeks rest, and falls into a state of unconsciousness, whereupon Jahel drives an iron tent peg into his head. Débora, who has been captured and left with Axa, is rescued. Axa kills herself on her husband's corpse. Jahel triumphs and will marry Haber.



Tu me parle d'un Roi de qui la vigilance  
 En tous lieux, quoiqu'absent, fait sentir sa prudence;  
 Qui bornant le crédit qu'il donne à mes pareils,  
 Limite leur pouvoir & pese leurs conseils,  
 Et qui par sa sagesse & son vaste génie,  
 Seul de tous ses Etats entretient l'harmonie

Duché's next and last play is greatly superior to his earlier productions. The subject of *ABSAŁON*<sup>4</sup> may have been suggested by Mme de Maintenon, as it was once supposed at court that Racine was going to dramatize it.<sup>5</sup> If William III had died only a few months earlier than he did, seekers after historical parallels would probably have seen in the play an allusion to James II's expulsion from England by his son-in-law and the latter's death. As a matter of fact, the only political implications are in the dedication, where Louis XIV is praised for keeping his word and making peace, though, by doing so, he allowed his enemies to combine against him anew.

In the preface Duché admits altering the Biblical account (II Samuel) in several respects. He says that he made Absalom penitent and attributed most of his errors to Achitophel in order that the spectators might pity the protagonist and realize that similar weaknesses might lead them into similar crimes, for "tel est le but de la Tragedie, elle doit plaire, mais en même tems elle doit instruire, & son principal objet est de purger les passions." He admits that, contrary to scripture, he changed the place of Absalom's death and added Thamar, whose rôle helped in the success of the play. Somewhat troubled by his alterations, he consulted prominent churchmen and was reassured.

He makes more changes than he mentions, for he brings Absalom, his family, and Achitophel into David's camp, has David prefer Achitophel's advice to Joab's, arranges for the latter a plan of battle, and makes Absalom's wife a descendant of Saul. Moved by his idea of the proprieties, he avoids referring to David's polygamous life and to Absalom's cohabiting with his father's concubines. Respect for the unity of place, need for feminine rôles, and desire to bring important characters together on the stage account for many of his alterations.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Paris, Anisson, 1702, 4°, *priv* (for publications of the Académie des Inscriptions), Dec 12, 1701, approbation, June 1, 1702, registered, June 20, 1702, *achevé*, July 15, 1702. Dedicated to Louis XIV. Republished, Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1712, veuve Ribou, 1730, in the *Nouveau théâtre françois*, Utrecht, Néaulme, 1735, in the *Théâtre françois* of 1737, in Petitot's *Répertoire* of 1803, in the *Auteurs du second ordre*, Paris, 1808, and in the *Répertoires* of 1818 and 1822-3. A Dutch translation appeared in 1741, an Italian, in 1751.

<sup>5</sup> Cf my *op cit*, Part IV, p 299.

<sup>6</sup> The scene is laid in a camp near Manhaim (Mahanaïm) in Gilead, whither David has fled from a rebellion ostensibly headed by Amasa. He has with him Absalom and Achitophel, as well as Joab. The last of these advises David to attack,

David is represented as an aged king, easily influenced, pious, kindly, devoted to his wayward son. Neither his heroic, his amorous, nor his artistic qualities are revealed. Fortunately he has the support of sturdy Joab and of cunning Cisai, who do much to determine the course of events. Pitted against these three legitimists are three rebels, Absalom, Achitophel, and Zamri. The last of these is merely a confidant and messenger, but Achitophel is represented as the brains of the opposition. He shrewdly influences both David and Absalom, takes part in the fighting, and is employed, like Œnone in *Phèdre*, to diminish the guilt of the protagonist.

Absalom, rather than David, is the central character. He is handsome, faithful to his wife, devoted to his daughter, but ambitious, intensely hostile to Joab, moved to sudden anger, easily influenced by Achitophel. His plan is not to kill, or even to dethrone his father, but to secure the succession for himself. He admits his fear that his older brother may reign, as well as his dislike of Joab, but he lays upon Achitophel most of the responsibility for the rebellion. Wavering between revolt and submission, he is caught in the web he has helped to spin. Despite his efforts to keep out of the battle, he is led into it by his hatred of Joab. His defeat brings about his fatal encounter with the oak. His repentance, which causes him to par-

but Achitophel urges him to await reinforcements that are to come next day. David accepts Achitophel's advice and urges Absalom to be friendly with Joab. Achitophel reveals to Zamri the facts that Amasa is expected to attack the next night, that the men of Ephraim will turn against David, and that Absalom will be made king after allowing his father to escape. Cisai now reaches camp with Absalom's mother, wife, and daughter. The wife, Thares, as a descendant of Saul, is unjustly suspected of urging Absalom to rebel. When she finds that he cannot clear himself, she persuades David to swear that, if there is a traitor in the camp, his wife and children shall be tortured and burned. Then she gives herself as a hostage into Joab's keeping. Her conduct nearly causes Absalom to give up his plans, but Achitophel persuades him to join the rebels and promises that Seba, whom David trusts, will, with the Ephraimites, restore to Absalom his wife and daughter. Thares now informs her husband that David has just heard that Amasa's army is proclaiming Absalom king. She begs him to renounce his plan and, when he urges her to escape with him, tells him that she is a prisoner. He leaves after promising to rescue her. A letter, brought for Absalom, falls into her hands. Further proof of her husband's designs is given David by Joab, who asks him not to trust former followers of Saul, but to have confidence in Seba and the Ephraimites. The queen accuses Thares of complicity in the rebellion, but Thares produces the letter that had been intended for Absalom. Written by Seba himself, it shows that he has been plotting to make Absalom king. Cisai reports that Achitophel has joined Absalom and that Seba and Amasa are advancing. David decides to retreat into the city and to have a talk with Absalom, whose wife and daughter will be put to death if he turns against his father. The interview takes place after Absalom's daughter, Thamar, has begged him to save her mother. Absalom admits his hostility to Joab and his desire to be named David's successor. His father pardons him, but insists that the chiefs of the conspiracy be given up. Absalom agrees, but, learning that Joab has driven Amasa back, he goes to see the rebel leaders. We soon hear that Joab, after luring the rebels on, had turned and defeated them, that Achitophel has hanged himself in a cave, and that Absalom, caught by his hair in the boughs of an oak, has been mortally wounded by Joab. Brought on the stage, Absalom accepts his fate, declares that God has guided Joab's hand, entrusts his family to David, and dies.

don Joab, is introduced to make the audience pity him despite his attack on his father's authority.

Duché introduced into his cast three women: David's queen, suspicious of her daughter-in-law, whom she blames for Absalom's rebellion, but subsequently penitent for having suspected her; Tharès, accused as a descendant of Saul of working for David's defeat, but in reality intensely loyal to the king and willing to sacrifice her life in order to prevent her husband from rebelling, and Thamar, who could have been omitted so far as the plot is concerned, though she is connected with the action by helping to motivate her father's decisions. This last character was probably added in order to give a rôle to the duchesse de Bourgogne.

The play is well constructed. Absalom's character is highly dramatic. His four interviews with David, Achitophel's scheming, and the part played by Tharès are especially effective. There is no scene of recognition, but there is a *coup de théâtre* when Tharès clears herself by producing the letter. The exposition is made dramatic, suspense is well preserved, the account of the battle is fairly brief, and the material is arranged in such a way that interest is maintained to the end of the tragedy.

According to the frères Parfaict,<sup>7</sup> the play was written to be acted at Saint-Cyr, where it met with such success that the duchesse de Bourgogne decided to give it at Versailles. She had it rehearsed on Dec. 29, 1701, and on Jan 3, 5, and 18, 1702. On the 19th Louis XIV returned from Marly earlier than usual in order to see it performed in the "cabinet de Madame de Maintenon, où l'on avoit fait faire un fort joli théâtre."<sup>8</sup> The duchesse played Thamar in a dress embroidered with all the crown jewels—a singular costume for a fugitive in an army camp. The duc d'Orléans played David; the comte and comtesse d'Ayen, Absalom and Tharès, Mlle de Melun, David's wife. Other rôles were taken by Michel Baron, who probably played Achitophel, by the young comte de Noailles, and by some of his father's servants. The play was acted on the same stage on Feb 3 and 22. Louis XIV and Mme de Maintenon were so much pleased with these performances that the king sent the author 1000 francs and Mme de Maintenon sent him 100 pistoles.

After Duché's death his widow obtained permission to have the tragedy acted at the Comédie Française, where David was played by Ponteuil, Absalom, by Beaubourg; Joab, by Philippe Poisson, Achitophel, by Guérin; Tharès, by la Duclos; Thamar, by la de Nesle. The frères Parfaict, who indicate the distribution of these rôles, cite an article devoted to the play

<sup>7</sup> XV, 109

<sup>8</sup> Dangeau, *Journal*, under the dates mentioned

in the *Mercure de France* of August, 1730, which finds some negligence in the versification, prefers Acts II and IV to the others, considers Absalom's hatred of Joab poorly motivated, the queen and Thamar useless, and the queen's change of attitude towards Tharès unexplained. This last statement shows that the critic had only a superficial knowledge of the play, for it is obvious that, when Tharès shows the letter to David, she both incriminates Absalom and Séba and alters the opinion that the queen had previously held in regard to her. The frères Parfaict praise highly the rôle of Tharès and the interview in Act IV between David and Absalom. The tragedy was acted twelve times in 1712, from April 7 to 29. It had in all thirty-nine performances at the Comédie Française, remaining in the repertory until 1755.

La Harpe praised it highly,<sup>9</sup> though he considered the queen's rôle useless, David not sufficiently active in the last act, and the account of Absalom's death too long. He found the action well developed in the first four acts, the characters well drawn, the scenes in which Tharès offers herself as a hostage and in which David interviews Absalom most effective. He quoted from it at length and regretted that it was no longer acted. *Absalon* is certainly superior to its author's other plays and, I should say, to all other Biblical tragedies written in the twenty-five years that followed the production at court of *Athalie*.

Duché's principal early eighteenth-century rival was Augustin Nadal (1664-1740), a native of Poitiers who was preceptor in the home of the marquis d'Etampes and secretary to the duc d'Aumont. These connections introduced him into the circle of the duc d'Orléans, Louis XIV's brother, and enabled him to visit England. In 1708-9 and in 1711 he was an editor of *le Nouveau Mercure*. He was a member of the Académie des Inscriptions. He wrote some occasional verse, a brief imitation of *Paradise Lost*, treatises on tragedy and on Roman customs, eulogies of Racine, attacks on Voltaire, and five tragedies derived from the Bible and Josephus. He showed considerable knowledge of dramatic technique and of French seventeenth-century dramatists, but little originality in the form or content of his plays.<sup>10</sup>

In his first tragedy, *SAUL*,<sup>11</sup> he sought to bring up to date the play of

<sup>9</sup> *Op. cit.*, VIII, 173-86.

<sup>10</sup> For his life of the *Biographie générale*. His works were collected in an edition in three volumes, Paris, Briasson, 1738. Besides *Saul* and *Hiérode* his tragedies were *Antiochus ou les Machabées*, acted on Dec. 16, 1722, published in 1723, *Mariamne*, acted on Feb. 15, 1725, published in 1725, and *Osarphus ou Moïse*, the performance of which was prevented in 1727, though it was allowed to be published the following year.

<sup>11</sup> "Tragédie tirée de l'Écriture Sainte," Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1705, 12°, *priv.*, April 4, registered, April 21. In signing the approbation of March 20, Danchet referred to the saintliness of the subject and the beauty of the verses. Dedicated to the duc d'Orléans, whose appreciation of literature is praised. Republished, Paris, veuve Ribou, 1731, and in the author's *Œuvres* of 1738. An Italian translation was

the same name by Du Ryer. In his preface he ranked his theme with that of *Cedipus*, quoted *Ecclesiasticus*, enumerated Saul's offenses, and explained that he added the episode of Asser in order to increase David's peril and that he brought David into Saul's camp so that he could bring about his reconciliation with the king. He admitted that he had altered the Biblical narrative by referring to Jerusalem as if the city were obedient to Saul, but he claimed that a poet need not be so accurate as an historian. Those who consider it a sacrilege to make "la moindre alteration des circonstances tant soit peu considerables de l'Ecriture Sainte, nous ont appris par leur exemple à négliger quelquefois leurs préceptes" These words repeat almost literally the attack that Boyer, in the preface of his *Jephthé*, had made upon Racine's *Esther*.<sup>12</sup> Not only does Nadal make no acknowledgment here of his debt to Boyer, but, when he quotes the passage in the preface of his *Osarphus*, he attributes it only to himself.

When he composed his play he made a similarly unacknowledged borrowing from Du Ryer. He selected the same theme. Saul's sins, his consultation with the witch, and his death in battle with the Philistines. Like Du Ryer he introduced the question of Saul's relations with David and his fear that Jerusalem would revolt, he brought Michol into her father's camp, and he provided David with a rival for her love. There are a number of close similarities.<sup>13</sup> Nadal's chief changes are in technique, in certain names, in the fact that he borrows from the Bible charges made against Saul that Du Ryer had not mentioned, that he keeps the interview with Samuel's ghost behind the scenes, and that he brings David upon the stage. The result is to make the tragedy more technically correct, the action in the first two acts more rapid, but to present Saul as a far less appealing character and to lose much of the power and picturesqueness of the older play.<sup>14</sup>

published in 1756 The play has been studied by M. A. Thiel, *la Figure de Saul*, Amsterdam, H. J. Paris, 1926, pp. 59-67

<sup>12</sup> Cf. my op. cit., Part IV, p. 319

<sup>13</sup> Most of these have been pointed out in my edition of Du Ryer's *Saul*, Baltimore, 1931 Cf. Du Ryer's *Saul*, v. 991, "ce peuple saint par tes Loix égorge," and Nadal's *Saul*, I, 1, "de Ministres saints quatre vingts égorger" Cf. also in my edition lines 539-40, 560, 839-40, 897-900, 905 b, 943-4, 952-7, 1043, 1228, and the notes on them that quote similar verses from Nadal's tragedy The first act of Du Ryer's play ends with Michol's couplet

Quand je parle pour toy dans vn mal si pressant,  
Est-ce pour vn coupable, ou pour vn innocent

The 1705 edition of Nadal's *Saul* reads

Si je t'implore ô Ciel' dans un mal si pressant,  
Est-ce pour un coupable, ou pour un innocent?

In the edition of 1738 Nadal, possibly to conceal the borrowing, as a new edition of Du Ryer's play had come out the year before, altered the couplet to

Daigne m'apprendre, ô Ciel, dans un mal si pressant,  
Si David est coupable, ou s'il est innocent

<sup>14</sup> Jonathan fears that Saul, having disobeyed God, may be defeated by the Philistines

The king is described as having suffered from the silence of Heaven ever since he had disobeyed by sparing Agag, killing the priests who defended David, and offering a sacrifice without waiting for Samuel. He is a weak and suspicious person, influenced both by his children and by Asser. Instead of preparing for battle, he consults a witch. Unwilling to accept his fate, he still seeks to destroy David and is cruel enough to assign the task to Jonathan. It is only when the battle is lost and he has given himself a fatal wound that he wishes David well. His death was by no means inevitable, for, if David and Michol escaped, Saul might well have done so. Nadal's desire to bring David on the stage weakened his presentation of his protagonist and the ending of his tragedy.

David is represented as a maligned and persecuted hero, faithful to Michol and to Saul. It is not explained why so accomplished a warrior takes no part in the battle after his soldiers have rescued him. Jonathan shows his devotion to David and seeks to protect his father, but he criticizes and disobeys Saul, as does Michol. Asser is shown as David's unworthy rival and Saul's evil genius.

The action takes place in some twelve hours and within Saul's tent. We no longer see, as in Du Ryer's tragedy, the witch's cave and the ghost. Nadal thought it more effective to bring the witch to Saul and allow her to report the ghost's words, uttered behind the scene.

Dans la Tragedie de Saul, qui est de moi, il y a une reconnaissance qui quoique nouvelle au Théâtre, eut un succès assez grand pour en parler avec quelque confiance

unless he is rescued by David. In order to reconcile them he has brought to the camp his sister, Michol, David's wife, but there is danger from Saul himself, whose mental condition may make him uncompromising, and from his confidant Asser, whose family has aspired to the throne and who is in love with Michol. Saul has just been persuaded by his children to recall David when he hears that he is advancing against him with the Philistines. Michol is distressed by the report that David is to marry a Philistine princess. Saul's subjects are on the verge of revolt. When David is brought in by Jonathan, he is accused by Saul of seeking with the enemy's support to seize the throne. David denies that he is doing so and declares that he has refused to marry a Philistine, that he is willing to negotiate peace with the enemy, or, if Saul decides to fight, that he will support him with his 600 followers. Saul now restores David to favor, but he is influenced by Asser to doubt the wisdom of this step. Unable to reach a decision, or to get an answer from Heaven, he sends Asser to find a sorceress. The witch is brought to Saul's tent, where the king, disguised, reassures her as to her safety and asks her to consult Samuel's ghost. She begins her incantations, sees the earth shake and an old man appear. She learns from him that her questioner is Saul. Before we are allowed to see the ghost the séance is interrupted by Jonathan. When Saul returns to the stage, we learn that Samuel has told him that he is to be dethroned for sparing Agag and that David will succeed him. Saul bids Jonathan kill David but the prince confides in his friend and urges him to leave the camp. The Philistines attack. Arrested by Asser, David is rescued by his own men, while Saul's soldiers revolt. The Philistines triumph. When Asser asks Michol to follow him, she refuses. Saul, disarmed, asks Asser to kill him. Michol and David beg Saul to escape with them. We learn that both Jonathan and Asser have been killed. Saul commits suicide after admitting to David that he has been unjust and urging him to rule wisely.

le changement d'état & le dénouement le suivit de près . . elle conjura l'ame du Prophete, dont la voix s'éleva du fond de la Terre pour lui faire entendre qu'elle parloit au Roi même qu'elle venoit d'outrager l'évocation étoit terrible, le phantôme toujours prêt à paroître, jettoit par-là dans les esprits plus d'épouvante qu'il n'eût fait en se montrant lui-même. l'apparition fut coupée par le[s] cris de la Pythonisse

Mais que m'apprend sa voix en montant jusqu'à moi?

Ah Dieux, je suis perdue! & vous êtes le Roi

La premiere représentation de cette Scene a été l'époque d'un coup de Théâtre, j'ose dire des plus éclatans, entre le célèbre Salé, & la Demoiselle Desmares, aussibien que la perfection de leur jeu l'Actrice eût [sic] besoin de toutes ses graces & de toute sa beauté pour ne pas faire peur; l'altération des traits de Salé, & sa terreur ont laissé au Théâtre des tons de tradition, qu'on y respecte encore<sup>15</sup>

Nadal had no justification for calling this recognition new, as Du Ryer's scene is similar, for it was not till after the recognition in the older tragedy that the ghost appeared. Nor could Nadal claim even verbal ingenuity as Du Ryer had written (vv. 955-6) .

Mais sa divine voix montant jusques à moy

M'apprend en mesme temps que vous estes le Roy

Moreover Saul's report of the interview pales in comparison with Du Ryer's scene in which Samuel's ghost actually appears and makes known to Saul the punishment that is about to be visited upon him.

A still more serious fault is that Nadal did not sufficiently concentrate his efforts, as Du Ryer had done, upon the tragic character of Saul, pursued by divine wrath, convinced of his approaching destruction, but devoting all his energies to saving his children and his country For the resulting loss of impressiveness there is small compensation in the few technical improvements that Nadal introduced: the reduction of the place to a single tent, of the time to not more than twelve hours, the explanation of Michol's presence in the camp, and the assurance of her escape at the end of the play

This tragedy, though it does more credit to its author's knowledge of technique than to his dramatic imagination, was fairly well received. It was acted twelve times between Feb. 27 and March 26. It might have had a better record, as it was accepted by the troupe on Nov 12, 1704, if its presentation had not been delayed by the success of Belin's *Mustapha et Zéangir*<sup>16</sup>

In his next tragedy, *HÉRODE*,<sup>17</sup> Nadal showed greater originality. His imitation of Du Ryer's *Saul* may have led him to Du Ryer's contemporary, La Calprenède, whose *Mort des enfans d'Hérodes* may have suggested his

<sup>15</sup> Nadal, *Œuvres*, Paris, Briasson, 1738, II, 206-8

<sup>16</sup> Cf frères Parfaict, XIV, 349

<sup>17</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1709, 12° Republished in the author's *Œuvres*, Paris, Briasson, 1738 In the preface Nadal calls tragedy the "chef d'œuvre de l'esprit humain" He dedicated the play to d'Aumont It was translated into Italian in 1756

dramatizing the account in Josephus that had been the source of the latter play. Unlike La Calprenède, Nadal suppressed one of Mariamne's sons, referred to Selléius, introduced Thirron, and showed on the stage neither the preparation of the forged letter, nor the trial.<sup>18</sup> He modified the ending by having Herod revoke the death sentence and another person prevent the reprieve from arriving in time to save his son. This alteration may have been suggested by the *Esser* plays of La Calprenède, Boyer, and Thomas Corneille.

Nadal tells us that he omitted Aristobulus because he might have been confused with Mariamne's brother and because he had the same interests and found himself in the same situation as Alexandre. He is pleased with his introduction of Thirron, now a minister of state rather than, as in Josephus, an old soldier. This statesman must have been employed primarily to contrast with Salome and her wily agents, but he is not, as the frères Parfaict assert, entirely episodic, for he influences the final actions of Salome, which in turn determine the character of the dénouement.<sup>19</sup>

Nadal's changes made his tragedy more of a psychological study than La

<sup>18</sup> I have found only very minor resemblances in wording between Nadal's tragedy and La Calprenède's. In the *Mort des enfants d'Hérodes*, I, 2, Herod calls to Mariamne and expresses remorse, as he does in *Herode*, II, 5, in the older play, II, 4, "Vous regnez trop long temps pour les vœux d'un jeune homme," addressed to Herod, expresses the same thought as *Herode*, II, 6, "Et le règne d'un père est un fardeau pécant." This remark, in view of Louis XIV's age, was more daring than it had been in the time of La Calprenède. Herod's ravings at the end of Nadal's tragedy may have been influenced by those of Oreste in *Antroaque*.

<sup>19</sup> As Salome has designs upon the throne, she plots to poison Herod's mind against his son by Mariamne, Alexandre, just back from Rome, where he has won the emperor's favor. She employs Philon, in whom the young prince confides, and Antipater, Herod's son by an earlier marriage. Both Antipater and Herod love Glaphira, a Cappadocian princess engaged to Alexandre. Herod reproves Antipater when he finds him quarreling with his brother and agrees that Alexandre marry Glaphira next day. He hopes that this act of self sacrifice will help him to conquer his remorse over the execution of Mariamne, but soon Salome, by reminding him of his age and of Alexandre's popularity, stirs him up against this prince. Philon convinces Alexandre that Herod is his rival and advises him to escape with Glaphira to her father's court. Entrusted with the arrangements for this flight, Philon persuades Alexandre to write a letter asking the Roman governor of Syria for permission to pass through his province. This letter is used by Salome to make Herod believe Alexandre is conspiring against him. He orders his son to be tried and proposes to send Glaphira home with her father's ambassador. The Council recommends pardon for the prince, but Herod takes matters into his own hands and orders his execution. Glaphira then persuades Herod to pardon Alexandre, but Salome makes the prince believe that Glaphira is giving herself to Herod in payment for his clemency, so that Alexandre's attitude towards his father is resentful. Thirron, arrested by Salome and freed by Antipater, warns Herod against killing his son and tells him that Salome plans to marry an Arabian prince, Selléius, and that she has designs upon Herod's throne. The king now sends for Alexandre and Salome, but he hears that the prince is surrounded by a cruel troop, that the people have killed Philon, and that Antipater is defending Alexandre. Salome brings the news of the prince's death. She had prevented Herod's message from reaching the guards. Realizing that Thirron has made known her schemes and that the people are seeking her life, she avoids arrest by committing suicide. Herod is left bewildered, lamenting over Alexandre and Mariamne and seeing visions of horror.



Calprenède's and less pathetic. Alexandre, who has the longest rôle in the play, is presented as a respectful son and ardent lover, with enough of his mother's pride to offend dangerous enemies like Salome and Antipater. He is the innocent victim in whose death the action culminates. Salome, whose rôle is next in length, is portrayed with decided skill. She is not merely an embittered woman, seeking evil for its own sake, but one who aspires to reign. For this purpose she intrigues with Silléus and seeks to remove Alexandre from her path as she had removed his mother. She dominates Philon, arrests Thirron, plays upon Herod's fears that his son is conspiring against him and upon the love of both father and son for Glaphira. It is she who prevents the reprieve from saving Alexandre. She shows imagination, subtlety, and daring. Her suicide, which is not historical and resembles that of Cléopâtre in *Rodogune*, is hardly in keeping with her character. "J'avais sur qui jeter le meurtre d'Alexandre," she says (V, 8). Why, then, did she not make use of such a person? Her rôle would have been still more sinister if Nadal had left her, as Josephus did, not only unpunished, but rewarded for her crime by both her brother and the Roman emperor.

Herod, though he has fewer lines than Alexandre and Salome, is the pivotal character on whose decisions most of the action depends. He still suffers from remorse over his execution of Mariamne. He loves the princess he has promised to his son. He is highly emotional, jealous of his power, suspicious, and easily influenced, by no means a monster, but a somewhat pathetic monarch, the victim of evil suggestions and of his own impulsiveness. Thirron represents the Jews who have remained loyal to the royal family. His blunt honesty contrasts sharply with the treacherous methods of Philon. Glaphira loves Alexandre, foresees disaster, and misinterprets Herod's feeling for her as paternal affection. Antipater, no longer a bastard, appears at first as Alexandre's rival, but, after becoming disillusioned in regard to Salome, endeavors to defend him. We do not see enough of him to follow the steps in this unexpected reformation. The people, though absent, have an important rôle both in rousing Herod's jealousy by their appreciation of Alexandre and in their uprising, which causes Philon's murder and Salome's suicide.

The exposition coincides with the beginning of the action. The time is little more than that of performance. The place is a room in Herod's palace. As all the important characters contribute to the development of the plot and as no unprepared influences are introduced, the action may be considered united. The structure is open to criticism chiefly in the final scenes, which do not allow enough time for the attempted rescue of Alexandre,

or for Salome's discovery that Thirron has revealed her machinations to Herod. Knowing, perhaps, that the material of the fifth acts of *Tristan's Mariane* and of La Calprenède's *Mort des enfans d'Hérodes* had been drawn out to too great a length, Nadal went to the other extreme and crowded the action in his concluding scenes.

Mathieu Marais noted that the censor had removed two lines from the play and questioned his wisdom in so doing<sup>20</sup> They are among the bold observations that Thirron addresses to Herod (V, 5).

Esclave d'une femme indigne de ta foi,  
La vérité jamais n'a percé jusqu'à toi

The censor seems to have feared that they would be applied to Louis XIV and Mme de Maintenon. He might also have objected, if the Dauphin had been less of a nonentity, to Salome's insinuation that a father's reign is a heavy burden (II, 6), and to these lines from IV, 8.

Et fatiguer d'un Roi, dont les destins s'achevent,  
Vers cet astre naissant tous vos regards s'élèvent

But in the censor's mind there was more danger to the realm from la Maintenon's domination of the seventy year old monarch than from his son's desire to succeed him.

Such verses did not cause the suppression of the play, which was acted nine times in the severe winter of 1709, from Feb 15 to March 12. According to the frères Parfaict, the author's share in the receipts was 632 francs, 3 sous. The tragedy was not revived. Perhaps the fact that it contained no disguises, recognitions, or similar melodramatic devices prevented its having a longer career.

For entertainment in her château at Clagny the duchesse du Maine engaged the abbé Genest, author of *Pénélope* and an habitué of her home, to write a play in which she would herself have a rôle. He selected a masculine subject, that of Joseph and his brethren, arranged that she should take part in the production, and brought out, in strict accord with Christian and dramatic rules, a tragedy called JOSEPH.<sup>21</sup> His chief source was

<sup>20</sup> Mélése, *Th et Pub*, p 80, quotes this remark from Marais's correspondence. The censor acted in June, 1709.

<sup>21</sup> Paris, Ganeau et Estienne, 1711, 8°. Dedicated to the duchesse du Maine *Privilege* to Genest, member of the Academy, abbe of Saint Vilmer, "Aumônier ordinaire de notre tres chere & tres amée [sic] Fille la Duchesse d'Orleans," April 2, 1707, registered, April 21. The approbation, signed Fontanelle [sic] and dated Jan 10, 1710, states that he believed "l'Impression en seroit aussi agreable au Public, que la Representation l'a été." There is a copy of this edition at the Johns Hopkins University. Solenne, no 1488, lists an edition of Rouen, Hérault, 1711, 12°. The play was republished by Ganeau et Estienne in 1731 and 1743, by Delalain in 1788. An Italian translation was published twice in 1720, again in 1732 and in 1756.

Genesis, Chapters XXXVII, XXXIX-XLV, especially the last three, but he also made some use of Exodus and he may have derived from *Athalie* the idea of putting into Joseph's mouth a prophecy about the Messiah.

He followed the Biblical narrative, adding a ceremony given at the court of Pharaoh in Joseph's honor, prophetic references to the fortunes of the Jews, and minor characters, including an old Hebrew who had known Joseph when he was a boy. He identified Simeon as the brother who suggested putting Joseph to death and made of Joseph's cup the receptacle used for reading the future. One could hardly have written a five-act tragedy in verse that showed fewer departures from a source in narrative prose. In this respect he outdid Racine, Boyer, Duché, and Nadal, but his drama suffered from his pious fidelity.<sup>22</sup>

Love appears only as conjugal, fraternal, and filial affection. Azaneth is given some part in the plot, for it is she who persuades Pharaoh and his queen to invite Jacob to Egypt. Hely is introduced chiefly to give Joseph an opportunity to tell his story. Only four of Joseph's brothers speak. Ruben, who regrets that he had not done more for Joseph, Simeon, who had proposed that Joseph should be put to death, who lies about the affair, and who is now the most pessimistic of the group; Judah, who takes the lead as in the Bible, and Benjamin, the innocent brother, represented as quite young, although, according to Genesis, he had ten sons when he settled in Egypt. Joseph, the principal character, is described as possessing a prophetic gift, as being a man of great kindness, devoted to his father and Benjamin, homesick for Palestine, resentful of the treatment he has received from his older brothers, but able to triumph over his emotions.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph, known as Sophoneas, has been put in charge of all the food in Egypt. Regarded as a savior of the people, he is about to have a festival given in his honor, to the delight of Azaneth, his wife. He has freed from captivity Hely, an old Hebrew who had cared for him in his youth and who, while seeking him after his disappearance, had been captured and sold into slavery. Joseph tells this man his adventures in Palestine and in Egypt, including the recent visit of his ten brothers, whom he has sent home with the exception of Simeon, detained as a hostage, with the request that they bring down Benjamin. Joseph interviews Simeon, hears him assert that one of his brothers has been killed by wild animals, accuses him of prevarication, and greatly frightens him. He is about to send Hely to Palestine when the brothers, including Benjamin, arrive and make him presents. Joseph frees Simeon and invites them all to a feast. When Joseph expresses to Azaneth his fears for his father, she suggests his inviting him to live in Egypt. The brothers make their departure, but they are soon brought back, accused of stealing the vase in which Joseph reads the future. When it is found in Benjamin's luggage, the youth insists that he is innocent and his brothers wish to die in his stead. Though dismissed, they are unwilling to leave without Benjamin. Finally Joseph has all eleven brought in, makes himself known, and declares that he was only testing them. He bids them offer a home in Egypt to Jacob and his descendants and predicts five more years of famine. Azaneth reports that Pharaoh has agreed to the establishment in his country of Jacob and his family. Pharaoh comes to confirm the invitation and hopes that, if his guests are persecuted, plagues may come upon his land. Joseph predicts the multiplication of Jacob's descendants and the coming of the Messiah.

Genest offers, of course, no explanation of his questionable political and economic views and defends him against the charge of torturing his brothers by having him explain that he is merely trying to determine whether they have become more merciful since the time that they sold him into slavery.

By inventing the festival Genest made of the day represented an unusual one, in accordance with classical prescription. The time is little more than that of performance. The place is a hall in Memphis. The unity of action is preserved. The proprieties are respected to such an extent that Joseph blushes when he reaches the part of his autobiography concerned with Potiphar's wife and reduces it to a statement (I, 4)

Une Femme livrée à son indigne erreur,  
M'impute un attentat qui me faisoit horreur!

It is amusing that Potiphar's wife should make blush the Joseph of the abbé Genest, who was writing his tragedy for the wife of Mme de Montespan's son by Louis XIV. When the duc du Maine saw the play, which, according to Malezieu, he knew almost by heart, he probably did not blush for his mother, but he may have seen an allusion to his father in lines applied to Joseph (I, 1)

Toujours du bien public faisant tous ses plaisirs,  
Par des ordres constans, où la sagesse brille,  
Ce grand Etat n'est plus qu'une seule famille,  
Qui n'a de mouvement que par ses volontez,  
Et ne fait que louer & benir ses bontez

It is explained that Joseph is a monotheist and that he has no use for the gods of Egypt, but neither the quaint nor the poetic qualities of Genesis are reproduced. Despite the two scenes of recognition that were to be expected from the author of *Pénélope*, the play is a dull production. It is hard to understand why it should have drawn tears from spectators in the gay entourage of the duchesse du Maine

Dangeau declares<sup>23</sup> that *Joseph* was acted at Clagny on Jan. 21, Feb. 1 and 8, 1706. The *Mercury* shows that it was performed there on two other occasions in February or March, and gives the cast. Two professional actors who had retired from the Comédie Française and had played in Longepierre's *Electre*, Baron and Rosélis, took the parts, respectively, of Joseph and Hély. The duchesse du Maine played Azaneth, Malezieu, Judah, his sons, Ruben and Benjamin. Simeon was played at two performances by de Vernonselle, then by the marquis de Roquelaure. Pharaoh was acted by the marquis de Gondrin; Thiamis, by d'Erlac, captain of the Swiss guards; Thermutis, by Mlle de Méru. According to the dedication, the work was

<sup>23</sup> *Journal*, XI, 167, 22, 267

highly approved by the duc and duchesse du Maine, the former shedding tears both at readings and at performances of the tragedy.

Instead of writing a preface, Genest published with his play a *Discours de Mr de Malezieu*, addressed to the duchesse du Maine and referring to the tears shed over *Joseph* by the prince de Condé, the duc de Bourbon-Condé,<sup>24</sup> and the prince de Conti.<sup>25</sup> Opposing those who might object to the play on account of its simplicity and its avoidance of love, Malezieu recalled the great success at Sceaux of *Philoctetes* as translated by himself and the fact that the duchesse du Maine had argued for simplicity and verisimilitude against a man who had preferred a complex play. Malezieu praised *Cinna* as a model of simplicity and probability. These qualities he also found in *Joseph*. He admired the exposition and the manner in which Genest delayed the chief scene of recognition till the last act. He found the narrations interesting and pathetic, the play full of lessons in tenderness, gratitude, generosity, and clemency.

Unhappily Paris was less emotionally stirred than Clagny. The tragedy was given at the Comédie Française only eleven times, six in 1710, beginning on Dec. 19, and five in 1711. The *Mercure de Trévoux* of February, 1711, noted that the play has no love in it and that it follows the Bible closely. The writer found in it poetic qualities, satisfactory treatment of manners and characters, and a striking scene of recognition, but he thought that this last effect might have been brought about more gradually. When they had quoted this article, the frères Parfaict, writing after the death of the great persons who had been interested in the play, expressed the opinion that, apart from the scene of recognition, the play was cold, its texture ordinary, the characters of little interest, and the verse prosaic. Voltaire paid it the doubtful compliment of calling it the "moins mauvaise" of all tragedies written on this interesting subject.<sup>26</sup> The principal interest it aroused was probably occasioned by the fact that the duchesse du Maine acted in it.<sup>27</sup>

These five plays represent the prologation into the early eighteenth century of the group of Biblical tragedies inspired by Racine's *Esther* and *Athalie*. Four were played at the Comédie Française, but only one of these, *Absalon*, remained long in its repertory. Four derived their plots from the Old Testament, the fifth from Josephus. None of their authors had Racine's

<sup>24</sup> He calls them "Monseigneur le Prince, vôtre Pere" and "feu Monseigneur le duc." The latter, who died in 1710, was the brother of the duchesse du Maine.

<sup>25</sup> Tears over *Joseph* must have been a prerogative of royal blood, for an ordinary mortal who saw the play acted at Clagny asserted that he was not touched by the performance; cf. Mélése, *Th. et Pub.*, pp. 401-2.

<sup>26</sup> Moland edition, XXX, 64.

<sup>27</sup> In the circle at Sceaux this fact meant so much that, when Genest addressed a poem to the duchesse du Maine, he entitled it, "Jacob à l'illustre Azaneth", cf. *Divertissemens de Sceaux*, Trévoux, Ganeau, 1712, p. 331.

gift of infusing Biblical poetry into his verse. Except for the association of their subjects with the Bible and a brief passage at the end of *Joseph*, none of them is genuinely religious. The authors were hampered by their respect for scripture without being able to find in it inspirational compensation. Chiefly to be noted is the authors' attitude towards love between the sexes. It is of primary importance only in *Debora*. It exists in Nadal's tragedies, but it is there overshadowed by other emotions. In *Absalon* and *Joseph* it is found only as conjugal devotion. These two tragedies and Longepierre's *Electre* are the only tragedies of the early eighteenth century in which is realized a reform suggested in the seventeenth and exemplified by Racine's last two plays. That all three, like those of Racine, were first played in private and that only one of the three, *Absalon*, was even moderately successful indicate that sexual love was considered by most audiences of the time a most desirable element in tragedy.

## CHAPTER VII

### CRÉBILLON AND LONGEPIERRE

Prosper Jolyot was born at Dijon on Jan 13, 1674. His father, maître-clerc of the Chambre des comptes there purchased in 1686 a piece of property near the city called Crais-Billon, which gave the dramatist the name of Crébillon. He was educated by the Jesuits at Dijon, studied law at Besançon, and became a lawyer at Paris, where he mingled with various young writers at the café Laurent. He is said to have composed in 1703 a play called *La mort des enfants de Brutus* that was refused by the actors of the Comédie Française and is now lost. His first play of which we can be certain was acted in 1705. Those that followed in 1707-11 established his reputation. He was married in 1707, shortly before the birth of Crébillon fils, with whom he lived long after his wife's death. He prospered temporarily from the speculation inspired by Law, but he soon lost most of what he had and lived in considerable poverty, surrounded by cats and dogs. In 1731 he was elected to the French Academy. From 1733 to his death he was an official censor, a fact that roused Voltaire's hostility. After obtaining other positions, one of them connected with the Bibliothèque du Roi, he died in 1762.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike La Grange-Chancel, he came to dramatic composition rather late, composed with normal speed between the ages of thirty-one and forty-three, then worked so slowly that he produced only three tragedies in thirty-eight years. His last play appeared when he was over eighty. His poverty and his various occupations may explain this curious irregularity. The five tragedies with which I am concerned belong to the first decade of his productivity.

*IDOMÉNÉE* was completed in August, 1705, and accepted by the actors on Sept 10.<sup>2</sup> Crébillon's principal source was Fénelon's recent novel, *Télémaque*, but he added details suggested by the *Iliad* and by Servius's commentary on the *Æneid* (III, 121, XI, 264). He found in *Télémaque* the

<sup>1</sup> For Crébillon cf especially Maurice Dutrail, *Étude sur la vie et le théâtre de Crébillon*, Bordeaux, 1895. His plays and the dates when they were first acted are *Idoménée*, Dec 29, 1705, *Atrée et Thyeste*, March 14, 1707, *Electre*, Dec 14, 1708, *Rhadamiste et Zénobie*, Jan 23, 1711, *Xerxès*, Feb 7, 1714, *Sémiramis*, April 10, 1717, *Pyrrhus*, April 21, 1720, *Catiline*, Dec 20, 1748, *Le Triumvirat ou la Mort de Cicéron*, Dec 23, 1754.

<sup>2</sup> Paris, Fr Le Breton, 1706, 12°, priv, Jan 30, approbation signed by Fontenelle. Dedicatory poem to "Monseigneur le duc," that is, to Louis duc de Bourbon-Condé. The play was republished, Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1711. Dutch translations appeared in 1723 and 1740, Italian, in 1764 and 1795. For other editions and a study of the tragedy cf Dutrail, *op cit*.

account of his hero's return from Troy, the storm, the offer to sacrifice the first person encountered, the son's proposal to die, Sophronyme's attempt to find a way out of the difficulty, and the son's death. Crébillon softened the ending by having the young man kill himself instead of dying by his father's hand. The protagonist's escape by boat is changed into an attempt to send others away. Servius suggested the idea of a rebellion. Merion is mentioned in the *Iliad*. Crébillon made Merion lead the rebellion, had it result in his execution, and added the rôle played by his daughter, the rivalry between father and son, the consultation of the oracle, and the death of Egésippe. Details of the affliction sent upon the people may have been suggested by La Grange-Chancel's recent *Alceste*. The continued success of Racine's *Iphigénie* may have encouraged Crébillon to attempt a tragedy that brought in the question of human sacrifice. His alterations and additions produced somewhat the effect of Corneille's when he wrote his *Edipe*, for one may well ask why a love story should be introduced into a somber tragedy that sets forth the deadly effects of a vow.<sup>4</sup>

In this distinctly masculine production love is accompanied by little tenderness and seems perfunctory. Idoménée is quite tragic, the victim of an imprudent vow, whose consequences he seeks desperately to evade. His love for Erixène, though unconvincing, adds to his woes. His son is an admirable young man. He conquers his love sufficiently to urge Erixène to marry his father, for whom and for the suffering populace he ultimately dies. Erixène, who is inspired chiefly by a desire for vengeance, resents the fact that she loves Idamante and admits it only when he is about to die. The minor

<sup>4</sup>Returning from Troy, Idoménée found on Samos Erixène, daughter of his comrade, Méron, who, hurrying ahead, started an uprising in Crete, but was defeated and captured by the king's son, Idamante. Just before Idoménée reached Crete, a terrible storm put his ship in such danger that, in order to appease the gods, he swore to sacrifice to them the first of his subjects he would see on the island. This turned out to be Idamante, who was boldly facing the storm while others were seeking shelter. Idoménée put Méron to death, but he was unwilling to fulfill his vow. Storms continued and his subjects began to perish. To gain time he had sent Egésippe to consult an oracle, only to be told that he knows what should be done and that the gods demand "le sang d'Idoménée." This answer is revealed by Egésippe to Erixène, who, though she loves Idamante, has refused to respond either to his courtship or to his father's. Instead, she seeks to rouse the people in order that the king may be put to death, the gods satisfied, and her father avenged. Idoménée, like the king in *Venceslas* and its Spanish source, offers his throne to his son in order that he may not have to sacrifice him, but Idamante refuses the offer. The king next gets ships ready and bids his son escape with Erixène to Samos, but the conversation makes him discover that Idamante is his rival. As he calls his son a traitor, the young man comes near killing himself. Meanwhile Sophronyme has discovered Egésippe's betrayal of confidence and has put him to death. The situation grows worse. As in *Alceste*, a gulf opens and sends out poisonous fumes. Idoménée decides to kill himself, makes peace with his son, and goes to consult the gods. Idamante is told by Sophronyme the true interpretation of the oracle. After learning from Erixène that she loves him, he kills himself. As he dies, the sun comes out, indicating that the gods have been appeased. Idoménée reproaches them and expects that his own death will soon follow.



characters, Egésippe and Sophronyme, have considerable importance in the plot. Though Sophronyme is only a confidant, he does not hesitate to act, so that he becomes a forerunner of Palamède in Crébillon's *Electre*.

The rôle of Idoménée, which runs to over 600 verses, takes up too much of the tragedy. He and his son together speak more than two-thirds of the lines in the play. There is only one rôle for an actress besides that of a confidant. There is some descriptive writing, chiefly in the accounts of the storm and the oracle. Over the whole tragedy hangs a pall induced by the wrath of the gods, thirsty for human blood and visiting the father's error upon the son. The appreciation that the tragedy received may have been attributed by the author to this air of gloom, so that he sought for his next play a still more forbidding subject.

*Idoménée* was acted thirteen times in 1705-6, a creditable showing for an author who was making his début. The frères Parfaict admire the exposition, but they find the subsequent action confused and the oracle obscure. The exposition is, indeed, superior to that found in some other plays, as there is a definite reason for the revelations other than that of satisfying the audience, but the action develops clearly enough. While the oracle, like all oracles, has to mislead some of the characters, it does not confuse the audience, for it states that Idoménée knows how to interpret it. A sounder piece of criticism is one quoted by the frères Parfaict from a dissertation of 1740, in which Idoménée's love of Erixène is ridiculed for reducing a hero of the Trojan war to the status of an "amoureux en cheveux gris." It is especially this love affair that La Harpe was to condemn.<sup>4</sup> Voltaire found the tragedy insipid and was greatly surprised that Albergati Capacelli had translated it into Italian.<sup>5</sup> The play was not acted after 1706, but, before the author could be aware of this fact, he was already at work on his next tragedy.

This was *ATRÉE ET THYESTE*,<sup>6</sup> the most horrible of Crébillon's plays. The subject had been attempted by Molière some seventy years before and had met with Corneille's disapproval, although its claim upon the attention

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, XIII, 311. He goes into considerable detail in discussing the style of certain passages.

<sup>5</sup> Moland edition, XLII, 217.

<sup>6</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1709, 12°. Dutrait lists an edition published by Ribou in 1707, but Crébillon states that he waited three years to have his tragedy printed, that he did so only after a defective Dutch edition had appeared, and that he published *Electre* at the same time. Consequently it is most improbable that there was a Ribou edition before 1709, though there must have been an earlier unauthorized edition published by a printer in Holland. Goziet mentions an edition published at The Hague by T. Johnson in 1711. For other editions and a study of the play, cf. Dutrait, *op. cit.* A Dutch translation appeared in 1716, Italian translations, in 1760, about 1787, and in 1782 (republished, 1796 and 1798). Another Italian translation was made, but not published. A Portuguese translation came out in 1805. The play was criticized at length and unfavorably by La Harpe, *op. cit.*, XIII, 11-46.

of dramatists had been sanctioned by Seneca's example. Crébillon may well have thought that, after dramatizing a theme of human sacrifice, he might attempt one of cannibalism, especially if he avoided the actual drinking of human blood, just as, in the earlier play, he had substituted suicide for a king's offering up his son as a sacrificial victim.

The essential facts that he employed came from Seneca's *Thyestes*, but there are few verbal similarities between the two tragedies.<sup>7</sup> Instead of two young children, born to Thyestes by adultery with his brother's wife, he has a grown son, born in this fashion. He is also given a daughter by another woman. Substitution of children is introduced to furnish danger of incest and an additional scene of recognition. Crébillon adds the plan of a military expedition, a shipwreck, Atreus's changes of purpose, the letter left by his wife, and Thyestes's suicide. He increases the supernatural element by employing the *cu du sang* and softens the exposition and the dénouement by having Thyestes carry off Érope before her marriage to Atreus had been consummated and by having him discover what is in the cup in time to avoid drinking it.

There is one dominant rôle that takes up about two-fifths of the play, that of Atreus, while the part given to women occupies less than one-fifth of it. In this respect and in the perfunctory representation of love the tragedy resembles *Idaménée*. It differs from the latter play in that the one love affair has to be given up, since the lovers learn that they have the same father, but the two tragedies are alike in subordinating love to other emotions, those associated with the vow in the earlier play, those centered round the personality of Atreus in the later.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Cf. however, III, 7, V, 5, 8 with *Thyestes*, vv. 195-6, 431, 992-3, 1005-6, 1110.

<sup>8</sup> Atreus had barely married Érope when his brother, Thyestes, had carried her off and begotten by her a son, Plithène. In revenge Atreus had laid waste Mycenæ, had captured Érope, and had poisoned her. He had adopted her son by Thyestes and had substituted him for one he had had by another wife. He has for twenty years been planning to have Plithène kill Thyestes and then be put to death. To carry out this purpose he has prepared a naval expedition to be led by Plithène from Eubœa, where the scene is laid, against Athens, where Thyestes has taken refuge. He now brings in Plithène and has him swear to avenge him a vow that the young man takes unwillingly. Plithène loves Théodamie, a girl who has escaped with her father from the sea. She asks him to get them a ship so that they may continue their voyage. Atreus agrees to furnish the ship, but he insists upon seeing her father. He learns that Thyestes has been away from Athens for a month and, when he questions the girl's father, recognizes him as his hated brother. He threatens to kill him, while Thyestes reproaches him for murdering Érope. When Plithène pleads for Thyestes, Atreus pretends that his hatred is soon to end. He removes to a safe distance Plithène's friends and the soldiers who are devoted to him, and orders the young man to keep his promise by killing Thyestes. When Plithène refuses, Atreus threatens to put Théodamie to death. Plithène wishes to send away Thyestes and his daughter, but Thyestes refuses to leave him. Atreus now shows his brother a letter left by Érope stating that Plithène is her son by Thyestes. The latter realizes why he has such a deep affection for Plithène, who is obliged by this discovery to renounce his love for Théodamie. Atreus declares that all his hatred is gone and offers to swear to the fact by means of an ancestral

Atréus, whose wife Thyestes had stolen, has planned his revenge during twenty years. He proposes to have his brother die by the hand of the child begotten in adultery, so that the crime may bring about its own punishment. For this purpose he had prepared the expedition that Plithène was to lead against Athens. When this is rendered unnecessary by the presence of Thyestes in his court, Atréus employs two devices to make Plithène murder his father. He has him swear to avenge him and he threatens to kill Théodamie if he fails. As these measures are without effect, Atréus contrives a more horrible method, deciding to murder Plithène and have his father drink his blood. Mlle Barbier<sup>9</sup> criticized Crébillon for these changes of plan, but Atréus never renounces his main purpose, which is to bring his brother to a horrible end by means of the son he has had by *Ærope*. Thus he carries out to his own satisfaction, if not to that of Mlle Barbier. She and the frères Parfaict also criticize Crébillon on the ground that Atréus would not have believed that Plithène would keep his oath, or that Thyestes would fail to recognize the drink as blood, but such belief is not inconsistent with the character that Crébillon depicts, that of a man not necessarily gifted in understanding how others would act under given circumstances and ever seeking the most horrible form of vengeance. Moreover, the long delay, the resourcefulness in crime that Atréus displays, his hypocrisy, and, as a climax, the introduction of the blood-filled cup make the character all the more effective. He is certainly one of the most striking creations of the period.

The other persons are like flies caught in the web of this deadly spider. Thyestes, the simpleminded brother who had sinned through love, had suffered for years, had been shipwrecked, is now shaken by a terrible dream and is imprudent enough to venture into the presence of Atréus. He is as willing to forgive and to restore proper family relationships as his brother is incapable of such sentiments. Though Plithène is more intelligent than his father, he cannot cope with his uncle. His sympathy with the afflicted refugees, his unwillingness to be bound by an unholy oath he had been tricked into making, his unfortunate love, and his untimely death make him an appealing figure. Théodamie has only a brief rôle, that of a dutiful daughter who is on the point of falling in love when she discovers that Plithène is her brother.

cup. Thyestes agrees to accept this evidence of good will, but Plithène is suspicious. Atréus has the young man arrested and put to death. The cup, filled with the blood of Plithène, is offered to Thyestes, who, when about to drink, sees what the liquid is, notes that the sun is darkened, refuses to drink, and learns the truth from Atréus. He gives himself a fatal blow and, while dying, predicts that some day Atréus will be more unhappy than he, a reference to his murder by *Ægisthus*, reported in Hyginus's *Fable* LXXVIII.

<sup>9</sup> *Saisons littéraires, second recueil*, Rouen, 1722, quoted by the frères Parfaict, XIV, 428-39.

Mlle Barbier objected to the exposition on the ground that Atreus did not have sufficient reason to reveal his plans at the beginning of the play. She found Thyestes too imprudent, Atreus too poor a judge of character. She held that the real plot does not begin till the fourth act, that the two scenes of hypocritical forgiveness are too much alike, and that the use of the cup is abominable. On the other hand, she considered the tragedy more terrible than Seneca's, was greatly impressed by Crébillon's style, praised especially the account of Thyestes's dream, and wished that the dramatist would write epic poetry.<sup>10</sup>

Crébillon said in his own defense<sup>11</sup> that he did not invent his subject and that he considered it one that would inspire pity and terror, the more so as he had sought to soften it and to adapt it to French manners. For this purpose he had had *Ærope* carried off from the "Autels même,"<sup>12</sup> had made Atreus less horrible than he is in Seneca,<sup>13</sup> and had not allowed Thyestes even to lift the cup to his lips. He claimed that the scene is no more horrible than the one that concludes *Rodogune*, but he noted that the public had disapproved of it so deeply that he was himself believed to be an "homme non avec qui il ne fait pas sûr de vivre." He insisted, too, that the double scene of hypocrisy was justified. When he reproduced in 1743 the preface of his first edition, he added a paragraph to the effect that the public had changed its attitude towards the play.

Voltaire did not object to the incident of the cup and, like Crébillon, found it no more horrible than the last scene of *Rodogune*. Like Mlle Barbier, he preferred the tragedy to Seneca's, but he held that Atreus should not have waited twenty years for his revenge, declared the love episode useless, and considered the play badly written.<sup>14</sup> Though Grimm approved of Voltaire's criticisms, he called the tragedy Crébillon's best play.<sup>15</sup> An anonymous apologist summed up his remarks by calling *Atrée et Thyeste*

<sup>10</sup> Here she echoes the judgment of a writer in the *Nouveau Mercure* (cited by Mélése, *Rep.*, p. 217) "Il lui faut de l'épique pour imposer au public. Il s'enquit qu'on a applaudi au songe de son Atrée." The audience may have been struck by such descriptive lines as

La mer mugit au loin, & le vent vous appelle (I, 3)  
La voile se déploie, & flotte au gré des vents (II, 1)

<sup>11</sup> Preface of the edition of 1743, I, 117-8

<sup>12</sup> In discussing the question of *cocuage* he quotes "L'étoit il? Ne l'étoit il point?" from La Fontaine's *Coupe enchantée*, meaning the *conte*, in which the quotation is found (Grands Écrivains edition, V, 132), not Champmeslé's play of the same name.

<sup>13</sup> He refers, perhaps, to his kindness to Thyestes and his daughter before he discovers who they are.

<sup>14</sup> Moland edition, XXIV, 346-7. Atreus's idea in waiting twenty years was, of course, to have the child of adultery old enough to avenge him.

<sup>15</sup> M. Tourneux, *Correspondance par Grimm, Diderot, etc.*, Paris, Garnier, V (1878), 119, XII (1880), 383.

"un Rembrant dans l'école de Melpomene."<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, it is especially this tragedy that gave Crébillon his reputation as the dramatist of horror.<sup>17</sup>

It would seem, however, that the general public was not averse to being horrified. From March 14 to April 8, 1707, the play was acted ten times, up to the Easter recess, and the receipts were so good that, when it was given again, in 1712, the author continued to receive a share in them.<sup>18</sup> It was acted eight times in that year and was revived from time to time down to 1806. It was even played at the Comédie Française in 1866, when the actors added a prologue, freely translated by Henri de Bornier from Seneca's first act, which Crébillon had not reproduced.<sup>19</sup> Although the total number of performances was only forty-four, it can be said of it that it remained in the repertory of the Comédie Française longer than any other tragedy of the period. It would seem from its history that the fatal cup could not be long endured, but that from time to time French spectators were not averse to its appearing before them.<sup>20</sup>

Though dramatized by Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, the story of Electra had been given to the French public only once in the seventeenth century and that in an *Electre* (1677-8) of Pradon that was never printed and is now lost. Atonement for this neglect was made twice in the first decade of the eighteenth century, but Crébillon did not lead the way. He was anticipated by Longepierre, whose *ELECTRE*<sup>21</sup> was first acted early in 1702.

The chief source was the *Electra* of Sophocles, followed rather closely in the first three acts, but with changes in the order of events. Æschylus supplied a model for Clytemnestra's grateful greeting of Orestes and for the reference to the Fates at the end of Longepierre's tragedy. Euripides may have suggested the pedagogue's making Orestes known to Electra and the young hero's hesitation before he murders. The presentation of Orestes's

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in the *Œuvres de Crébillon*, Paris, 1772, III, 257.

<sup>17</sup> So, for instance, the editor of the 1828 edition of Lesages' *Œuvres* (II, 195-8) thinks that his author was referring to Crébillon when he tells of a dramatist who had all the characters in a play murdered, although the context shows that Lesage is satirizing school plays, known for their large cast, their lack of form, and their display of blood on the stage.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. the frères Parfaict, XIV, 426. In their *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de la foire*, I, 100 l., they show that a parody of the tragedy was acted at the Foire Saint-Laurent in 1709.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Dutrait, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

<sup>20</sup> According to an anecdote told by La Porte and Collé and repeated by Dutrait, *loc. cit.*, an Englishman remarked at the café Procope that he found the tragedy "fort belle, mais la coupe la coupe! Ah! M. de Crébillon, transeat a me calix iste!"

<sup>21</sup> Paris, veuve Pissot, 1730, 12°. Republished in the *Théâtre français* of 1737. An Italian translation was published in 1743 and in 1758. For Longepierre cf. my *op. cit.*, Part IV, p. 358, and Baron Roger Portalis, *Bernard de Requelcyne Baron de Longepierre*, Paris, Leclerc, 1905, who, pp. 65-74, discusses *Electre*. Cf. also F. F. Frantz, *Oreste dans la tragédie française*, Paris, Fontemoing, 1910, pp. 29-41.

madness may have been influenced by the *Orestes* of Euripides or by Racine's *Andromaque*. As he eliminated the chorus, Longepierre thought it necessary to find something to take its place. Instead of bringing in new characters, as Racine had done in *Iphigène* and as Crébillon was to do in his *Electre*, he altered his material in such a way as to create new situations. He supposed that an oracle had warned Orestes not to make himself known to his sister till after he had seen his mother. Thus supposition enabled him to present in different scenes Orestes's discovery of who Electra is and her recognition of her brother. The latter scene is made more effective by a borrowing from the Merope legend. Though he probably knew Hyginus and Aristotle, he seems to have imitated La Chapelle's *Téléphonte*, in which there is a scene that resembles closely the one<sup>22</sup> in which Electra is prevented from murdering Orestes. While the attendant comes primarily from Sophocles and Euripides, the increased importance assigned to him by Longepierre may also be due to imitation of La Chapelle.

Longepierre shows none of Euripides's cynicism and comparatively little of the mystical qualities found in the *Choephori*. His play is much closer to Sophocles, with some of the supernatural element retained in the use of an oracle, in the dream, and in talk about the gods and Fate. Orestes and Electra struggle more than they do in the ancient accounts, Ægisthus has a larger rôle, and Pilades does not remain mute, as he does in Sophocles. Owing probably to the influence of the latter dramatist, Longepierre composed the first non-Biblical tragedy of the century from which love is excluded, a reform in which he preceded Voltaire by many years.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Electra, thinking that the stranger has murdered her brother, is about to kill him when she is stopped by the faithful attendant, who informs her that the stranger is Orestes himself. The situation in *Téléphonte* is exactly the same except that the woman is the mother, not the sister, of the intended victim.

<sup>23</sup> The scene opens at dawn in a "salon du Palais d'Agamemnon" at Mycenæ. Electra longs for the return from Phocis of Orestes in order that he may avenge their father. She has not compromised with Agamemnon's murderers as her sister, Chrysothemis, has done. The latter informs her that Clytemnestra, who has had a terrible dream, wishes to offer sacrifice at their father's tomb. Labors and offerings must be prepared. Electra refuses to help, but she allows her sister to take part of her veil. An attendant brings a note from Orestes, promising that he will soon arrive. The darkness of night enables the young prince and his friend Pilades to penetrate into the palace, while Pamène, Orestes's "gouverneur," arranges a revolt that will follow the murder of Ægisthus. False rumors have been spread that Orestes has died. An oracle has forbidden him to make himself known to Electra before he sees their mother and has directed him first of all to visit their father's tomb. After the young men have left with Pamène, Ægisthus expresses his sufferings as king, his fears of an oracle that has called him a regicide, his dread of Electra and Orestes. He derives little comfort from his wife's account of her dream and asks her to soften Electra, but her attempt to do so ends in mutual threats. A letter brought by Pamène, reporting the death of Orestes, reassures Clytemnestra, but distresses Electra, who urges Chrysothemis to stab Ægisthus. When her mild sister refuses to do so, she decides to take matters into her own hands. She meets the two strangers, who allow her to hold the urn in which the ashes of Orestes are supposed to be. Disguised Orestes tells of killing the prince in

More than half the verses of the tragedy are assigned to women, who are the only speakers in the first act. Electra has by far the longest rôle, one that is longer than those of the protagonists in Crébillon's *Idoménée* and *Atrée et Thyeste*. Her guiding passion is desire for vengeance. She hates both Ægisthus and her mother, upbraids her sister, and centers all her affections upon Orestes, whom she had rescued twelve years before and for whose return she eagerly waits. She retorts bitterly to Clytemnestra and Ægisthus, cooperates with Pamène, and has a marked influence upon her brother. Her emotions are so intense that she is able to picture the scene in the banquet hall without seeing it. She is tragic in that, when her dearest project has been accomplished after twelve years of misery, humiliation, and conspiring, she finds that her brother, the hope of the tribe, has lost his reason.

Orestes is less effective. He has to be prompted, not only by Electra, but by Pamène and Pilades. His mental equipment seems unequal to his task, so that its execution is followed by collapse. His character is weaker than Electra's, but stronger than that of his other sister, mild and timid Chrysothémis. Their mother defends herself for the murder of Agamemnon by referring to the sacrifice of Iphigeneia and to the fact that her husband brought Cassandra home from Troy, but her apology wins little sympathy. Fearing that her children will murder her to avenge their father, she persecutes Electra and triumphs when she hears that Orestes is dead, though she feels some qualms when she gets the report, which causes in her husband unmixed delight.

Ægisthus has been devoured night and day by his fears, has come to hate his wife, but he remains bound to her by their common interests. He has been troubled by the oracle and by his fear of divine punishment. When he thinks that Orestes is dead, he renounces his faith and regards his fears as due to a "credule erreur" (IV, 3). His only gods are now "la soif de regner, un zèle ambitieux." His plan for Electra shows a sadistic tendency, the last trait of his character to be revealed to the spectators before they hear of his death. Pilades is little more than a confidant, but Pamène

a forest in Phocis, whereupon Ægisthus proposes to give Electra to him as a slave in order that she may be constantly attached to her brother's murderer. Electra conceals herself and, when Orestes appears, seeks to stab him, but Pamène stops her and tells her that her intended victim is Orestes himself. Pamène thinks it is now time to act, but he and Electra have to rouse Orestes, who is suddenly troubled by a plaintive murmur. As a result of their urgings, the prince enters the banquet hall and kills Ægisthus. Electra describes the scene correctly, though she sees it only in her imagination. Orestes comes to confirm her report and asks for his mother, but Pamène tells him that she had received a fatal blow from her son when she threw herself between him and Ægisthus. Orestes beholds streams of blood, thinks he sees his mother dying, and loses consciousness, while Electra cries that it would have been better if the gods had not listened to her plea.

is an energetic conspirator, as eager for revenge as Electra, but more resourceful in his planning.

The tragedy is well constructed. Through her influence upon Orestes, Electra has a definite part in bringing about the denouement. There is, however, too large an element of chance in Pamène's arriving just in time to save Orestes from Electra, and the author's effort to spare his hero the guilt of murdering his mother is unfortunate. He could not alter the essential fact of the legend, but he wished his audience to remain in sympathy with Orestes. He consequently arranged an accidental killing in keeping neither with probability nor with the tragic effect that he desired to produce. Apart from these two defects and the author's lack of poetic endowment, the tragedy preserves quite well the spirit of Sophocles, much better than does Crébillon's play on the same subject. It is noteworthy, too, for the absence of sexual love and the prominent part given to women.

*Electre* was originally acted on Jan. 22, 1702, at the home of the princesse de Conti at Versailles. The actors were professionals, including Michel Baron and Rosélis, who had retired from the troupe of the Comédie Française and who played, respectively, Orestes and Ægisthus, and la Duclos, who took the part of Electra. The tragedy was acted at the same place on Feb. 5 and 12. Dangeau<sup>24</sup> wrote about the first performance

Monseigneur [the Dauphin] alla dîner chez Madame la princesse de Conty à la ville, où l'on joua le soir dans sa galerie *Electre*, qui est le plus bel ouvrage de théâtre qu'on ait vu depuis la mort de Corneille et de Racine. Longepierre en est l'auteur, la pièce fut jouée à merveille, et le vieux Baron joua avec les comédiens, quoiqu'il ait quitté le théâtre il y a longtemps. Toute la cour y étoit, hormis le roi, qui n'a pas voulu honorer ce spectacle de sa présence.

Saint-Simon also indicated where it was given and before whom. He declared that it enjoyed "le plus grand succès" and that it was "sans amour, mais pleine des autres passions, et des situations les plus intéressantes."<sup>25</sup> The *Mercur*e declared that Longepierre had written the play several years before and had not meant to give it to the public, that there had been rehearsals at Paris to which the "beau monde" had been admitted; that Baron's art was superior to what it had been twenty years before, and that no actress had ever played with such force and grace as la Duclos. Other journals praised the play and noted the absence of love from its verses.<sup>26</sup> It was not acted at the Comédie Française till 1719, when it was given nine times on and after Feb. 22. It might have had a more satisfactory career if Longepierre had allowed it to be played before it competed

<sup>24</sup> *Journal*, VIII, 298.

<sup>25</sup> *Œuvres*, Boissière edition, X, 6.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *Mélès*, *Rép.*, p. 213, *Th. et Pub.*, p. 267.



with a tragedy on the same subject by Crébillon. Voltaire regretted its failure as Longepierre had eliminated love and as his "déclamation" was "à la Grecque." He believed that its lack of success encouraged dramatists to look upon love as essential in tragedy.<sup>27</sup>

To compare Longepierre's play with the *ELECTRE*<sup>28</sup> of Crébillon reveals the taste of the early eighteenth century. "Ce n'est point la Tragedie de Sophocle, ni celle d'Euripide que je donne," wrote Crébillon, "c'est la mienne." His tragedy is, indeed, far from being an adaptation of Sophocles, though the Greek dramatist's *Electra* was his principal source. He kept the main facts, but he found the plot much too simple, the murder of a mother by her son too horrible, the elimination of love unpopular with those for whom he was writing. He consequently complicated the plot, followed Longepierre in making Clytemnestra's death accidental, and introduced two affairs of the heart. For this last purpose he gave Ægisthus a son and a daughter. To create new situations he made Orestes believe that he was the son of Palamède and added a tale of shipwreck, death, rescue, and heroic military achievements.

Despite his boast of originality, he imitated both Sophocles and Longepierre.<sup>29</sup> He may have derived from La Grange-Chancel's *Amasis* the idea of luring the usurper into a temple by a promise of marriage in order that he may be put to death there. He had already employed in his *Atrée et Thyeste* a prince's ignorance of who his father is, an arrival by shipwreck, and help given a prince by a man who is the son or the supposed son of his enemy. *Electre* is in a sense a sequel<sup>30</sup> to *Atrée et Thyeste*, for in it the grandson of Atreus murders the son of Thyestes.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Moland edition, V, 86, XVII, 413.

<sup>28</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1709, 12°. For other editions and a study of the play cf. Dutrait, *op cit* cf also F. F. Prantz, *op cit*. The play was translated into Dutch in 1714. An Italian translation was published in 1750, 1754, 1762, and 1766. Another Italian translation was made, but not published. For a Spanish translation cf. C. B. Quiala, *PMLA*, LVIII, 152-5.

<sup>29</sup> In Crébillon's play as in Longepierre's Orestes not only kills his mother accidentally and without realizing that he has done so, but he loses his mind when he discovers what he has done. Both plays start with a long monologue spoken by Electra and both greatly enlarge the rôle of Sophocles's pedagogue. Dutrait failed to take these resemblances into consideration, for he believed that Longepierre's tragedy was written not long before it was acted in 1719.

<sup>30</sup> Or, if one prefers, it is a sequel to a sequel. Pellegrin was soon to write a play in which Ægisthus kills Atreus.

<sup>31</sup> Just before dawn Electra tells us that she has given up hope of Orestes's return, that on this day she is to marry Itys, son of Ægisthus, and that she would murder her fiancé if she were not restrained by love. She is told that there is no hope of a popular revolt until Orestes returns, as Ægisthus and his family are protected by a stranger, Tydeus, whom Itys has rescued from a shipwreck and who has recently defeated the kings of Athens and Corinth. Electra tells Itys, who has loved her for ten years, but who would not marry her without her consent, that she will agree to their union only if he will first kill Ægisthus. On the other hand, Clytemnestra warns her that she will be put to death unless she marries Itys. Clytemnestra has

The longest rôle is that of Orestes, who has become an invincible warrior and has been well received by Ægisthus. He loves the usurper's daughter. He acquires a spiritual struggle that is not in the ancient tale, for he at first believes himself to be, not Agamemnon's son, but merely his former subject. His discovery that he is Orestes supplies a scene of recognition and has an important function in the plot as it convinces him that he ought to murder Ægisthus. His character is stronger than that of Longepierre's Orestes, who knows who he is from the beginning and has no love to overcome

This is the first play in which Crébillon gave a long rôle to a woman, but, though Electra has much to say, she has little influence upon the action except that her proposed marriage is used to snare Ægisthus. As in earlier accounts she is her stepfather's implacable enemy, but she now has to overcome her love, as she had not had previously to do. Her mother feels no remorse, is willing to see both of her children put to death, and expresses only hatred when she receives the fatal blow from her son. As Durtait notes, Clytemnestra is the only mother that Crébillon portrayed. He probably thought that a normal mother is out of place in a tragedy. The third woman, Iphianasse, adds little to the play. Though she loves Orestes, she conceals her feelings and offends him by her respect for rank and her suspicions of Electra. At the end of the play she is surrounded by guards, but we are not told what disposition will be made of her.

This is true, too, of her brother, Itys, apparently an excellent young man, sighing for Electra, dutiful to his father, attached to the supposed Tydee,

been troubled by a dream and would appease Agamemnon's shade, but Ægisthus looks for a favorable turn of events, especially because he has Tydee's support. Pearce and the hand of his daughter, Iphianasse, have been asked for by the King of Corinth, but Ægisthus prefers to give her to the man who will bring him the head of Orestes, preferably to Tydee. This young warrior reports that both his father, Palamède, and Orestes perished in the shipwreck and that he has himself been greatly troubled by a visit to a temple and an ominous prediction. When he makes love to Iphianasse, she declares that he has insulted her as her husband must be a king or the killer of Orestes, but Ægisthus offers him the girl's hand when he hears that Orestes is dead. Tydee is torn between love of the princess and loyalty to the memory of Orestes. He is urged by Electra to kill Ægisthus. He is offended by Iphianasse, who is suspicious of his relations with Electra. He is influenced especially by Palamède, who has escaped from the shipwreck and is shocked to find that, instead of killing Ægisthus, Tydee has rescued him from his enemies. As the young man still hesitates, Palamède informs him that he is Orestes. In order to protect him, Palamède had brought him up as his son and had called his own son Orestes. This revelation wins him over. In the meantime Electra has seen on her father's tomb gifts that make her think her brother has returned. When Orestes assures her that he lives, she recognizes him. Palamède now urges her to agree to marry Itys in order to lure Ægisthus into the temple. After some hesitation she agrees, but, when Itys calls her to the altar, she begs him to wait. While they talk, Ægisthus goes to the temple and is slain by Orestes. Itys goes to aid his father, but he is disarmed. Orestes is told that he fatally wounded his mother when she tried to save Ægisthus. Clytemnestra reproaches Orestes and dies. Orestes seeks to kill himself, is disarmed by Palamède, and becomes mentally deranged.

but unable to cope with the children of Agamemnon. The other men who have important rôles are Ægisthus and Palamède. The former is chiefly engaged in protecting himself against the children of the man he has murdered. When he expresses disbelief in dreams, he is seeking to obscure the memory of Agamemnon. He would protect himself by marrying his son to Electra and by offering his daughter to the man who will slay Orestes. He shows none of the pessimism attributed to him by Longepierre. His confidence in Tydée, who murders him at the end of the tragedy, is an example of tragic irony. The one general idea that he expresses seems strangely democratic unless we realize that it occurs in lines employed merely to win over Tydée (II, 4):

Lorsqu'on a les vertus que vous faites paroître,  
On est du sang des Dieux, ou digne au moins d'en être

Palamède is far more intelligent. He has for twenty years been planning to avenge Agamemnon and place Orestes on the throne. He has even used as a shield for the prince his own son, whose life has been lost on the expedition undertaken in behalf of Orestes. He dominates the plot and selects the moment when the usurper is to perish. He belongs to the series of faithful and resourceful supporters of legitimate heirs to a throne, suggested by Sophocles and developed in France by a number of dramatists, including La Chapelle, La Grange-Chancel, and Longepierre.<sup>32</sup>

The action is arranged in such a way that it contains several scenes of recognition, true or supposed. Orestes is recognized as Tydée and is made known in turn to himself, to Electra, to Iphianasse, and to Clytemnestra. There are descriptive passages devoted to the shipwreck, to battle, to the murder of Agamemnon, to what Clytemnestra has seen in her dream. The love scenes are ineffective, but they serve to provide actresses with longer rôles than Crébillon had previously allowed them. It is probable that the introduction of love, the descriptive passages, and the increased respect shown by Orestes for his mother made the play more successful than a stricter reproduction of Sophocles, like that of Longepierre, would have been. It was acted fourteen times between Dec. 14, 1708, and Jan. 12, 1709. It might have had a longer initial run if the theater had not been closed from Jan. 14 to 22 on account of the excessive cold. As it was, there were four more performances in 1709. The tragedy remained in the repertory until 1818, with a total of 163 productions.

The play did not escape criticism. In the *Nouveau Mercure* of 1709 an

<sup>32</sup> In view of this fact, it is unwise to suppose, as did one of Crébillon's critics, cited by the frères Parfaict (XIV, 501), that any special influence was exerted upon the dramatist by Danchet's *Cyrus*.

author<sup>33</sup> held that Electra influences the action too little and that, as she must have been about fifty, her love of Itys should not have been introduced. She should not, for his sake, have risked the success of the plot against Ægisthus. Her recognition of Orestes would have been more effective if she had not previously believed that Tydée might be her brother. Orestes could not have been born after the siege of Troy. It was imprudent of him to leave a sword on Agamemnon's tomb. Ægisthus is represented, not as a villain, but as a "fort honnête homme," too much so to suspect Tydée's intentions when the young man admits that he is a friend of Orestes. Clytemnestra is too black a character. She should have been given some virtue to win our sympathy, as had been done in the case of Racine's Phèdre. The description of her dream contains a passage that is obscure. Palamède, the finest character, shows little originality as he is derived from Danchet's *Cyrus*. He takes too long to reach Mycenæ after the shipwreck, fails to reprove Orestes for making himself known to Electra, and acts unworthily when he proposes that she should agree to marry Itys.

The critic finds that the names of Tydée, Iphianasse, Itys, and Palamède are too well known in other connections to be employed here. To have the son and daughter of Ægisthus love the daughter and son of Agamemnon is worthy of a comedy. Tydée's pompous description in Act II, though very popular, is out of place. The action does not begin till Act III. A fatally wounded woman should not be brought on the stage to die, nor does the scene show originality, for it is derived from Pellegrin's *Mort d'Ulysse*.<sup>34</sup> Crébillon put into his play "tempête, & songe, & oracle, & fureur. Voilà de quoi faire le plus bel Opera du monde."

Much of this criticism is puerile, but some of it is justified. Crébillon seems to have had it in mind when he wrote his preface. He admitted that he had made his plot unnecessarily complicated, that there were "longueurs" in Acts I and II, especially in the last half of Act I, and that much of Act II resembled an epic poem rather than a tragedy. However, as something had to be added to the original story, he had preferred new episodes to declamation. He claimed the right to alter his source, as Racine had done so in *Mithridate* and *Britannicus*, to give Orestes the age he pleased to give him, and to make Electra fall in love, especially as she acquired in this way a moral struggle and became more pitiful than she had been in the Greek tragedies. The only fault he admits in this connection is that her love does not produce enough events.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted by the frères Parfaict, XIV, 491-511.

<sup>34</sup> In this play it is Ulysses, not a woman, who is brought in to die. As a similar situation is found at the end of *Mithridate*, there is no reason to suppose that Crébillon was imitating Pellegrin.

The frères Parfaict<sup>25</sup> accept his argument and hold that the defects of the play are well concealed by its beauties, that it rouses great interest, that its situations are "heureuses & pathétiques," its thoughts "neuves, hardies, & brillantes," its versification "forte & nombreuse." Writing in 1748, they assert that the play then received the same applause that it won when it was new.

Voltaire<sup>26</sup> sought to replace the tragedy with his *Oreste*, but he succeeded only in having his play acted as often as Crébillon's while both were in the repertory. He also attacked *Electre* directly. The heroine should not be in love. She, her brother, Itys, and Iphianasse form a comic "partie carrée." Palamède should not be the principal character. Orestes ought to know who he is and should not head Ægisthus's army. There is too much material. The adventures of Tydée lack verisimilitude. In Crébillon's description of the storm the dramatist yields to the poet. Voltaire admits, however, that, despite errors in diction, there are "belles tirades" and tragic verses, that the rôles of Electra and Palamède and especially Electra's recognition of Orestes are effective. On the whole, he sympathized with Frederick the Great's liking for *Electre* and *Rhadamiste*, but he could not resist pointing out what he held to be the superior qualities of his own tragedy.

La Harpe<sup>27</sup> made a long parallel between *Electre* and *Oreste*, very much to Voltaire's advantage. He criticized Crébillon's play, not only for the defects indicated by Voltaire, but for the *préciosité* of Iphianasse, for the sudden change in the character of Orestes when he discovers who he is, for having three acts begin with monologues spoken by Electra, and for our being left in ignorance of the fate that will befall Itys and his sister. Like Voltaire he both objects to Palamède's having the principal rôle and admires the part in itself. He adds a personal recollection:

J'ai toujours remarqué qu'à la vue de ce personnage, il s'élevait un cri de joie, et ce n'est pas seulement parce que son rôle est plein de chaleur et d'énergie, c'est parce qu'en effet la tragédie, oubliée jusque-là, entre avec lui sur la scène.<sup>28</sup>

Crébillon reached the climax of his dramatic career with his next play, *RHADAMISTE ET ZÉNOBIE*,<sup>29</sup> the most frequently acted new tragedy of 1701-15

<sup>25</sup> XIV, 511-12.

<sup>26</sup> Moland edition, V, 190-5, XVII, 187-90, XXIV, 348-51, XXXVII, 3.

<sup>27</sup> *Op. cit.*, XII, 102-206.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>29</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1711, 12°, *priv.* Feb. 8, 1711, approbation of Feb. 21 signed by Boindin, who thought that the "Public en verroit l'impression avec autant de plaisir qu'il en a vu les représentations." Dedicated to the prince de Vaudemont. A copy of this first edition is at the Johns Hopkins University. For other editions and a lengthy study of the play cf. Dutrait, *op. cit.* A Dutch translation appeared in 1713. For Italian translations, especially that of Fragoni, published seven times in 1724-98, cf. Luigi Ferrar, *le Traduzioni italiane del teatro tragico francese*, Paris, Champion, 1925. For a Spanish translation of 1784 and an adaptation of

'To compose it he abandoned Greek mythology for Tacitus, but he also made use of Segrain's *Bérénice*, the second French novel he had imitated in a tragedy, and, perhaps, of Racine's *Mithridate*.<sup>40</sup> The first two sources give the names of Pharasmane, Rhadamiste, and Zénobie, their relationship, and much of the material mentioned in the exposition, which makes Rhadamiste more evil than he really was, but, so far as the action of the tragedy is concerned, there is little that is historical about it except the fact that Pharasmane caused the death of his son, Rhadamiste. Crébillon added Arsame, Rhadamiste's visit as a Roman ambassador to his father's court, his attempt to escape with Zénobie, the fact that Pharasmane plans to marry her, her wanderings in Media, and the disposition that is finally made of her. Consequently the tragedy is in the main an original production. Its most romantic elements come, not from Segrain, but from Tacitus.<sup>41</sup>

1799, cf. C. B. Quail, *PMLA*, LVIII, 155-8. In 1768 an English translation by Arthur Murphy was published at London as *Zenobia* "by the author of the Orphan of China," an unconscious tribute to Voltaire's celebrity.

<sup>40</sup> Dutrait, *op. cit.*, pp. 530-34, gives the passage from the *Annals*, Book XII, and shows what modifications Crébillon introduced. On p. 195 he notes that Voltaire was the first to call attention to Segrain's *Bérénice* (1648-51) as a source of the play (cf. Moland edition, XXIV, 375), that this borrowing was denied by two of Crébillon's editors, but that it was so firmly believed by Brunetiere that he concluded that the dramatist had not read the passage in Tacitus (cf. *Époques du théâtre français*, Paris, Hachette, 1896, p. 211). Dutrait believed that Tacitus was the main source, but that Crébillon took from Segrain at least the mention of Artaban as a city and the choice of Mitrane as the captain of Pharasmane's guards. He thought that Arsame's love of Zenobia might have been suggested by Tiridate's love of her in the novel, but Crébillon needed no such suggestion. It would be more correct to say that the mention in *Rhadamiste*, II, 1, of Tiridate's desire to marry Zénobie was suggested by the novel. Following Voltaire, Dutrait also mentioned resemblances between the play and *Mithridate*. About all one can say is that in both tragedies the scene is laid not far from the Euxine and that a father and his two sons, one respectful to him, the other hostile, love the same woman, who loves the obedient son.

<sup>41</sup> Pharasmane, King of Iberia, near the Caucasus, had two sons, Rhadamiste and Arsame. Rhadamiste was brought up by his uncle, Mithridate, King of Armenia, and was engaged to his daughter, Zenobia, but, as Pharasmane and Tiridate, King of Parthia, had invaded Armenia, Mithridate offered Zenobia to Tiridate in return for military assistance. Rhadamiste repelled Pharasmane, deposed Mithridate, but promised to restore the latter to his throne if he could marry Zenobia. After this marriage had been arranged he murdered Mithridate and married his daughter, but a revolt of the Armenians drove him from the temple with his bride in his arms. Fearing, while they were being pursued, that she might be captured and possessed by another man, he stabbed her and threw her into the river Araxe. Wounded in the ensuing conflict, Rhadamiste was rescued by the Romans under Corbulo. He aided them in war for ten years, then hearing of his father's designs upon Armenia, he got himself appointed Roman ambassador to his court at Artabanus with the thought of possibly murdering Pharasmane. Meanwhile Zenobia, rescued and healed by shepherds, had found her way into Media, where, known as Ismène, she was captured by Arsame and brought to the Iberian court. Both Arsame and his father now wish to marry her. She believes that Pharasmane has killed Rhadamiste and she is much attached to Arsame, but the old king has decided to marry her on the day represented in the tragedy. Arsame, who has been away, returns late, but he can get from her only the promise that she will not marry his father. When Pharasmane finds them together, he orders Arsame to give up his love and return to Colchoa. Zénobie thinks of persuading Arsame to kill his father, but she decides instead to seek the aid of the Roman ambassador. Pharasmane receives the letter and Hieron,

Pharasmane is a haughty old king, proud of his blood and of his victories, brooking no opposition. He has attacked his brother, persecuted Rhadamiste, and now he arrests his other son, Arsame. His forehead is described as "superbe." In his courtship he employs no gallantry. He commands Zénobie to marry him in the same imperious manner that he adopts when he orders the Roman ambassador to leave his kingdom. He boasts of the stern simplicity of his surroundings and is eager to war upon the Romans. The impression he produces is weakened at the end of the play by his releasing Arsame and allowing him to marry Zénobie, actions attributed to remorse over the killing of Rhadamiste, but hardly in keeping with what we have previously seen of Pharasmane.

His two sons are contrasted in their attitudes toward him and towards Zénobie. Arsame does not openly disobey his father, but he returns from war without waiting for his order and he is slow in leaving Iberia when told to do so. He refuses to join a revolt against Pharasmane and to assist the Romans. Whatever he does that fails to meet with his father's approval is caused by his love of Zénobie, to whom he is respectful and devoted, though not oppressively so. His character pales in contrast with his father's and still more so with that of his extraordinary brother.

Rhadamiste has murdered his uncle, has sought to kill his wife, and indicates that he may avenge himself upon his father. There are, however, extenuating circumstances. His uncle had broken his promise to give him Zénobie in marriage. When he stabbed his wife, he was moved by passionate jealousy of a man who might capture her. When he has an opportunity to kill his father, he does not seize it. He feels too much remorse over his crimes and is too deeply in love to make one think of him as a complete villain. He is rather a tragic hero, torn by conflicting emotions (II, 1),

furieux, incertain,  
Criminel sans penchant, vertueux sans dessein,  
Jouët infortuné de ma douleur extrême

He has returned to his old home with a half-formed political plan and the

ambassador of Armenia, who wishes to offer his country's throne to Arsame. The two ambassadors warn Pharasmane not to invade Armenia and anger him so greatly that he orders them to leave the country. Arsame begs the Roman to take the supposed Irménie away with him, but declines to intrigue against his father. When the ambassador and the princess meet, there is mutual recognition. Zénobie forgives her husband and agrees to escape with him at nightfall. Rhadamiste shows some jealousy towards Arsame, which is increased when he finds him conversing with Zénobie. Though she admits that she cares for Arsame, she is willing to escape with her husband. Pharasmane arrests Arsame and is upbraiding him for plotting with the Romans when news is brought that the Roman ambassador is abducting Zénobie. The old king rushes out, finds the supposed Roman fighting with his guards, and stabs him. Brought in dying, Rhadamiste reveals his identity. Moved by this revelation and remembering that Rhadamiste had seemed to avoid him during the fight, Pharasmane softens and, contrite over killing one son, spares the other and sends him off with Zénobie to rule over Armenia.

feeling that Heaven may punish him for his crimes. When he recognizes Zénobie, he is all contrition, but he soon becomes jealous of his brother, delays his departure on account of his passion, and falls a victim to his own designs. When he is attacked by his father, he spares him, but, when he is brought in dying, he reproaches Pharasmane bitterly (V, 6)

La soif que vôtre cœur avoit de le [mon sang] repandre  
N'a-t elle pas suffi, Seigneur, pour vous l'apprendre?

A moment later he is delighted to "retrouver mon pere" Such variations bewildered Crébillon's critics, though a modern reader can easily understand them. Rhadamiste speaks over a fourth of the play, indulging in long tirades of explanation or emotional expression. One of his most effective lines, intended as an insult to his father and as a means of making him break with Rome, is a judgment on himself and an example of tragic irony.<sup>42</sup>

Ah! doit-on haïr de ceux qu'on assassine?

Zénobie is presented with much less skill. She is a Romantic heroine with a classical veneer. After being stabbed, thrown into a river, and obliged for ten years to wander about in a strange land, she is taken to a royal court, where she finds that she has preserved enough of her beauty to win the love of a king and his two sons. Though she loves Arsame, she refuses to tell him so while she believes herself to be a widow. She is prevented by a "devoir rigoureux," but what this is she never explains. It cannot be that she disapproves of a widow's marrying her brother-in-law, for this is what she is about to do when the play ends. It is when she knows that her husband lives that she admits she has loved Arsame. However, there is no doubt about her reverence for the sanctity of marriage.

Que l'himen est puissant sur les cœurs vertueux! (IV, 2)  
Mon époux est vivant, ainsi ma flâme expire (IV, 4)

This despite the fact that her marriage had not been consummated, that her husband had attempted to kill her, that he now shows violent jealousy, and that she has fallen in love with another man. Dutrait compares her to Pauline in *Polyeucte* and to the heroine of the *Princesse de Clèves*. Crébillon may have had these characters in mind when he created her and sought to put the matrimonial bond to a severer test than Corneille and Mme de La Fayette had done. It may be for such purpose that he made her brave Pharasmane, in whose power she is, forgive Rhadamiste, who would probably have again attempted to murder her, and seek to discourage Arsame, whom she loves. But, unlike her classical prototypes, she does not carve out

<sup>42</sup> II, 2. The frères Parfaict, XV, 97, call attention to the fact that this line can be applied to Rhadamiste, but they fail to note its full effectiveness.



her own destiny, for her plans to have Pharasmane murdered, to elope with Rhadamiste, and to renounce Arsame all fail. Only her desire to see her father avenged is accomplished, but that is done without her participation and apparently to her regret. She remains an artificial creation, presented without proper explanation.

The other characters are unimportant. The political element is subordinated to the personal, to the rivalry of three men closely related by blood to one another and to the woman they love. There is little local color except in the king's proud reference to the "faste sauvage" of his country, which produces, instead of gold, "du fer, des Soldats" (II, 2). The exposition contains too much material and is presented in conversations that show little skill in the use of dialogue, but the rest of the play is quite simple, consisting largely of preparations for an abduction, the failure of the attempt, and the resulting death of Rhadamiste and marriage of Zénobie. Except that the talk of revolt has no effect upon the plot, the unities are preserved. The intrigue is arranged in such a way as to produce several effective scenes: the interview between Pharasmane and the ambassadors (II, 2), the scene of double recognition (III, 5) that was called by La Harpe "l'une des plus belles sans contredit, et peut-être la plus belle qu'il y ait au théâtre,"<sup>43</sup> the scene in which Rhadamiste shows that he is jealous of his brother (IV, 4), and the final scene of recognition and death (V, 6). These scenes, skillfully spaced, and the intense manner in which Rhadamiste, Pharasmane, and Zénobie express themselves are probably what gave the play its great success.

First presented to the public on Jan. 23, 1711, it was acted twenty-three times, until March 19, and ten more before the end of the year. The author's share was 2918 francs, 2 sous, more than any earlier tragedy had produced for its author, so far as can be judged from extant records. Beaubourg played Rhadamiste, Philippe Poisson, Arsame, Ponteuil, Pharasmane, la Duclos, Zénobie.<sup>44</sup> By the end of 1718 there had been forty-nine performances of the tragedy. It remained in the repertory of the Comédie Française till 1829, with a total of 288 performances, more for this period, 1711-1829, than those of *Cinna*, *Polyeucte*, *Bajazet*, or *Mithridate*.

This result was accomplished despite the warning of critics that the public would do well to restrain its enthusiasm. The abbé de Pons found that the scenes were not linked,<sup>45</sup> the characters not well sustained. The whole

<sup>43</sup> *Op. cit.*, XIII, 65. Nadal, *Œuvres*, II, 204-5, also praised this scene highly. He noted that Zénobie recognized her husband by the sound of his voice.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. the frères Parfaict, XV, 80, 88. The tragedy was parodied in *Apollon à la fureur* on March 1, 1711.

<sup>45</sup> His *Lettre critique* of 1711 is quoted by the frères Parfaict, XV, 87-8. In the printed copies of the play all the scenes are carefully linked.

appeared to him "confus et embarrassé," though he admitted that there were "traits hardis," happy expressions, interesting situations, and that at times the characters expressed themselves with a majesty worthy of Corneille. Dufresny,<sup>46</sup> too, found that there was too much material, but he praised the manner in which most of it was packed into the early scenes, so that it was separated from the action. He pointed out that it does not immediately become clear why Rhadamiste is not recognized by his father and brother and that it is highly improbable that Arsame and the ambassadors would have reached the court almost at the same time. Though he admires the scene in which these ambassadors appear before Pharasmane, he objects to the king's receiving them together. He holds Arsame inexcusable for abandoning a post confided to his care, Pharasmane, for stopping to speak to Arsame when he hears that Zénobie has been carried off. However, he admires the heroine's superhuman virtue, the character of Pharasmane, well sustained except at the end, and that of Arsame after the first scenes in which he appears. He comments less on the violation of rules than on Crébillon's success in spite of them.

In 1726 an anonymous author, said to be the abbé Pellegrin,<sup>47</sup> judged that Pharasmane does not conduct himself as a statesman should, that the play has a "fond de Roman," that Zénobie should not think of having Arsame kill his father, or Arsame propose to take revenge on Zénobie's husband. He could not understand why Rhadamiste is not recognized by one of his father's subjects, he was unmoved by the celebrated scene of recognition because it boded no good for Zénobie, and he found Rhadamiste cruel to his father at the end of the play.

Voltaire<sup>48</sup> referred to the report that Boileau, upon hearing a part of the play read, put the author below Pradon, but he was not so severe himself. He agreed with earlier critics that the exposition was obscure and that it was improbable that Rhadamiste should be unrecognized at his father's court. He also thought it unlikely that he would agree to carry off a woman merely because his father loved her. He held that Arsame's love lacked power and that Pharasmane was too much like Racine's Mithridate. On the other hand, he considered the latter king less proud and less tragic than Pharasmane, he declared that the scene of double recognition had greatly pleased, he called the tragedy Crébillon's best, and he credited it with "du tragique, de l'intérêt," striking situations and verses.<sup>49</sup> He even went so

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *Œuvres*, 1747, IV, 286-96. His criticism first appeared in 1711.

<sup>47</sup> Cited by the frères Parfaict, XV, 88-102.

<sup>48</sup> Moland edition, XX, 567-8. It may have been this report that induced J. B. Rousseau to say that, if Le Verrier had read the tragedy over Boileau's tomb, the old critic would, like Achilles, have risen up and demanded that it be sacrificed to his shade, cf. his *Œuvres*, edition cited, V, 155.

<sup>49</sup> Moland edition, XXIV, 355-8.

far as to say that *Rhadamiste* and *Electre* had special beauties that were lacking in Corneille and Racine.<sup>50</sup>

La Harpe<sup>51</sup> expressed the greatest admiration for the play, especially for the rôle of Rhadamiste and for the effective situations of Acts II-V. He agreed that there was far too much material in the exposition and he found fault with many expressions, but he considered the play enough by itself to give the author a very honorable position among tragic poets. After La Harpe several critics admired the tragedy. Geoffroy called it the last sigh of this "tragédie mâle, simple et vraie, créée par Corneille et Racine." Villemain considered it the only work of genius in the history of tragedy between Racine and Voltaire. Gérusez found in the play "la nature vraie et terrible."<sup>52</sup> Nisard held that *Rhadamiste* could be compared to Rodrigue, Zénobie to Pauline, praised the verse of the tragedy, and asserted that it contained "des actes entiers, des caractères vivants" that recall the masters of the genre.<sup>53</sup> Vitu reproached the Comédie Française for dropping the play from its repertory in 1829,<sup>54</sup> but later writers have tended to support the opinion of the actors, in spite of Dutrait's effort to give Crébillon the third place among French authors of tragedy.

Already Petit de Julleville had called the play "plus étrange que belle, et plus violente que forte," the work of a man who observed the world only through a dream.<sup>55</sup> Brunetière admitted that it had "un air de grandeur et d'héroïsme qui rappelle quelquefois Corneille," but he considered it a melodrama in which disguise is employed to cultivate surprise and terror.<sup>56</sup> He gives as the cause of its being dropped from the repertory the fact that it had been surpassed in startling effects by the authors of Romantic tragedy. Later writers have been inclined to agree with him. Lion called *Rhadamiste* "un pêle-mêle de galanterie et de rage jalouse, d'amour, de vertu et d'héroïsme, qui donnait à la tragédie, sinon la vie, du moins l'apparence de la vie"<sup>57</sup> Lanson's account of the play presents it in much the same fashion.<sup>58</sup> Mr Tilley repeats a part of Brunetière's comment<sup>59</sup>

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, XXII, 249

<sup>51</sup> *Op cit*, XIII, 40-89

<sup>52</sup> These three critics are cited by Dutrait, *op cit*, pp 485-8

<sup>53</sup> *Histoire de la littérature française*, Paris, 1863, IV, 167-8

<sup>54</sup> Cf Dutrait, *op cit*, p 490

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, p 491

<sup>56</sup> *Epoques*, Paris, Hachette, 1896, p 225 In this connection Brunetière attacked recognition as a purely melodramatic device and denied that it is to be found in Racine. He overlooked the reported recognition of Eriphile at the end of *Iphigénie* and the recognition of Joux in *Athalie*, V, 5. He also failed to remember that one of the greatest of tragedies, *Edipus Rex*, is based on recognition.

<sup>57</sup> In Petit de Julleville's *Histoire de la langue*, etc., VI, 547

<sup>58</sup> *Histoire de la littérature française*, Paris, Hachette, 1903, p 639 In attempting to establish the thesis that Crébillon sought to combine the horrible with the bienséant Lanson asserts that, "éclairé sur sa victime, il [Pharasmane] se tuera

The play seems to me to deserve neither the enthusiasm nor the scorn that it has received. For over a century it was regarded as one of the leading French tragedies, yet for more than another century it has not been considered worth reviving. There is too much material in the exposition and that material is presented in a prosaic fashion, but after the first act the tragedy moves swiftly, with striking scenes separated from one another by quieter discussions that make them all the more effective. *Zénobie* is certainly an unreal person and *Arsame* is like many another character in French tragedy, but *Pharasmane* has a vigorous, even a poetic rôle, while *Rhadamiste* is a most interesting character, wavering between right and wrong, jealous, passionate, murderous, yet with yearnings towards a better life that win our sympathy. In portraying these men Crébillon was not hampered by respect for the proprieties. It is unfortunate that they have not received more generous appreciation from recent critics.

Despite the great success of *Rhadamiste*, Crébillon next attempted a milder type of play, without disguise and recognition and with nothing more horrible than suicide, or than murder committed by a person not related to the victim. He did not, however, abandon as source material the ancient history of western Asia. In composing *XERXÈS*<sup>90</sup> he turned to Justin as he had previously turned to Tacitus, and borrowed from seventeenth-century plays as he had previously borrowed from a seventeenth-century novel.

After his unfortunate expedition against Greece, Xerxes, according to Justin (III, § 1), was murdered by his chief officer, Artabanes, who accused the king's elder son, Darius, of the murder and convinced the younger, Artaxerxes, that his brother was guilty. With the boy's assistance Artabanes put Darius to death, but the murderer's confidant told the truth to Artaxerxes, who succeeded in killing Artabanes. From this account Crébillon derived his five principal male characters, including the confidant, whom he called Tysapherne, the name of a Persian mentioned by Justin in another connection. He kept the murder of the king by Artabanes, Artaxerxes's suspicions of his brother, and the fact that the officer's guilt was revealed by his confidant, but he had the latter put Artabanes to death and he allowed Darius to live.

action horrible—et bien-séante." Unfortunately for the theory, *Pharasmane* does not kill himself. Noticing his error, Lanson changed the text to "*vaut se tuer*," thus avoiding the resetting of more than one line, but the alteration, though economical, is no nearer the truth, for *Pharasmane* gives no indication that he desires to kill himself. Moreover, suicide is found in some of the finest tragedies ever written.

<sup>90</sup> *MLR*, XVII (1922), 366.

<sup>91</sup> First published in his *Œuvres*, Paris, Pault fils., 1749-12°. When Fontenelle signed the approbation, Feb. 26, 1749, he stated that he had found nothing in the play unworthy of the author's great reputation. I own a copy of this edition. For others and a study of the play cf. Dutrait, *op cit*; Ferrail, *op cit*, mentions two Italian translations of 1756. For La Harpe's condemnation of the tragedy cf. his *op cit*, XIII, 93-102.

But Justin's tale gave Crébillon no feminine rôle. Dutrait supposed that the dramatist had invented the non-historical portion of the plot, although an anonymous author, quoted by the frères Parfaict,<sup>61</sup> had suggested in 1749 that other material was provided by Boisrobert, Magnon, and Boyer. Goldstein<sup>62</sup> eliminated the first of these and proposed instead Thomas Corneille's *Darius*. I would in turn eliminate Thomas Corneille, who dramatized a different account, for Goldstein's evidence is unconvincing. It is clear, however, that both Boyer and Magnon influenced Crébillon, the former especially in the plot, the latter in details of the text. The historical narrative they had dramatized, that of Artaxerxes II, his sons, and the Greek mistress of his brother Cyrus, was attached by Crébillon to the account of Xerxes's death, so that his play gives an example of a partially disguised subject. His method resembles that of Campistron in writing *Alcibiade*, which he based partly on history, partly on Du Ryer's *Thémistocle*.

As in Boyer's *Artaxerce*, Crébillon's powerful minister has a daughter whom he would use to promote his ambition, but whom Darius refuses to marry, the king has to choose one of his sons as his successor; a request made by the one selected must be granted, rivalry between the king and one of his sons is real or pretended, and a minister tries to incite a prince against his father, while hoping ultimately to secure the throne for himself. Both of the important feminine characters owe their existence to this play and to Magnon's *Artaxerce*.

Finally, there is a relationship that has been overlooked between this tragedy and *Rhadamiste*, for Darius returns, like Arsame, after a victory and without his father's permission, is coldly received by the king, loves the same woman as his brother, lingers at court after he has been ordered to leave, and is ultimately allowed to marry the woman he cares for and to become a king himself. In both tragedies a proposed elopement leads to the dénouement.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>61</sup> XV, 161 2

<sup>62</sup> *Darius, Xerxes und Artaxerxes in Drama der neueren Literaturen*, Leipzig, 1912, pp. 84 102

<sup>63</sup> Artaban, Xerxes's minister, plans to make himself king after getting rid of the monarch and his two sons, Darius and Artaxerxes. He poisons the mind of Xerxes against popular and victorious Darius while this prince is away from Babylon with the army, and persuades the king to appoint Artaxerxes as his heir. Since the selection carries with it the right to have a request granted, the younger prince asks for the hand of his cousin, Amestris, whom the king had promised to Darius. Hearing that his elder son is returning, Xerxes hopes to persuade him to accept the situation by offering him Egypt and Artaban's daughter, Barsine. Darius had once loved this woman, but Xerxes, fearing he would be too powerful if he became Artaban's son-in-law, had pretended to love her himself and had thus induced her to reject the prince, who had subsequently fallen in love with Amestris. When Darius reaches the court, he is brutally received by his father and learns that his brother is his successful rival in politics and love. Even Amestris, who has been made to believe that he loves Barsine, accuses him of perfidy and allows him no opportunity to

The Persian monarch is represented as essentially weak, fearing both his powerful minister and his popular son, winning temporary success by pretending to love Barsine, but allowing himself to be led by Artaban into selecting the wrong successor, then seeking to cover up his mistake by a show of sternness. Thoroughly inconsequential, he easily falls a victim to Artaban and excites little sympathy among those who surround him or those who read the play. His sons are quite superior to him. Darius has suffered from the fact that his mother was not loved by his father, but he has become a popular hero. Though cruelly hurt in his pride and his love, he is guilty only of trying to escape with Amestris. He could easily have become a tragic character. His brother has a rôle that resembles that of Attale in *Nicomède*. Though brought up in luxury, he does not intrigue for the throne. When he discovers that his brother and Amestris love each other, he yields her to him, even convincing her of Darius's loyalty. When he believes his brother guilty of killing their father, he hesitates to have him executed, and, when he learns that he is innocent, he gives him half his kingdom. He once (III, 2) expresses himself in a line that is worthy of Racine:

Il me haïroit moins, s'il ne vous aimoit pas

The longest rôle is that of Artaban, a wily, conscienceless, and ambitious person, who dominates the king and stirs up family strife for his own advantage. He makes only one mistake, that of trusting Tysapherne, and intends to remedy this by killing his confidant, but he fails to act quickly enough to prevent this error from being fatal to himself. He explains his motives in striking verses:

Me venger & régner, voilà mes souverains,  
Il n'est loix ni sermens qui puissent retenir  
Un cœur d'embarrassé du soin de l'avenir  
Un cœur comme le mien est au dessus des Loix  
La crainte fit les Dieux, l'audace a fait des Rois \*\*

explain Artaxerxes, however, learns from a stormy interview with his brother that he loves Amestris and, when he discovers that she still loves Darius, he convinces her that his brother has not broken faith with her. When Amestris and Darius are sure of each other, the latter proposes they escape together and accept help from Artaban, who arranges for them a rendezvous in the palace at night. The minister removes the usual guards and, before Amestris arrives, borrows Darius's dagger, claiming that he wishes to show it to the girl in order to convince her that her lover is waiting for her. Artaban then murders the king with it, accuses Darius of the crime, and submits the dagger as evidence. Artaxerxes is inclined to believe the accusation as he has been shocked to find Darius and Amestris together at night. A council condemns Darius to death, but Amestris rouses the people against Artaban. Barsine reports that her father's confidant, Tysapherne, who had witnessed the king's murder and whom Artaban had intended to kill, has just murdered Artaban. Barsine has already poisoned herself. Artaxerxes, convinced of his brother's innocence, yields Amestris to him and agrees to give him half his kingdom.

\*\* I, 1. Grimm, *op. cit.*, I (1877), 278, though he has a low opinion of the play

Some preparation for his confidant's change of heart is made in the questions asked him early in the play and by Artaban's noticing his pallor when the king was being murdered. He is the villain's helper, but he has a conscience that makes him undo his master's plot and kill both Artaban and himself. The two women are contrasted in the fact that one is guided by love, the other by ambition. Amestris refuses the throne because she loves Darius, while Barsine refuses Darius because she loves the throne. The kindly author rewards love and punishes ambition

The dramatic material is distributed in a somewhat unusual fashion. Artaban is the leading character in Acts I, III, and V, but he is much less prominent in the others. Xerxes, though he gives his name to the play, does not appear after Act III. Barsine comes on the stage only in Acts II and V. Amestris has almost as much to say in the third act as in all the others put together. Though the atmosphere of the play is that of tragedy, comic material is employed when Barsine, after rejecting Darius, tries unsuccessfully to win him back,<sup>65</sup> and when Amestris and Darius exemplify the familiar quarrel and reconciliation of lovers. Artaxerxes's pompous love-making and the contrast between the king's bluster and his weakness also approach the comic

There are a number of details that seem improbable. Amestris believes too readily that Darius has given her up. The sight of Darius's dagger would not have convinced her that he was waiting for her, nor would the prince have entrusted this weapon to Artaban. Artaxerxes is also too ready to accept the dagger as proof. He is too quick to believe his brother guilty and is too easily persuaded of his innocence by Barsine's report. There is no sufficient reason for her suicide. Tysapherne's murder of Artaban is insufficiently explained. The failure of the play may have been due to such evidence of careless workmanship, added to the fact that the spectators found here none of the scenes of violence or recognition that they associated with the name of Crébillon, no such striking characters as he had shown them in his earlier plays. The tragedy was acted only once, on Feb. 7, 1714.<sup>66</sup>

With this play ends Crébillon's contribution to tragedy before the death of Louis XIV. He had attracted attention with his somber *Idoménée* and its problem of human sacrifice. He had risen to prominence among dramatists with his *Atrée* and its horrible cup. In *Electre* he had produced a peculiarly eighteenth-century version of an ancient tragedy. This was followed by *Rhadamiste*, his masterpiece, a play that demonstrated his ability

and considers Artaban too outspoken when he reveals his motives, notes that this last verse attracted attention

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Armande and Clitandre in *les Femmes savantes*

<sup>66</sup> According to Dutrait, *op cit*, pp. 39-40, the actors wished to give the play again, but Crébillon insisted upon its withdrawal

to contrive striking situations and to create passionate characters. He was the only French author who wrote more than three tragedies in 1701-15. His love of romance, of complex material, of terrible situations made him seem to be leading classical tragedy into new paths, while respecting its rules of unity and propriety, but his medium was not well adapted to his experiments. After the Romantic movement had produced tragedies of its own, French audiences preferred to return to Corneille and Racine, or to attend plays by younger dramatists, their own contemporaries, with richer vocabularies than Crébillon, more facile prosody, and more varied dramatic material. Crébillon fell between the two schools. He has, however, an assured position in the history of French drama. One may hesitate to agree with Dugait that he should be ranked third among authors of classical tragedy, but one may well grant him admission to a group of writers, each of whom has some claim to this distinction: Rotrou, Du Ryer, Thomas Corneille, Campistron, and Voltaire.



## CHAPTER VIII

### PELLEGRIN, DANCHET, HÉNAULT, CHATEAUBRUN, DESCHAMPS

Seven men and two women wrote their first tragedies for the Comédie Française in 1701-15. Of these Crébillon, Nadal, and the women have already been discussed. The five who remain composed eight tragedies at this time. Several of these plays were well received and all were eventually published, but none was acted after its first season.

The author who led the way was S.-J. Pellegrin (1663-1745) of Marseilles, who began his adult career as an "aumônier de marine," but who came to Paris and wrote for the Comédie Française, the Foire, and the Opera. Known for his poverty and for mingling religious and operatic interests, he was ridiculed by Legrand as M. de La Rimaille, but he won at least the distinction of writing the first libretto for which Rameau composed the music. Though he was the author of various plays and operas, as well as of religious works in prose and verse, only two of his tragedies were acted in 1701-15.<sup>1</sup>

The first of these was POLYDORÉ,<sup>2</sup> derived from *Fable CIX* of Hyginus. Genest's lost *Polymneste*, acted in December, 1696, probably dramatized the same story and may have brought it to Pellegrin's attention. It seems that Priam sent his son, Polydorus, to be brought up by the boy's sister, Iliona, who had married Polymnestor, King of the Thracians. She pretended that he was her own son and that Deipylus, her son by Polymnestor, was her brother. After the capture of Troy the Greeks bribed the Thracian king with gold and the offer of Electra's hand to put Polydorus to death, but Polymnestor slew his own son, mistaking him for his wife's brother, and was subsequently killed by Iliona at the instigation of Polydorus. Pellegrin declares that he kept Hyginus's story except that he made Deipylus the son of Polymnestor by an earlier marriage. He did so in order to spare Iliona the responsibility for causing her son's death. He added a character called Laodamie, who, according to the frères Parfaict, is given love that is "très-équivoque & mal soutenu." They quote verses from IV, 1, that show considerable resemblance to *Héraclius*. Polymnestor evidently found himself in the same quandary as Phocas:

<sup>1</sup> For Pellegrin cf. the *Biographie générale*, the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale, La Harpe, *op. cit.*, XIV, 58, and Maurice Albert, *les Théâtres de la Foire*, Paris, Hachette, 1900, pp. 49-50.

<sup>2</sup> Paris, M. Le Clerc, 1706, 12°, *priv.*, Dec. 15, 1705. The *Bib. du th. fr.*, III, 142, gives the publishers as Pierre le Clerc, Brunet, and le Breton. The frères Parfaict, XIV, 369-73, discuss the tragedy. I have been unable to examine a copy of it.

Mon malheur est si grand, il est si peu commun,  
 Que je trouve deux fils, & n'en puis trouver un . . .  
 En faveur de tous deux me laissant prévenir,  
 Je ne sçais qui je dois ou venger ou punir

The frères Parfaict find little to praise in the tragedy. "L'exposition en est très-mal faite; la conduite embrouillée, les épisodes sont mal imaginés, les situations manquées, & les personnages peu intéressans" They declare that the sudden catastrophe surprises because of its improbability and that the versification is weak. Yet, accepted on Sept. 19, 1705, the tragedy was acted fifteen times, from Nov. 6 to Dec. 3, and Pellegrin thought well enough of it to select the same subject for an opera, produced in 1720 and in 1739.

His second tragedy was *LA MORT D'ULYSSE*,<sup>3</sup> derived, like its predecessor, primarily from Hyginus, who in *Fable CXXVII* had related the adventures of Ulysses' son by Circe, Telegonus, sent to Ithaca by his mother and there slaying his father, when the latter and Telemachus, unaware of his identity, attack him. Pellegrin adds an oracle that bewilders Ulysses. He brings in Penelope and creates Axiane, a princess whose father had sought Penelope's hand and who is loved by both sons of Ulysses.<sup>4</sup> In dramatizing this material the author made use of various French plays.<sup>5</sup>

The tragedy is based on two romantic notions, belief in oracles and in the *cri du sang*. Ulysses, who lacks entirely the cunning for which he is renowned, is an essentially weak monarch, moved by dread of an oracle he

<sup>3</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1707, 12°, the *privé* is that of *Polydore*, Dec 15, 1705. The approbation, signed by Fontenelle, is dated Dec 14, 1706. There is a copy of it in the Princeton University library. The author derived from his tragedy the opera called *Télégon* (1725).

<sup>4</sup> Ulysses has returned from Troy and slain all the rival suitors except Amphinome, King of Samos, who has died in captivity and left a daughter, Axiane, about to marry Telemachus. This projected marriage has recalled to Ulysses Circe's parting prediction that his blood would be shed by a very dear hand. Calchas, consulted by messenger, warns him to beware of his son. Thinking that Axiane will turn Telemachus against him, Ulysses decides to marry her to a young stranger, Telegonus. This young man, as we learn subsequently, is the son of Ulysses and Circe. His father had left him in charge of Polite, and Ulysses had heard that he had died, but he has in reality been sent by his mother to kill Ulysses, though a strange feeling has not only prevented his doing so, but has caused him to save Ulysses' life. In return he has been made commander of the army. Axiane refuses to marry him and seeks to start a mutiny. Ulysses sends Telegonus to put down the uprising and arrests both Axiane and Telemachus. After questioning the latter, Ulysses is sure of his innocence, but thinks it wise to banish him. Soon, however, his paternal affection induces him to change his plan, to tell his legitimate son about the oracle, and to promise to marry him to Axiane. Telegonus resents the loss of the girl and seeks to kill his rival. In the fight that ensues Ulysses receives the blow intended for Telemachus. Explanations follow. The dying Ulysses discovers that Telegonus is his son and that the oracle has been fulfilled. Overcome with horror at his deed, Telegonus kills himself.

<sup>5</sup> The frères Parfaict, XIV, 422-3, compare the opening scene to that of *Crébillon's Idoménée*, the scene (III, 4) in which the angry father perceives his son's look of innocence with *Phèdre*, IV, 2. *Britannicus* may have inspired "Le barbare qu'il est m'étouffe en m'embrassant" (V, 3), *le Cid*, "C'est peu de vous aimer, Seigneur, il vous adore" (IV, 2) and "Et dans ma propre Cour me fera t on la loy?" (IV, 4).

misinterprets. He pays no attention to Circe's threats till he has engaged his son to Axiane. His belief that Telegonus has died is based merely on a letter. He foolishly prevents Telemachus's marriage, then approves of it, though nothing has happened in the meantime to lessen the force of the oracular pronouncement. His actions in regard to Telegonus are partly determined by a mysterious feeling he has for one he believes to be a stranger. He is a somewhat pathetic figure, but one who violates classical prescription in regard to well-known legendary characters

Penelope is presented as a devoted mother rather than as a faithful wife. She is quite useless, as the frères Parfaict point out, except to provide the troupe with a second feminine rôle of some distinction. Axiane speaks boldly to Ulysses and will probably dominate Telemachus, a mild youth, ever seeking to calm the hot tempers of those by whom he is surrounded. In depicting him, Pellegrin may have been influenced by *Télémaque*. Telegonus is much more forceful and interesting. As the son of Circe and Ulysses, he has a split personality, dominated, now by vice, now by virtue. He is attracted to Ulysses, as his father is to him, though both are unaware of the relationship. It is unfortunate that he was not given a larger part with greater emphasis upon the inner conflict. The only other character worth mentioning is Eumaeus, promoted from his humble position in the *Odyssey* to the post of Ulysses' confidant, a similar elevation to that assigned to him in Genest's *Pénélope*.

The background of the action is not clear. Ulysses has been carrying on a successful war, yet he has caused much unrest among his subjects. Though Axiane is kept under guard, she is able to conspire. The *merveilleux* is represented, not only by the oracle and the cry of the blood, but by the darkening of the sun and the burst of a thunderstorm when Ulysses is wounded. The double recognition scene, placed almost at the end of the tragedy (V, 11), is effective. When Ulysses is wounded and Telegonus regretfully explains that Circe had sent him to Ithaca for that purpose, Ulysses asks how he knew her and is told that the young man had been brought up at her court

|   |                                                         |                                  |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| U | Je tremble                                              | de quel Père as-tu reçu le jour? |
| T | La mort m'avait ravi des ma plus tendre enfance         |                                  |
|   | Celui que l'on croyait auteur de ma naissance           |                                  |
| U | Je frissonne                                            | Son nom?                         |
| T |                                                         | Polite                           |
| U |                                                         | Je frémis                        |
|   | Grands Dieux! à quel forfait je reconnois mon Fils?     |                                  |
| T | Moy' votre Fils, Seigneur' Dieux' quel affreux mystere! |                                  |
|   | Moy même à quel forfait reconnois je mon Père?          |                                  |

Except in the character of Ulysses and the fact that Penelope is useless,

classical regulations are respected. The play's obvious faults were partially redeemed by the scene of double recognition, if one may judge by its satisfactory, though brief popularity. Acted first on Dec. 29, 1706, it was not given a second time until Jan. 13, 1707, but it ran until Feb. 4. Joannidès assigns to it eleven performances, the frères Parfaict, thirteen. According to these last writers, Ulysses was played by Ponteuil, Telemachus by Etienne Baron, Telegonus by Beaubourg, Penelope by la Desbrosses, Axiane by Charlotte Desmares.

Pellegrin wrote a third tragedy, one that was read in 1710, but has not survived in its original form. On Feb. 4 of that year the duc du Maine wrote his wife that two days before he had been present when a tragedy called *PÉLOPÉE*<sup>6</sup> was read at Versailles, and proceeded to give her a detailed analysis of it.<sup>7</sup>

*Pélopie* tells her confidant that in her youth, when she was known as Amestris, she had met a "rustre" called Eurotas, who had courted her in the hollow of a rock and either seduced her or married her secretly. The boy born of this union was taken away shortly after his birth and Eurotas disappeared at about the same time. As an oracle informed *Pélopie* that fifteen years later she would find a husband at Argos and would have other matters cleared up, she established herself in that town. Only the day before she has been given an apartment in the palace and is now called a princess, though she does not know who she is. We also learn that she has been attracted by the admiration of a young man at court, that Atreus, King of Argos, loves her, and that there has been an uprising among the people. In Act II Atreus makes love to the princess with so little success that he engages Uriste, the young man who loves her, to speak to her in his behalf. We hear that the uprising, which continues, has been caused by sympathy for Thyestes, whom Atreus, his brother, keeps in prison. *Pélopie* receives word that Thyestes is her father and writes him an affectionate letter. In Act III Uriste carries out Atreus's commission, but shows at the same time his own love of the princess. Atreus finds him on his knees before *Pélopie*, but pretends not to notice his attitude. In Act IV Atreus learns from a courtier who had retired from society that Uriste is the son of Thyestes. Atreus begs him to keep this information to himself and has him placed under guard. He gets possession of the letter that *Pélopie* had written to Thyestes, concludes that she loves him, and plans a terrible revenge. By showing the letter to Uriste he convinces him that *Pélopie* loves Thyestes. Uriste becomes so jealous that he agrees to obey Atreus and murder Thyestes, who is to be brought out of prison for that purpose. A captain of the guards begins the last act by seeking Uriste. Thyestes then enters with a friend, sees the place where two of his children were murdered, and wonders what has become of a son he has had placed at the

<sup>6</sup> In its final form it was played at the Comédie Française on July 18, 1733, and, under the name of the chevalier Pellegrin, was published at Paris, P. Le Breton, 1733, 8°, with a dedication in verse to the marshal duc de Villars, the hero of Denain, then in the next to last year of his life. The play was republished, Utrecht, Etienne Néaulme, 1733.

<sup>7</sup> The letter was published by A. de Boislisle in the *Annuaire-Bulletin* of the Société de l'histoire de France for 1908, pp. 223-31. In his brief introduction Boislisle calls the tragedy an imitation of Æschylus, but I have been unable to discover on what fact this opinion is based.

mercy of wild animals Uriste appears, shows Pélopée's letter, asks Thyestes how he knew her, and proposes a duel Thyestes declines and presents his chest for Uriste to pierce At this moment the captain introduces the courtier whom Atreus had arrested Uriste, interrupted when about to strike Thyestes, is told that his intended victim is his father Instead of striking, he embraces him and learns from him that Pélopée is the daughter of Thyestes Though he nearly dies as a result of this information, he goes out to put his father on the throne In the fight that ensues Atreus dies, while Pélopée holds the stage and tells us with what pleasure she expects to marry Uriste Thyestes returns in triumph and is recognized by Pélopée as Eurotas She upbraids him till she learns that he is her father Then she sees that "il y du qu'as-tu" dans son fait, et même un terrible qu'as-tu," and stabs herself Thyestes desires to kill himself "en se voyant son propre gendre; mais on s'y oppose, et je crois qu'il va faire de belles réflexions"

The duc du Maine comments that the subject is frightful, "tous les personnages sont parents sans se connoître, tantôt ils s'aiment un peu trop, tantôt ils se haïssent de même, et les convenances des âges y sont aussi forcées." He notes the author's skill in keeping the explanation of the relationships for the end of the play and in making monsters appear to be "de très honnêtes gens" He finds the verses "beaux et aisés" and wonders why he has been "ni touché ni intéressé."

The play was derived, like the two that had preceded it, from Hyginus.<sup>9</sup> The duc du Maine does not indicate that Uriste was Ægisthus Probably in this case and in others the text was more explicit. Crimes committed by members of a family upon one another, mysterious calls of the blood, and scenes of recognition had already been employed by Pellegrin, but he had previously introduced no such element of horror. He was probably influenced by Crébillon's *Atrée et Thyeste*, which was first acted in March, 1707, and of which *Pélopée* may be considered a sequel In both plays Atreus seeks to have Thyestes's son murder his father Pellegrin was quite indifferent to the improbability of a love affair between a woman and the fifteen-year old son she had had by her father. That a play based upon such a theme could be read at court near the end of Louis XIV's life makes it appear that the censorship exercised by the king and Mme de Maintenon was less strict than has been supposed

Apparently, however, Pellegrin was restrained from giving this play to the actors during Louis's reign and during the Regency Perhaps the accusations of incest with his daughter that were brought against the duc d'Orléans made it seem unwise to offer the tragedy to the public till after his death. However this may be, it was not played until 1733, when it was

<sup>9</sup> Boissière knew no other example of this expression, though he could have found one cited from La Fontaine by Littré, *s v* catu, cf also Huguet, *Dictionnaire du seizième siècle*, *s v* catu

<sup>9</sup> *Fables* LXXXVII and LXXXVIII The theme of the sword employed to identify the ravisher must have been omitted by Pellegrin

well received, according to Pellegrin, who could have supported his assertion by the fact that it was then performed sixteen times. In publishing it, he indicated his principal source and declared that respect for the proprieties made him change the rape of Pélopée to a secret marriage. Boislisle noted that between 1710 and 1733 the tragedy "subit quelques modifications," but these were much more considerable than this observation implies.

In its new form the young hero is called *Ægiste*, Atreus is not in love with Pélopée and pretends that she is his daughter, though he knows that she is his niece, Thyestes is not imprisoned till the middle of the play; some importance is given to the intervention of Tyndarus, King of Sparta, a theme that may have been suggested by the *Ægyste* of Séguineau et Pralard, a play acted in 1719 and now lost, but of which an analysis was preserved by the frères Parfaict, Pélopée first appears on the stage at the beginning of the second act, loves her husband faithfully, is aware that he is Thyestes, and does not kill herself. By sparing her Pellegrin softened the ending, but he left "unfinished business," as we are not told what will be the effect upon the trio of the discovery that Pélopée is her father's wife and the half-sister of her son.<sup>10</sup>

In his first three plays Pellegrin dramatized ancient tales he had found

<sup>10</sup> Thyestes, supported by Tyndarus, King of Sparta, has marched against Atreus, who had deprived him of Argos and made him drink his son's blood. Sostrate, who has been hiding in Atreus's dominions, is faithful to Thyestes and asks Arcas to take him a note explaining his innocence of a certain crime. This note falls into the hands of Atreus, who learns from it that a warrior who has been protecting him is the son of Thyestes. The latter had given his daughter, Pélopée, to Arbate to be slain, but Arbate had brought her to Atreus, who had substituted her for his own daughter, carried off from her cradle. Thyestes had subsequently forced his way into Atreus's palace and taken away Pélopée, who had been recaptured by Ægisthus. Atreus has offered her in marriage to Thyestes, who has refused the offer apparently because he believes his ally, Tyndarus, would marry him to his daughter, Clytemnestra. Thyestes has challenged Ægisthus, and Atreus urges him to fight, but Pélopée, whom Ægisthus loves, persuades him to spare Thyestes. She admits to her confidant that she is secretly married to Thyestes and has had a child by him, but that she has given the boy to Sostrate to rear, for Apollo's oracle has warned her that he will be in danger of committing parricide and incest. At the beginning of Act III Thyestes is in prison. He has felt so much emotion upon meeting Ægisthus that he has been unable to use his sword and has been captured by the youth. He now recalls an oracle that told him he would again rule over Argos: "Par un fils qui naîtra de ta fille & de toi." To avoid incest he had given his daughter to Arbate to kill. Pélopée greets him and proposes that they make known their marriage, but Thyestes would delay in order not to offend Tyndarus. Ægisthus wishes to defend Thyestes till he learns from Atreus that Pélopée loves him, whereupon jealousy obliges him to agree to Atreus's demand. He calms a mutiny and prepares to kill Thyestes, but, as he dislikes assassination, he proposes that they fight in Tyndarus's camp. Thyestes refuses the combat. At this point Sostrate enters, is accused by Thyestes of killing his son, and replies that this son is Ægisthus, who throws himself at his father's feet. Thyestes tells him that Pélopée is his mother. Ægisthus proposes that they pretend that Thyestes is dead in order that he may escape, but, when he meets his mother, he is obliged to tell her that Thyestes lives. She now discovers her relationship to the youth. When Atreus tries to kill Thyestes, Ægisthus intervenes and mortally wounds Atreus, who lives long enough to gloat over Pélopée and inform her that she is not his daughter, as she has supposed, but the daughter of her husband. Thyestes begs the gods to end the misfortunes of his family.

in Hyginus, themes that had been neglected by most other dramatists and must have been little known to the public. When he introduces familiar characters like Ulysses, Penelope, and Ægisthus, he may present them with slight regard for the kind of reputation they had acquired in earlier literature. Oracular pronouncements and mysterious appeals of kinship play an important part in his tragedies. He seeks sensational situations, presented at the expense of probability. His skillful use of surprise may explain the early success of his tragedies when acted at Paris. Their failure to remain in the repertory seems due to his inability to select themes or to create characters that inspire a desire for more intimate acquaintance. Like the duc du Maine, the spectators soon found that these tragedies neither touched nor interested them.

Antoine Danchet (1671-1748) was born in Auvergne, at Riom, was educated there and at Paris, and showed such aptitude for classical studies that he was given a "chaire de Rhétorique" at Chartres. He returned to Paris as a tutor and composed verses of various kinds. He was thrown with Boindin, Saurin, J-B Rousseau, and other frequenters of the café Laurent. He became known to the public through his opera, *Hésione*,<sup>11</sup> produced in 1700. As the bulk of his work was written to be accompanied by music, he became in a sense the successor of Quinault, with Campra replacing Lully as composer. He was highly enough esteemed to be elected to the Academy of Inscriptions and the French Academy and to hold a position as censor, a fact that accounts for the appearance of his name signed to various "approbations" of the period.

In the midst of his operatic occupations he found time to write four tragedies, the first of which was *CYRUS*.<sup>12</sup> In the *Avertissement* of this play he tells us that the general idea of it and one of its leading characters were derived from a Latin tragedy, composed a few years before. According to the *Discours* that heads the 1751 edition of Danchet's *Théâtre*, the tragedy to which he refers was written by Father La Rue.<sup>13</sup> He held that he should be allowed to imitate the modern author of a Latin tragedy as the great French dramatists had made successful use of Seneca, Sophocles, and Euripides. Brueys had advanced a similar argument in the preface of *Gabine* when he defended his use of Father Jourdan's *Susanna*. The frères Parfaict

<sup>11</sup> It was verses written in imitation of lines in this opera that began the literary quarrel which ended in J-B Rousseau's exile, cf. H. A. Grubbs, *J-B Rousseau*, Princeton, 1941, pp. 44, 46.

<sup>12</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1706, 12° and 8°. Republished in his *Théâtre* of 1741 and 1751.

<sup>13</sup> This must be his *Cyrus restitutus*, a tragedy written for performance at the Collège de Clermont in 1673. A programme published in that year, in 1679, 1691, and 1705, has been preserved at the Bibliothèque Nationale, as well as the text, which forms part of *Carolus Ruæi Carminum libri quatuor*, Paris, 1680, 4°.

(XIV, 412) think that Danchet was ill advised to imitate a school play, for such works need only "une versification forte, de grandes maximes, & des sentimens d'un héroïsme très-relevé," while critics of the popular stage insist upon structural correctness, verisimilitude, natural and well-sustained characters, and "beaucoup d'intérêt."

The subject that La Rue had dramatized goes back to the first book of Herodotus. Astiage remains, as in the Greek account, superstitious, cruel, vengeful, ready to destroy his grandson in order that his throne may not be in danger, and especially intent upon punishing Harpage. At the end of the French play he kills himself, although, in the Greek account, he is held in captivity by his grandson. This gloomy, self-centered monarch contrasts with the other characters, who vie with one another in virtue. Harpage is probably the character influenced by La Rue, for he is given more importance than in Herodotus and is presented differently. It is he, not his agent, who saves Cyrus. His son is served up to him at a royal feast, as in Herodotus, but, instead of seeking revenge, he now thinks only of saving Cyrus. He even begs the young prince to spare Astiage and seeks to give up his life in order to preserve the royal family.

The other characters are less interesting. Before Cyrus learns who he is, he is ashamed of his supposed rank and is eager to distinguish himself in war in order that his origin may be forgotten. He is, however, a respectful son and lover, grateful to Harpage and extremely tolerant of his grandfather's evil desires. Under Harpage's influence he even agrees to restore Astiage to his throne. The presentation of Harpage's daughter, Palmire, is marred by her unwillingness to listen to Cyrus's courtship until she learns that he is a member of the royal family. Mandane, a lachrymose princess, is introduced chiefly to bring about a scene of double recognition.<sup>14</sup>

Astiage is too deeply a villain. The other characters are too noble. As the frères Parfaict suggest, the characterization is that of a school play. On the

<sup>14</sup> The battle between the Medes and the Persians is about to begin when Harpage kneels before Cyrus, tells him who he is, how he came to be in his present situation, and calls him to be proclaimed king by the army. Not only does Cyrus win the battle, but he saves Astiage's life and brings him back as a prisoner. Harpage urges Cyrus to release his grandfather, who, untouched by this generous advice, offers to release Cyrus's parents if Harpage is put to death. Cyrus refuses. His mother, Mandane, escaping from imprisonment, urges her son to save his father, Cambise, whom Astiage will execute unless Harpage is slain and his daughter, Palmire, is prevented from marrying Cyrus. Harpage accepts these terms, refuses Astiage's offer to have Cyrus die in his stead, gets the king to write an order, and visits the hostile camp after leaving word that Palmire is to avoid Cyrus. When he reaches the camp, however, he finds that the chieftains of the Medes are angered by Astiage's plan and have decided to disregard it, to free Cambise, and to ask Cyrus to rule over them. Harpage returns in triumph. Cambise will follow Cyrus nobly offers to restore Astiage to the throne of Media, but the old king, seeing that his prophetic dream has been fulfilled, realizing the futility of struggling against divine predictions, and suffering from shame over his defeat, poisons himself. Cyrus will succeed to the double throne and make Palmire his queen.



other hand, the structure is classical. The unities of time and place are preserved, that of action may also be so considered, for, though Mandane could have been kept off the stage without changing the dénouement, her rôle is closely attached to the main action of the tragedy. There are numerous situations that make possible moral struggles, but these, owing to the fixity of the characters, are little developed. The *cri du sang* is introduced when Cyrus and his mother meet and when Astiage encounters his grandson without knowing who he is, but in the latter case knowledge drives out sentiment, for we soon hear the king calmly propose to Harpague that he put Cyrus to death. Danchet anticipated Crébillon by introducing horror into his tragedy (I, 2), but he emphasized the ghastly situation less than Seneca had done or than Crébillon was to do.

Ce cher fils, j'en frissonne & d'horreur & d'effroi,  
 Par son ordre égorgé fût [sic] offert devant moi  
 Attentifs aux effets d'un si barbare outrage,  
 Ses regards curieux observoient mon visage  
 Je demeurai muet dans ce cruel moment,  
 Je lui parlais [sic] sans trouble & sans ressentiment,  
 De mon sang qui croit j'étouffai le murmure,  
 Et la rage en mon cœur suspendit la nature

The frères Parfaict report that Danchet read the tragedy to the actors on July 8, 1705, that they offered suggestions, and that he followed their advice with the result that, when he read it again, Jan. 27, 1706, they accepted it and agreed to play it promptly. It ran from Feb. 23 to March 19, and these twelve performances were followed by seven others before the end of the year. What must have especially pleased the spectators was the use of recognition. There are three scenes of *reconnaissance*, one of which, as in *la Mort d'Ulysse*, is double <sup>15</sup>

The other tragedy that Danchet wrote in this period was *LES TYNDARIDES* <sup>16</sup> In his preface he expresses surprise that, while Helen and Clytemnestra had appeared in many tragedies, their brothers had been forgotten by poets.<sup>17</sup> He thinks this is because dramatists prefer to describe violent passions rather than to portray examples of sublime virtue. He adds that in this tragedy he has not written for those who believe that a father, a brother, relatives, honor, and virtue may be sacrificed to love

<sup>15</sup> The popularity of the play is indicated by the *Gazette de Rotterdam*, cited by Méléme, *Rép.*, p. 217

<sup>16</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1708 12° Republished in Danchet's *Théâtre* of 1741 and 1751 With the play is published an epistle in verse addressed to Bignon, *prévôt des marchands*, who with his brothers has supplied the poet with models for his play

<sup>17</sup> Not strictly true, for the twins appear and Pollux speaks in Euripides's *Helen*, while Father La Rue had written a Latin comedy called *Tyndaride*, the prologue and first act of which are preserved in an eighteenth century manuscript, listed in *Solenne*, no 3638

His main source seems to have been Hyginus, *Fables* LXXVII and LXXX, where it is stated that Idas and his brother, Lynceus, were engaged to Phoebe and Hilaira, that the girls were carried off by Castor and Pollux, and that in the quarrel that resulted Castor killed Lynceus, Idas killed Castor, and Pollux avenged his brother by slaying Idas. The devotion of the brothers and the idea that Pollux was immortal, while Castor was not, are also found in Hyginus. Danchet transferred the responsibility for Lynceus's death from Castor to Idas, thus clearing Castor's reputation and offering an example of brotherly hatred to contrast with that of brotherly devotion. He suppressed Phoebe and gave three lovers to Hilaira, whose name has become Elaire. He added the location in Cyprus, the method of selecting a king, the shipwreck, the proposed departure for Greece, and minor incidents.<sup>18</sup>

Danchet's main purpose was to present an example of perfect brotherly affection. Castor doubts Pollux only for a moment, while Pollux never wavers. Each is willing to sacrifice his love of Elaire for the other's sake. As Castor learns that he is not loved, while Pollux knows that he is, the latter's sacrifice is the greater. With their affection is contrasted the lack of fraternal feeling in Idas, who kills his brother when he finds that he is his rival. Elaire has an important function in the plot and helps to bring out the strength of the brothers' devotion to each other. Idas is as complete a villain as Astiage had been in Danchet's earlier tragedy.

The plot is simple. The play is well constructed and has a number of dramatic scenes. The oracle and the promise of immortality are examples of the *merveilleux*. There are scenes in which love is confessed, but there

<sup>18</sup> As the King of Cyprus is dead, various candidates have been competing for the succession. The man who defeats his rivals will not only be made king, but marry Elaire, daughter of the deceased monarch. Idas, a descendant of Perseus, defeats other contestants and finally kills his brother, Lynceus, but Elaire is unwilling to marry a man guilty of fratricide, the more so as she is already in love with Pollux. The latter and his brother, Castor, had pursued Theseus when he carried off Helen, their sister, and had been shipwrecked on the coast of Cyprus. Thinking his brother dead, Pollux had been on the point of killing himself when Elaire intervened. They were soon joined by Castor. At the beginning of the play Idas wishes to send the brothers to Greece and has prepared ships for that purpose, but Castor and Pollux have both fallen in love with Elaire and desire to protect her and to punish Idas for killing his brother. Castor tells Pollux of his love and thus prevents him from making a similar confession. Elaire appeals to Pollux to prevent the fight between Castor and Idas, but Pollux refuses to interfere. She then persuades the people to postpone the crowning of Idas and admits to him that she loves one of the brothers, but will not say which. When Castor tells Elaire that he loves her, he discovers that she loves Pollux and reports the fact to his brother. When he finds that Pollux also loves her and has kept silent in order not to be his brother's rival, he withdraws from the fight in favor of Pollux in order that the latter may marry Elaire. In return Pollux decides to give up Elaire and adheres to this decision even when the princess declares that she loves him, but, when he learns that Idas has insisted upon fighting Castor, that the latter's sword has broken, and that he has received a fatal wound, he avenges him by killing Idas. He now sees that he is the one of the brothers declared by an oracle to be immortal and implies that he will marry Elaire, though for the present he is chiefly moved by grief over his brother.

is no scene of recognition. The fact that sexual love is deliberately subordinated to another emotion shows that Danchet accepted Corneille's attitude towards the function of love in tragedy.

*Les Tyndarides* was acted thirteen times, from Dec. 16, 1707, to Jan. 11, 1708. According to the frères Parfaict, the rôles of Idas, Pollux, and Castor were taken, respectively, by Ponteul, Beaubourg, and Etienne Baron, that of Elaire by la Desmares. Danchet admits that at the first performances the spectators failed to appreciate his exaltation of virtue, but he thinks that his critics learned that he was appealing to their intelligence rather than seeking to move their feelings. An anonymous author discussed the play at length in *le Nouveau Mercure* for April, 1708.<sup>19</sup> He blamed the spectators for not appreciating the tragedy. He praised the choice of the subject, the simplicity and unity of the play, the contrast between the two examples of fraternal feeling. He thought that Danchet derived the contest over Elaire of claimants to the throne from a Latin tragedy on the same subject.<sup>20</sup> He admired especially the interview between the brothers (II, 3) and the fourth act, but he concluded that there should have been other spectators for Danchet, or, to win those of the day, another poet.

A hostile critic attacked the parterre's judgment, which favored the play. Danchet in a sharp reply identified this critic as Abeille.<sup>21</sup> At the Foire Saint-Laurent the tragedy was parodied by Lenoble the following year in *les Poussins de Leda*.<sup>22</sup> However sentimental one may find the theme of brotherly devotion, the emphasis placed upon it by Danchet shows that he was seeking to depart from the usual presentation of love on the stage. He had been preceded in his study of fraternal affection by Belin in *Mustapha et Zéangir* and, long before, by Corneille in *Rodogune*, but there are few other examples in French tragedy that he could have known.

The third author to produce a tragedy penetrated into social circles to which Pellegrin and Danchet could not aspire, but this fact failed to spur his creative imagination. Charles-Jean-François Hénault, born at Paris in 1685, was a pupil of the Jesuits and during two years prepared himself to be an Oratorian, but he gave up the church for the law, for letters, and for society. In 1710 he became "président de la première chambre des enquêtes," in 1724 a member of the French Academy. He was superintendent of Queen Marie Leczinska's household and, at the end of his life, held at least nominally the same position in the establishment of Marie Antoinette. After his wife's death he lived for many years with Mme Du Deffand. He was a most amiable

<sup>19</sup> Cited by the frères Parfaict, XIV, 457-86

<sup>20</sup> This may be La Rue's *Tyndaride*, cf. above, n 17

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Mélése, *Th et Pub*, pp 312-3

<sup>22</sup> Cf. the frères Parfaict, *Mémoires sur les Spectacles de la Foire*, I, 100.

man of the world, but also a writer who composed historical works, occasional verse, and even plays.<sup>23</sup>

His one dramatic composition that preceded the death of Louis XIV was *CORNÉLIE VESTALE*,<sup>24</sup> a tragedy that he described in his memoirs as "une déclaration [déclamation?] en quinze cents vers où quatre vers auraient suffi."<sup>25</sup> So modest an estimate might well disarm critics, but it has failed to do so

The principal source is the Younger Pliny (*Epistle* IV, § 11), who speaks of a Roman knight, Celer, and a Vestal virgin, Cornelia, put to death by Domitian for illicit relations, though they protested that they were innocent. Senator Licinianus is mentioned in the same letter. Hénault created for the lovers parental opposition to their marriage, for Celer a distinguished career in Gaul, for Cornelia the love of Domitian. He made of Licinianus a confidant of the emperor and a false witness against Cornelia. He added Emilie, head of the Vestals, making her a relative of Domitian and a rival of the heroine for Celer's love. To present these characters to the public he employed his knowledge of earlier plays,<sup>26</sup> but he displayed little talent for dramatic composition.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Henri Lion, *Le Président Hénault, 1685-1770*, Paris, Plon, 1903, and François Rousseau, *Mémoires du Président Hénault*, Paris, Hachette, 1911.

<sup>24</sup> Though acted in 1713, it was not published until 1768, when Horace Walpole, to whom it is dedicated, printed it at Strawberry Hill. Republished, 1769, in *Pièces de théâtre*, without place or printer's name.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Fr. Rousseau, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>26</sup> "Je l'aime indifférent, le fuiré vous sensible" echoes *Andromaque*, v. 1365. The situation in III, 4, when Domitian, after dismissing Celer, discovers him with Cornélie, resembles *Mustapha et Zangir*, IV, 5. An emperor's love for a Vestal, resulting in her death and that of the emperor's rival, had been portrayed by Pichantié in *Geta*. Lion, *op. cit.*, p. 195, finds in the play "pas mal de *Britannicus*, un peu d'*Andromaque* et un peu encore de *Nicomède*." Hénault may have considered the "grande tuerie" at the end of his tragedy justified by the example of *Rajaset*. Though he does not employ the word "stances," he gives in I, 2, a correct example of the usage, unique in tragedies of the period 1701-15. In so doing he may have been imitating *le Cid* and *Polyeucte*.

<sup>27</sup> Shortly after his accession to the throne, the Emperor Domitian had fallen in love with Cornélie when he saw her take her vows as a Vestal. He now visits the Temple of Vesta under the pretext of seeing his relative, Emilie, who had been made a Vestal by his brother, Titus. He informs Emilie that he has directed the senate to give a triumph to Celer, who has just quelled an uprising in Gaul. Emilie sees that Domitian loves Cornélie and hopes that, if he marries her, a precedent will be established for her own marriage to Celer. The latter and Cornélie still love each other, though hostility between their families had caused her to become a Vestal and him to seek to suppress his love by fighting the Gauls. Celer, who does not know that Cornélie has taken her vows, but who has heard that peace has been made between her family and his, hurries back to Rome in the hope of winning her. Meanwhile Domitian has offered her marriage and been refused. He receives Celer warmly till he discovers his love for Cornélie, whereupon he orders him to return to Gaul, but Emilie, wishing to gain time, persuades the emperor to allow Celer to postpone his departure. She then pretends to Celer that Cornélie will yield to Domitian. Celer accuses Cornélie of wishing to be empress. She hotly denies that she does. He kneels to ask pardon and is discovered by Domitian, who had been summoned by Emilie, and is arrested. Licinius brings criminal charges against Cornélie in order to force her to marry the emperor. Domitian offers to save Celer

The fundamental difficulty about the subject is that it is not explained how the emperor could expect to marry one Vestal virgin and give another to Celer. Since this problem is not cleared up, the mental struggles that are based on it move us little. The characters are thoroughly virtuous or thoroughly evil. There is little variety in the scenes till we near the end, when extraordinary violence is employed. It is not made clear why Cornélie finds it necessary to stab herself, though her death not only disposes of the heroine, but occasions that of two other important characters. At the end of the play, as Lucine has been slain by the gods, only the emperor and two attendants are left alive.

The structure, except for the lack of inevitability in the heroine's last deed, is entirely classical. Lion is mistaken in calling it "implexe" and in saying that the action "se passe on ne sait où,"<sup>28</sup> for the plot, however absurdly presented, is simple enough, and the place, though not indicated below the *dramatis personae*, is obviously within the precincts of the Temple of Vesta, in an imitation seventeenth-century convent parlor, a place familiar to the spectators. The time must be only a few hours. The one death that takes place on the stage, Emilie's, is a suicide. The element of the *merveilleux* is considerable, but it is placed in a *récit* (V, 8)

Le ciel vomit du sang, le soleil qui nous luit,  
Cède à [sic] l'obscurité d'une subite nuit,  
Le Tibre mugissant inonde son rivage,  
Le tonnerre cent fois a percé le nuage,

While there are few ideas in the play, there may be an early trace of eighteenth-century anticlericalism in the selection of two consecrated virgins as ardent lovers, in the sorry rôle played by the priests, and in such lines as these (I, 3)

C'est dans le sein du temple, au pied de ses autels,  
Que l'on voit se former les plus grands criminels

The most interesting thing about the play is the story of its publication. It was announced without Hénault's name at the Comédie Française, was acted there only five times,<sup>29</sup> and was left unpublished for over half a

if he will marry Emilie and pretends to Cornélie that his offer has been accepted, but the lovers are not deceived and prepare to die together. Blood falls from the sky, the sun is darkened, a bolt strikes Lucine, and the people seek to rescue Cornélie. When a priest lays his hand upon her *bandeau*, he is stricken dead, but she stabs herself with the sacrificial knife, Celer imitates her, and Emilie, after telling about these events, kills herself. As she dies, she advises the emperor to follow her example.

<sup>28</sup> *Op cit.*, p. 195

<sup>29</sup> From Jan. 27 to Feb. 5, 1713. When Hénault wrote a preface for his plays, quoted by Lion, *loc cit.*, he admitted that he had presented this tragedy under another person's name. The frères Parfaict (XV, 131-8) thought it to have been written by Fuzelier, who loaned them "le manuscrit de sa Tragedie pour en tirer

century. Apparently Mme Du Deffand called Walpole's attention to the existence of the manuscript, which he then offered to publish at his Strawberry Hill press. She refers to the matter several times in her correspondence with her English friend.<sup>30</sup> On Nov. 9, 1767, she writes that to publish the play would require "trop de soin et trop de dépense," but continues to inquire about the progress of the printing. Walpole was at first unwilling to include a preface in which Hénault dedicated the play to him but he finally consented. On Feb. 17, 1768, Mme Du Deffand writes that fifty copies will be enough for Hénault, though a hundred would please him. The author became nervous, fearing criticism, but was reassured by the reminder that the play would not be for sale and that it would be given only to persons selected by himself. On July 6 Walpole was informed that the copies he had sent had reached Paris, seventy for Mme Du Deffand, who on July 3 had sent one to Voltaire,<sup>31</sup> and eighty for Hénault. This left fifty for the publisher, for only two hundred were printed.<sup>32</sup>

The octogenarian was obviously pleased. "Cornélie n'aura pas perdu pour attendre," he wrote in his dedication. "C'est pour elle un magnifique établissement." One may hope that he was sufficiently serene not to be hurt, when he received his copies, by the printer's errors, especially in the matter of accents, or by the severe criticism with which Grimm greeted the publication.<sup>33</sup> Some of the critic's observations, though inaccurate, are not lacking in humor.

On ne sait pas trop pourquoi toutes ces vestales, si amoureuses, ont choisi un état pour lequel elles ont si peu de vocation.<sup>34</sup> Le délateur Lucien est tué par le tonnerre, qui aurait beaucoup mieux fait d'aller au fait, et de tomber sur Domitien. Les pontifes qui veulent frapper Cornélie sont eux-mêmes frappés de paralysie, et restent perclus de leurs membres.<sup>35</sup> A voir le galant et douxereux

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cet extrait." It seems improbable, however, that this author of farces and of plays for the Foire had a hand in Hénault's solemn production. He had probably acted only as an intermediary between the "président" and the actors. The manuscript he loaned differs from the printed text, for the frères Parfaict quote a number of verses from it that are omitted or altered in the published play. They give the cast as Ponteuil (Domitian), Quinault [probably J.-B. Maurice Quinault] (Celer), Guérin (Lucien), Du Boucage (Maxime, Capitaine des guides de Domitien), la Desmares (Emilie), la de Neale (Cornélie), la ballé (Albine, a confidant).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Mrs. Paget Toynbee, *Lettres de la Marquise Du Deffand à Horace Walpole (1766-1780)*, London, Methuen, 1912, I, 341 *seq.*

<sup>31</sup> Voltaire wrote on July 13 that he had received the book, but he was kind enough to say in regard to it only that he remembered seeing the tragedy acted over fifty years earlier, cf. Moland edition, XLVI, 734, 77.

<sup>32</sup> One of these is now in the library of Princeton University.

<sup>33</sup> M. Tourneux *Correspondance avec Grimm, Diderot, etc.*, Paris, Garnier, VIII (1879), 125-9.

<sup>34</sup> Yet the text states that Emilie had been forced by the Emperor Titus to take the veil and that Cornélie had followed her example because she despaired of marrying Celer.

<sup>35</sup> Only one priest is paralyzed and he falls dead.

président Hénault au milieu d'un souper, on ne se douterait pas qu'il fût capable d'user de moyens aussi violents pour se défaire des gens qui l'embarrassent. Heureusement ces petites plaisanteries se passent derrière le théâtre

His conclusion is that "ce plan puéril est exécuté de la manière la plus faible et la plus froide."

Jean-Baptiste Vivien de Chateaubrun (1686-1775), maître d'hôtel of the Regent's son, the duc d'Orléans, and a member of the French Academy, had a curious dramatic career, for the first of his plays was acted on Nov. 13, 1714, the remaining three as late as 1754-6. It is said that these last were held back because of the duke's religious scruples. Perhaps, too, the success of his first tragedy, which was played only twelve times, was not sufficient to encourage opposition to his protector's feelings.

Entitled *MAHOMET SECOND*,<sup>86</sup> it was the first Turkish tragedy of the century to follow *Mustapha et Zéangir*. Chateaubrun declares that all he took from history was the facts that Mahomet II captured Constantinople, that Constantine and his Greeks died after fighting desperately, that Mahomet loved a captive named Irene, and that, roused by his soldiers' protests, he gave up love for fame. He admits that some historians declared that the Sultan put his mistress to death, but he has the authority of Bayle<sup>87</sup> and others for having her die in a different manner. He adds that he chose the name Comnenus because of its celebrity and because a member of the family is said to have shared "la gloire et les malheurs de la défaite des Grecs." He is not to be confused, according to Chateaubrun, with the prince of the same name who was Emperor of Trebizond and who was put to death by Mahomet II.

Nevertheless the facts that, when the Sultan captured Trebizond, he took into his harem the daughter of the last ruling Comnenus and converted one of this prince's sons to his religion<sup>88</sup> may well have suggested to Chateaubrun certain elements of his plot, for he laid his scene in the Sultan's seraglio at Constantinople, where the youthful daughter of Comnenus is held and into which her brother, who pretends to be a loyal Janissary, is allowed to penetrate. The young man's conspiracy, his suicide, and his sister's may well have been Chateaubrun's inventions. They enabled him, despite many improbabilities, to produce two fine scenes of recognition, the

<sup>86</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1715, 12°. Republished in the *Nouveau Théâtre français*, Utrecht, Néaulme, 1734, and in the *Théâtre français* of 1737. For the author of the *Biographie générale*.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. *Dictionnaire*, s. v. Mahomet II. Bayle mentions Guillet de Saint George, who in his *Histoire du règne de Mahomet II* (1681) refers to the Sultan's killing Irene, his mistress, in order to convince his soldiers of his military ardor. Irene had been enslaved by a bacha and given to Mahomet.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Chalcocondylas in *Corpus historicarum byzantinæ*, Bonn, 1843, p. 497, and von Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*, Pesth, 1840, I, 467-8.

invention of which may have been his principal reason for writing the tragedy.<sup>29</sup>

Despite its Turkish theme, the play shows little resemblance to *Bajazet*, but it was probably influenced by *Andromaque*. Mahomet's attitude towards his captive resembles that of Pyrrhus towards Andromache, while, like Hermione, he expresses angered astonishment towards a man for carrying out his own order in regard to a person he loves. Mahomet is violent enough in his language to give an impression of force and vitality, but the idea that the conqueror of Constantinople entreated a seventeen-year old girl for mercy is almost comic. Chateaubrun admits in his preface that he was criticized for making the Sultan so respectful, but he considers himself justified because love makes one seek the happiness of the beloved and because Mahomet must have been impressed by Irene's distinguished birth. This defense shows that the author treated Turkish manners like French.

There is some hesitation, but no moral struggle in Mahomet's mind, nor is there a struggle in the minds of Thémiste and his sister. The play is a tragedy of intrigue, but, as the conspiracy fails primarily because someone who does not appear on the stage is a traitor, the plot is incomplete. In

<sup>29</sup> When Mahomet II captured Constantinople, the emperor and Thémiste's father and two brothers were killed, while Thémiste, left unconscious, was rescued and revived. He took the name of Osman, fought for Mahomet, and now, twelve years later is a leader of the Janissaries. He desires vengeance, but he has waited till his conspiracy may benefit his country. He plans to persuade the army to insist that the Sultan march away from his capital, so that, with the help of Scanderbeg, Corvinus and revolting Greeks, he may capture the city. He reveals these plans to his confidant, Clitus, then urges Mahomet to renounce his love for a captive and lead his army to victory. Mahomet declares that the army has no business giving him advice and bids Thémiste punish those who murmur, but he admits to his confidant, Achmet, that he disapproves of his own conduct in yielding to Irene's "charme vainqueur." The girl, however, refuses to submit to the man who caused the death of Comnenus, her father. When Thémiste returns with the report that the soldiers will revolt unless Irene is turned over to them, Mahomet bids him write a letter agreeing to deliver her up, but he explains to Achmet that this is only a ruse and orders him to send for Zizim and his troupes. He points out to Irene the danger she is in and offers marriage, but she declares that she prefers to die. Thémiste writes two letters, one of which, carrying out Mahomet's orders, is shown to him, while the other asks that a picked corps be sent to force the emperor's hand. Irene begs Thémiste to put her to death at the spot where her family has died. When she tells him her relatives' names, he discovers that she is his sister, lost when five years old in the fall of Constantinople. His plans have to be completely altered. He asks Clitus to hide Irene while he pretends that she is dead, but, as she leaves the palace, she is captured by soldiers, so that Thémiste is obliged to rush to the rescue. He confides her to Clitus, but she returns to the palace because she thinks Thémiste's life in danger. He plans to have her go with Clitus to the spot where her father died, lure Mahomet there, and have him murdered. He writes to urge Scanderbeg to march on Constantinople. Mahomet, thinking Thémiste has delivered Irene to the soldiers, threatens him with death. When he discovers she is alive, he proposes to marry her and then march on Rhodes. A premature uprising among the Greeks is interpreted to the Sultan by Thémiste as a revolt of the army, angered over news of the wedding, but the Greeks are implicated again and Irene defies Mahomet. Thémiste's letter to Scanderbeg is brought to the Sultan. Irene stabs herself. Thémiste admits who he is and kills himself. Mahomet starts on his military expedition.



other respects it is skillfully constructed in accordance with the classical system. There are only three characters besides the four attendants. Little attempt is made to reproduce Turkish atmosphere, to impress us with the pathetic fate of the Greeks, or to depict the historical background and the danger to occidental civilization caused by the triumph of the Turks.

The action is slow in the first part of the play, but in Act III it begins to move rapidly and continues to do so during the rest of the tragedy, somewhat at the expense of probability. Both scenes of recognition may have been appreciated. According to the *Bibliothèque française*, cited by the frères Parfaict (XV, 183), the first of these (III, 4) attracted much attention, but was spoiled by the comic line,

Quoi, mon frere, c'est vous! quoi, c'est vous que j'embrasse!

François-Michel Chrétien Deschamps (1683-1747) was born near Troyes. The selection of Louvois as his godfather was a singular choice for a writer who was subsequently to portray the virtues of Cato. He entered the church, gave it up for the army, in which he held a lieutenancy, but, after a single campaign, he obtained a financial position that enabled him to receive his discharge in 1733. According to the frères Parfaict, he had an amorous disposition and became a "malade imaginaire," treating himself with such assiduity that his illness became real and ended his life. They attribute to him a tyrannical nature that suffered no contradictions and sacrificed his wife's financial interests to his own. He was "d'une moyenne taille, mal campé sur ses jambes, les yeux ronds, extrêmement durs, & qui peignoient parfaitement son caractère."<sup>40</sup>

His first tragedy, begun in 1712, but not acted until Jan. 25, 1715, was *CATON D'UTIQUE*.<sup>41</sup> His own unbending character may have attracted him to the Younger Cato, while his love of amorous adventure may have suggested the addition of romantic episodes to Plutarch's somber account of the Roman's last day. Deschamps declares in his preface that, as Plutarch had supplied him merely with Cato's having to decide between suicide and falling into Caesar's hands, he has added the rôle of Cato's daughter, Portia, brought up among the Parthians, and has made Pharnaces take part in the play, though he was never at Utica. He gave him vices to contrast with Cato's virtues and placed Caesar between them morally, as a "Politique ambitieux" who was at the same time "dissimulé, intrépide, clément, livré à l'amour." He adds that the actors left out forty of his verses in IV, 2,

<sup>40</sup> Cf frères Parfaict, XV, 185-96

<sup>41</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1715, 12°. Republished in the *Théâtre français* of 1737. Deschamps wrote a *Licurgue* that he did not give to the actors, an *Artaxerce*, played in 1735, but not printed, and two tragedies that have survived, *Antiochus et Cléopâtre*, acted nine times in 1717, and *Médus*, acted eight times in 1739.

with the result that Portia was criticized for passing too quickly from love to hatred of Caesar. He has replaced them in the published play.<sup>42</sup>

While the chief historical source is Plutarch's *Life of Cato the Younger*, there are borrowings from other portions of Plutarch, from other ancient historians, and from Corneille.<sup>43</sup> So much romantic material is added, however, that most of the play resembles a seventeenth-century romance rather than a tragedy. A child, captured in battle, is substituted for a king's daughter. She feels strangely drawn to her own father before she knows who he is. Caesar does his courting during a short pause in military operations. Abduction is threatened and much fighting goes on behind the scenes.

Less than a third of the scenes are devoted to the political considerations that brought about Cato's death, yet the unity of action, like those of time and place, is preserved, for it is Pharnaces's desire to marry Portia that

<sup>42</sup> There are in reality thirty-two, indicated by marginal stars in the edition of 1737. Cato holds out at Utica, while Caesar, after defeating Scipio and Juba, advances Cato's daughter, Portia, brought up by the wife of Crassus, had fallen into the hands of Arsaces, King of Parthia, after he had defeated the Romans. As she resembled the king's daughter, who had just died, she was substituted for the dead princess. She was sent to Rome to marry Pharnaces, son of Mithridates, but the civil war prevented their union. Now he has come to Utica to marry her, but, as she has learned that he has murdered her supposed brother, Picator, she wishes to get out of the engagement. She has another reason in the fact that she has fallen in love with a Roman ambassador whose name she does not know. As Arsaces has recently died, she seeks Cato's advice. He hopes she will continue the alliance made by the king and promises to protect her from Pharnaces. He learns from a letter left by the Parthian monarch that his supposed daughter, Arsene, is really Cato's daughter, Portia. Surprised to find himself the father of a queen, he tells Pharnaces that she cannot reign. When Pharnaces threatens to join Caesar if she renounces the throne, Cato gives him permission to do so. Pharnaces then sends messengers to Caesar offering to kill Cato if he may be allowed to keep his own throne. Meanwhile Caesar's emissary, Domitius, comes to arrange an interview between his master and Cato and to seek for Caesar the hand of the supposed Parthian queen. Caesar is willing to come without hostages if Cato promises that he will not be molested. Cato agrees to his terms, but he warns that Pharnaces cannot be trusted and states that he will consequently meet Caesar in a fort that is out of Pharnaces's reach. Arsene (Portia) refuses to marry Pharnaces on the ground that he killed her brother, a fact she did not know when they became engaged. He decides to bring his soldiers to the fort, to kill Cato, and to carry her off. When Caesar reaches the fort, he makes love to Arsene (Portia), who recognizes him as the ambassador to whom she had been attracted and encourages him to hope. Caesar now offers the lives of Pharnaces's emissaries to Cato, who refuses to come to terms unless Roman liberty is restored. Informed by Cato that she is his daughter, Portia now turns against Caesar, who finds that his mission has failed. Domitius reports that Pharnaces is attacking the followers of Cato and Portia. Cato goes to help them and puts Pharnaces to flight. Portia agrees to marry Caesar if he will liberate the people of the West. When he refuses, she curses the Roman empire and predicts the misfortunes that were to befall it. Meanwhile Caesar's soldiers rescue him. Caesar has Pharnaces beheaded. Cato stabs himself and is brought on the stage to die after urging Portia to go to Spain and continue the struggle against Caesar.

<sup>43</sup> Certain details about Caesar's wars and about Mithridates, Caesar's desire to be Cato if he were not Caesar (III, 3, cf. the story of Alexander and Diogenes in Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*), "Pour être vrai Romain faut il cesser d'être homme?" (IV, 2, cf. *Horace*, vv. 81-2). Pharnaces's attempt to win Caesar by offering to put Cato to death is inspired by Ptolemy's murder of Pompey, described by both Plutarch and Corneille.

leads to his attack upon Cato, this attack permits Caesar's soldiers to surround Cato, and the fact that the old Roman is surrounded occasions his suicide. Otherwise he might have escaped to Spain, as he advises his daughter to do.

Cato is described as an uncompromising lover of liberty. He admits that, if a master had to be chosen, Caesar would be the man, but he is absolutely opposed to any government not based on the free expression of popular will. He has supreme contempt for kings and insists upon his daughter's giving up her throne as soon as he knows that she has one. The character is so rigid that it has little in it that is dramatic.

Caesar is more interesting. Except that he chooses a peculiar time for making love, he does not allow his feeling for Portia to overcome his ambition. He frankly admits that the latter desire comes first. In his scene with Cato (III, 3) he recalls his victories over the Germans, his making of the Mediterranean a Roman sea,<sup>44</sup> the unjust treatment he had received from Pompey, his efforts to make the Roman people happy, and the apparent approval of the gods. He offers Cato peace and a consulate, as well as the lives of those who have sought to betray him. He reserves a still stronger defense of his policies for his talk with Portia (V, 2), in which he explains that Rome has suffered from her triumphs, that, since she has grown great, she cannot bear the weight of her power, and that consequently dictators have arisen. He promises to be a benevolent despot. His apology is based on the idea, already expressed by Corneille in *Othon*, that a large country cannot continue as a republic, a theory to be held by Montesquieu and which has been discarded only because of improved systems of transportation and communication.

The other important characters are drawn with little skill. Pharnace is completely a villain. Portia is a romantic heroine, who falls in love at first sight and falls out of it almost as quickly. She is a convert to democracy, not because of conviction, but because she discovers who her father is. The play contains much that is improbable and sentimental. Deschamps showed some cleverness in arranging interesting situations, but he lacked the power to develop the dialogue as Corneille would have done, especially in political discussion.

The tragedy was at first reasonably successful. It had fourteen performances in 1714. It was highly praised in the *Journal des Savants*<sup>45</sup> because of situations that bring out Cato's "beau caractère . . . dans toute son étendue." Moreover, "La Poésie de cette pièce est aisée, naturelle, et les

<sup>44</sup> "J'enfermais l'Océan dans nos vastes frontieres" Mussolini would have appreciated the line if he had read it before the autumn of 1942.

<sup>45</sup> May 20, 1715, p. 311, cited by Mélése, *Th et Pub*, p. 310.

caractères sont bien observés." It obtained further notice because of Addison's *Cato*, a French translation of which had appeared in 1713. There is no resemblance, it is true, between the two tragedies except in the material derived from common sources and in the facts that both dramatists depict the end of Cato's career, employ a tense military situation as a background for love making, and have Caesar send an ambassador to Cato, yet the *Mercure galant* <sup>46</sup> published a *Parallèle* between them in which Deschamps's work was preferred on account of its structure, Addison's because of "le caractère dominant de la Tragédie, & la force de certaines situations." Possibly because of this comparison, Ozell translated Deschamps's tragedy into English <sup>47</sup> Nor did his play pass unnoticed in Germany. Gottsched based his own *Sterbender Cato* on both the English tragedy and the French. He expressed his preference for the structure of the French play, agreed with Deschamps that non-historical material might be added, and praised the interview between Caesar and Cato, but he found his fifth act defective and held that Cato died in it like a desperate man rather than a philosopher. <sup>48</sup>

None of these eight plays equals in dramatic interest the tragedies of Belin, Péchantré, and Rupeirous discussed above in Chapter IV. This fact was ominous for the future. The authors showed, like Crébillon, a predominant interest in Greek mythology and, like him, turned also to Roman history and to the legends of ancient Persia. Danchet and Pellegrin resembled Crébillon in their liking for horror, but they were much less effective. The mediocrity of the eight tragedies left Crébillon as the only dramatist to be long remembered among those who began to contribute to the genre in 1701-15.

<sup>46</sup> March, 1715, pp. 62-127, according to the frères Paisant.

<sup>47</sup> The second edition of this translation was published at London in 1716. According to the title page, the translated play had been acted at Lincoln's Inn-Fields.

<sup>48</sup> Cited by Louis Riccoboni, *Réflexions historiques*, Paris, Guerin, 1738, pp. 233-8.

## CHAPTER IX

### COMEDY

If comedy lacked the prestige of tragedy,<sup>1</sup> it nevertheless remained the more popular genre, averaging some 450 performances a year, a number made possible by the fact that a comedy in one act often followed on the same day a longer one or a tragedy. Molière, whose plays were acted over two thousand times, supplied about two-sevenths of the material; plays written in the seventeenth century by Thomas Corneille, Montfleury, Haute-roche, Dancourt, and Regnard combined were acted about as often, whereas new comedies, whether composed by beginners or by older authors, constituted only about one-fifth of the comic presentations. The comedies most frequently produced were old.<sup>2</sup> Those that ranked next were comedies by authors who had begun to write in the seventeenth century.<sup>3</sup> The comedy by a new author most often acted in the period was *le Port de mer*, but its sixty performances were little more than a third of those enjoyed by Haute-roche's *Crispin médecin*. It is true, however, that the period produced several comedies that were more highly appreciated by succeeding generations than by their contemporaries. Eight of these had by 1936 been performed at the Comédie Française over 400 times.<sup>4</sup>

The principal authors of new plays were the actors, Dancourt and Legrand, the ex-actor, Michel Baron; experienced dramatists, Boursault, Campistron, Brueys, Regnard, and Dufresny, and those who now had their plays acted for the first time: Lesage, the novelist, Destouches, secretary to an ambassador, Boindin, an ex-soldier; and Lafont, a man of letters. Single comedies were written by La Motte and Charles Roy, known at the time chiefly for their operas; La Grange-Chancel, famous for his tragedies, Abeille, an actor, Guérin, an actor's son, J.-B. Rousseau, a distinguished poet, Marivaux, just beginning his career, and several authors whose names are unknown.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. above, Chapter II. In the 1707 edition of *le Diable boiteux* Lesage contended (Chap. XIV) that it was more difficult to write a successful comedy than the kind of tragedy then being composed in France, for "l'on peut avec le seul secours du bon sens faire des tragédies comme celles qui se font présentement en France. Mais il faut autre chose que du bon sens pour composer des comédies qui y réussissent aujourd'hui." In 1726 he modified this opinion, declaring that the two genres require "deux génies d'un caractère différent, mais d'une égale habileté."

<sup>2</sup> *Crispin médecin*, 169, *Tartuffe*, 163, *Plaisieurs*, 156, *Médecin malgré lui*, 154, *George Dandin*, 147, *Avare*, 136, *Grondeur*, 130, *Deuil*, 124, *Sganarelle*, 121, *Amphitryon*, 113.

<sup>3</sup> *Folies amoureuses*, 91, *Double Veuvage*, 84; *Galant Jardinier*, 83, *Avocat Patelin*, 76, *Léqataire*, 66, *Ménechmes*, 62.

<sup>4</sup> *Folies amoureuses*, 1117, *Léqataire*, 988, *Avocat Patelin*, 885, *Crispin rival*, 679, *Ménechmes*, 541, *Turcaret*, 455, *Galant Jardinier*, 429, *Usurier Gentilhomme*, 417.

<sup>5</sup> Rousseau's comedy was acted at court, not at Paris. So far as is known, Mari-

Of the new plays, thirty-nine, so far as can be determined, were in one act, sixteen in three acts, seventeen in five acts. Dancourt's *Second Chapitre* is in two acts, but its prologue gives it the equivalent of another act, while Guérin's lost *Psyché de village*, in four acts and a prologue, has practically five. Fifteen comedies had prologues when they were originally acted. These were sometimes used to defend the play. Occasionally they may have been employed because they enabled the author to show a second locality without violating the unity of place. More comedies were written in prose than in verse, but the difference is not great, and all but four of the five-act plays are in verse. As a variation upon alexandrines and prose, "vers libres" are frequently employed. In four comedies they are the dominant form.<sup>6</sup> Obviously there was entire freedom in regard to the number of acts in a comedy and to the choice of prose or verse. Authors could in these respects adapt their form to the nature of the entertainment they were preparing to give.

Ten of the comedies are adaptations of older plays in Latin, Spanish, or French. Plautus's *Menaechmi*, *Captivi*, and *Mostellaria*, Terence's *Andria* and *Adelphoe*,<sup>7</sup> Rojas's *No hay amigo*, Calderón's *Peor está que estaba*, the fifteenth century *Patelin*, Guérin de Bouscal's *Sancho*, and Lesage's *Traître puni* were all brought up to date, most of them with considerable changes. Of these the only ones that were thoroughly successful in their new form were the *Menaechmi*, the *Andria*, and *Patelin*. The fate of Spanish adaptations shows that the vogue of the *comedia* had passed.

Authors were sometimes influenced by comedies they had previously written, or they turned to earlier dramatists, especially to Molière, whose *Tartuffe* influenced profoundly Dancourt's *Madame Artus* and Destouches's *Ingrat*, while one can find elsewhere echoes of *le Misanthrope*, *le Malade imaginaire*, *le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, *Amphitryon*, *Pourceaugnac*, and *les Femmes savantes*. Boisrobert's *Trois Orontes* and de Visé's *Veuve à la mode* were certainly imitated, while other seventeenth-century comedies, besides these and Molière's, were probably followed in minor details. In a few cases authors borrowed from other than dramatic authors. Hyginus, Ovid, Petronius, Cervantes, and La Fontaine. Many of the plays show no direct influence, but all the dramatists probably owed much to Molière and to plays of the two preceding decades, especially to those of Dancourt.

Some information may be gleaned from prefaces and prologues, occa-

vaux's play was never acted, nor was the work of Bordelon, probably not written for performance. Malezieu's productions were largely operatic.

<sup>6</sup> An example of *stances* occurs in Dancourt's *Sancho Pança*, V, 2, where its presence at so late a date may be explained by the fact that the play is little more than a new edition of one that had appeared nearly seventy-five years before.

<sup>7</sup> Malezieu is said to have made a translation, now lost, of his *Heautontimoroumenos*.

sionally from the texts of the comedies, in regard to the authors' opinions of their predecessors, their art, its interpreters, and the spectators. Boursault, Regnard, Dancourt, Lafont, and Destouches praise Molière. Boursault finds Molière so versatile that now the only way to be novel is to moralize, though Dancourt claims that he can still find new material in the study of manners. Dufresny maintains that a comedy should have a clear and logical plot, situations that surprise, though preparation for them has been made, and occasionally "quelque plaisanterie sans grossièreté." Regnard insists on a well-constructed play that entertains "les gens d'esprit avec art." Bordelon holds that the scenes of a comedy should be related by a common aim, that the dénouement should surprise, and that the chief rule is to bring enjoyment to the audience. Lesage implies that the spectators like to see characters with whom they can sympathize and that, unlike the Spaniards, they prefer the study of character to action. Dancourt, following Molière, puts comedy on a level with tragedy.

The acting of Raymond Poisson is remembered with high approval. No actors of the day are so good as some of their predecessors. They do not lack talent, but they at times neglect their duties. However, according to Dancourt, a spirit of harmony, understanding, and urbanity usually reigns among them. Critics are attacked for attending a performance, not because the play is good, but because it is new. Applause is said to be unfashionable. *Sifflets* are in vogue. Pickpockets frequent the theater. The parterre is the supreme judge, while vanity rules on the stage, coquetry in the boxes. We are told that performances at the Comédie Française begin at 5 P. M., an hour later than those of the Opera. Dufresny parodied the offerings of the latter institution. Satirical thrusts at the rival theaters of the Foire were made by Dancourt, Legrand, Lesage, and Lafont.

As most of the plays were written while France was at war, there are allusions to fighting in Flanders, Germany, and Italy; many of the young heroes are officers in the French army; there is a complaint about the scarcity of males; and there are references, though less frequently than in the preceding decade, to the difference between winter and summer lovers. When Dancourt wrote a new prologue for Thomas Corneille's *Circé*, he praised Louis XIV for suppressing the Huguenots and for sparing the Dutch. When peace was made, he wrote two plays to celebrate the event. One could not guess, however, when reading most of his comedies, that France was engaged at the time in a most disastrous struggle, one that caused much suffering among the people. Nowhere have I noted any hostility to the enemy, English, Austrian, or Dutch.

The manners are those of the lesser nobility, of bourgeois, large and small,

of servants, and of peasants. Business takes on new importance for comedy with studies of tax-collecting, usury, and *agiotage* by Dancourt and Lesage, of wills and inheritance by Regnard and Dufresny, of tontine insurance by Lesage. Forfeits are not infrequently introduced. Efforts are made by the bourgeois to purchase nobility, by underlings to acquire a fortune and with it social position. A peasant complains of working for others and hopes to have others working for him. There is criticism of the great for their pride, amusement at the expense of parvenus, but no dissatisfaction is expressed in regard to the social system itself.

Though he wrote no *pièce à thèse*, one can see by reading Dufresny that harm may be done by gambling, professional wet-nursing, and the lack of proper legal protection for widows and orphans. He ridicules belief in dreams and in the cry of the blood, though both had a place in the tragedy of his contemporaries. He also laughs at belief in astronomical influences, as does Legrand at alchemy. These dramatists are, however, seeking material for comic effect rather than weapons for social reform.

They are also contributing to the representation of manners, as are the dramatists who mention various kinds of entertainment, such as fireworks, games, dances, singing by professionals or by amateurs. We are shown the homes of prosperous Parisians and see or hear of their summer places near Paris, or as far off as Brittany and reached by coach. A good deal is said about food and wine, and there are references to tobacco, which has not yet won the approval of cultivated persons, though even women, if they are like Mme Turcaret, may indulge in it. Manners are stressed especially in certain plays by Dancourt, Dufresny, and Lesage. On the whole, they are not made more prominent than in the preceding decade, except in regard to financial affairs.

Pagan divinities occasionally appear. They are found in Dancourt's *Céphale et Procris* and *Impromptu de Surêne*, in Lafont's *Danaé*, in the prologues of Regnard's *Ménechmes* and of Roy's lost *Captifs*, and in a playlet by Regnard that was not acted, *les Souhaits*. There are young lovers in nearly all the comedies, but they are not usually given leading rôles. They are often deeply indebted to valets, whose most popular names are Frontin and Crispin, and to *suivantes*, who are frequently called Lasette, sometimes Marton, Marine, Toinette, etc. While the valet is usually clever and somewhat unscrupulous in his methods, the blundering or naive type is also found. The *suivante* is his feminine counterpart, well known to modern audiences through the long success of such plays as *Turcaret* and *le Légataire universel*.

A king and a minister of state are introduced into *Esope à la cour*; a governor, into *le Naufrage*. The nobility is by no means excluded, but the



dominant class is that of the bourgeois. There are many business men, lawyers, and notaries, a few physicians, an apothecary, an undertaker, a dyer, sea captains, and wine merchants. A Jew and his daughter are introduced into *Port de mer*. The Christian clergy, though admitted to the stage late in the seventeenth century, is excluded. Peasants appear in several plays, as do members of the criminal class. Fathers and guardians are common. Mothers appear less frequently. Dufresny had a special fondness for widows. The dramatists may hold up to ridicule members of any of these categories.

The moralizing tendency of the eighteenth century has often been noted, usually without much effort to distinguish its prevalence at different periods. In 1701-15 it was by no means regarded as essential. The most moralistic production is Boursault's *Esope à la cour*, a play that attacks the vices of the court: adoration of the sovereign, embezzlement of public funds, self-seeking, gossip, snobbishness. It rebukes an old man's pursuit of wealth, preaches love as essential to marriage, urges gratitude and tolerance, even argues for the existence of God. In three of his plays Destouches, too, seems moved by ethical rather than by artistic considerations. He condemns distrustfulness, ingratitude, and slander. Baron's *Ecole des pères* has a moral lesson. But in all the other comedies the authors seek primarily to amuse. Their plays may contain moral material, but even the satirical elements contribute to the comic effect rather than to the ethical. So far is Dancourt from playing the part of a moralist that in his *Céphale et Procris* he invites us to sympathize with marital infidelity, while Regnard makes us laugh with his heroes, despite their dubious honesty. As these plays of Boursault and Michel Baron were the last they wrote, it remained for Destouches alone to carry into later years such moralizing habits as had been illustrated in the first fifteen years of the century.

Classical structure prevails. The unity of time is everywhere respected, unless we consider the prologue of Dancourt's *Second Chapitre* as part of his play. In this comedy and *le Diable boiteux* the unity of place is violated if the prologues are regarded as part of the plays, while in three comedies derived directly or indirectly from Spanish *comedias* the place includes two or three localities in a town. Elsewhere the unity of place is respected. I find, on the other hand, minor violations of the unity of action in thirteen comedies, though the authors seldom fail to link their scenes. Almost all the plays, with the exception of those by Regnard and Boindin's *Bal d'Auteuil*, respect the *bienséances*. One must conclude that no author of comedies sought to be original in regard to the unities and to the linking of scenes, that occasional departures from classical custom are due to the exigencies

of a special situation, and that Regnard and Boindin were almost alone in the license of dialogue or situation.<sup>8</sup>

The chief provider of the Comédie Française was Dancourt; next came Dufresny and Legrand, then Regnard, Lesage, and Destouches. Dancourt, as the leader of the troupe, was chiefly relied on to supply entertainment for a special occasion or to rewrite for his comrades an older comedy. Regnard, though he at times disregarded rules of prosody, was the most gifted of these authors as a poet. Dufresny was the dramatist most interested in ideas. Lesage wasted his time upon Spanish plays and subsequently deserted the Comédie Française for the Foire. What he accomplished in the few years that he devoted to original composition for the Comédie makes us regret that he did not contribute to it over a longer period. Legrand, who was quite inferior to these writers, learned how to amuse an audience with a one-act play, as did Boindin and Lafont. Destouches produced comedies of greater length than these three and sought, more than anyone else, to revive character comedies, but he lacked imagination and lightness of touch. His best work lies in a later period.

Most of these authors and of those who made less important contributions had learned the art of dramatic construction and were able to invent a witty dialogue. So much was this the case that Voltaire preferred several short comedies of the period to many plays by Molière.<sup>9</sup> Of the longer plays those best known are *Turcaret*, *le Légataire universel*, and *les Folies amoureuses*, but *les Agitateurs* and *les Ménechmes* deserve to rank with these. Among the shorter, *le Galant Jardinier*, *le Double Veuvage*, *le Faux Instinct*, *la Coquette de village*, *Crispin rival*, *l'Épreuve réciproque*, and *le Port de mer* seem to merit special attention.

In the next eight chapters I will group my discussion of the comedies under the names of their authors, following chronology as far as possible. These will be followed by a chapter on lost plays and on those which, though associated with the Parisian region, were not acted at the Comédie Française. A final chapter is devoted to the crude, but intriguing productions of the Foire.

<sup>8</sup> Almost all the comedies that were acted at the Comédie Française and were printed not long afterwards, were published by Pierre Ribou. Unlike tragedies, very few of them were dedicated.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. below, Chapter XII, note 33.

## CHAPTER X

### DANCOURT

Though Dancourt is often discussed as primarily an eighteenth-century dramatist, the greater part of his work and the plays for which he is best known were acted in the seventeenth century. Before 1701 he had written a tragedy and thirty-three comedies and had helped to write four other plays, whereas in the eighteenth century he composed nineteen plays, two of them very brief, and rewrote two earlier productions. Nor can it be said that the quality of his later comedies equals that of *le Chevalier à la mode*, *la Maison de campagne*, or *le Mari retrouvé*, while, if one judges by success, the argument can be used that his seventeenth-century plays were acted at the Comédie Française more than five times as often as those that appeared in the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

This is not to say that, when he had reached the age of forty, he had written himself out. Not only was he still to produce a considerable number of comedies, but he was to seek new fields in dramatizing the business of the broker, in capitalizing the success of a recent novel, and in writing comedies in which plot and characters are subordinated to singing, dancing, and spectacle. As the leading author of the troupe, he was called on to compose plays for special occasions and to rewrite comedies that required adaptation to the tastes of the audience. While such labors prevented his having more time for original plays, they may have served to keep up his interest in dramatic composition.

I will first discuss the comedies in which he adhered to the methods he had developed in the seventeenth century, whether they are in one act, in three acts, or in five and whether they are written mainly in prose or in alexandrines, next, three comedies that have frames and are more fanciful than those of the first category, though they pay some attention to manners, then, two comedies in five acts and in verse that are revivals of older French plays, one by Lesage, the other by Guérin de Bouscal, both inspired by Spanish productions; and finally, spectacular comedies that make considerable use of "vers libres." With these last I will include the new prologues and *divertissements* that Dancourt wrote for spectacular comedies by Molière and Thomas Corneille.

<sup>1</sup> For Dancourt and his seventeenth century plays cf. my *op. cit.*, Part IV, pp. 577-95, 768-817.

## I—Comedies of Manners

The play with which Dancourt began his career as an eighteenth-century author is COLIN-MAILLARD,<sup>1</sup> in one act and in prose, ending with a *diversissement*, a type of play that had become familiar to his readers in the preceding decade. It is remarkable neither for its plot, nor for its characters, but, as the frères Parfaict aptly put it,<sup>2</sup> "les détails font valoir le fond." The plot, like that of Dancourt's *Tuteur*, is merely the arranging of an elopement by which a girl escapes from an elderly guardian and is united to the man she loves.<sup>3</sup> The characters show little originality. Robinot is the typical "barbon," who would marry his ward, not only because a wife is a "mal nécessaire," but because it is difficult for him to disentangle his own accounts from hers. More interesting than the young lovers and the clever valet are Mme Brillard, a widow who remembers her youth and is well disposed towards the lovers, and Claudine, an outspoken peasant, easily deceived by a brilliant young officer, but shrewd enough, when she discovers that she has been tricked, to return to her peasant fiancé.

The merit of the play lies in the bright and swiftly moving dialogue, the patois of Mathurin and Claudine, the picture of rural manners, and the gay ending, with the game of blindman's buff, the singing, and the dancing, all skillfully attached to the action. A similar use of this game had been made almost forty years before in Chappuzeau's *Colin-Mallard*, but, except

<sup>1</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1701 and 1702, 12° Music by Gilliers Republished in editions of the author's collected plays, in the *Fin du Répertoire*, Paris, veuve Dabo, 1824, and by Ad Rion in 1878 Dutch translations appeared in 1739 and 1765.

<sup>2</sup> XIV, 225

<sup>3</sup> Robinot, a widower living at Andresy, has brought his ward, Angélique, from a convent to his home, where she is chaperoned by his aunt, Mme Brillard. He plans to marry her, though his aunt reminds him that he and his deceased wife had promised her to a young captain, Eraste. Robinot's gardener, Mathurin, also a widower, is engaged to a peasant girl, Claudine, who attends Angélique. This girl informs Robinot that Angélique is unwilling to marry him and that, the evening before, her mistress had received a visit from a young man whom they had concealed in a cabinet until, while Robinot was blindfolded in a game of blindman's buff, he had made his escape. Robinot, despite his aunt's warning, goes to get his cousin the bailiff to make out the marriage contract and asks Mme Brillard to look after Angélique and to have village musicians come by the time he returns. Eraste and Lépine, his valet, now consult the aunt about an elopement. Mathurin overhears them and, since they have no money with which to bribe him, threatens to tell Robinot. Eraste makes love to Claudine, dazzles her with the prospect of becoming a lady, and forces Mathurin to agree, in order to win her back, not to tell Robinot and to supply Eraste with a peasant costume. Angélique, however, deceived by Eraste's trick and believing that he has deserted her for Claudine, agrees to marry Robinot before night. Eraste with Mme Brillard's help convinces Angélique that he is loyal to her. He is then passed off by Mathurin as a peasant, come to take part in the entertainment. Peasant singers and dancers arrive. A party of blindman's buff is arranged. While Robinot is playing the blindman and the peasants are singing, Eraste elopes with Angélique, accompanied by Mme Brillard, who will see that they are properly married. Claudine has been reconciled to Mathurin. Robinot is left in despair while peasants give the *diversissement*.

for the title and the device that enables the lovers to elope, there is no resemblance between the plays. Good examples of dialogue are the following:

Claudine Hé bien, Monsieur, elle dit qu'elle aime mieux mourir que d'épouser un vilain, un pied plat, un laid mâtin, un vieux pénard

Me Brillard Vous voyez, mon neveu

Cl Comment, Madame, est-ce que vous croyez que c'est de Monsieur qu'elle parle?

Mr Robinot Qu'est-ce à dire de moi?

Cl Mais écoutez, Monsieur, cela pourroit bien être, car elle dit qu'elle ne vous aime point, & je gagerois bien qu'elle dit vrai

Mr R La petite insolente! Et pourquoi ne m'aimerait-elle point?

Cl Parce que vous ne lui paraissez point aimable Et puis, voulez-vous que je vous dise, il me paroît qu'elle en aime quelqu'autre

Mr R Elle en aime quelqu'autre?

Me B Vous voyez, mon neveu

Cl Est-ce que vous vous êtes doutée de cela, Madame?

Me B Si je m'en suis doutée? oui vraiment je m'en suis doutée

Cl . Oh! bien n'en doutez plus, cela est certain (sc 3)

Lépine . c'est que nous ne portons jamais de bourse nous autres

Mathurin Morgué tant pis, c'est pourtant un meuble bien nécessaire

L Vous avez raison mais au défaut de bourse nous vous ferons nôtre billet si vous voulez, hem?

M Un billet? non Je n'avons pas de foi pour des billets de Capitaines

L Mais

M Non, voyez vous, je suis incorruptible \*

The comedy was first acted on Oct 28, 1701. The first run ended, according to the frères Parfaict, on Dec. 10, after the twenty-third performance. By the end of 1713 it had been played 52 times, by the end of 1792, 228 times. It ranks eleventh among its author's plays given at the Comédie Française, second among those first acted in the eighteenth century.

The next year Dancourt produced at the Comédie Française *l'Opérateur Barry*, first acted there on Oct. 11, 1702, but already presented at a private entertainment in 1700. It was well enough received to be acted nineteen times, but it was not revived.<sup>5</sup> He next prepared a new prologue and *divertissement* for a revival of Molière's *Amants magnifiques* and then produced the most successful play that he wrote during the eighteenth century.

This was *Le Galant Jardinier*,<sup>6</sup> which, like *Cohn-Maillard*, was in one

\* Sc 8 In sc 20 Mathurin employs a comparison that had appeared in Louise Labé's *Débat de Folie et d'Amour*, "Discours IIII," and in Tasso's *Torrismondo* (cf my *op cit*, Part II, p 35) "Il en est du ménage, vois-tu, comme d'une charuë, où sont attelés le mari & la femme? tant qu'ils tirent tous deux de concert, la charuë va bien mais si la femme se met quelque fantaisie dans la charvèle, le mari se chagrine, l'un tire à dià, l'autre à uriau, la charuë devient mal attelée, & le ménage s'en va à tous les diables"

<sup>5</sup> For this play of my *op cit*, Part IV, pp 812-3

<sup>6</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1705, 12° Music by Gilliers Republished in editions of the author's collected plays, in the collection of plays by authors of the *Second Ordre* in 1808, in the *Répertoire* of Paris, veuve Dabo, 1822-3, in the *Chefs-d'œuvre des auteurs comiques*, Paris, Firmin-Didot, 1845, and by Ad Rion in 1878 It was

act and in prose, was located in the country near Paris, and had, if not a final *divertissement*, something very much like one near the end of the play. It is again a playlet with a lively dialogue, amusing bourgeois and peasants, increasing animation as the action progresses. A scene between two stammerers, each of whom thinks that the other is imitating him, was probably due to the author's recollection of a similar situation that he had introduced into one of his early comedies, *le Notaire obligeant*.<sup>7</sup>

Dubuisson is a prosperous bourgeois, shocked by accusations of gay living brought against one prospective son-in-law and by the supposed extravagance of the other, also by the thought of putting his "potager en parterre, le beau projet ! & que mettre dans ma soupe ? des tulipes ?" (sc 10) He has gone to live in the country in the hope of reducing wedding expenses and he is willing, merely because of Caton's money, to marry Angélique to a man his wife describes as "un vilain, un ladre, un vieux coquin." Mme Dubuisson thinks more of their daughter's happiness, but she, too, is anxious to avoid expense and is far from appreciating the evening serenades. Angélique is an *ingénue* fresh from a convent who falls in love with the first handsome

translated into Portuguese in 1773. There is a brief study of the play in Lenient, *la Comédie en France au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, Hachette, 1888, I 119-21.

<sup>7</sup> Dubuisson, who has a home at Paris and another in the country, a few miles from the city, has planned to marry his daughter, Lucile, to Léandre, a young officer, son of his wealthy friend, Orgon. As Léandre has not been heard from for a month and as Dubuisson has been told that he is dissipated, he decides to give his daughter to Caton, though he is miserly and ugly. Meanwhile Léandre has met Lucile in a coach when she was returning with her mother from a convent. In order to be near her he has bribed Lucas, her father's gardener, to disguise him and his valet, La Montagne, as his helpers. For several nights Léandre has been entertaining Lucile with music and fireworks. Mme Dubuisson suspects Caton of paying for this entertainment, which she dislikes. Her husband has engaged La Montagne to clear up the mystery. While in Paris the valet has learned that Orgon has offered a reward for the discovery of his son. A copy of the notice is brought back by him, but is dropped, so that it falls into the hands of Lucas, who, though he cannot read, has his suspicions roused by it. He discovers from a conversation between Léandre and La Montagne that a reward has been offered by Orgon, is bribed by them to conceal their identity, and then goes off to inform the father of his son's whereabouts. While he is away, Léandre pretends to sleep in the garden and overhears Lucile tell Marton, her *servante*, of her love for him. When they discover a portrait of Lucile attached to his arm, one that he had had painted without her knowing it, they are convinced that he is not a gardener, but the officer she had seen in the coach. The love-making that follows is interrupted by the arrival of Dubuisson and Caton. Léandre talks like a peasant and pretends that he has been showing how vegetables could be replaced by flowers. It is reported that an expensive supper has been brought into Dubuisson's kitchen and that various guests, including a certain Bavardin, are arriving. Dubuisson accuses Caton of extravagance and leaves him with Bavardin. The two men stammer at each other, each thinks he is being mocked, and their quarrel is settled only by Marton's arrival. Mme Dubuisson, troubled by the confusion in her household, refuses to allow Caton to marry her daughter. Peasants, a gipsy girl, and persons dressed like Italian actors march in and sing. Handsome gifts are presented to Lucile and Marton. When the entertainment has reached its climax, Orgon, brought in by Lucas, recognizes Léandre, pardons his escapade, agrees to pay for his large expenditures, and concludes with Dubuisson their original plan of marrying Léandre and Lucile. Lucas will get the offered reward of 30 pistoles.

officer she sees. Her clever *servante* and the peasant gardeners complete the family group.

Léandre belongs to the same social stratum as Dubuisson, but his father's wealth has given him the ability to spend money freely. He is not only an ardent lover, but a man who shows decided cleverness in carrying out his plans. His valet is energetic and witty. The stammering old men and the shrewd peasants, who talk in patois and have not learned to read, add comic scenes, while the entertainers provide dancing and singing in the next to last scene.

The representation of manners includes the picture of a bourgeois home in the country near Paris, references to the guarding of girls in a convent, to the return of officers from the war in Germany, to advertising for a lost son, to an illiterate peasant's method of outwitting persons better educated than he, to his hope of some day becoming a collector of taxes, to Parisian shops, and to a bill for food.

l'un a été dans la rue S Honoré, chez des Marchands d'étoffes, l'autre chez des Marchands Joailliers, sur le Quai des Morfondus celui-ci chez Crepi, celui-là chez la Morliere (sc 2)

|                                    |                                                |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Deux potages, huit entrées         | Vn Marquassin, six Perdrix, une douzaine de    |
| Cailles, quatre Gelinottes de bois | Cent quatre vingt deux livres dix sols (sc 14) |

The scenes are varied and entertaining. A domestic interview between husband and wife is followed by a gay scene in which a valet jests, by scenes introducing peasants, by the love scene in the garden, the visit of a *rôtisseur*, the quarrel between the stammerers, the scene of dancing and singing, and the final scene of explanation and parental consent to the lovers' marriage. The public responded with enthusiasm. First acted on Oct 22, 1704, the play had seventeen performances by Dec 6, 83 by the end of 1715, 429 by the end of 1793. It was acted at the Comédie Française more frequently than any other play by Dancourt except *les Vendanges de Suresnes*.

It was four years before Dancourt brought out a third comedy of manners, but when he did so he produced one in five acts on which he may have been at work while he was composing plays of a different kind. MADAME ARTUS<sup>8</sup> owed its title-rôle to *Tartuffe*, a part of its intrigue and some of its characters to Saint-Yon's *Façons du tems*, according to the frères Parfaict,<sup>9</sup> who greatly exaggerate Dancourt's debt to Saint-Yon and do not sufficiently emphasize what he owed to Molière. I should say that *Tartuffe* furnished him with his point of departure. From it he probably derived the name of his hypocrite by dropping from *Tartuffe* its first and last consonantal sounds,

<sup>8</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1708, 12°, and 1720 Republished in editions of the author's collected plays.

<sup>9</sup> XIV, 484

but, in order to distinguish his play from its model, he made both hypocrite and dupe women instead of men. Tartuffe and Orgon gave him Mme Artus and Mme Argante, a name that is also not unlike that of her prototype. Like Orgon, Mme Argante has a son and a daughter who has a lover. In *Tartuffe* the girl whom Orgon's son loves is mentioned, but she does not appear, whereas the girl loved by Mme Argante's son is brought on the stage. Damis, uncle of the brother and sister, corresponds to Cléante, Finette to Dorine. Mr. Ludet, the notary, is added, as is Merlin. The hypocrite pretends to be unworldly, but she tries to control the family and to marry Dorante, as Tartuffe under the mask of religion tries to dominate Orgon and to seduce Elmire. In both plays the hypocrite first appears in the third act.<sup>10</sup>

From the *Façons du tems* Dancourt may have derived suggestions for the characters of the young spendthrift, his clever valet, and the mature woman who wishes to marry a young man, but the resemblances are not close enough to justify the frères Parfaict's statement except in one incident, that of the forest the young man has had cut down and the excuse given that it was necessary to provide a view, not only from the salon, but even from the "cuisine" and the "cave." It would seem that, after the frères Parfaict had noticed this resemblance, they jumped to the conclusion that Dancourt had borrowed extensively from Saint-Yon, though nowhere else is there verbal similarity. It is even possible, though it cannot be proved, that Dancourt helped Saint-Yon revise his play and that he had contributed the scene in question to the *Façon du tems*, so that in imitating it he was merely taking back his "bien" where he found it. Most details of the plot seem to have been his own.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Mme Artus expresses contempt for Mme Argante, as Tartuffe does for Orgon. Dorante says of Mme Artus, "Voilà, je vous l'avoue, une grande Coquine" (IV, 3) and "Voilà, je vous l'avoue, une étrange personne" (IV, 8), as Orgon says of Tartuffe, "Voilà, je vous l'avoue, un abominable homme!" (v 1529). When the character of the hypocrite has been revealed, the impostor is in both plays ordered out of the house by the dupe. Dancourt also makes comic use of well known tragedies: "Et quelle mere encore!" (I, 1, cf *Andromaque*, v 359), "Mais du bois abattu n'est pas un si grand crime" (I, 4, cf *le Cid*, v 306).

<sup>11</sup> Mme Artus, though of humble origin, had, thanks to a small legacy, established herself socially and attracted the attention of a rich widow, Mme Argante. She now lives in the latter's house, impresses her with her piety, makes herself very comfortable, and urges her hostess to control strictly her children, Cléide and Dorante. Mme Argante objects to her daughter's marrying Eraste and gives her son so little money that he goes to an estate in Brittany, which has been left him by his father, but is still under his mother's control, and has the wood cut down and sold. While there he falls in love with beautiful young Rosette, gives her a written promise of marriage, and hurries back to Paris in the hope of concealing these matters from his mother. His uncle, Damis, reproves him both for cutting the wood and for becoming engaged. His mother proposes to break off the match, but the girl's uncle, Ludet, a notary who has dealt with both Dorante and Mme Artus, pays the latter to introduce the girl, under the name of Massine, into Mme Argante's home, where she is to be instructed by Mme Artus. The latter plans to marry Dorante herself and to get his mother to settle on him all that she has. In return for money placed in Ludet's hands, Mme Artus signs a contract to bring about the marriage of Eraste and



In presenting Mme Artus, Dancourt imitated Molière, but he avoided the difficulties from which *Tartuffe* had originally suffered. There is nothing in the rôle that can be mistaken for a satire upon religion. Eraste tells us much more about the lady's past than we know about Tartuffe's. He describes her (II, 3) as an "Intriguante" who had appealed to his aunt's sympathy and been left four or five thousand francs, which had enabled her to marry a Swiss. When he died, he left her childless and with "quelques rentes pour vivre." The family of the Swiss had brought suit, but she had won, thanks to a young financier who loved her and some coquettes who influenced the judge. After that experience she lived now as a prude, now as a coquette,

Et mêlant l'air du monde, & l'air de la retraite,  
Par fois en brocard d'or, souvent en linge uni,  
Logeant presque toujours dans un Hôtel garni

She has an apartment and her own servant in Mme Argante's house and influences her hostess as she pleases (I, 2)

La loue à tout propos, l'applaudit, la caresse,  
Flûte jusqu'au Portier, jusqu'au chien du logis,  
Sous cet air de vertu qu'on voit bien qu'elle affecte

She is not in love with Dorante, but she sees that by marrying him she can get control of the family fortunes. To win him she has caused his mother to limit his finances so strictly that he may be driven to marry a much older woman. She falls a victim, however, to her love of gain, which induces her to take her rival into Mme Argante's home and to agree to work against the desires of her hostess. She lends money at sixteen percent interest, claiming that she takes only five and gives the rest to charity. She is a capable woman, soft of speech, eager for money and position, without a conscience, and less capable of judging people than she thinks she is. It is unfortunate that so interesting a character appears in only thirteen of the forty-six scenes.

The most original of the other characters is Ludet, by no means the ordinary notary of comedy, but a man of unusual ability who wins the

Célide, while she pretends to Mme Argante that she is helping her win Eraste despite his love for her daughter. Mme Argante makes love to Eraste, who pretends to favor her suit, while Dorante treats Mme Artus in similar fashion. Dams, when he discovers Mme Argante's absurd desire to marry Eraste and after he has met Rosette, aids the young people. The notary arranges things so that, when Mme Argante signs a contract for her son's marriage, thinking the bride is to be Mme Artus, she is really uniting him to Rosette. Mme Artus is triumphant, but her talk enables Mme Argante to discover that her supposed friend has accepted a bribe to marry Eraste to Célide. Then the fact is revealed that the contract enables Dorante to marry Rosette. The young man promises to let his mother retain all the rights she has given away in the contract, whereupon she consents to her children's marriages to the persons they love and orders Mme Artus out of the house.

confidence of those with whom he deals and is able to deceive the cleverest of them in the interests both of Mme Argante and of justice. Eraste and Célide are conventional young lovers, except that to Eraste is given the task of revealing Mme Artus's past. Rosette pretends to be naive, but she is able to outwit even Mme Artus. Dorante is both a devoted lover and a spendthrift. He is persecuted by his mother, who sees that he is locked out if he comes home late and obliges him to have recourse to usurers. She is herself a silly woman, whose widowhood weighs heavily upon her, who over-estimates her charms, and who is easily deceived by Mme Artus.

The comedy shows us a wealthy Parisian home, divided into apartments and guarded by a concierge. The father had owned Kerkameau le Château in Brittany. News about the estate is sent by the "Fiscal du lieu." Mme Argante has to see a tenant farmer about a lease. A girl may be detained by her family in a convent. When she has no fortune, she "travaille à la tapisserie." There is talk of how ladies spend a spring morning (II, 2).

Madame Artus là haut après son bouillon pris,  
Sur un grand canapé se tranquillise à l'aise,  
Et Madame à l'instant vient de sortir en chaise

The scene inspired by *les Façons du tems* is amusing. Merlin is explaining his master's excellent intentions in having the trees cut down (I, 5)

Kerkameau le Château, Mon-seur est à my côté,  
Pas tout à fait pourtant, mais il est en bon lieu,  
Le bois en question le resseroit un peu  
Ses arbres fort toffus s'élevoient jusqu'aux nues,  
Et partant le Château n'avait aucunes vûes  
Il en faut, le fait est de sçavoir d'un Château  
Ce qui plaît mieux à voir, ou des bois, ou de l'eau  
Damis J'aime l'eau  
Merlin Nous aussi c'est la grande maniere  
On découvre à present des prez, une riviere,  
Qui lentement coulante, arrose un verd gazon,  
Puis des Côteaux lointains perdus dans l'horison,  
Et la vûe autrefois de toutes parts grimpante,  
Du côté de ce bois est maintenant plongeante  
Damis Mais ce Bois, il faloit l'etester seulement  
La vue  
Merlin On n'en eût eu que dans l'appartement  
Dorante Je le voulois ainsi  
Merlin Oui, mais moi qui raffine,  
J'ai cru qu'il en faloit jusques dans la cuisine  
Damis Dans la cuisine?  
Merlin Bon! dans la cave à présent  
En haut le coup d'œil plonge, en bas, il est rasant  
Je vous suis caution qu'il a de quoi s'étendre

Interesting scenes are those of love-making by the elderly women (II, 4 and IV, 7) and of the hypocrite's unmasking. Dancourt, however, devoted too many scenes to preparation and explanation, so that few are highly dramatic. It was, perhaps, for this reason and for the too obvious imitation of *Tartuffe* that the play was unsuccessful. It was played only five times, on and after May 8, 1708. That it did not go unnoticed, however, is stated by a contemporary publication, which asserted that it made "beaucoup de bruit, parce que bien des gens y sont caractériséz."<sup>12</sup>

*LES AGIOTEURS*<sup>13</sup> is more completely a comedy of manners than any other play that Dancourt wrote in the eighteenth century. Unlike *Madame Artus* it is in prose. Though it has only three acts, it is as long as is that comedy in five. The plot is reduced to a minimum, shoved into the early scenes and those at the end of the play in order to leave room for the study of speculation, its methods, its practitioners, and its victims.<sup>14</sup>

The heavy expenses that a series of long wars brought upon France caused the depreciation of paper money and the relative increase in the value of gold. In order to remedy this situation, the king reduced the amount of gold in the louis. At times he found that he had reduced it too much and altered its value accordingly. Dangeau refers to the louis's losing five sous on April 1, 1701, and thus falling to 12 francs, 10 sous, but it had risen so much by the autumn of 1703 that it had to be reduced in order to be worth no more than 13 francs. On March 1, 1708, it was pulled down to this value. On March 25, 1709, it was reduced to 12 francs, 10 sous, but two months later it was put back to 13 francs. These fluctuations gave an excellent opportunity for speculation. *Agio*, a word borrowed from the Italians, was introduced about 1704 to indicate the profit that might be realized by exchanging gold and paper. An *agioteur* was a new kind of

<sup>12</sup> *Journal de Verdun*, July, 1708, cited by Melève, *Rep.*, p. 219

<sup>13</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1710, 12°. Republished in editions of its author's collected plays. For a study of it cf. Jules Lemaître, *la Comédie après Molière*, Paris, 1903, pp. 156-60

<sup>14</sup> Zacharie, a usurer, has brought from the country and established at Paris his godson, Trapolin, now deeply engaged in *agiotage*. Mme. Sara, a wealthy widow who hopes to marry Trapolin, lends him money. Both Zacharie and Trapolin plan to wed her niece, Suzon, but the latter, to whom Trapolin has entrusted gold that he wishes to conceal from his associates, prefers wealthy young Clitandre, until recently an army officer. Suzon has in her service Claudine, a country girl who is visited by her cousin, Lucas. This illiterate peasant hears much talk of paper that can be changed into gold, finds a sheet with writing on it, and takes it to Zacharie to be cashed, but the usurer discovers that it is a love letter, written by Trapolin to Suzon, in which he speaks slightly of Zacharie and Sara. The result is that, when Suzon announces her engagement to Clitandre, and Trapolin, hard pressed for money, offers to marry Sara, the widow rejects him and demands the return of the sums she had loaned him. Zacharie offers to marry Sara. She accepts him, but she will not forgive Trapolin. The latter has had other losses and sees himself ruined by the fact that Suzon will use the gold he had left in her hands to repay Clitandre for money he had advanced to Trapolin.

speculator,<sup>15</sup> whose possibilities for drama Dancourt was not slow to recognize. He had shown in *le Chevalier à la mode* the widow of a financial magnate, in *le Retour des officiers* a tax-collector; in the *Second Chapitre* a *sous-traitant*. Then Lesage had brought out *Turcaret*. It was quite natural that Dancourt should add to the subjects treated in these plays by dramatizing the kindred theme of *agiotage*. In so doing he went into much greater detail than can be found in any earlier money play written in France.

Trapolin had got his start as Zacharie's clerk, later becoming his associate. He works with another usurer, Craquinet. In order that their relationship should not be suspected, they have taken houses that open on different streets, but have in the rear a common wall, through which they have cut a hole. Trapolin has only to unlock a cupboard and knock on the wall behind it to establish communications with Craquinet. Looking to the future, he begins to employ one of his cousins who is serving a judge at Paris. He also keeps on good terms with a procureur of dubious reputation, Durillon, and collects information from him and others about the affairs of prospective borrowers. He finds out how desperately they need assistance, and estimates accordingly the value of the paper they bring, or wish to borrow. He and Zacharie have enough influence among financiers to set the price of paper (I, 8).

Zacharie Comment va le courant aujourd'hui?

Trapolin Je ne sçai, je n'ai point vu le Thermometre, je ne suis pas encore sorti mais il ira comme nous voudrons, quand on est trois ou quatre forts bureaux de bonne intelligence.

Z Quels fonds avons nous? cela nous réglera.

T Quantité de papier, & fort peu d'argent, & pour ne pas manquer quelque bonne affaire, il faut incessamment de l'espece.

Z puisque le papier nous gagne, & que l'espece est rare, il est bon de baisser aujourd'hui le papier de huit pour cent quand nous nous serons défaits du nôtre, on le remettra sur le même pied, ou on le rehaussera, s'il est possible.

Consequently Trapolin notifies M. Villain, "rue Trousse-vache, à la dame Gigogne," M. saint Denis, "rue saint Bonnet, à l'Image saint Claude," M. Laine, "rue Julien-rebec, à la Casaque retournée," and Mme Bersabée, "au Cheval qui chiffre, rue Geoffroi l'ânier." He is sure the smaller concerns will follow the lead of these. By such devices Zacharie had made one third profit out of 40,000 francs of conversions between the beginning of the week and Thursday. They are both disgusted with Craquinet when they find that he has loaned 13,000 francs in paper and has asked for it only 15,000 in specie at the end of six months, a little over 30 percent if paper is at par. Trapolin himself lends 22,000 in paper for 25,000 in specie at

<sup>15</sup> On July 9, 1712, Dangeau (*Journal*, XIV, 152) reports that *agroteurs* had been arrested for spreading bad news in order to help their business.

the end of three months—over 50 percent if paper is at par. He takes ample security and lends at times under the names of other persons.

Trapolin's associates include Zacharie, older and less daring than his godson and less in danger of failure. His marriage with a wealthy widow, suggested at the end of the play, will probably keep him till his death a menace to Parisian society. The other usurer, Craquinet, is introduced chiefly to illustrate Trapolin's nefarious practices and his boldness in fleecing his customers. Dubois represents the apt pupil from the country at the beginning of his career, one, however, who returns to his modest position with a judge when he sees that Trapolin is ruined. There is also a financial magnate, Cangrène, who comes to consult Zacharie and Trapolin about the morality of a deal by which he supplies a friend with 600 francs and subsequently accepts in payment a bond worth 2000, even obliging the friend to add 200 francs to close the deal. Cangrène's father-in-law had criticized him for his usurious practice, but he is, of course, reassured by Zacharie and Trapolin. The group represents the début, the progress, and the defeat or triumph of *agioteurs*, just as two characters in *Turcaret* show us the beginning and end of a tax-collector's career.

Durillon, the procureur, is on friendly terms with Trapolin and brings him business. He is a widower who would like to marry money. He is discreet and polite, seeks a cloak of respectability by being "Commissaire des pauvres" and "Marguillier de sa petite Paroisse" (II, 2), but he has been rudely reproved by the judge whom Dubois serves, one of the gentlemen who, as Durillon is obliged to admit, "sont les maîtres" (II, 3).

We are shown several dupes and near-dupes, while reference is made to others. A coquette, conceived out of wedlock, gets Trapolin to lend money to her fiancé, a provincial judge, whose aunt objects to the match. Their marriage will consequently be kept secret till the aunt dies. Trapolin will be paid out of what the judge inherits. A baroness borrows in order to gamble,<sup>10</sup> giving as security the income she will receive two years later. She is patronizing and insolent, but she impresses Trapolin and Durillon with "un certain air de supériorité qui détermine à faire tout ce qu'elles veulent, malgré qu'on en ait" (II, 13). Mme Malprofit engages in business ventures and has to conceal from her husband her extravagant purchases. She also has to pay for damage caused by her pet monkey. She gives Trapolin 8000 francs in paper to exchange for specie with which to meet her obligations, but he expects to settle with her creditors to his own advantage. A "fils de famille," Daudinet, is persuaded to borrow 20,000 francs in paper, for

<sup>10</sup> She admits that she is infatuated with *pharaon* and *lansquenét*, two of the games forbidden by law on Feb. 21, 1710, cf. Dangeau *Journal*, XIII, 165.

which he must return 22,000 in paper at the end of six months. His security is a house, loaned for the purpose by Durillon, who is sure the family will have to pay.

All transactions do not run as smoothly as these. Chicanenville seems to be a satisfactory dupe, but he gets gold that was not meant for him. Trapolin had slipped it into a bag without telling Dubois, who turns the bag over to Chicanenville without opening it. The error was due to the pressure of business and may have been corrected, but we are not told how the affair turns out. Dargentac, who pretends to be a Gascon, passes off bad coins on Trapolin and probably skips to Genoa before he can be caught. Finally, Clitandre, to whom Trapolin owes a large sum, is constantly put off, so that he is unable to equip his regiment, but, thanks to his marriage, his money will be restored to him by Suzon. Trapolin has so many affairs on his hands that even his skill and assurance cannot save him from failure.

Other characters are Mme Sara, a familiar figure in comedy of the time, that of a rich old woman who wishes to marry a young man and is deeply offended when she finds that he prefers a woman nearer his age, Suzon, a very capable girl who manages her affairs successfully, avoids marrying an *agioteur*, and not only captures Clitandre, but enables him to get back the money he supposed he had lost, and the peasants, Claudine and Lucas, who increase the comic element by their patois and naiveté.

The play gives an interesting picture of financial transactions at Paris in the early eighteenth century, when heartless brokers were taking advantage of the country's sufferings in war. It shows a large variety of types in scenes that contain some excellent dialogue. Its unity lies in the subject rather than the plot. Hardly any of the characters win our sympathy, but we prefer Clitandre and Suzon to the rest. The play must have pleased especially by its *actualité*, for it had twenty performances in 1710, between Sept. 26 and the end of the year, and was given once at Versailles,<sup>17</sup> but it was not revived after that year.

The last comedy that Dancourt wrote before the death of Louis XIV, *Le VERT GALANT*,<sup>18</sup> marks a return to methods he had employed in much earlier plays, such as *la Gazette de Hollande* and *les Vendanges*. We find ourselves in the society of lesser bourgeois, whose business, amusements, and relations with one another and with soldiers are dramatized. The love intrigue is slight. The play is in one act and in prose, with a brief *divertissement* at the end, called "la Musique." The chief event is worthy of a medieval

<sup>17</sup> According to a letter written on Nov. 30 by the duchesse d'Orléans and cited by *Mélèse, Rép.*, p. 220.

<sup>18</sup> No place, 1714, 12°. According to Dr. Starr, the approbation is dated Sept. 19, 1714. Republished in editions of the author's collected plays.

farce: an inelegant trick is played upon a would-be adulterer and leads to the triumph of virtue.<sup>19</sup>

The source of the play, according to the frères Parfaict,<sup>20</sup> was an anecdote that told how a husband surprised an abbé with his wife and gave him a bath that left him with a green tint. They quote the *Mercure galant* as saying that Dancourt told the tale in order to rouse interest in the play. This suggests that the play may have inspired the anecdote. If it did, the point of departure would be the pun indicated by the title, which may indicate an enterprising ladies' man, or a lover painted green, both of which definitions ultimately fit M. Tarif. The husband becomes a dyer in order that the operation of painting his rival may easily be carried out. His owning a farm explains why he was not expected to sup in Paris. The choice of military men as his helpers simplifies the task of mastering the rival. There seems to be no special reason why Tarif should be an *agioteur* except that Dancourt had recently written a play dealing with this somewhat novel profession, unpopular enough to characterize a villain. The introduction of the lawyer serves to meet objections that might be raised in regard to the legal aspects of the situation created by Jérôme's act of punishment. Such considerations explain the composition of this logically constructed play that resembles both a farce and a comedy of manners.

<sup>19</sup> Jérôme, a Parisian dyer, owns at some distance from the city a farm that he likes to visit. He has recently married a young wife. His niece, Javotte, lives with them. Her brother, Eraste, an officer in the dragoons, is impecunious, but hopes to marry Angélique, niece of a stock-jobber, M. Tarif. This marriage has been proposed by a neighbor, Mme Clopinet, pictures of the young people have been exchanged, and the only obstacle is that Tarif, anxious to retain control of his niece's fortune, is unwilling for her to marry. Jérôme invites Tarif to sup at his farm, but the invitation is declined. When the men have separated, Mme Tarif informs Jérôme that her husband has fallen in love with his wife, that Mme Jérôme has confided in her, and that she has invited Tarif to supper with the intention of playing a trick on him. Jérôme decides to play a trick himself and thinks of a method. He bids his wife continue her preparations for supper and enlists the aid of Eraste and his valet, Lépine, who had formerly worked in Jérôme's establishment. Mme Jérôme and Javotte receive Tarif, who removes his wig, puts on a cap belonging to Jérôme, and starts to enjoy with the ladies the expensive repast he has had brought in. Eraste and Lépine intrude upon the party and are followed by Jérôme. Tarif tries to explain his presence by saying that he had stopped in to while away the time before keeping an engagement, in preparation for which he would visit a *beigneur*. Jérôme offers to have him bathed by Lépine, who, with Eraste, takes him to Jérôme's vats, undresses him, and dyes him green, giving him three coats. While they are away, Mme Tarif and Mme Clopinet arrive, followed by Eraste and Angélique, who are eager to marry Jérôme, now worried over the consequences of his act, consults a cousin who is a lawyer and is advised to enter a complaint against Tarif before the latter can bring charges against him. Tarif, turned green, now appears. He threatens, but he is laughed at by Lépine and rebuked by his wife. He begs to have the color removed. After some discussion Lépine offers to restore him to his natural color if he will agree to give Angélique to Eraste and if Jérôme will allow the valet to marry Javotte and take over the dye business that Jérôme had offered to relinquish to Eraste. The affair is settled in this manner, but Tarif is obliged to hear a song that holds him up to ridicule.

<sup>20</sup> XV, 180-2

Jérôme dominates the action. He must have managed his business well, as he now has 200,000 francs, a home and a dye-shop at Paris, and a place in the country. He wishes to retire from business and purchase "quelque Charge qui m'anoblira" (sc. 3). He at first considers Tarif his good friend and remarkably honest for a man of his profession. He is hospitable to his nephew and niece and apparently thinks it no *mésalliance* to marry this girl to his former apprentice. He shows his imagination by the trick he plays on Tarif. When he fears he has gone too far, he consults a lawyer, but he does not lose his composure enough to keep him from jesting about his victim's color. His rôle of *justicier* never renders him solemn or morose.

Tarif is a speculator and a pursuer of women. When we first see him, he claims to be engaged in furnishing a dowry "en especes pour du papier, sur lequel il y a moitié à gagner" (sc. 5). He has deceived his wife on various occasions. When he had sought too great intimacy three months before with Mme Clopinet, two of her husband's clerks had beaten him. He is easily deceived by women's flattery and is comic in the contrast between his desires and his manners. He cannot resist telling Mme Jérôme how much he has paid for the supper 12 francs for the pheasant, "les deux perdrix neuf livres dix sols, & treize francs l'oiseau de riviere & la becasse" (sc. 13). He is no match for the soldiers and wins no sympathy when he is painted and begs to be cleansed.

The other characters are less striking. Eraste is the usual impecunious young officer, but he is distinguished from many of his predecessors by his humble origin, of which he is obviously ashamed as he wishes to keep his brother officers in ignorance of the fact that he is Jérôme's nephew. Lépine is not merely a clever valet, but one who knows the dyer's trade and has been made bold by army life. Mme Jérôme is described by her husband (sc. 3) as a "bonne grosse réjouie, belle & de bonne humeur". She and Mme Clopinet uphold social virtues and are quite capable of controlling men like Tarif. The latter's wife is equally virtuous, but has a somewhat different rôle, as she is chiefly concerned with seeking revenge. The competent lawyer, the two girls in love with uniforms, and a "garçon teinturier" complete the cast. The last of these is introduced to bring out the fact that Jérôme is preparing to "teindre en vert ce meuble de damas" (sc. 2) and consequently has ready at hand the materials for punishing Tarif.

The dialogue is brisk and amusing, especially at the end of the play, when Tarif appears in his new color. Jérôme proposes to change the green to "feuille morte", Lépine, from "vert brun" to "céladon". A song is sung to emphasize what has been accomplished.

La nature le rend galand  
Mais ce n'est rien que la nature,



Si l'art n'eût aidé le talent  
 Par le secours de la teinture,  
 Au denouement de l'aventure  
 Il ne seroit pas Vert-Galant

The play had only moderate success. First acted, October 24, 1714, it was given only ten times in that year, and was not revived. Perhaps eighteenth-century sentimentality was already too strong for it to be appreciated. The *Mercure galant* implied that it was played oftener than it deserved to be when it accused Dancourt of forcing the troupe to reject a play by Dufresny because he was unwilling for it to compete with his *Fêtes du Cours* and *Vert Galant*, "qui occupent la scène, en dépit du public, autant qu'il plaît à leur auteur"<sup>21</sup> A month earlier the same magazine had called *le Vert Galant* a comedy "mal taillée et mal cousue," a criticism that cannot be defended unless the form of the play when first acted was quite different from that given it when it was published. On the other hand, the hostility of the journal can be explained by the fact that Dufresny had edited it as recently as May, 1714.

## II—Comedies with Frames

Lesage brought out his *Diable boiteux* in the early summer of 1707 (*priv.*, June 5). So great was its success that Dancourt, who liked to take advantage of anything in which the public was interested, prepared a play that he entitled *LE DIABLE BOITEUX* quickly enough for it to be acted on Oct. 1 of that year. This comedy was so well received that he was induced to bring out another on Oct. 20, *LE SECOND CHAPITRE DU DIABLE BOITEUX*.<sup>1</sup> The latter is not a sequel to the earlier play and neither of them draws its plot from Lesage's novel, yet it is quite true that this novel inspired both plays and supplied Dancourt with important suggestions.

From it he derived the titles of both plays and his conception of the lame devil, Asmodée, a modern and unprepossessing reincarnation of Cupid, who gets lovers into trouble, carries people through the air, and enables them to see what is ordinarily hidden from the public. In the prologue of Dancourt's *Diable boiteux* Cléophas and the magician are referred to. The novel is mentioned in scenes 1 and 4. A character suggests that the heroine's uncle and aunt are the Procureur and his wife mentioned "dans la fin du livre," while another person thinks she has seen "ce vilain genie qui s'appelle Flagel, & qui est l'esprit de la chicane," one of the devils described by Lesage in

<sup>21</sup> *Mercure galant* of November, 1714, cited by Mélése, *Th. et Pub.*, p. 113.

<sup>1</sup> The two plays were published together, Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1707, 12°. They were republished in editions of the author's collected plays.

his first chapter. The prologue of the *Second Chapitre* mentions Pillardoc, Lesage's Pillardoc, who had caused Asmodée's lameness while fighting with him over a "partisan manceau." Both plays reproduce Lesage's cynical tone and to a certain extent his interest in manners.

*Le Diable boiteux* is a comedy of one act with a prologue.<sup>2</sup> The main source of the plot is, as the frères Parfaict suggest,<sup>3</sup> de Visé's *Veuve à la mode*. In both plays we hear of a husband's death, his widow's efforts to keep his property for herself, her dealings with merchants and with a commissaire sent by her husband's nephew to place seals on valuables. This accounts, however, for only a part of the plot. The theme of summer lovers, overcome by their military rivals, was appropriate to the time of year when the play was first acted and had been employed in the late seventeenth century by various authors, including Dancourt himself. Lépine's use of the wardrobe in the interests of the lovers may have been suggested by Poisson's *Foux divertissans*, of which Dancourt had made an adaptation in *le Bon Soldat*. The valet's impersonation of a dead man in connection with a will may well have come from Regnard's *Légataire universel*, which, though not played until 1708, had been read to the actors on Dec 24, 1706. That Lépine's intervention does not resemble Crispin's more closely may be due to the fact that Dancourt was unwilling to make his borrowing more apparent than it is.

The most entertaining character is the widow, but her hypocrisy might

<sup>2</sup> The *Diable boiteux* has brought the magician's wife, Thérèse, and her daughter, Sanchette, from Madrid to Paris. They are in the theater. The Diable proposes to show them what is going on at the home of a Procureur, who lives on the Place Maubert. This intrigue will take the place of the comedy that has been promised and will be followed by musical comment. After this prologue we learn that the Procureur is dying and that his niece, Angélique, and her servant, Marton, have been courted by Eraste and his valet, Lépine, but that, while these suitors are away in the army, the girls have been wooed by a law student and a clerk, who propose to take them to a dance. Eraste and Lépine now arrive and are about to quarrel with the summer lovers when the news of the Procureur's death is announced. To avoid detection, the four men retire into a wardrobe. Mme Lucas, the widow, pretends to be greatly afflicted, but she is comforted by the thought that her husband has made a will, leaving her all his fortune except a certain sum that will go to his nephew and niece if they marry. The nephew has the police put seals about the house and even seals up the wardrobe. M. Corbeau comes to talk about the funeral invitations and decorations. We hear that a seamstress and a merchant offer their services in connection with mourning garments. Lépine extricates himself from the wardrobe and asks Marton to tell Mme Lucas that her husband's ghost has appeared. Marton, who easily convinces the widow that Lépine's voice is that of the deceased, explains to the notary, who disapproves of the will, that they are playing a trick. Presently Lépine appears in the Procureur's hat and robe, which had been kept in the wardrobe, and is followed by the other men. The summer lovers represent devils, in costumes they had adopted for the ball. Lépine, speaking for the Procureur, asserts that his wife had forced him to make the unjust will and insists that it be torn up. As Mme Lucas raises no objection, Marton destroys the will. Thereupon Lépine and Eraste make themselves known and Mme Lucas retires, declaring that she has been cheated. In the last scene the *Diable boiteux* and Thérèse discuss the play. We are told that Eraste and Angélique will marry. Thérèse and Sanchette sing

<sup>3</sup> XIV, 452

have been developed more effectively. The other persons show little individuality. There is some representation of manners in the introduction of various persons drawn to a home where the head of the house has just died: a possible heir, merchants, police, a notary, a "crieur-juré", also in the reference to summer and winter lovers in time of war, in a traveler's patronage of a *baigneur*, and in the lack of protection offered a widow when her husband's will is destroyed. Preparation is carefully made. Mme Lucas's superstitious nature is shown long before the supposed ghost appears, and it is explained that the hat and gown of the deceased are kept in the wardrobe before the men are concealed there. Less care is taken, however, to unify the playlet, for several scenes could be omitted without influencing the dénouement. Indeed, the play makes the impression of having been hastily written in order that it might be acted while Lesage's novel was still new and in the month of October, when army lovers used to come home.

The prologue, which connects the play with the novel, is entertaining.<sup>4</sup> Paris is described as "la plus belle Ville du monde." It is said that women should avoid the manners of the provinces and become the "esclaves du gout & de la mode." The Diable objects to "connoisseurs" who, when they go to the theater, laugh only at "de bonnes choses . . . c'est une peste pour les Pièces nouvelles." The composition of the audiences is described as follows

la vanité & l'amour propre sont sur le Theatre, le luxe & la coquetterie dans les loges, & la fine critique dans le parterre

The Diable claims that it is he who inspires the actors, giving malice to one, presumption to another,

de l'esprit à celui-ci, l'opinion d'en avoir à celui-là, & qui leur inspire à tous en general ces sentimens d'union, d'intelligence & de politesse qui regnent ordinairement parmi eux

The variety of entertainment offered, the popularity of the novel, the references to manners, and the scene of the wardrobe probably account for the play's considerable, if temporary success. It was acted twenty-five times in 1707, six times in the two years that followed, and five times in 1713. It encouraged the author to write a companion piece, if not a sequel.

The *Second Chapitre* is practically a three-act play. Though it has the unorthodox number of two acts, its prologue, divided into three scenes, may well be considered a third.<sup>5</sup> By this arrangement the author was able to

<sup>4</sup> For an account of Sanchette, "l'ingénue la plus terrible" of Dancourt's theater, cf. Jules Lemaitre, *op. cit.*, pp. 120-2.

<sup>5</sup> Prologue. The Diable boiteux has fought with his old enemy, the demon Pillardoc, over Sunon, a *sous-traitant*, has brought the old man to Paris, and offers to show

represent two localities at Paris without violating the unity of place. His principal purpose, besides showing again the *Diable boiteux* and his Spanish protégées, was to extract comic material from the life of a financier, so that his play becomes a preliminary sketch of *Turcaret* and *les Agoteurs*.

Simon tells how he worked up by intrigue and speculation from the positions of page and doorkeeper to that of wealthy *sous-traitant*. All his thought has been fixed upon saving and making money. Now he is told that the young coquette he has married will squander his laboriously acquired fortune as soon as he is dead. It is to prove the truth of this prediction that the *Diable boiteux* has caused a report of Simon's death to reach his wife and that he now escorts him to his home. The first act demonstrates what would happen if Simon were dead, the second shows that, if he lives, he may be happy, provided he seeks pleasure under the guidance of the *Diable boiteux* and allows his wife, within certain limitations, to seek her own. The moral is that the enjoyment of life should not be ruined by too ardent a pursuit of wealth or by intolerance.

Dancourt was not yet ready to write a comedy of manners centered round a wealthy financier. His *Second Chapitre*, like its predecessor, is primarily intended to furnish light entertainment, with music, dancing, and enough talk and action to recall to the spectators the novel they had recently read. The *Second Chapitre* is less unified than the first and less satisfactory, as the characters, other than Simon, are little more than marionettes that dance while the *Diable boiteux* pulls the strings, and as themes suggested are insufficiently developed. The production was played only eleven times in 1707 and but once in 1708, whereas the *Diable boiteux* was given, as we have seen, thirty-six times in 1707-13.

The third comedy with an outer and an inner play, *LA COMÉDIE DES COMÉDIENS OU L'AMOUR CHARLATAN*,<sup>6</sup> was inspired by the success, not of a

him what is going on in his home after his wife has been made to believe he is dead, he introduces Simon to Thérèse and Sanchette, who have entered the Opera, have not as yet distinguished themselves, and enjoy Mme Simon's entertainments, Simon regrets the time he has spent under Pillardoc's direction and agrees in the future to live as the *Diable boiteux* advises. Act I. Mme Simon awaits only an official certificate of her husband's death before marrying a Chevalier she has lodged in her house, she and a Présidente, who retire at 9 A. M. and rise at 4 P. M., prepare to give a masked ball, Thérèse brings her daughter to call and sings a duet with a Major, who has left his wife at home, they go to put on their costumes. Act II. While Mme Simon and most of her guests are dressing, the *Diable boiteux* enters with Simon and retires with him into a *cabinet*, Mme Simon and her friends return, costumed and masked, Thérèse sings a song predicting a brief widowhood for her hostess and the reception of important news at 4 seconds after 8 32, the Président and the Major's wife enter unexpectedly and a quarrel is about to result when the *Diable boiteux* intervenes, introducing himself and Simon, who asks the Chevalier to return his dressing-gown and not to marry Mme Simon before she is a widow, peace is patched up by the *Diable boiteux*, in honor of which Thérèse and the Major sing songs, the last of them directly addressed to the audience.

<sup>6</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1710, 12°. Republished in editions of the author's collected plays.

novel, but of rival organizations that were playing at the Foire.<sup>7</sup> The *forains*, who employed elements of the old Théâtre Italien, had attracted such large audiences that they had been accused by the actors of the Comédie Française of violating their monopoly of dialogue and had had one of their theaters pulled down. Dancourt had been especially active in this affair and had been condemned to pay 300 francs. With his comrades he had won an appeal to the Conseil du Roi on March 17, 1710. In the meanwhile the *forains* had parodied plays and actors of the Comédie Française and had been ridiculed by Legrand in his *Foire Saint-Laurent* of 1709. Dancourt followed up this attack by satirizing the Italian dramatic methods that had inspired those of the Foire and by ridiculing Frenchmen who admired them.

While his main purpose was to attack the Foire, some of his material was suggested by the Opera or by earlier French plays. According to the *Nouveau Mercure* for January, 1711,<sup>8</sup> the Italian song introduced at the end of the first act recalled Danchet's *Fêtes vénitienes*, a ballet given at the Opera on June 17, 1710. The title of Dancourt's comedy had been employed by Gougenot and Scudéry over seventy-five years before. The use of an inner play to bring about the marriage of actors is also found in Quinault's *Comédie sans comédie*. The trick by which the dénouement is reached is similar to that used by Cyrano in *le Pédant joué*. There are also resemblances to Campistron's *Amante Amant* and to Regnard's *Folies amoureuses*.<sup>9</sup>

Dancourt is said to have planned originally only one act and to have expanded the play into three acts, the third constituting the inner comedy. In the outer play his comrades, La Thorillière and Poisson, appear under their own names, Etienne Baron and Beaubourg, as the young actors and lovers, Léandre and Eraste. Marton, who wants to become an actress, was played, according to the frères Parfaict by la Desmares. La Thorillière also appears as Mécetin, while Poisson agrees to play Scaramouche. In the inner play Beaubourg takes the rôle of the Docteur, Etienne Baron, that of Pierrot. It is proposed that La Thorillière play Arlequin, but he refuses, probably because Domenico Biancolelli, the greatest Arlequin, had been his father-in-law. Trivelin is mentioned, and an actress plays Spinette. The French farce-players of the early seventeenth century, Gros Guillaume and Guillot-

<sup>7</sup> Cf. below, Chapter XIX.

<sup>8</sup> Cited by the frères Parfaict, XV, 47-51, and by Melèse, *Rép.*, p. 220. As the gods had been treated with irreverence in the Théâtre Italien, it is unnecessary to suggest Lucian in this connection, as does the *Nouveau Mercure*.

<sup>9</sup> Feeding candy to a hidden lover (III, 9) had been employed by Campistron in his *Amante Amant*, advising an old man to give up women for drink, by Regnard in *sc. 1* of the *dérictissement* that ends *les Folies amoureuses*.

Gorju, take part in the *divertissements*, probably to indicate that Italian players were as much out of date as they.<sup>10</sup>

Grichardin, a retired apothecary, is wealthy and amiable, anxious to please his young wife. He objects to the Comédie Française because it seeks to have a monopoly of amusements and he shows that his own taste calls for the methods of the Théâtre Italien (I, 5):

Gr Ils veulent être seuls à divertir le public, & il semble qu'ils prennent à tâche de l'ennuyer

Ang Ils ont un privilege qu'ils soutiennent

Gr Oui, le privilege de ne rien faire qui vaille, parce qu'ils sont seuls, de mal jouer les anciennes pieces, & de n'en point donner de nouvelles qui ne soient mauvaises

J'étois un des meilleurs apuis du Théâtre Italien, je leur ai bien fait gagner de l'argent

Grichardin is presented as a person whom one would not care to imitate. He is described by Mezetin as follows (II. *Intermède*).

Il aime mieux Trivelin,  
Que tout Corneille & Moliere  
Honneur au Bourgeois sensé,  
De qui la raison rapelle  
Le bon goût du temps passé

<sup>10</sup> Grichardin, a wealthy bourgeois, has recently married young Lucile, who has taken into her home her friend Marton. Grichardin's daughter and his niece, Isabelle, are in love with young actors, Léandre and Eraste. Marton hopes to go on the stage and to marry the girls to their lovers. Léandre promises that he and Eraste will try to get her into the troupe if she will bring about their marriages. To accomplish this she proposes to add a dramatic performance to an entertainment. Grichardin has prepared for his wife. La Thorillière and Poisson agree to play Mezetin and Scaramouche. Since a relative has suggested that a certain business man marry Angélique, La Thorillière Mezetin disguises himself as this financier and shows so clearly that he is after money and expects to dupe Grichardin that the latter dismisses him, whereupon La Thorillière Mezetin takes off his costume and Grichardin is told that he has played a part without knowing that he was doing so. Angélique enters, disguised as the Docteur. Mezetin declares that they will give *l'Amour Charlatan*. Grichardin orders as an overture a dance in which various persons of "l'ancienne comédie Française et Italienne" will take part and taste for antiques is praised. The inner play follows. Jupiter and Momus propose to reside on earth and seek Mercury and Amour, who have been driven from Olympus. The Docteur, who loves his ward, Philine, invites them into his house in order to protect them from the girl's lovers and those of her maid, Spinette. Mercury instructs a flute player and invites village girls to dance. When Amour joins him, the two gods propose to organize a charlatan's troupe and make love to Spinette and Philine. Invited into the house, they encounter Jupiter and Momus. Mercury agrees to return to his usual occupations, but Amour is restive, is threatened with incarceration, and asks for a month's vacation to be a charlatan. Jupiter agrees, but he wishes to lodge in the Docteur's house during this period, and obtains his consent by offering him Philine. A notary is needed. Mercury declares that a comedy should not lose its dénouement for lack of a notary and asks Grichardin to sign the contract, since a signature is all that a comedy needs. Grichardin signs in order to be allowed to see Amour as a charlatan. He learns that his signature gives his consent to the marriages of Léandre and Angélique, of Eraste and Isabelle, and accepts the situation. A small stage representing Amour's palace is rolled forward. A march of actors and actresses is followed by four scenes in which appear Guillot-Gorju, Amour, Mercury, peasants,

In holding him up to ridicule, Dancourt was defending the Comédie Française. He also did so when he made Marton say (I, 8) that, if the Italians were to play, it might be "une chose assez ennuyeusement ridicule de travestir ainsi la Scène Française." The attack upon the rival actors continues in the second act when Marton tells Poisson that "les vrais Crispins ont bien valu les Scaramouches" and that "sans un Arlequin une Comédie Italienne ne vaudra pas le diable," though the rôle is easy to play, as "le masque joue de lui-même." La Thorillière adds that there has never been but one good one, meaning his father-in-law, long dead. A "scène détachée" resembles a "Comédie Italienne" (II, 5). Italian methods are parodied by Mezetin's sudden changes of costume (II, 10), by the Italian sentences he employs extensively when conversing with the Docteur (II, 11), and by the quality of the inner comedy, illogical, poorly constructed, introducing gods, songs, and horseplay.

Dancourt's comedy should be regarded primarily as a satire upon attempts to revive Italian methods. He probably thought there would be no advantage in constructing it logically or in making much of the characters. Besides Grichardin the principal persons are energetic Marton, mild Lucile, and the young lovers, to one of whom, Léandre, is attributed a picaresque career (I, 1)

il a été Ecolier en Droit, Apprentif Notaire, façon d'Abbé, Régent de Sixième, Commis de la Douanne, Avocat, Maître à danser il s'est fait depuis Comédien, ce n'est pas le plus mauvais parti qu'il pouvait prendre

International characteristics are listed by Angélique while she is playing the Docteur (II, 11)

vif comme un François, grave comme un Espagnol, rusé comme un Italien, hardi comme un Turc, fier comme un Ecossois, gourmand comme un Anglois, & yvrogne comme un Allemand

Some use is made of patois in the speeches of the peasants. A *divertissement* with singing and dancing follows each act. Indeed, the play is a medley, offering many forms of entertainment, but dominated by the satire of the *forains* and their Italian imitations. It was at first well received, as it had fourteen performances in 1710, on and after Aug 5, but it was not revived except in 1733, when it was acted only five times. The *forains* did not allow it to go unanswered. At the Foire Saint-Germain of 1712 they produced *les Plaideurs*, the third part of which was "une critique maussadement faite" of Dancourt's play. They held that they alone had a right to the rôle of Pierrot, which Etienne Baron had taken in *l'Amour Charlatan*.<sup>11</sup>

and a chevalier gascon. Then there is a dance, after which Marton, playing Amour, agrees in a song to marry Mercury.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. frères Parfaict, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des spectacles de la foire*, I, 149-50, and below, Chapter XIX.

## III—Revisions of Plays by Other Authors

Dancourt's comrades must have called upon him when they wished to produce or to revive plays that needed certain modifications in their texts. He had performed such service several times in the seventeenth century, most notably when he reduced Poisson's *Foux divertissans* to a comedy in one act, *le Bon Soldat*. In 1703-5 he made minor alterations in three spectacular plays, Thomas Corneille's *Inconnu* and *Circé* and Molière's *Amants magnifiques*. Dancourt's part in the revival of these plays will be discussed in the next section of this chapter. In 1707 he rewrote in verse Lesage's five-act adaptation of Rojas's *La Traición busca el castigo*. When Lesage published his *Traître puni* in 1739, he called attention to the fact that Dancourt had put his work into verse, but he indicated no other changes. The frères Parfaict<sup>1</sup> state that Dancourt corrected certain defects in Lesage's play and added material, but they do not point out what these corrections and additions were. They are, however, obvious enough to anyone who compares Lesage's play with *LA TRAHISON PUNIE*.<sup>2</sup>

Lesage had changed the Spanish play little, except that he wrote in prose and added a valet whom Dancourt did not retain. As an experienced dramatist and an actor who knew his audience, Dancourt wished to make the play more comic in tone and to effect a happier solution than the one that Rojas had invented. Instead of having the heroine marry in the middle of the play a man whom she does not love, he unites her to the man she loves at the end of it. He adds a minor intrigue with a third woman in order to bring out André's character and to devise one or two comic scenes. He omits the hole in the wall between two houses, probably because he considered the theme trite, introduces plans to help the lovers, makes the challenge miscarry, gives Don Juan one less change of purpose, and alters the dénouement. He brings Don Juan gradually to see that it is unwise for him to marry the heroine, makes Don André more of a poltroon, accords greater discernment to old Don Félix, increases the importance of the female attendants, gives more variety to the dialogue, and augments the comic element. The number of new scenes is almost as large as that of the old ones, though the plot and the leading characters remain, on the whole, much as they had been in Rojas and Lesage.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> XIV, 454

<sup>2</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1708, 12°. Republished in editions of Dancourt's collected plays. For Lesage's *Traître puni* cf. my op. cit., Part IV, pp 905-6

<sup>3</sup> Léonor, daughter of Don Félix, is loved by Don Garcie, who lives next door, but the young man's poverty has made him an unsuitable match for her in her father's eyes. Don André has been paying marked attention to Léonor, has convinced Don Garcie's sister, Isabelle, that he loves her, and has various other affairs of the heart. Don Félix has engaged his daughter to Don Juan, whom Don André had known in



The principal character, Don André, is handsome, wealthy, sought after by women. He loves none of them, but he amuses himself at their expense and is especially interested when there is opposition. He lies to Don Félix and betrays his friend, Don Juan. His character is blacker than in the earlier plays, for he lacks the courage to challenge Don Juan and seeks to lure Don Garcie to a rendezvous and have him murdered there by hired assassins. There is insufficient preparation for this last undertaking, which brings about the solution of the main problem in the play. Assassination would hardly be planned by one who had expressed his attitude towards life in the following lines:

Tout le cours de la vie est un amusement,  
Et rien n'amuse enfin tant que le changement  
Pour se désennuyer d'une stupide belle,  
On en trouve une alors laide & spirituelle  
Qu'une vieille fatigue avec sa gravité,  
On prend un jeune objet plein de vivacité,  
Si je suis las de voir une taille géante,

Flanders, but, when he finds that Léonor objects to the match, he visits Don André to learn his intentions. Finding him averse to matrimony, Don Félix returns to his first plan and introduces Don Juan to Léonor as her fiancé, but, as Don Garcie happens to be present, Léonor shows by her attitude towards him and the confusion of her speech that she prefers him to Don Juan. Before this meeting takes place, Don Garcie had asked Don André to cease paying attention to Léonor, and Don Juan had called on Don André to borrow his valet, Fabrice, and to tell him that he has come to Valencia to be married. The three visits whet Don André's appetite. He accompanies Don Juan to Léonor's house and, when Fabrice brings Don Juan a letter summoning him to his father's bedside, is asked by his friend to look after Léonor in his absence. Fabrice, thought to be Don Juan's servant, is allowed by Don Félix to stay at his home. Meanwhile Don Garcie has thought of fighting a duel with Don Juan, of escaping to Rome, and of having Léonor join him there, but her maid, Jacinte, favors a milder form of elopement and, in order to arrange it, proposes that Garcie visit Léonor in her apartment at night. When Jacinte discovers that Fabrice is in the house, she invites him to her room with the intention of locking him in, but, before the valet can go there, he is obliged to let Don André into the house. The latter proposes to force his way into Léonor's room, but he and Garcie meet in the dark and are about to fight when Fabrice calls for help, Léonor enters with a light, and each suitor claims he has come to rescue her from the other. To add to the excitement Don Juan, who has learned of his father's death, returns to the house, insists upon knowing which man is guilty, and, since Léonor defends Don Garcie, concludes that he is the culprit. To avoid scandal, he postpones further action and pretends to Don Félix that nothing has happened. Next day Don Juan employs threats to get a confession from Jacinte, Félix informs him that Don André loves Léonor, and the latter admits that she loves Don Garcie. A challenge, sent by Don André to Don Garcie, is delivered to Isabelle in her brother's absence. She is allowed by Léonor and Jacinte to accompany them to the house of a friend, Elvire, where they are to meet Don Garcie and plan the elopement. Fabrice, beaten by Don André for not delivering the challenge to Don Garcie himself, accedes to Jacinte's request that he help Don Garcie, so that, when he is threatened by Don Juan, he tells all he knows of the preceding evening, including Don André's visit to another home. Don Juan is now convinced of Don André's guilt, but on the advice of Don Félix treats him with contempt instead of challenging him to a duel. Don André admits to Fabrice that he has engaged thugs to murder first Don Garcie, when he comes to fight him, and then Don Juan. Presently Fabrice brings word that these thugs have killed Don André, mistaking him for one of his intended victims. Don Juan yields Léonor to Don Garcie and Don Félix gives his consent to their marriage.

Je rabaisse mon vol, & la naine me tente;  
 Et lorsqu'on est outré de l'exces d'embonpoint,  
 Qu'il s'en offre une maigre, on ne la chasse point.  
 Je n'ai jamais le goût délicat ni malade,  
 Et la brune me plaît, quand la blonde est trop fade.<sup>4</sup>

With Don André are contrasted the other lovers Don Juan, honest, considerate, and brave, willing to withdraw when he is convinced that Léonor loves another man, and Don Garcie, gentlemanly, loyal, deeply in love, but conceiving wild schemes that would defeat their object if he were not aided by persons cleverer than he is. Don Félix is not merely the honorable and authoritative old Spanish nobleman that one often finds in *comedias*, but a man of feeling and discernment, wiser than Don Juan and accepting a solution of his daughter's problem to which he had originally objected. The women of the play are Léonor, more independent than in Rojas and Lesage, but still needing assistance; Isabelle, disappointed in love, but apparently reconciled in the end to the loss of Don André, and three *suivantes*, who, with the valet Fabrice, do much to lighten the dialogue.

Despite Dancourt's efforts to make a comedy of this drama, his production remains somber in its general tone, nearer to the tragic-comedy of the seventeenth century than to most comedies of its time. Don Juan loses his father and is foiled in love, Isabelle has to renounce her lover, and André is murdered. French spectators were not accustomed to death and sorrow in a comedy, nor could they have approved of the play's structure. The events may take place within twenty-four hours, but three localities are represented on the stage, Don André's home, Don Félix's, and a place near Elvire's, while the unity of action is not preserved, as Jacinte's plans do not work out and there is insufficient preparation for Don André's death. The rule for *liaison* is, moreover, twice violated.<sup>5</sup> These departures from usage may explain why the comedy, first acted on Nov. 28, 1707, was given only seven times in that year. A writer in the *Nouveau Mercure* remarked that it could not be considered the best of its author's productions.<sup>6</sup> An attempt to revive it in 1733 was hardly more successful, as there were only eight performances of it in that year.

SANCHO PANÇA GOUVERNEUR<sup>7</sup> is little more than a new edition, with

<sup>4</sup> I, 6. The passage is obviously inspired by Lesage's play, I, 1, but it resembles Eliaute's well known speech in *le Misanthrope*, II, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Act III, between scenes 7 and 8 and between scenes 8 and 9.

<sup>6</sup> Cited by Mélése, *Rép.*, p. 218.

<sup>7</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1713, 12°. The dedication to de Mortemart in "vers libres" calls Cervantes the most skillful master that "l'art de bien écrire aura jamais peut-être" and expresses the hope that, "Quand Moliere est assis le premier au Parnasse," Dancourt may be the second. The comedy was republished in editions of the author's collected plays. It has been studied by Maurice Bardon, "*Don Quichotte*" en France, Paris, Champion, 1931, pp. 511-20.

minor alterations and a *divertissement*, of Guérin de Bouscal's *Gouvernement de Sancho Panza*,<sup>8</sup> written nearly seventy-five years before. Most of the plot, the important characters, and many of the verses are the same in both plays. Other lines of the older comedy are but slightly altered. While certain speeches are shortened and additions are made to all the acts, such changes are not important enough to give Dancourt credit for more than a subordinate part in the composition of the play.

As Guérin's comedy was the third member of a trilogy, Dancourt was obliged to add introductory material that his predecessor's play did not require. He put it into six scenes spoken by the Duke, Don Quixote, Sancho, and an attendant. We learn from them that Don Quixote is eager to rescue Dulcinea from her supposed enchantment, we hear Sancho, who has been promised a government, discuss his master's mental condition with the Duke, and we see him leave the stage in order to be dressed in accordance with his new rank. After these scenes Dancourt reproduces Guérin's first act closely except for its brief second scene. The Duke argues with the Duchess, and Sancho listens to the orator's harangue of welcome to his governorship.

The most important scenes of Guérin's second act, the first and third, are retained. They contain Don Quixote's instructions to Sancho and the first case that the new governor judges. Guérin's transitional second scene is altered and his fourth scene is omitted. Dancourt adds four scenes that introduce a letter from a magician informing Don Quixote that Dulcinea will not be released from the cavern till Sancho ceases to govern. His third act consists mainly of three cases that Sancho tries. The first, concerned with a peasant and a gipsy woman, is much as it is in Guérin's play, but the second<sup>9</sup> is in neither Guérin nor Cervantes, and the third, though not dramatized by Guérin, comes from the *Second Part of Don Quixote*, Chapter LI.<sup>10</sup>

Dancourt's fourth act is the closest to its model. There are only slight departures from it except for the addition of the first two scenes, in which Sancho is told that a governor cannot eat unless he is a knight. Act V, on the other hand, contains a good deal that is new. Guérin's scenes 1, 9,

<sup>8</sup> For a study of this play, cf. my *op. cit.*, Part II, pp. 273-8. Dancourt admitted in his preface that he had made some use of an old play. The *frères Parfaict*, XV, 128-9, indicated what this play was. Bardon confirmed their identification by a detailed comparison of the two comedies.

<sup>9</sup> Mme. Rodrigue insists on either marrying her ward, young Carlos, or taking his inheritance, but Sancho tricks her into accepting only a small part of the money and allowing Carlos to have the rest and to marry the girl he loves.

<sup>10</sup> A gallows has been set up in a certain country where men are hanged if they lie when questioned about their destination. Asked where he is going, a man replies that he is going to the gallows to be hanged. If he is hanged, he is telling the truth and does not deserve this fate, but, if he is not hanged, he is lying and does deserve to be hanged. The case is referred to Sancho, who acquits the accused.

11 are omitted and, though scenes 2-8, 10, 12 are reproduced with fair fidelity, the five new scenes that follow give the play an ending that is different from Guérin's both in content and in spirit. In them Sancho is at last allowed to eat, Dulcinea, who has been rescued, is presented to Don Quixote and agrees to marry him, and a *divertissement* is sung by Dulcinea, Sancho, Archelaus, and two other characters. A large part of the last four scenes is in "vers libres"

Dancourt borrowed directly from Cervantes, not only the legal case to which I have referred, but the theme of Dulcinea's enchantment, a reference to the cave of Montesinos, the introduction of Archelaus, and Mme Rodrigue's name. That he used *Don Quixote* to correct Guérin is shown by the fact that Cervantes's Recio de Agüero appears in Guérin merely as Rajo, but in Dancourt as Rezio d'Aguerre. He states in his preface that, after the play had ceased to be acted, he added "plusieurs Scenes, qui lient l'action plus qu'elle ne l'étoit d'abord & qui interessent davantage un des deux Heros, qui est D Guichot." These may be the whole or parts of I, 1, 2, II, 4-7, V, 15-17, which give Don Quixote a larger part in the play and make his happiness depend upon the main theme of Sancho and his government.

Dancourt claims that his comedy contains many "traits d'esprit & de fine satire" that are in neither the novel nor the plays previously derived from it. This is an exaggeration, but it finds some justification, as Bardon shows, in Sancho's criticism of the "Grands" and in the Duke's observations about amusements. There are a few other jests that are somewhat obvious. Samples of his additions are given in the following verses .

- S Mettons, tant bien que mal, beaucoup d'argent à part  
C'est la des Gouverneurs la meilleure maxime,  
Chez les Grands c'est vertu, chez les petits c'est crime (I, 5)
- D Lope Les Principaux de l'Isle  
Vous apportent les clefs des portes de la Ville
- S Des clefs! Ces Principaux savent mal leur métier,  
Je suis leur Gouverneur, & non pas leur Portier (I, 10)
- S La Grece! cette femme étoit de fort bon sens (III, 2)

Dancourt's omissions tend to improve the dialogue, but one misses Guérin's references to the theater, his couplet that parodies lines of *le Cid*, and his tirade in defense of stealing, with its savor of Rabelais. One would have expected these to be retained rather than the *stances* of V, 2, a form that had long ceased to be popular. Dancourt made the Duke more reflective, Sancho more independent, and Don Quixote more important than Guérin had done. His dialogue is more rapid and his *divertissement* introduces singing and dancing. On the whole, however, his play shows no marked improvement over Guérin's. Nor was he able to revivify the old play enough

to please his audience. First acted on Nov. 15, 1712, the comedy was withdrawn by its author after five performances. The public was less interested in Dancourt's *Sancho* than it had been two years before in another play derived from *Don Quixote*, Destouches's *Curieux Impertinent*.<sup>11</sup>

#### IV—Spectacular Plays

In this section will be discussed the material that Dancourt contributed to the revival of spectacular plays by Thomas Corneille and Molière, and the comedies he composed in 1705-14 that make of spectacle an important element, to the neglect of characters and manners. His most usual medium is "vers libres." Dancing and singing are admitted. Several of these plays, written for special occasions, could not have been expected to remain long in the repertory.

On June 1, 1703, the troupe revived *Psyché*, with its "machines," its dances, and its "vers libres." So great was its success that the actors produced another "machine" play, Thomas Corneille's *Inconnu*, first acted in its new form on Aug. 21 of the same year. Dancourt had the task of bringing it up to date. To do this he wrote a new prologue and altered the five acts in such a way as to create for each a *divertissement*. His prologue is a conversation in three scenes between the Muse of Comedy and members of the troupe: Paul Poisson, Ponteuil, Sallé, la Desmares, and Mimi Dancourt. La Thorillière and other actors also appear. Thalia praises the acting of Raymond Poisson and declares that she has heard that his son's acting is admired. We learn that the first performance of a play draws a crowd, but that subsequently spectators lose interest. The parterre is considered the supreme judge. The troupe is praised, though the actors do not equal certain "originaux" of the past. Their recent production of *Psyché* was successful, but the public was almost indignant over the fact that the price of admission was "au double." Thalia advises that *l'Inconnu* be given "au simple."

The five *divertissements* are made out of scenes in the *Inconnu*.<sup>1</sup> In the first four almost the only changes are found in the substitution of new songs for old ones, and in the mention of new actors, Sallé, Ponteuil, and la Desmares, who take part in the dances. The inner play of *l'Inconnu*

<sup>11</sup> Bardon asserts that Dancourt's comrades hesitated to give him his "part d'auteur" in the performances, as they considered the work primarily another's, and that only the intervention of Mortemart saved him from this humiliation. He must have derived the tale from Lérus or Clément et La Porte, who are dubious authorities. As Dancourt does not allude to the incident in his dedication to Mortemart, one may well doubt its accuracy. Since Dancourt had not received a "part d'auteur" for reducing les *Four divertissans* to his one act *Bon Soldat*, he may not have expected special remuneration for his new play. There is no question of humiliation.

<sup>1</sup> I, 7, II, 8, III, 6, IV, 6, and V, 3, 4.

which treats the subject of *Psyche* is discarded, as the troupe had so recently presented it in a more elaborate form, and a peasant marriage troupe with its songs and dances is put in its place. Dancourt's alterations gave the play an air of novelty and eliminated the expense of "machines." That his experiment was successful is shown by the number of performances the play enjoyed in the form he gave it: 23 in 1703, 56 in 1704-15.<sup>2</sup>

The following summer the troupe revived Molière's *Amants magnifiques*. Dancourt wrote for it a new prologue and *intermèdes* that differ entirely from those in the original. Allegorical figures converse in the prologue and at one point Fortune and Love are perched upon clouds. The fourth *intermède* employs French prose and an Italian song. Elsewhere the additions are written in "vers libres." Dancourt's verses are of little interest to the modern reader. They brought the play no such success as he had won for *l'Inconnu*. Revived on June 21, 1704, *les Amants magnifiques* was played only eleven times in that year and was never acted again at the Comédie Française.<sup>3</sup>

Thinking, perhaps, that Molière's play was not sufficiently spectacular, the actors revived, Aug. 6, 1705, Thomas Corneille's *Circé*, which employs mechanical devices as freely as does *Psyché*. Dancourt gave the play new introductory material. He dedicated it to Louis XIV and praised him in "vers libres" for defeating the Dutch, for sparing them, and for destroying the Huguenots. The prologue that follows resembles Thomas Corneille's in that it contains three scenes in "vers libres" and songs at the end of the last. These songs now constitute a *divertissement*. As Louis was sixty-seven, L'Amour is eliminated. The king is still praised, however, by Mars, Fortune, Glory, and Fame, despite the fact that the play was acted just about a year after Marlborough had crushed one of Louis's armies at Blenheim. The text and setting of the five acts are retained, except that songs are added or substituted for old ones.<sup>4</sup> Dancourt's alterations<sup>5</sup> changed the character of the play very little. It was given only eight times and was never revived. There must have been considerable financial loss, as the "machines" could be paid for only after many productions of a play.

Before the extent of the failure could have been known, the troupe was summoned to Livry-le-Château. As the Dauphin had gone hunting there,

<sup>2</sup> The new text was published in editions of Dancourt's collected plays and, except for references to actors by their names, it was added as an appendix to the old text of *l'Inconnu* in an edition of Thomas Corneille's plays, Amsterdam, 1740.

<sup>3</sup> Goizet lists an edition of the play with Dancourt's additions, Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1704, 12°. These additions are also published in editions of Dancourt's collected plays.

<sup>4</sup> New songs take the place of those in I, 6, II, 7, III, 8, IV, 4. Songs sung by Nereids and Tritons are added to V, 9. Sallé and his wife sang some of the new songs.

<sup>5</sup> They are published in editions of Dancourt's collected plays and in the edition of Thomas Corneille's published at Amsterdam in 1740.

M. de Livry had prepared a theater for his entertainment.<sup>6</sup> It took the form of a *comédie-ballet*, composed by Dancourt and with music by Gilliers. No "machines" were employed. Acted on Aug. 12, 1705, the production was called *L'IMPROMPTU DE LIVRY*.<sup>7</sup> The actors who took part in it are named in the published version.<sup>8</sup> The spot selected for the performance is described as follows.

Le Théâtre dressé dans le grand Vestibule de la Colonnade qui est au dessous du Salon, representoit un des plus beaux endroits du jardin, fermé par des palissades assez hautes pour cacher les Acteurs, ouvert par plusieurs endroits par des Portiques, du centre desquels pendent des festons de fleurs au dessus de plusieurs Orangers, entre lesquels sont des Gueridons & des Torchères, avec des Girandoles garnies de quantité de lumieres

La Sallé, as Flora, begins the entertainment by inviting fauns and shepherds to the festival. Sallé, dressed as a shepherd, responds. The guests march and dance. A stumbling harangue of welcome is given by the captain of the château. Songs and dancing follow, then a comedy is acted, a résumé of which is published. Though the text does not identify this comedy, the summary shows that it is certainly Dancourt's *Vendanges* with the scene changed from Mantes to Livry.<sup>9</sup> Even the names of Lucas and Margot are retained. The play ends in a march to celebrate the approaching marriage of young lovers. It is accompanied by songs, two ballet entries, and a "danse en rond." This playlet was well adapted to brighten an evening at Livry, but not to performance at Paris, nor is there any record of its having been acted there.

A month later, on Sept. 13, a similar performance was given at Sceaux in honor of the duchesse du Maine. It was entitled *LE DIVERTISSEMENT DE SCEAUX*.<sup>10</sup> Dancourt was again the author and Gilliers the composer, but only eight<sup>11</sup> of the fourteen actors who had played at Livry took part. The stage was placed in "un des beaux endroits des Jardins de Sceaux." La Sallé leads in actors and actresses, sings to them, and is welcomed by Sallé, dressed as a druid. He praises the duchesse du Maine. Poisson, as Crispin, makes a stumbling address in prose, comparable to the one introduced into *L'Impromptu de Livry*. Singing and dancing follow. Then "on represente une Comedie," but there is no way of telling what the comedy was. More

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Dangeau, *Journal*, X, 390-1

<sup>7</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1705, 4°. Republished in editions of Dancourt's collected plays

<sup>8</sup> Sallé, Fonpré, their wives, Paul and Philippe Poisson, Guérin, Lavoy, Ponteuil, Du Boccage, la Dancourt, her daughter Mimi, la Desbrosses, la Godefroy

<sup>9</sup> For this play cf. my *op cit*, Part IV, pp. 786-7

<sup>10</sup> Published in editions of Dancourt's collected plays

<sup>11</sup> Sallé and his wife, Paul and Philippe Poisson, Du Boccage, Fonpré, la Godefroy, and Mimi Dancourt

singing and dancing, ending with a "branle pour danser en rond, après lequel le Bal commence." In composing this production Dancourt obviously used as a model *l'Impromptu de Livry*. There is no evidence that it was played at Paris.

For six years after writing these plays Dancourt wrote comedies that resemble them only in their *divertissements*. Then he put on the stage of the Comédie Française a three-act comedy that is like them in the use of a prologue and "vers libres," in the choice of a beautiful garden as a setting for the action, and in the subordination of characters and manners to fanciful elements. He made use of an ancient legend and may have owed something to Molière's *Amphitryon*, a play that he mentions in his prologue.

CÉPHALE ET PROCRIS<sup>12</sup> dramatizes only a portion of the myth that had once tempted Alexandre Hardy and had in 1694 given rise to an opera by Duché. Dancourt probably found his source in Hyginus, *Fable CLXXXIX*, though he may also have used Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Book VII. He kept Athens as his hero's home, but he selected another place for representation on the stage. He introduced Mercury and attendants. The subordinate plot that he added may have been suggested by *Amphitryon*, for the attendant's love affair echoes the master's in somewhat similar fashion, though it is far less comic than are the relations between Mercury and Cléanthis. The psychological possibilities of the tale are as much neglected as are the realistic, probably because Dancourt was stressing especially the beauty of the setting, his use of "vers libres," and his three *divertissements*, one of which concludes each act.<sup>13</sup>

The stage shows the façade of a magnificent palace, to which lead long walks through gardens and rows of trees. The prologue defends the morals of the play by referring to the gods' behavior and by citing the example of

<sup>12</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1711, 12° Music by Gilhers. Republished in editions of Dancourt's collected plays. For a study of the play, cf. Jules Lemaitre, *op. cit.*, pp. 210-4.

<sup>13</sup> In the prologue, spoken by Momus and Thalia, comedy is put on a level with tragedy, unjust critics are attacked, and the play is introduced as a novelty. In the three acts that follow the scene is laid on Mount Hymettus. Cephalus and his confidant, Philacte, have been lured there by Aurora while they were hunting. Her nymph, Callitee, seeks to win Cephalus for the goddess, but he longs for Procris, his wife. Aurora then asks for his love, but she gets only a promise of worship. Mercury brings word that Jupiter, influenced by prudish goddesses, orders Aurora to send Cephalus back to Procris, but Aurora persuades Mercury to help her. Procris and her attendant, Dione, Philacte's wife, are brought to Hymettus. Aurora suggests to Cephalus that Procris may be unfaithful, changes his appearance, and allows him to offer Procris hospitality. She also changes the appearance of Philacte. Procris is impressed by her host and is urged to encourage him by Dione and by Mercury, who takes the form of Procris's *nourrice*. He has already quieted the goddesses on Olympus. He tells Procris that her husband is unfaithful. Procris rejects the riches and rank offered by her host, but finally admits that she prefers him to her "volage époux," whereupon Cephalus makes himself known and orders her away. She retires with Dione, who has recognized her own "traître de mari." Cephalus will be Aurora's lover. In the *divertissements* fauns and nymphs march, dance, and sing about love.



Plautus and Molière in their *Amphitryons*. Protest is made against inconsiderate critics who call themselves the "beaux esprits du temps." The three leading French dramatists are mentioned with respect:

Les Racines & les Corneilles,  
 Momus, auront des successeurs,  
 Et tels des modernes auteurs  
 Qui, par mes conseils, pour matiere  
 Ont pris la critique des mœurs,  
 Suivront, quoique de loin, les traces de Moliere  
 Quand on ne peut attendre au suprême degré  
 Il ne faut point rougir qu'un autre nous surmonte,  
 A ce mortel illustre on peut ceder sans honte,  
 Et dans le second rang voir son nom consacré

There are said to be some contemporaries in comedy who yield first place only to Molière. Momus finds none of the actors without talent, but he criticizes them for not sticking to what they are able to do, for failing to appear at performances, and for indulging in suppers that last until morning. Thalia defends them on the ground that they have too many rôles to play. Dancourt was at the same time excusing his comrades to the public and urging them to be more conscientious about their work.

In the dialogue the beauty of the setting receives emphasis. The material of the play is divided in accordance with the hero's attitudes towards the goddess and his wife. In Act I he is faithful to Procris; in Act II he hesitates, in Act III he labors to test his wife and is delighted at finding an excuse to desert her for Aurora. The unfairness of his method is not brought out, nor is Procris allowed to argue that it was really Cephalus she loved under his disguise. Her yielding comes suddenly, as if the author desired to end the play rather than to develop the situation. Her rôle might easily have been made pathetic, but pathos is avoided and we are told nothing about the fate assigned to her in the ancient accounts.

With her fidelity is contrasted her *souvante's* desire to be rid of her husband, but it is not made clear that he will become the lover of the nymph, who must look with contempt upon his cowardice. We are given little opportunity to judge the seductive powers of Aurora, who offers herself boldly to Cephalus, thereby winning the disapproval of the frères Parfact.<sup>14</sup> Mercury has a rôle of considerable importance, but his motive for pandering to Aurora's desires is not made clear.

The play is curiously immoral for the period, a fact that made necessary the apology introduced into the prologue. The subject is not well adapted either to comedy or to Dancourt's talents. He failed to develop the comic

<sup>14</sup> XV, 106.

elements that he introduced, nor did he compensate for this failure by writing charming verse or by a detailed study of motive. The resulting failure is not surprising. Acted first on Oct. 27, 1711, it was produced only six times. According to the frères Parfaict, its "chûte totale" was prevented only by the illness of an actor or actress.<sup>15</sup>

Dancourt's next play resembles those he had written for performance at Livry and Sceaux, but it is complete in itself, not merely a frame for a comedy. The occasion for it was the partial termination of the War of the Spanish Succession, which ended, so far as other enemies of France than the Empire were concerned, on May 10, 1713. To celebrate this event and to honor his country's ally, the Duke of Bavaria, Dancourt composed *L'IMPROMPTU DE SURÊNE*,<sup>16</sup> a *comédie-ballet* played at that village on May 21 and at the Comédie Française three days later. The prologue in "vers libres" declares that, since Victory has brought Peace, grapes and grains will come to maturity in fields that will escape the wrath of Mars. Peasants dance three *entrées* to celebrate the event. A one-act prose comedy follows in which La Folie, L'Amour, and Bacchus overcome the resistance of two miserly wine-merchants, distribute freely food and drink, and bring about five marriages.<sup>17</sup> The play ends with a *diversissement*, composed of stanzas, the last of which had to be written when the performance was transferred from Suresnes to Paris.

There is almost no intrigue. We are told little about the characters. The setting is "une Terrasse ombragée d'Ormes, de Tilleuls & de Maronniers, aux bords de la Seine" It must be to the performance at Suresnes that Dangeau refers on May 21, 1713 "on fit commencer la comédie qu'on avoit fait exprès pour cette fête, et on avoit fait un assez joli théâtre au bout du jardin, sur une terrasse au bord de la rivière"<sup>18</sup> Singing and dancing found an appropriate background in these outdoor surroundings. Dancourt relied for the success of his play on the setting, the dancing, the songs, his

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid* The actor was probably Etienne Baron, who died in the month after the last performance

<sup>16</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1713, 12°, a quarto edition from the same press gives only the prologue and *diversissements* Music by Gilibers, the ballet by Dumirail The *Impromptu* was republished in editions of Dancourt's collected plays

<sup>17</sup> M Foret and his associate in the wine business refuse to allow Lucile, Foret's daughter, and Nérine, his associate's niece, to marry the young men of their choice, Eraste and Clitandre La Folie comes to aid the young people and persuades Bacchus and L'Amour to help them Knowing that Foret has stored away wine in order to increase its value, Bacchus proposes to rid him of this stock and opens a tavern in which he takes the place of head waiter Foret is distressed to find that the guests leave without paying, but Bacchus silences him with threats and the promise of a "lettre de change sur la Fortune" The marriages of the two young couples are arranged, as well as those of drunken Kerpinot and silly Mme Pinterelle, of a widow and a young Gascon, and of Bacchus himself and La Folie

<sup>18</sup> *Journal*, XIV, 407 He writes from Marly, which is near enough to Suresnes to account for the fact that he does not mention the latter place

brisk dialogue, and a few allusions to manners. Among these last I note a reference to those who pass off Suresnes wine as champagne, a maid's patois, a Gascon's oaths, mention of a widow's amusements and those of Bacchus's worshippers, and the satire upon wine merchants who insist upon scarcity value in their economics

Bacchus regrets (sc. 6) that

on ne voit plus de Bourgeois yvres dans les rues, ni de petits Maîtres entre deux vins rendre hommage au beau Sexe dans les bosquets des Tuileries On ne bat plus le Guet à Paris, on ne casse plus de lanternes

A widow complains (sc. 14) that, since her husband's death,

Il a fallu renoncer aux spectacles, plus d'Opera ni de Comedie, pas de promenade même, je n'ai de ressource qu'au bal, parce qu'on s'y déguise, & quelquefois à la Guinguete, cela est sans consequence

M. Foret, who prays that the vines may freeze, explains his method of keeping up prices (sc. 6)

Depuis trois ou quatre ans d'intelligence avec les Vignerons & les Courtiers, nous y mettions un prix fort haut, dont on nous donnoit des contre-lettres . Ce prix servoit de regle au Bourgeois déliat & au riche Gourmet, chacun se pressoit d'en avoir, les autres se ruinoient, l'artisan souffroit, le malheureux languissoit, le Brasseur gagnait, & nous ne perdions pas nous autres

Hurriedly written for a special occasion, the play could not have been expected to enjoy more than temporary success. The text of the *divertissement* mentions the crowd that attended the performance at Suresnes. At Paris the play was given twenty-six times, but not later than the end of July. According to the frères Parfaict,<sup>19</sup> it had lost by that time three-fourths of its value.

Some fourteen months later, on Sept 5, 1714, appeared LES FÊTES NOCTURNES DU COURS<sup>20</sup> It resembles the *Impromptu de Surêne* in that it neglects plot and characters, refers to the ending of the war, has a scene representing charming outdoor surroundings near Paris, a prologue in "vers libres," and a final *divertissement* with singing and dancing A brief dedication in "vers libres" praises the Saxon prince and asks for his protection Then a prologue in similar form declares that, as the greatest of monarchs has chained up war, Venus and Bacchus are calling. The speakers are allegorical figures, Choreda and Cynoedor, who is described as the "Génie du Bal" and takes part in the one-act play that follows.<sup>21</sup> The scene is

<sup>19</sup> XV, 152

<sup>20</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1714, 12° Dedicated to the "Prince Electoral de Saxe" Music by Gilliers Republished in editions of Dancourt's collected plays

<sup>21</sup> Clitandre loves Célide, who loves him, but who has been told by Cidalise and her friends that he is unfaithful When he learns that she has exchanged masks with Cidalise, he pretends to believe that she is her rival and assures her that he

laid "au Cours dans les Champs Elysées." Many of the characters wear masks, and masked figures dance and sing in the final *divertissement*.

According to the frères Parfaict,<sup>22</sup> the Cours was so popular in the summer of 1714 that dances lasting all night were introduced. These with the crowd of carriages, lighted by torches, made a picturesque scene that attracted Dancourt's fancy. The wearing of masks encouraged adultery and gave an opportunity for intrigues of various kinds, some of which might have excellent results. We learn that cooks and provisions were sent ahead to Chaillot by those seeking entertainment and that *réveillons* were popular. The plot is feeble and incomplete. There are few genuinely comic situations. The characters make little impression. The play illustrates the thought expressed in sc. 19, that "le siècle courant est un bal continu, les passions s'y déguisent, & tout le monde s'y masque." A writer in the *Mercure galant* commented that "on ne laisse pas d'y rire, mais le parterre . . . avoue qu'il n'y comprend rien." He holds that one was justified in enjoying the masks, the dances, and some of the songs. Evidence that he was right is shown by the fact that the play was given thirty-two times. By Jan. 11, 1715, the novelty had worn off, so that the play was not revived.

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In his plays of 1701-14 Dancourt showed that he had retained his dexterity as a versifier, his ability to write clever dialogue, and his command of many devices for entertaining the public. His plays are in prose, in verse, or in the two combined in varying proportions. They may have any number of acts up to five, if we consider a prologue as an act. The scene of the two plays by other authors that he rewrote is laid in Spain. Elsewhere the place he selected is Paris or its environs. He respected the unity of time except that in the *Second Chapitre* more than twenty-four hours elapse between the beginning of the prologue and the end of the play. In the same way, this comedy and the *Diable boiteux* violate the unity of place. In the other plays, except that three localities in a city are represented in *la Trahison punie*, the unity of place is preserved. On the other hand, the unity of action is not infrequently violated, the rule of *liaison* occasionally. The proprieties are usually respected and moral lessons may be drawn from some of the plays, but Dancourt never sacrifices his art to his desire to preach and, in *Céphale et Procris*, he is distinctly immoral.

loves only Célide. He is helped by Cynoeodor, who inspires Cidalise's *souvante*, Marton. The same allegorical figure prevails upon Cidalise to accept M. de Butorville, a banker from Amiens. It is not clear whether he arranges other marriages among the four leading characters who remain: old Araminte, her daughter, Lucile, Clitandre's guardian, Oronte, and elderly Desminuttes, apparently a notary or a lawyer.

<sup>22</sup> XV, 173-5

He received suggestions from ancient mythology, Molière, Lesage, Guérin de Boussac, Cervantes, some of his own earlier work, and to a lesser extent from Chappuzeau, Quinault, de Visé, and other seventeenth-century authors. Except in *la Trahison pume*, *Sancho*, and *Madame Artus*, the imitation is less important than his knowledge of French life and of the theater. He introduces comments on the audience and occasionally puts his comrades on the stage under their own names. He describes aristocrats, bourgeois, upstarts, members of the underworld, peasants, and servants. There are echoes of the war, a study of high finance, references to the purchase of nobility, to Parisian shops, to menus, to various forms of business and amusement. The characters are not usually presented in much detail, but he gives us a very definite impression of Mme Artus, her notary, the *agroteurs*, Don André, and Simon. Dancourt's satire spares none of the classes he describes.

He maintained his reputation for discovering subjects that would interest the public, if only for a season. When one failed, he was soon ready with another to take its place. As the leader of the troupe, he was obliged to spend a good deal of his time adapting older plays or writing unpretentious pieces for festive occasions. He is at his best in *les Agroteurs*, the most complete money-play written in or before the reign of Louis XIV, and in his "dancourades," especially the *Galant Jardinier*. Only this play and *Cohn-Maillard* remained in the repertory through most of the century, but all were preserved for the reading public and many of them contained highly entertaining scenes, though none of them has the importance of *Turcaret* or of his own *Chevalier à la mode*.

## CHAPTER XI

### BOURSAULT, BARON, BRUEYS, AND CAMPISTRON

Besides Dancourt, four authors who had written for the Comédie Française before 1690 continued writing for it after 1700.<sup>1</sup> The oldest of them was Boursault, who had had his first comedy acted shortly after Molière returned to Paris, had tried various kinds of literature, and had won great success with his *Comédie sans titre* or *Mercure galant* and his *Esope* or *Fables d'Esope*. This last play introduced extensive moralizing into seventeenth-century comedy and was so well received that its author returned to the subject and again put *Æsop* on the stage in *ESOPÉ À LA COUR*,<sup>2</sup> practically completed in five acts and in verse before Boursault's death on Sept. 15, 1701, though he was unable to prepare it for publication.

The form of the play, which presents its rambling plot mainly in alexandrine couplets, but with intercalated fables in "vers libres," is that of the author's earlier *Esope*. Possibly acting on a suggestion from Lenoble's *Esope*, which his own had inspired, he introduced from Herodotus, as he had not done previously, Rodope, a Thracian freedwoman. From La Fontaine he derived his dénouement and at least four of his sixteen fables, while a fifth fable has the same moral as one by La Fontaine, and a sixth puts in the form of an apologue one of La Rochefoucauld's maxims.<sup>3</sup>

*Æsop* is represented as in the earlier play. He is deformed and ugly, an ex-slave, but so great is his wisdom that Croesus makes him a minister of state. He has no ambition except to lead an excellent life. He understands the vices of a court, preaches tolerance, gratitude, unselfishness, love in marriage, filial affection, belief in a Creator, and the forgiveness of one's

<sup>1</sup> For these four men cf. my *op cit*, Parts III and IV.

<sup>2</sup> Paris, Beugnie and veuve Gasse, 1702, 8°. Dedicated by Boursault's widow, in accordance with his wishes, to Mme de Villeguier. Published by Le Breton, 1706, 1724, 1725, by Pierre Ribou, 1708, by the latter's widow, 1724, 1725, at Amsterdam, 1726, at Paris, 1742, 1746, 1788, and in *Choix de pieces*, Duchene, 1783. For nineteenth century editions, including that in one act brought out by Truffier, cf. the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale. It was translated into Italian in 1747. For a study of the play cf. Alfred Hoffmann, *Edme Boursault*, Metz, 1902, pp. 130-42.

<sup>3</sup> The fables are *Le lion, l'ours, le tigre, et la pantherre*, *Le héron et les poissons* (from La Fontaine, VII, 4, *Le héron*), *La marchandise de mauvais débit* (Apollo offers *esprit* for sale, Mercury, *mémoire*, Apollo sells nothing, Mercury, much; cf. La Rochefoucauld, *Maxime* 89), *Le jardinier et l'âne*, *Le coq et la poulette*, *Le figuier foudroyé* (the same moral as La Fontaine, III, 14, but with a fig tree and birds substituted for a lion and other beasts), *La guenon et son maître*, one without a title in which rain on a river illustrates the careless distribution of favors by the great, *Le lion et le rat* (La Fontaine, II, 11), *Le faucon malade*, *Le fleuve et la source*, *La colombe et la fourmi* (La Fontaine, II, 12), *Le lion décepi* (La Fontaine, VIII, 3, *Le lion, le loup et le renard*), *L'enfer*, *La trompette et l'écho*, *L'homme et la puce*. The *freres Parfaict*, XIV, 238-49, show that the main portion of the last act comes from La Fontaine, X, 9, *Le berger et le roi*.

enemies. The other characters, introduced chiefly to give *Æsop* an opportunity to sermonize and recite a fable, include an amiable king, a kindly princess, sinful and penitent Rodope, her neglected mother, four typical courtiers, two of whom conspire against *Æsop*, a retired warrior who is an agnostic, a young colonel, and an aged financier.<sup>4</sup>

The manners described are those of the seventeenth century, especially those of Versailles, except that slavery exists and polytheism is practised, as in *Æsop's* day. The sovereign is an absolute monarch, advised by courtiers. His marriage for love rather than for reasons of state could be tolerated in view of Louis's union with Mme de Maintenon. The king investigates charges of embezzlement brought against a minister, as Louis XIV had done in the case of Fouquet. A man can grow rich by collecting taxes, as many men did in Boursault's time. The state religion is supported by the monarch, but courtiers think more of his approbation than they do of the gods.

Pour peu que l'on y prie on est toujours en garde,  
On observe avec soin si le Prince y regarde,  
Et lorsque par hazard on rencontre ses yeux,  
C'est lui que l'on invoque encor plus que les Dieux \*

It is in the same scene that *Æsop*, at the king's request, tries to convert General Iphicrate, a man of excellent morals who is unable to believe in the gods. His ideal is to

Ne se reprocher rien & vivre en honnête homme,  
Appuyer l'innocent contre l'iniquité,  
Briller moins par l'esprit que par la probité,  
Du mérite opprimé réparer l'injustice,  
Ne souhaiter du bien que pour rendre service,  
Etre accessible à tous par son humanité

He believes both men and the world eternal, but he does not wish to be

\* When *Æsop* returns from a trip, he is asked by Cræsus to correct the morals of his court and is made a minister in place of Iphis, who has offended the king by telling him that he drinks too much. *Æsop* persuades Cræsus to pardon Iphis and restore him to favor. He advises him to marry for love rather than for reasons of state and persuades Princess Arsinoë to postpone no longer the choice of a husband, but to accept Cræsus in marriage. He offers to wed her confidant, Lais, apparently in order to test her, and approves of the girl's refusal. He criticizes Rodope's conduct, but he pardons her when she shows remorse over her ingratitude to her slave mother. He urges Plexipe to avoid gossip, Cléon to seek less for himself, Iphicrate to admit the existence of a Creator, Griffet, who is eighty two, to give up his pursuit of money. His influence at court excites the jealousy of Traasibule and Tirrene, who accuse him to the king of hiding in his chest money that belongs to the state, but, when the chest is opened, the king finds in it only the clothes *Æsop* had worn as a slave. The sage prevails upon Cræsus to pardon these courtiers. At the end of the comedy the marriage of Cræsus and Arsinoë is to take place next day, that of Rodope and *Æsop* subsequently.

<sup>4</sup> Ill. 3, of the familiar passage about Louis XIV and his courtiers in La Bruyère, *Caractères*, "De la Cour" (I, 328 in the Grands Ecrivains edition)

called an atheist and will be only too glad to be convinced that the gods exist. *Æsop* uses the familiar arguments drawn from the need of a first cause, the order of systems and planets, and the thought of death. He will visit Iphicrate again. The scene must be an echo of life in 1701, when skepticism was abroad and was attacked by the orthodox. It is certainly to Boursault's credit that he gave so pleasing an account of an unbeliever and that he sought to enlarge the sphere of comedy by introducing a discussion of this kind, previously suggested on the modern French stage chiefly by Cyrano de Bergerac in *Agrippine* and by Molière in *Don Juan*.<sup>6</sup> Neither of these last plays was in the repertory of the Comédie Française in 1701. Boursault's scene met a similar fate, according to the *avis au lecteur* published with the play. It declares that "on ne la joue pas sur le Theatre, n'y étant pas tout-à-fait convenable."

Boursault's purpose in writing the play was obviously a moral one. If this is not clear enough in the five acts, it is made so by a letter to the Archbishop of Paris and by the author's verses:

Celui qui succédera sera *Esop* à la cour, persuadé qu'il y a des abus comme ailleurs, et qu'ils y sont d'autant plus considérables, que ceux qui les commettent sont dans une plus grande elevation<sup>7</sup>

Les Grecs & les Romains ont épuisé les veilles  
Des Racines & des Corneilles,  
Molière a critiqué les habits & les mœurs,  
Et je souhaiterois, avec l'aide d'*Esop*,  
Pouvoir déraciner des cœurs  
Les vices qu'on y développe<sup>8</sup>

As he limited himself to persons who might appear at court, his characters are less varied than in the earlier *Esop*, in which peasants, children, actors, a genealogist, and persons representing other professions appear. The dialogue is less amusing in the new play and the fables are less effective. The latter present the same variety in verse, but they lack the pungency and raciness of those in the older play. *Æsop* is as constantly on the stage<sup>9</sup> and as monotonously produces a fable for every situation. The success of the play shows that the rôle was well interpreted and that moralizing was beginning to replace in popular esteem the wit and the art that had distinguished the comedy of the seventeenth century.

<sup>6</sup> For other examples of the references listed in my *op cit*, Part V, p 170

<sup>7</sup> *Lettres nouvelles* (Lyons, 1715), II, 72, cited by Hoffmann, *op cit*, p 131. A writer in the *Histoire des Ouvrages de Savans*, cited by Mélése, *Th et Pub*, p 311, observed that "il y a une belle morale et des portraits assez fins, et quelquefois assez malicieux."

<sup>8</sup> Prologue of the play

<sup>9</sup> The rôle, which seems to have been taken by Dancourt (cf above, Chapter I, note 41), must have been hard to play as *Æsop* is in all the scenes of Act II and in all but one of the scenes in each of the other four acts



It was with the increase of this tendency in the eighteenth century that the play grew in popularity. Acted originally on Dec. 16, 1701, it had had by the end of the following year twelve performances, not many for a new play. It was not acted again until 1708, but in that year and those that followed through 1715 it had forty-two performances. It remained in the repertory until 1817 and was played in all 227 times. The fact that it surpassed the other *Esop* in popularity, *Esop à la ville* as it came to be called, may be due to the preference of the public during much of the period for affairs of the court over those of the city.<sup>10</sup>

La Harpe noted that the play had increased in popularity, but he offered no explanation of the fact. Though he objected to *Æsop's* being "amoureux et aimé," he found the character in other respects sensible and noble. He admired the emotional scene of Rodope's repentance, the comic scene of the financier, *Æsop's* reply to the officer who insisted that he was a colonel, not a soldier—"Monsieur le colonel, qui n'êtes point soldat,"—and the dénouement. He made no reference to the omission of the theological scene, but he cited an anecdote to the effect that lines spoken by Cræsus and *Æsop* were omitted or altered for fear they might offend Louis XIV.<sup>11</sup>

The great tragic actor, Michel Baron, had retired from the troupe of the Comédie Française in October, 1691. As he had not taken the trouble to publish his three comedies that had been acted in 1689, he seemed to have renounced permanently dramatic composition as well as acting. In 1702, however, he took part in court performances of *Athalie*, Duché's *Absalon*, and Longepierre's *Electre*. It may be his participation in them that awoke his Muse, for by the autumn of the following year he had written an adaptation of Terence's *Andria* that he entitled *L'ANDRIENNE*.<sup>12</sup>

In an *Au lecteur* the author expressed his surprise that Terence had not

<sup>10</sup> In 1701-7 the older play had seventeen performances, but in 1708-15 only eleven. It was given subsequently only sixty-four times and was dropped from the repertory in 1777. When *Esop à la cour* was acted at Choisy before Louis XV, the monarch thought that the temperance lesson given by Iphis to Cræsus was intended for himself and ordered that the comedy should not reappear at court, cf. Desnoiresterres, *la Comédie satirique au dix-huitième siècle*, Paris, 1885, pp. 102-3.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. La Harpe, *op. cit.*, VIII, 300-2. The most important part of the anecdote he cites, without naming its source, is found in Clement et La Porte, *Anecdotes dramatiques*, Paris, 1775, I, 316. According to this work the line in I, 3, that now reads "Et que le trône enfin l'emporte sur le roi" was originally "Et que le roi qui règne est toujours le plus grand," in which form it might easily have caused trouble for the actors.

<sup>12</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1704, 12°, *privé*, Jan. 30, registered, Feb. 13. I have given my reasons (*op. cit.*, Part IV, pp. 831-2) for believing that *Solemnec*, no. 1504, and the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale were led into error by a faulty title page when they gave 1694 as the date of this edition. The play was republished in 1729, 1769, 1778, 1789, 1816, 1821, and 1823, as well as in collected editions of 1736, 1738, 1742, 1750, 1759, and 1784, in the *Recueil Petitot* of 1804, in the *Auteurs du Second Ordre* of 1808, and in the *Repertoire* of 1823. For a study of the play cf. B. E. Young, *Michel Baron*, Grenoble, 1904, pp. 271-81, 314.

been adapted to the French stage since the time of Baif, gave the Roman credit for the success of his imitation, defended himself against those who claimed that he had not written the French play, and referred to good translations of Terence, especially to those of "ce savant homme" who had unfortunately translated only the *Andria*, the *Adelphoe*, and *Phormio*.<sup>13</sup> This last remark suggests that Baron made use of the savant's translations in making his own adaptations of Terence, but there is no reason to doubt the fact that the verses were his own.<sup>14</sup> It is not true, however, that there had been no adaptations of Terence between Baif and Baron, for *le Must* by Brueys and Palaprat had been acted at the Comédie Française in 1691 before Baron retired, to say nothing of La Fontaine's *Eunuque*, of Molière's borrowings from Terence, and of plays less well known than these.

Baron's chief problems were to turn Latin verse into French, to avoid offending the proprieties, and to give the heroine a rôle of distinction. He kept almost all of Acts I, II, and V, but he made considerable changes in the others. He eliminated both the midwife and the child and made it clear that the hero and heroine were married. For the scenes concerned with the infant he substituted others in which the heroine pleads, listens to reflections upon her character, and interviews her husband. He succeeded in making a living person of the heroine, who in the Latin play remains behind the scenes and is heard to speak only one line. His changes prevent the hero from losing our sympathy, but the new scenes are less striking than the old. He made minor alterations in regard to manners, substituting French amusements, terms of endearment, food, and methods of punishment for Roman.<sup>15</sup> As, however, he kept the location at Athens, the ancient names, and the slave system, his introduction of French customs is anachronistic.

Baron enlarged the rôle of Davus and at times expanded the dialogue. In so doing he seems to have taken hints from Molière and Corneille.<sup>16</sup> He made minor changes in structure in order to link his scenes. The most celebrated line in the *Andria*, "Amantium irae amores integratiost" (v. 555) is thrown into relief, at least in the edition of 1759, by being printed in capitals (III, 4) "Les piques des Amans renouvellent l'Amour"<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> This must be Saint-Aubin, who published at Paris in 1669 a prose translation of these three comedies and of no others, cf. the *Bib. du th. fr.*, III, 233.

<sup>14</sup> Allainval claimed that *l'Andrienne* was written by Father La Rue. So did Voltaire, *op. cit.*, XIV, 95.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. I, 1, III, 5, II, 3, III, 8. In V, 7, he employs the modern word *roman*.

<sup>16</sup> The use of coughing as a signal and the remark, "ce rhume est obstiné" (III, 5) resemble *Tartuffe*, vv. 1497-9. "Qu'on me jette dans l'eau la tête la première" (III, 7), *George Dandin* III, 8, "Je le ferois encore, si j'avois à le faire" (I, 1), *le Cid*, v. 878, and *Polyeucte*, v. 1671.

<sup>17</sup> Pamphile, an Athenian, is secretly married to Glicérie, who is supposed to be the sister of Chrysis. The latter had come to Athens from Andros, had acquired a

Baron kept too close to his model to allow his own talents to express themselves. The hero lacks initiative, the heroine appears only in the fourth act, Philumène is never seen, the rôle of Carin is superfluous, and the opportune arrival of Criton has the effect of a *deus ex machina*. The most interesting rôles are those of Simon and Dave, who must have seemed pale, however, in comparison with many fathers and servants of French comedy. Nevertheless respect for Terence and Baron's reputation as actor and author enabled the play to win a certain amount of popularity, testified to by the duchesse d'Orléans.<sup>18</sup>

First acted on Nov. 16, 1703, the play was given at Paris seventeen times in that and the following year and once, Dec 10, 1703, at Versailles. It remained in the repertory until 1782. As the total number of performances was 155, it ranks third in this respect among its author's plays. According to the frères Parfaict,<sup>19</sup> Etienne Baron played Pamphile, Guérin, Simon, La Thorillière, Dave, la Beauval, Mysis, and la Dancourt, Glicérie. The costume worn by the latter actress gave rise to a style of "robe negligée" known as an "andrienne." It may be of interest to note that three of the principal rôles were given by the author to his son, his brother-in-law, and his sister-in-law two others to persons with whom he had often acted, Guérin and la Beauval. The interpretation of these five experienced players may have had much to do with the play's success.

Baron was encouraged to make a second adaptation of Terence. From his *Adelphoe* he derived *LES ADELPHES*, or, as it was subsequently called, *L'ECOLE DES PÈRES*.<sup>20</sup> His method was much the same as that which he had

dubious reputation, and had recently died. Simon, Pamphile's father, had engaged his son to Philumène, daughter of his friend Chremès, but the latter has withdrawn his promise because he suspects Pamphile of a *liaison*. To test his son, Simon tells him that he must marry Philumène, an order that distresses the young man as well as Carin, who loves her. Pamphile's slave, Dave, discovers that no preparations are being made for the wedding, fears that Simon may have Glicérie sent out of town, and advises his master to gain time by accepting his father's proposition. When Pamphile does so, Simon persuades Chremès to renew the engagement, and the lovers are again in despair, but Dave succeeds in convincing Chremès that Pamphile and Glicérie are married. Meanwhile Criton has come from Andros, has declared the girl to be an Athenian, and has offered to take her to his home. Simon believes that he is an impostor and has Dave tied up to prevent him from spreading the story, but Chremès vouches for Criton's honesty. From the latter's narrative Chremès discovers that Glicérie is his daughter, shipwrecked in childhood on the island of Andros and brought up by the parents of Chrysis. There is now no objection to her union with Pamphile, who frees Dave and will try to arrange the marriage of Carin and Philumène.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Mélése, *Rép.*, p. 214. Evidence of its popularity is probably contained in the prologue, sc. 5, of Regnard's *Folies amoureuses*, acted only two months later, for Momus, in referring to a *savante* who gives her decisions about authors, mentions by name only "l'Andrienne" and Terence.

<sup>19</sup> XIV, 315. They state that, after La Dancourt retired, the rôle of Glicérie was given to her daughter, Mimi.

<sup>20</sup> Young, *op. cit.*, pp. 281-4, makes a study of the play. He lists an edition of Paris, 1705, but does so only on the authority of Mouhy's *Tablettes dramatiques*.

employed for the earlier play except that he transferred the location to Paris and referred to places in that city. He omitted the prologue, the rôle of Sostrata, and those of a few minor characters, but he gave genuine parts to the two young heroines, one of whom in the Latin play does not appear at all, while the other says only a few words and those behind the scenes. Baron elevated one of the heroines in rank and introduced a method of identifying her by means of two halves of a ring that had been employed in the Italian pastoral play, *la Fille di Sciro*. This identification is not employed to bring about the dénouement, but to reward the lovers for their fidelity.

Baron omitted, as in *l'Andrienne*, Terence's obstetrical references. Neither of his heroines is pregnant. His alteration not only is more in accord with the usage of the modern stage, but it helps to demonstrate the value of kindness in the bringing up of young men. Terence had raised the question and had created a stern father and his indulgent brother, but both of their methods proved unsuccessful. The only conclusion to be drawn from the Latin comedy is that a kindly parent is happier than one who is not, whereas Baron, by eliminating seduction and justifying the elopement, spared his youths the criticism to which Terence exposed them. He even rewarded Léandre for disobeying his stern father by making the *chanteuse* turn out to be an heiress.

In preparation for this piece of good fortune he introduced Sanion's wife and added the fourth scene of Act I. The first three scenes of Act II bring Pamphile on the stage and improve the preparation. In the rest of the first four acts he follows Terence step by step, but his fifth act, with the exception of sc 7, is largely new, for he adds Clarice's adventure with the police and alters the dénouement. Especially noteworthy is the fact that, though Terence had made of Demea a convert to his brother's methods, Baron keeps Alcée hard and impenitent, in accordance with the general usage of French classical comedy.<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, Beauchamps and Lérus refer to the work as found among Baron's papers after his death, and the *Bib. du th. fr.* declares that it was not published "dans le tems," but only in later editions of the author's work. The first edition must have been that of Paris, P. J. Ribou, 1736. Even Mouhy in his *Abrégé*, Paris, 1780, I, 6, states that it was first published in 1736. It was republished in collected editions of Baron's plays.

<sup>21</sup> Alcée, the stern father of Eraste and Léandre, has allowed the former to be brought up by his indulgent brother, Telamon. Eraste has been for some time secretly in love with Pamphile, a girl of good family whose father has died and left her little. We hear that Eraste has carried off Clarice, a girl of unknown parentage, from Sanion's house. Alcée blames his brother for the young man's conduct, but Telamon defends him and soon learns the explanation from Sanion's wife. When eight years old, Clarice had been left in this woman's keeping by a man who went off to Italy. He had given Mme Sanion 6000 francs and, for subsequent identification, half a ring. As no further news had been received, Sanion had proposed to turn her over to a scoundrel. Thereupon his wife had arranged the *enlèvement*,

The comic element is chiefly derived, as in Terence, from the conduct of Alcée, whose efforts at discipline are thwarted by his brother and his sons, and from the antics of Sirus, who comes on the stage drunk and jests at the expense of Alcée and Samon. When the latter slaps him, he points out, in lines that recall Scarron rather than Terence, the serious nature of a slap:<sup>22</sup>

Vous donnez des soufflets! Ah, mon petit mignon,  
Apprenez qu'un soufflet vaut cent coups de bâton!

Baron's additions increased the play's comic quality little, but they made the comedy more romantic, more modern, and more in accord with French technique. They brought it little favor from the public, as is shown by a letter of the duchesse d'Orléans<sup>23</sup> and by the fact that, first given, Jan. 3, 1705, it was acted only seven times in that year and was never revived. Perhaps it was the more purely romantic character of *l'Andrienne* that made it more successful than *les Adelphe*s, in which romantic elements are grafted on what might have been either a *pièce à thèse* or a comedy of manners, had either tendency been more satisfactorily developed.

*Patelin*, except for contributing a phrase and probably a few individual words to the language, had had no influence upon seventeenth-century comedy. It had been sufficiently well known, however, for an edition of it to be published at Rouen by Jacques Cailloué in 1656, reproducing one of 1560. Brueys's attention was called to the farce by a reading of Pasquier, who preferred it to all Greek, Latin, and Italian comedies. He determined to modernize the edition of 1656, both in language and in technique, and to prepare it for presentation by amateurs before Louis XIV. This was in 1700, but the war that broke out the following year prevented the realization of the plan. The comedy was not acted until June 4, 1706, and then, not at court, but at the Comédie Française "par les soins de M. Palaprat," as Brueys tells us in his preface.

carried out by Eraste for his brother, who loves the girl, but who, on account of Alcée's watchfulness, could not well rescue her himself. Pamphile, who thinks Eraste has deserted her for Clarice, appeals to his father's friend, Hegion, who takes the matter up with Telamon. Samon comes to get the girl back or to secure the 100 pistoles he was to have received for her. He is kept off by promises from Sirus, Telamon's valet, and is finally beaten by Eraste and his servants. Telamon explains the situation to Pamphile and makes arrangements for her marriage to Eraste, but Alcée, discovering that Leandre is in love with Clarice, has the girl put in the keeping of the police. Sirus and bandits he engages bring her back to Leandre. Alcée, disgusted with his sons and his brother, turns over to the latter the guardianship of both youths. Telamon prepares to marry them and rewards the servants. It is not until this point in the story has been reached that Hegion produces the other half of the ring and identifies Clarice, who will have a dowry of 50,000 écus. Alcée sends all his relatives "au diable de bon cœur."

<sup>22</sup> II, 11, cf. my *op. cit.*, Part II, p. 462.

<sup>23</sup> Méléze, *Rép.*, p. 215, lists the play as "d'après Plaute" [*sic*!] and cites a letter from the duchess of Feb. 11, 1705 [1705?] stating that "*L'Andrienne* de Térénce a très bien réussi, mais non pas *les A*."

It was entitled *L'AVOCAT PATELIN*, or simply *PATELIN*.<sup>24</sup> Brueys turned the old farce into a three-act comedy in prose with three *intermèdes*, after the manner of *George Dandin*. These *intermèdes* were omitted when the play was acted, probably because of the expense involved and because an allusion to the blessings of peace would have been inappropriate when the country was at war. In the three acts Brueys did not confine his contribution to modernizing the language. He added a slight love plot, gave the work unity, improved the preparation, omitted some repetition of material, and prolonged the dénouement. While sacrificing a good deal of the original, he added jests of his own and a few details intended to make the events more probable. La Harpe thought that "Brueys et Palaprat l'ont fort embelli."<sup>25</sup> About half the scenes of the play are almost wholly new, while the other half, though making some adaptations of the original, seldom follow it closely.<sup>26</sup>

Patelin is still the crafty and dishonest lawyer of the medieval play, less boisterous in his speech and actions when pretending madness, but equally clever in deceiving the draper and defending the shepherd Guillaume.

<sup>24</sup> Goizet lists editions of Paris, 1707 and 1715, 12°. It was republished in 1725 (Paris), 1743 (Lyons, Delaroche), 1760, 1773, 1782, 1783 (Paris), 1785 (London), 1786 (*Petite Bibliothèque*), 1787 (*Choix de pièces*), 1788, 1798, 1801, 1816, in collected editions of 1735, 1755 & in the *Recueil Petitot* of 1804, the *Auteurs du Second Ordre* of 1808, and the *Repertoire* of 1823. For seven editions published at Paris after 1816, cf. the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale. The play has been studied especially by Johannes Koch, *Brueys und Palaprat*, Leipzig dissertation, 1906, pp. 63-73. For its reputation in the eighteenth century cf. C. D. Brenner, *MLN*, XLVIII (1933), 88-90.

<sup>25</sup> *Op. cit.*, VIII, 292.

<sup>26</sup> Patelin and his wife have recently come to a village near Paris and have taken a house near that of the merchant, Guillaume, and that of the judge, Bartolin. Patelin's daughter, Henriette, is loved by Guillaume's son, Valère, while his servant, Colette, is engaged to Guillaume's shepherd, Agnelet. So ragged are the lawyer's clothes that he fears no one will marry his daughter. He consequently goes to Guillaume's shop, pretends that he wishes to pay him money his father had owed to Guillaume's father, and wheedles cloth out of the draper with a promise to pay early next morning and an invitation to eat goose. Agnelet now begs Guillaume not to have him arrested for killing sheep, but the draper prefers to let the law decide the matter, so that the shepherd, acting on Colette's advice, engages Patelin to defend him. Meanwhile Guillaume has gone to collect what Patelin owes him, but he has been repulsed by the lawyer's wife, who insists that her husband has been for some time mentally ill, and by Patelin himself, who pretends to think he is an apothecary, to see visions, and to hear robbers, against whom he takes up arms. When Bartolin holds the hearing, Guillaume represents himself, while Patelin speaks for Agnelet. Guillaume confuses his charges against Agnelet and Patelin. The judge, convinced by Agnelet's replies of "Bée" that he is out of his head, dismisses the case. As he knows that the shepherd has been hit on the head by Guillaume, he is not surprised to hear, shortly after the trial, that Agnelet is dead. When he goes to view the corpse and is shown the mutilated head of a calf, he concludes that Guillaume is a murderer. Colette demands justice, but she agrees to withdraw the charges if Guillaume will sign the marriage contract of Valère and Henriette. After this has been done, Agnelet, who had hidden in a neighbor's attic, is brought to the judge by a peasant, who suspects him of robbery. Guillaume now wishes to withdraw his consent to the marriage of his son and Henriette, but, as Patelin has put a forfeit into the contract, he accepts the situation. Patelin keeps the cloth. We may suppose that Agnelet will marry Colette.

differs from his model only in the fact that he has a slight feeling of guilt at having overcharged the lawyer. Agnelet is now engaged to be married and has made arrangements with a butcher so that he can dispose of the slaughtered sheep. He seems to have risen slightly in the social scale, but his nature has altered little. We are shown more of the judge and a good deal less of Guillemette, now called Mme Patelin. The three persons that are added are but slightly characterized, though they have an important part in the plot, as the marriage of Henriette and Valère is the event to which the action leads and as Colette sends Agnelet to Patelin and assists in the deception of the judge.

Brueys made fewer allusions to manners than did the fifteenth-century author, omitted the references to the saints, and softened the vulgarity of the original, but he kept in the main the atmosphere of village life and added a few satirical thrusts of his own, as when Guillaume admits that epidemics exist among men "avec les medecins, mais les moutons n'en ont pas" (I, 4), and regrets his sheep, "dont la laine me fait des draps d'Angleterre." He improved the preparation by bringing in Agnelet and the judge at an earlier point in the play. He does not allow Patelin to repeat to his wife what the audience already knows. On the other hand, one misses Patelin's exuberant speech, when he pretends to be delirious, his use of foreign words, or words from French dialects, his fable of the Fox and the Crow, and much of his wife's conversation.

Most of the credit for Brueys's comedy is due to the author of *Patelin*, but the scorn that medievalists heap upon the later play is quite undeserved. It is an entertaining comedy, adapted to the tastes of the eighteenth century, though preserving the chief characteristics of its model. Without Brueys the old play would have been unknown in that century except to a learned few. Thanks to him it became one of the most popular plays in the repertory of the Comédie Française. Lérin and Clément et La Porte testified to the pleasure it gave the public in their time. Voltaire<sup>27</sup> predicted that *l'Avocat Patelin* and *le Grondeur* would make the name of Brueys remembered so long as there would be a theater in France. Though it never enjoyed a long run, it was played a number of times almost every year from 1706 to 1829 and occasionally thereafter, down to 1859. The total number of performances at the Comédie Française was 885, a record surpassed by only two other plays written in the eighteenth century.

In 1709 Campistron was probably considered the leading author of tragedies then living, but his one comedy had had little success and had not been played for many years. Nevertheless, when he returned to dramatic

<sup>27</sup> *Op cit.*, XIV, 47

composition, which he had abandoned for a decade, he wrote in the lighter genre. The experience he had acquired in tragedy had taught him the advantages of simplicity and logical structure and may well have developed his taste for the type of high comedy that Molière had illustrated by *le Misanthrope*. It is to the latter play that *LE JALOUX DÉSABUSÉ*<sup>28</sup> is related rather than to a farce like de Visé's *Gentilhomme guespin*, or to Baron's *Jaloux*, with its unmarried and physically violent protagonist. Like Molière's play, it is a comedy of character, depicts high Parisian society, and introduces a jealous hero, a coquettish heroine, and a group of minor characters in league with her. Alceste has, however, married Célimène. In this respect and in the fact that the man is ashamed of his jealousy Campistron's comedy resembles Dufresny's recent *Jaloux honteux*. Moreover, the woman whom the protagonist loves uses her coquetry only in behalf of her sister-in-law. The characters of the play arouse no such interest as do those of *le Misanthrope* and the picture of society is less complete, but this is not to say that the comedy is without merit.<sup>29</sup>

Dorante is an "Homme de Robe" who has an income of over 20,000 écus. He neglects the law and mingles with the aristocracy (I, 1)

Ennemi du travail, toujours plein de loisir,  
Méprisant ses égaux, & depuis son enfance,  
Nourri dans le repos, dans la magnificence,  
Cherchant les Courtisans & les Gens du bel air,  
Imitant leur exemple, & les traitant du pair

<sup>28</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1709 and 1710, 12°. Reprinted in editions of its author's works that appeared at Amsterdam in 1722-3 and subsequently at Paris, as well as in the *Petite Bibliothèque* of 1788, the *Recueil Petitot* of 1804, the *Auteurs du Second Ordre* of 1809, and the *Répertoire* of 1823. It has been studied by Curt Hausding, *Jean Gilbert de Campistron*, Leipzig, 1903.

<sup>29</sup> Dorante and his sister, Julie, have inherited great wealth, which will be divided only when the girl marries. As this fact makes him unwilling for Julie to marry Clitandre, his wife's cousin, a domestic conspiracy is formed against him. Not only Clitandre, but Eraste and many other young men come constantly to Dorante's home. Célie, Dorante's wife, pretends that several of them are in love with her and that she is not indifferent to their courtship. Dorante is deeply disturbed, but he fears that, if he protests, he will be laughed at. A supper at Suresnes, to which he declines to go and which is vividly described to him by his sister's *servante*, heightens his suspicions. In the early hours of the morning, while his wife and his guests are amusing themselves, he decides to act. In the meantime Eraste admits that he has really fallen in love with Célie, tells her so, and is rebuked. She assures him that she will remain faithful to her husband, and decides that, since Eraste's confession has shown that she has allowed matters to go too far, she must now explain to her husband that she was merely pretending to be a coquette in order to force him to allow Julie to marry Clitandre. They had thought he would give this consent in the hope that, with Julie out of the house, the young men who made him jealous would have no excuse for entering it. When Célie is about to explain, Dorante speaks first, permits his sister to marry, and announces his intention of retiring from Paris with his wife into one of his châteaux. She tells him of their conspiracy and dismisses Eraste. Dorante shows that he has been "désabusé" by agreeing to remain in Paris, but she insists that his love is her most valued possession and prefers to leave next day for the country.



Il chasse, il court le Cerf, est homme de Campagne,  
 Aime le jeu, la table & le vin de Champagne,  
 Decide & parle haut parmi les Beaux Esprits,  
 Impose, plaît, commande aux Belles de Paris,  
 D'habits tout galonnez remplit sa Garderobe,  
 Et n'a rien en un mot du métier que la Robe

The frères Parfaict complain that these characteristics are not shown in the course of the play, but there is a good reason for this in the fact that Dorante's jealousy, aroused intentionally by his wife, has in the last few days caused him to lose his taste for pleasure (I, 7) He first appears in II, 2, when he complains about his wife's conduct Shortly afterwards he seeks an explanation, but he finds it difficult to overcome her smiling resistance. At the beginning of Act III we learn that he has suffered from his wife's behavior at dinner. When she comes to borrow his horses, as one of hers is ill and she wishes to go with Eraste and other friends to Suresnes, he becomes angry, but she pretends to faint and soon has her way His jealousy is greatly increased when he has this party described to him He has been restrained by the feeling that jealousy in a husband is a bourgeois characteristic, an opinion acquired when he entered high society (II, 2):

Et blâmant du vieux tems les maximes sensées,  
 J'en plaisantois sans cesse, & traitois de Bourgeois  
 Ceux qui suivoient encor les anciennes loix

He had married, not only without love, but expecting to be grateful to his wife's lovers for entertaining her Then he had become enamoured of her, but he dared not show his jealousy, for fear of ridicule (II, 2)

Si je montre l'ennuï que mon cœur en reçoit,  
 Les enfans dans Paris me montreront au doigt,  
 Et trait' de bizarre & d'Époux indocile,  
 Je serai le sujet d'un heureux Vaudeville

In the end his bourgeois jealousy prevails over both his aristocratic fear of ridicule and his selfishness in regard to his sister's fortune. The frères Parfaict thought that the fact of his being "désabusé" was not satisfactorily shown, but his willingness for his wife to remain in Paris is as much proof as can be required of a play written in accordance with the unity of time. What the future may bring has to be left to our imagination.

Célie is a person of great composure, who can pretend to be unconscious and can laugh when her husband would have her weep She enjoys admiration (I, 1)

Elle a de la vertu, mais elle est belle & Femme,  
 Elle aime à plaisanter, à sourire en passant,  
 Elle a l'accueil flateur, le coup d'œil caressant,  
 Et croit, lorsque le cœur est en effet fidele,  
 Qu'un souris, qu'un regard n'est qu'une bagatelle

There are limits, however, beyond which she will not go. She admits that there are women in society, especially at Paris, whose conduct deserves contempt, but she insists that there are others (IV, 7),

Qui des folles ardeurs savent garder leurs ames,  
Posséder la vertu telle qu'on doit l'avoir,  
Et vivre dans le monde en faisant leur devoir

She belongs to the latter class herself and will doubtless become a charming châtelaine in Brie or Champagne, while her husband will hunt with the gentry of the neighborhood.

Their two rôles dominate the play. We learn little of the sister except that she is much in love and will have a large dowry. Clitandre and at first Eraste represent the gay society with which Cécile surrounds herself. Subsequently Eraste has the unhappy rôle of a man caught in his own trap, of one who has to be reprovèd and sent away by the woman he loves. Unlike most of his contemporaries, Campistrion derives none of his comic effects from valets. The only one he introduces, Champagne, appears merely as a messenger, as a lover, and to complain of his master's late hours. On the other hand, the two *suivantes* are given rôles of some importance. Justine is the family servant, so well established that she speaks her mind freely to all members of the household. She has an important function in the exposition and in helping Cécile to carry out her plans. Babet, though young, is experienced in intrigue. Her air of innocence deceives Dorante into believing her racy account of the supper at Suresnes. More unusual is the characterization of Dubois, Dorante's secretary, well versed in the ways of the law, but so poorly paid that he readily accepts a bribe to work in Clitandre's interests. He has an underling's conviction of his own importance, unrecognized by the world at large. He has promised Dorante success in his profession if he will dress and behave as magistrates do (I, 5)

De la main du Greffier je prendrai les Procez,  
Je m'en instruirai seul, j'en ferai les extraits  
J'aurai le soin sur tout de vous les bien écrire,  
Et vous ne prendrez, vous, que celui de les lire,  
Je ne vous trompe point. Regardez Ariston,  
On l'estime par tout comme un autre Caton  
La Province le craint, la Cour le considere,  
Cependant son merite est dans son Secrétaire

We are introduced into a wealthy household, whose owners have some 800,000 francs and, besides their Parisian mansion, two châteaux. The husband and wife have each a pair of horses. They dine in the middle of the day. The wife drives to Suresnes for supper, a walk in the woods, and agreeable conversation. At night there is more talk, helped out with games till the small hours of the morning. Such a society has an aristocratic

view of life. It is not necessarily immoral, but may appear so, especially to the wealthy bourgeois it admits into its ranks and to people of other nations (II, 2). We are assured, moreover, that the old morality survives among "Gens du Peuple, Artisans, Portefaix & Vilains," who show that they adhere to it by beating their wives (III, 4).

The structure of the comedy is peculiar in that none of the leading characters appears in Act I. Too much use is made of asides, nine of which follow one another in succession in the last scene of this act. However, the exposition is clear and is agreeably presented. The other acts show Dorante's progress in jealousy and Célie's gradual recognition of the fact that she is playing a dangerous game. These two lines of development meet near the end of the play and solve the problem in its last scene, the final speech of which clinches matters by proposing to the male portion of the audience a test of virtue.

Si vous voulez sçavoir quelle est vôtre Compagne,  
Messieurs, proposez lui de vivre à la campagne

This is the test that had been applied to Célmène in the *Misanthrope* and in which, from Alceste's point of view, she had failed. Dorante's use of it is crowned with success. In both plays it is based on the assumption that outside of Paris there is no "salut pour les honnêtes gens," but both plays show that it is quite possible not to share this opinion.

The comedy was moderately well received. Between Dec. 13, 1709, when it was first acted, and Jan. 3, 1710, it was performed ten times and earned for its author 1206 francs, 12 sous,<sup>30</sup> a satisfactory sum, but far less than three of his tragedies had brought him. The *Gazette de Rotterdam* hailed it on Jan. 2, 1710 as a play that was "dans le véritable comique, et des plus belles qu'on ait vues depuis longtemps."<sup>31</sup> However, it was given only four more times in 1710, only six times in 1713. It was after the author's death in 1723 that it was revived and had its chief success, 50 performances in 1724-31. Though acted less frequently than *Andronic* and *Alcibiade*, it remained in the repertory till 1807, much longer than either. The total number of performances at the Comédie Française was 166. La Harpe<sup>32</sup> declared that he had seen it acted twenty-five years before and wondered why it was no longer played. He held it greatly superior to Campistron's tragedies, claimed that it had inspired La Chaussée's *Préjugé à la mode*, praised the two leading characters, the structure, and the "facilité élégante" of the style.

Except in the case of Brueys, these five comedies constitute the last plays

<sup>30</sup> Cf. the frères Parfaict, XV, 35

<sup>31</sup> Quoted by Mélése, *Rép.*, p. 220

<sup>32</sup> *Op. cit.*, VIII, 293-4

of four distinguished seventeenth-century dramatists. They show considerable variety in subject and tone, admitting moralistic, romantic, farcical, and psychological elements, reflecting methods that had been employed in ancient Rome, medieval France, and the Paris of Molière's time. The most original of them is *le Jaloux désabusé*, as it follows no comedy so closely as the others do those of Terence, *Patelin*, and Boursault's first *Esope*. All four authors showed discernment in selecting their subjects and technical skill in presenting them to their audiences, for, with the exception of *les Adelphe*s, all the plays remained in the repertory of the Comédie Française in the nineteenth century and each was acted over 150 times, *l'Avocat Patelin* as many as 885.

## CHAPTER XII

### DUFRESNY

In 1701-15 Dufresny<sup>1</sup> wrote about the same number of comedies as Legrand, but more than anyone else except Dancourt. Of the seven or eight that he composed at that time, six have survived, all dealing with contemporary French life, though the scenes of only two are certainly laid in Paris. He selected his persons from all classes of society, nobles, bourgeois great and small, peasants, and servants. He introduced widows into six of his comedies. Among other characters are found a child, a wet-nurse, a sea captain, a judge, a teacher of music, a village tax-collector, and a peasant farmer. Money is an important element in all of the extant plays, especially in questions of inheritance, dowry, gambling, and speculating in a lottery. Five plays are chiefly in prose, but some of them admit songs or end in a *divertissement* in verse. Two are in five acts, four, in three acts, one of these with a prologue, while one of the lost plays is said to have had but one act.

Dufresny's contemporaries credited him with originality of conception and skill in characterization, but they held that he did not work upon his plays enough to perfect their form. He accepted the classical system, but he sought novelty in characters and situations. Sometimes his departures from ordinary usage, such as failing to give certain characters names, can hardly be defended, but at times he seems to have been too subtle for his audience. His presentation of gambling, superstition, the wet-nurse system, and dishonesty has a moral flavor, but he writes primarily as an artist rather than a moralist. The only successful plays of the series were the first and last, but the others deserved a better fate than that which befell them. Dufresny was a talented author, undiscouraged by adversity. In some respects he was ahead of his times.

According to the frères Parfaict,<sup>2</sup> he had many happy ideas, but he would not take the trouble to develop them, so that, when he wrote a play of some length, he produced a collection of entertaining scenes that had little connection with one another. This is true of *Le Double Veuvage*,<sup>3</sup> next to *l'Esprit de contradiction* his most frequently acted play. His

<sup>1</sup> For Dufresny of my op. cit., Part IV, pp. 754-67, and the works cited there of Domann, Vie, and others.

<sup>2</sup> XIV, 255.

<sup>3</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1701, 12°, Barbin, 1702. Republished by Ad. Rion, Paris, 1878, in the author's collected works, Briasson, 1731, 1747, Barrois, 1779, Belin, 1821, Lecomte, 1830, in the *Répertoire Pictiot* of 1804, in the *Répertoire* of 1818, and in *Chefs d'œuvre des auteurs comiques*, Firmin-Didot, 1845.

original idea seems to have been that of creating a husband and a wife who hate each other, but who are bound together by mutual self-interest, and of making each believe that the other is dead. This plan would produce entertaining scenes, especially when the supposed widow and widower meet, but it would not introduce enough material for a full-length play. He accordingly brought in young lovers whose marriage is dependent on the consent of the principal characters, added a Countess and her attendants to direct the intrigue, made use of songs and the French of a German Swiss, satirized opera, and composed a prologue <sup>4</sup>

The Intendant has laid up a considerable fortune, perhaps at the expense of the Countess. He is pleased to hear that his wife is dead and is eager to marry Thérèse, but he must keep up appearances "pour conserver la paix chez moi, & mon honneur dans le monde" (III, 2). His wife, who is called la Veuve throughout the play, is as hypocritical as he and duplicates his actions. When they meet in the dark, the fact that Dorante's voice resembles his uncle's deceives the woman, while her imitation of Thérèse's voice, attempted in order to discover Dorante's sentiments, deceives her husband. He still thinks she is Thérèse when he reproaches her for wishing to marry Dorante, while she supposes the voice she hears to be that of her husband's ghost. The result is that she faints and he becomes more and more amorous till a lighted candle, brought by an attendant, disillusiones them. This is an effective comic scene, the best in the play.

Dorante is a young nobleman who shows that he was created in the eighteenth century by his insistence upon "sensibilité" in his sweetheart. Thérèse, however, is as gay and pleasure loving as he is sober and "raisonnable." The first obstacle to their union is his fear that she does not love him because she does not tremble when they meet. His own reaction is quite different (I, 1)

Moi, par exemple, que son abord a pénétré, je suis resté immobile, un saisissement  
une langueur mon cœur palpite ma vue se trouble Ah' c'est ainsi que  
devroient s'exprimer sa passion

<sup>4</sup> The scene is laid in the château of the Countess. Her Intendant, married for ten years and without children, has gone to seek invigoration from mineral waters. The Countess, who seeks amusement and wishes to help her goddaughter, spreads the report that the Intendant has died. When he returns and asks why mourning is worn, he is told that his wife is dead. He takes advantage of the situation to make love to Thérèse, his wife's niece, while his supposed widow courts Dorante, her husband's nephew. The young people are in love, but they are penniless. They encourage their admirers in accordance with a plan. The Intendant and his wife meet in the dark, he mistaking her for Thérèse, she supposing that he is Dorante. When they discover that both are alive, they are deeply disappointed, but they decide to make the best of the situation, as each hopes to inherit from the other. It is proposed to send Dorante and Thérèse away, but the Intendant would not lose sight of the girl, nor would his wife of the young man. The Countess solves the problem by marrying the young lovers to each other and arranging that, when the Intendant and his wife are both dead, their common fortune will go to Dorante and Thérèse.

He is already a Romantic, but one in love with a child of the seventeenth century, with whose attitude the author sympathizes more than he does with her lover's.

The Countess, though she appears little, prepares the intrigue and brings it to a happy conclusion. She is moved by her interest in the young people, her dislike of their rivals, and her desire for amusement. She is assisted by a *servante* called Frosine, a *souvante*, a Swiss, introduced chiefly for his barbarous speech, his wife, and a *maître d'hôtel*, Gusmand. The last of these works upon the Intendant as Frosine does upon his wife, but he also distinguishes himself by composing songs, a number of which are sung in the course of the performance. He gets assistance from his familiarity with Lully. At the end of the play he recites a kind of "Opera en racourci":

D'abord une ouverture,  
 La, la, la, d'une beauté,  
 D'une gravité  
 Chant naturel, d'après nature  
 La reprise est d'un goût  
 Fantastique & bizarre, Ta ri ta ri ta tou,  
 Voici la Pièce, écoutez jusqu'à bout  
 Une Ritournelle tendre,  
 Vous prépare au récit que vous allez entendre  
 La lire  
 La, la ri ta ri ta tire,  
 La li ta ra  
 Et cætera

This jingle forms part of the attack made by writers of the Comédie Française upon the monopoly held by the Opera, as Gusmand's remark that "nous manquons de Musiciens"<sup>5</sup> clearly shows.

Further variety is provided by the prologue, in which a marquis and a chevalier meet on the stage and discuss the play. Dufresny holds up to ridicule the empty-headed young nobleman who is chiefly interested in the songs and in repeating a few words of criticism he has heard about the play. The author's own ideal of comedy is expressed

des caracteres soutenus, une intrigue nette & suivie, des situations qui surprennent, quoi qu'elles soient préparées & de tems en tems quelque plaisanterie sans grossièreté

His play lives up to this definition so far as characters, situations, and jests without vulgarity are concerned, but the intrigue is less satisfactory as a number of scenes could easily have been omitted, the difficulties of carrying out the plan are insufficiently stressed, and the solution is too easily reached.

First acted on March 8, 1702, the comedy had nineteen performances in

<sup>5</sup> III, 7 The remark is made to explain why the play lacks a full *divertissement*.

that year, an excellent beginning.\* By the end of 1793 it had been performed 181 times. When it was reduced by Guillard to one act and revived in 1854, it was played twenty-one times, so that the total number of performances at the Comédie Française was 202.

No such good fortune attended *LE FAUX HONNÊTE-HOMME*,<sup>7</sup> which lacked the prologue, the songs, the foreigner's French, and the thrusts at opera of the preceding play. It is a three-act prose comedy of intrigue, in which a hypocrite is unmasked by a sea captain, who rescues a widow and helps bring about the marriage of young lovers.<sup>8</sup>

The plot was probably invented by Dufresny. The frères Parfaict<sup>9</sup> note the resemblance between Ariste's character and that of Lucinde in Dufresny's *Malade sans maladie*. Both of them, as they remark, descend from *Tartuffe*. They consider the sea captain an original creation, but one who is much like him is found in *le Muet* by Brueys et Palaprat. Dufresny had made inheritance an important issue in his last play, in which a leading character thinks she is a widow. Such resemblances explain, however, the origin of only a small portion of the play.

The comedy has a social background in the dangers that face women when the man of the family dies and their only means of support lies in what he has left them. If the man he has trusted is honest, their future is secure, if he is not, they may be victimized. Matrimony or a convent were in the eighteenth century their cities of refuge. But Dufresny gives

\* The frères Parfaict, XIV, 257-8, indicate that old Guérin played the Intendant, La Thorillière, Gusmand, Etienne Baron, Dorante, Desmarea, the Swiss, la Desbrosses, the Veuve, la Champvallion, the Countess, la Desmarea, Thérèse, la Beauval, Frosine, la Godefroy, the Swiss woman, Hortense Grandval, the *souvante*.

<sup>7</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1703, 12°. Republished in the author's collected works, Paris, Briasson, 1731, 1747, Barrois, 1779, Belin, 1821.

<sup>8</sup> The Veuve's husband, who had died at Marseilles, left two wills, one putting his property in the hands of Ariste, the other nullifying the first and entrusting his wealth to the Captain. Ariste has won the Veuve's heart and has let it be known that her husband's niece, Angélique, will inherit nothing. This girl loves Valère, son of the Marquise, a widow who thinks only of pleasure and would not be averse to marrying Ariste. Indeed she has agreed to do so, but she would first find a wife for her son. Meanwhile Frosine, the Veuve's *souvante*, gets possession of a compromising letter written to Ariste by a certain Agnès Doucet and gives it to the Captain. As the latter is afraid the Veuve will marry Ariste, he gains the man's confidence by pretending to be a scoundrel, and proposes to destroy the second will and divide with Ariste the money left by the first. The Marquise is convinced of Ariste's unreliability by Angélique, who tells her that he has advised her to marry Valère secretly. The Veuve, told of Ariste's crooked ways and his hope of marrying the Marquise, asks him to give her what her husband has left in his keeping for her. Ariste objects, asserting that the Captain has informed him that a secret clause will force him to make restitution to certain persons. The Veuve breaks with him, whereupon the Captain denounces him, makes known the existence of the second will, and promises to turn the money over to the family, provided Angélique has sufficient dowry to marry Valère. As her threat to retire to a convent had been occasioned purely by her lack of dowry, she will accept Valère. Frosine will marry Flamand, whose stupidity had helped her get information about his master and makes her feel sure she will dominate him. Ariste is allowed to make his escape.

<sup>9</sup> XIV, 300-6.



us little reason to fear for them as he preserves the tone of comedy and produces a rescuer in the Captain.

Ariste is a hypocrite with a dark past and an ingratiating manner that appeals to widows, though Frosine finds him "doucereux, fade." He had worked himself into the confidence of the husband and would now appropriate the money left in his charge for the widow, if he were not aware that the Captain has the second will. He accordingly proposes to give all to the widow and to marry her, unless the Captain spoils his plan, in which case he will marry the light-headed Marquise. He is not shrewd enough to reject the Captain's offer to divide the loot and fails in his plans because he cannot understand a "vrai homme d'honneur."

The Captain contrasts sharply with Ariste, pretending to be dishonest as the other pretends to be honest. He swears, speaks bluntly, assumes an air of authority. He is "brusque, piquant, des manieres grossieres, il paroît même un peu dur, mais dans le fond c'est . . . le plus aimable brutal que j'aie jamais connu" (I, 3). His life at sea has not prevented him from understanding a hypocrite. He must not only produce the second will, but prevent the Veuve from marrying Ariste. He gains the latter's confidence by pretending to be unscrupulous, gets him to make a bargain with him, and then forces him to reveal his essential dishonesty to the Veuve. His efforts are directed partly at marrying the young lovers, but chiefly at rescuing the Veuve, with whom he had once been in love.

She is a person who believes herself to be an excellent judge of character and always ready to take advice, though she is in reality entirely guided by her emotions, which lead her to believe the Captain dishonest and Ariste a model of virtue. She is so devoid of reason and has so little consideration for her attractive and highminded niece that one may well ask whether she is worth rescuing from Ariste. She contrasts with Angélique and with Valère, who is devoted and honorable, also with clever Frosine, who gets valuable information from Ariste's extremely simple-minded servant.

The play is well constructed and has a number of interesting scenes, especially I, 8, between the young lovers, II, 2, 4, in which Ariste interviews the Captain, then the Veuve, and III, 11, 12, in which the villain is trapped. In III, 11 there is an amusing dialogue between the Captain and Ariste.

C Touchez là vous êtes un fripon

A Monsieur

C Vous êtes un homme sans foi, & c'est ce qui attire ma confiance

A Monsieur

C Je vais vous ouvrir mon cœur, parce que je sçais que vous êtes un traître

A Je me justifierai

C Gardez-vous-en bien, je suis ravi que vous ne valiez rien, car je ne vaudrais pas grand chose, & nous nous en accommoderons mieux tous deux ensemble

The frères Parfaict object to the fact that clever Ariste has so stupid a servant. Dufresny should, indeed, have explained how this happened to be. He should also have made it clearer how Ariste's agents learned of the second will. The play would have gained in interest if Dufresny had shown us the scene in which the Veuve's friends try to persuade her that Ariste is a scoundrel, instead of having it merely related to Ariste by his servant. There also seems little excuse for calling three important characters only the Veuve, the Captain, and the Marquise, after the manner of an Old French farce. Such criticisms, however, do not account for the failure of the comedy, which was acted only five times, Feb. 24 to March 3, 1703, and was never revived.<sup>10</sup>

The comedy that followed was called *LE FAUX INSTINCT*.<sup>11</sup> Like its predecessor it is in three acts and in prose. As its title indicates, it is a satire upon the anti-intellectualist movement that had for some time flourished in France and showed itself in the acceptance of the idea that astronomical phenomena are connected with the fortunes of men and in the belief in dreams and the *cri du sang*. This last superstition had been employed, as we have seen, in many tragedies. Dufresny derived comic material from it, introducing, in order to do so, the first child seen on the Parisian stage of the eighteenth century. His play might also have been used to attack the evils of wet-nursing, but the author does not indicate that such was his intention.<sup>12</sup>

The play is remarkable for the large number of characters that are given no names. Of the ten that appear, only Valère, Angélique, and Toinette are referred to by their names in the *dramatis personae*, and we have to read

<sup>10</sup> It is not known how the rôles were distributed, but it is highly probable that la Beauval and her husband played Frosine and Flamand.

<sup>11</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1707, 12°. Republished in the author's works, Paris, Briasson, 1731, 1747, Barrois, 1779. Belin, 1821.

<sup>12</sup> The Veuve, aunt of Valère, had entrusted her infant to a Nourrice and a Nourricier, who lived in a village about twenty-four miles from Paris on the road to Lyons. The Vieillard, uncle of Angélique, had married a young wife and put their infant in charge of the same people. Valère and Angélique are in love, but for lack of funds they cannot marry, and the infant girls prevent them from inheriting. All these adults meet at the home of the Nourrice. It is discovered that, though she has been receiving board for two little girls, she has only one in her charge. Angélique's servant, Toinette, persuades the Nourricier to say that one child has died of smallpox and that the survivor is the widow's, but the Vieillard discovers the trick. When the Nourricier admits that he does not know which child has survived, the Vieillard and the Veuve, both of whom are extremely superstitious, decide to leave the solution of the problem to the child herself. The girl indicates as her mother the Vieillard's wife, but she insists that her father is not the Vieillard, but Valère, despite the young man's protests. As the Vieillard had already interpreted a dream and the letters of Valère's name in such a way as to make him jealous of him, he wishes to give up all claims on the child and to be separated from his wife. The Veuve, incensed by the girl's hostility, also gives her up. Finally, the Nourricier, responding to a bribe, produces papers showing that the child is his own, and that both his wards have died of smallpox. Angélique and Valère will consequently inherit the wealth of their uncle and aunt. The Vieillard consents to their marriage.

the text to discover that *La Petite Fille* is called Charlotte. Nevertheless, each person is distinctly, if slightly characterized: the *Vieillard*, by his superstitious beliefs and his jealousy; his wife, by her common sense and amiability, the *Veuve*, by her faith in mysterious forebodings, *La Mie de Paris*, by her interest in the child of the young man she had brought up and married to the *Veuve*, the *Petite Fille*, by her naive speech and behavior; the *Nourricier*, by his patois, his pretense of madness, and his dishonesty, his wife by her patois and by the aid she gives her husband in deceiving the Parisians. Those who are referred to by name are less interesting: the typical young lovers, Valère and Angélique, and the energetic *survante*, Toinette, whose comparing of notes with *La Mie de Paris* reveals the fact that at least one child is missing.

Among the superstitions mentioned are the belief that a child born during an eclipse cannot live, that it brings misfortune to turn over a saltcellar, to enter one's home when the crescent moon is seen on the left, or for thirteen persons to be together at table. A shepherd may bewitch a nurse's milk or the wool of which a child's swaddling clothes are made. Dreams, horoscopes, prejudices, and filial instinct are also highly significant. When the *Vieillard* and the *Veuve* hear that their children are in a certain château, they recall the mysterious emotions they experienced when they passed by, although it is subsequently discovered that their children had died several years before they did so. The most comic use to which superstition is put occurs when the *Petite Fille* is called upon to pick out her mother and father (III, 4)

P F Je ferme les yeux ben fort, ben fort, pour ne point voir tous mes papas & toutes mes mamans, que quand vous me dirais, c'est fait, comme à la climusette

Nourrice Vous pouvez ouvrir les yeux, mais ne tournez pas la tête qu'on ne vous le dise, & regardez-les tous bien long-tems, bien long tems avant que de parler

P F Vous me l'avez dit déjà, afin de voir si je sentirai remuer là-dedans mon papa & ma maman

Veuve Je suis sûre qu'elle va courir à moi

P F Oh point mais je sens déjà ah c'est celle là qui est ma belle maman

Femme du Vieillard Regardez-bien au moins, car vous vous trompez peut-être

P F Oui, c'est vous qui êtes ma vraie maman

Vieillard En faut il davantage? il n'y a que les premiers mouvemens qui soient vrais, parce qu'ils sont naturels viens, ma fille, viens, embrasse ton papa

P F repoussant le Vieillard Fi, fi

Vieillard C'est moi qui suis ton papa, car je suis le mari de ta maman

P F Ça ne fait rien, car tenez, c'est celui là qui est mon vrai papa Baisez-moi donc, mon vrai papa

Valère Vous êtes une petite sotte, voilà votre pere

The child's rôle, illustrated in this scene, is the most entertaining in the play. It gives a greater impression of reality than the rôle of any other child composed up to that time except that of Louison in *le Malade imagi-*

*naïve*. And more distinctly than in Molière's play is the interest centered round this child, whose existence brings the characters together, supplies them with a problem, and enables them to solve it. With the exception of *Athalie*, no modern French play had previously given to a child a rôle of such importance.

This rôle, the comic treatment of superstition and of unreasonable jealousy, the songs sung by the Nourricier, and the pleasing location in a village which supplies "la dernière dinée de la diligence de Lyon" (I, 1) entitled the play to a longer career than it achieved. First acted on Aug. 2, 1707, in a dull season, its initial run of seventeen performances was highly creditable, but it did not remain in the repertory after that year. Perhaps the difficulty of finding a child capable of playing the essential rôle prevented the troupe from subsequently undertaking to produce it.

Dufresny next composed a prose play in five acts, the first he had written since *la Malade sans maladie*. This was *LE JALOUX HONTEUX*,<sup>13</sup> a comedy of character based on a conflict between jealousy and shame. As one of the characters remarks (III, 2), "la jalousie est le nœud de la difficulté, il faut que la honte en fasse le dénouement." The principal character is accordingly a man both "jaloux" and "honteux," while, to contrast with him, another man is "jaloux," but not "honteux," and the women they love are neither jealous nor ashamed. Moreover, the principal character has no real cause to be jealous, while the other has a rival who wins the girl away from him. Jealousy alone may give rise to comic situations, but jealousy accompanied by shame may well produce subtler and less conventional effects.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1707, 12°. The Bibliothèque Nationale has two editions, without place or date, one of them brought out by Charles Collé. Republished in editions of the author's collected works, Paris, Briasson, 1731, 1747, Barrois, 1779; Belin, 1821.

<sup>14</sup> The Président fears that other men are in love with his wife, who lives with him and his niece, Lucie, in his château near Rennes and carefully avoids giving her husband any cause for jealousy. Recently at a masked ball a young man named Damis had mistaken her for her husband's niece and had made love to her until she removed her mask. In spite of the excuses he offered, the Président believed him to be his rival and consequently, when Lucie inherited a fortune, favored as her sutor an unprepossessing lover, M. Argan. At the same time he has tried desperately to conceal the fact that he is jealous. His wife, Lucie, and the latter's *souvante*, Lisette, seek to make him understand that he has no cause for jealousy and should favor Damis. By making him believe that Damis has gone to Rennes, Lisette enables the lovers to meet. Lucie disguises herself so as to resemble the Présidente and thus makes sure of the fact that it is not her aunt whom Damis loves. When he and she have come to an understanding, the Président finds them together, mistakes Lucie for his wife, and shows his jealousy clearly. When he learns the truth, he realizes that the only way to make people believe he is not jealous is to allow the marriage to take place. The subordinate plot concerns the Président's servant, Thibaut, a man no longer young, Hortence, who is a "jardinière," and Argan's valet, Frontin. Thibaut and Hortence are connected with the main plot by the fact that they spy for the Président on his wife. Thibaut has long sought to make Hortence believe she will marry him, but, when she meets the lively young valet, she soon admits that she greatly prefers him as a husband. At the end of

The Président is a man of wealth and influence. He holds that "de toutes les passions, la jalousie est celle qui me paroit la plus honteuse & la plus deshonorante," and he knows that one who judges others will lose his standing if he is thought to be jealous, yet he thinks that every attractive young man is after his wife. He has servants spy on her, enters his house secretly, interprets her explanations as subtle methods of deceiving him. When Lisette tears up the letter that Damis had written to Lucie, he wishes to collect the pieces and make out what had been written. He seems to have read Regnard's *Bourgeois de Falaise*,<sup>15</sup> for he claims (II, 7) to have known a man who hid in an "étui de ces grosses basses de violon," and he acts like the protagonist of *l'Ecole des femmes* when Hortence tells him she heard a knock at the window, that the Présidente opened it (III, 6).

Et là tout d'un coup que c'étoit la petite guenon du Fermier qui s'est jettée sur Madame pour la caresser

Le Président *reprenant haleine* Ouf!

At the end of the play he keeps his sense of shame, for he makes the witnesses promise not to tell, but he declares that he has conquered his jealousy, though we may still wonder how he will act when the next young man appears.

His wife assures us that she loves him. She is presented as a prudent and intelligent woman. Her husband's niece resembles her physically, but she has a more romantic nature, falling in love with a man she has seen only twice and to whom she has never spoken. Lisette is the conventionally clever *servante*. Hortence is quite naive in her relations with men, but she has acquired considerable skill in spying upon the women of the family. Her patois adds to the comic element of the play. Thibaut is the typical *jaloux*. He hopes to marry Hortence, but he defeats his own aims by his attitude towards her, which contrasts as sharply with that of Frontin as do the methods of Arnolphe with those of Horace. Damis is the passionate young lover, Argan, who appears only in I, 1, 2, and III, 1, the unattractive suitor, interested only in Lucie's wealth.

The unity of the plot would have been strengthened if the final scene, in which the Président mistakes Lucie for his wife, had been planned by the women instead of being largely due to Frontin's bringing back the Président in order that he might see his wife and Damis together. We should also have been told what was the nature of the inheritance that required the intervention of judges and made it necessary for Lucie to marry either Argan or Damis. Chance, moreover, plays too large a part in the plot.

the play the Président gives her to Frontin because the latter had supplied him with information that led to his victory over his own jealousy

<sup>15</sup> Cf. my *op cit*, Part IV, p. 737

These defects do not justify the frères Parfaict's criticism<sup>16</sup> that the intrigue "n'est ni raisonnée, ni développée, ni terminée," but they help to explain why the comedy was given only once.<sup>17</sup> An article in the *Mercure de Trévoux* that the frères Parfaict cite declared that the character of the protagonist was impossible since shame can never conquer jealousy. Camipstron showed, however, the following year with his *Jaloux désabusé* that a play may succeed when its leading character is both jealous and ashamed of his jealousy. The failure of Dufresny's play would seem, then, to be due to the execution rather than to the original conception.

It did not fare much better in the second half of the century than it did in 1708. Reduced to three acts by Charles Collé, who had derived from it an operetta called *le Jaloux corrigé*,<sup>18</sup> it was published in his *théâtre de Société* of 1769 and in this form appeared at the Comédie Française, where it was played only four times. It was not without influence, however, on Beaumarchais and gave rise in 1813 to Vial's *Deux Jaloux*, "comédie en prose mêlée d'ariettes et imitée de Dufresny."<sup>19</sup>

Undiscouraged, Dufresny brought out two plays the next year. *L'AMANT MASQUÉ* was first acted on Aug. 8, 1709. There were only two other performances, the last of them on the 12th. The author received only 15 francs, 2 sous. The frères Parfaict,<sup>20</sup> who got this information from the *Registres* of the Comédie Française, state that the play was in one act and in prose with a *divertissement* and with music by Gilliers. The comedy was never published and the manuscript is lost. The frères Parfaict suggested<sup>21</sup> that the subject might be the same as that of a comedy in verse that Dufresny presented to the actors on Feb. 13, 1721. This play, announced before Lent in 1722, but never acted, was discovered and identified by M. Vic, who supposed that the incident of the masked ball in *le Jaloux honteux* had given rise to *l'Amant masqué* and that Dufresny had subsequently turned the latter play into verse, calling it *les Trois Dominos* or *les Dominos*. While his argument is appealing, it is impossible to be sure to what extent *l'Amant masqué* was altered in this transformation. The text of *les Dominos* is easily accessible, as it was published by M. Vic.<sup>22</sup>

The other play of 1709 was *LA JOUEUSE*,<sup>23</sup> one in which Dufresny intro-

<sup>16</sup> XIV, 483

<sup>17</sup> On March 6, 1708. The author's share was 71 francs, 4 sous, according to the frères Parfaict, XIV, 480.

<sup>18</sup> Given at the Opera on March 1, 1753.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Vic in *Revue du dix-huitième siècle*, III, 132-6.

<sup>20</sup> XV, 11-2.

<sup>21</sup> XV, 411.

<sup>22</sup> *Op. cit.*, II, 307-34. Vic believed that *le Portrait*, a lost play by Dufresny, was another title for *l'Amant masqué*, as a portrait has some importance in *les Dominos*.

<sup>23</sup> Paris, Briasson, 1731, 1747, Barrois, 1779, Belin, 1821. The MS was in the hands of the actors when Dufresny died, cf. Vic, *op. cit.*, IV, 290.

duced characters, situations, and even expressions he had employed in earlier comedies. The frères Parfaict<sup>24</sup> pointed this out and cited parallel passages to establish their contention. They showed that speeches of the Joueuse and the Chevalier were taken from those of the protagonist and the Marquis in Dufresny's *Joueur*; the character and certain observations of the Marquise from those of the Marquise in *le Faux Honnête-Homme*.<sup>25</sup> They also suggested that Orgon's easy-going character was derived from that of Oronte in Dufresny's *Négligent*, which may be true, but is not so easy to prove.

The point of departure was probably the *Joueur* with its gambler who loses, wins, loses, its tubercular and titled player, and its feminine pawn-broker, but the protagonist, instead of being a young man whose passion for gambling is stronger than his love, is a mother who sacrifices her daughter to her desire to win, the nobleman has grown older, is the great-uncle of the young hero, and is his rival, while the old woman who lends money on jewels does not appear on the stage. Gambling becomes still more serious in its effects as it leads the gambler to crime and comes near depriving her innocent daughter of her fortune. Dufresny borrowed less from his *Faux Honnête-Homme*, but he made fewer changes in what he borrowed a Marquise who lives for pleasure and seeks a wealthy bride for her son, but who finally agrees to his marriage to the girl he loves, her son, who has none of his mother's grasping propensities, but who realizes the importance of money in the social system of the time, and the girl who, when she thinks her fortune is lost, proposes to renounce marriage and retire to a convent. Dufresny was evidently salvaging material from two of his unsuccessful plays. His addition of Triolet, the music teacher, who has no equivalent in these earlier comedies, gave him the opportunity to introduce several songs and a final *divertissement* that are lacking in them.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> XV, 14-26

<sup>25</sup> They compare the *Joueuse*, II, 3, V, 7, III, 5, V, 4, respectively, with the *Joueur* (*Chevalier Joueur*), II, 3, V, 9 and 10, III, 11, *le Faux Honnête Homme*, III 3. They might with equal justice have compared the Marquise's plans for an afternoon in the two plays *Joueuse*, I, 10, *le Faux Honnête Homme*, I, 6.

<sup>26</sup> Mme Orgon, the gambler, has had by her first marriage a daughter, Jacinte, whose fortune of 20,000 écus and precious stones is in the keeping of her stepfather. This gentleman lives in a different apartment from his wife's and seeks in music consolation for his marriage. She complains of the noise the musicians make, he, of that made by the gamblers. Triolet, who has been giving music lessons to Jacinte, is in love with Lisette, Mme Orgon's *servante*, but he has recently married a sickly old woman who lends money on jewelry. Orgon has just returned from the country with his stepdaughter. He has invited to a musical entertainment a Marquise and her son, Damis, in whom Jacinte, while in a convent school, has become interested. Damis falls in love with Jacinte and, by lending her mother money with which to gamble, secures a promise that he may marry the girl, although Mme Orgon has promised her to the Chevalier, the Marquise's uncle, whose heir Damis is to be. The Marquise at first refuses to consent to her son's marriage, but she yields when she discovers that Jacinte has a respectable dowry and that, if she marries the Chevalier,

According to her husband, Mme Orgon spends all the time that she is awake at the green table. Many come to her house to play. She listens eagerly for them, talks of little but the game, pawns her silver and tapestries. We see her in the joy of victory and in grief over defeat. She has the gambler's superstition about bad luck and his unconquerable hope that some day it will change. Her conviction that she is sure to win induces her to borrow from her husband without his knowing it, to rob her daughter of her inheritance, and to attempt to marry her to an old man in order that she may herself in this way acquire money for further operations.

Her husband, who had once loved her, but whom her passion for gambling has disgusted, is a mild and music-loving gentleman who longs for peace at home and agreeable companionship. He is profoundly outraged when he discovers that his wife has robbed her own daughter. He describes the Marquise as follows (I, 9) :

C'est une femme de mon caractere, un caractere mêlé, moitié folie, moitié raison, n'aimant que le plaisir, c'est une humeur folâtre, vive, charmante enfin, car elle est toute opposée à l'humeur de ma femme

The Marquise differs from Orgon, however, in her selfishness and avarice. Her son adds to the familiar qualities of the young lover the decision of character required to risk playing against his prospective mother-in-law. Jacinte, though just out of a convent school, has read enough novels to wonder whether her feelings for him can be described as love. The Chevalier, Damis's great-uncle, is distinguished by his cough, his expecting to die in a few years, and his desire to make use of Jacinte's dowry in order to straighten out angles in his real estate. Triolet claims to be an "homme de bonnes mœurs, quoique Maître à chanter" (I, 2), but he is not above intriguing for the Chevalier or marrying an old woman for her money. He is a somewhat obsequious individual whose musical talents have brought him into contact with persons who patronize him and who fail to pay what they owe him. The other characters are the *servantes* of Jacinte and her mother and the Marquise's inconspicuous lackey. Strangely enough, it is Mme Orgon's *servante* rather than her daughter's who is active in bringing about Damis's marriage.

Damis may be disinherited. The death of Mme Triolet, however, reveals the fact that she had loaned money to Mme Orgon on Jacinte's jewels. Orgon now discovers that, during his absence, his wife has found the key to his strongbox and has gambled away all of Jacinte's dowry. When the Marquise learns that the girl is penniless, she tells her son that, if he marries her, she will disinherit him by taking a second husband. Mme Orgon wins so much with money borrowed from Damis that she can return what she has stolen, but she keeps some of her winnings in order to gain more and loses everything. When the Chevalier learns that Jacinte is to have no dowry, he withdraws, but Damis, who has been playing with Mme Orgon, wins back the dowry as fast as she loses it. He has also been able to redeem the jewels. There is now no obstacle to his marriage with Jacinte. Triolet is persuaded, in spite of the fact that his wife has just died, to supply a musical entertainment that gives the play its *divertissement*.



The play gives a number of details about manners, especially those of gamblers and musicians. A game is compared to a performance by the greatest actors "on met mille louis sur une carte, toute la table est inondée d'un flux & reflux d'or roulant" (V, 6). The gamblers' supper is described in lively fashion (II, 8)

On prend du sel avec le coin d'une carte, & on voit courir à la ronde un chapon en l'air, chacun en arrache son lopin, comme quand on tire l'oye celui-ci boit d'une main, & joue de l'autre, l'un avale en gémissant, l'autre mâche en jurant, celui-ci mange les cartes avec son pain, & l'autre avale sa rage avec un verre de vin

One starts for the opera at 4 P. M., for the Comédie Française at 5 (I, 10). We are shown a teacher instructing his pupil in the art of singing, witness the confusion brought into a family by music and gambling, hear much about the importance of money in making a marriage and in keeping it from leading to separation. At the end of the play there is an analysis of Triolet's "Opera du jeu," which seems intended as a satire upon both gambling and the opera. It begins as follows

Ce seroit un Poeme Tragique, le Théâtre représenteroit le Temple du malheur, on y verroit le desespoir, force Joueurs poignardés, se poignardant, voilà le tragique cela Un chœur infernal de juremens & d'imprécations ce chœur-là feroit frémir, & c'est le but du Poeme qu'Aristote demande A l'égard du comique, les Femmes Joueuses en founiroient de reste

The play has other satirical thrusts:

Comment pourrais-je ne pas croire que je suis jeune? il y a si long-tems qu'on me le dit (I, 10)

On devroit toujours commencer par se séparer, pour conserver l'union dans un ménage (I, 10)

La symphonie ne sert à present que de basse continue à la conversation (II, 2)

Dufresny's aim was artistic rather than moral, for, however much we may condemn the Joueuse, we must admit that the harm she does her daughter is to a great extent corrected by Damis's gambling. Unfortunately the dénouement shows as little art as it does morality. If Damis had lost, how would the play have ended? Moreover, though the comedy is too long and parts of it might easily have been omitted, the Joueuse should have had a more extensive rôle and one that would allow us to understand her better. As it is, the spectators' attention is so dispersed that, in spite of a good deal of interesting material in the play, it must have been difficult for them to show enthusiasm. The result was that it was acted only five times in 1709<sup>27</sup> and was not revived.

To have four or five plays fail in six years would have discouraged a dramatist less accustomed to adversity than Dufresny. Even he brought out no new play for several years. When he did so, he received from the

<sup>27</sup> Oct 22 to 30. According to the frères Parfaict, XV, 14, 18, the author's share in the receipts was 207 francs, 7 sous, and the Joueuse was played by la Champvallon.

actors less encouragement than ever. According to the *Mercure galant* of November, 1714,<sup>28</sup> he presented to the troupe in that year a play called *LES DEUX VEUVES OU LE FAUX DAMIS*, which was rejected because Dancourt, interested in two of his own plays, wished to avoid competition. As, however, neither of these was acted after Jan. 11, 1715, and a comedy by Dufresny was accepted by the troupe in time to be acted on May 27, 1715, it is unreasonable to suppose that the rejection of *les Deux Veuves* was due merely to Dancourt's influence. Nothing else is known of this production, which was never published and is not mentioned by the frères Parfaict, Domann, or Vic.

Dufresny must have thought it necessary to make a radical change in his methods. He did this by writing in verse and by excluding servants from his cast when he composed his next comedy, *LA COQUETTE DE VILLAGE OU LE LOT SURPOSÉ*.<sup>29</sup> It is a three-act play that describes village life, in which classes mingled more freely than at Paris.<sup>30</sup> The principal characters are Lucas and his daughter. The former expresses his ambition in patois (I, 2)

Labourer pour stier, labourer pour stila!  
 J'ai labouré trente ans, après trente ans me vla  
 Labourer pour autrui c'est un ptit labourage  
 Faut labourer pour soi, c'est ça qui donn' courage  
 Pour égaliser tout, faudroit il pas margoir  
 Que les autres à leur tour labourissent pour moi?

He urges his daughter to marry the Baron until he thinks he has won the "gros lot." After that he insults the nobleman by keeping his hat on in his presence, by taking an armchair, and by boasting that his "fortune

<sup>28</sup> Cited by Mélése, *Th. et Pub.*, p. 113.

<sup>29</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1715, 12°. Republished in Dufresny's works, Paris, Briasson, 1731, 1747, Barrois, 1779, Belin, 1821, in his *Œuvres choisies*, 1840, in *Chefs-d'œuvre*, 1845, in the *Répertoire Petitot* of 1804, the *Auteurs du Second Ordre* of 1809, and the *Répertoire* of 1818. The play was studied briefly by Lément, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-4.

<sup>30</sup> Lucas, an uneducated farmer, has a pretty daughter, Lisette, whose natural turn for flirtation has been cultivated by a Veuve who had been a *servante* at Paris, but who had married a bailiff and has remained in the village since his death. Lisette has three admirers: the Baron, Girard, the village *receveur*, and Argan, a man of fifty-four whom the Veuve would like to marry. Lucas, weary of working for others, has bought forty tickets in a Parisian lottery. Girard, whose cousin prints the lottery announcements, has had him send two lists of winners, one the true list, the other indicating that Lucas has won the "gros lot" of 100,000 francs. Lisette uses her charms to induce both the Baron and Argan to sign a marriage contract with her. Girard is considered less desirable than Argan, the latter, than the Baron, who, though in debt, still owns the village château. The Veuve finds that her lessons have been so successful that Lisette may take from her the man she hopes to marry. When Lucas is shown the false list and believes he has won a fortune, he becomes unbearably arrogant, turns over his farm leases to Girard, and proposes to take his daughter to Paris, increase his wealth, and marry her to a more distinguished man than the village offers. Argan, rejected by Lisette, agrees to marry the Veuve. Then the true list is produced, Lucas is held up to scorn, and Lisette, no longer able to win the Baron, is obliged to accept Girard.

asteur soit bian pu haut qu'la vôtre" (III, 3). He proposes to purchase the château and make the Baron his overseer, then naively determines to put his money into "la grande aventure" and watch it swell. When the bubble is pricked, he, like Arnolphe, can say only "Ouf."

His daughter, when nine, was already a "coquette en herbe." Her talents have been developed by the Veuve's precepts and by practice on the Baron and Argan. She weeps or falls into a reverie, according to her lovers' tastes, cajoles them or dismisses them until each is ready to sign the contract. When her father dreams of great wealth, she dreams of many lovers, lackeys, and *suivantes*. When she learns that her father has not won the "gros lot" and has deprived himself of his farms, she blames the Veuve for her evil lessons and assures Girard that, without them, "Par tendresse d'abord, je vous aurois choisi." But the widow has another explanation (III, 5)

Voilà le sort d'une coquette  
Après de haut[s] projets, on la voit tôt ou tard,  
Confuse, confondue, & réduite à Girard

To these leading characters are added the Veuve, who unwisely varies the monotony of village life by imparting to Lisette the secrets she has learned at Paris, and the three suitors the Baron, dull, impecunious, disliking to marry beneath him, but attracted by a flirt; Argan, conscious of his age, but egotistic enough to believe he has won the girl's affections, and the clever *arriviste*, Girard, described by the Veuve as follows (I, 1) ·

Maltotier de village, encor dans les regrats,  
Tu dois en tout pays trouver des cœurs ingrats  
Mais pendant quelque tems agiote, grapille,  
Contrôle, taille, rogne, en plain pille & repille,  
A force d'enquaisser, de compter, d'escompter,  
Tu pourras parvenir à te faire écouter

The play has no *personnages sympathiques*, no sentimentality. A moral is indicated in the lines given to the widow at the end of the play, but, as such verses are quite in keeping with her character, Dufresny cannot on account of them be accused of moralizing. There are no tedious passages in this brisk and completely unified little play, one of its author's most entertaining productions.

First acted on May 27, 1715, it was given sixteen times in that year. The author's preface, in which he speaks slightly of critics, testifies to its success. The *Mercure galant* found it "pleine d'esprit" and "une des plus jolies comédies qu'on puisse voir," refers especially to the coquette and the "manant qui fait fortune," and praises the acting of Ponteuil and la Desmares, adding that la Dangeville "la seconde, parfaitement"<sup>21</sup> From this it seems clear that Ponteuil played Lucas, la Desmares, Lisette; la

<sup>21</sup> Frères Parfaict, XV, 200, and Mélite, Rép, p 223

Dangeville (née Grandval), the Veuve. In June the *Mercur* published a letter from the abbé de Pons that is partly reproduced by the frères Parfaict.<sup>22</sup> He admitted the success of the play, but he objected to the title on the ground that Lisette seemed to be a Parisian rather than a village coquette. He considered the conduct of the Baron not sufficiently clear. He held that Lucas does not remain long enough on the stage while bragging about his fortune and that he is undeceived too abruptly. He regretted that the play is not in five acts. The frères Parfaict disapproved of this criticism and praised highly the scenes in which Lucas and Lisette appear. An author has, of course, a right to determine the number of acts in his play. The abbé missed the point of the title, intended to poke fun at those who look upon all village belles as naive. The criticism of the Baron is due to the wooden psychology of classical critics, who allowed no variations in a man's behavior. The regret that Lucas in his state of ill-founded exhilaration does not remain longer on the stage, like the disappointment that the play is in three acts rather than in five, is a compliment, if unintentional, to Dufresny. The play was revived in 1733 and remained in the repertory until 1778. As the total number of performances was 82, the comedy ranks third in popularity among those Dufresny wrote for the Comédie Française in the reign of Louis XIV.

These plays show that Dufresny was a man of imagination and of ability in employing a variety of comic devices. His satirical spirit, which ridiculed opera, various forms of superstition and of social hypocrisy, his talent for sketching character, for writing comic dialogue, and for conceiving entertaining situations should have brought him greater success than they did. He seems to have lacked, when it was a question of his own work, the critical judgment on which he relied in regard to others. In some of his comedies he undertook subjects that could better have been treated in a novel, or he allowed defects in structure that longer meditation might have avoided. In the early eighteenth century he wrote two comedies that remained for a long time in the repertory, one that, though well received at first, did not last into a second season, and several that were failures. This record hardly does him justice, for even the plays that failed contain excellent comic passages. Less a man of the theater than Dancourt, less a poet than Regnard, he made for himself a distinct place among Molière's successors. When Voltaire enumerated seven short comedies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that he considered superior to most of Molière's shorter productions, three of them,<sup>23</sup> *l'Esprit de contradiction*, *le Double Veuve*, and *la Coquette de village*, were written by Dufresny.

<sup>22</sup> XV, 201-4

<sup>23</sup> *Op. cit.*, XXII, 247. The others were Champmeslé's *Florentin*, *le Grondeur* by Brueys and Palaprat, Dancourt's *Galant Jardinier*, and Fagan's *Pupille*.

## CHAPTER XIII

### REGNARD

In his seventeenth-century plays Regnard had shown that his principal guides were the Théâtre Italien, Plautus, and Molière.<sup>1</sup> His three chief eighteenth-century comedies felt the same influences. The first of them, *LES FOLIES AMOUREUSES*,<sup>2</sup> was said by a contemporary to be "tout-à-fait dans le goût italien."<sup>3</sup> In 1719 Charni was more specific, holding that there were "vers la fin, quelques faux airs de la *Finta Pazza* des Italiens"<sup>4</sup> Cited by Fournier, this remark made Toldo<sup>5</sup> believe that the plot was derived from an Italian opera, *la Finta Pazza*, produced in France in the time of Mazarin, or from a scenario of the same name by Flaminio Scala. Lénient took the first alternative, Lintilhac, the second. The only evidence is that furnished by Toldo to the effect that in Scala's scenario the heroine pretends to be mad and attacks the man she is expected to marry. I conclude that Regnard may have taken the airs indicated by Charni from the opera, the episode of pretended madness from the scenario.

It may also be argued that the general tone of the comedy recalls that of the Théâtre Italien, which may have been the source of the trick played on Albert by Lisette and of the heroine's wearing an "habit de Scaramouche," spitting in her guardian's face, stamping on his foot, and pretending to have been, at twenty-seven, the mother of fourteen children. However, the presence of a prologue and the fact that the last act is followed by a *divertissement* are in the French tradition as well as the Italian, the main portion of the play is, in the simplicity of the material and the unity of the structure, far more French than Italian, and the comedies to which the play seems most closely related are not Italian, but French. Molière's *Sicilien*, as Toldo suggests, his *Ecole des maris*, and Champmeslé's *Florentin*.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. my *op cit.*, Part IV, pp. 649-65, 731-54.

<sup>2</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1704, 8°, 1707, 12°, Barba, 1819, Marchant, 1844, Blot, 1863, by Ad. Rion, 1878, in two undated editions and in editions of the author's collected works of the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale. Dutch translations were published in 1710 and 1727. For a study of the play cf. Lénient, *op cit.*, I, 56-67.

<sup>3</sup> Flachat de Saint-Sauveur, *Pièces fugitives*, Paris, 1704, p. 527, cited by the frères Parfaict, XIV, 321.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Fournier's edition of Regnard, p. lxx.

<sup>5</sup> *RHL*, XI (1904), 67-9.

<sup>6</sup> The subject of all four plays is a clever girl's escape with her lover's help from an unattractive and elderly guardian. Other resemblances to French plays can be mentioned. The comparison between the siege of a town and that of a woman (I, 7) had been employed by Champmeslé in *les Grisettes* (cf. my *op cit.*, Part III, p. 766). Medical talk used to distract attention while preparations are made for an elopement.

Regnard probably composed his play in three acts and in alexandrines, then lengthened it to the equivalent of five by adding a prologue and a *divertissement* that serves as an epilogue, both written in "vers libres".<sup>7</sup> This seems the more likely as the plays he had previously composed for the Comédie Française are all in one act or in five. The prologue is especially in honor of la Beauval, who created her last rôle in that of Lisette. She is said to be the author's friend and is presented as a woman who quickly changes her mind. Dancourt, who seems to lead the troupe, recognizes her importance in the play. La Desbrosses and Du Boccage are little more than messengers, though the prologue also served to welcome Du Boccage, who was to become a member of the troupe a few weeks after the play was first acted. Like the *divertissement*, the prologue was given only during the early performances of the play.

There are only five characters that take part in the three acts of the comedy. Agathe dominates the action, plans her own abduction, procures the money it requires, aids her friends in getting Albert out of the way. She shows her imagination in the variety of her disguises and the methods she uses, not only to deceive Albert, but to torment and insult him. Her guardian is a widower who desires children. He is jealous, opinionated,

(III, 10) is found in *le Médecin malgré lui*. The transfer of a pretended malady from one body to another (III, 10) had occurred in *la Devineresse* (cf. my *op. cit.*, Part IV, p. 919).

<sup>7</sup>The characters of the prologue are Momus, two actresses, la Beauval and la Desbrosses, and two actors, Dancourt and a recent arrival at the Comédie Française, Du Boccage. La Beauval objects to giving a comedy in only three acts and, despite Dancourt's protests, refuses to play till la Desbrosses reports that the author wishes to withdraw his comedy, whereupon she insists upon playing it. Du Boccage announces that Momus has arrived with la Folie, Carnaval, and others. The god proposes to help with singing and dancing, as he does in the *divertissement*. He then asks support from the parterre.

The three acts follow. Agathe, a wealthy orphan, brought up by Eraste's mother, has been confided at her death and while Eraste is away to Albert, who has for six months kept her shut up in his château. Eraste has just returned from Italy with his valet, Crispin. Albert, disturbed by the signs of a man prowling about, engages a workman to put bars on the exits to the château. To explain his presence, Crispin tells Albert that he is collecting herbs needed for his practice of medicine. Eraste bows to Albert and pretends that his carriage has broken down. Moved by the young man's presence and by that of a locksmith, Agathe acts as if she has lost her mind, treats Albert roughly, gives him a piece of music and Eraste a note asking him to carry her off. After singing and dancing, she disappears into the house, followed by her maid, Lisette. Albert, who believes that her mental illness is genuine, begs Crispin to cure her. She reappears as an old woman, borrows from Albert 100 louis to help her win a law suit, and gets the money into Eraste's hands. Then, disguised as a dragon, she raves about war and sinks into a chair. Crispin removes her illness into Eraste, who pursues Albert with a sword. Crispin and Lisette prevail upon Albert to seek a sedative in the house. When he returns, he finds that the lovers and their servants have eloped.

In *Le Mariage de la Folie*, which constitutes the *divertissement*, the lovers and their attendants have reached the home of Eraste's friend, Clitandre, who is making preparations for the wedding. Momus, Carnaval, and Folie come with their troupe. Carnaval, after some hesitation, agrees to marry Folie. When Albert arrives and demands Agathe, she replies that love makes her prefer Eraste. Folie approves of her attitude and advises Albert to seek consolation in wine, which he agrees to do.

autocratic, and extremely gullible. He and Eraste, the conventional young lover, Crispin and Lisette, the clever valet and knowing *servante*, all contribute to the plot and to carrying on the amusing dialogue.

Act I contains the exposition, rouses Albert's suspicions, and determines him to employ a locksmith. In Act II the rivals meet, Agathe has her first mad scene, and she succeeds in notifying Eraste of her intentions. In Act III Agathe removes financial difficulties, while Crispin, assisted by the lovers and Lisette, gets Albert out of the way, and the *dénouement* is accomplished. The action is simple and rapid, the dialogue varied and effective. There are references to the war in Germany, to the crossing of the Alps near Mount Cenis, to the various trades that Crispin claims to have practised, to abbés as rivals of husbands, to Terence, Hippocrates, Galen, and the Congo, but the play is by no means a comedy of manners. It is a bright and lively fantasy presented in sparkling verse. Note, for instance, the comic tirades of which Regnard was fond

Un écolier qui sort d'avec son précepteur,  
Une fille longtemps au célibat liée,  
Qui quitte ses parents pour être mariée,  
Un esclave qui sort des mains des incréants,  
Un vieux forçat qui rompt sa chaîne après trente ans,  
Un héritier qui voit un oncle rendre l'âme,  
Un époux, quand il suit le convoi de sa femme,  
N'ont pas le demi quart tant de plaisir que j'ai  
En recevant de vous ce bienheureux congé (I, 2)

J'ai couru l'univers, le monde est ma patrie  
Faute de revenu, je vis de l'industrie,  
Comme bien d'autres font, selon l'occasion,  
Quelquefois honnête homme, et quelquefois fripon  
J'ai servi volontaire un an dans la marine,  
Et, me sentant le cœur enclin à la rapine,  
Après avoir été dix huit mois flibustier,  
Un mien parent me fit apprenti maltôtier  
J'ai porté le mousquet en Flandre, en Allemagne,  
Et j'étais miquelet dans les guerres d'Espagne (I, 5)

Vos traits sont effacés, elle est aimable et fraîche,  
Elle a l'esprit bien fait, et vous l'humeur revêche,  
Elle n'a pas seize ans, et vous êtes fort vieux  
Elle se porte bien, vous êtes catarrheux.  
Elle a toutes ses dents, qui la rendent plus belle,  
Vous n'en avez plus qu'une, encore branle t'elle,  
Et doit être emportée à la première toux (II, 2)

The *divertissement* is longer than in most such productions. Its title, *le Mariage de la Folie*, must have been suggested by La Motte's *comédie-ballet* danced on Oct. 14, 1703, *le Mariage de Carnaval et de la Folie*, in which as here Momus and Carnaval are rival lovers of la Folie. Thus

*divertissement* helps the plot by showing that Eraste and Agathe are about to be married and that Albert withdraws his opposition to the match, but its chief purpose is to introduce Momus and the allegorical figures, Carnaval and Folie, with an appropriate reference to the suspension of war during Carnival and a considerable amount of singing and dancing. A passage in the first scene seems to refer to Regnard himself and his life on his estate called Grillon, where he is known to have entertained actors, including Dancourt and la Beauval:

Pour être heureux, je l'avouerai,  
Je me suis fait une façon de vie  
A qui les souverains pourraient porter envie,  
Et, tant qu'il se pourra, je la continuerai  
Selon mes revenus je règle ma dépense,  
Et je ne vivrais pas content,  
Si, toujours en argent comptant,  
Je n'en avais au moins deux ans d'avance  
Les dames, le jeu, ni le vin,  
Ne m'arrachent point à moi-même,  
Et cependant je bois, je joue et j'aime  
Faire tout ce qu'on veut, vivre exempt de chagrin,  
Ne se rien refuser, voilà tout mon système,  
Et de mes jours ainsi j'attraperai la fin \*

The play was enormously successful. Acted first on Jan. 15, 1704, it was given fourteen times in that year.<sup>9</sup> Except in 1722 and 1752, it was performed every year as late as 1793. Even after that it was played so frequently that by 1919 it had had 1089 performances at the Comédie Française, more than either *le Cid* or *Phèdre*. Indeed, for the period 1680-1920, only *les Plaudeurs* and eight comedies by Molière were more frequently acted at that theater. It remained in the repertory even later than that, reaching, by the end of 1926, the remarkable total of 1117 performances.<sup>10</sup>

In his next play Regnard drew closer to ordinary life and gave a larger place to character and manners. He admitted frankly that *LES MÉNECHIMES* OU *LES JUMEAUX*<sup>11</sup> is an adaptation of Plautus's *Menaechmi*, but he really derived from the Latin comedy little more than the idea of drawing comic situations from a story of identical twins, long separated and meeting only near the end of the play. His comedy is quite superior to the three earlier French plays derived from the *Menaechmi*, Rotrou's *Ménechmes*, Bour-

\* Cf. frères Parfaict, XIV, 402

<sup>9</sup> According to Fournier's edition of Regnard, p. lxx, the first performance earned 1833 francs, 12 sous

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Edouard Champion, *La Comédie-Française, année 1936*, p. 348

<sup>11</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1706, 12°, 1709, 12°. Republished in two undated editions, in one by Ad. Rion in 1878, and in one by Stock in 1898, as well as in editions of the author's collected works. A Dutch translation appeared in 1779. The play was studied by Lenient, *op cit.*, I, 67-76



sault's *Nicandres*, and Lenoble's *Deux Arlequins*, from none of which is it probable that he drew suggestions.<sup>12</sup> From Plautus he derived his two brothers, but he differentiated their characters sharply, as Plautus had not done, had them separated for a different reason from that given in the Latin play, and made neither desirous of finding the other. His one valet has a rôle corresponding to Messenio's, but he is no longer a slave and he is much more active in conducting the intrigue. Instead of the wife and the mistress of one Plautine twin, Regnard introduces two respectable and unmarried women, one the aunt of the other. The younger woman's father replaces in very different scenes the old father-in-law of the married twin in Plautus. Erotium's male cook and her maid are combined in Finette. About the only details borrowed are the invitation to dinner, comment on the danger that a young man in a strange city may meet from women, the suggestion that the latter may get information about him from the locality where he first arrives, and a portion of the dialogue between the brothers when they meet.

Regnard omits Plautus's parasite, physician, and slaves. He adds a notary, a merchant and a Gascon marquis. The place is changed to Paris. The time is the early eighteenth century, with a corresponding use of the war in which France was then engaged. The chief question is not so much whether the twins will be reunited as it is whether the young lovers will marry.

Naudet, an editor of Plautus, remarked that in Regnard's comedy "il n'y a qu'une dupe, par conséquent moins d'effets comiques."<sup>13</sup> If this were true, a comedy based on identical quadruplets in ignorance of one another's identity would have twice the comic effect of the *Menaechmi*. Naudet's argument can appeal only to propagandists for the ancient classics. It had been answered by La Harpe<sup>14</sup> before it was expressed.

[Regnard] multiplie bien davantage les surprises, et met à de bien plus grandes épreuves la patience du Menechme campagnard. La ressemblance ne produit guère dans Plaute que des friponneries assez froides, dans Regnard elle produit une foule de situations plus jouissantes les unes que les autres.

Regnard seems to have realized the danger of monotony in a comedy based purely on mistaken identity and to have sought variety by having one of the twins know who the other is before he is himself recognized by his brother.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. my *op cit*, Part I, pp. 623-5; Part III, pp. 693-5, and Part IV, pp. 642-4. The only way in which Regnard's play resembles the comedies of Boursault and Lenoble more closely than it does the *Menaechmi* lies in the fact that none of the twins in the three French plays is married, but this fact is no proof of influence. It is much more probable that Regnard owed the exchange of valets, an important motif not found in Plautus, to Thomas Corneille's *Dom César d'Avalos*, cf. my *op cit*, Part IV, p. 449.

<sup>13</sup> Cited by A. Ernout in his *Plaute*, Paris, les Belles Lettres, 1936, IV, 10.

<sup>14</sup> *Op cit*, VIII, 317-8.

He composed a play that has much more human interest and is far less crude in the devices employed than is its model. Knowing, however, the respect with which Plautus was regarded by some of his critics, he took the precautions of showing his manuscript to Boileau, whom he had attacked a few years before, of getting his approval, and of writing a prologue in which he explained what he was attempting to do <sup>15</sup>

Writing under the auspices of Boileau and complimenting Molière in his prologue, Regnard must have felt quite safe in altering Plautus at will. Identical twins are usually alike in character, but this may well be because their environment has been much the same. To Plautus long separation seems to have meant nothing, but Regnard must have felt that it would make acceptable the great difference in the brothers' characters as he conceived them. Both are handsome, but the Chevalier has had the military and social experience of a young officer, fighting in the summer and spending his winters at Paris, while his brother has continued to rusticate near Péronne. The Chevalier has made many friends, has learned how to charm women, is brave, honorable according to fashionable standards, and impecunious. He is in debt to a merchant and to a Gascon marquis, probably to many other persons. As in plays by Dancourt, he has equipped his regiment at the expense of an unattractive woman, whom he has promised to marry.

<sup>15</sup> Apollo and Mercury meet on Parnassus, each weary of his usual occupation. Mercury regrets the lack of good plays since the death of Molière, whom he calls "le censeur de son temps, l'amour des beaux esprits." Apollo suggests reviving Plautus who appears and declares that manners and customs have changed so much that, if one of his comedies is to be given, it must be adapted by a French dramatist to modern tastes. Apollo says he has seen such a work. Mercury agrees to have it acted and begs the audience to be indulgent.

The Menechme brothers lost their mother at birth and subsequently their father. One has spent thirty years or more in Picardy, near Péronne, while the other, the Chevalier, has joined the army and become an officer. For two years the Chevalier has been aided in equipping his regiment by wealthy Araminte, whom he has promised to marry but he has recently fallen in love with her niece, Isabelle, daughter of Demophon. Now it happens that his uncle has died and, not knowing that his military nephew was alive, has left his fortune of 60,000 écus to his other nephew. A notary, Robertin, who has charge of the money, has proposed to Demophon that he marry his daughter to the heir. The rustic Menechme takes the coach for Paris to get his money and his bride, but his valise with Robertin's letter is exchanged with the valise of the Chevalier who is thus made aware of the situation. The Chevalier is invited to dinner by Araminte, but he finds that he is too busy to dine with her. She meets his brother, thinks he is the Chevalier and is rudely treated. On the other hand, the Chevalier, mistaken for his brother, is cordially received by Demophon and Isabelle, who, however, subsequently mistake his brother for him and are disgusted by his boorish remarks. The brother from near Péronne fears the advances of women, is irritated by a merchant who seeks to collect what the Chevalier owes him and in order to avoid a duel, is obliged to pay 60 louis to a Gascon marquis. In the meanwhile, assisted by his valet, Valentin, the Chevalier has secured the 60,000 écus. He makes his peace with Isabelle by explaining who he and his brother are. When the notary and the rustic Menechme meet, each accuses the other of trying to rob him, but the Chevalier appears in time to explain their mistake. The Chevalier agrees to divide the inheritance equally with his brother on condition that he be allowed to marry Isabelle and that his rustic brother will marry Araminte. A third marriage will be that of Valentin and Araminte's servant, Finette.

This promise means as little to him as do the legal aspects of his uncle's legacy. In the latter case he takes the law into his own hands and agrees to divide with his brother only on condition the latter replace him as Araminte's fiancé and renounce his claim on Isabelle. But these questionable practices do not prevent his being a person with whom we sympathize.

His brother, on the other hand, has made no promise of marriage, is not in debt, and does not attempt to defraud the Chevalier, but "il est brusque, impoli," has not "goûté l'air de Paris, Et c'est un franc Picard" (II, 1). He is bewildered by life in the capital, fears the wiles of women and the marquis's sword, speaks insultingly to Démophon, Araminte, and Isabelle, expresses his pleasure over his uncle's death and his brother's disappearance. His ignorance and conceit are well described by himself (III, 8)

J'aime les gens d'esprit plus que personne en France  
J'en ai du plus brillant, et le tout sans science  
Je trouve que l'étude est le parfait moyen  
De gâter la jeunesse et n'est utile à rien  
Aussi je n'ai jamais mis le nez dans un livre  
Et quand un gentilhomme, en commençant à vivre,  
Sait tirer en volant, boire, et signer son nom,  
Il est aussi savant que défunt Cicéron

The niece and the aunt are also contrasted. Isabelle is young, charming, offended by one brother, attracted by the other, gifted with irony that she uses against her aunt and her rustic suitor. Araminte, past fifty, though she is unwilling to admit it, is domineering, eager for a husband, seeking to make the most of her faded charms, unconscious of the impression she produces, and quite a suitable match for the gentleman from Picardy

Valentin is an active and clever valet, as ambitious to become rich as his prototype in *le Joueur*. He hopes in two years to appear in a "char magnifique," to have servants of his own and a love-nest near the city ramparts, which he offers to share with the outspoken *suivante*, Finette. Old Démophon is kindly and intelligent. A more original creation is the obsequious M. Coquelet, a "marchand fripier" and "marguillier,"<sup>16</sup> who hesitates to appeal to the law, but who insists on being paid his due. Noteworthy, too, are the Gascon marquis, who speaks French with the accent of Bordeaux and frightens the wrong Ménechme into paying him, and the busy notary, Robertin, who pays antiquated compliments, mingled with words of his profession, and defends his honesty when it is questioned.

The introduction of these minor characters, references to the war in

<sup>16</sup> Lintilhac, *Histoire*, IV, 132, holds that the most characteristic expression of Regnard's comic fancy is found in the lines (III, 11)

Ménechme Laissez moi lui couper le nez  
Valentin Laissez le aller  
Que feriez-vous, monsieur, du nez d'un marguillier?

Flanders, to travel by coach, to the delivery of baggage, to matrimonial arrangements and questions of inheritance give the play a considerable study of manners. While Paris seems to some a center of culture and refinement, it impresses quite differently the visitor from Picardy (II, 2) :

LA, l'épée à la main des archers malfaisants,  
Conduisant leur capture, insultent les passants  
Un fiacre, me couvrant d'un déluge de boue,  
Contre le mur voisin m'écrase de sa roue,  
Et, voulant me sauver, des porteurs inhumains  
De leur maudit bâton me donnent dans les reins

The play is well constructed. The action is unified and the interest steadily increases. Scenes of mistaken identity, absent from the first act, are found in all the others and reach a climax in V, 5, after which the brothers are seen together for the first time and the solution is obtained. Except for the strange chance that the elderly woman who loves the Chevalier should be the aunt of the girl who has been thought of as a suitable fiancée for the Chevalier's brother, and the equally peculiar circumstance that the brothers reach Paris at about the same time, the events are reasonably probable. The tone is comic throughout.<sup>17</sup>

The play was cordially received by the public, though the actors seem to have had some difficulty in staging it, perhaps because it was not easy for them to represent identical twins. It was presented to them on Dec. 2, 1704, again on Jan. 13, 1705. Though it was accepted, the actors did not fix a date for playing it until Sept. 19 of the latter year, so that it was not acted until Dec. 4.<sup>18</sup> It was presented twelve times in that month, eleven times in 1706. By 1791 it had been given in every year except four. It remained in the repertory of the Comédie Française until 1907, with a record of 541 performances, ranking fourth in this respect among its author's plays.

According to the *Gazette de Rotterdam*,<sup>19</sup> it won applause both at court and at Paris and was thought to be as witty as any comedy that had appeared since the death of Molière. A writer in the *Journal de Trévoux*<sup>20</sup> was less enthusiastic. He admitted that Regnard had succeeded in the substitutions he had made for scenes in Plautus's play and had avoided monotony, but he held that he had not always respected the proprieties, that his diction was not exact, and that there were no characters in the play.

<sup>17</sup> Regnard's use of older plays for comic effect, especially noticeable in his *Legataire*, is exemplified in *les Ménechmes*, V, 6, when the Chevalier offers to divide the inheritance with his brother and the latter exclaims, "A ce dernier trait là je reconnois mon frère," parodying *le Cid*, v. 264.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. the *frères Parfaict*, XIV, 374, and Fournier, *op. cit.*, pp. lxxii-iii. The latter states that the first performance earned 1807 francs, 16 sous.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted by Mélessé, *Rép.*, p. 216.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. the *frères Parfaict*, XIV, 375-8.

He explained that he meant by characters persons who give us horror for vice or who rouse us to acts of virtue. Certainly from this point of view Regnard stands condemned, but, if we are not seeking moral instruction, we may heartily enjoy the dramatist's gaiety and will not be shocked by his easy-going morality or his occasional disregard for the proprieties and for rules of prosody.<sup>21</sup>

Regnard's last five-act play brought him one of his greatest triumphs. *LE LIGATAIRE UNIVERSEL*,<sup>22</sup> written in the tone of a farce, is as gay and lively a production as any that its author composed. It is highly reminiscent of Molière. The imitation of *le Malade imaginaire* is obvious in the rôles of Géronte, Lisette, and Clistorel, while there are minor borrowings from other plays by Molière and by other dramatists.<sup>23</sup>

There has been much discussion about the inspiration for the important incident of the will, presented in Acts IV and V.<sup>24</sup> An allusion in the thirtieth canto of the *Inferno* to Gianni Schicchi brought from the commentators a tale that corresponds closely to Crispin's impersonating Géronte in the presence of Eraste and the notary and to his remembering his own interests in the false will, to the lawful heir's disgust. Toldo showed that a similar story had been related by Marco Cademosto da Lodi, and Altrocchi added a reference to Nicolao Granucci. These sixteenth-century writers may have followed Dante's commentators or they may have found the story elsewhere.

It has also been held that the episode was based on an incident in real life. Shortly after the play was first acted, the *Nouveau Mercure* pointed

<sup>21</sup> Many persons who were not shocked must have been present at the very successful performance of the play that Sarcey attended in 1885, cf *Quarante ans de théâtre*, Paris, 1900, II, 229-36.

<sup>22</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1708 and 1714, 12°. Republished, veuve P. Ribou 1731, Duchesne, 1775, Barba, 1820, Sanson, 1820, Ad. Rion, 1888, Boulanger, 1894, Hatier, 1926. Classiques Quillet, 1928, Lesot (arrangé pour jeunes gens), 1931, Larousse, 1935, and in editions of the author's collected works. A Dutch translation appeared in 1725, an Italian translation in 1798. For an English adaptation of 1769, *Wil's Last Stake*, cf Georges Roth, *RHL*, XXI (1914), 174-6.

<sup>23</sup> The scene (I, 4) in which Géronte tells his nephew that he intends to marry the girl the young man loves resembles *l'Arare*, I, 4, difficulties between apothecaries and physicians (II, 11) had been brought into Villiers's *l'apothicaire dévot*, Crispin's method of disgusting Geronte with his relatives is exactly that employed by the valet and the *servant* in *les Petits Maîtres d'été* (cf my *op. cit.*, Part IV, p. 858), verses 9 and 10 in III, 1, are reminiscent of *George Dandin*, the jest in III, 2 about the woman's inability to calculate as an excuse for the birth of her baby soon after her marriage, had been employed in Dufresny's *Mal-assortis* (cf my *op. cit.*, Part IV, pp. 669-70), "C'est à vous de sortir. La maison m'appartient" (III, 2) resembles *Tartuffe*, vv. 1537-8, "Il s'est allé jeter—Ou donc? dans la rivière"—Non monsieur, sur son lit (V, 4) comes from *l'Amour médecin* I, 6. The last of these and some other resemblances were pointed out by H. Parigot, *Genre et Métier*, Paris, 1894, pp. 155-60, cf also the letter of Théodore Reinach cited by Sarcey, *op. cit.*, II, 247-8, and, for a possible borrowing from Brueys's *Empiriques*, Maurice Baudin, *MLN*, XLVI (1931), 84-5.

<sup>24</sup> Cf Toldo, *RHL*, XI (1904), 72-3, and *Giornale storico*, XLVIII (1906), 113-23, Rudolph Altrocchi, *PMLA*, XXIX (1914), 200-24, and Fournier, *op. cit.*

out that, in the scene where Crispin makes the will, "on fait . . . ce qui se fait quelquefois en pareille occasion autre part que sur le Theatre."<sup>25</sup> L  ris and Cl  ment et La Porte declared that a similar incident had actually occurred, but they did not indicate when or where. Editors of Regnard have been more specific. They have stated that a wealthy man of Besan  on, M. d'Ancier, died in the house of the Jesuits at Rome. Members of the Society of Jesus persuaded a farmer to take the place of the corpse and dictate a will making them the heirs of the deceased but the farmer in the presence of the notary added items that gave him a large part of the inheritance. This incident was dramatized in the latter part of the eighteenth century in *les Jammabos* by Fenouillot de Falbaire. The story, told in notes added to the play, was reproduced in the 1830 edition of Regnard and in Fournier's edition. Mr. Altrocchi established the fact that early in the seventeenth century the Jesuits did inherit from the M. d'Ancier of the comedy, but he could find no evidence that they played the trick, which may have been borrowed by the author from *le L  gataire universel* in order to discredit the Jesuits. One may conclude that Regnard did not invent the episode and that in some way it is related to the incident told by the Dante commentators, but from what particular source Regnard derived it remains undetermined.<sup>26</sup>

The principal character is not, as the title implies, the heir, but the old man from whom he hopes to inherit.<sup>27</sup> Like Argan G  ronte takes much

<sup>25</sup> Quoted by the fr  res Parfaict, XIV, 475

<sup>26</sup> The fact that he brought G  ronte to life was criticized by both Toldo and Altrocchi, but they seem to be oblivious to the fact that for the principal character in a comedy to die would be without precedent on the French classical stage and would run the tone of the play. No one with a feeling for the comic can regret the situation when the supposed dead man hobbles into the room.

<sup>27</sup> G  ronte is a wealthy invalid, cared for by his servant, Lisette, who loves Crispin, valet of the old man's nephew, Eraste. This young man loves Isabelle, daughter of Mme Argante, who will allow him to marry her if he is to be G  ronte's "l  gataire universel." The invalid decides to marry the girl himself, but Mme Argante is persuaded to write a note refusing her consent, while Lisette and an apothecary assure G  ronte that it would be most unwise for him to wed. He proposes to make Eraste his chief heir, but to leave 20,000 crowns each to a nephew and niece who live in the provinces and are coming to visit him. Crispin disguises himself in turn as the nephew and the niece and makes so disgraceable an impression upon G  ronte that he decides to leave his provincial relatives out of his will. He is so deeply moved by the stormy interviews he has with disguised Crispin that he falls into a lethargic state and is believed to be dying intestate. When the notaries come to make his will, Crispin disguises himself as the old man, directs the payment of his debts, including one of Crispin's, makes Eraste the residuary legatee, but leaves Lisette 2000 crowns in cash and Crispin an annuity of 1500 francs. Eraste protests against these legacies, but he prefers to leave them in rather than to destroy the will. G  ronte recovers consciousness and learns from a returning notary that he has made a will. He approves of the part concerning Eraste, but he objects to the clauses relating to Crispin and Lisette till he is reminded that he dictated the will and that, thanks to his lethargy, he has forgotten its clauses. After much persuasion and the return of a considerable sum of money that Eraste had discovered while his uncle was unconscious, G  ronte allows the will to stand. Eraste will marry Isabelle, Crispin, Lisette

medicine and is deeply concerned over his health, but he is by no means a "malade imaginaire." He is miserly, cautious, in fear of being robbed, wary of all his relatives except Eraste, who approves of everything he says and pretends deep emotion over the thought of his uncle's death. The other leading characters are the servants. Lisette, bright and bold, an attentive nurse, but one who is by no means disinterested, and Crispin, an imaginative scamp, prepared for the part he is to play in making the will by the fact that he had been for three years a lawyer's clerk. He puts on three disguises, playing the brutal nephew, the intriguing niece, and the dying old man. He carries his impudence to the point of suggesting that his deceased wife had been Eraste's mistress and that Lisette is Géronte's illegitimate daughter. He works brilliantly for his master, but he does not forget his own interests in doing so. Minor figures are the two notaries, who resemble their colleague of *les Ménechmes*, determined and minute M. Clistorel, young Isabelle, her money-loving mother, and two lackeys.

Act I is made comic by the racy and somewhat indecent talk of the servants and by Géronte's remarks about his health and his matrimonial intentions. As Act II is largely concerned with the plot, the author brightened it up by ending it with Clistorel's farcical scene. Act III is especially distinguished by the antics of Crispin when he is disguised as Géronte's relatives. Still more amusing is Act IV, which contains the famous scene of the fraudulent will. Act V is less effective, though the second scene with the notary is admirable, and the heirs' comic suspense is well sustained. It is unfortunate that Regnard did not imagine a more striking dénouement than merely to have Géronte yield to persuasion. His acceptance of the situation, like Mme Argante's breaking her promise in Act II, is so poorly motivated that it seems to be employed merely to give the play a happy ending.

The comedy is unified except that the scene in which Clistorel appears could be omitted without loss to the plot. Less respect is shown for the proprieties than in Regnard's other five-act comedies. Not only in its tone, but in the absence of moral considerations, the comedy has about it much of the farce. Unlike farces, however, it makes use of familiar lines from tragedy that become comic through the connection in which they are introduced. Géronte says of his prospective bride

Et, de son chaste amour recueillant tout le fruit   \*\*

Eraste exclaims:

Mon oncle, qu'avez vous? vous changez de visage\*\*

\*\* I, 7, cf *Mithridate*, v 1112

\*\* I, 4, cf *Phèdre*, vv 1291-2

Lisette defends her speech to Géronte :

Je ne sais point, monsieur, farder la vérité,  
Et dis ce que je pense avecque liberté<sup>20</sup>

When Géronte returns to life, Crispin comments :

Et l'avare Achéron lâche encore sa proie<sup>21</sup>

Regnard's wit is in these cases external to his characters, who can hardly be supposed to have had Racine in mind when they spoke the lines. This is characteristic of much of his work. He seems, for instance, to have made Crispin claim to be Géronte's relative on the ground that his deceased Bretonne wife was Eraste's mistress, chiefly in order to enable Lisette to comment sarcastically (I, 1).

Oui-da, tu peux passer pour parent de campagne,  
Ou pour neveu, suivant la mode de Bretagne

This is true, too, of Eraste's remark to his uncle (I, 4), "Votre bien seul m'est cher," and of Géronte's medicinal love-making (I, 7).

Vous êtes pour mon cœur comme un julep futur,  
Qui doit le nettoyer de ce qu'il a d'impur  
Mon hymen avec vous est un sûr énélique  
Et je vous prends enfin pour mon dernier topique

In spite of Regnard's subordinating the representation of character to his efforts to excite laughter, the weakness of his dénouement, and the indecency of certain lines, he produced a comedy whose irresistible gaiety and the really excellent scenes of the will (IV, 6, and V, 7) won his audience as did few plays of the eighteenth century. When it was read to seven members of the troupe on Dec. 24, 1706, they not only accepted it, but declared that it should be played as soon as possible. La Thonillière, however, fell ill, Paul Poisson was substituted, and Regnard was requested on Jan. 18, 1707, to adjust his play to the acting of his new interpreter, who played Crispin<sup>22</sup>. By the time the changes were made, it was probably too late for the play to be given before the summer season, so that it was not acted until Jan. 9, 1708. According to Fournier, the first performance brought in the unusually large sum of 2246 francs, 10 sous<sup>23</sup>.

Opinions were, however, divided, as a letter in *le Nouveau Mercure* shows, one that was probably composed not long after the first performance

<sup>20</sup> III, 4, cf. *Britannicus*, vv 173-4

<sup>21</sup> IV, 8, cf. *Phèdre*, v 626

<sup>22</sup> Cf. the *Critique du Légataire*, sc 2, and Mélite, *Th et P*, p 312 for evidence that Poisson played Crispin

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Fournier, *op cit*, pp lxxiv-vi. He gives the date of first performance as Jan 28, which Joannidès corrects



of the comedy.<sup>34</sup> The author objected to Crispin's jesting about his dead wife's morals and about Lisette's parentage, to Mme Argante's sudden change of plan, and to Géronte's accepting the will. He had less reason to assert that the plot ends with the second act, for the provincial relations had still to be disposed of, and to claim that one man acts both as Géronte's lackey and as Mme Argante's.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, the writer admired the scenes when the will is made and when it is read to Géronte, and he admitted that the comedy is highly amusing, although, after one has seen it, "il ne reste rien qui occupe l'esprit dès que le Spectacle est fini." He concluded that it was the acting rather than the text that made the play popular.

Just how much of the criticism represented by this letter reached Regnard before he wrote a defense of his play cannot be determined, but he must have known that it was accused of containing errors in structure and morals. His apology took the form of a prose play in one act entitled *LA CRITIQUE DU LÉGATAIRE*.<sup>36</sup> In writing it he employed the method made famous by Molière's *Critique de l'Ecole des femmes*. He has the *Légataire* discussed by persons who attack and defend it. He lays his scene, as other dramatists had done in the theater, but his playlet is unusual in that its action takes place at the end of a performance.<sup>37</sup> The critics are represented as pedantic, jealous, ignorant, or prudish. They have not seen the *Legataire*, or they are too much concerned with other matters to watch a performance intelligently or they cannot formulate their objections. Some object to references to widowhood, to a posthumous child, or to the meaning suggested by Lisette for the word *interloquée*.<sup>38</sup> The poet cites Aristotle and the *Code*

<sup>34</sup> Feb., 1708, pp. 110-42, cited in part by the frères Parfaict, XIV, 467-78. The latter writers note that, though Géronte declares (II, 6) his Norman nephew to be his brother's son, Crispin, when disguised as this nephew (III, 2), claims to be the son of Géronte's sister. It is not Crispin's slip, as Géronte fails to notice it, and consequently must be due to Regnard's negligence. In the Garnier edition the text of II, 6 has been altered so that there is no inconsistency between the two scenes. Regnard also makes a slip in III, 9, when Eraste is surprised to find that Crispin had been disguised, although he had recognized him in III, 7. This error is pointed out in the Garnier edition.

<sup>35</sup> The text indicates that there were two lackeys, though only one is mentioned in the list of characters.

<sup>36</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1708 and 1714, 12°. Republished in editions of the author's collected works.

<sup>37</sup> An actor announces a tragedy for the next day, *le Légataire* for the day after that. The chevalier protests that he does not wish to see it again. A countess and a poet criticize the play while a marquis defends it. M. Bredouille, a financier, approves of it because he has enjoyed it. An apothecary named Cristorel expresses his indignation at being put on the stage and discusses the matter so angrily with the actor who had taken the part that they come to blows. The countess intervenes, sends the apothecary back to his shop, and invites the actor to a dance. They will leave in her carriage, which the poet has had brought to the door of the theater.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. III, 8.

Et vous avez souffert qu'on vous interloquât?  
Une femme d'honneur se voir interloquée!

*Justinian.* He claims that the play is worthless because it is built round a will made by a valet, who, as he depends upon another, cannot, according to Justinian, make a will. M. Chistorel, supposed to be a real apothecary, protests against the ridicule that is heaped upon his profession.

Regnard's admirers make no specific replies to most of these charges, but the financier insists that the play must be good, as he enjoyed it immensely, and the marquis (sc. 4) defends both the dramatist's conception of his art and the structure of the *Légataire*.

Il n'est pas question, dans une comédie, du droit romain ni de Justinien. Il s'agit de divertir les gens d'esprit avec art. Le premier acte expose le sujet, le second fait le nœud, dans le troisième commence l'action, elle continue dans les suivants tout concourt à l'événement, l'embarras croît jusqu'à la dernière scène, le dénouement est tiré des entrailles du sujet.

These claims are, as I have shown, not altogether justified, but they are interesting as revealing Regnard's ideal of dramatic composition. He brings out in his *Critique* the great popularity of the *Légataire*, which caused the streets to be blocked and drew so many spectators that it was hard to find a good place in the theater. So true was this that, although Regnard sacrificed his royalties to have it acted,<sup>39</sup> the *Critique* seemed superfluous. Played first on Feb. 9, 1708, it was acted only three times. As a dramatic composition it is insignificant. The characterization is poor and the farcical scene between the two Chistorels is out of keeping with the rest of the production. Its failure did not diminish the success of the comedy it was written to defend. *Le Légataire* was acted twenty-three times in 1708 and became, next to *les Folies amoureuses*, the most frequently produced at the Comédie Française of Regnard's plays and of all plays written in the eighteenth century. By 1920 it had had at that theater no less than 960 performances, by the end of 1934 no less than 988.<sup>40</sup>

Regnard did not live to see much of this triumph. He died on Sept. 4, 1709. Like Molière he had worked almost to the end and had, in his last decade, shown no diminution in his knowledge of the theater and his gaiety of spirit. It is even possible that he continued to compose scenes

<sup>39</sup> This fact was brought out by Fournier, *op. cit.* p. lxxviii. He quoted the *Registres* to the effect that, at a meeting of the troupe on Feb. 9, 1708, Regnard proposed to add the *Critique* to the *Légataire*, and the actors, following the precedent established on Jan. 18, 1700, when they agreed to play Regnard's *Retour imprévu* before his *Démocrate* had completed its first run, accepted the author's proposal, but on condition that he would receive nothing "de la grande ni de la petite, du jour qu'on commencera à la jouer." To this Regnard gave his consent, although the *Légataire* had earned in fourteen performances nearly 20,000 francs for the troupe and himself and might have continued to make money for him if he had been willing to have it played without the *Critique*. He was, however, in comfortable circumstances and had earned a considerable sum from his plays acted at the Comédie Française. Couet estimated it at 7698 francs, 9 sous, 6 deniers, in *Journal des débats*, Sept. 9, 1909, cited in *RHL*, XVI (1909), 853.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. E. Champignon, *loc. cit.*

after he had completed the *Critique*, for at least two productions have survived that may have been written in the last eighteen months of his life.

Fournier published four *les Souhairs, les Vendanges, le Marchand ridicule*, and *l'Île d'Alcine*. There seems to be no reason to doubt the authenticity of the first two, as they had already been published in 1731 with other plays of Regnard by the widow of his printer, Pierre Ribou. Fournier, though less sure about *le Marchand ridicule*, published it as an "opéra comique représenté à la foire Saint-Germain en 1708, pièce inédite, d'après un manuscrit de la Bibliothèque Nationale" Now this manuscript had already been published in the *Dictionnaire des théâtres*, III, 304-11, of 1756, without indication of authorship, and had been listed in the *Catalogue Soleinne*, no 3402. Fournier was not aware of these facts, for he calls the play "inédite," fails to mention the *Dictionnaire*, and refers only to III, 7 (a slip for III, 6) of the catalogue.<sup>41</sup> He misinterpreted this last reference, stating that "M de Soleinne" did not doubt that the play was by Regnard, though it is given there merely as "attrib. à Regnard," and no evidence is offered to support even this cautious statement. Now I have discovered that the play is practically identical with one of the same title that is found in a manuscript with three other farces in which Polichinelle takes a leading rôle. These are attributed to a certain Gillet and are said to have been acted at the Foire about 1695,<sup>42</sup> though they may have first appeared there ten or fifteen years later.<sup>43</sup> They are extremely crude prose productions written for marionettes and bear no resemblance to the work of Regnard. It is absurd to assign the authorship of *le Marchand ridicule* to him when the only evidence we have is the fact that Paul Lacroix, who listed the play three times in the *Catalogue Soleinne*, once declared that it was attributed to Regnard.

As for *l'Île d'Alcine*, Paul Lacroix described it in *Soleinne*, III, 27, as "L'Isle d'Alcine, ou l'Anneau magique de Brunel Tiré de l'Arioste (com. et prol. pr.), avec une parodie d'*Iphigénie* Par Regnard" Ludovic Lalanne published it, partly in résumé, in *la Correspondance littéraire* for May 5, 1859.<sup>44</sup> It was subsequently published by Hippolyte Lucas<sup>45</sup> and by

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Fournier, *op. cit.*, pp. lxxvi-ii, 455-7.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. the account of these plays in my *op. cit.*, Part IV, pp. 935-6. They are all four entered in *Soleinne*, no. 3399.

<sup>43</sup> Fournier's text differs from that attributed to Gillet only in very minor matters and in the fact that he omitted "quelques lignes de ce dialogue à cause de sa trivialité." By "trivialité" he means indecency. Unfortunately the climax of the tale is found in the passage he modestly left out.

<sup>44</sup> He states that the manuscript is entitled "*L'Isle d'Alcine ou l'Anneau magique de Brunel, tirée de l'Arioste avec une parodie d'Iphigénie, par Regnard*."

<sup>45</sup> Paris, Lemerre, 1867. Fournier calls this the first edition of the play. He mentions Lalanne, but refers only to his note of June 5, 1859, in which "Alcine" is corrected to "Alcine." Neither Lalanne nor Fournier reproduces the complete play. Both give the prologue, but the parody is omitted by Fournier, while Lalanne gives

Fournier. It is true that Poisson and La Thorillière, who were friends of Regnard, appear in this play as they do in the dramatist's *Souhairs* and parody the same scene from Racine's *Iphigénie*, but this may merely mean that *les Souhairs* had suggested to the author of *l'Île d'Alcine* the idea of introducing these actors and of parodying *Iphigénie*, IV, 6. On the other hand, no editor of Regnard's collected plays had seen fit to publish *l'Île d'Alcine* in the eighteenth century, or in the nineteenth before Fournier. As these editors had access to a list of his plays that Regnard drew up little more than eight months before his death, in the presence of a notary and witnesses,<sup>46</sup> I prefer to follow them rather than Fournier and to conclude that there remain only two plays by Regnard to be considered.

LES SOUHAITS<sup>47</sup> has but one act and is written in "vers libres." At a fair Mercury proposes to grant requests. A bride, a large Swiss woman who is accompanied by a male dwarf, a girl dressed as a Gascon gentleman; and a gourmand file by, but their requests are refused, as granting them would do more harm than good. Finally Poisson and La Thorillière appear as strolling players, ask to be admitted to the troupe of the Comédie Française, and give a brief performance, in which they parody *Iphigénie*, to demonstrate their value as actors. Mercury finds that they will do well to avoid Paris and return to the country, for

Il vaut mieux être enfin le premier au village,  
Qu'être le dernier à Paris

Poisson proposes to become a Swiss actor. Mercury calls attention to the fact that none of his petitioners has asked for virtue or wisdom and advises all of them to laugh, sing, and dance, leaving to Jupiter care for the morrow. A dance ends the play.

This slight production may have been written, as Fournier suggests, for performance at Grillon, where Regnard included Poisson and La Thorillière among his guests. The tone is highly satirical. The preliminary scenes lead up to the fifth, in which the two actors appear and introduce the inner play, *les Amours de Mars et de Venus*, which La Thorillière claims to have written. In this playlet Venus and Vulcan talk in "vers libres," then, while Vulcan remains alone, the actor who plays Venus leaves the stage to

only in résumé a large part of the six remaining scenes. The parody is quite different from the one in *les Souhairs* and is by no means close to Racine. Except that in both *l'Île d'Alcine* and the tragedy a scene in verse describes a violent altercation between a man and his daughter's lover, there is hardly any resemblance to Racine. One could not guess that it is a parody if La Thorillière had not called it in the prologue "une espèce de parodie d'une scène d'*Iphigénie*."

<sup>46</sup> This list was first published in the edition of Regnard's works that appeared at Brussels in 1711. It is mentioned in the *Catalogue Solennel*, no 1539, in Brunet's *Manuel*, and by Fournier, *op cit*, p. lxxix.

<sup>47</sup> Paris, veuve P. Ribou, 1731, and in collected editions that appeared subsequently.

return, transformed into Mars, and speak lines from the rôle of Achilles in *Iphigénie*, IV, 6, to which Vulcan replies with verses from the rôle of Agamemnon. When Mars-Achilles has made his exit, Vulcan recites a few lines imitating *Iphigénie*, IV, 7. The parody is cleverly executed, but it was better adapted to presentation at Grillon than at the Comédie Française, where the play was never acted.

The other comedy was apparently meant to run to five acts, but only one of them was finished. The completion of the play may have been prevented by the author's death. What remains of it is entitled *LES VENDANGES OU LE BAILLI D'ANÏÈRES*<sup>48</sup>. Regnard, who had condescended to become a bailiff himself, may well have noticed characteristics among his colleagues that would lend themselves to comic reproduction. The list of characters shows that there were fifteen persons in the play: Trigaudin, his wife, his daughter, his *servante*, his clerk, his daughter's lover, and two peasants, all of whom appear in the single act that has survived, also the lover's valet, called Champagne, a procureur, named La Serre, a procureuse, a greffier, a greffière, a notaire, and a commissaire. The first act shows Trigaudin's plan to marry his daughter, her lover's proposal to carry her off during a peasant dance, his engaging Trigaudin to defend a supposed friend if he should be accused of abduction, and the report of the peasants about a murdered man and pigs. The four lost acts, if they ever existed, must have brought in the characters that do not appear in the first, must have established some connection between the elopement and the legal proceedings relative to the murder, and must have ended with Léandre's obtaining permission to marry Babet by means of the document he has paid Trigaudin to sign.<sup>49</sup>

The protagonist, whose name is that of the chief character in Montfleury's *Trigaudin*,<sup>50</sup> is presented as stupid and authoritative, willing when bribed to "faire gauchir les lois," proud of his ability as a pleader and versed in

<sup>48</sup> Paris, veuve P. Ribou, 1731, and in collected editions that appeared subsequently. It was published separately by Louis Lacour, Paris, Dentu, 1855.

<sup>49</sup> Trigaudin insists upon entertaining Parisian friends at vintage time in order to marry his daughter, Babet, to a procureur, although his wife complains about the expense involved. We learn that Babet loves Léandre, who has the help of Toinon and the clerk and has proposed an elopement. When Trigaudin finds Léandre at his home the young man pretends to have come to consult him in the interests of a friend who plans to abduct a girl from the keeping of her tyrannical father. Trigaudin at first refuses to consider the case, but, when Léandre gives him a purse, he relents, agrees to serve, even to sign a statement that he believes the abduction to be justified, and boasts of his legal skill. The peasants, Guillot and Mathieu, report that a man has been murdered and that a peasant who was driving pigs to market has been locked up as well as his pigs. Trigaudin is much interested until he discovers that the supposed murderer is a peasant, but, when his clerk informs him that the accused man had a drove of pigs, he again changes his attitude and becomes eager to take the case. The act ends with Toinon's announcement that Trigaudin's "bidet est tout bridé là-bas."

<sup>50</sup> Cf. my *op. cit.*, Part IV, pp. 422-6.

the pompous methods already dramatized by Racine in *les Plaideurs*. He recites the opening lines of a speech he had made on the subject of a lost donkey (sc. 11):

Quand le grand Annibal et les Carthaginois,  
De deux consuls romains triomphant à la fois,  
Portèrent la terreur au sein de l'Italie,  
Et couvrirent de morts les plaines d'Apulie,  
Quand ce fils d'Amilcar, etc

His wife is shown only as an economical person who cites the prudent maxims of her husband's grandfather in order to support her contentions, but who is obliged to yield to Trigaudin's desires. The other characters are cautious Babet and her lively attendant, clever Léandre, active in planning the abduction and in deceiving Trigaudin, a clerk who is weary of the law and wants to enter the army, and two peasants who express themselves with great difficulty and employ an amusing patois. These characters and those that do not appear might have composed the cast of an entertaining comedy, but, as only one act has survived, it is impossible to say how well Regnard would have worked out his plans. Fournier records that the play was acted on March 15, 1823, at the Porte Saint-Martin theater and that it was unsuccessful, as well it may have been in its unfinished condition.

The plays not acted at the Comédie Française or at the Théâtre Italien add nothing to Regnard's reputation, which rests primarily upon *Attendez-moi, le Joueur, le Distract, Démocrate, les Folles, les Ménechmes*, and *le Légataire*. Some years ago there was much discussion about his place in French drama. Certain critics found him lacking in originality and in knowledge of the stage. Others commented upon his superficiality, his lack of respect for the proprieties, his occasional departures from correct prosody. But no one can deny the essential gaiety of his comedies, or that from time to time he indulges in a burst of poetic fancy that creates memorable passages. He was, to use an expression attributed to Julius Caesar, a halved Molière. This is, perhaps, sufficient praise. It would have been approved by Voltaire, who paid him this tribute: <sup>61</sup>

Molière est le premier, mais il serait injuste et ridicule de ne pas mettre *le Joueur* à côté de ses meilleures pièces. Refuser son estime aux *Ménechmes*, ne pas s'amuser beaucoup au *Légataire universel*, serait d'un homme sans justice et sans goût, et qui ne se plaît pas à Regnard n'est pas digne d'admirer Molière.

<sup>61</sup> Moland edition, XXII, 247

## CHAPTER XIV

### MARC-ANTOINE LEGRAND

With the exception of Dancourt, Legrand<sup>1</sup> was the only active member of the Comédie Française troupe to write plays in the first fifteen years of the century. Before he joined the company he had composed six little comedies, had acted in the provinces and in Poland, and had written a *Divertissement en musique pour le Retour du Roi à Varsovie*, an operetta with a ballet, probably produced in 1700-1.<sup>2</sup> His acting was tested at the Comédie Française on March 21 and June 27, 1702, and he became a member of the company on Oct. 18 of that year, but it was some time before he returned to dramatic composition. Perhaps the delay was occasioned by his travels and by the burdens placed upon a new member of the troupe.

In 1707-13 he produced seven one-act comedies and assisted in the composition of an eighth. They are written in verse or in prose, are often farcical, sometimes end in a *divertissement*, and deal with various classes of the society in which he lived. He owed something to Molière, though he never learned his art of depicting character, and something to Dancourt, though he was far less varied in his representation of manners. His chief concern was his plot, despite his slight regard for probability and the weakness of several dénouements. His satire shows considerable ability and is sometimes personal. He had learned how to entertain an audience, as an actor should, and achieved considerable, if temporary fame as a contributor to the repertory of the Comédie Française.

His career as a Parisian dramatist began with a one-act comedy in verse, *LA FEMME FILLE ET VEUVE*,<sup>3</sup> a slight production, farcical in tone, with emphasis placed upon the intrigue at the expense of character and dialogue.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. M. S. Burnet, *Marc-Antoine Legrand, acteur et auteur comique (1673-1728)*, Paris, Droz, 1938, and my *op. cit.*, Part IV, pp. 862-71. Documents published by Campardon, *les Comédiens du roi*, Paris, 1879, pp. 24-5, 206, show that in 1711-2 Legrand was living on the rue du Regard.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Burnet, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-1.

<sup>3</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1707, 12°. Republished, Paris, Duchesne, 1773, in editions of the author's plays of 1731, 1742, and 1770, and in the *Fin du Répertoire* of 1824.

<sup>4</sup> On a trip to Bordeaux Oronte meets a Gascon and a Limousin, engages his daughters, Elise and Angélique, to them, and exchanges with each man papers promising that 12,000 francs will be forfeited by the person who breaks the agreement. When Oronte returns to Paris, he makes the girls desperate, for they want to marry Philidor and Dorante, but, though penitent, he is unwilling to sacrifice the 24,000 francs of the contracts. Fortunately the girls have a cousin, Hortense recently married to Lisimon. She bids them give the provincials a chilly reception and plans with her husband and the servants, Lisette and Valentin, to win back Oronte's *dépôts*. To do this she pretends at first to be a wealthy *ingénue*, just out of a convent, then to be a rich widow, and wins the hearts of Dardibras, the Gascon, and of Fatignac, the Limousin. After each has given up his contract, she finds them

It reads as if it were written for the actress who appears in turn as wife, unmarried girl, and widow, and whose rôle dominates those of her comrades. We learn that as a child she had been bright and "malicieuse." Now that she is happily married, she is moved by a desire to help her cousins and to find amusement for herself. In order that we may not be surprised by the ease with which she procures mourning for her disguise as a widow, she is made to appear in black out of respect for a recently deceased aunt-in-law. She has little difficulty in winning the young provincials, who are aghast at her ability to appear (sc. 18)

Et fille, & veuve, & femme, & Diable qui t'emporte,  
Visage a-t-il jamais changé de cette sorte?  
Innocente, affligée, enjouée, est-ce assez?

Oronte's prospective sons-in-law are presented as penniless and unintelligent seekers after dowries, quite ready to marry the highest bidder. Dardibras is described as follows (sc. 9)

Le sourcil bien marqué, l'œil vif, le nez bien fait,  
Le corps droit, toutefois tant soit peu sur la hanche,  
Et que la tête aussi sur l'épaule un peu penche,  
C'est le bon air, la jambe & les pieds bien tournés,  
Le chapeau sur l'oreille & tantot sur le nez,  
L'estomac débraillé, la main dans la ceinture,  
Et l'esprit enjoué

He swears with Gascon oaths and brags of his twenty châteaux on the Garonne, his nobility, and his success with women. Fatignac, the Limousin, resembles him, but he has a less prominent rôle. He claims to be a baron and to have had many amorous adventures, which, however, do not protect him against the wiles of the supposed widow. The servants are conventionally clever. Valentin<sup>5</sup> shows some ability as a raconteur and makes an interesting allusion to a contemporary tragedy.<sup>6</sup> The other characters are given little to say, but enough to show the absurdity of Oronte's behavior, well brought out in one of his speeches to his daughters (sc. 3)

Ecoutez, mes enfants,  
Les dédits sont chacun de douze mille francs,  
Je ne saurais payer une somme si forte  
Epousez ces gens-ci toujours, que vous importe?  
Allez, une autre fois, je vous choisirai mieux

---

together and laughs at them. Oronte returns the contracts they have given him and pays their way to the place where he had met them. Then he gives his daughters to the men they love.

<sup>5</sup> This name had recently been given by Regnard to the valet of *les Menechmes*. Legrand was to use it in his next play.

<sup>6</sup> Sc. 12. "Elle allait dire un songe Aussi beau que celui de Thyeste." The editor of the *Fin du Repertoire* identifies this as an allusion to Crébillon's *Atreé et Thyeste*, first acted less than three months before Legrand's comedy.



Legrand shows little originality, for the tricking of provincials by Parisians, the use of a forfeit, ridiculing a Gascon, employing disguise and clever servants were all themes very familiar to his audience. The obstacles are too easily overcome. Oronte has no pride in his folly and is ready to yield if he is secured against financial loss. The Gascon and the Limousin fall with incredible promptness into the traps prepared for them. A more experienced author would not have been satisfied with so feeble a plot, or failed to produce more comic scenes. Legrand's five years at the Comédie Française had not yet made him an abler dramatist than he had been when he wrote for a traveling troupe at Lyons. First produced on May 26, 1707, his comedy was given fourteen times in a dull season,<sup>7</sup> but it was never revived.

It was, however, sufficiently successful to encourage him to produce, the following year, *L'AMOUR DIABLE*,<sup>8</sup> a comedy with more striking effects and better characterization.<sup>9</sup> The central figure is Folidor, a "souffleur" who

<sup>7</sup> Nine of these performances brought Legrand a share in the receipts, but he earned in all only about 150 francs according to Miss Burnet, *op cit.*, p. 87.

<sup>8</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1708, 12°. Music by Gilliers. Republished, The Hague, Clos, 1710, Avignon, frères Brunet, 1787, 8°. Paris, Brunet, 1787, and in collected editions of 1731, 1742, and 1770. Translated into German in 1778. Miss Burnet, *op cit.*, p. 58, follows Clément et La Porte in believing that the play was based on a real incident, but the assertions of their *Anecdotes dramatiques* are far from being trustworthy.

<sup>9</sup> Folidor is so deeply interested in alchemy that, failing in his effort to produce gold, he has stopped preparations for the marriage of his daughter, Hortense, to young Léandre, has kept her shut up for a month, and refuses to allow her to wed until he has solved his problem. Léandre rents a room below Folidor's apartment and makes a hole in the ceiling with the intention of rescuing Hortense. He has the help of the girl's mother, Elise, he has persuaded the music teacher from whom he has rented the lower room to bring friends from the Opera, as he knows Folidor is fond of music, he has given the latter's son, a boy named Francillon, a bar of gold with which he is to deceive his father, and he has notified Hortense by letter of his plans. When the play begins, the girl and her *souvante*, Nérine, notice a crack in the floor. Soon it widens sufficiently for Léandre and Valentin, his valet, to appear and report about arrangements for the marriage. Another report is brought by young Francillon to the effect that, during his father's temporary absence, he had substituted the gold bar for the silver that Folidor was trying to turn into gold. He is followed by his tutor, Polycrasse, who, as he can be won neither by a bribe nor by Nérine's blandishments, is pushed into the trap with Léandre and Francillon, while Valentin hides under the table, clearing the stage for Folidor, who enters with his wife and brags that he has made gold. Elise now believes that her daughter will be allowed to marry, but her husband fears that the gold has been produced by the devil, conjured up by his reading a *grimoire* and subsequently seen by him in a dream. When he hears that Francillon and Polycrasse have disappeared, he attributes their absence to the devil and is confirmed in his fears when he hears Polycrasse call from below the trap. Valentin now comes from under the table, declares that he is the devil, and threatens to carry off Folidor unless he can find a substitute. Folidor offers his wife, then his daughter, whom Valentin declares to be illegitimate. The devil promises to assume Léandre's form and, while Folidor's eyes are turned away, enters the trap, from which springs Léandre. The latter calls upon spirits to release Polycrasse and Francillon, who enter drunk. Hortense is presented to Léandre and leaves with him. Folidor explains to his wife that, in order to save his own life, he has given the girl to the devil. Musicians sing about the lovers. Valentin, Francillon, and Polycrasse explain the situation to Folidor,

seeks to produce a high enough temperature to turn silver into gold and reads from a "grimoire." He is easily deceived, hates his daughter, sacrifices her to his fancy, quarrels with his wife, and greatly fears the devil. Elise is described as a "maîtresse femme." Her common sense and sympathy for the young lovers contrast with her husband's qualities as do those of Mme Jourdain with those of Jourdain. Hortense and Nérine are the familiar young heroine and attendant, but Léandre is an unusually imaginative and enterprising young lover, Polycrasse is a type of Latin-speaking pedant that had been absent for some years from French plays, and Francillon is the second child to appear on the eighteenth-century French stage. The boy is whipped by his father, is unhappy in his home, and hopes to enlist in the army as soon as he is old enough. He shows his cleverness by tricking Folidor and finds the wine he imbibes while down the trap greatly to his taste. The only remaining member of the cast, Valentin, collaborates with his master, impersonates the devil successfully, gets the better of Polycrasse, and shows much wit in his remarks.

The play is well constructed, offers considerable variety in its scenes, appeals to the eye by the use of the trap, and ends in a *divertissement*. Its theme of alchemy was relatively fresh, as, though used several times in the seventeenth century,<sup>10</sup> it had not been extensively employed since the *Souffleurs* of 1694. A critic in the *Mercure de Trévoux*<sup>11</sup> noted the large number of jests based on the use of the word *diable* in conversation.<sup>12</sup> He held that Francillon talked too much like an adult and he deplored the absence of edifying characters. He seems to have been blind to the fact that a moral can be found in the satire upon alchemy, though Legrand's purpose was primarily to amuse. It is obvious that he succeeded in entertaining audiences both in and outside of Paris, for his play was acted 133 times at the Comédie Française, from June 30, 1708, until 1781, and it was performed in the Low Countries, Germany, and Poland.<sup>13</sup> It prepared the way for a still more popular production.

This was *LA FAMILLE EXTRAVAGANTE*,<sup>14</sup> again a comedy in one act and

who, in return for having his fear removed, pardons them and renounces alchemy. The play ends with a *divertissement* offered by the musicians, Valentin, and Francillon.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. the references in my *op cit*, Part V, p. 155.

<sup>11</sup> Cited by the frères Parfaict, XIV, 485-90.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. sc. 7, "Allez vous-en au Diable", "que le Diable m'emporte", sc. 9, "C'est le Diable", "Donner ma fille au Diable", "qu'elle aille au Diable", "Ils se donneront tous au Diable pour lui plaire", sc. 11, "du vin du Diable", sc. 14, "la musique du Diable." Perhaps it was on this account that a critic was shocked upon reflecting that "on y joue la crainte du diable qui est un des préceptes du christianisme", cf. L. Bourquin, *op cit*, p. 74 (the title of the play appears in this article as *L'Amour du Diable!*).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Burnet, *op cit*, pp. 168-9.

<sup>14</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1709, 12°. Music by Gilliers. Republished in editions of the author's plays, 1731, 1742, 1770, in *Auteurs du Second Ordre*, 1808, in the

in verse. The materials of which it is composed were not new. The theme of a dishonest guardian who wishes to marry his ward had been employed a few years before by Dancourt in his *Colin-Maillard*. Deception practised in behalf of lovers and in connection with a marriage contract is found in Dancourt's recent *Madame Artus* and in earlier plays.<sup>15</sup> To have a character, addicted to the use of proverbs, agree to renounce the habit, but continue to utter them is a comic element in *Don Quixote* that was to be introduced by Dancourt in his *Sancho Pança*. Legrand may have been influenced, too, by the popularity of the *proverbe dramatique* in the last years of the seventeenth century and the early years of the eighteenth.<sup>16</sup> His originality in regard to proverbs lies in his combining them with other verses to make up the final *divertissement*.

The plot, though simple and lacking in probability, is again the author's chief concern.<sup>17</sup> It is somewhat carelessly constructed, with most of the exposition given in an opening monologue that exists for no other purpose. The author fails to explain why Cléon's presence in the house is of such great importance, how Lasette was able to admit him, or why, even if he had been discovered more quickly, the plot would have had a different ending. The result is that we are less interested in the scenes in which the procureur's mother, Mme Rissolé, her daughter Lucrèce, and her granddaughter Suzon make love to Cléon. Such scenes seem to be strung together with little purpose except to create momentary amusement.

Piétremine is represented, not only as much too old for his ward, but as thoroughly dishonest. He has cheated Cléon out of part of his inheritance. In the contract that he has his clerk prepare for his marriage, he puts down only a fourth of Elise's wealth, apparently hoping to keep the rest for himself. He proposes to avoid paying for entertainments given to celebrate

*Répertoires* of 1818 and 1821, that of Petitot, 1810, that of Touquet, 1821, that of Didot, 1823. It was translated into Dutch, 1730, into German, 1778. It is analyzed by Miss Burnet, *op cit*, pp. 41-2.

<sup>15</sup> Cf., for instance, *le Feint Campagnard* and my *op cit*, Part IV, p. 872.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. my *op cit*, Part IV, pp. 928-33.

<sup>17</sup> A procureur, Piétremine, wishes to marry his wealthy ward, Elise, and locks up his house in order to keep other men away. Cléon, who loves her, bribes the lawyer's servant, Lisette, who conceals him in the house with his valet, Saint-Germain. Piétremine's mother, his sister, and his daughter all fall in love with the handsome youth, whom they have seen from the window. Lisette bribes Bazoché, the lawyer's clerk, to substitute a contract marrying Elise to Cléon for one that would marry her to Piétremine. Before this substitution is made, Cléon meets the three other women and, with his valet's assistance, pretends to be in love with them in order to keep them from making known his presence in the house. When the lawyer at last discovers him, he sends Lisette for a policeman, but Saint-Germain disguises himself as a commissaire and pretends to arrest Cléon. Before he leads him away, Elise brings the contract, which Piétremine has signed as her guardian while thinking he was signing as her future husband. In this way the marriage of Elise and Cléon is brought about. The musicians, summoned to celebrate the signing of the contract, supply the music of the *divertissement*, in which minor characters sing

his engagement and marriage by entering such expenses as if incurred by law-suits he has on hand. He employs Bazoché, a clerk as unscrupulous as he, but in so doing he brings about his own defeat, for Cléon, with a larger bribe than Piétreminé's, wins over the clerk, who pockets both fees, while threatening his employer with blackmail if he protests.

The other characters, with the exception of Mme Rissolé, have little to distinguish them from the young lovers, the servants, and the unattached women of many comedies. The old lady is noteworthy for her love of proverbs (sc. 2) :

P       Ma mere, finissez vos proverbes des halles,  
           Sentences du vieux tems fades et triviales,  
           On n'entend que cela dans toute la maison,  
           Et ma fille & ma sœur les mettent en chanson  
 Mme R   Soit, vous n'entendrez plus proverbes, ni chansons  
           Mais revenons un peu, de grâce, à nos moutons

Subsequently she quotes, "Rira bien qui rira le dernier," "Il faut prendre la balle au bond," and in the last scene four in succession

Mes enfants, mal nouveau se guérit aisément,  
 Pour un amant perdu l'on en retrouve cent  
 Je sais bien que marchand qui perd ne sauroit rire,  
 Mais, ou l'espoir n'est plus, l'amour bientôt expire

Her use of proverbs prepares the way for the *divertissement*, each stanza of which brings in at least one proverb,<sup>18</sup> while, to end the play, Saint-Germain declares that he invents a new proverb to praise a just and learned judge, "Il juge comme le Parterre." There are a few references to manners. Mme Rissolé, influenced by war conditions somewhat similar to those existing in parts of the United States in 1944, declares mournfully that "l'on n'a jamais vu telle disette d'hommes."<sup>19</sup> Lisette describes Bazoché as an ugly dwarf and regrets that more clerks are not like him, as in that case there would be no disorder in the homes of procureurs, and "les enfants qu'ils ont leur ressembleroient mieux" (sc. 8). Saint-Germain complains that clerks never leave anything on their plates (sc. 9). And Bazoché needs money "Pour cesser d'être Clerc & me faire honnête-homme" (sc. 28)

In spite of its careless structure, superficial characterization, and lack of probability, the play contained enough amusing scenes to make it acceptable to eighteenth-century audiences, who must have enjoyed especially the

<sup>18</sup> Contre fortune bon cœur, Un clou chasse l'autre, Tant va la cruche à l'eau, Le temps passé ne revient plus, Si jeunesse savait, si vieillesse pouvoit, Qui refuse, muse, Il faut connoître avant qu'aimer, Il n'est pire eau que l'eau qui dort, L'occasion fait le larron. Les absens ont toujours tort. La fin couronne l'œuvre

<sup>19</sup> Sc. 11 It is in flat contradiction with a proverb I have just quoted from the last scene of the play, "Pour un amant perdu l'on en retrouve cent"

servants' diplomacy, Mme Rissolé's proverbs and absurd lovemaking, that of her daughter and granddaughter, and the theme of the trickster tricked. The comedy was acted at the Comédie Française almost twice as often as its predecessor, 264 times between June 9, 1709, and the end of the *ancien régime* in 1793. It was played at Brussels as late as 1810 and was revived at the Odéon, in memory of the past, in 1895 and in 1921.<sup>20</sup>

Legrand's next comedy, *LA FOIRE SAINT-LAURENT*,<sup>21</sup> is primarily satirical. Dancourt, Regnard, and Dufresny had written plays dealing with fairs and their visitors. They had even introduced showmen. But their intention, so far as the fair was concerned, was realistic rather than satirical. On the other hand, Dancourt and various writers for the Théâtre Italien, as well as for the Comédie Française, had satirized the Opera, and Lesage had spoken sarcastically of the Foire in *Turcaret*. Legrand applied the methods of those who laughed at the Opera to the materials employed by those who had laid their scenes at or near the Foire.

In 1708 Legrand and another actor had been sent by the troupe to appeal to the police in order to prevent the actors of the Foire from giving plays.<sup>22</sup> As such efforts were unavailing, the Comédie Française had brought about the destruction of a rival stage at the Foire in February, 1709.<sup>23</sup> The Foire had retorted by giving parodies of *les Tyndarides* and *Atrée et Thyeste*, by referring to the actors of the Comédie Française as "Romains," and by representing them as declaiming nonsense in the rhythm of alexandrines. In reply Legrand turned to satire in the hope of showing that the entertainments of the Foire were of a low order, their barkers monotonous, and their admirers stupid.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Burnet, *op cit*, pp 1, 168-9. She also mentions performances of the play in Poland and in Germany.

<sup>21</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1709, 12°. Music by Gilliers. Republished, The Hague, Clos, 1710, and in editions of the author's collected plays, 1731, 1742, and 1770. The comedy has been studied by Miss Burnet, *op cit*, pp 36, 58-9. The comparison she makes between Legrand's play and those of Dancourt, Regnard, and Dufresny shows resemblances only of the most general kind.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Campardon, *Spectacles de la Foire*, II, 254-85.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. the frères Parfaict, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des spectacles de la Foire*, Paris, 1743, I, 90-5.

<sup>24</sup> Thérame has won the love of Lucile and that of her aunt, Mme Raymond, but her father, Fronimond, wishes to marry her to Dandinot, son of an old friend who lives in Beauce. Thérame has in his service a clever servant, La Verdure, Blaise, a blundering peasant who lives in the village where Thérame is regarded as the "seigneur", and Fronimond's servant, Grison, bribed to work in his interests. Thérame sends an unaddressed note to Lucile by Blaise, who delivers it to Mme Raymond. The romantic old lady replies, agreeing to elope from the fair, whither, according to Grison, the family is coming. La Verdure, after spending there several days and a good deal of Thérame's money, has secured the assistance of the showmen. After Fronimond, Dandinot, Lucile, and Mme Raymond have seen the marionettes, they are invited by La Verdure, dressed as M. le Rat, to see the "tableaux changeans." While her friends are so engaged, Lucile meets Thérame and expresses her surprise that she should be invited to elope. Her father interrupts the conversation and takes her off to see the armless man. Blaise reports that he has carried off Lucile, but

Fronimond is a bourgeois, slow of wit and infatuated with Dandin, who is still more obtuse than he. This countryman's admiration for crude side-shows helps to turn Lucile against him and to disparage the Foire in the eyes of spectators at the Comédie Française. Mme Raymond has read so many novels that she has formed a romantic conception of life in which reality has no part. Ready to believe that Thérèse loves her, she aspires to be the heroine of an abduction. Blaise's absurd mistake is partially explained by his ignorance of Parisian ladies who "se peignent tant que je n'y connois goutte" (sc. 2). His pride in his achievement and his use of patois add to the comic effect of the rôle. He contrasts sharply with La Verdurie, who directs the intrigue, wins over the men of the Foire, disguises himself, and shows remarkable dexterity when temporarily deprived of his arms. The other characters are handsome and wealthy Thérèse, energetic Grison, charming Lucile, who gradually comes to see that elopement is her only resource, the supposed Indians, and the barkers, L'Enroué, Gille, and Braillard.

The plot is of little consequence, serving chiefly to introduce several amusing situations and to enable the author to criticize the entertainments of the Foire, which include "tableaux changeans," a bull-fight, displays of merchandise, and the antics of an armless man, jesters, marionettes, "Danseurs, Sauteurs, Voltigeurs," an Italian Turk, Indians, Chinese, Egyptians, and a Jap. The satire becomes personal when La Verdurie appears (sc. 7) "sous la figure de M. le Rat, qui montrait des tableaux à la Foire" and invites visitors to

Voir ici ces Tableaux changeans,  
 Vous en serez contens,  
 Bien contens,  
 Très-contens, etc

When Dandin asks his name, La Verdurie replies that it is "Fatiguant" and Fronimond comments

Aussi l'êtes vous bien toujours la même note  
 Depuis dix ans, pour voir une chose aussi sotte

the woman turns out to be Mme Raymond, who is made to wait in a booth. Her arrival prevents Thérèse from profiting from the confusion caused by Grison's turning over a merchant's wares. Fronimond and his party are invited into a booth by Thérèse, disguised as an Indian. There, while Indians sing, La Verdurie, disguised as the armless man, shuffles cards with his feet and gets the better of Fronimond and Dandin at piquet. While they are busy over the game, Lucile, her patience exhausted by Dandin, goes off with Thérèse. Dandin shows so little interest in her disappearance that Fronimond takes back his promise and announces that he will give his daughter to Thérèse. La Verdurie now resumes his normal appearance, arms included, and sends Grison for Thérèse, while Blaise, learning that Mme Raymond is not Lucile, explains his mistake and causes the old lady to demand revenge. Though Dandin will complain to his father, Fronimond will marry Lucile to Thérèse. The play ends with a *divertissement* supplied by La Verdurie and the Indians.

According to the frères Parfaict,<sup>25</sup> Le Rat, a tall man who dressed in black and wore a black wig that came down to his belt, was so well impersonated by La Thorillière that he sought revenge by announcing next day at the Foire that his *tableaux changeans* represented "La Thorillière yvre, Baron avec la Desmare, Poisson qui tient un jeu, Mademoiselle Dancourt & ses filles"<sup>26</sup> . . . Vous serez contens, très-contens, &c." They add that this pleasantry resulted in Le Rat's arrest and his imprisonment during the rest of the Foire.

The satire succeeded while Parisians were interested in the Foire, which ran to the end of September. First acted on the 20th of that month in 1709, the comedy was given nineteen times in that year and was performed every year thereafter through 1731. It remained in the repertory until 1752 with a total of 162 performances.

According to the frères Parfaict,<sup>27</sup> *LES AMANS RIDICULES* was a comedy in one act and in verse that Legrand never published except in so far as it was reproduced in the first act of *le Triomphe du Tems*, a play in three acts and a prologue that was acted on Oct. 18, 1724. As it is now impossible to tell how much of the comedy passed into the *Triomphe du Tems*, all that can be said about it is that it was first acted on June 1, 1711, was played nine times in that year, and was not revived. Legrand was much more successful in a play which followed a few months later, but of which he was not the only author.

There has been considerable difference of opinion about the authorship of *L'ÉPREUVE RÉCIPROQUE*.<sup>28</sup> The first claimant is R.<sup>29</sup> Alain, under whose name it was published in 1711. After his death and that of Legrand, the latter's heirs declared that he had regarded the play as his. They accordingly included it among his plays when they sold the permission to print them, with the result that it appeared in collections of Legrand's comedies in 1731 and subsequently. Maupoint added to the confusion by listing two plays, one by Lafont, the other, acted in the provinces, by Alain and Legrand. Beauchamps considered the comedy the work of Alain, a "sellier-carrossier" who was aided by Legrand and who died when he was about thirty-four. The frères Parfaict,<sup>30</sup> who place Alain's birth in 1680

<sup>25</sup> XV, 12-3

<sup>26</sup> This suggests that La Thorillière played La Verduze, Etienne Baron, Thérame, la Desmares, Lucile, la Dancourt, Mme Raymond, her daughter, an Indienne, and Poisson, Dandinot, who boasts of his skill at piquet.

<sup>27</sup> XV, 103

<sup>28</sup> Paris, Lefebvre, 1711, 12°, in an edition without place or date, in the editions of Legrand's works of 1731, 1742, and 1770, Paris, Duchesne, 1773 and 1783, Toulouse, Droulhiet, 1782, Paris, Prault, 1786, Paris, 1821 (Touquet edition), and in the *Répertoires* of 1823 and 1824. It was translated into Dutch and into German in 1779, into Italian in 1796. It has been studied briefly by Miss Burnet, *op cit.*, pp. 39-40, 45-6, etc.

<sup>29</sup> Robert, according to Beauchamps, *Recherches*, II, 502 3

<sup>30</sup> XV, 104 5

or 1681, his death on Dec 22, 1720, state that he prepared for the church, but was obliged by his father's death to take over his shop and become a sadler, and that he once competed for a prize offered by the Academy. Their remarks indicate that one cannot reject the attribution of the play to him on account of his trade. They hold that he wrote the comedy with the help of a man "de beaucoup d'esprit" and that Legrand made some changes in the text. In 1756 the *Dictionnaire des théâtres*<sup>21</sup> named a third collaborator, Pierre Thierrî, a lawyer then living. He is probably the clever man referred to as Alain's helper.

Nothing was said about Lesage in this connection until Paul Lacroix,<sup>22</sup> remembering that this author's name was Alain René, concluded that "R. Alain" referred to Lesage. He ignored the facts that Beauchamps had declared the "R" stood for Robert, that there is no evidence Lesage ever called himself "R. Alain," that no editor of Lesage had included the play among his productions, and that *l'Épreuve réciproque*, like most comedies by actors, was first acted in the summer season, whereas the plays Lesage is known to have written for the Comédie Française were not. It seems evident that this is merely one of Lacroix's many futile attempts at attribution and should be considered worthless.<sup>23</sup>

The attribution to Lafont is to be taken no more seriously. Contemporary evidence shows that it was primarily the work of Robert Alain with some help from Thierrî and that Legrand adapted it to the stage of the day, altering it sufficiently for him to claim it as his own. The case is similar to several in which Dancourt had a hand. The main ideas may well have been Alain's, the adjustments that only an experienced dramatist could give, Legrand's.

The essential theme is that of a lover's testing his beloved by disguising his servant as a gentleman, one as old on the French stage as Scarron's *Héritier ridicule*. It is renewed here by having the woman in the case disguise her servant as a lady in order to test the man she loves at the same time that he is testing her. The authors doubtless knew such related plays as *les Précieuses ridicules*,<sup>24</sup> Chappuzeau's *Académie des femmes*, Montfleury's *Dupe de soi-même*, and Hauteroche's *Bourgeoises de qualité*, but in these

<sup>21</sup> V, 461. Claude Parfaict added a note to the effect that he and his brother were not allowed to make this statement till after Vol. XV of their *Histoire* was published.

<sup>22</sup> *Solemnac*, no 1650.

<sup>23</sup> He was followed by Goizet, as Miss Burnet (*op cit*, p 40) shows, though she did not realize that he was borrowing from Lacroix. Henri Cordier, *Essai bibliographique sur Lesage*, Paris, Leclerc, 1910, p 308, lists the play as if it were by Lesage. The catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale, after mentioning the play under the names of Alain and of Legrand, attributes it to Lesage (= R. Alain) and Legrand.

<sup>24</sup> In *l'Épreuve réciproque*, as in Molière's play, the valet, when his identity is revealed, tries to explain his disguise as due to a bet.



the disguise is inspired by a desire for revenge, or by the hope of making the deceived woman release a man, whereas here, as in Scarron's play, we have a test. In none of the five earlier comedies had the disguise been employed to deceive a man, in none of them had a similar deception been employed both by a man and by a woman, and in none had the opponents remained genuinely in love. By introducing such elements as these Alain and Legrand wrote what was practically a new play.<sup>55</sup>

The atmosphere is that of a fashionable salon, made gay by the costumes and by the handsome gifts the lovers have received. Mme de Falignac, who presides over it, had once been a soubrette, but she had married a "conseiller de province," is now a widow, and increases her fortune by gambling. She is an amiable person with considerable tact and knowledge of the heart. Valère and Philaminte are aristocrats, genuinely in love, but doubting each other because love is rare in the society in which they live. Frontin and Lisette are clever and cynical servants who have learned how to ape their masters. The valet sprinkles his talk with proverbs, as does Mme Rissolé in *la Famille extravagante*. His disguise and Lisette's make possible satirical remarks about a financier and about a titled lady who is willing to sell her rank for a fortune. The only other character is Criquet, son of the coachman in the home where Lisette is employed. He serves chiefly as a messenger and to deceive Valère in regard to the false countess.

The action moves swiftly, is perfectly unified, remarkably symmetrical. The dialogue is clever. Frontin describes Mme de Falignac's home as a place of meeting for

des Comtes, des Comtesses, des Marquis, des Marquises, des Présidents, des Présidentes, des Abbés, des Abb      Que diable sais-je?

Mme de Falignac asides (sc 4), "cette épreuve réciproque nous va donner la comédie en notre petit particulier" "Nous en sommes au

<sup>55</sup> Valère and Philaminte are in love, but each wishes to test the other's affection. To do so Valère engages as his valet Frontin, who had previously served an extremely wealthy financier, M Patin—a name borrowed from *le Chevalier à la mode*. He disguises Frontin as his former master, sends Philaminte a handsome brooch in Patin's name, and secures a rendezvous. In the meantime Philaminte disguises a friend's maid, Lisette, as a countess and sends her picture to Valère in a jeweled frame. All four characters meet at the home of a widow, Mme de Falignac, who is informed of their plans by Valère and Philaminte. Indignant with the latter, Valère makes love to Lisette and offers to marry her, while Mme de Falignac and Philaminte look on from a place of concealment. In order to get her revenge, Philaminte agrees to marry Frontin, while she is being similarly observed by Mme de Falignac and Valère. Frontin and Lisette, who do not recognize each other and who realize that they cannot carry out these marriages, but who are anxious to profit by their momentary grandeur, agree to marry. Philaminte finds them together, upbraids Frontin, and tells who Lisette is. Valère then triumphs over Philaminte by telling her that she has accepted a valet, but she retorts by informing him that the "countess" is only a *souvante*. Each reproaches the other, but Mme de Falignac assures them that they love each other. Philaminte will marry Valère. Lisette accepts Frontin on condition he will not put her to a test.

dénouement," echoes Frontin near the end of the play (sc. 18). While they are disguised, he and Lisette agree that their marriage must be secret (sc. 15), for

Que diroient le Commandeur mon Oncle, mon Frere le Marquis, mon Neveu le Vicomte, s'ils savoient que je voulusse épouser moins qu'un Duc?

Fr Et ma Tante la Partisanne, mon Frere le Trésorier, & mon Cousin german le Secrétaire du Roi, que diroient-ils s'ils me voyoient pousser si avant dans la Noblesse, eux qui savent si bien ce qu'en vaut l'aune

This bright little play is made of finer stuff than Legrand's earlier comedies Lantilhac<sup>36</sup> saw in it a predecessor of Marivaux. First produced on Oct 6, 1711, it was acted twenty times in that year and remained in the repertory until 1823, longer than any play that Legrand wrote by himself. As the total number of performances was 287, it was surpassed in this respect by only two of his comedies<sup>37</sup>

Like *l'Epreuve reciproque*, LA MÉTAMORPHOSE AMOUREUSE<sup>38</sup> is in one act and in prose and employs disguise, but it deals with simpler souls and is nearer the tone of the farce in dialogue and devices<sup>39</sup>. The plot would have been improved if Severin's consent to his niece's marriage had been obtained purely by means of incidents in the play, instead of resulting in part from the death of the hero's brother, which, though anticipated as early as the third scene, is due to nothing connected with the intrigue.

<sup>36</sup> *Op cit*, IV, 338, cited by Miss Burnet, *op cit*, p 40

<sup>37</sup> For performances in the Low Countries, Germany, and Poland cf Burnet, *op cit*, pp 168-9

<sup>38</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1712, 12° Republished in editions of the author's plays, 1731, 1742, 1770, and in the *Fin du Répertoire*, Par.s. veuve Dabo, 1824

<sup>39</sup> Severin, uncle and guardian of Isabelle, refuses to allow her to marry Valère, a law student, because of his poverty. He dismisses the servants who have helped to bring the lovers together. As Valère expects soon to inherit from a dying brother, it would be unnecessary for him to intrigue against Severin if the guardian had not promised his niece to an elderly Norman, Bouquinart, whose arrival is expected when the play begins. While Valère and Isabelle are in the street, discussing the situation with his valet, Pasquin, and her dismissed *servante*, Toinette, they meet Crispin, Severin's godson, sent to engage a new *souvante* for Isabelle and a new *nourrice* for Severin's infant. The youth shows them a letter addressed to Mme Simone, who runs an employment agency. Pasquin secures Crispin's cooperation and disguises himself as the *nourrice*, Valère as the *souvante*. They are readily accepted by Severin. Meanwhile Bouquinart has arrived from Bayeux and pays laborious compliments to Isabelle. He is so weary from his trip that he goes to bed and falls asleep. Valère now urges Isabelle to elope with him to her aunt's house, but the girl hesitates until she is warned by Toinette that Severin has seen Mme Simone, has learned of the trick, and is coming with the police. The lovers leave in a carriage, while Crispin warns Pasquin, who appears at a window of Severin's home. The police surround the house, but Severin fears to enter it with them and retires to a safe distance. Pasquin exchanges his feminine costume for the clothes of the sleeping Bouquinart, makes the police believe he is Severin's prospective nephew, and escapes. The police rouse Bouquinart, force him to put on the garments that Pasquin has left on the bed, and hold him under arrest till he is liberated by Severin. Indignant over the treatment he has received and doubting Isabelle's virtue, he leaves for Bayeux, while Valère returns, announces that he has inherited from his brother, and receives Severin's permission to marry his niece.

The death of a brother is, moreover, unusual as a comic motif.<sup>40</sup> In other respects the plot is well constructed.

The characters need little comment. Severin's chief concern is to marry his niece to a man of means, regardless of his age or lack of charm. The countryman he has selected is said to laugh at his own jokes and is shown as a boor, but he is far less amusing than similar characters in Scarron and Molière. The young lovers and their attendants have conventional rôles, while the police are well-meaning officials who, thanks to Severin's cowardice, quite naturally arrest the wrong man.

Much of the comic element depends upon the costuming. When Crispin first appears, he has put on things that represent his new occupations "les manchettes & le rabat du Secrétaire, l'épée & les bottines de l'Ecuyer, & j'aurais pris dans un besoin les tettons de la Nourrice." The latter must subsequently have formed part of Pasquin's costume. Both the valet and Bouquinart once dress as a *nourrice*, Valère is disguised as a *souvante*, Pasquin as Bouquinart. The cleverest part of the dialogue is found in scenes 10 and 12, when Valère and Isabelle assure each other of their devotion with words that Severin interprets quite differently. There is a little social satire in Pasquin's account of the life he pretends to have led as a nurse in the family of a wealthy procureur who (sc. 11)

me fesoit mourir de faim, parce que malheureusement l'enfant que je nourrissois avoit le nez fait comme celui de son Maître Clerc      la maudite engeance que ces Clercs! ma vertu a bien essuyé des assauts

The action, which takes place in the street, moves rapidly and works up to a comic climax when the house is besieged by the police, Pasquin escapes in one disguise, and Bouquinart is dragged out in another. The play was first acted on Aug. 6, 1712, was given fourteen times in that year, 137 times before it was dropped from the repertory in 1789.<sup>41</sup>

It was followed by the most frequently acted of Legrand's plays, *L'USURIER GENTILHOMME*.<sup>42</sup> The title of this comedy in one act and some of its satire show the obvious influence of *le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, but it is an exaggeration to say, as Miss Burnet does,<sup>43</sup> that "la satire de la famille Mananville, y compris le frère paysan, est modelée sur la satire des

<sup>40</sup> Miss Burnet, *op cit*, p. 51, declares that "la plaisanterie n'est pas nouvelle" and cites Dancourt's *Retour des officiers* to prove it, but in the latter play it is the villain who is pleased by the death of his relatives, while here similar sentiments are attributed to the hero.

<sup>41</sup> For performances at Brussels cf. Burnet, *op cit*, p. 168.

<sup>42</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1713, 12°. Music, according to the frères Parfaict, XV, 159, by the elder Grandval. Republished in the editions of Legrand's plays, 1731, 1742, 1770, Paris, Duchesne, 1773, Ruault, 1777, Toulouse, Drouilhet, 1788, and the *Fin du Répertoire*, Paris, Dabo, 1824. A Dutch translation was published in 1740. The play has been studied by Miss Burnet, *op cit*, pp. 35-6, 46-7, 52-3, 58.

<sup>43</sup> *Op cit*, p. 36.

Jourdain," for the motivation of the usurer is different from that of M. Jourdain, his wife bears almost no resemblance to Mme Jourdain, he has no daughter, M. Jourdain has no son, and there is no character in Molière's comedy to correspond to the peasant, Colas. It would be more correct to say that Legrand derived from *le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* his title, the idea of satirizing a wealthy parvenu, and the type of instruction given to his son; suggestions for the portrayal of this young man from Thomas Diafoirus in *le Malade imaginaire*, for the portrayal of the protagonist from Dancourt's *Second Chapitre* and *Agioteurs* and from *Turcaret*. None of these plays, however, was of much assistance to Legrand in the composition of his plot, but he may owe the method by which the dénouement is brought about to Lesage, for in his *Tontine*, accepted by the actors in 1708, a valet disguises himself as a military man, storms about, and forces a fiancé, disliked by the heroine to withdraw. *L'Usurier* also resembles some of Legrand's older plays, as the forfeit theme had been employed in his *Femme fille et veuve* and Licaste's law-suit, mentioned early in the play and won at the end of it, is similar in treatment and function to the hero's inheritance in *la Métamorphose amoureuse* <sup>44</sup>

Mananville, son of a village school-teacher at Charonne, had, when twenty, started his career at Paris in 1681 as the servant of a business man, had married a peasant's daughter, had worked with several usurers, had become one himself, as well as an *agioteur*, and had built up a great fortune. He wishes to marry his son to the daughter of a nobleman in order to secure "tout l'appui possible contre les recherches qu'on aurait pu faire de l'acquisition de mes biens" <sup>45</sup> He has acquired a certain polish by life in Paris

"Fontaubin, a nobleman whose affairs have suffered from his gambling and from usurers, has agreed to marry his daughter, Henriette, to the Baron de la Grusaudière, son of M Mananville, a usurer of peasant origin. The contract is to be signed on the day represented in the comedy. Licaste, whom Henriette loves, comes with his valet, Frontin, to the home of Mananville in order to prevent the marriage. He tells Henriette that he has gained admission to the house by bribing a servant, that he has written to her brother, a captain, asking him to intervene, and that he expects to become wealthy when he wins a law suit. She fears that it is too late, but is assured that her proposed marriage to the Baron can be prevented. To do this Frontin has investigated Mananville's origin and has persuaded his peasant brother, Colas, to come to the wedding. The speech and manners of Mme Mananville, her son, and her brother-in-law disgust Henriette's father, but he cannot break the engagement without forfeiting 20,000 écus. To overcome this difficulty Frontin disguises himself as Henriette's brother, storms about, insults the usurer, slaps Colas, and demands 100,000 francs for his consent to the marriage. When a musical entertainment is given as a preliminary to the signing of the contract, Mananville is surprised to find that he and his family are ridiculed in the songs, which Frontin had composed, and Henriette's *souvante*, Lisette, had persuaded the musicians to sing. In order to get rid of Henriette's supposed brother, Mananville proposes to break off the match. Fontaubin gladly agrees. The documents connected with the forfeit are returned to their signers. Fontaubin regrets that he has withdrawn his promise to marry Henriette to Licaste, who now brings the good news that he has won his law suit and has 200,000 francs to share with Henriette. Their marriage will follow, as will that of Frontin and Lisette. The play ends with a *dévoisement*.

<sup>44</sup> Sc 25. Miss Burnet, *op cit*, p 47, shows that the affairs of such persons were investigated in 1716 and that the help of a man who stood well at court was desirable

and is ashamed of the patois spoken by his wife and by his brother, whom he tries to pass off as a ship captain. Apart from a brief allusion to his exacting heavy interest for money he has loaned a widow, we hear nothing of his business operations, nor is the ease with which Frontin tricks him consistent with his alleged shrewdness in finance.

His wife is a much more comical figure. She is pretentious, rude to her servants, continually saying the wrong thing and expressing herself in the speech of her village. Her son is a dull youth, who has to be coached by his relatives and who has profited little from the instruction he has received in fencing, music, dancing, riding, and what his mother calls "ostographe" and "arismétique" (sc. 5). The family group is completed by Colas, a friendly peasant, ill received by his wealthy relatives, obstinate in his desire to remain in their home when they try to get rid of him, too prudent to resent the slap he receives from Frontin.

In contrast with these persons of humble birth we are shown Fontaubin, who has been deceived about Mananville's family, who recognizes his mistake, and who conducts himself like a gentleman except for his lingering in Mananville's home after he has broken off the marriage—a fact that shows Legrand to have been more interested in introducing the *divertissement* than in drawing a character. Licaste and Henriette have little individuality. Lisette is clever and impudent, especially amusing when she imitates the speech of Mme Mananville. "Madame, j'allons nous en aller. Mais j'aurons l'honneur de revenir tout à cette heure" (sc. 6). The character that dominates the action is Frontin,<sup>46</sup> who investigates Mananville, brings his brother to Paris, and, disguised as a captain, breaks off the marriage and saves Fontaubin from paying the forfeit. Like many of Legrand's valets, he is quick, resourceful, and witty.

The play is weak in verisimilitude and in the method by which the dénouement is brought about, and the characters are superficially presented, but there are excellent scenes at the expense of the upstart peasants. When Mme Mananville meets Henriette, she assures her that "je serons tretous ravis de vous avoir dans notre alliance," and she admits that, as for herself and her husband, "je sommes la politesse même, croiriez-vous que je n'avons point eu de peine du tout à nous accoutumer à être de qualité?" (sc. 5). Her acquired politeness is put to a severe test when her brother-in-law arrives from the country (sc. 9).

Mme M. Que venez vous nous conter ici, mon ami, je ne vous connaissons pas.  
Colas. Quoi? Catau ne reconnoit pas son biau frere!  
Mme M. Fi donc!

<sup>46</sup> Not Crispin, as Miss Burnet, *op cit.*, pp. 48, 51, calls him three times. Frontin's use of songs to ridicule the Mananville family may have been derived from *le Concert ridicule* by Brueys and Palaprat, cf. my *op cit.*, Part IV, p. 709.

Le Baron: Tenez, je ne vous reconnois pas non plus, mon oncle Colas.

Colas Morgué! je ne sis pourtant pas si changé que vous; oh bien, bien, tout coup vaille, je veux être de la fête

Mme M Un paysan être d'une nôce de qualité, quelle hardiesse!

Le Baron Oui, cela est impertinent, mon oncle Colas

Colas Jarnigué, vous êtes des ingrats, nan dit bien vrai, qu'il vaudroit mieux qu'une Cité pérît, qu'un gueux s'enrichît

The dialogue in the scenes in which the Mananville family appears, the satirical verses at their expense, and the final *divertissement* must have appealed especially to audiences that revered as an ideal a stratified society, free from usurers and from persons who sought to change their class. The play was first given on Sept. 11, 1713. It was performed twenty-seven times in that year and, except in 1744 and 1746, was produced every year thereafter through 1783. A last performance at the Comédie Française was given in 1789. In the eighteenth century it was played no less than 417 times, but it did not survive the social changes that began to take place during the Revolution.<sup>47</sup>

Among the authors of the period who composed more than three or four comedies Legrand alone confined himself to plays in one act. He showed little originality, employed disguise in all his comedies, trusted chiefly to his plot, although, except when he was writing in collaboration, his plots leave much to be desired. His first play was, as I have said, no better than those he wrote in the provinces, but he surpassed them in *l'Amour Diable*, with its satirical treatment of superstition and its introduction of a boy, in *la Famille extravagante*, with its entertaining use of proverbs, and in *la Foire Saint-Laurent*, a clever attack upon rivals of the Comédie Française. Superior to these are *l'Epreuve réciproque*, of which, however, Alain may be the main author, and *l'Usurier Gentilhomme*, with its entertaining dramatization of parvenus.

Legrand's work in this period suggests that he was preparing to succeed Dancourt as the principal member of the troupe to compose plays for it. This may explain why he specialized in one-act comedies, many of which were needed, as they were played with tragedies or longer comedies, and it was especially desirable to have them during the summer season, when new full-length plays were rarely given. That he knew his audience is shown by the success of his comedies in the eighteenth century. That they had little of lasting value is demonstrated by the neglect into which they fell in the century that followed.

<sup>47</sup> For performances of the play in the eighteenth century at Brussels, in Germany, and in Poland cf. Burnet, *op cit*, pp. 168-9.

## CHAPTER XV

### LESAGE

Lesage is remembered primarily as a novelist. It was probably the fame of *le Diable boiteux* and *Gil Blas* that caused *Turcaret* to be revived and helped prolong the careers of this comedy and of *Crispin rival de son maître*. Yet his plays deserve attention on their own account. Though he owed much to Spain and to Dancourt and contributed little that was new in material or method to the drama of his country, five of his comedies, composed in the first decade of the century, were performed at the Comédie Française, two of these are among the most widely known plays of the period, and one of them is its most dramatic *comédie de mœurs*.

He had begun his career as a dramatist by adapting to the French stage a play by Rojas and one by Lope de Vega.<sup>1</sup> He had altered them little, though he had written in prose, but he had gained some knowledge of dramatic technique, of what material should be kept and of what it was wise to omit or alter. When he composed his third play, *Le Point d'honneur*,<sup>2</sup> he showed similar characteristics, but he made larger alterations in his model. His source was again a play by Rojas and again he wrote in prose. *No hay amigo para amigo* had already supplied Scarron with a few amusing scenes.<sup>3</sup> Lesage repeated these, but he also took over the main incidents of the Spanish plot. Rojas's *comedia* is a romantic drama of love and honor, in which are presented a captain who is very sensitive about rules connected with dueling and servants whose conduct contrasts comically with that of their masters. Lesage eliminated the murder that the hero of the Spanish play has committed, reduced the romantic portion of the *comedia*, leaving out Rojas's love orations and his elaborate comparisons with flowers, heavenly bodies, etc., but he increased greatly the comic portion, making of the captain much more a professor of honor than he is in the original, giving new scenes to Rojas's servants, and adding new characters to increase comic effects suggested by the Spaniard. From Scarron<sup>4</sup> he must have derived the attitude he assigns to Beatrix in regard

<sup>1</sup> Cf. my *op. cit.*, Part IV, pp. 905-7.

<sup>2</sup> Among Lesage's plays published in the *Recueil* of Paris, Jacques Barois fils, 1739, *priv.*, Aug. 22, 1738. Republished in collective editions of 1774, 1783, 1810, 1821, 1823, 1828, 1830, and 1879, cf. Henri Cordier, *Essai bibliographique sur les œuvres d'Alain-René Lesage*, Paris, Leclerc, 1910, and the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. my *op. cit.*, Part III, p. 896, note on Part II, p. 459.

<sup>4</sup> *Jodelet souffleté*, II, 2.

to the humiliated valet. There are references to *le Cid*, and a line (II, 17) is quoted from that play.

Though Lesage respected only one unity, that of time, and allowed a violation of *liaison*, he made some effort to follow French technique by reducing to three<sup>5</sup> the number of localities represented, and succeeded in producing a comedy that is more firmly constructed than *No hay amigo*. This is partly due to the fact that he paid more attention to preparation and placed the comic scenes between the valets earlier in his play. When his comedy was acted, it was in five acts, but, when he published it, Lesage reduced the number to three "pour la rendre plus vive," as he declares.

The chief character, the one who makes a fetish of the "point d'honneur," is in Lesage's play<sup>6</sup> Don Lope de Castro. Léonor describes him (I, 1) as "si délicat sur le point d'honneur, qu'il outre quelquefois la matière. Cela lui donne un ridicule dans le monde," though he is well born, brave, and honest. He has written a book that gives the rules "de point d'honneur." In this he describes all sorts of offenses and "réparations possibles et impossibles." Men come from abroad to consult him. He employs spies to discover cases that may require his services. Lesage has him refer (II, 1) to a duel for which he is to make arrangements, introduces one of his spies (III, 2), who tells him of a fight connected with a serenade, and adds a scene (III, 3) in which a Sicilian consults him.<sup>7</sup> He is shown in his

<sup>5</sup> By making one of the girls the captain's niece he was able to do without other places than the Prado and two apartments in the captain's house. When the action passes from one of these to the other, *liaison* is violated (III, 56). Some of the scenes have no connection with the plot except that they illustrate the captain's activities.

<sup>6</sup> Alonso de Guzman has been for four years in love with Estelle d'Alvarade, who has preferred Luis Pacheco. The latter, supposed to be still fighting in Flanders, has returned to Madrid under the assumed name of Carlos. He has grown up Estelle for Leonor, Alonso's sister, who has fallen in love with him. In order to help his own suit, however, Alonso has promised his sister to Estelle's uncle, Captain Lope, whose life has been saved by Luis in Flanders. Léonor declares her intention of obeying her brother, but she is persuaded by her *survante*, Beatrice, whom Luis has bribed, to receive the young man in the evening. When Léonor learns that her brother resents the attentions of the supposed Carlos, she arranges for their interview to take place in Estelle's apartment. Meanwhile Alonso has asked Lope to help him punish a man who has been prowling around his house and is apparently seeking to seduce his sister. Luis's valet, Clarin, recognized by Estelle, pretends, in order to conceal the fact that his master is in Madrid, that Luis has married a girl in Brussels. Estelle appeals to her uncle, who promises to avenge her. The captain's valet, Crispin, left as a sentinel, is slapped by Clarin, is ordered by his master to get revenge, practises with his sword, and is slapped again and beaten. He makes Lope believe he has avenged his honor. Luis keeps his appointment with Léonor, recognizes Estelle, and wishes to retire, but he is discovered by Alonso and the captain. Luis explains that he is not married and that he loves Léonor. Estelle, who had already expressed interest in Alonso, agrees to marry him instead of Luis. The captain approves since one of his rules is that the man who has loved longer than his rival has first claim on the girl. When he is reminded that Luis has loved Léonor longer than he has, he withdraws his request for her hand and comments on the severity of honor's rules.

<sup>7</sup> The Sicilian has read in a book that a man of his name was murdered by a



relations with the other gentlefolk of the play and with his valet, whom he instructs in regard to honor. His character is made comic by his exaggerated interest in dueling and by the manner in which he subordinates all his emotions to his mechanical code. The fact that his rival has loved Léonor a few days longer than he makes him assist in the dénouement by withdrawing his offer of marriage.

The importance given to this character and the scenes in which a valet who resents an insult is more severely insulted make of the play largely a satire upon the "point d'honneur." The frères Parfaict felt that the subject was not one that could be appreciated in the France of Lesage's time, which was almost that of their own. As Louis XIV had done much to suppress dueling, it probably would have been difficult in 1702 to find any such interest in rules of honor as had existed in Spain in the time of Rojas. This fact may help explain the failure of the play.

The other characters have little to distinguish them from the usual young lovers and their resourceful attendants. So greatly did Lesage increase the rôle of these servants that they are found in all the scenes of Act I, in all but two of Act II, and in all but two of Act III. They and the captain replace Rojas's young lovers as the center of interest. This shift in emphasis, the use of prose, the changes in position of certain scenes, and the attention paid the setting<sup>8</sup> are Lesage's chief contributions. That they were of little avail is shown by the fact that the play was acted only twice at the Comédie Française and that it was not performed more frequently when it was given at the Théâtre Italien.<sup>9</sup>

In his next play, *DON CÉSAR URSIN*,<sup>10</sup> Lesage returned to the methods he had employed in his first two adaptations of Spanish plays and followed closely his model, Calderón's *Peor está que estaba*. This *comedia* had already been adapted to the French stage by Brosse and by Boissrobert,<sup>11</sup> but there is no evidence that Lesage knew the work of either. His prin-

person called Perichichichipinchi and that the murder has not been avenged. He has been unable to find anyone of that name in Italy and asks whether, if he discovers no one in the rest of Europe, his honor may be at rest. The captain advises him to visit the rest of the world.

<sup>8</sup> The scene of Acts I and II is laid in the Prado. One sees "dans l'enfoncement un mur de jardin percé d'une petite porte." Act III shows two apartments in the captain's home. The first, Lope's own, resembles a "salle d'armes on y voit quantité de fleurets, de plastrons et autres ustensils concernant les armes." The other, Estelle's, is lighted by many candles.

<sup>9</sup> First played, Feb. 3, 1702. The frères Parfaict, XIV, 250, state that the author's share was 163 francs and that, altered by Lesage, the comedy was given on April 10, 1725, and once thereafter at the Théâtre Italien. It then had a prologue and was entitled *l'Arbitre des différends*.

<sup>10</sup> It was first published in the *Recueil* of Paris, Jacques Barois fils, 1739, *privé*, Aug. 22, 1738, then in collective editions of 1774, 1810, 1821, 1823, 1828, and 1830, cf. Cordier, *op cit* and the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. my *op cit*, Part II, pp. 473-4, and Part III, pp. 65-6.

cial alterations lie in the suppression of the second invitation sent by Lisarda to Don Cesar, asking him to visit her at night, its attendant complications, and the recovery of the man Don Cesar is supposed to have killed. The action is consequently simplified and made to accord more fully with the spirit of French comedy, but we are left with a rather flat ending, brought about in part by circumstances not connected with the action.

The play is distinctly a comedy of intrigue,<sup>12</sup> an imbroglio based on a curious series of misunderstandings. A father arrests his own daughter, thinking she is the daughter of a friend, and entrusts her to herself. A young man flirts with a friend's fiancée without knowing who she is. This friend questions a girl about one adventure while she thinks he is talking about another. The secret on which the happy outcome depends is often in danger of being discovered. When all is over, one may well ask whether César and Lisarde are satisfied with the mates they get, although Lesage made some effort to avoid this impression by having César declare that Fléride still has first place in his affections and Lisarde assert that, in inviting César to her home, she is merely satisfying her curiosity.

Both the portrayal of character and the creation of distinctly comic scenes are sacrificed to plot. The chief importance of the play lies in the fact that its lack of success seems to have convinced Lesage that French audiences had wearied of Spanish cloak and sword dramas and desired plays that would be more distinctly comic and would pay more attention to characters and manners.

<sup>12</sup> Don Cesar Ursin, visiting in a garden at night Fléride, daughter of Prosper Colone, Governor of Naples, has wounded a man whom he mistook for a rival and has fled to Gaeta, where, in a garden by the sea, he meets Lisarde, daughter of Don Ferdinand d'Aragon, governor of the town and an old friend of Colone. Though engaged to Don Juan Osorio, Lisarde is attracted by Cesar. Fléride has followed Cesar to Gaeta and taken refuge with Lisarde. Her father, thinking she has eloped, writes to Colone requesting that his daughter and Cesar be arrested. This message leads to the capture of Cesar and a veiled woman, whom the governor puts, as he thinks, in his daughter's keeping while he conducts Cesar to prison. Lisarde, who happens to be the veiled woman, now finds herself safe in her own apartment. Her father sends word to Colone that he has made the capture. Meanwhile Juan, who has come to Gaeta with the purpose of marrying Lisarde, is presented to her as her fiancé. As he is an old friend of Cesar and has seen him in the garden before his capture, he regrets his imprisonment and offers assistance. Cesar, invited by Lisarde to visit her at night, gets Juan to prevail upon the keeper of the prison to allow him to go. Though he does not accompany him, Juan discovers his presence in the governor's home and demands an explanation. Cesar declares that he does not know Lisarde and was visiting another woman, a statement he believes to be true, as he has not learned the name of the woman he met in the garden at Gaeta. Juan lets Cesar go, but next morning questions Lisarde's guest, finds that she knows Cesar and has met him in a garden. He is convinced that his friend is innocent so far as Lisarde is concerned and informs Fléride that Cesar is in town. Lisarde tries to prevent her from visiting him, but a courier brings a letter from the Governor of Naples stating that Cesar's victim has recovered, that he may return to Naples, and that he may marry his daughter. A double wedding will take place at Gaeta, that of Cesar and Fléride, of Juan and Lisarde.

*Don César Ursin* was first given, with *Crispin rival de son maître*, on March 15, 1707. It was acted only six times and was not revived. The duchesse d'Orléans noted on March 24 that *Don César* was more successful at court, *Crispin rival* at Paris, but that neither was of much value. The *Journal de Verdun* declared in May that *Don César* had been hissed, though many persons thought it deserved a better fate.<sup>15</sup> Lesage accepted the popular verdict and did not again attempt this type of play.

Lantilhac<sup>14</sup> supposed that the first conception of *CRISPIN RIVAL DE SON MAÎTRE*<sup>15</sup> came from Hurtado de Mendoza's *Empeños del mentir* because in this Spanish play an adventurer tries to marry his benefactor's sister by passing himself off as her fiancé. He admits, however, that incidents, dialogue, and characters owe nothing to this supposed source. He might have added that, as Mendoza's Teresa says, "no hay lacayito en la historia." Moreover, a lover poses as a fiancé in other plays that are no more remote from Lesage's comedy than is Mendoza's, such as Tirso's *Vulana de Vallecas*, Boisrobert's *Trois Orontes*, Thomas Corneille's *Dom César d'Avalos*.<sup>16</sup> There is, then, no evidence that this theme was derived from Mendoza's play.<sup>17</sup> The idea of disguising a valet as a gentleman could have come from various plays other than Mendoza's Scarron's *Jodelet maître* or *Héritier ridicule*, Molière's *Précieuses ridicules*, etc. Moreover, for a valet to long to rise in society had been suggested in Champmeslé's *Grisettes*, Haute-roche's *Souper mal apprêté*, Regnard's *Joueur* and *Ménechmes*.<sup>18</sup> Lesage was not the first to dramatize any of these ideas. His originality lay in combining them as none of his predecessors had done, as well as in his clever dialogue and his rapid and well developed action.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> For these references cf. the frères Parfaict, XIV, 440-1, and Mélése, *Rép.*, p. 217. It is probably the failure of this play that inspired a remark in the 1707 edition of *le Diable boiteux* (Chap. X). When it is suggested that, if Spanish plays were translated in France, they would not succeed, Asmodée agrees and adds, "Il n'y a pas longtemps qu'un auteur de ce pays là en a fait la triste expérience."

<sup>16</sup> *Op. cit.*, IV, 161. He discusses the play on this and the following pages. Cf. also his *Lesage*, Paris, Hachette, 1893, p. 38, and Lement, *op. cit.*, I, 130-3.

<sup>17</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1707, 12°, pp. 11, May 8. Republished in the *Théâtre français* of 1737, in the *Recueil*, Paris, Jacques Barois fils, 1739. For these and forty-six other editions, as well as for translations, cf. Henri Cordier, *op. cit.* and the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. my *op. cit.*, Part II, pp. 745-8, and Part IV, pp. 447-50.

<sup>19</sup> *Los Empeños del mentir* may have been thought to be the source of the play because it probably did inspire an episode in *Gil Blas* (II, 428 seq. in the edition of 1828), which Lesage's editor believed he had taken from *Crispin rival*.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. my *op. cit.*, Part III, pp. 768, 773, Part IV, p. 741, and above, Chap. XIII. Wedding garments, worn by a man for whom they were not made, play a similar part here and in Boindin's recent *Trois Gascons*.

<sup>21</sup> Valère has fallen in love with Angélique, daughter of Oronte, and has gained the help of her *survante*, Lisette, who has told him that her mistress is engaged, but without revealing the name of the man. He appeals to his valet, Crispin, who longs for a financial career and admires Angélique. Crispin meets an acquaintance, La Branche, who, after serving a sentence at the Châtelet, has become the valet of Damis, the young man who was to marry Angélique, but who has secretly married

The characterization is superior to that of Lesage's earlier plays. Oronte is a wealthy Parisian bourgeois, who has three fine houses in the city and gives his daughter a dowry of 60,000 francs. One of his houses has cost him 80,000 francs to build. He is easily deceived by Crispin's disguise and by La Branche's claim that Valère has forged a letter, though he is convinced that he is himself an excellent judge of character. His wife is still more simple-minded. She is said to agree with the last person who has spoken to her. She changes her opinions rapidly, is easily influenced by flattery, and has an excellent opinion of her intelligence and her charms. She is between twenty-five and sixty, but, as she lost a lover in the Cretan war some forty years before the play was acted, she must be much nearer sixty than twenty-five. When she recalls that Valère looked at her and Angélique "avec des yeux si passionnés," she asks Lisette if she is sure that "c'est de ma fille qu'il est amoureux?" (sc. 5). One can hardly expect this couple to have produced a daughter more intelligent than Angélique, who can think only of following suggestions she receives from Lisette and Valère.

Orgon resembles Oronte in being easily deceived. He is courteous enough to think that he should himself explain why his son cannot marry Angélique. This son, who has seduced a girl of good family and been obliged to marry her, does not appear on the stage. Valère is a young-man-about-town, cheated by merchants, protected by a marquise, and not above deceiving Oronte in order to win his daughter. As a penniless young nobleman and an ardent lover, he wins the sympathy of the audience

a girl at Chartres. La Branche has come to Paris to inform Oronte that Damis cannot marry his daughter and to bring back Damis's wedding garments. Crispin proposes to put on these clothes, to pose as Damis, to marry Angélique, and to divide the dowry with La Branche. He warns Valère that he must stay away from Oronte's house while he works in his interests. Angélique and Lisette persuade Mme Oronte to favor Valère, but she yields to her husband's judgment when he assures her that, as the contract has been signed, he cannot break off Angélique's marriage to Damis. La Branche brings Oronte a forged letter, presumably from Orgon, introducing his son, Damis. He is followed by Crispin, who, disguised as Damis, is now received as their son-in-law by Oronte and his wife. He flatters Mme Oronte and wins her support. Meanwhile Valère, who has become impatient, meets Angélique and Lisette, learns that the fiance is Damis, and declares that the latter, who happens to be his friend, has written that he is married. While he goes to get the letter, Lisette informs Oronte about its contents, but La Branche convinces him that Valère has forged the letter. Oronte is so completely won over that he discusses Angélique's dowry with Crispin and starts to visit his notary in order to obtain the sum required. On the way he meets Damis's father, Orgon, who had come to tell him about his son's marriage, but had been persuaded by La Branche to postpone his visit for a day in order to allow the anger of Oronte and his wife to cool. Orgon now confirms Valère's report that Damis is married and declares that the young man is still at Chartres. He and Oronte conclude that Crispin is an impostor. When the valets are accused, they try to escape, but Valère, Oronte, and Orgon arrest them. They beg for mercy and appeal especially to Mme Oronte, who asks that they be spared. Oronte agrees to release them and even to start them in business if they will reform. He gives his daughter to Valère and invites Orgon to the wedding.

More important than any of these are the two intriguers, La Branche and Crispin. The former has spent several weeks in the Châtelet, charged with an attempt at highway robbery. He has had his term shortened by the intervention of a pawnbroker's niece. He plots with Crispin and agrees to divide the spoils. At one time he thinks of taking the whole dowry for himself, but he decides that it is more prudent to stand by his fellow thief. He shows his cleverness by preparing the way for Crispin, by convincing Oronte that Damis's letter is forged, and by delaying Orgon's visit to Oronte. Crispin is equally clever and even more daring. Weary of being a valet, he says to himself (sc 2)

tu devrois présentement briller dans la finance      Avec l'esprit que j'ai, morbleu!  
j'aurais déjà fait plus d'une banqueroute

His need of capital sends him to Touraine, before the play begins, on a gambling expedition. It now induces him to pose as Damis in the hope of escaping to Flanders, if not with Angélique, at least with her dowry. He shows his resourcefulness in plotting with La Branche and in deceiving Oronte, his family, and Valère. He has to invent information quickly when Oronte questions him about Orgon's law-suit, of which he has never heard, and he cleverly explains his disguise to Valère by pretending that he was seeking to disgust the Oronte couple with Damis.

These characters are skillfully introduced in a series of scenes that follow one another logically and give a varied series of situations. Suspense is excellently preserved. The play is well constructed and contains not a little social satire.

il aime le jeu, le vin, les femmes      Cela m'amuse, cela me détourne de mal faire (sc 3)

Il a été élevé avec la plus brillante jeunesse de Paris. 'Tudieu! c'est une tête bien sensée. "A M Craquet, medecin, dans la rue du Sepulcre." Voilà un medecin qui loge dans le quartier de ses malades. "A M Bredouillet, avocat au parlement, rue des Mauvaises Paroles." "A M Gourmandin, chanoine de " (sc 7)

La justice est une si belle chose, qu'on ne sauroit trop l'acheter' (sc 9)

Damis est un plaisant homme de vouloir avoir deux femmes, pendant que tant d'honnêtes gens sont si fâchés d'en avoir une. un de ces petits scélérats qui ne se font point un scrupule de la pluralité des dots (sc 13)

This bright little comedy was originally played with its author's *Don César Ursin* on March 15, 1707. This was an unusual programme as a new play in five acts was regularly given alone until the receipts dropped sufficiently to warrant the addition of a one-act comedy. Lesage may have thought that his longer play was not comic enough to stand alone. The superior popularity of *Crispin rival* was shown in 1707 by its being acted nine times in comparison with six performances of *Don César*. Neither

play was given in 1708, but, while *Don César* failed to reappear in the repertory, *Crispin rival* was acted five times in 1709 and ten times in 1718. As Lesage's fame increased, it became a favorite, was acted sixty-four times in 1720-30, remained in the repertory until 1874, and had by that time been performed 679 times. Only six eighteenth-century plays were acted more frequently at the Comédie Française.

According to Lintilhac,<sup>20</sup> Lesage next composed a one-act play called *les Etrennes* and wished to have it acted on Jan. 1, 1708, then, as it was refused, lengthened it to five acts and called it *TURCARET*.<sup>21</sup> Though it was accepted in its new form, the performance of the comedy was delayed, supposedly because financiers influenced the actors or the author, but on Oct 13, 1708, the troupe was ordered by the Dauphin to learn the rôles and bring it out.<sup>22</sup> The year before Dancourt had produced his *Diable boiteux* and *Second Chapitre*, each of which plays has a frame in which Asmodée appears, once at the Comédie Française itself. It seems probable that Lesage derived from these plays, inspired by his own *Diable boiteux*, suggestions for his *Critique*, which, according to the frères Parfaict, was given with the five-act play when it was first performed. The opposition that he had encountered in getting his play before the public made him realize the need for this *Critique*. In writing it he was following the example of Molière and the very recent one of Regnard in his *Critique du Légataire*, while in giving it the form employed by Dancourt, he was recovering his "bien" where he found it.

The sources of *Turcaret* lie partly in the life of the times when it was written, partly in plays that had preceded it. Lintilhac has indicated the increasing importance of the tax-collectors as Louis XIV became, thanks to his wars, more and more financially embarrassed. He has also listed a number of plays, including and following *la Comtesse d'Escarbagnas*, which had introduced tax-collectors or other financiers into the cast. To these may be added Robbe's *La Rapinière*, Saint-Yon's *Mœurs du tems*, and Dancourt's *Second Chapitre*. While it is difficult to say just which plays were utilized, it is easy to show that several of them may well have served as Lesage's models.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *Histoire générale du théâtre*, IV, 164. His detailed study of *Turcaret* is found on pp 182-208, cf also Lenient, *op cit*, I, 113-50, and C S Gutkind, *ZFSL*, LV (1932), 308-24. The play in five acts was read to the troupe on May 15, cf Lintilhac, *Lesage*, p 50.

<sup>21</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1709, 12°, *priv*, Feb 23, registered, March 1. Republished in 1725 by Ribou's widow, in the *Théâtre françois* of 1737, in the *Recueil*, Jacques Barois fils, 1739, and Paris, Gandouin 1750. For these and fifty-two other editions, cf Henri Cordier, *op cit*, and the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale. The name, *Turcaret*, was derived, according to Van Kampen (*Neophilologus*, XVI, 6-9) from *turc* in the sense of Turk and in that of a blood sucking insect.

<sup>22</sup> The frères Parfaict, XV, 4, quoted a statement to this effect from the *Registres*. Lintilhac notes that the document in question is now lost.

<sup>23</sup> A wealthy tax-collector of humble origin, *Turcaret*, is squandering his fortune

In *les Mœurs du tems*, a tax-collector loves a girl who prefers a young nobleman, spends money on her, is deceived and pillaged. In the *Banqueroutier* Persillet cheats the public, courts a widow, and pays her debts. Lintilhac<sup>24</sup> calls attention to the fact that an unscrupulous character in the *Avantures des Champs Elysées* is named Raffle, as is a character in *Turcaret*. Dancourt's *Retour des officiers* introduces a *sous-fermier* who began his career as a lackey, is on his way to prosperity, and is ashamed of his rustic relatives. A *sous-traitant*, who began as a page and a doorkeeper, has an important rôle in Dancourt's *Second Chapitre*. His *Bourgeoises à la mode* shows an adventurer whose mother is a pawnbroker, a valet named Frontin, and a diamond that is important in the plot. The Marquis of *le Joueur* turns out to be a cousin of another pawnbroker. This play and others I have mentioned in discussing *Crispin rural*, as well as the latter comedy, bring in a valet who is anxious to rise socially by means of financial operations. Lesage's Frontin is a subtler and more formidable Crispin. His other characters are, in the main, familiar figures.

Lesage's originality is found in his making his tax-collector the leading character of his play, in his depicting him as more violent than his predecessors had been, and in his adding details about various characters. We learn a good deal about *Turcaret*. His father was a *pâtissier* in a Norman village. He had started life as a lackey in a noble family. He has now reached a point where his "prose . . . est signée et approuvée par quatre

upon a colonel's widow, the Baronne, who in turn gives money to the Chevalier. Her maid, Marine, disapproves of her conduct, resigns, and informs *Turcaret* that his money is going to the Chevalier. In a rage the tax-collector breaks a mirror and porcelaines in the Baronne's chamber, but he is made to believe that the woman he loves is innocent and to replace the damaged furnishings. At the Baronne's request he takes into his service the Chevalier's valet, Frontin, who places his friend, Lisette, in the Baronne's home. Frontin engages a forger to present a bill, said to be owed by the Baronne's deceased husband. *Turcaret* agrees to pay it. The Baronne will use the money to furnish a country house that *Turcaret*, at the suggestion of Frontin and Lisette, will present to her. Meanwhile *Turcaret* has engaged in various risky deals and has gone security for a man who skips with 200,000 ecus. As his resources have been drained by the Baronne and Frontin he is unable to pay this amount and is taken off to prison. Before he goes, he has met at the Baronne's his sister, who is a pawnbroker, and his wife, whom he has tried to keep in the provinces, but who, needing money, has come to Paris, represented herself as a countess, and begun an intrigue with the Marquis, who is a friend of the Chevalier and whose grandfather *Turcaret* had served as a valet. The meeting exposes *Turcaret's* humble birth, his snobbishness, and his wife's pretensions. A diamond, pawned by the Marquis, acquired by *Turcaret*, presented to the Baronne, loaned to the Chevalier, and returned by him, enables the Baronne to clear herself of charges brought against her by Marine. A check for 10,000 ecus, payable to the bearer and pre-ented by *Turcaret* to the Baronne, is entrusted to Frontin who pretends that it was taken by the police when they collected *Turcaret's* assets. As a matter of fact, he has cashed the check and with this money and Lisette is prepared to start on a career that may some day make him as wealthy as *Turcaret*. As for the Chevalier, the Baronne gives him up when she discovers that he has invented gambling losses in order to get money from her.

<sup>24</sup> *Histoire générale du théâtre*, IV, 193

fermiers-généraux" (I, 6). He belongs to an important "assemblée," sells minor offices, engages under the names of others in usurious practices, advises a protégé to enter into bankruptcy with fraudulent intent, neglects to pay his wife's allowance, is pitiless to an employee who has been robbed. When told that the latter is "trop bon," he exclaims, "Trop bon! trop bon! Eh! pourquoi diable s'est-il donc mis dans les affaires?" (III, 9). His ruin is caused partly by his shady enterprises and partly by his extravagance in regard to women. The Baronne and her friends have little difficulty in tricking him while he is lavishing gifts upon her, a handsome diamond, a carriage and horses, a house, furnishings, a check for 10,000 écus, etc.

Turcaret's social ambition leads him to patronize the Opera, though he considers a trumpet a suitable instrument to accompany a singer. He enjoys having a poet at his table and even seeks to write verse himself, like the millionaire in *les Hommes de bonne volonté*, but with less regard for the rules of prosody. He is convinced of his own discernment and is unaware that, when his affections are involved, he readily falls a victim to persons less skillful in affairs than himself. The violence of his anger is shown in the scene of the broken mirror and vases, but he restrains himself when he is insulted by the Marquis. The character would have appeared more ominous if more emphasis had been placed on his nefarious business methods and less on his rôle as a dupe.

This impression is partly remedied by the rôle of Frontin, whose career lies largely in the future. He is merely a clever valet at the beginning of the comedy, but he is accepted by Turcaret as a clerk and shows his progress in deception by persuading his employer to add to his gifts to the Baronne, by deceiving him in regard to the forged bill, and by keeping for himself the money of the *billet à porteur*. He represents the tax-collector in his beginnings, as Turcaret represents him just before his downfall. Together they offer a fairly complete picture of this social scourge. Lesage's method is similar to that employed by Emile Augier in *les Effrontés*. It was one that the limitations imposed by the unity of time rendered especially desirable.

The other persons are well characterized. The Baronne is very clever in her flattery of Turcaret, but she is easily deceived by the Chevalier and his agents. Marine is a relatively honest *servante*, whose common sense is shocked by the Baronne's infatuation over the Chevalier that makes her run the risk of losing her "vache à lait." Lasette has no scruples of any kind and may enter the Opera if she does not find it more profitable to build up a fortune with Frontin. The Chevalier makes his living at the expense of women, "avec ses airs passionnés, son ton radouci, sa face minaudière" (I,



1). The Marquis, one of the most interesting characters in the play, is a dissipated aristocrat, witty and sarcastic, seeking variety in his amusements, flirting with a queer woman he meets at a dance, able to make something of himself, but preferring to do nothing elegantly while awaiting an inheritance.

Mme Turcaret, a blacksmith's daughter, has been banished by her husband to Valogne in Basse-Normandie. She claims to have made of the town a miniature Paris (V, 7).

On joue chez moi, on s'y rassemble pour médire, on y lit tous les ouvrages d'esprit qui se font à Cherbourg, à Saint-Lô, à Coutances, et qui valent bien les ouvrages de Vire et de Caen.

Large and bold, she is described as "vive, pétulante, distraite, étourdie, dissipée, et toujours barbouillée de tabac" (IV, 2). She has come to Paris to force her husband to pay her allowance and takes advantage of her visit to seek adventure at a masked ball. Her sister, Mme Jacob, by plying the trades of "revendeuse à la toilette" and maker of marriages, supports her husband and her many children. She resents the fact that she is ignored by her brother, yet, when she finds that he has been arrested by his creditors, she goes to his aid, reflecting that "je sens que je suis sa sœur" (V, 14), a generous remark echoed in the next scene by Mme Turcaret, "Et moi, je vais le chercher pour l'accabler d'injures; je sens que je suis sa femme."

M Rafle runs Turcaret's "bureau d'usure" and consults his employer in strict privacy. When he appears, he gives the impression of being an intelligent and well trained informer who leaves the decisions, immoral or not, to his superior. M Furet, on the other hand, is obviously a knave. He is "vêtu de gris-noir, avec un rabat sale et une vieille perruque" (IV, 7). He has to ask whether the Baronne or Lisette is the mistress of the house, poses as a "huissier à verge," reads his counterfeit bill in a thoroughly correct manner, and creates somewhat the impression of Loyal in *Tartuffe*. In contrast with these clever gentlemen, Turcaret's valet, Flamand, is thoroughly naive, chiefly interested in keeping his newly acquired job as "capitaine-concierge de la porte de Guibray" at Falaise. He offers to send the Baronne "de petits présents" if she will keep on good terms with Turcaret, for he knows "comme les commis en usent avec les demoiselles qui les placent" (V, 3).

With the possible exception of the Marquis and Mme Jacob, there is no character in the play with whom one can sympathize, an unusual, though by no means a unique characteristic of a five-act comedy. If one thinks only of Turcaret, one may find a moral in the play, but Frontin's prospect of success quickly destroys the lesson. Lesage was satirizing a society that

he knew, probably with no thought of improving it. The play is well constructed except that too much chance is involved in the circumstances that bring together Turcaret, his wife, and his sister at the Baronne's house. The representation of manners is extensive, especially those connected with fashionable amusements and the business of usurers and tax-collectors. The comic element, which produces many clever scenes, is in the main closely associated with the characters, not lugged in for its own sake<sup>25</sup>

The force of the satire obliged the author to compose a brief apology for his play, *La Critique de la Comédie de Turcaret par le Diable boiteux*,<sup>26</sup> in which Asmodée and Don Cléophas, the leading characters in the *Diable boiteux*, appear on the stage of the Comédie Française, comment upon the audience and the popularity of rival theaters at the Foire, and refer to the play that is about to be given. Their conversation serves as a prologue to *Turcaret*; the "Continuation du Dialogue," as an epilogue. In the latter most of the criticism is found. It is held that *Turcaret* ought to shock honest business men no more than *Tartuffe* does genuine "dévots." It is noted that all the characters are "vicieux", that the satire is too close to reality, that, while Turcaret, the Baronne, and the Chevalier are punished, Frontin and Lisette are rewarded, and that methods of spending money are shown rather than the mysteries of making it. A Spanish gentleman is said to object to the lack of action in the play, but it is explained that this is true of French comedies that reveal character, a point already made by Lesage in *le Diable boiteux*, as Lintilhac recalls. It is claimed that all the spectators were entertained except two, Turcaret and the Baronne.

This critique defends the play cleverly and probably met most of the objections raised in regard to it when it first appeared<sup>27</sup> Lesage lightened the dialogue by referring to the cabals of friends and enemies seen in the audience and to himself as seated in an upper box and prevented by his deafness from hearing unkind remarks about his play. He must have pleased the actors by referring to the Foire as popular among coachmen and lackeys.

*Turcaret* was first acted on Feb. 14, 1709, after the period in which the

<sup>25</sup> There is an exception in IV, 8. The counterfeit bill describes the late colonel's purchase of "douze mulets, quinze chevaux normands sous poil roux, et trois bardeaux d'Auvergne, ayant tous crins, queues et oreilles." The colonel, who had to equip his regiment, might well have purchased horses and mules, but the insistence upon "crins, queues et oreilles" must have been added merely to amuse the groundlings.

<sup>26</sup> Published with *Turcaret* in 1709, 1735, and 1737. For these and later editions cf. Henri Cordier, *op. cit.*, and the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale.

<sup>27</sup> The only contemporary criticism of *Turcaret* that Mélése (*Th. et Pub.*, p. 310) was able to find appeared in the *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres* for April, 1709: "L'auteur a voulu jouer les François. On trouve qu'il n'y a pas réussi! La conduite, en effet, est fort négligée, mais il y a de fort bons traits. On est choqué de ce que ce sont tous fripons que la scène étale."

unusual severity of the winter caused the theater to be closed. It was given seven times. As the seventh performance brought in more than 650 francs, the play cannot be said to have failed.<sup>28</sup> The fact that it was then withdrawn, taken in connection with the fact that the actors delayed the first performance of the play until higher authorities intervened, suggests that pressure was exerted by tax-collectors and their friends to prevent further performances. If this is true, the case parallels closely that of *Tartuffe*, held up by the Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement. Like Molière, Lesage had his revenge, for the play, revived in 1730, was acted fifteen times in that year and remained in the repertory as late as 1931, by which time it had been performed at the Comédie Française 455 times<sup>29</sup>

Lantilhac<sup>30</sup> believed that Lesage composed the *Amants jaloux* "peu après *Don César Ursin*," that is, in 1707, but he had no proof. As it was not acted till Nov. 21, 1735, it may well have been written many years after 1707. On the other hand, he is correct in regard to *la Tontine*. When Lesage published it in 1739, he stated that he had offered it to the French actors in 1708,<sup>31</sup> that they received it and prepared to play it, but that "je la retirerai pour des raisons que le Public se passera bien de savoir, & elle n'a été représentée qu'au mois de Février 1732." Lantilhac pointed out that this must be the play mentioned in the *Registres* of the Comédie Française on Feb. 27, 1708 "On a reçu une petite pièce de M. Lesage pour être jouée après Pâques." That it was not played then may have been due to the same influences that delayed the performance of *Turcaret*, for *la Tontine* also deals with financial transactions. In the case of both plays something more may be said. Dancourt's *Second Chapitre* was acted twelve times in 1707-8, his *Agitateurs*, twenty times in 1710, though both ridiculed financiers, yet *Turcaret*, ultimately much more popular, had only seven performances in 1709 and *la Tontine* was not acted until long afterwards. These facts suggest that the pressure was applied to Lesage himself rather than to the actors and that the persons who influenced him died or for some other reason lost their power before 1730-2, when both of Lesage's plays were acted at the Comédie Française.

<sup>28</sup> Lantilhac, *op cit*, p. 205, declares that the actors received at the seventh performance 853 francs, 4 sous, but on p. 206 he gives the sum as 653 francs, 4 sous, the amount indicated by Gutkind, *op cit*, p. 308. In either case one would have expected other performances to follow in a few days. Mélessé (*loc cit*) quotes the *Gazette de Rotterdam* of March 25, 1709, as stating that the play was successful and the *Journal des Savants* of April, 1709, as indicating that it had failed. The latter journal was probably impressed by the fact that the play had been given only seven times and was no longer being acted.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. E. Champion, *op cit*, p. 344.

<sup>30</sup> *Op cit*, IV, 164-5.

<sup>31</sup> A misprint in the edition of Lesage, Paris, Ledoux, 1828, XII, 1, gives the date as 1718.

LA TONTINE<sup>32</sup> owes its existence to the system of group insurance proposed by the Italian financier, Tonti, in 1653, first tried in France in 1689, again in 1696, and not suppressed until 1763. The play is not a satire upon the system, but it suggests how it may be misused by an un-intelligent physician and an apothecary who assists him<sup>33</sup>. Lesage showed little originality in his plot and characters, or in his satire upon medicine. The novelty of his play lies in the references to the tontine and the comical presentation of the peasant who is in danger of being killed with hygienic attentions.

Trousse-Galant is not a quack. He believes that his remedies have value. He is thoroughly versed in the lore of medical authorities, still has confidence in his "ptisane rafraîchissante," although fourteen persons have died after taking it, in bleeding, and in purging. He is convinced (sc. 3) that "un bon Médecin va toujours son train sans se rendre à des épreuves, qui blessent des principes établis & reçus dans l'Ecole." He expects to make a fortune from his investment of 10,000 francs in Ambroise, who when eighty will be, he predicts, the only surviving member of his class, so that, if he lives to be a hundred, Trousse-Galant will enjoy the proceeds of the tontine for twenty years!

Bolus also believes in his drugs and approves of his friend's speculation. He is given additional opportunities to appear comic by his love-making and his use of a douche. When Mariamne seems to favor his suit, he declares that her words "distillent dans mon ame un sirop amoureux,"<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Published in the *Recueil* of Paris, Jacques Barois fils, 1739, *privé* Aug 22, 1738, in editions of the author's works of 1774, 1783, 1810, 1813, 1821, 1823, 1828, 1830, and 1879, in his *Théâtre* of 1828 and 1911, and Paris, France édition, 1924. Cf. Cordier, *op. cit.*, and the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale.

<sup>33</sup> Trousse-Galant, a physician, has prescribed with deadly results for many persons, including his wife. His friend, Bolus, who has assisted his own wife out of the world, gives him his cooperation. Trousse-Galant has agreed to support a peasant, Ambroise, sixty years old, for the rest of his life, provided he will turn over to the physician the sums he will receive from the tontine when he becomes the sole survivor of his class. For this purpose Trousse-Galant has insured Ambroise for 10,000 francs. He now offers Bolus half his future gains from the tontine as a dowry when the apothecary marries his daughter, Mariamne. The girl is, however, in love with Eraste and dislikes Bolus. She is aided by her *souvante*, Frosine, and by Eraste's valet, Crispin. In accordance with a plan devised by this valet, Mariamne pretends to be pleased with the idea of marrying Bolus, while Crispin, disguised as a colonel, and Eraste, disguised as a major, visit Trousse-Galant for a consultation. Knowing that Ambroise, who is allowed little to eat and is frequently purged, is anxious to escape, they pretend that he is a deserter and must be shot. The physician offers 100 pistoles for his life and various persons plead for him in vain until Frosine suggests that Trousse-Galant give the colonel his daughter. The colonel accepts for the major, who demands a dowry. Bolus is persuaded to withdraw, so that the dowry he would have received is offered to the major. Eraste will in this way become the husband of Mariamne and take charge of Ambroise, who would rather be shot than remain at the physician's home. The supposed colonel will marry Frosine.

<sup>34</sup> Sc 17. Cf. Géronte's medicinal courting in I, 7, of Regnard's *Légataire universel*, first acted only seven weeks before *la Tontine* was accepted by the troupe.

assures her that, as long as his wife had lived, he had not spared the drugs of his shop, and promises to be equally generous with them in regard to Mariamne. When Frosine removes Bolus's cloak, he appears with "une serviette nouée autour du corps & une seringue passée dedans," an instrument that "lui sied à ravir"

Mariamne and Eraste are young lovers as helpless as their prototypes in *Tartuffe*. They are aided by Frosine, who bears some resemblance to Molière's Dorine, and by Crispin, who recalls Molière's Scapin. Ambroise does his creator more credit. As a peasant and a soldier who has campaigned in Germany and in Italy, he has developed a vigorous constitution and at sixty is said to appear only forty, but Trousse-Galant, who seeks to improve upon nature, is doing his best to counteract her influence. He has the poor man bled twice every three days, refuses to allow him to eat mutton, goose, or pork, and limits his diet to cheese and "ptisane hépatique." He must be purged by Bolus and must not flirt with Frosine. His good points are indicated to Bolus by Trousse-Galant as if he were a horse. In despair Ambroise appeals to Frosine and readily falls in with her plans, for, rather than to have the physician continue his treatment, he would prefer to "passer par les armes"

These characters are utilized to construct amusing situations: interviews between Trousse-Galant and Bolus, between the physician and Ambroise, between the veteran and Frosine, the scenes of the lovers' quandary, of Bolus's love-making, of Crispin's intervention when disguised as a colonel. The dialogue is rapid and frequently witty. The comedy deserved a more cordial reception than it got. Withdrawn in 1708 before it was acted, it was not played at the Comédie Française until Feb. 20, 1732, and only five times in that year. It was not given there subsequently, though it appeared several times at the Odéon in 1900.<sup>35</sup>

Lesage's career in 1699-1709 established the facts that the French public was no longer interested in Spanish cloak and sword plays and that it greatly preferred comedies of manners. His first four plays were adaptations of *comedias* by Lope, Rojas, and Calderón. One of them was not acted at all, the other three only a few times. Imitation of a Spanish novel had led him to satirize French life extensively in *le Diable boiteux*, so that he quite naturally turned to the comedy of manners, drawing suggestions when he did so from Molière, Dancourt, and other French dramatists. *Crispin rival* was his first great success. It showed his ability at dramatic structure and at composing an amusing and sarcastic dialogue while revealing social unrest. *Turcaret*, his masterpiece, carried these tendencies

<sup>35</sup> Cf. N.-M. Bernardin, *La Comédie italienne en France*, Paris, Editions de la Revue bleue, 1902, p. 102

further and satirized in striking fashion the part of Parisian society that was composed of tax-collectors, their victims, and those who turned their illicit gains into other, but equally illicit channels. Before it was played, Lesage had composed *la Tontine*, a one-act comedy built round a form of insurance. The absence of *Turcaret* from the repertory of the Comédie Française in 1710-29 and the author's refusal to allow *la Tontine* to be played before 1732 were probably caused by influence exerted upon Lesage by persons who objected to the discussion on the stage of contemporary financial operations. Such persons may have inspired the advice offered by Asmodée at the end of the *Critique de Turcaret* "allons à la Foire voir de nouveaux visages." Lesage was soon composing farces for the *forains* and devoting much of his time to *Gil Blas*. The Comédie Française suffered from his desertion, as did French comedy. The only compensation lies in his contributions to the novel and the help he gave the humble actors of the Foire.

## CHAPTER XVI

### NEW AUTHORS · BOINDIN, LA MOTTE, LAFONT

Despite the popularity of comedy in 1701-15, only four authors whose names are known and whose work has survived began to contribute at this time to the repertory of the Comédie Française. The most important of these, Destouches, will be discussed in the next chapter. As La Motte, chiefly interested in opera, wrote only one play before the end of 1715, the authors mainly to be considered are Boindin, who composed three comedies, and Lafont, who wrote four. All of the eight that were printed during the period were published at Paris by Pierre Ribou. Seven of the eight comedies are in one act, one is in three acts. Only two of them have prologues. Four are in prose, four, in alexandrines or "vers libres." The scenes of four are laid in or near Paris, of four, in Italy or in or near Greece. This is a much larger proportion of plays whose scenes are laid outside of France than one finds among the comedies of older authors.

One of the plays dramatizes the ancient tale of the Ephesian widow, another renews a comedy by Boisrobert, while the rest have plots invented by the authors, with some assistance from Molière and his contemporaries and, in one case, from mythology. The unities are preserved except that in two comedies the unity of action is violated. Boindin's *Bal d'Auteuil* alone offended the proprieties, but the offense seems to have been committed by the actors rather than the author. Some of the comedies lay considerable stress on spectacle, showing a garden lighted for a ball, an ancient tomb, the sea, and a funereal pyre. In all, the interest is centered in the plot rather than in the study of character or the representation of manners. Valets and *servantes* have important rôles in most of them. Use is made of speech peculiarities, exoticism, mythology, confusion of names, smoking, parody of tragedy. We find for the first time a French play the heroine of which is a modern Jewess.

Nicolas Boindin was born at Paris in 1676. Twenty years later he joined the musketeers, but his poor health obliged him to leave the service. As a young author he frequented the café Laurent and was involved in the affair of the couplets. Voltaire attacked him as a "raisonneur avec un fausset aigre," as a censorious person incapable of praising others, but Boindin's atheism, which got him into trouble with spiritual authorities and inspired J.-B. Rousseau's reference to "cet athée au teint blême, à l'œil triste," brought Voltaire subsequently to his defense. He declared that Boindin always lived "en philosophe" and that his morals were irreproachable.

He was a "procureur du roi et des trésoriers de France," as well as a member of the Academy of Inscriptions. Cardinal Fleury is said to have prevented his election to the French Academy. He died in 1751.<sup>1</sup>

Besides three comedies, possibly four,<sup>2</sup> he wrote accounts of the Comédie Française, the Comédie Italienne, the Opera, and the Foires of Saint-Germain and Saint-Laurent, as well as treatises on Roman political divisions and on ancient theaters, costumes, and masks. After his death two works were published under his name defending J.-B. Rousseau in regard to the couplets and blaming La Motte, Saurin, and Malafer.

The first of his plays is *LES TROIS GASCONS*,<sup>3</sup> in one act and in prose, derived, as the frères Parfaict suggest, from Boisrobert's *Trois Orontes*.<sup>4</sup> In both plays a Parisian has engaged his daughter to a man from Bordeaux whom he has never seen, the girl's lover, with the help of servants, pretends to be the man from Bordeaux, and the latter's sweetheart comes in pursuit of him, disguised as a man and also claiming to be he. In both plays the real man from Bordeaux is accused of assuming his name and is threatened with a duel. In the end the marriages of the Parisian lovers, of the couple from Bordeaux, and of the clever servants are arranged. There can be no doubt about the borrowing, but the alterations are considerable.

Boindin cut the play to one act, omitted some of Boisrobert's characters, and paid little attention to details of manners that the older author had introduced. The plot is greatly simplified and the dénouement is easily reached by Boindin's making of the lady from Bordeaux an awe-inspiring person who easily wins back her errant lover. The action is rapid, the dialogue, bright and amusing. The play profits by the use of Gascon dialect, natural to two of the characters and well imitated by a third. It possesses little originality in substance or in turns of phrase, but it probably amused by the simplicity of the action, the gaiety of the dialogue, and the effect of repetition when we meet in turn an imitation Spadagnac, a real one, and a Gascon woman who also claims the name.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the *Biographie générale*, Voltaire (Moland edition), VIII, 563, and XIV, 42, 93, the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale, and H. A. Grubbs, *Jean-Baptiste Rousseau*, Princeton, 1941. According to the 1828 edition of Lesage's *Ouvrages* (II, 357-8), Boindin was the original of the censorious critic referred to in *Gil Blas*.

<sup>2</sup> The *Bib. du th. fr.* attributes to him a comedy in one act and in prose called *Le Petit maître de robe* that was never performed. This play, according to *Soleinne*, Vol. V, "Corrections et Additions," p. 71, was published in the edition of Boindin's *Ouvrages* of 1753.

<sup>3</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1702, 12°, republished in Boindin's *Ouvrages*, Paris, Prault, 1753, Brussels, Josse de Griech, 1754 (attributed to Dancourt), in the *Petite Bibliothèque du théâtre*, Paris, 1787, in the *Théâtre de Boindin*, ed. Touquet, Paris, 1821, in the *Suite du Répertoire*, Paris, veuve Dabo, 1822, and by Ad. Rion, Paris, 1878. There seems to be nothing to support the claim that La Motte collaborated in this play. A Dutch adaptation, which attributed the play to Dancourt, was published at Amsterdam in 1730.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. my *op. cit.*, Part II, pp. 745-8.

<sup>5</sup> Lucile and Eraste are in love, but Lucile's father, Oronte, has promised her to



In the slightness of the plot, the prominent use of clever servants, the employment of disguise and dialectal pronunciations, and the final *divertissement*, Boindin shows himself to be a follower of Dancourt, though he pays much less attention to manners. His playlet was acted eight times in 1701, from June 4 to 30, four times in 1730, and three times in 1750.

The following summer Boindin produced another comedy, less simple in plot, with more elaborate use of disguise, and with less caution in regard to the suggestiveness of the situations. The play was entitled *LE BAL D'AUTEUIL*.<sup>6</sup> The scene is laid in what was then a suburb of Paris. According to the frères Parfaict, the play was originally in one act, but, when it was published, it was divided into three acts and a prologue. This prologue was subsequently omitted.

We find again a girl between two lovers, one of whom, though he is favored by a male relative, she is unwilling to marry, while she loves the other and is helped in her affair by clever servants. But to this theme Boindin added the story of a wife who, when disguised, makes her husband fall in love with her,<sup>7</sup> servants who have a similar experience, and two young women who, when disguised as men, attract each other till each discovers that the other is not a man. Only one of these subordinate plots is essential to the main plot. The unity of the play lies, not in the action, but in the fact that all the themes are made possible by the masked ball given at Auteuil.<sup>8</sup>

M de Spadagnac because he belongs to an ancient family and because the marriage is desired by Oronte's wealthy brother. Frontin, Spadagnac's valet, has preceded him to Paris, bought clothes for him, and has fallen in love with Lucile's maid, Marton, who will not marry him unless he helps her mistress and Eraste. When the latter bribes him, Frontin enters his service and proposes to disguise Eraste as Spadagnac, giving him the clothes he had purchased and shown to Oronte. Eraste, wearing these clothes, is presented to Oronte, speaks with a strong Gascon accent, is accepted, and asks for a notary. At this point Spadagnac arrives, talks as a Gascon, and asks who Eraste is. Oronte concludes that one of them is a rascal. Both produce portraits of Lucile. Spadagnac goes to find someone to identify him. Thereupon Julie enters, disguised as a man, and claims to be Spadagnac. Frontin whispers to her that he has disguised Eraste as the Gascon in order to prevent the latter from marrying Lucile. When Spadagnac returns, he tells Julie that he still loves her and is marrying Lucile only for her money. Julie threatens to kill him if he refuses to marry her. Spadagnac renounces Lucile, Oronte accepts Eraste to replace the Gascon, and a notary is summoned. Frontin declares that "Nos Basques et nos Gasconnes" have arrived and that "nous n'avons qu'à nous divertir"—preparation for the *divertissement* that ends the play. The music, according to the frères Parfaict, was written by Gilliers.

<sup>6</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1702, 12°. Republished in Boindin's *Œuvres*, Paris, Prault fils, 1746 and 1753, in the *Théâtre de Boindin*, ed. Touquet, Paris, 1821, in the *Suite du Répertoire*, Paris, veuve Dabo, 1822, and by Ad. Rion, Paris, 1878.

<sup>7</sup> A theme already treated by Chevalier and Dorimond, cf. my *op. cit.*, Part III, pp. 212-3, 324.

<sup>8</sup> M. Cidaris has agreed to marry his sister, Hortence, to M. Vulpin, a wealthy bachelor of Auteuil, who is preparing to give a masked ball in her honor. Eraste, who loves Hortence, has placed his valet, Frontin, in Vulpin's service under the name of Lolive. Acting under Hortence's orders, Frontin has summoned Eraste to Auteuil. M. Cidaris has sent his wife to Paris in order that he may see a masked

Vulpin, a nobleman who has led a gay life as a bachelor, now wishes to marry in order to "faire souche." As Frontin explains (I, 1),

Il a goûté jusqu'ici, dans le célibat, tous les plaisirs du mariage, et se marie enfin par bienséance, pour goûter, dans le mariage, toutes les douceurs du célibat.

He seems quite unable to cope with Frontin or with the ladies of Auteuil whom he has promised to marry. He relies chiefly on his gardener, Lucas, an amusing character who speaks in patois and has similar functions to those of his namesake in Dufresny's *Esprit de contradiction*, on whom he was probably modeled. Frontin has a rôle similar to the one he played in Boindin's earlier comedy, except that he lets himself be tricked by Marton and that he has acquired enough boldness to deceive by telling the truth, as he does in talking about himself to Lucas (I, 2) and, again, to Vulpin (I, 5):

Tenez, Monsieur, c'est un coquin qui s'insinue dans vos affaires, qui s'empresse de vous servir, que vous croyez dans vos intérêts, et qui, dans le fond, ne cherche qu'à vous attraper

Madame Cidarès and Marton are women clever enough to deceive the men they love and bring them to order, but one may well doubt if their prospect for happiness is bright. Hortence is virtuous and devoted, quick to refuse to be married against her will, but more attractive to Eraste than to the audience. The other women are probably courtesans, but not necessarily so. The scenes in which they fall in love while disguised as men could easily have homosexual developments, but these, in the printed text, are avoided.

The play has a clever dialogue and scenes that shift rapidly. Our sympathy is not roused by any of the characters, nor does the author take pains to explain away the illogical elements of the situations. Disguise is extensively employed, there is a good deal of comic repetition, and Lucas's

woman he had met at an entertainment. Lucas, the gardener, reports that village girls have quarreled with the violinists whom Vulpin had engaged and spoiled their instruments. Menine and Lucinde, women of dubious reputation whom Vulpin had promised to marry, come to the dance disguised as men. Each falls in love with the other. Lucas helps them meet. Each promises to introduce the other to a girl she knows. They leave the stage, put on women's clothes, meet again, and discover that both are women. Meanwhile Mme Cidarès and her *souvante*, Marton, come masked to the dance. Cidarès makes love to his wife, Frontin, to Marton. Mme Cidarès agrees to yield if Cidarès will marry Hortence to Eraste. He consents and signs the contract, but only to discover that the masked woman he loves is his wife, whom he hates. Frontin, after making disparaging remarks about Marton to his new love, similarly discovers that she and Marton are one and the same. Menine and Lucinde reproach Vulpin for breaking his promises to them, while Cidarès is indignant with him for seeking to marry Hortence while having other engagements. As he can no longer win Hortence and as Menine withdraws, Vulpin is obliged to sign the contract to marry Lucinde. Marton agrees to pardon Frontin if he will marry her. To celebrate the three marriages, "les masques et les ménestriers viennent d'arriver tout à propos" for the *dévoisement* with music by Gilliers.

speech is amusing in its patois. These devices follow naturally their use in *Les Trois Gascons*.

*Le Bal d'Auteuil* was first acted on Aug. 22, 1702. It was played four times in that month and six times later in the year, on and after Nov. 7. It must have been acted at Versailles on the evening of Jan. 1, 1703, for the next day Louis XIV was moved to anger by the report he had received of the performance.

Le roi, qui ne va plus à la comédie depuis plusieurs années, dit à son petit coucher, au marquis de Gesvres, qu'il venoit d'apprendre que les comédiens avoient joué le soir devant Monseigneur et Madame la duchesse de Bourgogne une petite pièce fort licencieuse, et qu'il puniroit leur insolence. Il lui commanda en même temps de faire venir les comédiens et de les avertir de sa part que, si jamais ils retomboient dans une faute approuvante ou que même ils jouassent à Paris de si scandaleuses, ils seroient cassés sur-le-camp.\*

Maupoint mentioned the matter briefly in his *Bibliothèque des théâtres*. The frères Parfaict merely referred to Maupoint. In the edition of his works that appeared shortly after his death, Boindin explained that Louis's sister-in-law was shocked by the manner in which a scene between Lucinde and Menine (II, 4) was played, when the girls, disguised as men, "se faisoient des avances réciproques et des agaceries qui parurent suspectes, ou du moins équivoques à la Princesse Palatine."<sup>10</sup> It was, then, not the words, but the acting that offended, a fact that explains why there was no attempt to suppress the published comedy or to prevent the author from writing another. The actors, however, must have thought it wiser to discontinue performances of the play, which was never acted again.<sup>11</sup>

The third and the most successful of Boindin's comedies was *Le Port de Mer*,<sup>12</sup> which possesses qualities similar to those of the author's earlier productions, but also an exotic element that may partially account for its long career. It is the first French play in which one of the leading male characters is a modern Jew and in which the heroine is a modern Jewess. The musical element, the introduction of a Turk called Hali, and the use of *lingua franca* recall Molière's *Sicilien*, the suggestion of bankruptcy, Champmeslé's *Rue de Saint Denis*.<sup>13</sup>

\* Dangeau, *Journal*, IX, 82.

<sup>10</sup> Cited by Mélése, *Th et Pub*, p. 80.

<sup>11</sup> It was not forgotten, however, for Dr Zeek finds in it the source of Boissy's *Amant de sa femme*, acted in 1721, cf. C. F. Zeek, Jr., *Louis de Boissy*, Grenoble, 1914, pp. 29-30.

<sup>12</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1704, 12°. Republished in Boindin's *Œuvres*, Paris, Pault, 1753, in Touquet's ed., Paris, 1821, in the *Suite du Répertoire*, Paris, veuve Dabo, 1822, and by Ad. Rion, Paris, 1878. The evidence that La Motte collaborated in the composition of this play is not convincing.

<sup>13</sup> Sabatin, a Jewish merchant of Leghorn, has a daughter, Benjamin, whom he has promised to a Marseilles shipbuilder called Dautremer. The latter's nephew,

The plot is full of improbable encounters and of devices that have little effect upon the dénouement, which a mere meeting of uncle and nephew would probably have brought about, but it serves to bring together a rare collection of comic types, whose amusing dialogue is set off by disguises, dancing, *lingua franca*, and the singing of a song in Italian

Sabatin is a prosperous Jew, who receives stolen goods, sells slaves, and is not averse to bankruptcy, "le fin du commerce." He is defined by Brigantin as "l'usure, la dureté, la défiance, et la fraude, le parjure, avec quelques règles d'arithmétique" (sc 2). The last of these qualities is illustrated by his remark that "le cœur n'est qu'un zéro dans un mariage bien sensé" (sc 7). The play cannot, however, be considered anti-Semitic, for to his daughter is attributed all the generosity, tenderness, and beauty that he lacks, while the Gentiles are not better than he. Léandre, who has stolen jewels, La Saline, who has left Paris with other people's money, Brigantin, a convict who cannot resist putting his hand in Léandre's pocket, Hali, who gets the jewels from Sabatin, and Doutremer, a rough customer, accused of being a pirate and probably interested in the slave trade

The most humorous character is Brigantin, who has found the theater the best place for picking pockets. He seems to have attended a performance of *Andromaque*, for, with reference to his meeting La Saline at Leghorn, he quotes (sc. 2)

Qui l'eût dit qu'un rivage, à mes yeux si funeste,  
Dût présenter d'abord Pilade aux yeux d'Oreste<sup>14</sup>

In the same scene he affirms his love of plays, his insistence on preserving silence during their performance, and the regularity of his attendance in the theater, "où le plus discrètement qu'il m'était possible, je m'emparais des épées pour prévenir les querelles, et des tabatières pour empêcher les éternuements." He realizes that it would be useless for him to acquire

Léandre, has escaped to Italy with his uncle's jewels and a valet, La Saline, who had left France with stolen money, had lost it in a shipwreck, and now, to serve Léandre, has secured a position as one of Sabatin's agents. He meets a convict, Brigantin, formerly employed by Léandre, and enlists his services as well as those of a Turkish convict, Hali. Under pretext of arranging for Sabatin's profitable bankruptcy, La Saline introduces singing and dancing slaves, among them Brigantin, disguised as an *Esclavonne*, and Léandre, disguised as a Moor. While Brigantin describes his imaginary adventures to Sabatin, Léandre makes love to Benjaminne Doutremer, who has disgusted the Jewess by smoking a pipe and insisting on marriage without courtship, is accused by Brigantin of marrying women in order to sell them into slavery. This he denies, but, when he recognizes Léandre and finds that he loves the girl, he decides to withdraw in his favor, provided he can recover his jewels. Stolen and pawned by Léandre, secured by Sabatin, stolen again by Hali, these jewels are now brought in by the Turk, who understands they are to be used to help the bankruptcy proceedings. Doutremer takes possession of them. Léandre will marry Benjaminne, La Saline, her *souvante*, Marine. Brigantin prefers to remain a convict. The play ends in a *divertissement* with music by Gilliers.

<sup>14</sup> *Andromaque*, I, 1. He changes *Présenteroit* to *Dût présenter*.

respectability, for "j'ai pris mon parti, je commence à me faire au service; et d'ailleurs, il y faudrait toujours revenir."

Doutremer is characterized by his smoking a pipe, his promise that, after a month of matrimony, Benjamin will know how to "fumer comme un janissaire," his abrupt talk of marriage, and his nautical references. These last are found in the speech of other characters when they talk about him. Even the names of several persons have a flavor of the sea—Marine, La Saline, Doutremer, Brigantin,—just as the two Hebrews are appropriately called Sabatin and Benjamin.

The *lingua franca* employed appears chiefly in sc. 4, when Hali learns the legal nature of bankruptcy:

Habit qualchì scrupuli, e volit sapir che star gambarutta? Oh! dir-mi, signor· nou povir far niente, se non sapir E non star friponaria? E la justicia non impicar? In conscienza? Oh' non habir piu di scrupuli, e star presto à la gambarutta

The play was first acted on May 27, 1704. By July 2 it had been performed nineteen times, by the end of 1715, sixty times. During this period it was acted more frequently than any other play by an author who began to write after 1700. It remained in the repertory till 1787, with a total of 208 performances. Voltaire called it a "jolie comédie"<sup>15</sup> The frères Parfaict cite a contemporary who referred to it as "une très-jolie Pièce d'un Acte, suivie d'une Fête Marine." They praise it for "la marche de l'intrigue, la coupe des Scènes, la peinture des personnages, & la vivacité du dialogue."<sup>16</sup> Their only objection to it is that its hero marries a Jewess. Evidently the author, the troupe, and the spectators who came frequently to performances of the play were less prejudiced than these historians.

Boindin was probably incapable of writing a full-length comedy. He showed no ability at creating character or constructing a plot. He made too much of disguise and of valets. But he could write racy dialogue, never allowed his audience a dull moment, and showed an increasing variety of comic devices. To write a play with a Jewess for a heroine and to have in his cast a shipbuilder and two *galériens*, one of them a Turk who speaks *lingua franca*, shows that he might have done much to broaden the scope of French comedy had he continued to apply his talents to dramatic composition.

Houdar de La Motte (1672-1731), well known for his attack on poetry, had already written several operas and was to distinguish himself in tragedy with his *Inès de Castro*. Early in the eighteenth century he made one venture into comedy by composing *LA MATRONE D'EPHÈSE*.<sup>17</sup> The subject

<sup>15</sup> Moland edition, XIV, 42.

<sup>16</sup> XIV, 336-7.

<sup>17</sup> Published in the author's *Œuvres de théâtre*, Paris, Dupuis, 1730, and in his *Œuvres*, Paris, Prault aîné, 1754.

must have been known to him in the forms given it by Petronius in his *Satiricon* (CXI) and by La Fontaine in his *conte* rather than as it appeared in Mainfray's *Ephésienne* or in Fatouville's *Matrone d'Ephèse*.<sup>18</sup> Like Petronius and unlike La Fontaine, La Motte has his widow receive other visitors than the soldier and has the latter seek death when he hears that the corpse he was supposed to guard has been taken away, but, as in La Fontaine, not as in Petronius, it is the attendant who proposes to substitute the husband's body.

La Motte wrote his comedy in one act and in prose. He eliminated the spectacle of the dead pirate and limited the place to a space before the handsome tomb. To the widow, her lover, and their attendants he added the young man's father, his valet, and an army cook. The old man's love of the widow is a new element in the tale, one that explains his presence at the tomb and helps to complete the dénouement and to assure us of a respectable future for the lovers. Preparation is carefully made, the coarser elements of the old story are eliminated, and the playlet is given perfect unity.<sup>19</sup>

The widow's character is well portrayed. A highly susceptible person, she had fallen in love in a moment, had derived much physical pleasure from her experience, and, when she lost her husband, had believed that life is not worth living. She rejects the advice of Chrisante, whose seventy years leave her cold, but, when his son admires her, she begins to think of her looks, sees in the youth the soul of the deceased, and soon yields to his

<sup>18</sup> Cf. my *op. cit.*, Part I, pp. 115-21, and Part IV, pp. 608-11. Fatouville's play, written for the Théâtre Italien, has survived only in its French scenes, which have almost nothing to do with Petronius's tale. For a list of versions of the story cf. Regnier's edition of La Fontaine, VI, 63-86.

<sup>19</sup> Euphémie, when about to consecrate herself to Diana, had fallen in love with a young man, had married him, and had loved him so passionately that, when he died, she had gone, two days before the play begins, to pine away in his tomb. She was accompanied by her *souvante*, Frosine, who had made a similar vow, but who has been receiving supplies from Lucas, valet of old Chrisante. The latter loves the widow and urges her to renounce her intention of dying, but he meets with no success. As he leaves the tomb with Lucas at night, they stumble into a cook and Straton, a valet, and cause them to drop a supper they were carrying to an officer. This young man is Chrisante's son, Sostrate. He commands the soldiers who are guarding the body of a man of importance, recently hanged. After Chrisante has departed, Sostrate comes to look for his valet, orders him to pick up the food, hears Euphémie's moans, and meets her when she emerges from the tomb. He has already heard of her beauty and of her devotion to her husband's memory. He makes love skillfully and rapidly. She is soon deeply interested and agrees to partake of the supper. The servants improvise a table and eat with their master and mistress. Chrisante, returning to the tomb, is shocked to find them eating and denounces both Euphémie and his son. Straton now brings the news that the body of the man who had been hanged has been carried off. Sostrate wishes to kill himself, but his father snatches his sword away and it is proposed that a substitute corpse be procured. As Straton is too short and Lucas is too fat, Frosine suggests the body of Euphémie's husband. To save his son, Chrisante promises that, if the widow will lend the corpse, he will approve of her marrying Sostrate. The widow does not refuse, the body will be substituted, and the marriage will take place.

persuasions. La Motte presents her so tenderly that we are not allowed to see her final yielding, nor hear her actually consent to the use to which her husband's body is to be put. But the fact remains that in three days this "exemple des veuves" has buried one husband and acquired another.

Sostrate is evidently a man of high rank, chosen by the government to carry out an important mission, ready to kill himself when he finds that, through the negligence of his men, he has failed in his duty. He is an ardent and tactful lover, who humors the widow till he feels that he has made sufficient progress to predict that she will love him for himself rather than for his resemblance to his predecessor. The other characters are primarily comic: elderly Chrisante in love with a young woman, cowardly and energetic Straton, Frosine who understands her mistress and says what the widow would like to say if the proprieties allowed, and Lucas who entertains us with his patois.

The comic element is found primarily in the cynical nature of the subject with the sharp contrast between the widow's grief and the demands of the flesh. There is also comic material in Chrisante's impotent wrath, in the encounter at night with the momentary loss of the supper, in the cook's despair, in Straton's terrors, in the references to food and drink, and in the observations of Lucas about the widow and her dead husband.

ils étoient morgué si afoles l'un de l'autre, qu'on ne les eût jamais pris pour mari & femme ça use terriblement un jeune homme (sc 1)

It may have been remarks of this kind that shocked the duchesse d'Orléans, herself only recently a widow, and caused her to write on Dec. 14, 1702, that the play was "pleine d'impertinence"<sup>20</sup> Perhaps her prudishness prevented its having a longer run than it did, for there were only nine performances in 1702, beginning on Sept. 23, and it was not revived after that year. The author deserved much credit for adapting the tale to the taste of his day, keeping the comic element without the gruesome details, but the subject was not one that could long withstand early eighteenth-century reverence for the proprieties.

The career of Joseph de Lafont is not unlike that of Boindin in that each wrote only a few short plays, all comedies, and then ceased to contribute to the Comédie Française, but without losing interest in drama. They were, however, quite different in character. Boindin was an avowed atheist, a sour critic, and a man of excellent morality, while Lafont, kindly and dissipated, concerned with his verses rather than with his morals, was a fanciful dramatist of Regnard's school rather than of Dancourt's.

Son of a procureur au parlement, he was born at Paris in 1686, preferred

<sup>20</sup> Mélése, *Rép.*, p. 213

the theater to the practice of law, became a friend of La Thorillière, and wrote plays with this actor in mind that gave him in the eighteenth century an assured position among minor dramatists. He subsequently composed a number of operas, the most celebrated of which, *Les Fêtes de Thalie*, had nearly eighty performances in 1714. He learned rôles of kings and peasants in the hope of becoming an actor, but, worn by gambling, wine, and a wandering existence from one inn to another, he fell ill of "languueur" and died on March 20, 1725.<sup>21</sup>

According to his death notice in the *Mercur*, he was known for "le mérite de l'esprit" and "la bonté de son cœur." His aim, as stated in the preface of his *Amour vengé*, was to write short comedies that would keep the spectators "en haleine," but would not descend to the methods of the farce.

N'avilissons point un théâtre aussi noble que le nôtre il faut jeter toutes ces ordures basses & triviales hors de la Ville, & les laisser aux spectacles grossiers des fauxbourgs de Paris.<sup>22</sup>

To these principles he adhered in the four plays that he composed, all of which are brief, pleasing, and free from "ordures." None of them, on the other hand, shows much comic force or psychological insight.

His first two plays suggest that he had been caught by the vogue of the fairy-tale and by that of the *Arabian Nights*, only recently made known to the French public. The first of them, *DANAË OU JUPITER CRISPIN*,<sup>23</sup> also owes inspiration to ancient mythology, to Molière, and probably to La Thorillière. In *Amphitryon* Molière employs "vers libres," brings Jupiter and Mercury to earth, has Jupiter make love successfully to a mortal woman, and has an unattractive woman make love unsuccessfully to Mercury. Lafont adapts similarly to the modern stage a story related by Hyginus in his *Fable* LVIII, one that tells of a princess locked up in a tower<sup>24</sup> and rescued by a lover, a tale to delight Perrault or Mme d'Aulnoy.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Cf. the frères Parfaict, XV, 155-8, Petitot, *Répertoire*, Paris, 1804, XIX, 79-85; and the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale.

<sup>22</sup> That is, to the theaters of the Foire. As the remark was published in 1712, it echoes attacks made upon the *forains* by other authors when writing for the Comédie Française, Dancourt, Legrand, and Lesage.

<sup>23</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1707, 12°. Republished in the *Nouveau théâtre français*, Utrecht, Néaulme, 1734, and in Lafont's *Théâtre*, Amsterdam, Marteau, 1746.

<sup>24</sup> The fact that this is a "tour d'airain" cannot come from Hyginus, but may have been derived from Ovid's *Amores*, II, 19, 27.

<sup>25</sup> As Jupiter has heard that King Acrisius, fearing that he will be slain by a son born to his daughter, Danaë, has shut her up in a tower, he disguises himself as Crispin and, accompanied by Mercury, sets out to visit the girl. He bribes first the soldiers who guard the tower, then old Tiphacé, the girl's governess. While Mercury watches for Juno, Jupiter meets Danaë, who promptly falls in love with him, and leads her under neighboring trees. Juno arrives, disguised as Dame Gigogne, discusses the situation with Mercury, and goes off to persuade Vulcan to make for



But, as he tells us in his prologue, it was too daring to introduce gods into a short comedy and have them talk seriously. He was obliged to "les travestir en ridicule" and to make of his playlet a "Crispinerie." In so doing he may have been influenced by La Thorillière and by his recollection of the Théâtre Italien. The farcical coloring he gives to the myth is shown in the rôle of Jupiter, who fears Argive soldiers, squeezes his thunderbolt into his pocket, stands in awe of Juno, and, in order to silence her, gives up Danaé. The "Auteur du firmament" has become a bourgeois husband who allows himself only brief and carefully guarded departures from his domestic duties. Juno serves chiefly to make possible the old comic quarrel between husband and wife and to hasten the dénouement. Mercury is in his traditional rôle of go-between and humorous commentator. He alludes to characters familiar to the Parisian public (sc. 9) ·

Jupiter en Crispin? Vous en Dame Gigogne?  
Puisse-je devenir un cadet de Gascogne.

and points out the difficulty of Jupiter's situation

Après quatre mil ans peut-on aimer sa femme?  
Car à bien supputer le tems,  
Vous goutez de l'hymen depuis quatre mil ans,  
Tandis que maintenant l'on maudit le ménage,  
Après six mois de mariage

He is also comic, as he had been in *Amphitryon*, when he resists the advances of an unprepossessing woman. Tiphée, who leans on a stick, is amusing both when she seeks to attract Mercury and when she rapidly yields to bribery. Her ward has a naïve rôle, like that of the boy in *la Coupe enchantée*. She has apparently seen only animals and Tiphée before meeting Jupiter. She frankly expresses her feeling for him, refuses to leave him when he hears of approaching danger, tells Juno that she has "l'air de ma guenon," and, when she is told that Polydectes will be her husband, asks, "Et qu'est-ce qu'un Epoux?"

Lafont makes no effort to explain her readiness to accept the situation, or Juno's willingness to renounce her vengeance. He hurries us along like the author of a fairy-tale with no thought of reality. The form he selected, that of twelve-syllable and eight-syllable lines, gracefully arranged in shifting rime-schemes, is well adapted to the fancifulness of the theme, as is the setting of the play with "la Mer Egée" in the background and

her keys to the tower. Tiphée makes love to Mercury, offering him the purse that Jupiter has given her, but to no avail. The gods make themselves known. Juno, unable to get help from Vulcan, returns, scolds Jupiter, and threatens Danaé till Mercury proposes they make peace. Juno agrees on condition Danaé be sent off to marry King Polydectes. Jupiter consents to this solution of the problem and takes his wife home on his eagle.

"une Tour d'airain où Danaé est enfermée." He did not, however, put the actors to the difficult task of turning Jupiter into a shower of gold. Instead, he merely had the soldiers ask for the shower and find in their pockets the gold that Jupiter had promised them.

In order to prevent criticism, Lafont composed a preface, as Palaprat had done for *le Grondeur*. It is spoken by L'Amour and La Critique. L'Amour has come to find out whether the play will appeal to a "spectateur fin, délicat, habile." La Critique declares that she has come only because the play is new and that she expects to yawn and whistle, for applause is no longer fashionable. L'Amour warns her that he has taken the author under his protection, but La Critique insists upon making a failure of the play and looks for the assistance of "Abbez" and "plumets." When she has left, L'Amour begs the parterre for applause and warns of his power:

Vous avez vû jusqu'à present  
Des Avars, des Misanthropes,  
Des Fourbes, des Grondeurs, des Joieurs, des Esopes,  
J'ay forcé chacun d'eux à devenir Amant.<sup>26</sup>

L'Amour was not notably successful in his plea, for the play, first acted on July 4, 1707, was produced only eight times at the Comédie Française,<sup>27</sup> but the author was sufficiently encouraged to make, three years later, a second attempt, again with a "Crispinerie."

This was *LE NAUFRAGE, OU LA POMPE FUNÈBRE DE CRISPIN*,<sup>28</sup> an exotic, farcical, and somewhat spectacular little play based on two laws of a strange land: one, that everyone must marry, the other that, when a husband or wife dies, the widow or widower must be burned on the funeral pyre of the deceased mate. The first law enables the author to create a difficult situation, the second, combined with the opportune arrival of the hero, makes it possible for him to remove the difficulty. The plot is well conceived, but it could have given rise to more ample comic developments than those we are allowed to witness.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> *L'Avare, le Misanthrope, le Port de mer, le Grondeur, le Joueur, and les Fables d'Esop* had all been given in 1706. One might suppose that "Fourbes" refers to *les Fourberies de Scapin*, but in that comedy Scapin is not a lover.

<sup>27</sup> It was acted by the Italian troupe on July 25, 1721, on its opening day at the Théâtre du Faubourg Saint-Laurent, cf. Maurice Albert, *les Théâtres de la Foire*, Paris, Hachette, 1900, pp. 100-1.

<sup>28</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1710, 12°, in the *Nouveau théâtre françois*, Utrecht, Néaulme, 1734, in Lafont's *Théâtre*, Amsterdam, Marteau, 1746, in the *Peitite Bibliothèque*, Paris, Belin, 1789, in the *Répertoire* of 1818, 1819, 1821, 1823, in the *Auteurs du second ordre*, 1809, in the *Théâtre* edited by Touquet, 1821, and in the *Répertoire*, Paris, Didot, 1824. It was translated into Dutch in 1730.

<sup>29</sup> A French nobleman, Licandre, has eloped with Eliante, taking along his valet, Crispin, and her *souvante*, Marine. A shipwreck has placed Eliante and the servants on an island called Salamandros, while Licandre is supposed to have been drowned. Marine has married an islander, Piracmon, of whom she approves, while Eliante,

As in the earlier play, Crispin is the principal character. Since his cleverness, chiefly aimed at getting the better of Eliante, is foiled by Piracmon, he is primarily a cowardly and outwitted valet, struggling for his life, with his insistence that he is Eliante's husband turned against him, and saved by no actions of his own. The other persons are but slightly characterized. The play has a lively dialogue and rapid action. There is a satirical reference in sc. 5 to French girls' eagerness for matrimony. Two lines in sc. 12 parody *le Cid*

Pleurez, pleurez mes yeux, & fondez-vous en eau,  
La moitié de Crispin mettra l'autre au tombeau

The spectacular element is considerable. At the beginning the stage represents

une île sauvage on y voit quelques habitations dans des Rochers escarpés, & un peu plus loin l'on découvre la Mer, dont le rivage est couvert de débris de vaisseaux.

In sc. 12 Eliante appears, covered with flowers, upon a "bucher" that is "au pied d'un Mausolée galant, où l'Amour est représenté portant le portrait de Crispin" To the sound of musical instruments and by the light of torches Crispin is led to the pyre. There is dancing and singing. The alexandrine couplets in which most of the play is written are varied by songs that employ verses of 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 12 syllables, by "article XIII" of the Law couched in verses of 8 and 12 syllables, by a prose letter, and by Crispin's final stanza addressed to the parterre in 8-syllable verse.

The play was first acted on June 14, 1710, with music composed by Gilliers. It was acted fifteen times in that year and remained in the repertory until 1790. The total number of performances was seventy-three.

After these two excursions abroad, Lafont attempted two comedies dealing with the life of his contemporaries, though his manner remains far

to escape a similar fate, has, with her consent, been married to Crispin by the high priest of the island and now refuses to allow the consummation of the marriage. As a week has passed without news of Licandre, Crispin insists upon his privileges as a husband and appeals to the governor. This dignitary demands the consummation of the marriage or the death of Eliante. The women appeal to Piracmon, who suggests that Eliante pretend to be dead and that Crispin be informed that he must be burned with her body. When the plan is carried out, the valet argues that he has never really been Eliante's husband, but the governor refuses to accept his plea, Eliante is shown on a pyre, and Crispin is ordered to join her. Fortunately Licandre had reached another island after the shipwreck. He now appears with a note from its governor. He is told that Eliante is dead, but, when she hears his voice, she reveals the fact that she has pretended death in order to escape from Crispin and declares herself to be Licandre's wife. The high priest annuls her first marriage and unites her to Licandre. The governor promises to find a wife next day for Crispin, who, however, insists upon a contract that will excuse him from dying if he should lose this new wife. The play ends with dancing, singing, and verses addressed by Crispin to the parterre.

from realistic. The first of them is *L'AMOUR VENGÉ*.<sup>30</sup> In his preface Lafont points out that recent five-act comedies, owing to the fact that they have in them "beaucoup de vuide," have met with little success.<sup>31</sup> Unless one has Molière's fire, it is hard to hold the spectators "en haleine" during five acts. He consequently prefers to write a one-act comedy and to hurry the action in order to make it more effective.

The play is chiefly a comedy of intrigue, though the plot is far from being complex.<sup>32</sup> It has only two effective scenes, the tenth and fifteenth, in which the hero and heroine seek to amuse themselves at each other's expense and end by falling in love. In the second of these scenes the rôle of Nérine recalls that of Dorine when she reunites the young lovers in *Tartuffe*. In order to increase the comic element, the author brought in an absurd Gascon, a sort of *miles gloriosus*, though he brags only of his prowess in love, and attempted a scene of manners by referring to two restaurants, those of Fitte and Payen, and by introducing a passage in which various professions are listed (sc. 1) .<sup>33</sup>

Tiens, chacun se deguise, & l'on s'est fait un point  
De passer en public pour ce que l'on n'est point  
L'Usurier veut paroître un prudent œconome  
Tout Procureur voudra passer pour honnête homme,  
Tout Asne pour Docteur, tout Poltron pour César,  
Tout visage en couleur pour visage sans fard  
Tout Partisan rusé qui pille la Province  
Pour un sujet qui prend l'intérêt de son Prince.  
Tout petit Sous Fermier, tout Traitant, tout Voleur  
Pour homme delicat en matière d'honneur,  
Tout Amant un peu fier pour Amant sans tendresse

The author admits in his preface that he was criticized for hastening his action too greatly, for having his hero and heroine become interested in each other too quickly, and for lack of reality in the presentation of the Gascon. To these criticisms he fails to make a convincing reply. The plot is so

<sup>30</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1712, 12°. Dedicated to d'Argenson. Republished in the *Nouveau théâtre françois*, Utrecht, Néaulme, 1734, in Lafont's *Théâtre*, Amsterdam, Marteau, 1746. It was translated into Dutch in 1740.

<sup>31</sup> It is true that no five act comedy first played in 1709-12 had many performances.

<sup>32</sup> Orgon would marry his nephew, Clidamis, to Araminte's niece, Lucile, but the young people show such indifference to each other that the girl's aunt agrees to marry her to a Gascon, the Chevalier de la Fanfaronière. Clidamis's valet, Merlin, and Lucile's servant, Nérine, pretend to the young people that each is loved by the other and persuade them to encourage each other in order that each may laugh at the other's expense. But when Clidamis pretends to make love, Lucile feels deeply moved, and, after she leaves the stage, Clidamis admits that he has been similarly affected. Lucile refuses to marry the Gascon, who retires after he has expressed his indignation. The notary who had come in order to oblige de la Fanfaronière is employed by Orgon and Araminte to draw up the contract for the marriage of Clidamis and Lucile. Merlin, proud of his stratagem, is accepted by Nérine.

<sup>33</sup> For similar dramatic lists cf. my *op cit*, Part III, pp. 823, 830, Part IV, pp. 431, 828-9.

hurried that there are few comic situations and we are not convinced that there was ever much of an obstacle to be overcome. A Gascon had appeared in several seventeenth-century plays and quite recently in Boindin's *Trois Gascons*. Lafont represents him as weighing five times as much as Chdamis, using characteristics of Gascon speech,<sup>84</sup> and being infatuated with his charms, though others laugh at him. Lafont asserts that there will be men of this kind so long as there are Gascons, but one may doubt if any Gascon ever went to such lengths. The character is a survival of the ancient Plautine tradition and must have seemed quite out of place in a play that might in other respects have been considered a predecessor of Marivaux.

The comedy at first made an excellent impression. Though first produced as late as Oct. 14, it was acted sixteen times in 1712. It was given, however, only seven times thereafter, once in 1713 and six times in 1722. Before the author could have known that it would not have the success of his *Naufrage*, he had composed the play that did most to establish his reputation and was, like *l'Amour vengé*, a Parisian comedy.

This was *LES TROIS FRÈRES RIVAUX*,<sup>85</sup> the first idea of which, according to the preface, was suggested to the author during the winter of 1713 by a friend who had "beaucoup d'esprit et d'érudition." This friend, according to the frères Parfaict, was La Thorillière, for whom in return Lafont composed the rôle of Merlin. The suggestion roused many ideas in Lafont, who adds that he had amused "avec assez de noblesse tous les honnêtes gens, c'étoit l'unique but que je m'étois proposé."

The play is based on mistakes in the identification of three brothers named Lisimon, all of whom are captains in the Queen's regiment and each of whom is favored by a member of one family, father, mother, or daughter. Confusion, due in part to the activities of a valet, is followed by explanations that result in the triumph of love.<sup>86</sup> The comedy has some resem-

<sup>84</sup> Substituting *é* for *e*, *bous* for *tous*, and using *sandis* as an oath.

<sup>85</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1713, 12°. Dedicated to the marquis de Courcillon, Governor of Touraine. Republished in the *Nouveau théâtre françois*, Utrecht, Néaulme, 1734, in Lafont's *Théâtre*, Amsterdam, Marteau, 1746, at Naples, Gravier, 1777, at Paris, Delalain, 1776, and Behn, 1788, in the *Répertoires* of Paris, 1804 (Petitot), 1813, 1818 (Petitot), 1821, and 1824, in the *Auteurs du second ordre*, 1809, and in the Touquet edition of 1821. It was translated into Dutch in 1734 and 1755.

<sup>86</sup> Philidor, a prosperous lawyer, would like his daughter to marry a man of his profession, but Angélique prefers an officer. Philidor's valet, Merlin, has been bribed by three brothers Lisimon to introduce them into the family. One is a marquis, one a count, one a chevalier. The father promises Angélique to the marquis, the mother promises her to the count, but she prefers the chevalier. The youngest brother wins over Merlin by bribing him a second time. The marquis arrives with a letter from Philidor, the count, with one from Philidor's wife. While they are in the garden, the lawyer and his wife quarrel over the choice of a son-in-law, but they make peace when they discover that each has chosen Captain Lisimon of the Queen's regiment. Angélique resents her parents' selecting a husband for her till she finds that they, like herself, have chosen Captain Lisimon. Trouble flares up again, however, when there is a difference of opinion as to whether the captain is a marquis,

blance to the *Femmes savantes* in that a father and mother quarrel over the choice of a husband for their daughter and that a letter, fabricated for the purpose, brings about the discrediting of the hero's rivals. The presence of three brothers, the youngest of whom wins the prize, is a folk theme found in many fairy-tales. The success of the play was due, not to the realism of the manners described or to the analysis of character, but to the *verve* of the dialogue and to the varied comic scenes, presented with increasing wit up to the logical, if not unexpected dénouement.

Merlin, the leading character, delights by his impudence, his avarice, his moments of fear, and the manner in which he ingratiates himself into the good opinion of those he needs to further his interests. The kindly father, anxious to assert his authority, but dreading a conflict with his wife, the latter's calm self-confidence, their daughter's insistence upon choosing her man produce amusing repartee. Even the colorless lovers help create comic situations. One does not regret the absence of a *souvante*.

The play begins, like Regnard's *Joueur*, with a lively monologue spoken by Merlin, who draws from his pocket three purses, one after another

Trois objets ravissans, trois bourses plaines d'or!  
Qu'un valet est heureux chez monsieur Philidor!

Most of the exposition is contained in this monologue. The scene that follows allows Merlin the opportunity to belittle lawyers, "avec leur air gris-brun," as husbands, in contrast with warriors—a popular theme in time of war

Plaisant époux, ma foi! qu'un époux à rabat!  
Car qu'est ce, dites moi, que Damon l'avocat?  
Un fat, un ignorant balayant la grand'salle,  
Qui par sa vanité croit que rien ne l'égale,  
Qui de papiers tout blancs a soin d'emplir son sac,  
Qui décide de tout et *ad hoc* et *ad hac*.  
Qui s'écoute parler, qui s'applaudit lui-même,  
Pindarisant ses mots avec un soin extrême

In scene 4 the marquis and the count are made amusing by the manner

a count, or a chevalier. When the marquis and the count appear, Philidor declares that the marquis is the man, Mme Philidor, that the count is, Angélique, that neither is. Then the chevalier claims the girl and explains that they are three brothers in the same regiment. Philidor, his wife, and Angélique each supports the man he or she has selected. At this point Merlin brings in a note that accuses the marquis of gambling, the count of pursuing women. Though the accused captains deny the charges, the parents are impressed. Merlin, when he is accused of cheating the brothers who have paid for his assistance and of slandering them in the note, protests that it is not his fault if they are brothers and that he does not know how to write. Angélique declares that it is unnecessary to find out whether the charges are true or false, for she loves neither of the men. This statement makes the marquis and the count withdraw. Merlin admits that he wrote the note to help the chevalier, who had paid him more than his brothers had. As there is no longer any opposition, the chevalier is accepted as Angélique's husband.

in which their words and actions duplicate each other's. A similar effect is produced in sc. 8, when Philidor and his wife appear, but the spectator's pleasure is increased by their quarreling and their temporary reconciliation.

Mme Ph Je prétends qu'Angélique à moi seule obéisse  
 Ph Selon ma volonté j'entends, moi, qu'elle agisse  
 Mme Ph Elle doit se soumettre aveuglément à moi,  
 Et de nul autre après ne recevoir la loi  
 Ph Et par quelle raison?  
 Mme Ph C'est que je suis sa mère  
 Ph Et moi donc, s'il vous plaît, ne suis je pas son père?  
 Mme Ph Et quand vous le seriez? voyez, belle raison!  
 Ph Je m'en moque, j'aurai pour gendre Lisimon  
 Mme Ph Lisimon, dites vous? Lisimon, capitaine?  
 Ph Oui  
 Mme Ph De quel regiment?  
 Ph De celui de la Reine  
 Mme Ph Tout de bon?  
 Ph Tout de bon  
 Mme Ph Eh' vite embrassons nous,  
 Allons, faisons la paix, mon cher petit époux'

The comic effect of this scene is repeated in the next, when Angélique's insistence upon selecting her husband meets with disapproval until it is discovered that she also has chosen a Captain Lisimon of the Queen's regiment. The general satisfaction lasts, however, only for a moment, for a dispute arises in regard to the captain's title. This scene is followed by the entrance of the older brothers, then by that of the chevalier and the discovery that there are three captains. When Merlin's letter accuses the marquis and the count of the vices "ordinaires de presque tous les gens de guerre," gambling and women, Mme Philidor exclaims

Fi! les maris joueurs sont des maris infâmes!  
 Peut on aimer le jeu? Passe encor pour les femmes'

The dénouement follows quickly with Angélique's declaration that she loves the chevalier, the withdrawal of the older brothers, Merlin's confession, and the parents' acceptance of their daughter's choice.

The frères Parfaict<sup>37</sup> assign to the play, often acted in their day, "une place marquée dans le rang des Comédies en un Acte," on account of its simple subject, its well filled action, and the good comic tone of the characters. They quote the *Bibliothèque Française*, which finds in the comedy "des traits inimitables & des caractères parfaitement soutenus" and admires especially Mme Philidor's remark, just quoted, on the relative merits of

<sup>37</sup> XV, 152-5. When the play was given in August, 1797, at the Théâtre Feydeau, uncomplimentary remarks addressed to Merlin, the valet, were understood by the audience as intended for Merlin de Douai, Minister of Justice in the Directoire, with the result that the theater was closed, cf. Desnoiresterres, *op cit*, pp 437-8.

gambling and fornication. Lafont himself thought it unnecessary to reply to critics of his play. Though first presented in the summer season, on Aug. 4, 1713, it was acted fifteen times before the end of the year, remained in the repertory until 1821, and had in all 397 performances at the Comédie Française, more than any other one-act comedy of 1701-15 except Dancourt's *Galant Jardinier*, Lesage's *Crispin rival*, and Legrand's *Usurier Gentilhomme*.

These eight productions show that the habit of giving short plays after tragedies or longer comedies influenced strongly new authors, more of whom attempted this type of comedy than any other. They indicate on the part of their authors ready mastery of technique and familiarity with various comic devices already employed by Dancourt and his contemporaries. They are unusual in the facts that in a large proportion of them the authors are concerned with life outside of France, and that in one of them a modern Jewess is selected as the heroine. By far the most successful of them was *les Trois Frères Rivaux*, the only one that was played at the Comédie Française in the nineteenth century.



## CHAPTER XVII

### DESTOUCHES

The only author of comedies who began in 1701-15 to write plays that were acted and who ultimately acquired a very considerable reputation as a comic author was Destouches.<sup>1</sup> His father, François Néricault, was an organist and scrivener at Tours, where Philippe was born on April 7, 1680. He is said to have received a good education at Tours and at Paris, to have quarreled with his family, and to have joined a troupe of actors, probably in 1697 or 1698. The tradition, cultivated by his son, that he fought in the French army has been shown to have no substantial support other than family pride.<sup>2</sup> While playing in Switzerland, he attracted the attention of the marquis de Puisieux, the French ambassador, who took him into his service in 1699, chiefly as a copyist, and taught him the principles of diplomacy. Destouches wrote his first play while he was in his employment and organized amateur theatricals at the ambassador's home. He followed him in 1708 to Sillery and was introduced by him to the court of the duchesse du Maine at Sceaux, for which he composed three musical *divertissements*. On June 19, 1711, he was living at Paris, rue de Bussy, and described himself as Puisieux's secretary.<sup>3</sup> In 1717 he became, on the recommendation of Puisieux to the Regent, secretary to Dubois, who took him to London, where Destouches remained until 1723.

While in England he acquired a certain interest in English literature, shown by a few translations, and he married an English girl.<sup>4</sup> After the death of Dubois and the Regent, he retired from diplomacy, obtained a pension, and established himself on the estate of Fortoiseau near Melun, of which town he was governor. Although he had been elected to the Academy

<sup>1</sup> Cf. especially Paul Bonnefon, *RHL*, XIV (1907), 637-95, Jean Hankiss, *Philippe Néricault Destouches*, Debrecken, 1920, Henri David, *Revue du dix huitième siècle*, V (1918), 116-44, A. Burner, *RHL*, XXXVIII (1931), 40-73, 177-211. Editions of his works were published at Paris, Le Breton, 1716 and 1718, The Hague, 1725, 1741-2, 1752, 1754, Paris, Prault père, 1736-45, 1745, 1758, 1772, 1774, Imprimerie royale 1757, Charpentier, 1761, Libraires associés, 1774. For most of these and for later editions cf. the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale and Burner, *op cit*, pp. 200-4.

<sup>2</sup> Burner believed that he did not quarrel with his family, that he became an actor in 1697, entered the army in 1698, took part in the battle of Saint Gothard, and was received into Puisieux's service in 1699.

<sup>3</sup> This evidence, which Burner alone of Destouches's biographers noticed, is given in a deposition made by the dramatist when called as a witness in an affair that involved the actor, Beaubourg, cf. Campardon, *Comédiens du roi*, Paris, 1879, p. 25, and above, p. 17. David, *op cit*, p. 142, had concluded that he remained in Puisieux's service up to the end of 1710.

<sup>4</sup> For his life in England cf. I. O. Wade, *MP*, XXIX (1931), 27-47.

in 1723, he spent the rest of his life in semi-retirement, devoting much of it to the composition of plays. He died in 1754.

It is not known why he called himself Destouches. Bonnefon suggested that he took it as a stage-name, but Hankiss raised the objection that he kept it when he became a diplomat. He certainly employed it as early as 1701 and may have been attracted to it by the fact that it was the name of a popular composer of operas. By 1717 he was especially known as a dramatist and may have believed that the name he had signed to his plays was more distinguished than the bourgeois Néricault, which, as David remarks, might have suggested *mauricaud*. However this may be, it was as a dramatist that he became known to posterity. Though his most celebrated plays were written after his retirement to Fortoiseau, the seven acted at the Comédie Française in 1710-17 were those that, with the help of Dubois, elected him to the Academy.

The first of these was *LE CURIEUX IMPERTINENT*.<sup>5</sup> Destouches declares that he was attracted to the subject by Mme de Thibergeau, Puisieux's sister, who expressed the opinion as they read *Don Quixote* together that the *Curioso Impertinente* would make an excellent subject for a comedy. The tale had already inspired a French dramatist, the younger Brosse, but there is no evidence that Destouches knew his play.<sup>6</sup> He took from Cervantes his title, his main theme, and his three leading characters, but he altered his materials decidedly by substituting engagement for marriage and by having the servants duplicate the actions of the three chief persons. In this way he avoided the question of adultery and was able to introduce a good deal of comic material. Hankiss thinks that the first of these changes was due to a remark made by Cervantes's curate, but, as Molière had made a similar alteration in writing *l'Ecole des maris*, Destouches may have acted without noticing the curate's remark.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Paris, Pierre Ribou, 1710, 1711, 12°. Goizet, Hankiss, and the *Intermédiaire des chercheurs et des curieux* (1935, col. 235) give 1710, David and the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale, 1711, Ludemann and Burner, both years. As the *Gazette de Rotterdam* (cf. Méloë, *Rép.*, p. 221) of Dec. 29, 1710, states that "on vend" the play, it must have been published by that time. It was dedicated to Puisieux. Republished, Amsterdam, Jordan, 1711, Paris, Le Breton, 1716, 12°. The Hague, Gilbert, 1741, in editions of the author's plays, and by Ad. Rion in 1878. The play has been studied by Max Ludemann, *Über Destouches' Leben und Werke*, Greifswald, 1895; Hankiss, *op. cit.*, G. Babinger, *Wanderung und Wandlungen der Novelle von Cervantes "El Curioso impertinente"*, Erlangen, 1911, pp. 334, and Bardou, *op. cit.*, pp. 491-5. Destouches's son, in a letter of April 5, 1779, attributed to him a tragedy called *les Macchabées*, a first work that is now lost, if it ever existed.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. my *op. cit.*, Part II, pp. 471-2. The only respect in which Destouches is nearer to Brosse than he is to Cervantes lies in the fact that in both plays the friend accuses the husband or fiancé of unfaithfulness, but this is a theme that Destouches may easily have found for himself.

<sup>7</sup> Bardou seems to think that the changes were due entirely to Destouches's unwillingness to shock the public. He criticizes him for not following Cervantes more closely. Some of his points are well taken, but he forgets that Destouches was writing a comedy.

The material is well distributed through the five acts. The exposition is brief, there is a steady increase in interest, and the solution is reached in the last verses of the play.<sup>8</sup> The change of fiancés within a single day is as well prepared as could be expected. Léandre is meant to be as jealous as his model in Cervantes, but he is much too calm to be convincing. He is not at all a violent lover, like the protagonist of Baron's *Jaloux*, but rather an amateur psychologist making an experiment that fails and calmly admitting the fact at the end of the play. Damon gives the impression of being much more in love and has a genuine struggle between *amour* and *amitié*. He would not have undertaken the experiment except for Léandre's insistence. He continues it for the same reason until his love prevails almost in spite of himself. His is the most dramatic rôle in the play, as he is constantly striving to reconcile his ideas of love and honor.

Julie is wounded by her lover's neglect, restrained by her sense of the proprieties, and grateful to Damon for soothing her pride. She seems to accept Damon, not because she loves him, but because she is indignant with Léandre. There is no reason for her rushing so promptly into matrimony except the author's desire to respect the unity of time. Her father is not the "doux et insignifiant" person that Hankiss represents him as being. His threatening Lolive with a beating to be administered by his three lackeys and his display of anger, reported by Crispin, do not indicate a gentle disposition. He is, however, fond of his daughter and unwilling to marry her against her will.

The three servants are like many found in plays by Destouches's predecessors. Lolive is a blunderer, Crispin, a clever valet. Nérine, the lively

<sup>8</sup> Léandre, a lawyer, is engaged to Julie, daughter of G ron te. He has his wedding postponed because he wishes to test Julie's love with the help of a friend, Damon, who is a military man and in love with Julie, though he has helped his friend to win her. Damon objects to participating in L andre's plan for testing Julie, but he finally yields on account of his friendship, while warning L andre not to hold him responsible for the consequences. When Damon declares his love, Julie is angered, but the next time she sees him she pardons him provided he will not speak to her of love again. He makes further progress by causing her to believe that L andre loves another girl. Now L andre has pretended that his father is quite ill at Tours and that he discovered this fact by sending there his valet, Lolive. But G ron te receives a letter from L andre's father stating that his health is excellent and that he has been for six weeks in Brittany. He then forces Lolive, under the threat of a beating, to confess that he has not left Paris and that L andre is seeking to postpone his marriage, not because his father is ill, but in order to test Julie. Both the girl and her father feel that they have been insulted, but Julie pardons Damon when he assures her that his love is genuine. She has already felt that L andre's neglect has cooled her feeling for him. Now she fears to marry a man who will certainly make a jealous husband. In order to get her revenge, she pretends to L andre that she loves him even if he is unfaithful. L andre declares that he has never ceased to love her and asks for her hand. Damon, acting on his friend's advice, has already asked her to marry him. G ron te leaves the decision to Julie, who rejects L andre and accepts Damon. A similar triangular intrigue is carried out by Lolive, N rine, and Crispin. N rine greets Crispin's first advances with a slap, subsequently softens, and accepts him when Lolive withdraws in order to escape dismissal.

counsellor of her mistress, switches from one of her lovers to the other, not so much because of her own feelings as to give a comic echo in a lower key to the love-making of the main trio. Molière had employed servants similarly in *le Dépit amoureux* and *le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. There is, however, definite connection between the servants and the main plot, especially when Lolive's forced confession precipitates the action.

Destouches moralizes at the end of his comedy as Dancourt had done in *la Famille à la mode* and as Molière would not have done. It is the first evidence he gives of a tendency that, reappearing in many of his later works, was to appeal to his eighteenth-century audiences. His play lacks comic force, but one or two passages are worth quoting:

Tiens, Lolive, la femme est une marchandise  
Qu'on doit prendre au hasard sans la faire priser,  
Et qu'on ne peut jamais connoître qu'à l'user,  
Il faut, sans tâtonner, brusquer le mariage,  
Et s'exposer sur mer sans craindre le naufrage  
Qui tremble dès le port ne doit pas s'embarquer (II, 3)

Il faut qu'un tendre amant soit inquiet, jaloux  
Un regard innocent doit le mettre en courroux.  
Une mouche qui vole autour de sa maîtresse,  
Un épagneul qu'elle aime, & qui lui fait caresse,  
Un petit perroquet, qui, prenant sa leçon,  
Lui dit, baisez, baisez, dans son petit jargon (III, 4)

Acted first on Nov. 17, 1710, it was given thirteen times in that year, seven times in 1711, and four times in 1715. The *Gazette de Rotterdam*\* pronounced it the play "la plus parfaite" that had appeared since the time of Molière. At the Foire it was parodied on Feb. 3, 1711, in the third act of *Jupiter curieux impertinent*, and was criticized there on March 1 in *Apollon à la foire*.<sup>10</sup> The frères l'arfaiet<sup>11</sup> praise its structure and prosody and declare that it is "dans le vrai ton du noble comique," but they admit that the public was not especially eager to see it acted. They quote an epigram to the effect that

Pour la voir une fois on n'est que curieux,  
Mais qui la verra deux, en remplira le titre

Nevertheless it remained in the repertory until 1763, with a total of 72 performances, not a brilliant record, but a satisfactory one for an author's first play at the Comédie Française

\* Quoted by Mélese, *Rép.*, p. 221. He also quotes a statement from the *Mercurie galant* of 1715 to the effect that this was Destouches's best play up to that time.

<sup>10</sup> For these plays cf. below, Chapter XIX, pp. 320-1.

<sup>11</sup> XV, 65-7.

His next comedy, *L'INGRAT*,<sup>12</sup> received its inspiration, not from a foreign novel, but from a French comedy, *Tartuffe*, which left its author still less opportunity for originality. Destouches was careful to remove from his imitation anything that might offend the pious or cause uncertainty as to his meaning. There is no longer any attempt at adultery and the protagonist confides in his valet so clearly that even the most industrious critic can find no ambiguity in the text. Dealing with less controversial material, Destouches was able to bring his hypocrite on the stage as early as Act I, scene 6, and to reach a solution of his problem without an appeal to the king. The play is far, however, from having the intensity or the variety of *Tartuffe*, or from offering phrases that delight the reader, while even its effective scenes suffer from the inevitable comparison with Molière's great comedy.<sup>13</sup>

The principal character is a hypocrite and an ingrate, like *Tartuffe*, but he is much younger, and the emphasis is laid on his ingratitude rather than on his hypocrisy. He has the same understanding of his dupe, makes him believe that those who tell him the truth are deceiving him, and bids him marry his daughter to another for the same reason that *Tartuffe* asks Orgon to pardon his son. His motives are purely selfish. He is equally ungrateful

<sup>12</sup> Paris, Le Breton, 1712, 12° Republished in editions of the author's works, by Prault père, 1734. The Hague, Gilbert, 1741, and Vienna, Van Ghelen, 1753 Translated into German in 1789 The play has been studied by Ludemann, *op cit*, pp 179, and by Hankiss, *op cit*, pp 68-75 Both point out the debt to *Tartuffe*, Hankiss in great detail

<sup>13</sup> Damis, accused of murder, has been cleared through the activities of an aristocrat, Cléon, and has been received into the home of Géronte, who is under considerable obligation to Damis's father, now dead So grateful is Géronte that he has decided to marry his daughter, Isabelle, to Damis, but the girl, who loves Cléon, resists She is aided by her lover, her maid, Lisette, and her uncle, Ariste When Isabelle, backed by Lisette, assures Damis that she loves Cléon, he pretends to give her up and even begs Géronte to marry his daughter to Cléon, knowing full well that this request will make his host admire his generosity and insist on his marrying his daughter This is what happens, but the interview leads to a quarrel between Damis and his valet, Pasquin, who, when he is dismissed, gets revenge by informing Lisette that Damis was engaged, when at Nevers, to Orphise, daughter of Dorante, and that he departed unceremoniously when his prospective father-in-law lost a law-suit Dorante and Orphise now come to Paris in connection with an appeal of this suit and get in touch with Isabelle and her friends Orphise's *souvante*, Nérine, makes peace with Pasquin and informs him that Orphise has inherited a fortune from her aunt Isabelle now agrees to marry Damis if Géronte wishes her to do so, but only on condition that she see Cléon first Orphise reproaches Damis, who fears that, if Géronte hears her story, he will lose Isabelle He consequently pretends to Géronte that Ariste and Cléon have engaged people to disguise themselves as Dorante, Orphise, and Nérine When Pasquin talks about Damis, Géronte thinks that his uncomplimentary remarks form part of the conspiracy Pasquin interprets the same remarks to Damis as inspired by the hope of making Géronte break with him so that he can return to Orphise, who is now rich Damis hastens to make love to Orphise, but he is overheard by Géronte, who decides to give him up till he is convinced by Damis that the person he heard was Pasquin, imitating his master's voice Géronte accordingly receives Dorante and Orphise rudely, but the latter produces a letter from Damis, describing Géronte as an imbecile Géronte is at last won over and gives his daughter to Cléon Orphise, though she had been at first disposed to forgive Damis, also abandons him and is offered Géronte's nephew in compensation Damis hopes to find a richer wife than either Isabelle or Orphise Pasquin points the moral

to Cléon, who has saved his life, to Pasquin, who has faithfully served him, to Orphise, who has been engaged to him, and to Géronte, who has sheltered him and offered him his daughter.

Géronte is like the typical father in comedy in that he is opinionated, violent, and credulous, but he has the redeeming virtue of gratitude. There is no evidence that, like Orgon, he has served the king well, but he is equally infatuated with his hypocritical guest. His preference for a bourgeois rather than an aristocratic son-in-law does not come from *Tartuffe*, but, as has been suggested, may well have been inspired by Mme Jourdain's opinions in *le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. Géronte has no wife or son, but he has a daughter who needs the help of a *souvante*. Lisette, like Dorine, is outspoken and clever, urges her mistress to resist her father, and intrigues in her interests. Cléon has a less interesting rôle than that of Valère, as there is no lovers' quarrel, but his part in the plot is much the same. Destouches even added a wise Ariste, who, like Cléante, supports the heroine against the father.

Pasquin and the trio from Nevers have no connection with *Tartuffe*. The valet is chiefly noteworthy for having enough morality to be shocked by his master and consequently to turn against him.<sup>14</sup> The three from Nevers are used chiefly to bring about the dénouement. Dorante is an honorable gentleman, disagreeably surprised by the reception he is accorded by Géronte. Orphise is for a while foolish enough to be willing to forgive Damis, but she is finally convinced of his rascality and accepts in compensation Géronte's nephew—an absurd device inherited from tragi-comedies of the seventeenth century. Nérine, the third member of the trio, makes herself useful in the plot and rewards Pasquin when he repents of deserting her.

The play is well constructed in many respects. Géronte's heated remarks to his brother give life to the opening scene, as do those of Mme Pernelle to the beginning of *Tartuffe*.<sup>15</sup> Géronte next has an entertaining quarrel with the *souvante*, an imitation of Orgon's quarrel with Dorine.<sup>16</sup> We are given all of the exposition in this first act, after which the struggle is joined between the two factions and is carried on with varying success and the production of several interesting situations until the solution is reached in the last scene of the play. The author makes use, however, of several chance coincidences in bringing this about. The arrival of Dorante and his family exactly on the day when they are needed, and Géronte's reaching his brother's

<sup>14</sup> Hankiss calls him "le premier membre d'une longue lignée de Pasquins," but this type of valet was by no means unusual when Destouches portrayed him, and the name had been made famous, long before he wrote, by Baron's *Homme à bonne fortune*.

<sup>15</sup> "Elle l'épousera, Ou je l'épouserai, moi" must have been suggested by Dorine's remark that Orgon may marry Tartuffe.

<sup>16</sup> Her "Je me répons à moi" is obviously taken from Dorine's rôle.

house just when Damis is making love in a loud voice to Orphise are quite improbable, while no preparation is made for Orphise's production of Damis's note, although more than anything else it brings about the solution of the difficulty.<sup>17</sup>

The play suffers, too, from the author's insistence upon moral instruction, obvious enough in most of the play and emphasized at the end of it by Pasquin's urging the audience to profit by this lesson on the value of gratitude. The lesson, however, is not so well presented as it might have been, for, if Damis is punished for his ingratitude, G ron te's troubles are largely due to the gratitude he feels toward Damis's father. Moreover, if Damis had been still more ungrateful to Orphise and had written her no letter, he might still have retained G ron te's friendship. It is true, too, that a man may be ungrateful without being the scoundrel that Destouches depicts. The play is little more than what Hankiss calls it, "l'essai d'un jeune homme s du t par les sombres beaut s du 'Tartuffe.'"

It was first acted on Jan. 28, 1712. After seven performances the theater was closed on account of the Dauphine's death. It was not acted again till autumn, when it was played eight times. It was not revived until it profited from the success of later plays by Destouches and was given four times in 1734, twice in 1761. A total of twenty-one performances makes it rank with its author's minor productions.

In his next play, *L'IRRESOLU*,<sup>18</sup> Destouches again showed his fondness for the comedy of character, but this time he selected as his protagonist a person with whom the spectators would sympathize, though they would laugh at him. Moli re had given a model for such a character in *le Misanthrope* and much more recently Regnard, as Hankiss points out, had given another in *le Distr t*. Indeed, this play has more resemblance to Destouches's comedy than he indicates, for both comedies contain, besides the title-r le, an elderly and opinionated woman, a lively young chevalier, two girls of different temperaments, and a valet who helps his master while lecturing him on his shortcomings. There is also quite an obvious imitation of Terence's *Adelphoe*, which Baron had, a few years before, made French in *les Adelphes*.

Destouches explains that he had originally thought of giving his hero a great many opportunities to show his lack of decision, opportunities concerned with other matters as well as with love. This had been Regnard's

<sup>17</sup> Here again Destouches borrows from *Tartuffe*. G ron te is finally convinced that Damis is unworthy by his uncomplimentary remarks about him in the letter, just as Orgon is persuaded that Tartuffe is an evil person by the hypocrite's remarks about him to Elmire.

<sup>18</sup> Paris, Le Breton, 1713, 12  and 8 . Dedicated to the marquis de Courcillon. Republished, Paris, Prault, 1735, and in the author's collected works. A Dutch translation appeared in 1762. Cf. especially Hankiss, *op cit*, pp. 75-87.

method in *le Distrain*, though Destouches does not say so. He concluded that such usage would, on account of the twenty-four hour rule, violate verisimilitude and would not allow him to discuss anything in sufficient detail. He consequently limited himself to his hero's choice of a wife, but criticism he received caused him to alter all the acts of his play, especially the last two, in order to indicate, at least in *résumé*, other evidences of indecision. He mentions especially Dorante's hesitancy in choosing a profession, and he tells us that he laid more stress in the final form of his play on the part played by jealousy in his hero's decision.

As it stands, the comedy<sup>19</sup> is primarily a study of Dorante, a young man of excellent character and attractive personality who has distinguished himself in war. The fact that his father has always employed reason and kindness with him has made him see so many sides to every question that it is difficult for him to come to a decision. He boasts of this quality as a sign of intelligence, but he is obliged to admit its practical disadvantages. He orders horses hitched and unhitched. He cannot decide what profession to select. When he falls in love, he doubts the wisdom of obeying his emotions.

<sup>19</sup> Pyramon and his brother or brother-in-law, Lysimon, argue about the proper way to bring up children. Pyramon is for kindly reasonableness, Lysimon, for authoritative discipline. The play is supposed to demonstrate the superiority of Pyramon's method. He and his son, Dorante, have established themselves at Paris in an "hôtel garni," where Lysimon and his son, the Chevalier, are also staying, as well as Mme Argante, a wealthy widow, and her daughters, Julie and Célimène. Dorante hesitates between these two girls, feeling attracted to Julie, but admiring Célimène's reserve. He bids his valet, Frontin, discover which one loves him. Frontin gets the help of their *femme de chambre*, Nérine, who discovers that both girls and their mother would like to marry Dorante. The hero decides to marry Célimène, then Julie. The Chevalier, who loves amusement, is angered by the restraints imposed by his father. As he is in need of money, he proposes to marry Mme Argante and to make Dorante his son-in-law by giving him Julie. Upon reflection Dorante decides that, as husbands are ruled by wives they love and as he might become jealous if he followed his inclination, it is wiser for him to marry Célimène. But his love for Julie persists, he is unable to arrive at a decision, and he thinks of Mme Argante, whom he offers to marry. The Chevalier, however, makes such violent love to her that Dorante withdraws in his favor. Then Mme Argante becomes angry and the girls laugh at Dorante. As he is especially irritated by Julie, he makes love to Célimène, who refers him to her mother. Julie offers to help him win her sister, but she admits that it may cost her dear. The Chevalier reports that he will marry Mme Argante, who will allow Dorante to marry Célimène, but not Julie. Dreading to lose Julie, Dorante begs for her mother's approval, but she yields only when the Chevalier threatens to give her up if she refuses. A notary is summoned. Célimène, wounded in her pride, proposes to marry the Chevalier. Nérine obtains the consent of Mme Argante, who has been irritated by the Chevalier's demand for money. But now that he may marry Julie, Dorante hesitates, for the army will often take him away from home. He thinks of becoming a magistrate and puts on a robe and a *rabat* that Frontin is taking to Lysimon. Julie has them taken off. Her apparent lack of seriousness makes Dorante decide to return unmarried to the army. At this point, Pyramon, to show the superiority of his educational system, bids Dorante give up Julie. Dorante agrees and Lysimon admits that his own methods are inferior to Pyramon's. But the thought of losing Julie makes Dorante eager to marry her, even if an elopement is necessary. He writes a letter to her, then tears it up. He is invited to sign the contract to marry Julie after Frontin has explained that Pyramon's opposition was not genuine. Just before he leaves to sign, he ends the play with the line, "J'aurais mieux fait, je croi, d'épouser Célimène."



He fears that absence from home may make him lose his wife's love. Even on his way to sign the contract, he wonders if he would not have done better to marry Julie's sister. Like Molière's protagonists, he keeps his ruling characteristic to the end. This fact may make one skeptical about the success of his marriage, though Destouches has made him promise that, once wed, he will persist in his resolution to be faithful.

The two girls are well differentiated. Julie is a vivacious brunette with sparkling eyes. She dances and sings, refuses to be deeply moved at the thought of losing Dorante, claims to be frank and sincere, laughs at her lover when the occasion offers, attracts him in spite of himself. Célimène, a blonde, is called prudish and is slow to admit her feeling for Dorante. She has the makings of a lachrymose romantic heroine, but her *amour propre* prevents her from pining over Dorante and leads her to accept the Chevalier in order to show that she has not suffered from losing a man to her sister. Their mother is a purely comic character, a woman well past fifty, but willing to purchase a young husband. Her renouncing the Chevalier would have been more convincing if it had been shown on the stage.

The two fathers are introduced chiefly at the beginning of the play and at the end of it. They are contrasted in their attitudes towards their sons and in their manners. Like the brothers in Terence's *Adelphoe*, one is as conciliatory as the other is uncompromising. The play also resembles Terence's in the fact that the events hardly support the suggested moral, for Pyramon's system is said to have developed Dorante's lack of decision, while Lysimon's domineering method does not keep his son from making a satisfactory marriage. The Chevalier, who resembles the Chevalier of Regnard's *Distract*, describes himself as follows (II, 10) :

J'aime le vin, le jeu, les femmes, les spectacles,  
 Les spectacles, s'entend, pour y faire du bruit  
 J'aime à dormir le jour, puis à courir la nuit,  
 A jurer, à médire, à ferrailler, à battre  
 Mon père, sur cela, me fait le diable à quatre

We see him chiefly as a pretended lover of Mme Argante, some thirty years his senior. He will probably be unfaithful to Célimène, as he would have been to her mother, but Destouches avoids the question of their future in his desire to see all of his young people happily married.

A good deal of the comic element is provided by the servants, who not only work in the interests of the young lovers, but comment upon their actions and upon society in general. They oppose their common sense to Dorante's fancies, Célimène's prudery, and the Chevalier's willingness to sell himself to Mme Argante. In I, 2, Frontin gives a lively description of

his master's indecision. Nérine in a similar passage (II, 4) lists the victims of love according to their professions and gives a strikingly modern account of the difference between her contemporaries and beauties of earlier days (V, 1):

Les belles autrefois étoient prudes et fières,  
Et ne pouvoient charmer nos sévères aïeux,  
Qu'en affectant un air modeste et vertueux  
Mais dans ce siècle-ci, c'est une autre méthode,  
Tout ce qui paroît libre est le plus à la mode  
Une belle à présent, par des regards flatteurs,  
Tendres, insinuans, va relancer les cœurs,  
Et moins elle paroît digne d'être estimée,  
Et plus elle jouit du plaisir d'être aimée  
On veut se voir heureux dès qu'on est engagé,  
Et l'on traite à présent l'amour en abrégé

The play is less insistently moral than the author's earlier comedies. This is illustrated by the ending, where, instead of offering the audience moral advice, a line gives the final touch to the character of the protagonist. Moreover, from the earlier comedies the lesson may readily be drawn that jealousy and ingratitude are highly undesirable, but from *l'Irrésolu* one learns merely that indecision, though it may lead to temporary embarrassment, neither causes the loss of friends, nor prevents a prospect of happiness. Indeed, the play has no thesis in the sense that Destouches's earlier productions have. It is a comedy of character in the Molière tradition, but lacking variety in its situations and in its repartee.<sup>20</sup> If it had been successful, it might have saved its author from overloading later comedies with moral instruction. Unfortunately it had, during his lifetime, an inglorious career. It was acted only six times, from Jan. 5 to 19, 1713. After Destouches had improved the text, it was revived and was played twenty-four times in 1762-81, but the author could not have foreseen that it would ultimately be played more often than his *Ingrat*. It is consequently not surprising that he should return to the kind of play in which the title-rôle is that of a person with whom we do not sympathize, as it had been in his first two comedies

But a further change of method must have seemed indicated. As I have said, Destouches had at first thought of introducing more incidents into *l'Irrésolu*, but had given up the idea. The failure of the play may well have made him believe that less concentration was desirable. The result was that

<sup>20</sup> In IV, 8, the Chevalier claims to have just invented the word *indissolublement*. Littré gives no example earlier than Saint Simon, but cites Cotgrave, who defines the word without illustrating it. It was probably little used when Destouches wrote the play, although *indissolubilité* had been employed by Bossuet, cf. Brunot, *Histoire de la langue française*, IV<sup>1</sup>, 485.

his next production, *Le MÉDISANT*,<sup>21</sup> is not a comedy of character, but a comedy of intrigue in which one of several important persons is a slanderer. It is the first play in which he used disguise. Much of the plot has nothing to do with slander, and, if the slanderer had been omitted, there would still have been enough material to make a play.<sup>22</sup>

The character that has the longest rôle is not Damon, the slanderer, but Lisette, a bright and energetic *servante*, loyal to her young mistress and indignant with Damon over his remarks about her character. She defends the Baron against his wife, intrigues to keep Marianne from marrying Damon, and, when Léandre appears, does her best to help him. She almost falls in love with him when she thinks he is a valet, as does Isabelle's *servante*, Javotte. The comic scenes in which these women meet are by no means essential to the plot.

Damon's rôle, the second in length, is found in the second half of Acts II, III, IV, the first half and the final scene of Act V. He is a nobleman, mingles in good society, and does not lack courage, but his character has been warped by his fondness for gossip. He suggests that Lisette has helped to establish an incestuous relationship between Valère and his aunt. He describes the Baron as a fool and a weakling, the Baronne as a dominating woman who pretends to favor his marriage to her daughter, but who really desires to have an intrigue with him herself. He calls Valère "aussi sot que son père," suggests that Richesource may be the child of adultery, attacks Isabelle and various persons who do not appear on the stage. Just as Dorante had defended in *l'Irrésolu* his lack of decision, Damon holds that he exerts a fine influence upon society (III, 7).

<sup>21</sup> Paris, Le Breton, 1715, 12°. Dedicated to the duchesse du Maine. Republished by Prault in 1734, by Duchesne in 1772, by Ad. Rion in 1878, and in the author's collected works. Cf. Lüdemann, *op cit*, pp. 20-1, and Hankiss, *op cit*, pp. 87-96.

<sup>22</sup> The Baron and his wife have a daughter, Marianne, who, while visiting Brittany, has fallen in love with Léandre, son of the Marquis. The Baronne wishes her daughter to marry Damon, a friend of her son, Valère, but the Baron objects because of Damon's love of slander and thinks of sending her to a convent or of marrying her to Richesource, a wealthy plebeian. After seeking Marianne for six months, Léandre disguises himself as a valet, is employed by Richesource, and takes the name of La Fontaine. He gets the help of Marianne's *servante*, Lisette, and hopes to have that of Valère through the influence of Isabelle, Richesource's sister. When Damon finds Léandre and Lisette together, he insinuates that the girl is not virtuous and that Valère has been made his aunt's heir thanks to a secret agreement of a compromising nature. When he learns that Richesource is his rival and that Isabelle has asked the Baron to give Marianne to her brother, he insults and threatens Richesource in the presence of Marianne. Unable to defend himself, Richesource disguises Léandre as his cousin, de Bienville, and proposes that he marry Marianne. His hope is that a quarrel between Damon and Léandre will result, and that he will be avenged. Léandre gladly agrees to Richesource's plan, meets Marianne, makes himself known to her, and secures her promise to marry him. Meanwhile Valère discovers that Isabelle is the girl with whom he had fallen in love at a masked ball. He is anxious to marry her, but his mother objects till she is won over by a letter from her sister denouncing Damon for his scandalous remarks about herself, the Baronne, and the Baron Valère.

Dire sur un chacun librement ce qu'on pense,  
 Chercher le ridicule, & lire au fond des cœurs;  
 Peindre ce qu'on y voit des plus vives couleurs;  
 Discerner les motifs, & peser le mérite;  
 Faire la guerre aux sots, démasquer l'hypocrite:  
 Voilà ce que je fais, je ne m'en défens point

He goes on to tell how he has corrected the affectations of an abbé, a magistrate, an author, of young nobles who no longer dare "au théâtre étaler leurs habits," how he has shamed an ingrate, a critic, and a prude. But at the end of the play no one believes that he had other than selfish motives in attacking his victims. He slanders both to gain some definite advantage and for the joy of making trouble. Some of his criticisms are purely malicious, without foundation in fact. Sometimes he tells the truth, but in so doing is rude or ungrateful. The character is interesting, but not sufficiently important in the plot. By his talk he offends most of the other characters and helps destroy his chance of marrying the heroine, but his hopes were doomed in any case as soon as Léandre appeared. He never becomes formidable, like Tartuffe, or even like the title-rôle of *l'Ingrat*.

Léandre is a charming young lover, active in his own behalf, disguising himself as a valet, then as a Norman nobleman, defending Richesource against Damon, winning the heroine and even, for a while, the two *souvantes*. Richesource, son of a financier who purchased nobility, is a young man quite lacking in gentility, making a show of his wealth, cowardly and inconsequential, but a kindly and generous person, who has enough intelligence to recognize Léandre's merits and to propose to disguise him as a nobleman. Valère is romantic enough to fall in love with a girl as soon as she takes off her mask at a dance, but practical enough to pay much attention to his wealthy aunt. He is convinced by Damon's slanderous talk that his friendship for him cannot continue.

The Baron and the Baronne are imitations, as has been suggested, of Chrysale and Philaminte in *les Femmes savantes*, though the Baronne shows no interest in learning. Like Chrysale, the Baron talks boldly when his wife is absent, yields to her when she is present, and has the support of a female attendant. The others are less distinctly characterized. Marianne, an *ingénue*, Isabelle, who appears to be more energetic, but is given little to say, the second *souvante*, Javotte, and Léandre's father, brought in at the end of the play to simplify arrangements for his son's marriage.

Ludemann believed that Destouches was influenced in the choice of his theme by La Bruyère and in constructing his plot by Corneille's *Mélite*,

breaks with him for the same reason. Damon is driven from the house. Léandre, whose good birth is established by his father's arrival, will become the husband of Marianne, Valère, the husband of Isabelle.

but he could certainly have thought of the theme without reading La Bruyère. It had already been suggested, as Hankiss notes, by much of Célimène's conversation in *le Misanthrope*. Nor did Destouches need to read *Mélite*, which has only the vaguest resemblance with the *Médisant*. His play is much closer to Montfleury's *Dupe de soi-mesme*, in which a crude person, rejected as a suitor, disguises a nobleman, whom he mistakes for a man of humble birth, as a gentleman and helps him marry the girl by whom he had himself been rejected. It is also more probable that Destouches borrowed the incident of the masked ball from Dufresny's recent *Jaloux honteux* than, as Hankiss proposes, from Thomas Corneille, the rivalry of mother and daughter, from his own *Irrésolu*, than, as Hankiss suggests, from Quinault's *Mère coquette*. All that one can conclude, except in the case of a few details,<sup>28</sup> is that, whatever his sources may have been, Destouches's themes in this play were not novel.

The plot shows greater variety in situations and characters than Destouches had employed in any one of his earlier comedies, but he continued his method of embodying a social defect in a leading character and of emphasizing the moral of his play. In his last scene he put an edifying couplet into Valère's mouth:

Heureux si ce revers, qui doit vous affliger,  
D'un penchant odieux pouvoit vous corriger

When Destouches published his play, he made his moral still more obvious by addressing to the duchesse du Maine a dedication in which, after mentioning his three earlier comedies, he boasted that:

Aux MEDISANS je déclare la guerre,  
Peste maudite, & fléau de la terre,  
Esprits pernicioeux, dont le malin effort  
Voulant faire hair tous les objets qu'on aime,  
Détruit le plus parfait accord,  
Et noircit l'innocence même

This excellent intention was rewarded by the interest the public took in the comedy during the first year when it was played. Presented on Feb. 20, it was acted sixteen times in 1715. However, it was not produced in 1716 and had only moderate success thereafter, remaining in the repertory until 1780 with a total of sixty-five performances, more than *l'Ingrat* and *l'Irrésolu* enjoyed, but less than *le Curieux Impertinent* and far less than five of the comedies Destouches composed after he returned from England.

<sup>28</sup> III, 2, "La griffe est là-dessous" (*Ecole des femmes*, v 654), III, 7, "Qu'à ton âge il siéd mal de faire le Caton" (*Misanthrope*, v 82), IV, 11, "Il est des nœuds secrets" (*Rodogune*, v 359). Richesource's boasting of his fencing (IV, 2) may come from *le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, III, 3.

A criticism of the comedy appeared before the end of the year. A certain M. de Florizelle attacked it in a critique addressed to the Academy of Lyons for not bringing in Damon before the seventh scene of Act II, for admitting too many "personnages épisodiques," for giving so much importance to other persons than the "médisant," for having the hero disguise himself as a valet, and for allowing Léandre's father to change his mind so quickly. The frères Parfaict,<sup>24</sup> who quote the critic, assert that it would be easy to reply to these objections, but say that the best answer is the public's unanimous approval of the play. They might have pointed out that Léandre's father had had six months in which to repent of his opposition to his son's marriage, that the disguise of a hero as a valet had not diminished the long success of Scarron's *Jodelet maître*, and that, if the work is looked upon as a comedy of intrigue rather than of character, the other objections do not apply. This does not mean, however, that a more effective play might not have been written, a comedy of character in which a slanderer would have held more often the center of the stage.

The only other play by Destouches that was acted before the death of Louis XIV was *LA FAUSSE VEUVE OU LE JALOUX SANS JALOUSIE*, which was acted five times, between July 20 and 28, 1715. As it was never printed, the frères Parfaict<sup>25</sup> relied for their information about it on the *Registres* of the Comédie Française and a short article in the *Mercure galant*. According to this journal, Legrand, who had not succeeded in the rôle of the emperor in Campistron's *Andronic*, had the task of announcing the playlet that was to follow. He expressed the hope that it would make the audience laugh as much as the tragedy. The spectators, though they appreciated the jest, were not amused by Destouches's comedy. The frères Parfaict say that it was in one act, apparently because it was used as a "petite pièce." They were probably correct, though occasionally a play given in this manner was in three short acts. In either case Destouches was departing from the form he had previously selected for his comedies. He was not discouraged by the failure of his play, for it was followed by another one-act comedy in prose, *le Triple Mariage*, but this production was not acted until July 7, 1716.

With the four plays that have survived from those he composed in the reign of Louis XIV, Destouches established his reputation as a promising dramatist, one whose works would be accepted for many years by the actors of the Comédie Française. They are all five-act comedies in verse, concerned with contemporary life as lived at Paris by aristocrats and prosperous bourgeois. Little attention is paid to manners. The leading characters are young lovers and their servants. Fathers are introduced into all the plays;

<sup>24</sup> XV, 196-9

<sup>25</sup> XV, 206-8 They state that it was in prose

mothers, both comic, into two of them. Besides these mothers and the servants, there are but two essentially comic types, the henpecked husband and the wealthy upstart, both found in *le Médisant*. There is in all the plays a well-defined plot, but only *le Médisant* can be considered a comedy of intrigue rather than one of character.

Destouches seems to have imitated essentially Molière, but he lacked his comic force, his vitality, his ability to characterize, and his variety in comic effects. He took one of his plots from Cervantes and was influenced by Terence, by Regnard, and by other French dramatists. He was especially interested in depicting persons dominated by a certain undesirable quality—lack of confidence in the woman one loves, ingratitude, indecision, fondness for slander—and who endanger their happiness in consequence. In the first two comedies the person who embodies the defect brings about his defeat in love, in the third he comes near doing so, in the fourth he contributes to the causes of his overthrow. The plays show considerable skill in structure, though the unity of action is not altogether achieved in *l'Ingrat* and *le Médisant*. They are distinctly moralistic, with the exception of *l'Irrésolu*. In this play and *le Médisant* an interesting effort is made to defend shortcomings on philosophic grounds, but elsewhere the author's thought is superficial.

The comedies give the impression that their author was a talented writer who worked laboriously and conscientiously in a very limited field and produced acceptable works that showed no touch of genius and were at times marred by his insistence upon trite moral observations. As he wrote the duchesse du Maine in the dedication of *le Médisant*

Vous ne savez que trop qu'il n'est plus de *Corneilles*,  
Que *Racine* est dans le tombeau,  
Que *Molière* en mourant a brisé son pinceau, . .  
Pour moi, qui marche sur leurs traces,  
Mais qui les suis de loin, & toujours chancelant,  
Je crains à chaque pas de fatales disgraces

Very true, but hardly a satisfactory attitude to be adopted by a creative dramatist.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### LOST COMEDIES AND COMEDIES NOT ACTED AT THE COMÉDIE FRANÇAISE

A few comedies written by the authors studied in the preceding chapters are lost, a few of them were acted elsewhere in the Parisian region than at the Comédie Française or the Foire. Reference to almost all such plays has already been made. There remain ten lost plays acted at the Comédie Française, the authors of which are unknown with the exception of Abeille, La Grange-Chancel, the younger Guérin, and Charles Roy. We also have the text of a play by J.-B. Rousseau, acted at court, but not in the city, and that of Marivaux's first play, included here on account of his subsequent career at Paris. Under the patronage of the duchesse du Maine, Malezieu composed a series of *divertissements*, among which are four productions that may be considered comedies, three of them translated from Plautus or Terence. Finally, Bordelon wrote a comedy and two dramatic fragments that were published at Paris, though in all probability they were never acted.

It is these productions that constitute the subject of this chapter. Too little is known about most of them for me to make any general statements in regard to them, except to say that their dramatic material probably differed little from that of other plays of their day. The majority of them were one-act comedies in which prose seems to have predominated. There is evidence that some of the authors imitated Plautus, Molière, and Dancourt, that they satirized rustic types, parodied opera, and gave important rôles to servants. The most novel traits that I have been able to discover in them are the use of ignorance in regard to music to characterize country nobles and Bordelon's idea of having the ghosts of the great departed represent living actors instead of having the living represent the dead.

The earliest of these plays is *LE PETIT-MAÎTRE DE CAMPAGNE, OU LE VICOMTE DE GÉNICOURT*,<sup>1</sup> mentioned in *Soleinne*, no. 1589, as rare. Since I have been unable to examine a copy of it, I am obliged to rely upon the analysis of the frères Parfaict.<sup>2</sup> They state that it is in one act and in prose, has to do with a financial transaction, and satirizes a young country nobleman and his mother.<sup>3</sup> The plot is simple and unconvincing. It is said of

<sup>1</sup> Paris, Jean Moreau, 1701, 12° 47 pp.

<sup>2</sup> XIV, 220-5. As they did not know that the play had been printed, they gave the analysis an unusual amount of space.

<sup>3</sup> Ricotte, a "négoçant" at Venice, had died and left for his son 100,000 écus, entrusted to his associate, M. de Saint Armel. The latter returned to France, changed his name, and began to spend the money left in his charge. Fearing that young Ricotte may appear, he decides to provide for his daughter, Mariane, by marrying



Génicourt that he "tient du sot, du fat, & de l'extravagant." His snobbishness and his mother's are shown in the following dialogue:

Le Vicomte Vous êtes de race marchande, je vous en félicite Je ne veux point me mesurer à votre aune, Mons Ricotte

La Vicomtesse Il y a quelque différence, mon voisin, entre un Monseu Ricotte, & un Gentilhomme qui a droit de Colombier

Le Vicomte *s'en allant* Adieu, Beau pere, vous allez avoir un gendre bien étoffé Adieu Madame Ricotte, vous passerez ensemble des jours filés d'or & de soye. . .

La Vicomtesse *s'en allant* Mons Ricotte épousera Mariane La plaisante chose! Mons Ricotte! quel nom! Que ce nom est peuple! il n'y a pas une lettre dans ce nom-là, qui ne soit de la dernière roture

But the bourgeois seem to have acquired culture that is lacking in the country gentry. Mme de Génicourt finds that at the Opera "tous ces instrumens ensemble font un bruit horrible" and that, when the actors sing, "vous entendez au bas du Théâtre un mauvais bourdonnement de violons, qui blesse les oreilles délicates." Inability to appreciate music had characterized Jourdain, was soon to be attributed to Turcaret, and was to be applied to other bourgeois by Flaubert and Becque. It is used here for the first time in a French play to characterize a rustic noblewoman. She recalls in her lack of culture the comtesse d'Escarbagnas.

The comedy was first acted on July 26, 1701. It had so little success that it was performed only three times, ending its career on the 30th, according to the frères Parfaict, who report that the author's share from the three performances was only 32 francs, 19 sous.

The second of these plays in date was *LA CEINTURE MAGIQUE*,<sup>4</sup> written by J.-B. Rousseau for a performance at court. The author claimed that it was a "travail de douze heures." Mr. Grubbs notes resemblances to the rôle of Toinette in *le Malade imaginaire*. The heaping up of words ending in *-cie* and *-ique*<sup>5</sup> seems to have been inspired by the same play, while the

her to the ridiculous vicomte de Génicourt, but she prefers an impecunious young captain, Eraste. Her *souvante*, Marton, persuades Bastien, the nobleman's valet, to give his master an anonymous letter stating that Ricotte is about to come for his money. By suddenly pretending to be in love with Génicourt, Mariane helps to convince him that her dowry is in danger. He consults his mother, who finds his suspicions justified, and they break off the engagement. Mariane is now free to marry Eraste, who turns out to be no other than young Ricotte himself. He is willing to forgive Saint Arnel for his trickery in return for his daughter's hand.

<sup>4</sup>Published in the *Pièces nouvelles du sieur Rousseau*, Sur l'imprimé à Londres, 1724; in his *Œuvres diverses*, Amsterdam, Changuion, 1726, 12°, Brussels, 1732; 1744, separately at Brussels in 1755, in the author's *Œuvres*, London, Tonson et Watts, 1734, Toulouse, Broulliet, 1785, Paris, Lefèvre, 1820, cf. Goizet, the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale, which also lists two editions without place or date, and H. A. Grubbs, *Jean-Baptiste Rousseau*, Princeton, 1941. The play was translated into English as *The Magic Girdle* and played at London in 1770. For earlier comedies by the author cf. my *op cit*, Part IV, pp. 848-55.

<sup>5</sup>Francisque claims (ac 8) to have invented "Chiromancie, Pédomancie, Hydromancie, Pyromancie, Alectromancie, Sternutomancie, Négromancie, Pharmacie & Apolexie." He predicts that the Capitain will become "hydropique, pulmonique, épileptique, paralytique, & par dessus cela phrénétique, vous mourrez hérétique."

consultation over astronomy recalls *le Médecin malgré lui*,<sup>6</sup> and there are reminiscences<sup>7</sup> of Rabelais in the names, Nembroth, Faribroth, and Alcofribas. Such references, however, indicate no source for the plot, which resembles those of Dancourt's *Tuteur* and *Cohn Maillard*. In all three cases a guardian wishes to marry his ward, has a trick played on him, and is forced to give her up in favor of the young man she loves. Rousseau's originality lies in his doubling the number of guardians, girls, and lovers and in his placing his chief emphasis upon the rôle of an ex-valet, who, after being imprisoned for robbery, devotes his talents to helping young lovers.<sup>8</sup>

Francisque derives his comic effects from the euphemistic account he gives of his thefts and of his imprisonment, from the numerous trades he claims as his own, from the list of astrologers to whom he declares that he is related, from the inventions he has fathered, from the distinctions he has acquired, and from the various lands in which he has traveled. We see him tricking the guardians after the manner of the Théâtre Italien, secretly attaching to the men's cloaks letters addressed to the girls, and binding them together with a hoop of steel. The other characters are the kindly and efficient aunt, the girls, the lovers, and the guardians. Both members of each of these three couples always appear on the stage together and leave it together. Lucette is franker than Baliverne, who has something of the *précieuse* in her speech. The Captain is a *miles gloriosus* who indulges in Gascon oaths. Trufaldin is equally stupid and cowardly, but he does not brag. Even less differentiation is shown between Horace and Octave, who differ chiefly in the facts that Octave had formerly employed Francisque, and that Horace has seen him steal a horse at Marseilles.

With the exception of Francisque, the characters resemble marionettes. The dialogue, except for a few allusions and plays on words, is a mechanical affair. The play exists chiefly for three scenes: the eighth, in which Francisque outwits the guardians,<sup>9</sup> the tenth, in which he binds them together; and the fourteenth, which provides no dialogue, but a *déroulement*.

<sup>6</sup> Sc 8, cf *le Médecin malgré lui*, III, 6.

<sup>7</sup> Scs 2 and 8.

<sup>8</sup> Mme Merluce has two nieces, Lucette and Baliverne, whose father's will has provided that, a year after his death, their guardians, Captain Escarbonbardon and Trufaldin, are to find husbands for them. Octave and Horace ask to marry them and secure the aunt's approval, but their request is refused by the guardians, who wish to marry the girls themselves. The aunt insists that the girls' consent must be obtained. Octave's former valet, Francisque, is engaged to help the young men, is presented to the guardians as an astrologer, wins their confidence, and offers them a magic belt that will show how the girls feel about them. This belt, made of steel, is fastened around both of the guardians, so that they are unable to prevent their wards from joining their lovers. Mme Merluce has the young people sign the marriage contracts. Octave and Horace force the guardians to give their consent.

<sup>9</sup> There are allusions in this scene to the *Almanach de Milan*, a publication to which Louis XIV objected, to the "Juif errant", to the "Roi des Terres Australes"; and to the "comette qui parut en 1681" and which had inspired Fontenelle's first play.

Sept masques conduits par Francisque, & portant la marque des sept Planettes,<sup>10</sup> viennent former une Entrée mêlée des Récits, par où finit la Comédie

The play was given in the apartment of Mme de Maintenon<sup>11</sup> at Versailles on Feb. 3, 1702, immediately following a performance of Duché's *Absalon*. We learn from the correspondence of the duchesse d'Orléans that her son, the future Regent, took the part of Francisque, that the young lovers were acted by the duc de Berry and the comte de Noailles; the girls, by the duchesse de Bourgogne and the comtesse d'Estrées<sup>12</sup> Louis XIV was present. "Madame's" verdict was that the "petite pièce ne vaut pas grand chose, mais on ne laisse pas d'y rire." It was not sufficiently successful to attract the actors of the Comédie Française, though it was eventually translated into English and German and was acted at London and Brussels.<sup>13</sup>

Five plays that have disappeared were acted at the Comédie Française in 1703-5. The oldest of them, *LE BAILLI MARQUIS*,<sup>14</sup> was played on Feb. 24, 1703, and three times subsequently. The frères Parfaict state that it was in one act and in prose, and that the ballet of the *divertissement* was composed by La Montagne. They also mention<sup>15</sup> *FRONTIN GOUVERNEUR DU CHÂTEAU DE VERTIGILILINGUEN*, a comedy in one act given on Oct. 11, 1703, and three times thereafter. Less unsuccessful was *LE MÉDECIN DE VILLAGE*,<sup>16</sup> acted five times, Sept. 24 to Oct. 2, 1704, once afterwards in that year, and once in 1705. It was a prose comedy in one act. A manuscript of this play, dated 1704, is mentioned in the *Bib. du th. fr.* and in *Soleinne*, no. 1666.

N.-A.-M. Guérin, son of the actor, Guérin d'Estriché, and of la Molière, had brought out *Myrtil et Mélicerte* in 1699. On May 29, 1705, his *PSYCHÉ DE VILLAGE* was acted at the Comédie Française. It was a prose comedy in four acts with a prologue and with *intermèdes*, the music of which was composed by Gilliers. According to the *Gazette de Rotterdam* of June 25, it was "une parodie très divertissante sur l'ancien *Psyché*, opera." According to the frères Parfaict, Guérin was inspired by a village girl whom he married. The play was never published. The manuscript appears to have been lost even in the time of the frères Parfaict.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Including the sun and moon, according to the astronomy that preceded Copernicus

<sup>11</sup> This is stated by Dangeau, *op. cit.*, VIII, 309. The  *Mercure* discusses the performance of *Absalon* and *la Ceinture* in connection with that of Longepierre's *Electre*, also acted at Versailles, but at the home of the princesse de Conti there. The frères Parfaict, XV, 110, drew from the article in the  *Mercure* the erroneous conclusion that all three plays were given at the Hôtel de Conti. In this error they were followed by Grubbs, *op. cit.*, p. 53. Dangeau's statement is supported by the fact that the duchesse d'Orléans was invited to the entertainment by Mme de Maintenon.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Méleze, *Th. et P.*, pp. 396-7.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Grubbs, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Joannidès, *la Comédie Française de 1680 à 1920*, p. 105, and the frères Parfaict, XIV, 300. The latter learned from the *Registres* that La Montagne received 50 francs for the ballets of this play and the *Princesse d'Elide*.

<sup>15</sup> XIV, 311.

<sup>16</sup> Frères Parfaict, XIV, 338.

<sup>17</sup> XIV, 386-8, cf. also Méleze, *Rép.*, p. 215.

Even less is known about *LA PROVENÇALE*, played with *l'Ecole des femmes* on Oct. 17, 1705, and three times subsequently. It was apparently in one act. The frères Parfaict<sup>18</sup> state that the author received 13 francs, 10 sous from the first performance, 4 francs, 10 sous from the second, nothing from the third and fourth

Throughout the period 1701-15 the duchesse du Maine was entertaining at Sceaux, Châtenay, and Clagny. Malezieu, who was to write, as we have seen, the preface for Genest's *Joseph*, composed for her several productions, most of which were operatic rather than dramatic. *Phlémon et Baucis*, an opera presented in 1703, *le Prince de Cathay*, produced at Châtenay on Aug. 31, 1704, a *divertissement* with music, dancing, and elaborate costuming,<sup>19</sup> *la Tarentole*, acted there on Aug. 10, 1705, and at Clagny in February, 1706, *les Importuns de Châtenay*, performed at Clagny on Jan. 22, 1707, with "beaucoup de musique et d'entrées de ballet, qui furent dansées par les meilleurs danseurs de l'Opéra" in the presence of the Dauphin and the duc de Berry,<sup>20</sup> and translations of Plautus's *Mostellaria* and *Miles gloriosus* and of Terence's *Heautontimoroumenos*.<sup>21</sup>

The only one of these that can be considered a French play is *la Tarentole*. Its three acts were introduced by a musical prologue, the words of which were written by Genest. It seems to have been influenced chiefly by *le Médecin malgré lui*, but it also showed borrowings from Dancourt's *Galant Jardinier* and Regnard's *Folies amoureuses*. It is a farce, arranged in such a way as to lead up to a dance, in which an Alard of the Foire took part.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> XIV, 368

<sup>19</sup> Malezieu, magnificently costumed as a prince de Samarcand, obtains permission to become a knight of the Mouche à Miel in honor of the duchesse du Maine, whose emblem was the bee, cf. Adolphe Jullien, *op cit*, and Desnoiresterres, *les Cours galantes*, Paris, 1864, IV, 42-6

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *les Divertissemens de Sceaux*, Trévoux, Ganeau, 1712, pp. 175-97, 232, 472-3, Dangeau, *op cit*, XI, 289, 306, *Soleinne*, no 1639, Adolphe Jullien, *op cit*, *Mélèse, Rép.*, pp. 216-7. The duchesse du Maine is said to have played in *les Importuns*, which included in its cast various types of bores, possibly in imitation of *les Fâcheux*, among them a musician, a physician, *précieuses*, a mason, a *marchande*

<sup>21</sup> The translation of the *Mostellaria*, entitled *l'Hôte de Lemnos*, was given at Châtenay on Aug. 8, 1707, and on March 7, 1708. On the latter occasion the duchess played in it and the Dauphin, the duc de Berry, and the duchesse de Bourgogne were among the spectators. Dancers from the Opera were employed in the *intermèdes*; cf. Dangeau, *op cit*, XI, 431, XII, 93. The translation of the *Miles gloriosus*, called *Pyrgopolinicc, capitaine d'Ephèse*, was written in 1708, but was not played till Aug. 6, 1710, cf. *Soleinne*, no 1640, and Jullien, *op cit*, p. 21. An adaptation that Malezieu made of *Heautontimoroumenos* and did not publish is mentioned by Goujet, *Bibliothèque française*, IV, 445. His adaptation of Euripides's *Iphigeneia among the Taurians* has been discussed above, p. 7

<sup>22</sup> *Soleinne*, no 1638, lists a manuscript of the play that once belonged to the duc du Maine. Jullien, *op cit*, pp. 16-9, gives an analysis of the farce and comment by Hamilton about the entertainment. A miser has promised his daughter, Isabelle, to rich old Fatolet, but the girl prefers the impecunious marquis de Pamecourt. She is aided by her maid, Finemouche, the marquis's valet, Crotèques, and even by her father's valet, Bruscamille. Advised by Crotèques, Isabelle pretends to be mute,

The duchesse du Maine played Finemouche, Malezieu, Crotesquas. The tone becomes more boisterous than that of most French comedies of the time, indicating, perhaps, the prevailing taste at the court of Sceaux. According to Hamilton, "le spectacle dura trois heures et deme sans ennuyer un moment." He describes the place in the garden where the performance was given.<sup>23</sup>

C'étoit un grand espace couvert, et environné de toiles, où l'on avoit élevé un théâtre, dont les décorations étoient entrelacées de feuillages verts, fraîchement coupés, et illuminées d'une prodigieuse quantité de bougies

We have seen that Dancourt wrote for the duchesse du Maine a playlet called *le Divertissement de Sceaux*, that Genest composed for her a tragedy, *Joseph*, published with a preface by Malezieu, and that Destouches contributed one or two *divertissements*. Another production, written by the chevalier de Saint-Gilles and entitled *Gilotin précepteur des Muses*, was acted on Feb. 24, 1706, with *l'Ecole des maris*. Jullien says that it was no more than a rimed prologue.

To this period belongs Marivaux's first play, *LE PÈRE PRUDENT ET ÉQUITABLE, OU CRISPIN L'HEUREUX FOURBE*,<sup>24</sup> never acted, but published at Paris. It marks the début of a most distinguished dramatist. Pierre Carlet de Marivaux, born at Paris in 1688, is said to have scarcely left school when he declared that it is not hard to write a play and, to prove it, composed *le Père prudent* in a few days. His model may have been *Pourceaugnac*, from which he borrowed the reflection that polygamy "est ici cas pendable" (sc. 22) and the general idea of the plot, chiefly devoted to the efforts of attendants and a "fourbe" to disgust certain undesirable suitors with a marriage in order that the heroine may marry the young man she loves. Inexperienced in developing dramatic situations, Marivaux introduced three unwanted suitors instead of one. He retained the "fourbe" as well as a valet.<sup>25</sup> The lovers' quarrel of sc. 3 was probably borrowed from *Tartuffe*.

like the heroine of *le Médecin malgré lui*. A stammering physician is called in. He and Fatolet stammer at each other as do two men in *le Galant Jardinier*. Isabelle rushes in, upsets the physician, and causes him to break his teeth. Her performance resembles that of the heroine in *les Folies amoureuses*. In Act II Bruscamille brings in Crotesquas, disguised as a Turkish physician, who declares that Isabelle has been stung by a "tarentole." He prescribes music and dancing. In Act III the remedy is applied. The Italian words of the songs were supplied by the duc de Nevers. Finally, the supposed Turk declares that the only remedy is to find the girl a husband, but warns that he will die within six weeks. The marquis offers to run the risk and is accepted. Alard ends the play with a soothing dance.

<sup>23</sup> *Œuvres complètes d'Hamilton*, Paris, 1805, III, 250.

<sup>24</sup> According to the *Bib. du th. fr.*, III, 151, it was published in 1712 at Limoges with a dedication to M. Rogier and at Paris by the veuve Barbin. The Bibliothèque Nationale lists an edition of Limoges, Paris, P. Huet, 1712, 12°. It was republished in the author's *Œuvres de théâtre*, Paris, N. B. Duchesne, 1758, and in his *Œuvres*, Paris, veuve Duchesne, 1781, and Haut-Cœur et Gayet jeune, 1825.

<sup>25</sup> Démocrite, who lives in a village, objects to the marriage of his daughter,

The play consists chiefly of a series of deceptions, practised by Crispin, Frontin, and Toinette, the discovery of the trickery, and the solution of the problem by the simple device of having a law-suit won at the end of the play. As this dénouement is brought about by forces external to the plot, and as the lovers' quarrel and the rôle of Frontin are superfluous, the unity of action is violated. Nor is there much cleverness in the dialogue or in the situations. Marivaux strove to increase his comic element by having Jacques speak in patois and by minor references to manners. Crispin-Ariste objects to Philine's *fontange* and recommends *sabots* (sc. 13). In the same scene he describes the duties of a countryman's wife:

Tous mes biens sont ruraux, il faut beaucoup de soin  
Tantôt, c'est au grenier, pour descendre du foin;  
Veiller sur les valets, leur préparer la soupe,  
Filer tantôt du lin, & tantôt de l'étoupe,  
A faute de valets, souvent laver les plats,  
Eplucher la salade, & refaire les draps,  
Se lever avant jour, en jupe, ou camisolle,  
Pour éveiller ses gens, crier comme une folle

Such passages as this do not prevent the play from being a dull and mechanical production, totally lacking the charm that Marivaux was subsequently able to introduce into his comedies. There is no evidence that *le Père prudent* was ever acted.

In 1706-13 the Comédie Française gave no plays that have remained inaccessible, but towards the end of these years the actors produced two comedies that were never published and are now lost. Both of them are said

Philine, to the young man she loves, Cléandre, because his affairs are involved in a law-suit that may not be settled for years. He tells her that she must marry one of three suitors who are to present themselves shortly, an old and wealthy countryman, a chevalier, and a financier. Cléandre, irritated by Philine's apparent acceptance of the situation, scolds her and threatens to leave, but her *suivante*, Toinette, and his valet, Crispin, induce them to make peace and think of measures to be taken. Crispin prepares to save the situation and engages Frontin a "fourbe," to help him. When Ariste, the countryman, appears with a peasant, Jacques, Crispin pretends that he is Démocrite and that Toinette is his daughter. Her bold manner soon drives Ariste away. Crispin then pretends to be Ariste and to wish his wife to be a drudge, angering Démocrite to the point of dismissing him. Crispin next meets the financier and pretends that an unmentionable malady has infected Démocrite, his daughter, and their relatives. The financier tips him and wishes to leave after saying a word to Démocrite, but he learns from him that he has been deceived and goes to look for Crispin. Frontin now presents himself as the financier, but Démocrite, who has become wary, sends him away. Disguised as a woman Crispin claims to have been secretly married to the chevalier and wins Démocrite's sympathy, but the chevalier appears and forces Crispin to confess that he has slandered him and to admit that he has told him Philine is deranged. The financier now returns and recognizes Crispin, who admits that he had sent the imposter, Frontin. Ariste and the peasant, Jacques, join the group, as Jacques has seen Crispin in the village and learned who he is. Crispin defends himself by saying that he has been helping Cléandre, whom Philine loves. Cléandre now reports that his law-suit has been won and asks for Philine. As the rivals are willing to withdraw, Démocrite accepts him as a son-in-law. Cléandre in turn agrees to the marriage of Crispin and Toinette.

to have been in three acts and in verse. The first, called *LA FILLE VALET*,<sup>26</sup> was written by Abeille, who was a provincial actor and a nephew of the abbé Abeille. It was acted on Sept. 5, 1712, was played seven times, and earned for its author 147 francs, 17 sous. The title suggests that it was a comedy of intrigue that employed disguise. The other comedy probably had a satirical element, if one may judge by the sub-title. It was called *LA FILLE SUPPOSÉE OU L'HÉROÏNE DE ROMAN*.<sup>27</sup> The author was La Grange-Chancel, whose earlier plays had all been tragedies. His comedy was first acted on May 11, 1713. As it had only four performances, it must have been a failure. The author avoided comedy thereafter.

The following year two other lost comedies appeared, the one-act *RIVAUX D'ŒUX-MÊMES*,<sup>28</sup> played on Aug. 27, 1714, and only once thereafter, and *LES CAPTIFS*,<sup>29</sup> by Charles Roy, first acted on Sept. 28. The latter play seems to have been an adaptation of Plautus's *Captivi*, in three acts and in "vers libres," with a prologue and with three *divertissements*, the music of which was composed by an actor, J.-B. Maurice Quinault. The idea of introducing by a prologue<sup>30</sup> an adaptation of Plautus probably came from Regnard, who had written one to accompany his *Ménechmes*. In Roy's prologue La Thorillière, playing Mercury, brings petitions from various persons in the Elysian Fields. One of them, sent by Prometheus, objects to Pluto's having substituted, as his tormentor, a young lawyer for a vulture. While Mercury is discussing the petitions, Plautus comes to complain that he is robbed by modern authors. Mercury asks him if he objects to Molière's having taken from him the subject of *Amphitryon* and informs him that his *Captivi* has inspired another modern author. When Plautus fears for the success of this play, Mercury assures him that its second father is still more troubled about it.

The critic of the *Mercur* who supplies this information adds that he has heard that Roy's Aristophon is quite inferior to Plautus's Chtophon, that his intrigue is derived, badly derived from a novel called *l'Heureux Esclave*,<sup>31</sup> but that the *divertissements* are greatly admired. He also states that at the

<sup>26</sup> Cf. the frères Parfaict, XV, 124. In their *Dictionnaire des théâtres*, I, 3, it is stated that Abeille also wrote *Crispin jaloux*, a play never printed and of unknown date.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. the frères Parfaict, XV, 151.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172. *Soleinne*, no. 1666, lists a manuscript of the play and indicates that it was in verse.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. the frères Parfaict, XV, 176-9, Joannidès, *la Comédie-Française de 1680 à 1900*, p. 15, *Mélèse, Rép.*, p. 222.

<sup>30</sup> Without giving any evidence, Joannidès asserts that the prologue was by Lafont, but this may well be doubted as the frères Parfaict, who consulted Roy about the comedy, indicate no other author for the prologue than Roy himself.

<sup>31</sup> An anonymous novel of this title had appeared at Paris in 1674, cf. R. C. Williams, *Bibliography of the Seventeenth-Century Novel in France*, New York, 1931, p. 299. The full title is *l'Heureux Esclave ou relation des aventures d'Olivier de Nazume*. This novel is attributed to Brémond by Polinger, *Pierre Charles Roy*, New York, 1930, p. 105.

first performance the hall was packed. The success of the play is also shown by its having seventeen performances in 1714 and seven others in the four years that followed.

There is a curious account of the play's production in 1718. On March 21 of that year the actors were accused of violating the monopoly of singing and dancing granted to the Académie Royale de Musique. They had recently given Dancourt's *Métempsychose* and Roy's *Captifs*, plays

dans lesquelles ils ont donné un prologue et des intermèdes remplis de chants et de danses avec des accompagnements de leur orchestre où ils avoient un batteur de mesure et y ont meslé des entrées de ballet complètes avec des danseurs externes qu'ils avoient pris.<sup>22</sup>

Roy informed the frères Parfaict that he had withdrawn the play and reworked it. He told them that he would publish it in a new edition of his works unless he found an opportunity to have it performed again. Though this opportunity does not appear to have arisen, it was never published, in his lifetime or subsequently.<sup>23</sup>

I conclude this chapter by taking up the productions of an author who, so far as anyone knows, never had a play performed, but some of whose work in dialogued form shows considerable acquaintance with Molière, the Théâtre Italien, Raymond Poisson, and actors of his own day. The abbé Laurent Bordelon (1653-70)<sup>24</sup> had published, late in the seventeenth century, an *Arlequin Comédien aux Champs Elysées* and a *Molière Comédien aux Champs Elysées*. Early in the eighteenth he brought out a similar work, *Poisson Comédien aux Champs Elysées*, and a novel called *Mital* that contains two rudimentary playlets. In the latter work, published at Paris and at Amsterdam in 1708, he indicates his purpose in composing the two little comedies

Il ne s'agit pas ici d'unité d'action, de temps, de lieu La première & la principale règle, c'est de voir & d'entendre quelque chose qui divertisse Ce qui s'appelle Comédie, n'est qu'un composé de différentes Scènes, qui ont cependant toutes rapport à un même but.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Campardon, *Comédiens du roi*, p. 285. The actors were excused from paying the fines requested, but they were warned to respect the monopoly in the future. The Académie Royale found, however, fresh cause for complaint in 1725 and in 1740.

<sup>23</sup> Polinger asserts, *op cit*, p. 357, that it was published in 1773. He does not say where or by whom. He quite obviously saw no copy of it, for, when he discusses the play, pp. 105-6, he merely follows the frères Parfaict. As no copy is listed in *Soleinne* or in the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale, and as Goizet declares that the play was never published, I conclude that Polinger was mistaken. Even his reading of the frères Parfaict was careless. He writes that "Parfaict [*sic*, which of the brothers?], seems to have been an eye witness of the performance," although what they say about the size of the audience and the nature of the prologue is taken from a writer in the *Mercur*.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. my *op cit*, Part IV, pp. 702-5 and 894-7, Jacqueline de la Harpe, *L'Abbé Laurent Bordelon*, Berkeley, 1942, and my review of this dissertation, *MLN*, LVIII (1943), 209-10.

<sup>25</sup> *Mital*, pp. 253-4. The playlets are found on pp. 256-82 and pp. 321-47.



LE CORAM ET LE CLAM consists of twelve scenes demonstrating the difference between what one says to a person and what one says about him. They show in turn women who compliment another woman when she is present and call her *sotte* and *idiote* when she is away; a young man who flatters a girl and subsequently admits to a friend that his object was seduction; men who flatter a "grand seigneur" and an author; and a judge who puts off a litigant, but who is eager to hear a woman talk about her law-suit if her niece, whom he loves, accompanies her. Parts of two of the scenes are given in résumé. There is no connection among the various groups except the general idea. Even this is not well indicated in the case of those who visit the judge, as we do not see them when they are out of his presence.

The other playlet is called LES GRANDS ET LES PETITS. It has nine scenes, most of them unconnected with one another. They illustrate by conversations the facts that the great are boastful, overbearing except when seeking favors, ungrateful, lacking in culture, unappreciative of the learned, and at times heavily in debt, the "petits," too humble in their attitude towards the great and wretched when dependent upon them. No political measures are suggested to remedy the situation, though the work gives evidence of dissatisfaction with the class system of the time. Neither this play nor its companion piece showed sufficient wit, psychological discernment, or dramatic action to carry its excellent social message to those for whom it was intended.

Of much greater interest is POISSON COMÉDIEN AUX CHAMPS ELISÉES,<sup>86</sup> "nouvelle Historique, Allegorique, & Comique Où l'on voit les plus celebres Orateurs représenter une Comédie intitulée La Comédie sans Femme" As in the case of *Arlequin Comedien* and *Molière Comédien*, the scene is laid in the Elysian fields and there is preliminary talk among the shades Mlle L'Héritier's *Apothéose de Mlle de Scudéry* is praised by Pellisson, d'Urfé, La Calprenède, Mlle Desjardins, and others D'Urfé is teased because in the *Astrée* shepherdesses appear naked before Celadon. Baro suggests that they talk about plays Quevedo, Cervantes, and La Serre make a few comments. Lucian brings in Raymond Poisson, who is asked to prepare a play and to take the chief rôle in it Then follows *Misogine ou la Comédie sans femme*, with a prologue, three acts, and an epilogue.

The actors are all shades of the dead. The most interesting thing about them is that some of them take the part of living actors, reversing the function of actors who represent the illustrious dead. Other shades play imaginary parts Only Cicero and Raymond Poisson belong in both cate-

<sup>86</sup> Paris, Le Clerc, 1710, 12°, and Paris, Pierre Prault, 1712 The approbation, signed by Fontenelle, is dated Jan 2, 1710, the *privilege*, Jan 26 The work was registered on Feb 10 There is a copy of this second edition in the Library of Congress.

gories, Poisson representing his son Paul in the prologue and epilogue, but, in the three acts, a valet called Frontin, though one would have expected Crispin, the name that he ordinarily employed while he was alive.<sup>87</sup>

The prologue and epilogue constitute an outer play,<sup>88</sup> chiefly interesting for the evidence it gives about the troupe and the audiences of the Comédie Française. Paul Poisson is said to have a reputation for creating joy. He objects to the exclusion of women from the inner play and threatens in the epilogue to strike La Flèche. Etienne Baron has only a minor rôle as Poisson's comrade. Six actresses are impersonated. The dialogue shows that la Dancourt and la Desbrosses were well known for playing intriguers and peasant women, la Dangeville, for portraying feeling, la Fonpré, for her "douceur naturelle." Charlotte Desmares and Françoise Quinault de Nesle demand pensions as they are not allowed to act in the inner play. All these actresses are disgruntled by this exclusion, but, if they are the six women who dance in the *divertissement*, they were allowed their revenge.

Scenes 12 and 13 are chiefly devoted to the question of *sifflets*. Cliton brings in many, for such is said to be the custom of spectators. He has gilded whistles for the lowest boxes, whistles "pour attraper des caillies" for the second tier, whistles of a "chaudronier" for the third. He also has some for people in the amphitheater, though, as these do not pay for their seats, they do not care to call attention to themselves. He has flutes for the men who sit on the stage and flirt with the actresses between the acts, but

<sup>87</sup> The actors of the prologue are listed as follows, their names coming after those of the characters they represent: Maxant, Ciceron, Lehanne, Cornélie, Angélique, Agalle, Dorimant, Demosthenes, la Flèche, Lucien, Lysette, Phintys, Cliton, Petrone, Poisson, Poisson défunt, Baron, Pericles, Mlle Fonpré, Hortensia; Mlle Dancour, Eudoxie, Mlle Dancour la fille, Anne Comnene, Mlle Dangeville, Mlle Desjardins, Mlle de Nesle, Mme de la Suze, Mlle Desmarres, Mlle de Scudery, Mlle Desbrosses, Aspasia.

Those of the three acts are: Doraste, Phocion, Harpage, Longin, Frontin, Poisson; Fabiaste, Balzac, Un financier, La Seire, Un homme de robe, Ciceron, Un officier, Calprenède, Un poète, Bocalini, Vieillard, Miguel de Cervantes, Gusman, Quevedo; M. Des Menuets, Hortensius, Valet de Des Menuets, Naruetze [Nervèze?], M. de Fredonville, Isocrate, Gascon, Protagoras, Suisse, Lipse, Paysan, Bodin, Capitaine de Vaisseau, Demades.

<sup>88</sup> Angélique has two lovers, Maxant, an author, and Dorimant. Her mother, Léhanne, approves of Maxant as a "bel esprit," but the daughter prefers Dorimant and asks him to see to it that a play written by Maxant will be a failure. His valet proposes that whistles be employed for the purpose, but Angélique's *souvante*, Lysette, holds that it will be better for the lovers if the play succeeds. Actresses of the Comédie Française object to the fact that there are no women in the play, which is then performed. Lysette begs Angélique and Dorimant to praise the play and argues that Maxant has shown in it that women must be treated as slaves. Dorimant agrees to praise it if Angélique and her mother are not included in the general condemnation of women. Léhanne bids her daughter indicate her preference between her two suitors. Angélique prefers Dorimant. Lysette points out that this choice gives the unexpected dénouement that a good comedy should have. Léhanne adds to the surprise by agreeing to marry Maxant if he will write a "Comédie sans Homme." Lysette then expresses her preference for Dorimant's valet, Cliton, over La Flèche, Maxant's valet. The work concludes with a *divertissement* written by Maxant for his wedding and showing the triumph of women over a *docteur*, an old man, and a warrior.

none for the parterre, as it is always well supplied. He refers to the fact that one no longer cries "Haut les bras" to those who sit in the boxes.

The inner play is entitled *Misogine ou la Comédie sans femme*.<sup>39</sup> At the beginning of each of its three acts, the actresses come to sit on the stage with the spectators. The plot, which is merely an excuse for a series of consultations, recalls *Arlequin Misanthrope*. These consultations contain a good deal of social criticism, but most of it shows little originality. There is a reference (I, 13) to women who smoke. The Swiss speaks Germanic French (II, 6-8). The dancing master parodies what is finest and what is most absurd in the performance of the Opera's leading dancers. Most of the comic element is provided by two valets, especially by Frontin, who constantly endeavors, at times with success, to extract money from his master's visitors.

Bordelon was a man of considerable learning and knowledge of the stage, but he had little creative ability, and his attempts at wit are laborious. His play about Poisson resembles the productions he had devoted to the memory of Molière and Domenico Biancolelli. The chief value of all three lies in the evidence they furnish of the popularity of comedy and the influence it could exert upon a writer whose talents were better adapted to other forms of literature.

<sup>39</sup> Doraste, believing his beloved Celonte has eloped with Alcidor, has retired with his valet, Frontin, to a solitude near a seaport. Various persons come to consult Doraste, chiefly about their domestic difficulties. He receives an old man in danger of becoming a cuckold, an officer, a financier, a dancing master, a poet, a Swiss, a dramatist, a peasant, a magistrate, a Gascon, and finally a sea captain. The last of these tells of his love for a girl who will not respond to his advances. It turns out that the girl is Celonte and that she is still faithful to Doraste. The latter's father comes with her to ask advice, Doraste is recognized, and his marriage to Celonte is arranged. A minor *divertissement* is made by the leaps and capers of two cabin boys.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE THEATERS OF THE FOIRE

The Fairs of Saint-Germain and Saint-Laurent, established at Paris in the Middle Ages, flourished there in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup> Saint-Germain usually opened on Feb. 3 and ran till Palm Sunday, while Saint-Laurent began in July or August and continued well into September, sometimes into October. The visitors were offered for entertainment rope-dancing, leaping, the view of wild or trained animals, and marionette shows. Occasionally they might see human actors, as was the case when *les Forces de l'amour et de la magie* was played at the Foire Saint-Germain in 1678 by the troupe of Alard and Moritz von der Beek.<sup>2</sup> In this production plot and dialogue are employed to introduce spectacular gymnastics, magical tricks, and dancing.<sup>3</sup> Earlier types of entertainment offered at the Foire persist in the use of trained animals, of "sauteurs," and of Polichinelles, familiar figures in marionette performances. Imitation of the Théâtre Italien is suggested by the presence of an Arlequin and the emphasis placed on *lazzi*. The popularity of the play may be judged by the fact that it seems to have introduced Merlin as the name of a valet.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> One was located near Saint-Germain des Prés, the other between the Faubourg Saint Denis and the Faubourg Saint Martin.

<sup>2</sup> For a study of Foire theaters cf especially the frères Parfaict, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des spectacles de la foire*, Paris, Briasson, 1743, and *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris*, Paris, Lambert, 1756 (as François Parfaict died in 1753, this work is often attributed to Claude alone, though both appear to have labored over it), Campardon, *les Spectacles de la foire*, Paris, 1877, Lesage et d'Orneval, *le Théâtre de la foire*, Paris, Gandouin, 1737, Soleinne, Jal, Bonnasquier, *les Spectacles forains et la Comédie Française*, Paris, 1875, Barberet, *Lesage et le Théâtre de la foire*, Nancy, 1887, Maurice Albert, *les Théâtres de la foire (1660-1789)*, Paris, 1900, N.-M. Bernardin, *la Comédie italienne en France*, Paris, 1902, and my *op cit*, Part IV, pp 933-6.

<sup>3</sup> An analysis of the work, preserved by Sauval, was reproduced by the frères Parfaict, *Mémoires*, I, lvi lxxix, and by Maurice Drack, *le Théâtre de la foire*, Paris, 1889, pp 12-22. The scene represents a large forest with "quantité de Sauteurs, sur des piédestaux." After an overture has been played, Merlin, "Valet de Zoroastre," complains that his master uses magic and loves a shepherdess, Gresinde. The girl calls on Love for protection while demons beat Merlin. The valet takes refuge on a pedestal while the Sauteurs make dangerous leaps. In the second *intermède* Zoroastre composes a charm, shepherds and a "Sauteur en Arlequin" dance, monkeys and winged snakes appear unexpectedly, Gresinde promises the magician to yield after two hours, and there is a dance of "Sauteurs en Polichinelles." In the final *intermède* Gresinde appeals to Juno, who removes her to a place of safety, substituting for her a demon who "fait un saut périlleux du haut du centre." Zoroastre is obliged to yield to the gods and Merlin "danse une Sarabande a neuf postures."

<sup>4</sup> One can understand why the magician, Merlin, should lend his name to the valet of another reputed magician, Zoroaster. Borrowed by Boursault for the valet of his popular *Comédie sans titre* in 1683, the name was soon adopted for valets in plays by Saint-Yon, Desmarest, Dancourt, and many other dramatists of the late seventeenth century and of the eighteenth.

The leaders of the troupe that gave this production soon became well known. Charles and Pierre Alard, sons of a "baigneur-étuviste," performed for years at Paris. They are the only entertainers of the Foire that Dangeau mentions by name as giving performances at court.<sup>5</sup> Charles died from a fall in 1711, while Pierre continued for a number of years in another troupe. Their German associate, von der Beek, had married Jeanne Godefroy and become the father of Catherine, who in 1696 married the actor, Etienne Baron. The father had died before this marriage took place. The fact that Catherine had a dowry of 15,000 francs<sup>6</sup> shows that he must have amassed a considerable fortune. His widow, who married a young nobleman<sup>7</sup> in 1698, continued, as the *veuve Maurice*, her husband's trade until the end of 1709.

Another early organizer of dramatic entertainments at the Foire was Alexandre Bertrand, a "maitre doreur" and maker of marionettes. He made them so well that he was tempted to set them in motion, opened a marionette show in the rue des Quatre Vents, and, after succeeding there, acquired a "loge" at the Foire Saint-Germain in 1690, adding human actors and actresses to his dolls. Upon the complaint of the Comédie Française, his establishment was quickly destroyed by the police, but he continued to entertain with dancers, leapers, and marionettes, and even rented the Hôtel de Bourgogne in 1697 after the Italian troupe had been forced to leave it. Though an order from the king deprived him of that theater at the end of his first week, he was not discouraged and was soon one of the leading producers at the Foire.

At his establishment were performed the first two plays by Fuzelier, *Thésée* and the *Ravissement d'Hélène*. The first of these was entitled *Thésée ou la Défaite des Amazones*. It was in three acts, with three *intermèdes* called *les Amours de Tremblotin et de Marinette*. Magnin argued that the three acts were played by marionettes, the three *intermèdes* by living actors.<sup>8</sup> He believed that Fuzelier's second play, *Le Ravissement d'Hélène, le siège et l'embarquement de Troie* was given in a similar manner. To prove that the marionettes were the chief entertainers, he quotes from a poster the statement that the play was to be acted "par les marionnettes du sieur

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.*, IX, 10, 13, 321.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Campardon, *op. cit.*, I, 83, and Jal.

<sup>7</sup> The frères Parfaict (*Mémoires*, I, 102-5) tell a romantic story to explain this strange marriage of a nobleman and the widow of a *forain*. It seems that the young man slapped his father's *gouvernante*, who died of the blow. Mme von der Beek assisted him when pursued by the police and, through her influence, enabled him to escape punishment. He showed his gratitude by marrying her. The date of this marriage, which escaped the frères Parfaict and Campardon, was indicated by Jal.

<sup>8</sup> *Histoire des marionnettes en Europe*, Paris, Michel Lévy frères, 1862, p. 150. His probably correct conclusion is based on the facts that Bertrand was especially known for his marionettes, that he had previously sought to combine them with living actors, and that an actor, Tamponnet, is said to have created the rôle of Tremblotin.

Alexandre Bertrand, dans le préau de la foire Saint-Germain." A libretto of this work has been preserved.<sup>9</sup> It is an extremely crude production, published in anticipation of the performance. A realistic prologue in three scenes, spoken by persons who do not reappear, is followed by three acts, the first two of which include certain scenes that are given entirely in pantomime, while the third consists chiefly of ballet dancing.<sup>10</sup> The view of Troy, the fighting, the episode of the wooden horse, and the arrival of the goddesses in a chariot that must be aerial furnish much that is spectacular. The comic element is supplied chiefly by Francœur and Simon. The fact that a very large cast is required supports the statement that marionettes were employed. Characters appear and disappear without preparation and often without leaving information regarding their fate. No attempt is made to represent ancient manners. "On ouvre les Tranchées, à la mode Française" (I, 6) "On bat la Chamade dans la Ville, on fait voir un Drapeau" (I, 8) The time is at least ten years. If the space represented is small, it is probably owing to the nature of the subject rather than to respect for the unities, as the place changes within the first act, many of the scenes are not linked, the unity of action is far from being preserved, there is a marked mingling of tones, and no respect is shown for the *bien-séances*. Though most of the play is in prose, the third act is almost entirely in verse. Except for Helen's cynical acceptance, first of Paris, then of Menelaus, there is nothing noteworthy in the presentation of character. The play was obviously designed to be presented to an audience that would be indifferent to the art

\* Paris, Antoine Chrétien, 1705, 12°, *priv*, signed by d'Argenson, Jan. 30. 32 pp. The title page indicates that the play will be given "aux Jeux des Victoires du Sieur Alexandre Bertrand, dans le Préau de la Foire Saint Germain," but it does not mention marionettes. There are copies of this libretto at the Bibliothèque Nationale and at the Johns Hopkins University. The *Dictionnaire des théâtres*, IV, 378-81, analyzes the work and, like Magnin, indicates that it had been announced as to be acted "par les Marionnettes du Sieur Alexandre Bertrand."

<sup>10</sup> In the prologue Francœur, a soldier who had accompanied Paris to Greece, converses with Mine de la Ramée before her inn. She keeps him waiting while she dons her skirt. He tells of Paris's arrival with Helen, predicts that the Greeks will follow, and asks for a "gorge de cochon." In Act I we are within Troy when Paris and Helen assure each other of their love and the governor of the city welcomes them, then in the Greek camp, where Menelaus talks of his dishonor and his desire to punish Paris and recover Helen, whom he considers blameless, and receives offers of help from Achilles and Ulysses. The city is attacked. Troilus, Patroclus, Hector, Achilles, and Paris are killed one after another. Ulysses enters the city and brings out the Palladium. Priam offers Menelaus 20,000 gold pieces and provisions for his trip home, if he will leave within an hour. Advised by Ulysses, Menelaus pretends to accept the offer and the gold is brought. In Act II Simon, coached by Ulysses, pretends to desert and with many jests persuades the Trojans to receive the wooden horse with dancing and song. Simon unlocks the horse and signals to the Greek army. A massacre is ordered, but Pyrrhus spares Andromache, Aeneas escapes with his father and son, and Menelaus welcomes Helen, who pretends to be happy over their reunion. In Act III Juno and Minerva appear in a chariot and gloat over Paris, Helen and Menelaus rejoice, six ballet entries are danced, and the play ends with a "Chaconne."

of the Comédie Française and would be delighted by crude jests, fighting, dancing, and a changing spectacle.

Other producers were Christophe Selles (1701-9), Rochefort and Tiquet (1705-8), Louis Nivellon (1707-11), la Letellier and her son, who gave marionette shows in 1707, 1715, and probably in other years, Saint-Edme and his wife (1711-18), the chevalier Pellegrin (1711-18), brother of the dramatist, Jean-Baptiste Constantini (1712-16), who, as Octave, had represented young lovers in the Théâtre Italien,<sup>11</sup> and the veuve Baron, or dame de Beaune (1712-18). The mother of this last producer, la veuve Maurice, had sold her place of business to Bellegarde and Desguerrois at the end of 1709, possibly in the hope of establishing her daughter at the Foire. Catherine Baron had suffered from her husband's debauchery, his wasting her dowry, and even from insults and blows she received from him.<sup>12</sup> Bellegarde and Desguerrois ran their shows in 1710 under her name and that of Raully, then sold out to Saint-Edme, but Etienne Baron's death in December, 1711, enabled his widow to open her own establishment without fear of being sued for her husband's debts. She employed two experienced actors, Baxter, an Englishman who played Arlequin, and Sorin, who took the part of Scaramouche. For a while she was associated with Saint-Edme. She was the principal producer of Lesage's early contributions to the Foire.<sup>13</sup>

Besides Baxter and Sorin, some of the leading actors were Charles Dolet and Antoine Delaplace,<sup>14</sup> who played, respectively, Arlequin and Scaramouche in various troupes, Belloni, a Greek, who began in the troupe of Selles in 1704 and distinguished himself as Pierrot, Pierre Paghetti, who came to Paris about 1710 and played the Docteur, Jean-Baptiste Raguenet, who was the son of the merchant who supplied the Comédie Française with candles, who played in various troupes, and who won great applause as Don Juan, and Pierre-François Biancolelli, called Dominique, son of the famous Biancolelli of the Théâtre Italien and author of many farces, who, after playing in various troupes of the Foire until 1717, became a member of the new Comédie Italienne.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Cf my *op cit*, Part IV, p. 601, and the *Dictionnaire des théâtres*, IV, 10-14. After the expulsion of the Italian actors, Octave returned to Italy, where, apparently as a spy, he rendered important service in 1701 to the French army. He was rewarded with "une inspection sur toutes les barrières de Paris," a position that enabled him to become a producer at the Foire.

<sup>12</sup> Cf Campardon, *op cit*, I, 83-5, and above, pp. 17-8.

<sup>13</sup> About 1715 she married Pierre Charretier de Beaune, "conseiller au Châtelet de Paris." He took her to Louisiana, where he had been named "procureur général." After his death she was in such reduced circumstances that for a while she was an *ouvreuse* at the Opéra Comique. She died about 1736.

<sup>14</sup> Delaplace was accused by Dancourt of threatening to assassinate him, in August, 1712, he was charged with attacking Dolet, cf Campardon, *op cit*, I, 234-5, 264.

<sup>15</sup> He began to play at the Foire in the latter half of 1708, according to the frères

Dominique was not the only link between the old Théâtre Italien and the actors of the Foire, for his wife and his nephew Jean-Antoine Romagnesi, both of whom acted with him, were, respectively, the daughter of Pascariel and the grandson of Cinthio. Moreover, Octave, as we have seen, directed shows at the Foire for several years, while Antoine Francassini, son of Polichinelle, played in the troupes of Selles and the veuve Maurice. Many of their comrades, former artisans or professional dancers or leapers, were looked down upon as persons "sans aveu" by the actors of the Comédie Française, despite the marriage of Catherine von der Beek to Etienne Baron, nephew of Dancourt's wife, and the facts that La Thorillière was young Dominique's brother-in-law, la Duclos the aunt of la Châteauneuf, who acted with Dolet and Delaplace.

Performances were at first given in what was called a *loge*, defined by the frères Parfaict<sup>16</sup> as

un lieu fermé avec des planches, ou l'on dressoit des échaffaudages pour les Spectateurs, une corde tendue pour les Danseurs, & une estrade élevée d'un pied & demi, tout au plus, pour les Sauteurs, mais sans ornemens & sans décorations. A la fin de chaque Foire, on enlevoit tout ce qui étoit dans la Loge, pour s'en servir à la prochaine Foire

After the departure of the Italians and Bertrand's failure to keep the Hôtel de Bourgogne, the *forains*, as the nearest heirs to the Théâtre Italien, began to construct theaters resembling, except for their temporary character, the one in which the rival actors of the Comédie Française were playing. According to police reports published by Campardon,<sup>17</sup> they had stages about four and a half feet high, supporting decorations and several rows of benches for spectators, a parterre, an amphitheater, and two tiers of boxes. Prices charged in 1681 had been much lower than those of the Comédie Française,<sup>18</sup> but, as the fortunes of the *forains* and the accommodations they offered improved, their charges rose till we find them asking in February, 1712, three and a half francs for a seat on the stage or in a lower box,<sup>19</sup> about the price exacted by their distinguished rivals.

A certain Trével engaged himself to play in Bertrand's troupe at the Foire Saint-Germain of 1706 for twenty sous a day. The frères Parfaict<sup>20</sup> conclude that this is what Bertrand paid to each of his actors, but, as they submit no further evidence, we may suppose that more experienced actors

Parfaict, *Mémoires*, I, 81, in 1710 according to the *Dictionnaire des théâtres*, I, 440, and Campardon, *op cit*, I, 264

<sup>16</sup> *Mémoires*, I, 3

<sup>17</sup> *Op cit*, I, 88, 91, 201

<sup>18</sup> Cf my *op cit*, Part IV, p 934

<sup>19</sup> Cf Campardon, *op cit*, I, 262

<sup>20</sup> *Mémoires*, I, 13



received larger salaries. There is no evidence, however, that troupes of the Foire formed stock companies, as did the actors of the Comédie Française, nor did they receive a governmental subsidy, but they attracted such large crowds—including even members of the nobility<sup>21</sup>—that they excited the envy of the Comédie and the Opera and encouraged by their success the formation of new troupes at the fairs.

In 1701-8 the *forains* gave crude plays, or detached scenes, many in the manner of the Théâtre Italien or directly derived from it, some borrowed with modifications from the French repertory. Fuzelier's *Thésée* and *Ravissement d'Hélène* have been mentioned. At the Foire Saint-Germain of 1706 the veuve Maurice produced Bellavane's *Sancho Pança*, with Belloni in the title-rôle.<sup>22</sup> At the same fair she gave a performance that began with dancing and a tight-rope exhibition, after which was represented

un lit duquel sortoient deux hommes en chemise, l'un vêtu en scaramouche et l'autre en arlequin, ledit arlequin se jetant dans un grand pot de chambre, ensuite s'entretenant de plusieurs dialogues et propos interrompus, chansons, et ledit jeu finissant par des sauts avec quelques entr'actes de danse et annonce faite en finissant.<sup>23</sup>

In 1707-8 were played such productions of the Théâtre Italien as Fatouville's *Arlequin lingère*, *Arlequin Prothée*, *Arlequin Empereur dans la lune*, and *Fille savante*, *les Chinois* and *la Foire Saint-Germain* by Regnard and Dufresny, and *Pasquin et Marforio* by Dufresny and Louis Biancolelli. The *Folies d'Isabelle*, announced to be acted on Feb. 24, 1707, may also have been an old play. *Arlequin Ecolier ignorant et Scaramouche Pédant scrupuleux*<sup>24</sup> and *Arlequin Gentilhomme par hasard*,<sup>25</sup> played in 1707-8, are in the same tradition. In regard to a *Festin de Pierre*, acted at the theater of the veuve Maurice on Sept. 28, 1707, a police official declared that it "nous a paru être un précis de la même que les comédiens françois ont représentée sur leur théâtre."<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Campardon, *op cit*, II, 346, shows that on Aug. 2, 1712, there attended a performance in Saint Edme's theater "plusieurs seigneurs et dames de la Cour, entre autres Madame la duchesse de la Meilleraye et M. le chevalier de Mesmes."

<sup>22</sup> Frères Parfaict, *Mémoires*, I, 46.

<sup>23</sup> Campardon, *op cit*, II, 116.

<sup>24</sup> According to the *Dictionnaire des théâtres*, V, 92-4, this play was derived from a scenario of the old Théâtre Italien. It appeared at the Foire Saint Germain in 1707 with Dolet as the scholar, Delaplace as Scaramouche. Repeated in all fairs up to 1710, it had subsequently to be given "à la muette," so that Fuzelier adapted it to this requirement and added songs. In its new form it was acted on Sept. 12, 1711, and was published. Scaramouche who has taught Arlequin to avoid women, beats him when he catches him kissing Isabelle's hand, but a little later Arlequin finds Scaramouche making love to Colombine and beats him in turn.

<sup>25</sup> Composed by Dominique and played, when he first acted in Paris, at the Foire Saint Laurent of 1708, cf. frères Parfaict, *Mémoires*, I, 81. In the *Dictionnaire des théâtres* I, 222, it is suggested that the play derived from Quinault's *Coups de l'amour* or its Spanish source.

<sup>26</sup> Campardon, *op cit*, II, 119. *Le Triomphe de l'amour* was announced on Aug. 3,

The actors of the Comédie Française probably interpreted the performance as the policemen did and regarded it as a new infringement upon their monopoly. They had been protesting for some time. Both the Parlement and the police had acted in their behalf, but the *forains*, by appealing their cases and by peculiar methods of presenting their plays, had succeeded in eluding efforts to stop their performances. In February, 1699, d'Argenson had forbidden "tous Particuliers de représenter aucune Comédie ni Farce." The *forains* had appealed. In February, 1706, the police had warned them against giving "Spectacles où il y ait des Dialogues." The *forains* had then persuaded Cardinal d'Estrées, abbé de Saint-Germain des Prés, whose land they were renting, to aid their appeal, but, in spite of his influence, Parlement had, on Feb. 22, 1707, rejected the appeal and insisted that the *forains* should present neither "Colloques ni Dialogues."<sup>27</sup> The actors resorted to monologues and gave plays as described in a police account of a performance of *Scaramouche Pédant scrupuleux* on Aug. 30, 1707.<sup>28</sup>

Que presque à toutes les Scènes, l'Acteur qui avoit parlé se retiroit dans la coulisse, & revenoit dans l'instant sur le Théâtre, ou l'Acteur qui étoit resté parloit à son tour, & formoit ainsi une espèce de Dialogue. Que les mêmes Acteurs se parloient & répondoient dans les coulisses & que d'autres fois l'Acteur répétoit tout haut ce que son Camarade lui avoit dit tout bas.

They supplemented this method of acting by introducing remarks at the expense of their opponents. On March 6, 1708, the troupe of Nivellon gave a performance described by the police as follows:<sup>29</sup>

Après les danses de corde on a levé une toile et ont paru plusieurs acteurs comme un arlequin, un docteur, un scaramouche, une colombine, une fille du docteur, un pierrot, un chanteur et une chanteuse, qui ont formé une espèce de comédie dont le sujet est que le docteur, pour accommoder ses affaires, lève une troupe de comédiens de tous ses domestiques et répète plusieurs scènes tirées de différentes comédies et tragédies et parodies burlesques. A chaque scène un acteur parle seul. Après quoi il se retire et un autre vient ensuite. Quelquefois ils sont deux ensemble sur la scène, l'un parle haut et l'autre répond bas. Quelquefois un acteur répond quelques mots derrière la perspective à celui qui est sur la scène et qui parle haut, en sorte que le tout ensemble fait voir un sujet de comédie suivie. Il nous a paru dans toute

1708, to be performed next day, cf. frères Parfaict, *Mémoires*, I, 81. *Le Vailliant amoureux* was acted on Sept. 5, 1707, by la Letellier and her son after their marionettes had left the stage, cf. Campardon, *op cit*, II, 74. It was in one act and may have been Françoise Pascal's old farce, adapted to the ways of the Foire, cf. my *op cit*, Part III, pp. 670-80. *Le Marchand ridicule* acted, according to its title-page, at the Foire Saint Germain of 1708, includes Polichinelle among its characters, an indication that it was played by marionettes (cf. Campardon, *op cit*, II, 71). The plays by Gillot that I discussed (*op cit*, Part IV, pp. 935-6) include *le Marchand ridicule* and have Polichinelle as their chief character. All four may have been acted in the period 1701-8. For the publication of *le Marchand ridicule*, cf. above, Chap. XIII, p. 230.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. frères Parfaict, *Mémoires*, I, 18, 47-8, 57-8.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 63-4.

<sup>29</sup> Campardon, *op cit*, II, 176-7.

la pièce qu'on se moque des comédiens du Roi, ce qui a fait que nous avons entendu dire à plusieurs personnes qui étoient autour de nous " Les comédiens sont bien bafoués là-dedans " et un acteur apporte plusieurs livres et lit le titre d'iceux qu'il dit être *l'Art de parler seul, inventé par les comédiens françois*. Après quoi ils disent " Quand nous ne saurons plus que faire, nous annoncerons le *Diable* " <sup>30</sup> *bouteux*."

On March 21, 1708, and Jan. 2, 1709, new rulings were promulgated by Parlement in favor of the Comédie Française. Tiquet and Rochefort ceased to give performances. Alard and the veuve Maurice purchased from Guyenet, director of the Opera, the right to use decorations, singers, and dancers. Bertrand and Selles sold their business to Holtz and Godard, members of the duc d'Orléans's Swiss guard, who in turn hired the actors of these producers and proceeded to give forbidden dialogues. But not for long. Fresh complaints from the actors of the Comédie Française were followed by the destruction of Holtz's theater under the supervision of Dancourt, Dufey, and the police <sup>31</sup> The Swiss appealed to the Grand Conseil, which condemned the actors on March 14, 1709, but an appeal to the king reversed the decision in 1710 and forced Holtz and Godard to retire from business as showmen.<sup>32</sup>

Before this final decision was reached, the *forains* attacked their rivals with parody, a device that had been often used by the Théâtre Italien. On Feb 19, 1709 Dolet's troupe announced for next day *les Fourberies de Scaramouche*, probably a satirical imitation of *les Fourberies de Scapin*. At the Foire Saint-Laurent of that year were produced parodies of two tragedies recently acted at the Comédie Française, Crébillon's *Atrée et Thyeste* and Danchet's *Tyndarides* <sup>33</sup> The *forains* imitated their rivals' gestures and uttered " d'un ton tragique des mots sans aucun sens, mais qui se mesuroient comme des Vers Alexandrins " <sup>34</sup> They referred regularly to the actors of the Comédie Française as the "Romains" The rival dramatists replied Lesage in the epilogue of *Turcaret*, Dancourt in the *Comédie des comédiens*, Legrand in *la Foire Saint-Laurent*, but the *forains* answered Dancourt and Legrand and extended their attacks to opera, parodying *Persée*, *Atys*, *Phaëton*, *Télémaque*, *Thétis*, and *l'Europe galante*

They were obliged, however, to respect the ruling of March 17, 1710, at

<sup>30</sup> Dancourt's *Diable bouteille* had appeared the preceding autumn

<sup>31</sup> Moreover, on March 3 1708, Dancourt appealed to the police against Delaplace, who " s'est vanté et a dit à plusieurs personnes qu'il poignarderait et assassinerait ledit sieur plaignant ". cf. Campardon, *op. cit.*, I, 231-5

<sup>32</sup> This affair is related in the *Mémoires* of the frères Parfaict and in the *opéra* *écrits* of Campardon and Bonmasses

<sup>33</sup> The parody of the latter tragedy was called *les Poussins de Lida*. The *Dictionnaire des théâtres* (IV, 223) attributes it to Férouard and adds (VII, 677-9) that it consisted of a series of monologues in verse. At the end Mercure Pierrot descends in a basket to bring Pollux a letter from Jupiter giving him a " brevet d'immortalité " It was with difficulty that the author persuaded so distinguished an actor as Pierrot to make use of the basket

<sup>34</sup> Frères Parfaict, *Mémoires*, I, 100-1

least in a manner. Selles left for the provinces. Alard introduced at the Foire Saint-Germain of 1710 plays given "à la muette," that is, speeches were printed in large characters upon rolled "cartons" that each actor carried in his right pocket. When he wished to use one, he unrolled it, showed it to the audience, and then placed it in his left pocket. This device was not long employed, for it was suggested that, instead of prose, the actors should use "couplets sur des airs connus, qu'on nomme Vaudevilles." When such verses were introduced, the orchestra played the air, persons placed by the actors about the hall joined in, and the spectators were soon all singing.<sup>35</sup> At the Foire Saint-Germain of 1712 another improvement was introduced. The verses were printed on a "Toile gommée," held in place by a stick and brought down from the ceiling of the stage with the aid of two boys "habillés en Amours."<sup>36</sup> This method was employed by la veuve Baron for presenting *Arlequin à la guinguette*<sup>37</sup> on Aug. 7, 1711. According to the police,

ils y jouent des scènes muettes et sur différents sujets, avec des écriteaux qui sont tenus par deux petits garçons suspendus et qui se lèvent avec des cordages et machines, que lesdits écriteaux contiennent plusieurs chansons qui sont chantées par plusieurs du parterre sitôt qu'elles ont été mises sur l'air par un violon, lesquelles chansons écrites sur les deux côtés de chaque écriteau servent le plus souvent de réponse l'une à l'autre et dont aucunes sont l'explication de leurs scènes muettes.<sup>38</sup>

Similar *écriteaux* were used at a performance on March 29, 1715, of *les Aventures comiques d'Arlequin*, described by the police as follows

Laquelle pièce comique est représentée par de grands écriteaux moulés et imprimés sur de grandes toiles, que l'on fait descendre dans le milieu du théâtre et sur lesquels sont des chansons qui forment des dialogues sur le sujet de la pièce qu'ils représentent et qui sont chantées à haute et intelligible voix par trois particuliers qui sont dans l'orchestre.<sup>39</sup>

Riccoboni describes *écriteaux* he had seen in action and their effect upon the audience

tout le monde sçait que les Acteurs se présentent sur la Scène sans parler que dans l'instant il descendoit du Platfond du Théâtre sur leurs têtes des Ecriteaux,

<sup>35</sup> Cf. frères Parfaict, *Memoires*, I, 108-10. The use of familiar songs had already been witnessed in performances of the Théâtre Italien, as Lantillac points out in his *Lesage* (Paris, Hachette, 1891, p. 126).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. frères Parfaict, *op. cit.* I, 137.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *Dictionnaire des théâtres*, I, 175-8. This play in three *entrées* was written by the abbé Pellegrin and interpreted by Baxter and Sorin. Jupiter, upon Mercury's suggestion, obliges Arlequin to correct Parisian disorders and expresses the desire that the Opera be jealous of the Foire. Dressed as a *cabaretier*, Arlequin interviews a lawyer, a coquette, and a *petit maître*. He beats them when the Docteur brings in Colombine, breaks his pots and glasses, and is carried off by a sprite.

<sup>38</sup> Campardon, *op. cit.* I, 91. *Nolcinne*, nos. 3397 and 3401, lists a libretto of this work, published at Paris, Rebuffe, 1711, 12° (31 pp.).

<sup>39</sup> Campardon, *op. cit.* II, 189. According to the *Dictionnaire des théâtres*, I, 333,

qui se succédoient les uns aux autres, & sur lesquels étoient écrits en gros caractères des couplets de Chansons dont l'Orquestre jouoit l'air, & dont le Parterre, en les lisant, en chantoit les paroles les Acteurs dans le tems que l'on chantoit, faisoient les actions convenables au sens des paroles Ce Dialogue muet de la part des Acteurs, n'avoit rien d'estimable, ni qui pût en quelque façon réjouir les Spectateurs, tout l'agrément n'étoit que du côté de l'extraordinaire de faire chanter par les Spectateurs le Dialogue des Acteurs <sup>40</sup>

From the usage here described arose the term "Opéra comique," employed by the frères Parfaict with reference to the troupes of Saint-Edme and the veuve Baron, which agreed on Oct. 30, 1713, to share expenses and profits. They seem to have called themselves by this new title at the fairs of 1714, though it was not till Dec. 26 of that year that official permission was given by the Académie Royale de Musique <sup>41</sup> The emphasis now placed upon music, the substitution of songs for dialogue, and the retention of comic gestures and situations, created in this way a new genre, comic opera

The hostility of the *forums* to the Comédie Française and to the Opera continued after 1710 to find expression in parody. Barberet <sup>42</sup> analyzed two productions that contain satires of this kind, *Apollon à la foire*, produced by Alard on March 1, 1711, and *Les Ecriteux pour les Plaideurs des scènes muettes* of February, 1712 <sup>43</sup> In the first of these, five familiar figures of the Théâtre Italien appear The Docteur advances towards the audience as if to make a complimentary address, opens wide his mouth, moves his lips gestures, and says nothing He then points to an *écriteau* on which is written a parody of a familiar song, "Ne m'entendez-vous pas" This parody indicates that Rome (the Comédie Française) wishes the *forums* not to speak They appeal to Apollo, who declares that he has come to see *Rhadamiste et Zénobie*, the last scene of which is parodied while Apollo looks on from a balcony. Then follows a criticism of *le Curieux Impertinent*, a play which, like *Rhadamiste*, had been recently given at the Comédie Française <sup>44</sup> In the second act the operas, *Persée* and *Manto la fée*, are parodied, in the third a horse is introduced and is reproved when he neighs There are "sautes périlleux" and each actor displays an *écriteau*

*Les Ecriteux pour les Plaideurs* was acted at Selles's theater by Dolet and Delaplace.<sup>45</sup> The performance was enlivened with dances, gymnastic

this play, attributed to Ragueneau, had been acted in February, 1711, by Dolet and Delaplace

<sup>40</sup> *Reflexions historiques et critiques* Paris, Guérin, 1738, p. 116

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Campardon, *op. cit.*, II, 191 and frères Parfaict, *op. cit.*, I, 159, 166

<sup>42</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 234-41

<sup>43</sup> Librettos of these plays are listed in *Solenne*, no. 3397 The first is given as a "divert muet (3 et prol en vaud)" S n. 1711, the second as "(3 pant et vaud)" S n. 1712, in 12 fig.

<sup>44</sup> They were first acted, respectively, on Nov. 17, 1710, and Jan. 23, 1711

<sup>45</sup> Cf. frères Parfaict, *Mémoires*, I, 149-50

exhibitions, and the representation of varied personalities, including those of Basques, gipsies, gods, and Moors. The frères Parfaict tell us that the second of the three acts could be called the "Amours de Colombine et d'Arlequin." The chief purpose of this formless composition was to criticize *l'Amour charlatan*,<sup>46</sup> the inner play of Dancourt's *Comédie des comédiens*, first acted on Aug. 5, 1710. The Docteur's wife comments upon the recent activities of the Comédie Française that had muzzled the *forains*:

Toujours plaider, ô monstres de nature!  
Romains cent fois plus méchants que les loups,  
Race parjure,  
Tirans jaloux,  
Et contre qui, cruels batailles vous'  
C'est votre sang, tout le monde en murmure

She subsequently receives various actors, including Pierrot, who apologizes for having appeared at the Comédie Française, though Dancourt, who wrote the play to which she objected, and Etienne Baron, who took in it the rôle of Pierrot, might have been blamed with greater justice. A brief criticism of *l'Amour charlatan* follows in Act III.

*Jupiter curieux impertinent* is a parody of Destouches's *Curieux Impertinent* only in its title and in a small portion of its subject matter, but it introduces a "Romain" and an attack upon the "troupe Romaine."<sup>47</sup> *Arlequin au bal du Cours*, acted by Dominique and his comrades in September, 1714,<sup>48</sup> was obviously intended as a parody of Dancourt's *Fêtes nocturnes du Cours*. On Sept. 22 a parody of *Amphitryon* was given, in the last scene of which Amphitryon tries to shoot Jupiter, who to calm him, sings a *vaudeville* on "cocuage."<sup>49</sup> Several other plays of the Foire have titles that suggest parodies: *l'ennemi juge et partie* (1711), *Coupe enchantée* (1714), *Psyché* (1714), *Arlequin Héracles* (1715), *Dame in-*

<sup>46</sup> The frères Parfaict refer to this merely as a play in which Etienne Baron took part, Barberet, as if it were a complete play. Neither work identifies it as forming part of Dancourt's *Comédie des comédiens*.

<sup>47</sup> Played by the troupe of Alard and Lalauze on Feb. 4, 1711, and published (Paris, Valloire) in 1713, it is analyzed in the *Dictionnaire des théâtres*, III, 218-51. *Arlequin* implores the aid of Folly against the actors of the Comédie Française. Jupiter visits Hades to get possession of Isabelle and is shown various types, including *agoteurs*, an actress of the Opera, and an actor of the Comédie Française whom the god beats. Act II is directed chiefly against men of law. In Act III Mercury, to satisfy Jupiter, tests Isabelle and, with the help of gold, succeeds in seducing her. While Jupiter reflects upon his fate, a peasant sings a song pointing out that a husband who worries about his son's paternity is an "impertinent curieux." Jupiter makes Isabelle fall back into Hades, and the play ends with a "divertissement de sauteurs."

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Campardon, *op. cit.*, II, 319-52. A poster announced a performance for Sept. 3, though Dancourt's comedy was not acted till Sept. 5. If *Arlequin au bal* was really given on Sept. 3, the author may have derived his knowledge of Dancourt's play from a manuscript. *Arlequin au bal du Cours* was certainly acted on Sept. 11 and 12.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Campardon, *op. cit.*, II, 221, and *Solennne*, no. 3397.

visible (1715), *Médecin malgré lui* (1715, for marionettes).<sup>50</sup> There were also parodies of operas. Three by Lesage will be discussed below. At the end of a performance of *Arlequin à la guinguette*, Arlequin imitated a dance at the Opera, mimicking "la demoiselle Prévôt."<sup>51</sup> The *Fêtes parisiennes* of Feb. 3, 1711, parodied Danchet's *Fêtes vénitiennes*.<sup>52</sup> *La Foire galante ou le Mariage d'Arlequin* (1711) by Dominique is said to be a parody of La Motte's opera, *Europe galante*.<sup>53</sup>

These parodies did not soften the hearts of the "Romains," nor did the use of *écriteaux* keep them from appealing to the police and accusing the *forains* of slipping prose dialogue into their productions, but their protests did not take effect until the end of 1718, when all the shows of the fairs were suppressed. No plays were given in 1719 and few in 1720, but in 1721 the Opéra comique again began to flourish. It lasted until 1762, when it was absorbed by the Comédie Italienne.

One cannot, of course, sympathize with the actors of the Comédie Française in their efforts at suppressing competition, but it can be said in explanation of their conduct that they had been forced to build an expensive theater, that they were heavily taxed, and that the *forains* were seriously reducing the size of their audiences. As they suffered from the monopoly of singers and dancers given to the Opera, it was quite natural that they should try to make the most of the monopoly assigned to them. Nor did the *forains* surpass them in generosity, for they sought more than once to exclude one another from space at the Foire and even used violence to prevent the construction of theaters there.<sup>54</sup>

The plays of the Foire were obviously crude productions, poorly organized, giving evidence of their origin in acrobatic exhibitions and in the Théâtre Italien, sometimes obscene, written to make only a temporary appeal.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Campardon, *op. cit.* I, 91, and II, 354, *Soleinne* nos 3399 and 3405, and the *Dictionnaire des théâtres*, III, 361, Montfleury's *Femme juge et partie*, Champmeslé's *Coupe enchantée*, Corneille's *Psyché* and *Héraclius*, Hauteroche's *Dame invisible*, and Molière's *Médecin malgré lui*.

<sup>51</sup> Campardon, *op. cit.* I, 92-3.

<sup>52</sup> *Dictionnaire des théâtres*, II, 563-5.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *Soleinne*, no 3397.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Saint-Edme's efforts on July 20, 1715, to destroy construction work undertaken by la Letellier and her son (Campardon, II, 75-6), la Saint-Edme's complaint on July 26, 1714, that the hirehugs of Octave and Pellegrin were threatening to murder her and la dame de Beaune (*ibid.*, II, 347-8), and Octave's renting the whole *Préau* of the Foire Saint-Germain in 1713 in an effort to establish a monopoly of his own (frères Parfaict, *Mémoires*, I, 152-3).

<sup>55</sup> In *Soleinne*, nos 3397, 3399, 3405, are listed a number of plays other than those already mentioned: *Arlequin Ence ou la Prise de Troyes*, Saint-Laurent, July 25, 1711 (Paris 1711, 23 pp.), *Arlequin et Scaramouche vendangeurs* followed by *Pierrot Sancho Panza*, Saint-Laurent, September, 1710 (Paris, 1711, 24 pp.), *Orphée ou Arlequin aux enfers* (Paris, Valleyre, 1711, 20 pp.), *Arlequin grand-visir* (1713), *l'Opéra de campagne* (1713, possibly a revival of Dufresny's play), *Colombine bohémienne ou Fourbine* (1713), *le Retour d'Arlequin à la Foire*, followed by *Arle-*

Owing, however, to the use of *écriteaux* and to the contract with the Académie Royale de Musique, authors were able to give greater unity to their compositions and to develop the element of song. Spectators were attracted by the fact that they were allowed to join in the singing and admired the skill with which a story could be presented in spite of the burdens imposed upon the performers. The first of the early writers for the Foire to realize that something might be made of such very raw material was Lesage, whose plays entitle him to the distinction of being called the father of comic opera.

After two attempts which, according to Barberet, were no better than the work of his predecessors, *les Petits-Maitres*<sup>56</sup> and *Arlequin et Mézetin morts par amour*,<sup>57</sup> he brought out at the Foire Saint-Germain of 1713 *Arlequin roi de Serendib*, in three acts, the first of his Foire plays that he considered worthy of publication. It was given with *écriteaux*, as were his *Arlequin Thétis* and *Arlequin invisible*, both one-act plays produced at the Foire Saint-Laurent of 1713. They were followed by comedies that were sung: the *Foivre de Guibray*, which served as a prologue to *Arlequin Mahomet* and *Nostradamus*, the *Ceinture de Vénus*, the *Parodie de l'Opéra de Télémaque*, the *Temple du Destin*, *Colombine-Arlequin ou Arlequin-Colombine*, and *les Eaux de Merlin*<sup>58</sup>

These were the only plays he wrote for the Foire before the death of Louis XIV. Barberet holds<sup>59</sup> that he introduced order, measure, and clarity into the genre. Like his predecessors, he employed old materials, inherited from earlier writers for the fairs, from operas, from the Théâtre Italien, and

*quin baron allemand ou le Triomphe de la folie* (1712), *la Critique* (Sept. 30, 1712), *la Baguette enchantée* (1713), *Arlequin fille malgré lui* (July 22, 1713), *Arlequin favori [jouet] de la fortune* (1714), and *les Aventures de Cythère* (1715). Others are listed in the *Dictionnaire des théâtres*: *Amours de Venus et de Mars*, preceded by *Fêtes Bacchiques* and followed by *Fête de Payrans*, Saint-Laurent, 1711, *Ecole des Jaloux*, Saint-Laurent, 1712 (perhaps an imitation of Diderot's *Idées des officiers*), *Arlequin Rival du Docteur*, Saint-Laurent, 1712 (given with this title, I, 279-80, but as a *Diversissement*, II, 321, attacks the "Romains"), *Arlequin au Sabat*, Saint-Germain, 1713, *Arlequin Prince et Paysan*, Saint-Germain, 1713 (a story of exchanged children that resembles Montfleury's *Crispin Gentilhomme*), *Pèlerines de Cythère*, Saint-Germain, 1714, *Arlequin colonel*, 1714, *Arlequin et Mézetin heureux pour un moment*, 1715, *Descente de Mézetin aux enfers*, 1715 (attributed to Letellier, probably a reworking of Regnard's play).

<sup>56</sup> Unpublished except for a few verses reproduced by Lintilhac in his *Lesage*, p. 128.

<sup>57</sup> Briefly analyzed in the *Dictionnaire des théâtres*, I 231-2. Driven away from Colombine by the Docteur, Arlequin and Mézetin drown themselves and return as ghosts to frighten the Docteur and Colombine, who marry in spite of their efforts.

<sup>58</sup> *Guibray*, *Mahomet*, and *Nostradamus*, forming together a three-act play, were acted at the Foire Saint-Laurent of 1714, the *Ceinture* (2 acts) and *Télémaque* (1 act), at the Foire Saint-Germain of 1715, the others all in one act except that *Merlin* has a prologue, at the Foire Saint-Laurent of 1715. All of these, as well as the three given with *écriteaux* were published by Lesage et d'Orneval in *le Théâtre de la Foire*, Paris, Gandouin, 1737, approbation, signed by Danchet, June 15, 1720, priv., Aug. 24, 1730, registered Aug. 31, 1730, the priv. ceded by Ganeau to Gandouin, July 17, 1737.

<sup>59</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 39.



from French plays, but he gave to his productions greater simplicity and unity than the *forains* had known before, while respecting the peculiar conditions under which they had to be acted.

The published plays consist of a series of songs, comic in tone, connected by pantomime that occasionally admits brief remarks in prose. The plots must have been easy to follow, not only because of their simplicity, but because they included parody and employed airs that were familiar to Lesage's audiences.<sup>60</sup> *Arlequin Thétis* is a parody of Fontenelle's opera, *Thétis et*

<sup>60</sup> *Serendib* Arlequin, shipwrecked on the coast of Serendib (Ceylon?), escapes from robbers and a wolf, only to fall into the hands of the Grand Visir, who makes him king and tells him that he is soon to be sacrificed, after he has been fed and entertained, dishes are snatched from him and he is led to a temple beside the sea, but the Grande Prêtresse, who was supposed to sacrifice him, turns out to be Mezzetin and to have as a *souvante* Pierrot, after they recognize one another, they pillage the temple, try unsuccessfully to carry off the idol, and escape in a ship to France

*Arlequin Thétis* Loved by Neptune and Jupiter, Thetis prefers Pelée, who is loved by her *souvante*, Doris, after the two immortals have visited Thétis, they meet, Jupiter touches Neptune with a thunderbolt, and the play abruptly ends

*Arlequin invisible* Taken by Asmodée to the King of China's palace, Arlequin receives a feather which, if placed in his hat, renders him invisible, he flirts with a female slave, rescues the lover of the king's favorite mistress by lending him his hat, and is himself saved by Asmodée, the king concludes that he has been tricked by the devil and has no reason to suspect his mistress

*La Foire de Guebray* A magistrate at a fair near Falaise interviews a musician, an Italian actor, and Arlequin, all interested in entertaining, the magistrate proposes that Arlequin and the Italian give each a play in order that he may judge between them. Arlequin gives *Arlequin Mahomet*, the Italian, *le Tombeau de Nostradamus*. In Arlequin's play, he is given a magic chest that enables him to fly away from his creditors, pose as Mahomet, and frighten the King of Basra into breaking with the "Kam des Tartares" and giving his daughter to the prince of Persia, while her *souvante* becomes Arlequin's "houri." In *Nostradamus* Octave strikes upon a tomb, embraces a monster, and gets a magician to bring out Nostradamus, who straightens out Octave's marital affairs and gives advice to two young snobs, to a miller's wife, and to a girl who wishes to enter the Opera, whereupon natives of Provence dance for joy over the resurrection of the great prophet

*La Ceinture de Vénus* Fortune gives Arlequin a purse that will be filled as soon as it is emptied, Amour gives Mezzetin a belt that will make women love him, they test these gifts upon a shepherdess, a countess, a poet, a teacher of singing, and their sweethearts, jealous Colombine and Marinette but the donors take back their gifts and peace is made between Arlequin and Colombine, between Mezzetin and Marinette. I am surprised to find an analysis of this play, under its own title, in the *Grand Dictionnaire Larousse*

*Télémaque* Neptune ravages Calypso's island, demanding the blood of Ulysses, Calypso erects an altar and Telemachus offers to die for his father, but Calypso makes love to him and has demons burn his ships, Minerva comes to the rescue and has zephyrs carry Telemachus and his sweetheart, Eucharis, to Ithaca

*Le Temple du Destin* The Docteur, Pierrot, Arlequin, and Searamouche love Colombine and appeal to Destiny, who, after answering a would-be actor, lovers, an elderly dealer in old clothes and his wife predicts that Colombine's husband will wear horns, whereupon Arlequin and Searamouche give up the contest, but Pierrot is encouraged to remain in the Docteur's home, apparently in order that the prediction may be carried out

*Colombine-Arlequin* Colombine makes peace between Léandre and the Docteur's daughter, Isabelle, it is agreed that, in order to prevent the lovers from becoming jealous, Léandre will have a valet selected by Isabelle and she a maid selected by him, Arlequin is disguised as the maid, Colombine as the valet, Arlequin talks of

*Pelée*, Acts I and II, *Télémaque*, of Pellegrin's opera, *Télémaque ou Calypso*. The final scenes of *Serendib* are clearly a parody of a third opera, *Iphigénie en Tauride* by Duché and Danchet. Indeed, most of the play may have been inspired by this production, with the landing after a shipwreck in a barbarous country, the declaration that the foreigner is to be sacrificed, and the rescue by the priestess, who turns out to be a friend of the intended victim. Lesage had only to add episodes and give a comic tone to the whole. For the Oriental element he was probably indebted to the recently published *Arabian Nights*. He indicates that in II, 6 and III, 5 he is parodying also Roy's *Callirhoé*, an opera first given as recently as Dec. 27, 1712. At the end of the *Fou de Gubray* Arlequin and Colombine laugh at each other "à l'imitation du Musicien & du Maître à danser de l'Opera des Fêtes Vemtiennes," produced by Danchet on June 17, 1710. In the first scene of *la Ceinture de Vénus* the orchestra plays the "Cotillon de l'Opéra des Fêtes de Thalie,"<sup>61</sup> which is repeated in the next scene. In such passages Lesage was seeking comic effects by contrasting the solemnity of opera with his own burlesque scenes, by introducing anachronisms, and by bringing to earth the heroes of the past. *Serendib*, for instance, ends as follows:

Mezzetin    Que nous allons boire à Paris  
               De flacons de Champagne!  
               (montrant des puerres)  
               Avec ces brillans que d'Iris  
               Nous mitrons en campagne!  
 Arlequin    Oui, mais avec tous nos bijoux  
               Eupotons l'Idole avec nous,  
               Lon lan la, derirette,  
               Car l'Opera finit ainsi,  
               Lon lan la, deriri

Telemachus's devotion to his father is ridiculed.<sup>62</sup>

Minerve toujours défendra  
       Votre bon Papa,  
       Et vous le rendra

---

unhappy experiences in the homes of a marquis and a magistrate and attracts Pierrot, the Docteur agrees to marry Leandre to Isabelle, the new maid to the new valet, Colombine and Arlequin tell who they are and embrace.

*Les Eaux de Merlin* In the forest of the Ardennes Arlequin and Mezzetin are shown by Merlin fountains that induce love and hate, they get permission to sell these waters at Paris and interview a countess whose husband is too attentive, a naive valet, pursued by a girl whose affection he does not understand. Darius who would be cured of loving a "Beauté de Théâtre," and Pierrot whose young wife attracts many lovers finally Colombine and Marinette, seeking freedom from love are given the wrong bottles, but they in turn force Arlequin and Mezzetin to drink, so that all four are happy till policemen come to arrest the merchants as charlatans, whereupon Arlequin and Mezzetin call upon *lutins*, who carry off the police.

<sup>61</sup> By Lafont. First played, Aug. 14, 1714, about six months earlier than *la Ceinture*.

<sup>62</sup> *Parodie de l'Opera de Télémaque*, so 7.

Whereas Fontenelle puts into Neptune's mouth these elegant lines:

Jupiter m'enleva le plus noble partage,  
Mais l'empire des mers, où je donne la loi,  
Sur l'empire des cieux doit avoir l'avantage,  
Quand vous régnerez avec moi,

Lesage makes Neptune say

Il est vrai que Jupin mon Frère  
A pris le gros lot, sans façon,  
Mais, je fais bien meilleure chère  
Que lui, ma Déesse, en poisson<sup>63</sup>

Lesage also pointed to the fact that the Foire had become more popular than the Opera, making a minister address Destiny as follows.

Le monde, quand ton ordre à la Foire l'appelle,  
Déserte l'Opéra, ce spectacle pompeux  
Pour aller voir Polichinelle<sup>64</sup>

He had more cause, of course, to laugh at the Comédie Française, whose persecution of the *forains* must have caused them more vexation than the money exacted by the Académie Royale de Musique for the privilege of singing and dancing. Nevertheless his ridicule of French plays and actors is less pronounced, perhaps because he found the sentimentality and exaggeration of opera easier to parody. There are, however, a few examples in these early plays of parody and criticism directed against the actors for whom he had formerly written. The celebrated "Soyons amis, Cinna" is reproduced literally in *le Temple du Destin*, sc. 11, and is altered to "Ami, soyons Arabes" in *la Foire de Guibray*, sc. 1. In *Serendib*, II, 6, Arlequin sings "Je suis un Irrésolu Lanturlu," and a note explains that he alludes to Destouches's *Irrésolu*, which had failed because the protagonist was "un Fou." Arlequin must be parodying the actors of the Comédie Française when, in *Serendib*, III, 5, he gestures like an "Héros de Théâtre qui s'afflige sans modération." Finally, when the magistrate in *la Foire de Guibray*, sc. 4, declares that the year before a troupe had had not even four spectators, an Italian actor concludes that the troupe must have been composed of "Acteurs Français," and the magistrate admits that it was.

Despite such remarks, Lesage made use of French comedies elsewhere than in parody. The quarrel of the lovers in the first scene of *Colombine-Arlequin* and its solution by Colombine must have been influenced by *Tartuffe*. The use of the magic hat in *Arlequin invisible* may well have been suggested by Brécourt's *Jalour invisible* or *Bonnet enchanté*, as it was

<sup>63</sup> *Thétis et Pelée*, I, 5, *Arlequin Thétis*, sc. 3

<sup>64</sup> *Le Temple du Destin*, sc. 10. Polichinelle here stands for marionettes

also called. *Serendib*, II, 7 is inspired by Cervantes, but the situation had been shown in Dancourt's *Sancho* as recently as 1712. The relations between the miller's wife and Pierrot in sc 7 of *Nostradamus* recall Dancourt's *Mari retrouvé*. Octave's adventures as described in the first scene of *Nostradamus* resemble those of the hero in Lesage's comedy, *Don César Ursin*, while in scene 8 Arlequin, who is disguised as a woman, tells of having "meubles" and "porcelaines" broken up by visitors, just as those of the Baronne had been smashed by the protagonist of *Turcaret*.

Besides operas and plays, the work to which Lesage owed most was the *Mille et un jours*, from which he derived the plot of *Arlequin Mahomet*, as Barberet<sup>65</sup> has shown in detail. Lesage kept the hero's flight in a chest to escape creditors, his meeting with a king's sequestered daughter, his impersonation of Mahomet, and his defeat of the unwelcome rival, but he added the Prince of Persia and he eliminated the burning of the chest and the condemnation of the protagonist to life as a weaver. He borrowed from his own *Diable boiteux* the character and function of Asmodée in *Arlequin invisible*.

Lesage's leading characters are usually those already made familiar by the Théâtre Italien. Arlequin, Mezzetin, Pierrot, Scaramouche, and the Docteur. He also introduced their comrades, Octave, Léandre, Colombine, Isabelle, and Marinette. Arlequin is especially prominent, appearing in all the plays. He preserves his fondness for disguise, both masculine and feminine, his wit, resourcefulness, and lack of moral scruples. Mezzetin is sometimes his understudy, sometimes of equal importance. He is disguised as the Grande Prêtresse in *Serendib* and takes the rôle of Jupiter in *Arlequin Thétis*. Pierrot keeps at times his naive rôle, but he also appears as a minor character, a secretary or a peasant, again, inconsistently, as Mercury or Minerva. The Docteur is no longer a pedant, he appears as a father, a rejected lover (Neptune), or a cuckold to be. Scaramouche is Arlequin's companion, his pugnacious rival, a Greek captain with only three lines to say, or an unimportant valet. Octave is found in only one play, where he is Isabelle's penitent husband. Léandre is twice a young lover, once with nothing to say. Women are less emphasized than in the Théâtre Italien. Colombine has a rôle in five plays, but she has little opportunity to show her customary cleverness, while Isabelle and Marinette are found in only two plays each. Of the other characters the most important are Nostradamus, the Juge in the *Foire de Guibray*, and Asmodée. The subordinate persons are chiefly remarkable for their great variety. They include kings and peasants, countesses, magicians, musicians, actors, female slaves, a *sacri-*

<sup>65</sup> *Op cit*, pp 105-6

*catour*, a *lutin*, a seller of old clothes. There is little characterization here, and what is to be found is indicated by rudimentary methods

There is some social satire, but nothing that was not familiar to audiences of the Comédie Française. Lesage alludes to *agroteurs*, to bankruptcy, to the taste of aristocrats for beautiful actresses rather than for perfect plays, to the use of tobacco, to the difference between French and Italian singing, to the snobbishness of young men who have forgotten who their grandfathers were.<sup>66</sup> Such references contribute to the general comic effect, which is obtained more frequently by parody, adventure, and the general tone of the verses.

Except for an occasional reference to a "pot de chambre," there is little vulgarity. Lesage probably helped to reform the plays of the Foire in this respect. The spectacular element is considerable. It includes the use of "machines" to introduce the gods, of flames and fireworks, of a storm at sea, and of sudden changes of scenery. All the plays include dancing. Some use is made of gymnastics. Music was essential, as the text was sung almost in its entirety. In these plays by Lesage the airs of 159 songs are employed 636 times. Some are operatic arias, but most are the tunes of popular songs, some of them long known in France.<sup>67</sup> Familiarity with the songs must have increased their success, as it enabled the audience to participate more readily in the singing. It explains why many of the airs were frequently repeated.<sup>68</sup>

The limitations under which Lesage was obliged to work did not leave him free to construct his plays as he had constructed those he had written for the Comédie Française. It was difficult with snatches of song to relate

<sup>66</sup> Cf. *Nostradamus*, sc 7, *Mahomet*, sc 4 and *Ceinture*, I, 2, *Guisbray*, sc 4, *Ceinture*, II, 1 and *Temple*, sc 11, *Ceinture*, II, 3, *Nostradamus*, sc 5. In the last case each of two youths claims to be of better family than the other, but it turns out that one is descended, by way of a country nobleman and a bailiff, from a miller, the other, through a rich man and a "petit Commis aux Aydes" from a coachman Paul Chaponnière. *RHL*, XX (1913), 828-44, emphasizes the presentation of popular manners in plays of the Foire, but he gives no examples from plays of 1701-15 and underestimates the presentation of manners in plays of the Comédie Française.

<sup>67</sup> *Lanturlu* is referred to as an old song in Sédery's *Comédie des comédiens*, acted about 1632, and in Chevalier's *Galans ridicules*, published in 1662. The latter play also refers to *Turlututu renquene*. An old woman in Montauban's *Parure*, acted in 1674, declares that she sang *Du Pont, mon ami* in her youth. *Les son zon* and *Grasliids* are mentioned in the *Concert ridicule*, acted in 1689. *Jean de Vert en France* is referred to in *les Aventures des Champs Elisees*, played in 1693. Dufresny's *Départ des comédiens*, produced in 1694, mentions *Récitez-vous, belle endormie* and *Vous m'entendez bien*, which may be the same song as *Ne m'entendez-vous pas*.

<sup>68</sup> The sixteen airs most often found are these: *Récitez-vous, belle endormie*, 34 times, *Quand je tiens de ce jus d'Octobre*, 29 times, *Comme un coucou que l'amour presse*, 26 times, *Quand le péril est agréable*, 24 times, *Je ne suis né ni Roy ni Prince* and *Vous savez qui des deux*, 21 times each, *Mon Père, je viens devant vous* and *Tu croyais en aimant Colette*, 20 times each, *Menuet de M. de Grandval*, 15 times, *Laure la, laire lan laire*, 13 times, *Bannissons d'ici l'humour noire*, 12 times, *On n'aime point dans nos forêts*, *Menuet d'Hésione*, and *Je reviendrai demain au soir*, 11 times each, *Allons, gay* and *Pour passer doucement la vie*, 10 times each.

what had taken place before the play began or to describe much that was supposed to be enacted behind the scenes. In his two plays that are primarily parodies the structure resembles more nearly that of his comedies, except that in *Télémaque* the scenes are not all linked and the solution is reached by Minerva's intervention. In the other plays the events are related more nearly *ab ovo*, unprepared episodes are allowed, and in several cases series of persons are introduced as in a *revue*. Linking is preserved only in *Nostradamus* and *les Eaux de Merlin*. If the unity of time is respected, it is chiefly because most of the plays are in one act. The action is unified only in *Colombine-Arlequin*. The place may change within the act. In *Arlequin Mahomet* it passes from India to Basra. It would seem, then, that Lesage felt free to construct his plays without regard for French classical technique, except that he made them clear and simple and never employed more than three acts.

According to Barberet, all of these plays were acted by la Baron's troupe with the exception of *la Ceinture de Vénus* and *Télémaque*, played by the troupe of Saint-Edme, who was associated with her at that time. Lesage's *Arlequin* must usually have been acted by the English acrobat, Baxter, while Sorin played *Nostradamus*. Reference to these actors is made in a document published by Campardon.<sup>69</sup> It seems that an actor of the Comédie Française, Milache de Moliney, visited a police official on Sept. 26, 1714, to complain of comedies given by "Bastée, Saurin," and other members of la Baron's troupe, who spoke to one another in prose. The official visited the theater between 5 and 6 P. M., saw a performance of *Arlequin Mahomet*, and noted that the actors spoke and replied in short prose dialogues. He also mentioned the fact that Sorin, at the end of the performance announced that *le Tombeau de Nostradamus* would be played on the following Sunday for the last time. His report seems to have had no effect upon the fortunes of the Foire.

When Lesage and d'Orneval published plays given by the *forains*, they excluded those that contained obscenity, those that might for other reasons make an unfortunate impression, those derived from the Théâtre Italien, and those that had succeeded only because of the "jeu des Acteurs" or their "Balets brillants."<sup>70</sup> Besides plays written by Lesage, only two that were acted in 1713-5 were included, one by Letellier and one by Fuzelier.

The first of these, *Arlequin Sultane favorite*, had been acted at the Foire Saint-Germain in 1715. The methods employed are similar to those of Lesage. The play is in three acts. The dialogue is composed almost entirely

<sup>69</sup> *Op. cit.*, I, 93

<sup>70</sup> *Le Théâtre de la Foire*, I, pp. 2 and 3 of the preface

of songs, set to music that had, in many cases, been employed by Lesage. A few remarks in prose are sandwiched in. There is a rudimentary plot.<sup>71</sup> The play has an exotic element, introduces *lazzi*, and admits exciting situations. The scene is laid in an apartment and a neighboring garden. The text is free from indecent language. The characters act somewhat as Letellier's marionettes must have done, with little preparation or explanation, and so as to make everyone, including the Sultan, happy at the end.

The other play introduces a new element into the Foire, the echo of a literary quarrel. La Motte had published in 1714 his metrical adaptation of the *Iliad*, criticized the same year by Mme Dacier in *Des causes de la corruption du goût*. Their controversy was echoed in Fuzelier's one-act *Arlequin défenseur d'Homère*, which was played at the Foire Saint-Laurent in 1715. The simple and poorly constructed plot<sup>72</sup> exists chiefly to bring about the seventh and eighth scenes. In the first of these Arlequin "en Pédant avec un chapeau en pain de sucre" sings a song ending "Vivent les Grecs" and explains that

Le Parnasse est troublé par des guerres cruelles,  
Dans le sein des Caffez, dans le fond des Ruelles  
Colets contre Colets, Rimeurs contre Rimeurs,  
Combatent folement pour le choix des Auteurs

It is in sc 8 that the "cabinets" are introduced. Arlequin ironically remarks that modern works are only "Pour le plaisir des Dames," whereas ancient books are "le charme de mes ennuis." A copy of Homer in a Chinese box is kissed by Arlequin

Arl Quel plaisir d'embrasser Homère!  
Bailly Je crois qu'il en est amoureux  
Arl Allons, baisez Homère en godinette  
Bailly Je vous demande pardon, Monsieur Bouquinidés Je ne sçais pas le Grec<sup>73</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Léandre, his wife Isabelle, his valet Arlequin, Colombine, and Pierrot have been captured by the Sultan, who loves Isabelle. Arlequin, persuaded by Léandre to disguise himself as Isabelle, tries to steal a key, but in so doing awakens the Sultan, who orders him to be strangled by mutes. Pierrot, who has become the Sultan's buffoon, saves Arlequin by persuading him to turn Mohammedan. Still disguised as Isabelle, Arlequin reveals his identity to the Sultan's favorite and gets her help. Léandre, Isabelle, and Colombine escape in a ship, but, when Arlequin is identified, they are recaptured. Meanwhile the favorite has regained her influence over the Sultan, whom she persuades to allow the captives to depart.

<sup>72</sup> Léandre agrees to pardon Arlequin for stealing his linen if he will help him win Angélique, daughter of a Bailly, who, acting on the advice of his brother, a physician of Montpellier, endeavors to keep his daughter away from men. Disguised as a "revendeuse à la toilette," Arlequin brings a letter from Léandre that falls into the Bailly's hands instead of his daughter's. He next appears as a pedant and has two "cabinets" brought in, one containing books by Ancients, the other, books by Moderns. Léandre, concealed in the latter, converses with Angélique while Arlequin shows books to the Bailly, who, when he discovers Léandre and learns that he is the son of an old friend, agrees to the marriage and has fishermen and their women dance in celebration of the event.

<sup>73</sup> This jest comes, of course, from *les Femmes savantes*, vv 946-7. The passage in

Arlequin then attacks the Moderns, making use of Mme Dacier's title:

Voulez-vous apprendre les causes  
De la corruption du goût?  
C'est que, sans trop peser les choses,  
On met de l'épice partout  
Sans sel pourtant on sçait écrire

No one defends the Moderns directly, but, as Léandre is added to the collection of modern books, the result symbolizes the triumph of love over pedantry, so that, if the play must be classified in regard to the Quarrel of Ancients and Moderns, it belongs on La Motte's side rather than on that of Mme Dacier. The chief value of the play lies, perhaps, in the evidence it gives that the famous Quarrel could interest the public of the Foire.

Early in each of the last four centuries French dramatic entertainments have included productions composed with little art, but able to attract many spectators' farces as presented by Gros Guillaume and his comrades, the plays of the Foire, melodramas, and silent movies. Critics ignored or condemned them, but they flourished in spite of them and, though they produced no masterpiece, they exerted a certain influence on genuinely artistic creations. The productions of the early eighteenth century had a special resemblance to those of the early twentieth in that the very limitations placed upon the authors furnished an attraction for the public. There seemed to be little difficulty about writing a dialogue, but audiences, at least for a while, were fascinated by actors who could, without one, communicate a story to an audience and even make it comic and exciting. The success of the Foire furnished a warning to the Comédie Française that the humbler members of an audience cannot profitably be neglected. If the Bourbons had reflected deeply enough upon this fact, the course of French history might have been altered.

*les Précieuses ridicules* about taking "le roman par la queue" must have inspired Arlequin's comment, when the Bailly says his daughter is reading a "Roman," that "elle le prendra sûrement Par où l'on doit le prendre"



## CONCLUSION

Louis XIV's last days were not his best. His final war reduced both his territory and his prestige and left tendencies that were to haunt his descendants. Yet there was no unconditional surrender. He was not entirely vanquished. The battle of Denain partly compensated for the defeats he had suffered, he was able to have the last word with the Empire, if not with England, and he maintained his way of life in its essentials up to the end. Much the same comment may be made upon the theater of his times. Corneille, Racine, and Molière could not be replaced, but there were partial compensations both in tragedy and in comedy, while here and there one can detect tendencies that were to gain strength in the generations that followed.

Literary historians, while criticizing authors of the period for their conventionality, are apt to fall into the same error themselves when they consider only a few authors and a few of their plays and reword comments that have long been made about them. That the theater continued to fill an important place in French life no one denies. If this is the case, how could it fall so quickly into the state of decay that is often assigned to the period? Let us see what can be said for and against such critical assumptions.

There were at Paris two groups of actors, those of the Comédie Française and those of the Foire. The first, subsidized by the government, maintained the traditions of the seventeenth century and produced a number of plays that long survived their authors, a few that are still in the Parisian repertory. Beaubourg, Etienne Baron, Quinault-Dufresne, La Thorillière, Paul Poisson, la Beauval, la Duclos, and la Desmares were worthy successors of former members of the troupe, though they did not gain quite the reputation of Michel Baron, Raymond Poisson, and la Champmeslé. The other group had no pretensions to dramatic art, clung rather to traditions of the circus, of Tabarin, or of crude musical entertainers. These actors were frequently at odds with the police, showed great ingenuity in adapting themselves to the conditions that were imposed upon them, managed, not only to exist, but to rival seriously the aristocrats of the stage. They represent one of the obscure forces that were already undermining the Ancien Régime.

It was in tragedy that the restrictions of the classical stage were chiefly felt. All such plays were written in five acts and in alexandrine verse, with subjects that came from fields cultivated by their predecessors, especially that of Greek mythology. The one exception, Ferrier's *Montézume*, met with so little success that it was never published. Violations of technical rules

were rare. Yet authors were by no means oblivious to their audiences. Péchantré, in the hope of increasing dramatic interest, demanded freedom in regard to chronology. Crébillon opposed the desire of his critics for extreme simplicity and logic. He sought primarily to interest the spectators and for that end made use especially of surprise, horror, and recognition. The contrast between the nature of his subjects and his efforts to make them palatable may cause the modern reader to smile, but he produced striking effects in *Rhadamiste*, created two excellent characters in the protagonist and his father, and, both in this and in earlier plays, showed decided talent for creating intense situations and for infusing a general atmosphere of tragic gloom. The horror that he attained especially in *Atrée et Thyeste* is also found in tragedies of Pellegrin and Danchet, but it is absent from most tragedies of the period. Recognition is much more characteristic. The effort to exclude romantic love, subsequently approved by Voltaire, was illustrated by three tragedies, all given originally elsewhere than at the Comédie Française. Stage decoration was limited to palace interiors and to camps. La Grange-Chancel regarded as puerile efforts to have more elaborate scenery. At court performances there was sometimes compensation in elaborate costuming, however ill adapted this may have been to the subject.

After Crébillon one must place La Grange-Chancel, whose masterpiece, *Amasis*, shows his ability at creating interesting situations. His *Ino et Méléagre*, Belin's *Mustapha et Zéangir*, Péchantré's *Mort de Néron*, Riuperrous's *Hypermnestre*, and Duché's *Absalon* are tragedies of considerable merit. They are quite superior to tragedies written by women or by other men than Crébillon and La Grange-Chancel in the second half of the period.

In comedy there was greater variety in material and in treatment. Several plays describe scenes outside of France. Among those whose scene is laid within the country there are rural as well as city plays. Comedies of character were written by Destouches, Dufresny, and Dancourt, but most of the offerings can be better described as comedies of manners. Prose is employed more frequently than verse. "Vers libres" are found as well as alexandrines. The number of acts is by no means fixed. Many of the comedies have prologues. There is less respect for the unities than in tragedy, but the only departures from observance of the proprieties are found in Regnard and Boindin.

Both nobles and peasants appear, but the class chiefly described is that of the bourgeois, ranging from small tradesmen to the hero of *le Jaloux désabusé*, who has been altogether received into upper Parisian society. A certain amount of social unrest is expressed, but no dissatisfaction with the social system. I have pointed out echoes of the war, but they are by no means

so important as one might have expected. No hostility is expressed to enemies of France. The theater must have been looked upon by returning warriors as an escape from their life under war conditions rather than a reflection of it.

Especially noteworthy is the rôle of money in plays by Dancourt, Dufresny, Regnard, and Lesage, which now includes *agiotage*, insurance, and questions of inheritance. Moralizing is represented by Boursault, who went so far as to discuss the existence of God, and by Michel Baron in their last plays, and especially by Destouches. Elsewhere it is conspicuously absent, especially in the work of Dancourt, Regnard, and Lesage. A beginning of the *sensibilité* that was to characterize later eighteenth-century comedies is detected in the rôle assigned to the young lover in Dufresny's *Double Veuvage*. In the main the comic resources are those employed in the late seventeenth century: amusing situations, satirical comment, peasant patois, mistakes in identity, inability to understand one's own situation, clever observations, happy endings, etc. Regnard is chiefly noteworthy for the brilliance of his comic verse, Dancourt and Lesage for their study of manners, comment upon which at times becomes bitter, Dufresny for his interest in ideas and the originality of his methods, Destouches for his effort to revive comedy of character, though he was hampered by his lack of comic imagination.

Classical comedy lends itself more readily than classical tragedy to appeals to the eye, which are especially conspicuous in the exotic farces of Lafont and in the plays written by Dancourt for special occasions. It was Dancourt who revised a few seventeenth-century "machine" plays and who prepared playlets for performance in the gardens at Livry, at Sceaux, and at Suresnes. His spectacles do not represent wild nature, but charming lawns around aristocratic châteaux.

If we take into consideration the fact that most of the comedies and tragedies were composed during a long war that strained the resources of the country, the dramatic production of the period is quite remarkable. Some of the plays are of purely historical interest, but many can still be enjoyed. *Rhadamiste* and *Turcaret*, *les Folies amoureuses*, *le Légataire*, *le Galant Jardinier*, and *la Coquette de village* may even attract actors in the years that lie ahead.

Authors of comedies and tragedies came from so many parts of France that there are few conclusions to be drawn in regard to their geography. I note, however, that none of them was born in Normandy, in Lyons, or in Bordeaux, and that the majority of those who wrote comedies were by birth Parisians. Moreover, the only actors who wrote plays that have survived were the Parisians, Baron and Legrand, and Dancourt, born nearby, at Fontainebleau.

In sharp contrast with the productions of the Comédie Française or those given at court are the rough and tumble performances of the Foire, which at first imitated the methods of the old Théâtre Italien and combined dramatic productions with marionette shows and rope dancing. Their authors employed parody extensively, especially when efforts were made to suppress their theaters. Forbidden the use of dialogue, they acquired from the Opera the right to employ songs and built up a genre of their own, which they were the first to entitle comic opera. The best productions are probably those of Lesage, but even these are distinctly inferior to the plays given at the Comédie Française. The effort made by the *forains* is comparable to that of early producers of moving pictures, like whom they are chiefly distinguished for their success in the art of triumphing over difficulties.

Such was the dramatic material that was ready at hand when Louis XIV died and his nephew, who had acted in farces at court, became the Regent. He promptly weighted the balance on the side of irregularity by recalling the actors of the Théâtre Italien, but he also favored the regulars by having Paul Poisson and his son rejoin the troupe of the Comédie Française. Both groups flourished with greater or less success through most of his administration and through those of various successors. One may liken them to the right and left wings of French politics, whose conflict has often brought the state to the verge of disaster, but has ever contributed to the amazing vitality of its history.

## PLAYS ACTED AT THE COMÉDIE FRANÇAISE

1701–September, 1715 <sup>1</sup>

- Belin, *Vononez*, T. (Jan. 7, 1701).  
 Boindin, *Trois Gascons*, C., 1 a. p. (June 4, 1701), 1702.  
 Anon., *Petit-Maître de campagne*, C., 1 a. p. (July 26, 1701), 1701.  
 Dancourt, *Colin-Maillard*, C., 1 a. p. (Oct. 28, 1701), 1701.  
 La Grange-Chancel, *Amasis*, T. (Dec. 13, 1701), 1701.  
 Boursault, *Esopé à la cour*, C., 5 a. v. pl. (Dec. 16, 1701), 1702.  
 Lesage, *Pont d'honneur*, C., 3 a.<sup>2</sup> p. (Feb. 3, 1702), 1739.  
 Ferrier, *Montézume*, T. (Feb. 14, 1702).  
 Dufresny, *Double Veuve*, C., 3 a. p. pl. (March 8, 1702), 1701.  
 Barbier, Mlle, *Arrue et Pélus*, T. (June 3, 1702), 1702.  
 Boindin, *Bal d'Auteuil*, C., 3 a.<sup>3</sup> p. pl. (Aug. 22, 1702), 1702.  
 La Motte, *Matrone d'Ephèse*, C., 1 a. p. (Sept. 23, 1702), 1730.  
 Dancourt, *Opérateur Barry*, C., 1 a. p. pl. (Oct. 11, 1702),<sup>4</sup> 1702.  
 Barbier, Mlle, *Cornélie*, T. (Jan. 5, 1703), 1703.  
 Péchantré, *Mort de Néron*, T. (Feb. 21, 1703), 1703.  
 Dufresny, *Faux Honnête-Homme*, C., 3 a. p. (Feb. 24, 1703), 1703.  
 Anon., *Bailli Marquis*, C., 1 a. p. (Feb. 24, 1703).  
 Anon., *Frontin gouverneur du château de Vertigihlanguen*, C., 1 a. (Oct. 11, 1703).  
 Baron, *Andrienne*, C., 5 a. v. (Nov. 16, 1703), 1704.  
 La Fosse, *Corésus et Callirhoé*, T. (Dec. 7, 1703), 1704.  
 La Grange-Chancel, *Alceste*, T. (Dec. 19, 1703), 1704.  
 Regnard, *Folies amoureuses*, C., 3 a. v. pl.<sup>5</sup> (Jan. 15, 1704), 1704.  
 Riupeirous, *Hypermnestre*, T. (Feb. 13, 1704), 1704.  
 Boindin, *Port de mer*, C., 1 a. p. (May 27, 1704), 1704.  
 Anon., *Médecin de village*, C., 1 a. p. (Sept. 24, 1704).  
 Dancourt, *Galant Jardinier*, C., 1 a. p. (Oct. 22, 1704), 1705.  
 Baron, *Adelphes*, C., 5 a. v. (Jan. 3, 1705), 1736.

<sup>1</sup> Tragedies are indicated by "T" They are all in five acts and in verse. Comedies are indicated by "C" The number of acts is shown by the numeral before "a" The "v" or "p" that follows shows whether the play is mainly in verse or in prose. If it has a prologue, the fact is indicated by "pl" The date of first performance at the Comédie Française is placed within parentheses. The date not so enclosed is that of publication. Plays publicly acted before 1701 are not included here.

<sup>2</sup> Lesage states that it was originally in five acts.

<sup>3</sup> The play is said to have been originally in one act.

<sup>4</sup> Originally played, with a different prologue, at the home of Pontchartrain in February, 1700.

<sup>5</sup> The play also has an epilogue.

- Behn, *Mustapha et Zéangir*, T. (Jan. 20, 1705), 1705.  
 Nadal, *Saul*, T. (Feb. 27, 1705), 1705.  
 Guérin, *Psyché de village*, C., 4 a. p. pl. (May 29, 1705).  
 Anon., *Provençale*, C., 1 a. (Oct. 17, 1705).  
 Pellegrin, *Polydore*, T. (Nov. 6, 1705), 1706.  
 Regnard, *Ménechmes*, C., 5 a. v. pl. (Dec. 4, 1705), 1706.  
 Crébillon, *Idoménée*, T. (Dec. 29, 1705), 1706.  
 Danchet, *Cyrus*, T. (Feb. 23, 1706), 1706.  
 Brueys, *Avocat Patelin*, C., 3 a. p. (June 4, 1706), 1707.  
 Barbier, Mlle, *Tomyris*, T. (Nov. 23, 1706), 1707.  
 Pellegrin, *Mort d'Ulysse*, T. (Dec. 29, 1706), 1707.  
 Crébillon, *Atrée et Thyeste*, T. (March 14, 1707), 1709.\*  
 Lesage, *Don César Ursin*, C., 5 a. p. (March 15, 1707), 1739.  
 Lesage, *Crispin rival de son maître*, C., 1 a. p. (March 15, 1707), 1707.  
 Legrand, *Femme fille et veuve*, C, 1 a. v. (May 26, 1707), 1707.  
 Lafont, *Danaé*, C., 1 a. v. pl. (July 4, 1707), 1707.  
 Dufresny, *Faux Instinct*, C., 3 a. p. (Aug. 2, 1707), 1707.  
 Dancourt, *Diable boiteux*, C., 1 a. p. pl. (Oct. 1, 1707), 1707.  
 Dancourt, *Second Chapitre*, C, 2 a. p. pl. (Oct. 20, 1707), 1707.  
 Dancourt, *Trahison punie*, C., 5 a. v. (Nov. 28, 1707), 1708.  
 Danchet, *Tyndarides*, T. (Dec. 16, 1707), 1708.  
 Regnard, *Légataire universel*, C., 5 a. v. (Jan. 9, 1708), 1708.  
 Regnard, *Critique du Légataire*, C, 1 a. p. (Feb. 9, 1708), 1708.  
 Dufresny, *Jaloux honteux*, C., 5 a. p. (March 6, 1708), 1707.  
 Dancourt, *Madame Artus*, C., 5 a. v. (May 8, 1708), 1708.  
 Legrand, *Amour Diable*, C., 1 a. v. (June 30, 1708), 1708.  
 Crébillon, *Electre*, T. (Dec. 14, 1708), 1709.  
 Lesage, *Turcaret*, C., 5 a. p. pl.<sup>†</sup> (Feb. 14, 1709), 1709.  
 Nadal, *Hérode*, T. (Feb. 15, 1709), 1709.  
 Legrand, *Famille extravagante*, C., 1 a. v. (June 9, 1709), 1709.  
 Dufresny, *Amant masqué*, C., 1 a. p. (Aug. 8, 1709).  
 Legrand, *Foire Saint-Laurent*, C., 1 a. v. (Sept. 20, 1709), 1709.  
 Dufresny, *Joueuse*, C, 5 a. p. (Oct. 22, 1709), 1731.  
 Barbier, Mlle, *Mort de César*, T. (Nov. 26, 1709), 1710.  
 Campistron, *Jaloux désabusé*, C., 5 a. v. (Dec. 13, 1709), 1709.  
 Lafont, *Naufrage*, C, 1 a. v. (June 14, 1710), 1710.  
 Dancourt, *Comédie des comédiens*, C, 3 a. p. (Aug. 5, 1710), 1710.  
 Dancourt, *Agoteurs*, C, 3 a. p. (Sept. 26, 1710), 1710.  
 Destouches, *Curieux Impertinent*, C, 5 a. v. (Nov. 17, 1710), 1710.

\* There was an earlier unauthorized Dutch edition

† The play has an epilogue

- Genest, *Joseph*, T. (Dec. 19, 1710<sup>\*</sup>), 1711.  
 Crébillon, *Rhadamiste et Zénobie*, T. (Jan. 23, 1711), 1711.  
 Legrand, *Amans ridicules*, C., 1 a. v. (June 1, 1711).  
 Alain et Legrand, *Epreuve réciproque*, C., 1 a. p. (Oct. 6, 1711), 1711.  
 Dancourt, *Céphale et Procris*, C., 3 a. v. pl. (Oct. 27, 1711), 1711.  
 Destouches, *Ingrat*, C., 5 a. v. (Jan. 28, 1712), 1712.  
 Duché, *Absalon*, T. (April 7, 1712<sup>\*</sup>), 1702.  
 Legrand, *Métamorphose amoureuse*, C., 1 a. p. (Aug. 6, 1712), 1712.  
 Abeille, *Fille Valet*, C., 3 a. v. (Sept. 5, 1712)  
 Lafont, *Amour vengé*, C., 1 a. v. (Oct. 14, 1712), 1712.  
 Dancourt, *Sancho Pança*, C., 5 a. v. (Nov. 15, 1712), 1713.  
 Destouches, *Irrésolu*, C., 5 a. v. (Jan. 5, 1713), 1713.  
 Hénault, *Cornélie vestale*, T. (Jan. 27, 1713), 1768.  
 La Grange-Chancel, *Ino et Mélicerte*, T. (March 10, 1713), 1713.  
 La Grange-Chancel, *Fille supposée*, C., 3 a. v. (May 11, 1713).  
 Dancourt, *Impromptu de Surène*, C., 1 a. p. pl. (May 24, 1713<sup>10</sup>), 1713.  
 Lafont, *Trois Frères rivaux*, C., 1 a. v. (Aug. 4, 1713), 1713.  
 Legrand, *Usurier Gentilhomme*, C., 1 a. p. (Sept. 11, 1713), 1713.  
 Crébillon, *Xercès*, T. (Feb. 7, 1714), 1749.  
 Gomez, Mme, *Habib*, T. (April 17, 1714), 1714.  
 Anon., *Rivaux d'eux-mêmes*, C., 1 a. v. (Aug. 27, 1714).  
 Dancourt, *Festes nocturnes du Cours*, C., 1 a. p. pl. (Sept. 5, 1714), 1714.  
 Roy, *Captifs*, C., 3 a. v. pl. (Sept. 28, 1714).  
 Dancourt, *Vert Galant*, C., 1 a. p. (Oct. 24, 1714), 1714.  
 Chateaubrun, *Mahomet Second*, T. (Nov. 13, 1714), 1715.  
 Deschamps, *Caton d'Utique*, T. (Jan. 25, 1715), 1715.  
 Destouches, *Médisant*, C., 5 a. v. (Feb. 20, 1715), 1715.  
 Dufresny, *Coquette de village*, C., 3 a. v. (May 27, 1715), 1715.  
 Destouches, *Fausse Veuve*, C., 1 a. p. (July 20, 1715).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>\*</sup> First acted at Clagny, Jan. 24, 1706

<sup>\*</sup> First acted at Versailles, Jan. 19, 1702

<sup>10</sup> First acted at Suresnes, May 21, 1713

<sup>11</sup> Longepierre's tragedy, *Electre*, played at the Versailles home of the princesse de Conti on Jan. 22, 1702, was acted at the Comédie Française on Feb. 22, 1719, and was published in 1730. Lesage's prose comedy in one act, *la Tontine*, was accepted by the actors on Feb. 27, 1708, but it was not played until Feb. 20, 1732, or published until 1739. Pellegrin's tragedy, *Pélopée*, was read at court on Feb. 2, 1710, acted at the Comédie Française on July 18, 1733, and published in 1733.

## ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS TO

### *A History of French Dramatic Literature in the Seventeenth Century*

An article by Jean Lemoine entitled *La première du Cid* is important for knowledge of the Marais and the Hôtel de Bourgogne. After appearing in the *Revue des questions historiques*, it was published separately by Hachette in 1936. Lemoine shows that the Marais was located at what is now no. 90, rue Vieille-du-Temple. The property was rented by the actors from April 1, 1634, to April 1, 1639, at 3000 livres a year. The rental was then reduced to 2000 livres. The actors who signed the lease on May 8, 1634, were Montdory, Charles Lenoir, François Méthiviers, Julien and François Bedeau (Jodelet and l'Espy), Claude Deschamps (Villiers), Pierre Marcoureaux, and Nicolas de Vis (Des Éilletts). On July 8, 1678, the dimensions of the property were given as "17 toises, 4 pieds" long by "6 toises" wide. Those of the Hôtel de Bourgogne were 7 by 17 "toises." On April 8, 1647, the troupe of the latter theater agreed to pay 2400 livres instead of 2000 as rent in return for an engagement entered into by their landlords, the Confrérie de la Passion, to "refaire les loges dudit hôtel suivant le dessin de celles qui sont au tripot du Marests, même d'avancer le théâtre dans ladite salle de dix pieds plus qu'il n'est à présent." After the change the stage was to be seven "toises," one foot deep and to be raised in front "à six pieds et le hausser par le derrière à proportion du devant." Thirteen boxes were to be installed for the actors above and below the stage, each with lock and key. In the hall there were to be "deux rangs de loges, de dix-neuf à chacun rang, d'une toise de milieu en milieu de large et de la profondeur qui sera nécessaire." Also "il faudra deux tirants au devant du théâtre pour attacher la frise et l'élévement du rideau." One must conclude from this requirement that there was in 1647 a stage curtain at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, though it may not have been used at all performances (cf. Part II, p. 18). It was also agreed that the Confrérie would place seats around the walls below the boxes and make over the "plancher pour poser les loges du bout et escalier pour monter aux galeries et paradis," which last part of the house was above the "loge des anciens maîtres" (cf. Part I, p. 712, l. 18).

The lease of the Hôtel de Bourgogne on April 8, 1647, shows that at that time the troupe included in its membership Montfleury, Beauchasteau,



Floridor, André Baron "dit le Baron," Claude Deschamps, sieur de Villiers, and Pierre Hasard. The fact that Floridor was then playing at the Hôtel contradicts the argument that I advanced in Part II, p. 25. It also follows that Bellerose, whose name does not appear in the document and who is said to have sold his costumes to Floridor, had in all probability retired by that date. As the name of d'Orgemont is also absent, one must conclude that he had returned to the Marais.

G. R. Kernodle's *From Art to Theatre* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1944) is an important contribution to knowledge of pictorial influences that lay back of the development in France of stage decorations; cf. my review in *MLN*, LIX (1944), 572-3.

A suggestive article on Pierre Corneille was published by Jean Boorsch in *Essays in Honor of Albert Feuillerat*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1943, it is entitled "L'Invention chez Corneille Comment Corneille ajoute à ses sources." Late in 1942 Saintonge and Christ brought out their *Fifty Years of Molière Studies. A Bibliography, 1892-1941*, a supplement to it appeared in *MLN*, LIX (1944), 282-5. J. Scherer discussed the meaning of certain titles in "Sur le sens des titres de quelques comédies de Molière," *MLN*, LVII (1942), 407-20. J. C. Chessex sought to give a moralistic interpretation to Molière's leading comedies in "Les Intentions de Molière," *MLQ*, IV (1943), 27-47.

Part II, p. 190, l. 27, read 1709, p. 284, l. 32, add for evidence that the author had in mind the château in which Richelieu spent his youth cf. my article in *MLN*, LX (1945), 167-72, "The Château de Richelieu and Desmaretz's *Visionnaires*", p. 391, l. 18, read 1701.

Part III, p. 16, n. 4, l. 3, for de Vin read de Vis, p. 63, a comparison in parallel columns between the two plays is given by W. H. Bohning in "Lope's *El mayor imposible* and Boisrobert's *La folle gageure*," *Hispanic Review*, XII (1944), 248-57 (the author overlooks entirely my discussion of the subject in Part III and refers to a passing remark in Part IV as if that were all I had said about it), p. 385, ll. 1-3, add Lachèvre, *Oeuvres de Dehénault, complément, Mélite*, pp. 121-35, assigns the authorship of *Mélite* to Dehénault, but without sufficient evidence, p. 654, l. 11, read ac. 3, p. 865, l. 17, for Anon read Girard, E.

Part IV, pp. 7, 8, add cf. Louis Bourquin, *RHL*, XXVI (1919), 53-64; p. 109, for a discussion between Carlos Lynes, Jr. and myself in regard to the récit de *Théramène* cf. *MLN*, LIX (1944), 387-91, 584-6, cf., too, for *Phèdre* an article by F. Baldensperger, "Encore la 'Cabale de *Phèdre*.' Leibniz du mauvais côté?" *MLN*, LVIII (1943), 523-6; p. 119, ll. 9-13, add, W. E. Stiefel has called my attention to the fact that Mesnard, in his later edition of Racine, withdrew his attribution to J.-B. Racine of this MS.

note and declared that it was not "très-ancienne"; if this is true, the information in the note must have been derived from Louis Racine's life of his father, to which it bears close textual resemblance; this weakens the evidence for 1777 as the date of Jean Racine's sketch, but I still consider it stronger than Mesnard's arguments for 1773; p. 183, n. 19, l. 1, *add* March 29, 1680, is the date of the *privilege*, p. 368, l. 26, *add* as the marriage contract was signed on March 12, 1708, according to Léon de Labessade, *les Philippiques* (Paris, 1875<sup>2</sup> p. 140), 1709 is probably Nietzelt's error for 1708, p. 399, l. 25, *add* in a letter of Feb 19, 1700 (*RHL*, XIV (1907), 162) Dubos wrote that *Thésée* "a extrêmement réussi."

Part IV, p. 476, *add* Lachèvre, after a long search, found a copy of the play, probably now unique, in a bookstore at Montluçon and published it in 1937 under the title of *Le Casanova du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Pierre-Corneille Blessebois et sa comédie, La Corneille de Mademoiselle de Sçay* There is a copy of this work in the New York Public Library and a microfilm reproduction of it at the Johns Hopkins University. Four women are in love with Corneille, who flirts with all of them till they discover his fickleness and abandon him. His enemy, Alcidas, arrests him, but Mlle de Sçay agrees to visit him in prison. Lachèvre thinks that Blessebois was portraying himself and his relations with various women. A line from *le menteur* is quoted in the fifth scene. The comedy is a very slight production that shows no talent either for amusing dialogue or for dramatic situations. It is improbable that it was played at the Hôtel de Bourgogne before it was printed, as in that case "Jouée à" rather than "Pour l'hostel de Bourgogne" would have been put on the title-page. Though it is not nearly so indecent as *Marthe Le Hayer*, a suggestion of homosexuality in the valet's rôle makes it unlikely that it was acted at that theater at all. It does not appear in the repertory of Molière's troupe.

Part IV, p. 488, n. 2, *add* the collection is mentioned by Bayle in a letter to Dubos of Feb 27, 1702 (*RHL*, XX (1913), 438), in which he points out that one of the five plays is by Waernewick, another by Genest, and states that he has been told that "La Fontaine n'a rien fait de tout cela", p. 567, n. 8, *for* Allainville *read* Allainval, p. 603, n. 13, *add* a play called *les Folies d'Octave* was acted shortly before the closing of the theater in 1697, according to the frères Parfaict, *Mémoires*, I, 133; p. 702, l. 10, *read* 1653, p. 732, l. 16, *for* twelve *read* eleven, p. 861, n. 2, *add* G. B. Watts (*MLN*, XLII (1927), 107-8) pointed out the error of the frères Parfaict in regard to the title of *le Fourbe*, cited an uncomplimentary reference to it by Gacon, showed that the play was in verse, that it introduced a procureur, a "fourbe, solliciteur de procès," and that some excerpts from it have been preserved at the Arsenal, MS. 6541, fol. 251 *seq.*, p. 878, n. 7, l. 10, *for* 1681 *read*

1678; p. 907, l. 6, *add* except one written for the Théâtre Italien, Fatouville's *Précaution inutile* of 1692; p. 920, l. 20, *add* Delaporte, *Du merveilleux dans la littérature française*, suggested the influence of Villars's *Comte de Gabalis* (published in 1670) on *la Pierre philosophale* and was followed by E. D. Seeber, *PMLA*, LIX (1944), 79-80; the name and title of the comte de Gabalis in the play must have come from Villars and probably the talk of elemental spirits, as Naudé, whom the dramatists quote, does not name the founder of the Rosicrucians and does not mention these spirits; p. 933, *les Forces de l'Amour et de la Magie* is analyzed above, Chapter XIX; p. 934, n. 5, *add* Charles Magnin, *Histoire des marionnettes en Europe*, Paris, 1862, p. 151, mentions the MS. and gives the first of the lost plays as *la Noce de Polichinelle et l'accouchement de sa femme* (he must have examined the MS. before a part of the title was blotted out); p. 935, the four farces discussed here were probably played by marionnettes (cf. above, p. 230).

Part V, p. 9, l. 3, *add* except once, when Descartes is mentioned in *les Femmes savantes*, v. 883, p. 153, l. 20, *add* further proof that de Vergnette was J.-B. Rousseau is given by Fournier in his edition of Regnard, p. lxxvi; p. 193, l. 14, *for* Allainville *read* Allainval.

The following paragraph gives the plays that were acted more than 400 times at the Comédie Française in 1680-1936, with the number of performances. The list is made up from the publications of Joannidès and Edouard Champion. If the *Coupe enchantée* was played more than once in 1926, the number of times it was given should be increased accordingly. It will be noted that in a little more than 256 years there were eighty-three plays that were given over 400 times, that forty-eight of these were composed in the seventeenth century (first acted, 1637-1700), seventeen in the eighteenth, seventeen in the nineteenth, one in the twentieth, that sixty-eight comedies made such a record in comparison with only fifteen tragedies, and that eight of the eighteenth-century plays were first acted in 1701-15, almost as many as were produced in the eighty-five remaining years of the century.

*Tartuffe*, 2270, *Médecin malgré lui*, 1847, *Avare*, 1705, *Misanthrope*, 1402; *Femmes savantes*, 1348, *Malade imaginaire*, 1340, *Plaideurs*, 1316, *Ecole des maris*, 1279, *Ecole des femmes*, 1277, *Phèdre*, 1162; *Dépit amoureux*, 1152, *Cid*, 1131, *Folies amoureuses*, 1117, *Mariage forcé*, 1044, *Précieuses ridicules*, 1043; *Andromaque*, 1041, *Fourberies de Scapin*, 1033, *Légataire universel*, 988, *Monde où l'on s'ennuie*, 939; *George Dandin*, 932, *Barbier de Séville*, 917, *Amphitryon*, 897; *Jeu de l'amour et du hasard*, 893; *Mariage de Figaro*, 892, *Avocat Patelin*, 885; *Britannicus*, 869; *Hernani*, 860; *Crispin médecin*, 849, *Joueur*, 836, *Iphigénie*, 802; *Horace*, 764; *Esprit de contradiction*, 752; *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*, 723; *Florentin*,

705, *Mlle de la Seiglière*, 702, *Menteur*, 691; *Gendre de M. Poirier*, 687; *Crispin rival de son maître*, 679, *Cinna*, 670; *Aventurière*, 645; *Legs*, 644; *Sganarelle*, 644; *Grondeur*, 635; *Ruy Blas*, 625; *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, 616; *Il ne faut jurer de rien*, 602, *Comtesse d'Escarbagnas*, 574; *Gringoire*, 567; *Festin de Pierre*, 564, *Polyeucte*, 563, *Joie fait peur*, 561; *Mithridate*, 558; *Vendanges de Suresnes*, 550, *Ménechmes*, 541, *Mercuré galant*, 535, *Etourdi*, 532, *Homme à bonne fortune*, 524, *Sérénade*, 519; *Coupe enchantée*, 510, *Epreuve*, 507, *Un Caprice*, 505, *Deuil*, 495, *Athalie*, 493; *Zaire*, 488, *Fausse Agnès*, 478, *Il faut qu'une porte soit ouverte ou fermée*, 475, *Femme juge et partie*, 474, *Démocrète*, 471, *Mlle de Belle-Isle*, 466, *Demi-monde*, 460, *Turcaret*, 455, *Cocher supposé*, 450, *Ami Fritz*, 447; *Fausse confidences*, 439; *Bajazet*, 435, *Galant Jardinier*, 429, *Philosophe marié*, 426, *Rodogune*, 426; *Primeroise*, 422, *On ne badine pas avec l'amour*, 419, *Bonhomme jadis*, 418, *Bataille de dames*, 417, *Usurier Gentilhomme*, 417.



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