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FIELDING AND MOLIÈRE

by

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ABSTRACT

Fielding and Molière

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This study examines the possible influences of Molière's comedy on the development of the comic theory and technique of Henry Fielding, as evidenced in his dramas and comic novels. It begins with a detailed analysis of Fielding's two adaptations of Molière plays, The Mock-Doctor (1732), based on Le Médecin malgré lui, and The Miser (1733), based on L'Avare. In the first of these adaptations, Fielding transforms the three-act French farce into a farcical ballad-opera of one act. His other major alterations in the play are the addition of a good deal of topical satire, the expansion of the character of Dorcas, and the muting of the boisterous, animalistic aspects of Gregory's nature. The essential character of the mock-doctor and most of the great comic scenes of the French farce are retained.

In Fielding's second and most ambitious adaptation, The Miser, the English author undertakes a more drastic alteration of the original French play. The plot structure is greatly changed as Fielding moves it toward the traditional intrigue plot of Restoration comedy. The intrigues of the play are carried on
by Mariana, Lappet, and Ramilie, all of whose parts are greatly expanded from their counterparts in L'Avare. The adaptation does, however, remain quite faithful to the original in its portrayal of the miser, Lovegold. Most of the significant changes in the adaptation can be traced to the influence of the Restoration tradition on the young dramatist.

After this detailed discussion of Fielding's adaptations of Molière, the following chapter examines the possibilities of Molièresque influence on Fielding's dramas as a whole. It cites a number of specific borrowings from the French author in the characters and situations of his five-act comedies and shorter farces. It also draws some parallels between the technique of these plays and Molière's comedy. As in The Miser, however, Fielding's attempts at producing a Molièresque kind of comedy in his plays in general are affected greatly by the influence of the Restoration tradition.

The final concern of this study is to assess the possible influence of Molièresque comedy on the theory and technique of Fielding's great comic novels. Although there are numerous evidences of Fielding's having borrowed specific materials in the novels from Molière's comedy, the possibility of a subtler Molièresque influence on the formation of the English novelist's actual theory and technique is more important. The two writers' views on the nature and purpose of comedy are essentially similar, both assuming a classical Aristotelian position; and they went about creating this kind of comedy in
many of the same ways. In his theories and techniques of characterization, in his combination of farce and satirical comedy, and in many of his techniques for arranging comic scenes, Fielding seems to have learned from the comedy of the French playwright for whom he often expressed his admiration. Thus, while part of the comedy of Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones stems from their identity as comic epics, another important part comes from their relationship to a comic drama very much like that of Molière in its theory and techniques.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

During the last thirty years Henry Fielding has received a large amount of critical and scholarly attention as one of the earliest formulators of the English novel. His novels have been examined from nearly every standpoint—their moral and religious background, their satiric significance, their classical and continental sources, their structural principles, their techniques of characterization, and their narrative point-of-view. During the same time very little energy has been devoted to the close study of the dramas which occupied most of Fielding's time and provided his livelihood in the decade before the production of the novels. In spite of this apparent lack of interest in the dramas, however, it would certainly seem worthwhile to undertake a detailed analysis of these plays to determine their possible relationship to the development of the theory and technique of the novels. Particularly when one considers that Fielding moved from writing comic drama to producing comic novels, the proposition that the period as a practicing playwright served in some way as an apprenticeship for Fielding's later career as a novelist appears to be a particularly viable one.

During the period from 1728, when his first comedy, Love in Several Masques, appeared on the boards at Drury Lane, until the Licensing Act of
1737 shut the doors of the Little Theatre in the Haymarket against him, Henry Fielding produced more than twenty plays and afterpieces, many of which were great popular successes on the contemporary stage. Considering the fact that most of the period between the production of his first play in 1728 and of his second in 1730 was spent as a student at the University of Leyden, the sheer volume of his dramatic output for the following eight-year period is rather impressive. In addition, the playwright spent a good deal of time revising and reworking those plays that had already been produced, sometimes to make them more agreeable to the public, sometimes to take advantage of the talents of new actors or actresses, and sometimes to bring their very pointed satire more up to date. Three of Fielding's best known plays, Tom Thumb (later entitled The Tragedy of Tragedies; or, The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great), The Author's Farce, and The Welsh Opera; or, The Grey Mare the Better Horse (later entitled The Grub-Street Opera), were complexly and extensively revised for one or more of these reasons. Furthermore, several of the other plays required reworking after their first productions to smooth off the rough edges, remove any particularly weak parts, and capitalize upon those aspects the audience responded to most.

In light of the fact that Fielding produced so many plays in this short time, it is unusual that the kinds of plays he wrote were widely varied. His plays may be divided into four general groups, although within these divisions there is much overlapping between groups and variation among members of the
same group. Undoubtedly the most commercially successful and popular of the
plays were those pieces which fall under the vague label of satirical drama.
Many of these plays might be called forms of irregular comedy in the sense
that they do not follow traditional comic rules and make use of a shortened
number of acts, such unusual forms as the ballad-opera and puppet show, and
at times, have no real comic plot at all. The literary burlesques, Tom Thumb
and The Covent-Garden Tragedy, would appear in this group. In addition, it
would include all the plays which might fall under Fielding's own category,
the "dramatic satire," including Pasquin, The Historical Register for the Year
1736, The Author's Farce, and The Grub-Street Opera. Finally, it would in-
clude a large number of additional satirical pieces, sometimes full-length plays
like Don Quixote in England which is Fielding's only five-act ballad-opera, but
more often short farces and farcical ballad-operas which attack various social
and political ills of the time.

The second large group of Fielding plays are the eight regular, five-act
comedies. With the exception of The Miser, which actually belongs in a dif-
ferent category as an adaptation, none of these plays achieved any great success.
The earlier ones, Love in Several Masques, The Temple Beau, and Rape upon
Rape had moderate, but acceptable runs when they appeared. Some of the later
plays were thoroughly hissed by their audiences; the Modern Husband, in particular,
was a bit too frank in its subject matter, even for Fielding's London audiences.
Most of these comedies show strong Restoration influence in their intrigue plots, witty dialogue, and character types.

Neither of the two remaining groups of Fielding plays is as large as the previous ones. The first includes several short farces, like the two "Miss Lucy" plays and The Letter-Writers, which contain no real satiric thrust and served primarily as entertaining afterpieces, perhaps to lighten the mood of a more serious primary play. The second of these smaller groups contains Fielding's one translation of Aristophanes, Plutus, and his three French adaptations, The Intriguing Chambermaid, taken from Le Retour imprévu of Regnard, and The Mock-Doctor and The Miser, taken from Le Médecin malgré lui and L'Avare of Molière. Curiously enough, this latter group of adaptations contains some of Fielding's most commercially successful plays. Each provided a large part for Kitty Clive, an extremely popular and talented young actress, who undoubtedly did much to assure their contemporary success. The latter play, The Miser, was one of, if not the most, successful of all the Fielding plays; and its popularity and ability to draw audiences extended well beyond the stage of the 1730's. It was revived numerous times throughout the eighteenth century and even well into the nineteenth.

Only a very few of the Fielding plays have been studied in any detail. Undoubtedly the most closely-examined play has been The Tragedy of Tragedies, which is thoroughly discussed in James T. Hillhouse's introduction to his edition of the play. Other scholars, in particular Charles B. Woods, have discussed
some of the more important dramatic satires. However, the bulk of the Fielding drama has been pretty much ignored. Since the beginning of this century at least, there has always existed a vague feeling that Fielding's dramatic period served in some way as an apprenticeship for the writing of the novels. Most scholars have paid lip-service to this idea in passing, speaking of the dramatic quality of the scenes of his novels, his extensive use of dialogue, and his use of stage directions and "humour names." However, the first critic to really focus on the problem of the relationship of Fielding's plays to his later production of the novels has been Ronald Paulson in his monograph, Satire and the Novel in the Eighteenth Century. He traces the roots of the novels' satiric comedy back through the dramatic satires of Fielding's career as practicing playwright to the techniques and concerns of Pope and the other Augustan satirists. This discussion of the satiric aspect of the comedy in Fielding's "comic epic-poem in prose" was the first significant and thorough attempt to trace the relationship between Fielding the dramatist and Fielding the novelist.

The purpose of this study will be to discuss the influence of another kind of comedy on Fielding's work, the comedy of Molière, and to trace its possible importance in the development of the comic theory and technique which culminate in the great comic novels. Besides the actual parallels in the two authors' works, there are two basic reasons for suspecting a strong influence on Fielding by Molièresque comedy. The first is his actual adaptation of the two Molière plays, L'Avare and Le Médecin malgré lui, for his own stage. Coupled
with this point is the fact that several of his other plays show obvious and direct borrowings from Molière. The second basic reason that makes the assumption of possible influence of Fielding by Molière plausible is that Fielding recurrently expressed his admiration for the French dramatist's comedies and suggested that he hoped to emulate him in his own comic endeavors. In prologues and prefaces to the plays, Fielding underlines this admiration for Molière as a model of comic creation; and, in the introductory chapter to Book XIII of *Tom Jones*, he actually places Molière among the group of great masters of the comic mode by whom he hopes to be inspired as he writes the novel.

The most obviously discernible evidence of the influence of Molière's comedy on Fielding's work comes from his early career as a dramatist. Two of his most popular plays on the contemporary stage, *The Miser* and *The Mock-Doctor*, were adaptations of Molière comedies. The first, and least ambitious of these adaptations, *The Mock-Doctor*, was written in 1732. This afterpiece was composed hastily to replace the disastrous *Covent-Garden Tragedy* which had angered Fielding's audiences. The three-act farce of Molière was cut down to one act in order to make the play an acceptable length for an afterpiece and the author capitalized on current taste by turning his play into a ballad-opera.

When Fielding's first adaptation was published, the author added a preface to it, suggesting that the unusual success of the play had lead him to think of adapting other of Molière's plays for the English stage in the future. The result of this hope was the production of the most ambitious of his adapta-
tions, The Miser, in 1733. Along with The Tragedy of Tragedies, this play shares the distinction of having the greatest commercial success and the most enduring popularity of all the Fielding plays. This achievement, in some respects, seems strange when we look at Fielding's career as a dramatist. Nearly all of his really successful plays were dramatic satires and burlesques. In fact, The Miser is the only one of the eight five-act comedies that achieved any notable popularity among Fielding's audiences.

Starting with these two adaptations as a basis, then, this study will attempt to assess the possible extent and types of influence the comedy of Molière may have had upon the formation of the comic theory and technique of Henry Fielding. It will begin with a close analysis of each of the adaptations, which attempts to assess the significance of both the changes Fielding made and the materials he retained in his versions of the plays. Following these detailed analyses, it will undertake a survey of the entire canon of Fielding dramas in an effort to determine the extent to which Molière may have been a formative influence on Fielding's dramatic technique in general. Finally, it will suggest parallels that can be drawn between the kind of satirical comedy Fielding adapted from Molière early in his career as a dramatist and the later theory and technique of the great comic novels. In essence, it will attempt to demonstrate that, while some of the comedy of Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones stems from their identity as comic epics, another part comes from their relationship to comic drama,
a drama clearly like that of Molière in its use of certain types of satire, techniques of characterization, and farcical situations.
CHAPTER II

THE MOCK-DOCTOR: AN ADAPTATION OF

MOLIÈRE'S LE MÉDECIN MALGRÉ LUI

With *The Mock-Doctor*, Henry Fielding undoubtedly reached his high point in the 1731-1732 theater season. (This play, based on *Le Médecin malgré lui*, was his first adaptation of Molière.) In other respects, this period was a discouraging one for the playwright. After a very successful season the previous year at the Little Theater in the Haymarket, at the end of which that company had scattered, Fielding returned to the Theatre-Royal in Drury Lane. Although his productions of *Tom Thumb*, *The Author's Farce*, and *The Welsh Opera* had established him as a popular playwright, his next plays were not well-received by the London audiences. His first play of the season, *The Lottery*, a farce in ballad-opera form, enjoyed a modest run as an afterpiece; this limited success was due partly to the talents of the rising new actress, Kitty Rafter. His next production, however, *The Modern Husband*, Fielding's first dramatic attempt to deal honestly and seriously with the social evils of his time, was thoroughly damned for its frankness. Curiously enough, the lead in this attack was taken up by the *Grub-Street Journal*, which became more violent against Fielding as the season wore on. When it became evident that *The Modern Husband* would be quickly removed from the boards, the disappointed author produced two new
plays in rapid succession, The Old Debauchees and The Covent-Garden Tragedy. They were performed together on June 1, 1732 and were soundly hissed by the audience. The first, The Old Debauchees, based on a contemporary incident at Toulon in which a Jesuit seduced his young confessor, poked fun at Roman Catholic beliefs. Its inevitable effect was to raise even further the ire of the Grub-Street Journal with its Roman Catholic bias, as well as to make its audience uneasy by its light treatment of religion. The real disaster, however, was effected by the afterpiece, The Covent-Garden Tragedy, with which Fielding followed the former play. This afterpiece was a burlesque of Ambrose Phillip's blank-verse tragedy of twenty years before, The Distress'd Mother, a play itself originally based on Racine's Andromaque. In his burlesque Fielding moved the scene of the play to the back-room of a brothel near Covent-Garden Square; thus, his characters, who all speak in lovely blank verse, became Mother Punchbowl, Captain Bilkum, Lovegirlo, Stormandra, Kissinda, and Leathersides, the porter, obviously modelled on the editor of the Grub-Street Journal. Although the burlesque might seem very funny today, its crudeness and vulgarity outraged the sensibilities of the London audience.

Thus, it was in this atmosphere of uproar and indignation that Fielding set about to recoup his dramatic fortunes in June of 1732. Although he did rework The Old Debauchees, cutting and toning it down to please his audience, he realized that he had to find a new afterpiece to replace the irreparable failure, The Covent-Garden Tragedy. In his search for this replacement, he
hit upon the happy idea of adapting the French play, Le Médecin malgré lui, which had enjoyed such great success in France, for the English stage. His preface to The Mock-Doctor suggests how he may have conceived the idea for his first adaptation:

Le Médecin malgré lui of Molière hath been always esteemed in France the best of that author's humorous pieces. Misanthrope, to which it was first added, owed to it chiefly its success. That excellent play was of too grave a kind to hit the genius of the French nation; on which account the author, in a very few days, produced this farce; which being added to the Misanthrope, gave it one of the greatest runs that any play ever met with on that stage. ¹

In his next paragraph, Fielding goes on to say "the English Theater owes this farce to an accident not unlike that which gave it to the French." Although later scholars have demonstrated the doubtfulness of this often-repeated myth about the Molière play, Fielding's belief in it nevertheless suggests how he may have arrived at the idea of adapting that delightful and successful farce in order to bolster his dramatic fortunes at this particularly low point. Such a motivation, of course, would imply that the author did not undertake this first adaptation with any really serious literary designs as are evident later in his adaptation of The Miser. Nevertheless, the play is one of his most popular and successful afterpieces; and, as he points out in his Preface, its success did encourage him to think of adapting other of Molière's plays for the English stage.
Contrary to the usual practice of adaptors, including his own work later with *L’Avare*, Fielding shortened his original considerably in constructing *The Mock-Doctor*. Molière’s three-act play is condensed into one act with twenty scenes. On the surface, this fact might seem slightly misleading as there are only twenty-one scenes in the three acts of the French play. However, the scenes of *The Mock-Doctor* are extremely brief with the dialogue cut significantly in almost every scene taken from *Le Médecin malgré lui*. Although Fielding did add a small amount of original material to the play, it is not enough to make up in length for those deleted parts.

The table in Appendix 1 indicates the basic outline of Fielding’s adaptation of the Molière play. In scenes i through v of *The Mock-Doctor* Fielding reproduces all of the essentials of Act I, scenes i through v of *Le Médecin malgré lui*. The only significant alteration in this part of the adaptation is Fielding’s movement of Sganarelle’s attempts to make up with Martine after the quarrel with M. Robert from the end of scene ii to the beginning of scene iii. Thus, the English play combines the mock-doctor’s attempts to smooth over the quarrel with his wife and Dorcas’ avowal of revenge in scene iii. The sixth scene of the adaptation, a soliloquy by Dorcas, does not appear in Molière’s play; its purpose was undoubtedly to add another good song to the part of Dorcas. In scenes vii through xi, Fielding also adapts the essential features of Act II of the French play; but, in this case, he does eliminate a rather large block of material. All the portions of scene i pertaining to the nurse, Jacqueline, as
well as the entire third scene where Lucas and Sganarelle argue over her are
removed in the English adaptation. In addition, Leander's soliloquy and song
which comprise scene x of Fielding's play, like the earlier soliloquy of Dorcas
in scene vi, have no basis in the Molière play. The portions of the English
adaptation which are based on Act III of Le Médecin malgré lui undergo the
most extensive and complicated changes. Three scenes of the third act of
Molière's play are eliminated altogether—scene iii where Sganarelle courts the
favor of Jacqueline and is overheard by Lucas; the following discussion of
Sganarelle by Lucas and Geronte in scene iv; and scene x, near the end of
the play, where Geronte insists that the doctor must be punished for his mas-
querade. On the other hand, Fielding adds a good deal of material to this
section of the play. Scenes xiii and xiv which depict Gregory's masquerading
to his wife as a French physician and his turning Dorcas over to the mad
doctor, Hellebore, for care are inventions of Fielding and have no parallels
in the French play. He also adds scene xviii to the adaptation where Dorcas
appears at Sir Jasper's to expose her husband, just before the elopement is dis-
covered. Besides the additions and omissions of entire scenes in his handling
of this act of the Molière play, Fielding made several other alterations in his
adaptation. Act III, scene i of the French play which, in the expected chrono-
logical sequence of Le Médecin malgré lui, should be scene xii of Fielding's
adaptation actually becomes, in a condensed form, scene xv. The conversation
between Gregory, James, and Davy in scene xii reproduces, but only in very
broad terms, the second scene of Act III with Sganarelle, Thibaut, and Perrin in Molière's play. Finally, two scenes in the latter part of Fielding's adaptation combine the basic aspects of separate scenes in the Molière play: scene xvi combines scenes v and vi of Act III of *Le Médecin malgré lui*; and scene xix combines scenes viii and ix of that same act.

While Fielding remains much closer to Molière's play in this adaptation than he will later in *The Miser*, he does make several important alterations in the basic construction of the play. Certainly the most obvious of these changes is the transformation of the French farce into a ballad-opera. Rather than implying any criticism of the form of the Molière play, this alteration was undoubtedly undertaken to capitalize on the prevalent popular taste for ballad-opera which followed the production of Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* in 1728. However, this decision is not out of keeping with the spirit of Molière who, as a practicing dramatist writing for a company of actors, did not hesitate to employ forms such as the comédie-ballet, when he felt his audience wanted them. *Les Fâcheux, Le Malade imaginaire*, and *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*, to mention three well-known Molière productions, were all plays, which mingled song and dance with comedy in their presentations. In addition, *Le Médecin malgré lui* does make some use of music itself, for Sganarelle appears singing in the scene where he is chopping wood and drinking out of his little jug. Perhaps this fact gave Fielding part of the idea for turning the French farce into a farcical ballad-opera.
Another reason for the success of Fielding's transformation of the play's form is that the plot of the Molière farce lent itself so well to the traditional plot of the English ballad-opera. In fact, Edgar V. Roberts, in his discussion of the eighteenth-century ballad-opera, suggests that the basic plot of these plays was derived from Molière's farces. Generally, the ballad-opera focused on some aspect of a love intrigue, in which a young couple tried to overcome the opposition of a parent or guardian to their marriage. In the end, the parent was reconciled to the match, often as a result of the hero's discovery that he was a long-lost heir to a large inheritance. Thus, the plot of Le Médecin malgré lui came very close to what Fielding knew his audience expected in the ballad-opera.

The transformation of the play into a ballad-opera naturally worked significant changes on its effect as a stage production. One obvious result of the change in form is that the action of the play, much in the manner of a modern musical comedy, is stopped periodically for a character to step forward and sing a song. Thus, The Mock-Doctor moves a step further away from the illusion of reality than the French farce, although the later is clearly not an attempt at recreating reality. More importantly, however, the movement of the English play is slowed down considerably by these pauses for music, removing some of the marvellous comic effect of the rough-and-tumble pace and rapid-fire dialogue of the Molière play. Finally, because the songs of the ballad-opera were usually given primary importance in these productions, other
dramatic requirements were generally subordinated to them. Often the playwright who aspired to writing successful ballad-operas had to sacrifice considerations of plot and characterization in order to pull his songs into the play. This effect is noticeable at several points in *The Mock-Doctor*, particularly perhaps when Gregory prescribes a song for Leander to sing to Charlotte in scene xvi.

The effects of the ballad-opera form on this play are not as serious, however, in terms of a good adaptation, as the foregoing discussion might suggest. In the first place, Fielding used only nine songs in *The Mock-Doctor*, a much smaller number than he did in his other ballad-operas, so they do not dominate the play as much as might be expected. Secondly, the songs the play contains are sung by only two of the characters, Dorcas and Leander, with Dorcas having the majority of them. Thus, large sections of the play, including most of those scenes where Gregory appears as the mock-doctor, have no songs at all in them, suggesting perhaps that Fielding was at least as interested in capturing the comic effects of the Molière farce as he was in writing a ballad-opera.

Nevertheless, one important difference between the two plays is brought about, at least indirectly, by the ballad-opera’s traditional connection with light satire of contemporary politics, literature and society. Molière’s play contains almost no topical satire. That satire of the medical profession which it does contain is not necessarily of his own times, but rather comes from a long tradition of the satirical treatment of physicians in Western comedy. Fielding, on the other hand, who found it difficult to restrain his impulse toward topical
satire in his plays in general, took advantage of the basic situation of The Mock-
Doctor to direct a number of satiric thrusts at Dr. John Misaubin, a favorite 
butt of contemporary satire. Dr. Misaubin of St. Martin's Lane was a notorious 
London quack of the early eighteenth century. He was born in France, though 
his birth date is unknown, and received his M. D. at the University of Cahors 
in 1687. In 1719, he settled in London where he remained until his death in 
1734. He became a licentiate of the College of Physicians in London, but 
because of his arrogance and methods of practice, became widely described 
and caricatured as a quack. In a scene where Gregory, the mock-doctor, takes 
on the disguise of a French physician to test his wife's virtue, Fielding pokes 
fun at the quack's foreign accent, broken language, over-inflated view of 
himself, and "little peel," his famous specific for all diseases. This scene is 
the funniest of those which Fielding added to the play. Later, when The Mock-
Doctor was published, the author capped this satire with an ironic mock-dedication 
to Dr. John Misaubin in which he stated:

It would be hard to make a more delicate compliment 
to a lady than by dedicating to her the Sixth Satire 
of Juvenal. Such an address must naturally suppose 
she free from all the vices and follies there inveighed 
against. Permit me, therefore, sir, to prefix to a 
farce, wherein Quacks are so cleverly exposed, the 
name of one who will be remembered as an honour to 
his profession, while there is a single practitioner in 
town at whose door there is a lamp in an evening. 

He goes on to sing the praises of the doctor's "Little Pill" and speaks of it as the 
reason other members of the medical profession hate him:
It is this, sir, which has animated the brethren of your faculty against you: that has made them represent one of the greatest men of this age as an illiterate empiric, for which weak effort of their malice you have continually had a very laudable and just contempt.

Fielding concludes his dedication with a wish that the French physician will receive the reward he merits for his work. The tongue-in-cheek pose of this dedication would have been delightfully apparent to any eighteenth-century reader acquainted with the career and methods of the French quack.

In an essay on political allusion in some of Fielding's plays, Sheridan Baker has stated that, for contemporary audiences, The Mock-Doctor probably had a layer of political satire in addition to its satire of Dr. Misabun. By demonstrating that Robert Walpole had been dealt with as "the Great Quack" in other plays and articles of the time, Baker suggests that Gregory, the mock-doctor, would also have brought to mind this much-satirized prime minister. As Fielding became an increasingly outspoken member of the Opposition to Walpole during his dramatic career, this possibility cannot be easily discounted. It is, however, difficult to point to any passage in the play that would clearly establish that Fielding was thinking of this additional layer of political allusion. Whether or not the author was consciously thinking of Walpole in his construction of the play, however, the connection of the great quack and the prime minister was probably one that was often made among an audience particularly responsive to this kind of political allusion in its plays.
Fielding's use of satire in the play, of course, extends beyond the basic mockery of Dr. Misaubin to briefer satiric jabs at medicine in general and other aspects of contemporary life. James, for example, introduces Gregory to Sir Jasper with a sharp comment on the medical profession, "He makes no more of bringing a patient to life than other physicians do of killing him." (Mock-Doctor, vii) Such criticism of doctors is evident also in the character of Dr. Hellebore, which Fielding added to the play, both to further the complication of the plot and to satirize the medical faculty. Gregory has decided to use Dr. Hellebore, a mad doctor who has come to him for consultation in a case of dumbness, to pay Dorcas back for the beating he received at the hands of Harry and James. He tells Dorcas that the gentleman will take her to his lodging, but gives the doctor very different instructions, on the pretext of curing Dorcas of a madness which causes her to think every man her husband:

The first thing, sir, you are to do, is to let out thirty ounces of her blood; then, sir, you are to shave off all her hair; all her hair, sir: after which you are to make a very severe use of your rod twice a day; and take particular care that she have not the least allowance beyond bread and water.

(Mock-Doctor, xiv)

Dr. Hellebore's reply, "Sir, I shall readily agree to the dictates of so great a man; nor can I help approving of your method, which is exceedingly mild and wholesome," together with the fact that he is an accepted member of the medical faculty, broadens the play's satiric thrusts at the profession. In his
Epilogue to the play, Fielding sums up its satire of physicians by pointing to the mock-doctor as being just as competent and ethical as many of the real doctors in London:

    Well, ladies, pray how goes our doctor down?  
    Shall he not e'en be sent for up to town?  
    'Tis such a pleasant and audacious rogue,  
    He'd have a humming chance to be in vogue.  
    What, though no Greek or Latin he command,  
    Since he can talk what none can understand?  
    Ah! there are many such physicians in the land.  
    And what, though he has taken no degrees?  
    No doctor here can better take--his fees.  
    Let none his real ignorance despise,  
    Since he can feel a pulse, and--look extremely wise.  
    Though, like some quack, he shine out in newspapers,  
    He is a rare physician for the vapours.  
    Ah! ladies, in that case, he has more knowledge  
    Than all the ancient fellows of the college.  
    Besides, a double calling he pursues,  
    He writes you bills, and brings you--billet-doux.  
    Doctors, with some, are in small estimation,  
    But pimps, all own are useful to the nation.  
    Physic now slackens, and now hastens death;  
    Pimping's the surest way of giving breath.

The picture of Gregory as no worse than many of the London doctors—and much more useful than they, in some ways—is a telling satiric comment on the state of medicine in eighteenth-century London, as Fielding saw it. There are several other instances in the play of brief satiric jabs at aspects of contemporary life. When Sir Jasper (the Geronte of Le Médecin malgré lui) asks Gregory why he has never heard of those curious drugs he prescribed to Leander for Charlotte, Gregory replies that "they are some, sir, lately discovered by the Royal Society." (Mock-Doctor. xvii) As usual, Fielding could not allow
an occasion for poking fun at the Royal Society to pass by unheeded. Another of the play's typical satiric comments is Gregory's remark in scene i that he acquired his great knowledge by attending a young gentleman at Oxford where he learned "very near as much as his master," the reflection upon the level of education of the modern young gentleman being obvious. (Mock-Doctor. i)

In addition to the changes in the play's basic form and its satiric direction, Fielding also made some alterations in the characters of the play. The most significant of these changes was in the character of Dorcas, Gregory's wife, which is much expanded in the English play. Indeed, every important addition Fielding made to The Mock-Doctor can be traced back to the alterations in the character of Dorcas. Although in the early scenes of the play her part is not greatly expanded in length, it is given more focus because she sings all of the songs in the first four scenes. Later in the play the part is considerably enlarged by the addition of the scenes with Gregory as the French physician and with Dr. Hellebore. In Fielding's play it is actually Dorcas who precipitates the unmasking of the mock-doctor through her anger at him for turning her over to Dr. Hellebore. In the French play, on the other hand, Martine does not reappear until after the revelation that Sganarelle is a fraud who has helped the apothecary steal Geronte's daughter.

The motivation behind Fielding's enlargement of the character of Dorcas was practical rather than literary; he wished to make full use of the talents of the young comic actress, Catherine Rafter. The addition of those two or three
new scenes near the end of the play, for example, was reputedly undertaken at
the request of Miss Raftor who felt her part was too short. Furthermore, the
fact that the majority of the play's songs are sung by Dorcas, suggests that her
talent for singing was perhaps a great influence on the author's decision to
turn the French farce into a ballad-opera. Fielding, in fact, shows his great
admiration for this young actress by singling her out for praise in his preface to

The Mock-Doctor:

But I cannot, when I mention the rising glories
of the theatre, omit one, who, though she owes
little advantage to the part of Dorcas, hath
already convinced the best judges of her admir-
able genius for the stage: she hath sufficiently
shown in the Old Debauchees that her capacity
is not confined to a song; and I dare swear they
will shortly own her able to do justice to char-
acters of a much greater consequence.

Fielding himself was soon to prove the justice of his prediction by creating for
Kitty Raftor the role of Lappet in The Miser, one of her most successful char-
acter roles.

To say that Fielding's alterations in the character of Dorcas stemmed
from practical considerations, however, is not necessarily to deprecate them.
Any good playwright producing plays for a specific company of actors, including
Molière himself, would be likely to make the best use possible of the talents of
his actors and actresses. The scenes which Fielding added to the play to expand
the part of Dorcas are very entertaining ones. It is true that these scenes could
be lifted out of the play rather easily and that the thread of the plot would
still be left intact. However, this kind of episodic construction is not unusual in farce, whose primary end is to entertain; and it was certainly not beyond Molière himself, influenced as he was by the *commedia dell'arte*. On the other hand, the main effect of the enlargement of the character of Dorcas was to take some of the focus off the character of the mock-doctor. Gregory is forced to compete in ingenuity, deviousness, and greed with his wife, so that what the audience gains in the portrayal of Dorcas, it in some sense loses in the development of the sham doctor.

Ultimately, Dorcas is a less sympathetic character than Martine of *Le Médecin malgré lui*, perhaps because she is drawn more fully. In the French play, although we love Sganarelle for his eternal comic equilibrium and his healthy animal spirits, we feel some sympathy for the frustrated Martine. In spite of her shrewishness, she does have a pretty hard life and has perhaps been dealt worse than she deserves. As the play is a farce, this sympathy, of course, is not allowed to dominate our view of her, but it does exist under the surface of our reaction and keeps us from really taking sides in the quarrel between the husband and wife. With Dorcas, on the contrary, we feel not only that she has got what she deserves, but also that she was lucky to find Gregory. Thus her shrewishness and her greed become in a sense less excusable than Martine's. This change in attitude toward the character is effected partly by Dorcas' tendency to put on airs about herself, and partly by her frank self-revelations of her
real character. The first of these aspects of her character is illustrated in the opening song Dorcas sings in the play:

When a lady, like me, condescends to agree
To let such a jackanapes taste her,
With what zeal and care should he worship the fair,
Who gives him—what's meat for his master?
His actions should still
Attend on her will,
Hear, sirrah, and take it for warning;
To her he should be
Each night on his knee,
And so he should be on each morning.

(Mock-Doctor. i)

Dorcas continues this affectation of great worth and virtue throughout the play. In the scene where Gregory tries to test her virtue in the disguise of the French doctor, she discovers just in time that it is her husband. Her reaction to his proposition quickly changes, and she speaks with the voice of outraged innocence:

"Do you dare affront my virtue, you villain? Do you think the world should bribe me to part with my virtue, my dear virtue? There, take your purse again" (Mock-Doctor. xiii). On the other hand, when Dorcas is alone she gives a quite different picture of her character. In Gregory's speech following the song quoted above, he states explicitly what was only hinted at in the French play, that Dorcas was not a virgin when he married her:

Meat for my master! you were meat for your master, if I ain't mistaken; for, to one of our shames be it spoken, you rose as good a virgin from me as you went to bed. Come, come, madam, it was a lucky day for you when you found me out.

(Mock-Doctor. i)
Dorcas herself establishes the truth of his accusation in her soliloquy of scene vi, where she is contemplating the delights of her revenge on Gregory:

I don't remember my heart has gone so pit-a-pat with joy a long while.--Revenge is surely the most delicious morsel the devil ever dropped into the mouth of a woman. And this is a revenge which costs nothing; for alack-a-day! to plant horns upon a husband's head is more dangerous than is imagined:--Odd! I had a narrow escape when I met with this fool; the best of my market was over, and I began to grow almost as cheap as a cracked China-cup.

(Mock-Doctor. vi)

Following this revelation of her reason for marrying Gregory, she sings a cynical song about feminine virtue, a song reworked from The Grub-Street Opera and perhaps the best one in this play:

A woman's ware, like China,
Now cheap, now dear is bought;
When whole, though worth a guinea,
When broke's not worth a groat.

A woman, at St. James's,
With hundreds you obtain;
But stay 'till lost her fame is,
She'll be cheap in Drury Lane.

(Mock-Doctor. vi)

Thus, Dorcas's frankness about her sexual incontinence as well as her view of Gregory as a "puffed-up fool" (Mock-Doctor. xx) who was silly enough to marry her, gives Fielding's Dorcas a slightly different character from Molière's Martine, though she is still a very effective comic creation.
One additional change that Fielding made in the characters of his adaptation has to do with the group of rustic characters Molière included in his play, Lucas and his wife Jacqueline, and Thibaut and Perrin. Fielding made some changes in the role of each of these characters. Perhaps the most important of these alterations is the deletion of the character of the nurse, Jacqueline, completely. The motivation behind this change was probably the removal of the very explicitly sexual dialogue and by-play of the scenes between the nurse and Sganarelle, which the author, in all likelihood, did not want to take a chance on after his audience's reaction to his earlier plays that season. It may also have been related to an assumption that the part was no longer necessary with the expansion of the role of Dorcas, or even to a fear that the nurse's role might detract from that of Dorcas. It is strange, however, that the scene where the nurse expresses her common-sense view of Lucinde's illness was not retained in some way in the adaptation, as her views are so close to those of the author. This is one of the few times that Fielding would pass up an opportunity to express his views on love and money and their relationship to happiness in marriage.

While it is understandable that Fielding found it necessary to remove these scenes from his adaptation, his decision does eliminate some delightful comic scenes from the play—-Sganarelle's attempts to examine the nurse's breast, his repeated embrace of Jacqueline in congratulations to Lucas on such a fine wife, his attempt at using preventive medicine on the nurse, and their conver-
sation denouncing Lucas as a husband which the latter overhears. In addition to the loss of these great comic scenes, the characterization of the mock-doctor also loses some of its healthy animality in the English version where these scenes are removed. The only aspect of the nurse's scenes which is retained is Gregory's attempt to treat Charlotte's maid by prescribing sugar lumps to prevent disease. There are, however, no sexual undertones here at all, and the scene has very little in common with the original, other than the idea of using preventive medicine, supposedly as a means for the doctor to collect more fees.

The other peasant characters of the Molière play are included in the English play, but in an altered form. Perhaps the most significant general transformation of these characters is in the elimination of all the comic dialect of the French play. In Le Médecin malgré lui the humor of the character of Lucas stems largely from his peasant dialect, filled with homely sayings, bad grammar, and malapropisms. Much of the comedy of the scenes where Lucas and Valère are searching for the great doctor comes from the contrast between the rustic dialect of Lucas and the language of Valère who is a more educated household servant. In Fielding's play Lucas and Valère are replaced by Harry and James who are not differentiated between linguistically. James also functions later in the play to bring Davy, the Thibaut of Le Médecin malgré lui, to see Gregory about his wife's illness. Thus, he takes the part of Perrin in that scene from the French play. This scene is greatly condensed in The Mock-Doctor, perhaps because Fielding agreed, along with so many later
critics, that interest at this point in the Molière play begins to weaken. Whatever his motivation may have been, the author, in his adaptation of these characters, once again omitted the humorous peasant dialect of the Molière characters.

In the French farce, Thibaut, in particular, uses language filled with malapropisms. He states his wife's disease as "hypocrisie" rather than "hydropisie." One long passage, in which he describes his wife's condition, admirably illustrates his comic misuse of language:

Oui, c'est-à-dire quelle est enflée par tout; et l'an dit que c'est quantité de sériostés quelle à dans le corps, et que son foie, son ventre, ou sa rate, comme vous voudrais l'appeler, au glieu de faire du sang, ne fait plus que de l'iou. Alle a, de deux jours l'un, le fièvre quotidienne, avec des lassitudes et des douleurs dans les mufles des jambes. On entend dans sa gorge des fleumes qui sont tout prêts a l'étouffer, et par fois il lui prend des syncoles et des conversions, que je crains quelle est passée. J'avons dans notre village un apothicaire, révérence parler, qui li a donne je ne sai combien d'histoires; et il me'en coûte près d'une douzaine de bons écus en lavements, ne v's en déplaise, en apostumes qu'on li a fait prendre, en infections de jacinthe, et en portions cordales.4

(Médecin. III.i)

Besides the obviously bad grammar of Thibaut's speech, this passage indicates the effective use of comic malapropisms—sériostés for sériostés, mufles for muscles, fleumes for flègmes, syncoles and conversions for syncopes and convulsions, apostumes for apozèmes and infections and portions cordales for infusions and potions cordales. Fielding eliminates this comic use of language
in his portrait of Davy, as he does the use of uneducated, rustic dialect with all of his peasant characters.

In his portrait of the mock-doctor, Gregory, Fielding retains most of the characterization of Molière's Sganarelle. Gregory has the same cleverness and adaptability to all situations that the French wood-cutter displays. In this sense, he remains the consummate role-player, adopting the roles of the educated man quoting Aristotle to his wife or Hippocrates to his employer, the most ethical of businessmen quoting prices to perspective customers, the selfless healer refusing to degrade his profession by helping Leander, the French physician trying to make a cuckold of himself and of course the famous but eccentric doctor performing miraculous cures. Fielding also reproduces most of the scenes which emphasize Gregory's greed and acquisitiveness: the sudden discovery that he is, after all, a doctor when the messengers mention a reward, the about-face in his attitude toward Leander's problem when he is given a purse of money, and his pretense of not being able to understand Davy's explanation of his errand until he receives his fee. The only important scene in *Le Médecin malgré lui* emphasizing greediness which Fielding omits is the one where Sganarelle refuses to take Geronte's money, though doing so all the while, and then has the audacity to ask if the coins are full weight. Fielding mentions that Sir Jasper gives money to Gregory but drops the rest of the scene's comic by-play. With the exception of a few instances, however, Fielding does retain most of the great comic gags involving Sganarelle, the joke about changing the place of the heart, his bewildered
wondering if he has become a doctor without knowing it, his facile use of Latin once he ascertains that no one present knows the language, his comment to Lucas and Valère that he has not found their mistress' tongue, his beating Geronte to make him a physician, and his amazement that anyone should refuse to have a dumb wife.

Undoubtedly the most significant difference in Fielding's portrait of the mock-doctor is in the muting of the boisterous, animalistic qualities of his nature. Molière's Sganarelle is natural, elemental man, revelling in the life of the senses and uninhibited by the conventions of the society around him. His rowdy enjoyment of life is centered on sensual gratification, enhanced by an ability to take circumstances however they come and make the best of them.\(^5\) This aspect of the character is removed almost completely from *The Mock-Doctor*. The slapstick roughness of Sganarelle is toned down by a considerable reduction in the number of actual beatings in the play. More important, perhaps, all references to Sganarelle's drunkenness are deleted. Thus, the adaptation loses that marvellous comic scene where Sganarelle sings to his little jug, including the very effective stage business of his trying to keep the jug away from Lucas and Valère whom he suspects of trying to steal it when they bow. Finally, through the elimination of the character of the nurse, the sexual vitality and openness of Sganarelle are removed from the character of Gregory. The muting of this aspect of Molière's mock-doctor creates the most significant difference between the two characters.

In still another sense, the character of Gregory is dampened somewhat
by the increased emphasis on Dorcas and her compétition with him. In the end Gregory is not quite as likeable as Sganarelle, perhaps because he does not seem as vital and clever a man. One indication of this change in attitude is that, while in the Molière play Sganarelle is given the last word and allowed to assert his triumph over his wife and life in general, Dorcas is allowed the last word in Fielding's play and pokes fun at Gregory's pretensions calling him a "puffed-up fool." (Mock-Doctor. xx)

In viewing the basic changes in the character of the mock-doctor, particularly those changes which modify his essentially animalistic, sensual nature, we can locate a major reason for the difference between the two plays in tone and atmosphere. There is a prevailing elemental, even bestial, quality about the Molière farce that is carefully refined away in Fielding's ballad-opera. The dampening of the strong sexual bent of Sganarelle's character, already mentioned, by deleting the scenes with the nurse is one aspect of this change. While it is true Fielding does retain some sexual undertones in the character of Dorcas, it is the artificial, conventionalized sex of the Restoration, rather than the natural, instinctual sex of Molière's farce. Sex in The Mock-Doctor is spoken of in terms of cuckoldry, revenge, and trickery, the weapon a woman can use against her husband if she is clever and careful enough. In three of Dorcas' first four songs, Restoration attitudes come through, although the songs function as light satire on both Dorcas and the society she is emulating. In the first, "When a lady, like me, condescends to agree," Dorcas is affecting
the attitudes and the airs of a fashionable lady of quality. Her third song "In
Ancient days I've heard with horns," is a satiric comment on the state of mar-
riage in a society where cuckoldom is so common that a wife can no longer use
it to threaten her husband. Finally, in her fourth song, "A woman's ware, like
China," Dorcas makes specific use of the metaphorical connection between female
virtue and china so popular in the Restoration comedies. The ballad automatically
brings to mind the famous china scene in Wycherley's Country Wife with its teas-
ing use of sexual innuendo. Thus, the sexual tone that does exist in Fielding's
adaptation is quite different in nature from the natural animal vitality of
Molière's Sganarelle. One suspects that Fielding's audience would have been
quite dismayed at the overt sexual nature of, for example, the scene where
Sganarelle repeatedly tried to fondle the breast of Jacqueline, the nurse.

Along with the muting of the sexual tone of Molière's play, Fielding
also eliminated much of the coarseness and brutality of his original. One way
in which he accomplished this effect was to remove all scatological references
from the French farce when he adapted it. An excellent illustration of this
kind of deletion is the removal of this dialogue where Sganarelle is questioning
Geronte about his daughter's symptoms:

Sganarelle. Va-t-elle où vous savez?
Geronte. Oui
Sganarelle. Copieusement?
Geronte. Je n'entends rien à cela.
Sganarelle. La matière est-elle louable?
Geronte. Je ne me connois pas à ces choses.

(Médecin. II.iv)
Another example of Fielding's deletion of the same kind of scatological material is Sganarelle's response to Geronte later in the play when he asks where the physician has been, "Je m'étais amusé dans votre cour à expulser le superflu de la boisson." (Médecin, III.v)

In addition to removing the sexual and scatological elements of the French play, Fielding also cut down considerably on the amount of brutal and violent materials in his adaptation. His play omits much of the rough-and-tumble stage business of the French farce. As mentioned earlier in connection with the changes in the character of Sganarelle, there are fewer beatings in The Mock-Doctor then in Le Médecin malgré lui. Mr. Robert, for example, is only threatened in Fielding's play, whereas he is beaten by both Sganarelle and Martine in Molière's farce. Fielding also deletes the incident where Lucas berates his wife for her outspoken attitude toward Geronte, punctuating his speech by striking Geronte repeatedly on the chest with his forefinger. In this same light, it is interesting to note that Martine actually bumps into Lucas and Valère at the beginning of the play rather than their coming to ask her for information. This unexpected jolt characteristically sets the plot of the Molière play in operation. The same kind of violent action is illustrated in another scene which Fielding removed, the scene where Sganarelle tries to examine the nurse's breasts. Lucas, her husband, grabs Sganarelle violently and spins him around; this action is comically repeated when Jacqueline grabs her husband
and spins him around in the same manner, saying that she can take care of herself.

The foregoing discussion of the material omitted in The Mock-Doctor suggests an even broader, and perhaps more important, fact about the English adaptation. The play contains a good deal less of the elaborate rough-and-tumble stage play than its model. Besides the scenes already mentioned, Fielding also deletes Sganarelle's hugging scene with Jacqueline and Lucas, his little jug scene with Lucas and Valère, his falling over the chair as he rattles off his fake Latin, and his elaborate attempts to divert Geronte's attention from what Lucinde and Leandre are doing. What these deletions suggest is that Fielding cut down considerably on those aspects of Molière's farce which might be traced back to the dual influence of the commedia dell'arte and the traditional French farce. A more specific description, perhaps, of what the adaptation accomplishes might be the removal of the elaborate use of gesture and the reliance on gesture to convey character that so clearly tie Molière's farce to the Italian comedy. Because the commedia dell'arte was played in masks, it relied heavily upon gesture as a means of conveying character. Influenced as it was by this tradition and by that of the French farce, Le Médecin malgré lui uses gesture and boisterous stage-play almost more than actual dialogue to draw the character of Sganarelle. On the contrary, in the Fielding play, nearly all this use of gesture to define character disappears. One sign of this change is the loss of the elaborate stage directions for how Sganarelle is to play
so many of the scenes. Perhaps the most pictorial example of how Fielding has transformed this aspect of the French farce occurs in the third act of the play when Sganarelle appears with the apothecary at Geronte's house. When Geronte asks who the man with him is, Sganarelle keeps making the motions of an apothecary giving an enema until Geronte finally understands. This situation, where the entire meaning is communicated by gesture without the use of dialogue, is omitted from Fielding's adaptation of the play.

In viewing the general effect of Fielding's adaptation of The Mock-Doctor, it seems clear that the adaptor has slowed down considerably the pace of the French farce, in which events occur with such boisterous rapidity. The ballad-opera form, of course, contributes to this slower pace, as does the elimination of so much of Molière's rough-and-tumble action. Even the condensation of passages of dialogue in the adaptation, however, add to this slowing-down effect. By shortening so many of the scenes, Fielding often destroys the culminating effect of those passages of staccato dialogue which Molière used so effectively to push his scenes on toward a climax. An excellent example of this effect in Molière is the quarrel between Sganarelle and Martine at the end of Act I, scene i where the rapid cross-fire of name-calling eventually climaxes in a beating for Martine. When Fielding condensed this dialogue, he also lost most of the effect of headlong speed which the French scene contains.

In spite of the aforementioned changes in the tone of The Mock-Doctor, however, Fielding still remains relatively close to his original in this adaptation.
He reproduces nearly all of the famous comic gags of Molière's Sganarelle and is basically true to that character in his development of Gregory. Nor does he make the kind of drastic changes in the structure of the play that he will later in his adaptation of L'Avare. His basic alteration is the careful refining out of the prevailing elemental tone of the French play. Thus, Fielding's first adaptation followed its model closely enough to be assured of sharing in the success of the original. Its edge of satire, the fine comic portraits of Gregory and Dorcas, and the marvellous comic gags of Molière all contributed to place the play among the most successful and popular of Fielding's career.
Notes to Chapter II

1 All references to The Mock-Doctor are taken from Henry Fielding, *The Mock-Doctor; or the Dumb Lady Cur'd, a Comedy done from Molière* (London: J. Watts, 1732).


5 In Molière and the Comedy of Intellect, Judd D. Hubert has explained this aspect of Sganarelle's character in more psychological terms by describing him as a man with no trace of superego, who "behaves like an undiluted id who simply revels in all the creature comforts" (Berkeley: U. of California, 1962), p. 156.
CHAPTER III

THE MISER: AN ADAPTATION OF MOLIÈRE'S L'AVARE

In the preface to The Mock-Doctor in 1732, Fielding had indicated a desire to adapt other of Molière's comedies for the English stage. Encouraged by the success of that first adaptation, he turned, the following year, to a more difficult literary undertaking, a five-act comedy based on Molière's L'Avare.

Fielding's The Miser, which opened at the Theatre-Royal in Drury Lane on February 17, 1733, had a long first run of twenty-six nights. It was one of the most commercially successful and most popular of the Fielding plays, a striking fact considering that Fielding's other successful and popular plays were invariably dramatic satires, burlesques, and farces. The Miser was, in fact, the only regular five-act comedy of the author to achieve any real contemporary success. Furthermore, its interest to the play-going public continued long beyond that first run, for the play was revived often during the author's lifetime and remained among the stock-pieces of the English theater well into the nineteenth century. One testimony to its continuing popularity is the fact that Frederick Lawrence, in his biography of Fielding, published in 1855, records a performance of the play as recently as 1854.¹ It was the only Fielding play, other than The Tragedy of Tragedies, which remained popular after the author's
death. Undoubtedly, one of the primary reasons for the play's continued appearance on the boards was the opportunity which the character of Lovegold offered for displaying the power of a talented actor. Among its most famous eighteenth-century representatives were the great comic actors, Ned Shuter and Charles Macklin. In addition to being a successful stage play, however, The Miser was also an evident success for the printer and bookseller. The five editions and numerous printings of the play during Fielding's lifetime, as well as the many reprintings after his death, attest to the play's lasting popularity with eighteenth-century readers.

As a literary production The Miser has generally been rated high among Fielding's dramas, particularly his other serious comedies. While it is perhaps difficult to go along with his over-exuberant admirers who prefer this play to the original, it is nevertheless possible to see in The Miser, more so than in his other comedies, evidences of the comic characterization and structure that the great comic novels are built upon. Even among the Victorians, who did not approve of the morality of much of Fielding's drama, this play retained a high place. Lawrence, one Victorian biographer who rails incessantly at the indecencies in Fielding's plays, wrote of The Miser, "Upon this play mainly rests his permanent fame as a dramatist." He later goes on to remark, "Had he ceased to write altogether after the production of this play, his name would always be remembered in connection with the literature of the stage." Perhaps a more tempered evaluation of the literary merit of the play, however, comes
from a French contemporary of Fielding, Voltaire, in his life of Molière.

Voltaire was evidently acquainted with the Fielding adaptation and wrote of it:

M. Fielding, meilleur poète (que Shadwell) et plus modeste, a traduit l'Avare et l'a fait jouer à Londres. Il y a ajouté réellement quelques beautés de dialogue particulières à sa nation, et sa pièce a eu près de trente représentations, succès très rare à Londres, où les pièces qui ont le plus de cours ne sont jouées tout au plus que quinze fois.\(^3\)

Considering Fielding's own statements on his role as translator in the preface to The Mock-Doctor, as well as the hopes expressed at the end of the prologue to this play, it would seem that Voltaire's statement on the play might be the kind of evaluation its author himself wished for. The prologue to The Miser expresses the hope that the play's critics will grant that the author has not "injured the French author's cause," for "he must be safe, if he has saved Molière."\(^4\) Voltaire, at least, seems to have felt Fielding did succeed in making the play English without destroying the essential qualities of the original.

Although, in the dedication of the play to the Duke of Richmond, Fielding does call himself "the translator" of Molière's play, The Miser could hardly be termed a translation in any strict sense of the word. Fielding allowed himself a great deal more liberty in his adaptation of L'Avare than he had taken in the earlier adaptation of Le Médecin malgré lui, even though he did change the form of that play. In The Miser Fielding makes significant alterations in
the plot and characterization of the French play, adding some scenes and characters and omitting others, so that the finished play is actually quite different, in many respects, from the original. From the changes he made, as well as from the aspects of Molière's play that he retained, we can learn much about Fielding the comic dramatist, not only about what he thought comedy should be but, also, of how he was molded, even limited, by the theatrical requirements and traditions of his own time.

The table in Appendix II indicates the basic outline of Fielding's practice in his adaptation of L'Avaré. In the English play, the first act is lengthened somewhat by the addition of three scenes involving the servants, Ramilie, Lappet, and Wheedle, at the beginning of the play. Scenes iv through ix of Act I follow the same progression as the five scenes of the first act of Molière's play, the only difference being that Fielding divides Molière's long fourth scene into two scenes. After Frederick learns of his father's intention to marry Mariana and leaves the stage in confusion in scene vii, Fielding begins a new scene for Lovegold's revelation to Harriet of his marriage plans for her. In the French play both of these revelations are included in scene iv. As in the first act, Fielding reproduces nearly all of Act II of L'Avaré, the only omission being the very brief third scene in which Harpagon and Frosine each have one speech. Thus, his main change in the structure of the act is the addition of two scenes, iii and iv, which reveal the characters and relationships of Mariana, Harriet, and Frederick. From this point in the play, however, the parallels in
the adaptation become much more complex and difficult to trace with Fielding often combining small parts of several Molière scenes into one scene or reproducing only a part of a scene from the original. In Act III several of his scenes do not appear at all in his model—the brief opening scene between Frederick and Clermont, the meeting of Ramlie and Lappet in scene iv, scenes viii through xi in which Lovegold tries to arrange his marriage with Mariana while all the young people try to dissuade her from it, and Clermont's soliloquy in scene xiii. The remainder of the scenes in Fielding's third act retain varying amounts of material from L'Avare. Scene ii contains Harpagon's caution to Cléante to be nice to Mariane from scene i of L'Avare. However, the rest of that scene, together with Molière's second scene, is included in scene iii of the English play. Fielding's fifth scene contains brief parts of scenes v, vi, and vii of L'Avare: the spectacles and stars exchange between Harpagon and Mariane, Harpagon's description of his children as weeds that have grown too quickly, the gift of Harpagon's diamond ring offered by Cléante, and the latter's having ordered costly refreshments for the guests in his father's name. There are only two additional brief parallels in Act III of The Miser: the opening speech of scene xii in which Lovegold instructs Clermont about saving as much as possible of the food is taken from Act III, scene ix of L'Avare, and perhaps Lovegold's reference to disinheriting his children was inspired by Act IV, scene v of that play. Very little of the last two acts of Molière's play remains in the adaptation. In fact, only three scenes are reproduced. Act IV,
scenes xv and xvi of The Miser parallel Act IV, scenes vi and vii of the French comedy in which we first see Ramilie with the miser's treasure and then hear Lovegold's soliloquy on his terrible loss. The only scene of Act V of L'Avare which Fielding retains is scene iii in which Lovegold and Clermont confuse the miser's daughter and his money. This exchange becomes scene xi of Act V in the English play. The remainder of these two acts is taken up by material of Fielding's own invention which works out the complicated intrigue of the play.

Before discussing the details of Fielding's adaptation of Molière, however, it is necessary to settle the question of Plautus in relation to The Miser. The title page of the first edition of the play refers to The Miser as "A Comedy Taken from Plautus and Molière." As Fielding was undoubtedly acquainted with Plautus' Aulularia, it is a significant question whether he was simply referring to Molière's basing his play on Plautus or whether he indeed went directly to the Latin play for some of his materials. A close perusal of all three plays will indicate that the former alternative is correct. In the first place, Fielding does not restore any of the basic changes that Molière made in the Plautus play. Euclio, the miser of Aulularia, is a poor man who has acquired his treasure accidentally; he lives wretchedly and does not engage in financial transactions. Nor is he involved in any love intrigue in the play. As another important point of contrast, surviving resumes of the play suggest that this miser softens at the end, not only giving up his daughter to Lyconides but also throwing in the pot of gold as her dowry. Another significant difference is the single set
of lovers in this play. Euclio has no son; in fact, even his daughter, Phaedria, never appears on stage. All we hear of her presence are her cries of childbirth coming from off-stage at the end of the play. While the usual comic Oedipal overtones exist in the competition between Lyconides and his uncle for the girl, the tone is much different than in the two later plays. Megadorus is not portrayed as a repulsive man or lover, and he willingly gives up the girl when he learns what the situation is. In all of these basic alterations, as well as in many minor ones, Fielding follows Molière's lead.

Secondly, it is clear after studying each of the plays that those characteristics of Fielding's play which might have a basis in Plautus are also included in L'Avare, and in a form much closer to the English play. Most of these borrowings are actions or speeches which develop the character of the miser: his fear and suspicion, his stinginess, his accusations to servants about spying on him and telling neighbors things about him, his hearing noises near the place where his treasure is buried, his insistence on no dowry for his daughter, his trying to cut down expenses for the wedding feast, and his soliloquy when he has lost his gold. Other aspects that are copied in both plays are the complex misunderstanding about the girl and the gold and the fact that the gold has been stolen by a servant and is eventually returned. In general then, Fielding is claiming Plautus' Aulularia as a source for his play only as the Latin play comes through Molière's L'Avare. There is no evidence that anything in Fielding's The Miser came directly from Plautus' play.
This evaluation is further borne out by the structure and tone of the three plays. Plautus' play is a very elemental comedy. It is brutal in its subject matter, which involves rape, beatings, the cries of childbirth, and threats of cutting out tongues, digging out eyes, and hanging. It is also elemental in its emphasis on the relationship between hidden gold and marriage, exploiting all the sexual connotations. Moreover, in a more significant way, it keeps very close to the basic comic myth. Its comic resolution is clearly the triumph of abundance over poverty, fertility over sterility, youth over old age. In addition, the presence of Euclio's household god gives the denouement the aura of divine sanction or grace so often connected with the comic resolution. The part the god plays in the plot of the play creates a sense of divine will working itself out in the resolution. Molière moves away from this kind of elemental comedy in several ways, though he does retain some of the roughness in the action and of the sexual suggestiveness of the hidden treasure-marriage relationship. Most important, however, he maintains some feeling of the elemental comic myth in the much-maligned denouement of his play. Early in the play, we hear of Élise's narrow escape from drowning, through Valère's heroic efforts. Later, this situation is echoed over and over as we hear of four more people saved from the same fate. By the end of the play five people have been miraculously saved and, perhaps more miraculously, brought together at a specific house in a city far from their original home. The resolution is not particularly believable, but it is comedy, a comedy that remains close to
the comic denouement's mythic connections with miracle and grace. Fielding does away with this entire situation in his play and thus moves it, in tone and structure, a good deal further from Plautus than did Molière. Although Molière did not, of course, get the actual situation for his denouement from Plautus, his play does remain closer to Plautus' *Aulularia* in tone and structure. Fielding's characters, for the most part, save themselves through their own cleverness and thus create a very different tone and structure from the two earlier plays.

When Fielding assumed the task of adapting Molière's play for the English stage, he evidently felt the need to make certain major alterations in that play in order to insure its success. In spite of his admiration for Molière as a comic dramatist, Fielding did change the basic construction of the French play in the course of his work. Undoubtedly the basic differences between the two plays stem from the way in which Fielding reworked Molière's plot structure. As this aspect of *L'Avare* has generally been considered its weakest point, Fielding may have felt he was actually improving upon the French play. On the other hand, because the plot changes do move *The Miser* closer to the Restoration tradition, a tradition on which Fielding模特led his earlier five-act comedies, it may be that Fielding was simply trying to fit the play into the accepted comic tradition of his theater. Whichever motivation prevailed, the literary result was to bring *The Miser* nearer in plot structure to Restoration comedy. In *L'Avare* the central action reveals a prevailing vice gradually breaking up a family circle. The members of this family circle seem powerless
to control their situations and are, in fact, saved only by incredible good fortune. In *The Miser*, however, Fielding completely transforms this basic flow of events by building his plot on a complicated series of intrigues. Thus, the focus of the plot becomes the attempt on the part of the other characters in the play to cheat Lovegold, the Harpagon of Molière's play, out of as much of his money as possible.

This plot transformation is accomplished mainly by a change in the roles of two characters in the play. Most significantly, the passive and suffering Mariane of the French play becomes a self-sufficient, scheming coquette. Captivated by the idea of a rich sixty-year-old lover, she carefully surveys her situation and decides to put his foolishness to good use. She plays her part so well that she actually convinces everyone in the play that she wants to marry Lovegold. In fact, she is so successful that she fools the audience as well; the revelation of her real intent to Lappet near the end of the fifth act comes as a surprise to everyone. By this time, however, she has tricked Lovegold into signing a marriage contract in which he will forfeit ten thousand pounds if he refuses to go through with the wedding. The fifth act of the play dramatizes the process of convincing Lovegold to forfeit the money in order to protect himself against Mariana's extravagance.

Another basic character change which further complicates this central intrigue is the transformation of Molière's Frosine into the maid, Lappet. In *L'Avare*, Frosine plays the part of a marriage broker and arranges the initial
agreement between Harpagon and Mariane's mother. However, she takes a less active part in the action as the play moves forward, and her final scheme to save the young lovers is never put into action. Lappet, on the other hand, has a much larger part in The Miser. She is, in fact, more at the center of the play than is Mariana.

Aside from any artistic considerations, one reason for the size of Lappet's role, as well as its specific characteristics, lies in the fact that it was tailor-made for Fielding's favorite comic actress, Miss Rafter. Kitty Rafter excelled in the role of the clever, vain chambermaid and probably stole the stage in this play as she had before in similar roles.

In The Miser Lappet is a supreme example of the intriguing chambermaid, completely carried away with her ability to arrange other people's lives. She is, as Ramilie says later in the play, "the glory of all chambermaids" (Miser. III.iv). She underlines her vanity in speeches like the one to Mariana toward the play's end:

But, truly, I can never be made amends for all the pains I have taken on your account. Were I to receive a single guinea a lie for every one I have told this day, it would make me a pretty tolerable fortune. Ah! madam, what a pity it is that a woman of my excellent talents should be confined to so low a sphere of life as I am! Had I been born a great lady, what a deal of good should I have done in the world!

(Miser. V.xvi)
Earlier in the play she has bragged to Frederick in a similar manner:

Alas! sir, I never did any thing yet so effectually, but that I have been capable of undoing it; nor have I ever said any thing so positively, but that I have been able as positively to unsay it again. As for truth, I have neglected it so long, that I often forget which side of the question it is of. Besides, I look on it to be so very insignificant towards success, that I am indifferent whether it is for me or against me.

(Miser. IV.iii)

The competition between her excessive vanity and a good dose of healthy self-interest keeps her shifting sides throughout the play. At the outset, she is busily arranging the match between Lovegold and Mariana, as well as managing the details of the intrigue between Clermont and Harriet (Élise and Valère of L'Avare). In this capacity, she follows the basic maneuvers of Frosine, primarily because she feels a young wife will always have expensive secrets to hide from an old husband. Halfway through the play, however, she decides, on the strength of a purse of guineas, that her interest lies with Frederick's cause, so she abruptly shifts sides and undoes what she has already arranged. Unfortunately, an unexpected shift in the plot reverses the situation once again. At this point Mariana reveals her strategy to Lappet, which the maid, of course, pretends to have known all along; and they plot the final defeat of Lovegold together. Although all of Lappet's intrigues have proven ineffectual, she does actually bring about the happy resolution of Mariana's plot. By pretending to side with Lovegold, she convinces the miser that she will swear Mariana has
stolen the ten thousand pounds from him. On this pretext, the money is given to Mariana, and Lappet finally tells the truth.

One additional complication of the play's intrigue grows indirectly out of the character of Lappet through her relationship to Ramilie, Frederick's valet. Ramilie, who has a larger part than Molière's La Fière, is engaged to Mrs. Lappet. He both admires her ingenuity and knows how to circumvent her anger through flattery. However, he does become piqued at her constant bragging about her cleverness, particularly about the match she is making between Lovegold and Mariana. When he sees his master's distress over the loss of Mariana, he decides to help him out of his situation and at the same time put down Mrs. Lappet. Seeing Lappet talking to Lovegold, he assumes she is still promoting the match with Mariana. Thus, after she leaves, Ramilie goes to Lovegold and in a series of very vague statements tells him that everything Lappet has said is a lie. Unfortunately, this is precisely the point where Lappet has reversed her original position, so that the plot comes full circle through Ramilie's interference.

These basic alterations in the plot structure make Fielding's play clearly different from Molière's, as well as a good deal longer. Simply in terms of general tone, the new structure works noticeable changes. The atmosphere of plotting and cleverness, particularly when so much of it is ineffectual, weakens the insidious, threatening qualities of the central vice of L'Avare. A situation which can be attacked in this way, where characters can bump up against each other, make mistakes and still finally succeed, cannot create as terrifying an
impression as one in the face of which characters seem impotent. Furthermore, at the conclusion of Fielding's play, the characters do triumph over Lovegold. In spite of his threat about a law suit, we know that he cannot retrieve his ten thousand pounds. Although he does recover the three thousand guineas which were stolen, he has been defeated; he has forfeited the money from the marriage contract. His condition is quite different from that of Harpagon who not only recovers his money but marries his children at no expense to himself and acquires a new suit in the bargain. Moreover, in L'Avare, Harpagon seemingly excludes himself from the festivities of the comic resolution by his over-riding love for his money. Lovegold, on the other hand, seems to be forced out of the comic resolution by the actions of the other characters. He is a defeated character; and, as he leaves the stage threatening revenge Frederick dismisses him in one sentence and he is forgotten.

It is undoubtedly the alterations in plot structure which are the basis for those appraisals of Fielding's play by certain critics who have ranked it above L'Avare. What these changes actually have done, however, is bring the play closer to the Restoration models which Fielding must have, consciously or unconsciously, had in mind. In Molière's play a realistic plot unfolds, which can only be solved by an artificial ending. In this play character conditions plot in two senses. First, it determines the actual plot structure and development because the play is centered on the revelation of the character of the miser. Thus, scenes which might at first seem comparatively unrelated to each
other—the loan, the preparations for the dinner party, the gift of the ring, and
the soliloquy on the stolen cashbox—are tied together in a coherent plot as
revelations of the character of Harpagon. Secondly, character conditions plot
in the sense that the plot must remain within the probabilities of the established
characterizations. If the plight of the characters cannot be resolved realistically
without violating the already established essentials of the characterization, then
the comic resolution must be brought about artificially by a manipulation of the
external circumstances of these characters. In contrast, The Miser, following
the Restoration tradition, develops a more artificial intrigue for its plot, which
finally works itself out to a logical conclusion. It is interesting to note that
Fielding, in his comic novels, moved closer toward the type of plot in the
Molière play. Perhaps the most valid comment about Fielding’s altered plot
structure is that it does not make The Miser a better play so much as a dif-
ferent kind of play from its French model. L’Avare is, in terms of its basic
structure, closer than The Miser to the comic myth and romantic comedy, be-
cause of the artificial but miraculous quality of its triumph over avarice and
old age.

Several other plot alterations, generally brought about by this basic
change in the nature of the play, are important for a clear picture of what
Fielding has done in his adaptation. In the first place, he opens the play
differently. The first three scenes of The Miser, scenes which have no parallel
in L’Avare, take place between Lappet and Ramilie, who are joined in scene ii
by Mariana's maid, Mrs. Weedle. Under the guise of filling Mrs. Weedle in on the family gossip, Ramilie and Lappet reveal how the relationship between Clermont and Harriet has developed and also give the first indications of Lovegold's miserliness. At the same time, Mrs. Weedle draws a clear picture of the character of her mistress, Mariana. Thus, the exposition of the opening situation is accomplished in a smoother, more realistic way than in Molière. In spite of the skill with which Molière handles an awkward situation, the opening scenes of L'Avare still convey some impression that two people are telling each other what they already know for the sake of the audience who must be enlightened about the situation.

This new opening also reveals much about the characters of the servants themselves. The Lappet-Ramilie relationship, as introduced in these scenes, comes to function in the play as a kind of double plot. Lappet puts on the airs of a fashionable lady; she is as vain and whimsical as any coquette and treats her lover as badly as does Mariana. The servants talk of balls, masquerades, cards, plays, and operas. In this sense their actions function more as a comic comment on the relationship between Frederick and Mariana than does the more serious example of Clermont and Harriet. This comic reflection is very evident in the contrast between Ramilie's reaction to the loss of his mistress' favor and Frederick's response. After Ramilie has blunderingly destroyed Lappet's attempt to break up the match between Lovegold and Mariana, she explodes in anger, breaking off their engagement and finally ordering him to "never
see my face again" (Miser. IV.xiii). Instead of reacting to his plight as
Frederick later does in distraught, hopeless utterances, Ramillie takes his situation
very calmly:

Huhl now would some lovers think themselves
very unhappy; but I, who have had experience
in the sex, am never frightened at the frowns
of a mistress, nor ravished with her smiles;
they both naturally succeed one another; and
a woman, generally, is as sure to perform what
she threatens as she is what she promises.
(Miser. IV.xiii)

As the couple is easily reconciled in the comic resolution, Ramillie's prediction
proves to be true. The affair of these lovers, running as it does alongside the
plight of the others, offers a comic reflection on their situation.

A final plot change stemming from the transformation of the play's
general structure is the addition of a whole series of tradesman-scenes in the
fifth act. Mariana, wishing to create an impression of utter extravagance, has
tried to spend as much of Lovegold's money as is humanly possible. The act
opens with servants in the kitchen commenting on the goodness, that is to say,
the extravagance, of Mariana, who has ordered monstrous quantities of food and
drink and invited five hundred people to dinner. The following scenes are brief
but present a long series of tradesmen—Mr. Furnish, an upholsterer, Mr. Sattin,
a mercer, Mr. Sparkle, a jeweller, and Charles Bubbleboy, a dealer in snuff-
boxes and rings—from each of whom Mariana orders whatever seems most ex-
pensive or extravagant. In the middle of this process, Lovegold appears, be-
moaning the loss of his three thousand guineas which Ramilie has stolen. He is beset on every side by creditors; and just when, almost at the point of distraction, he succeeds in driving the tradesmen out, Mr. Last, the tailor, appears to measure him for a new laced suit which Marianna has ordered (an interesting variation on the new suit Harpagon gets at the end of L'Avare). This piling up of demands continues to the end of the play when Lovegold is finally borne under by the sheer weight and number of the demands made upon him. This technique works admirably within the structure of Fielding's play. It does, however, give the last act of The Miser a very different atmosphere from the ending of L'Avare. Lovegold, harrassed on all sides, never reaches the power, the almost tragic single-mindedness, of Harpagon in his one agonizing loss. The diffusion of focus in The Miser has the effect finally, of making Lovegold seem a more farcical character than Harpagon.

Besides the major change in the roles of Marianna and Lappet, the alterations in the structure of The Miser naturally brought about changes in the roles of other characters as well. Perhaps the most noticeable of these alterations is in the portrayal of the four young lovers. In general, their characters are more clearly differentiated in the English than in the French play. Molière, following a frequent comic technique, keeps the characters of his young lovers rather vague and undifferentiated. Except for the facts of their situations, Élise is not easily distinguishable from Mariane, nor Valère from Céante. This technique, among other effects, undoubtedly prevents their distracting from the powerful central
characterization of the miser. In Fielding's play these lovers more clearly take on characters of their own. On one hand, each of the couples presents a specific kind of love relationship, Harriet and Clermont being serious, sensible love and Frederick and Mariana, capricious, fashionable love. On the other hand, each of the lovers is differentiated from the others and takes on a different, as well as more specific, character than in L'Avare.

The alterations in the characters of Frederick and Mariana are, of course, the most obvious. The coquettish Mariana is the stronger member in this relationship. Always having her world under control, she is a long way from the passive and frightened Mariane of Molière's play. As a result, Frederick wishes to borrow money, not to relieve the distresses of his mistress and her ailing mother, but to convince Mariana she should marry him. Frederick is a much weaker man than Cléante, his counterpart in L'Avare. He is less spirited in his dealings with his father and more easily driven to the excesses of despair. During four-fifths of the play, we probably agree with his sister Harriet that he has placed his love very foolishly. When he says to Clermont in Act IV, "what appears a coquette in Mariana is rather the effects of sprightliness and youth, than any fixed habit of mind; she has good sense and good nature at the bottom" (Miser. IV.iv), we are inclined to agree with Clermont that it is "at the bottom indeed."
This defense, however, which sounds remarkably like Fielding’s later defense of Tom Jones, does prove to be true and perhaps redeems Frederick’s character.

Both the characters and basic situation of Harriet and Clermont are changed somewhat in Fielding’s adaptation. Harriet is sensible, outspoken, and, to a modern audience, would perhaps seem overly self-righteous. In fact, each of the lovers, with the exception of Mariana, sounds occasionally like a character out of the sentimental comedy of the time, a bit too anxious to preach. The most significant change in the relationship of these two characters, however, is the fact that their situation is not nearly as desperate as in the French play. Clermont is a young man of good family with all the money he and Harriet need. He does save her from drowning as his counterpart did in Molière. However, the development of their relationship follows the lines of the proper eighteenth-century love intrigue: he arranges to come across her at a play, defends her from a rude fellow, and escorts her home; they send letters back and forth with Lappet’s help; and finally he is smuggled into the house as Lovegold’s clerk. Though the resulting situation seems nearly the same, it is not really as serious in Fielding’s play. Harriet and Clermont can get married whenever they wish and do, in fact, appear married during the last act of the play. Thus, Clermont in disguise does not play as serious and desperate a role as does Valère.

Among the alterations of the English play, perhaps the character change which is most lamentable is that of Maître Jacques, the most delightful comic
character of Molière's play. As James in *The Miser* his part is cut considerably, limiting his appearance to one major scene and a few brief lines in the fifth act. In *L'Avare* Maître Jacques is the most purely comic character, a clown who is always being pushed around and always caught between two sides, no matter what he does. He represents, in one sense, an aspect of essential humanity, constantly trying to order the world to his own use but invariably bungling the job hopelessly. Fielding eliminates a good part of the characterization of Maître Jacques in drawing James. The only major scene he reproduces is the one where Lovegold directs the preparations for dinner, in which Fielding recreates the classic hat-changing scene, as well as the servant telling the master what his neighbors think of him, though both scenes are presented in a much-condensed form. An illustration of the degree of condensation is the fact that James only mentions the starving horses. Thus, not only do we miss some of the characterization of the miser, but also the marvellous comic humanitarianism of Maître Jacques whose heart is torn by the misery of his horses. In general, in the Fielding play, James is a sassier and more sarcastic servant than Maître Jacques. He never attempts to ingratiate himself with Lovegold by pretending to be his friend. The greatest change in his role, however, is that he has no part in bringing about the comic misunderstanding with the cassette at the end of the play. While the denouement of the English play may be less contrived as a result, it does omit some of the most delightful comic scenes of *L'Avare*. 
With all of the changes in the play's structure, Fielding nevertheless remained relatively true to the original in depicting his central character, Lovegold. The two miser's are essentially English and French versions of the same character. The few alterations in Lovegold's characterization, however, stem from two main sources. First, Fielding puts more emphasis than did Molière on Lovegold's sexual desire for Mariana. When Mariana first gives her consent to the marriage, Lovegold cries to Mrs. Wisely, "Oh! madam, you shall be a grandmother within these ten months, I am a very young fellow" (Miser. III.xi). Even more striking as an illustration of this theme is the reaction of Lovegold later in the play when Lappet is trying to change his mind. He begins by praising Mariana in a general way but is carried away in his passion to "sweet kissing lips, swelling breasts, and the finest shape that was ever embraced," and ends by catching Lappet up in his arms, much to her disgust (Miser. IV.viii).

Along with this increased emphasis on the miser's lustful infatuation with the young girl, Fielding puts somewhat less emphasis on the obsessive and unnatural aspects of his love for his money. In both the soliloquy of the miser when he has been robbed and the discussion which confuses the daughter and the cassette, Fielding has made considerable cuts. These alterations in general dampen the manic effect of Lovegold's passion; but, in addition, they remove many of the lines which give the miser's utterances their sexual undertone. In the soliloquy in particular, the principal effect of Fielding's condensation is the
removal of the sexual suggestiveness of Lovegold's words. The following passage from Harpagon's soliloquy clearly illustrates the sexual undertones of his obsession with money:

Au voleur! au voleur! à l'assassin! au meurtrier! Justice, juste Ciel! je suis perdu, je suis assassiné, on m'a coupé la gorge, on m'a dérobé mon argent. Qui peut-ce être? Qu'est-il devenu? Où est-il? Où se cache-t-il? Que ferai-je pour le trouver? Où courir? Où ne pas courir? N'est-il point là? N'est-il point ici? Qui est-ce? Arrête. Rends-moi mon argent, coquin... (Il se prend lui-même le bras.) Ah! c'est moi. Mon esprit est troublé, et j'ignore où je suis, qui je suis, et ce que je fais. Hélas! mon pauvre argent, mon pauvre argent, mon cher ami! on m'a privé de toi; et puisque tu m'as enlevé, j'ai perdu mon support, ma consolation, moi joie; tout est fini pour moi, et je n'ai plus que faire au monde: sans toi, il m'est impossible de vivre. C'en est fait, je n'en puis plus; je me meurs, je suis mort, je suis enterré... (L'Avare. IV.vii)

In his adaptation of this speech, Fielding reproduces the basic dialogue up to the point where the miser catches himself by the arm. All of the material which follows this gesture, and which contains the most obvious sexual overtones in the passage, is eliminated in the English version; and Fielding only returns to the French soliloquy much later when Harpagon begins to think of calling in the law and having his entire household questioned.

Most of the changes in the portrait of Fielding's miser are wrought from without by the effects of the new plot structure. As suggested earlier in a discussion of Fielding's changes in plot construction, the miser of the
English play, as a result of the altered plot structure, never reaches the power and single-minded obsession of Harpagon in the soliloquy after he has discovered the theft of his money. From the last scene of Act IV, Lovegold is harassed on all sides by financial problems—the demands of his future wife's creditors, the theft of his cashbox, and the large forfeiture he must pay to break the marriage contract. The diffusion of these stresses on the character of the miser makes the final effect of Lovegold's passionate avarice quite different from that of Harpagon. The English character is thoroughly frustrated as he tries to sort out the confusion which engulfs him. He is angry, rants and raves, and threatens everyone around him. However, the final effect of his passionate outbursts leans more toward the farcically impotent than toward the near-tragic intensity of Harpagon's outraged loss. Ultimately, the twinge of pity that we feel for Harpagon is absent at the end of the English play.

In spite of the basic changes that Fielding made in his adaptation of The Miser, the English play nevertheless does retain a surprising amount of the original. Twenty-two scenes of the play are taken completely or in part from L'Avare. Often, long passages of dialogue are directly translated. The fact that these passages are generally cut and condensed must be laid to the problem of the play's length rather than to any implicit criticism on the way Molière constructed his scenes. When Fielding decided to add to the plot of L'Avare, he had to make way for his additions somewhere.
In constructing the play, Fielding retains nearly all of the comic and farcical sequences that expose and define the miserliness of Harpagon. The only major comic scenes omitted, Harpagon's trick to discover the truth about Céante's love, Maître Jacques' actions as intermediary in the ensuing quarrel, and Maître Jacques' deposition against Valère for stealing the cashbox, are eliminated chiefly by plot considerations. All other comic sequences are retained. The conversation early in the play, where Lovegold questions his son about his opinion of Mariana as a possible wife, follows that scene in L'Avare closely. Fielding also retains the loan sequence where Frederick discovers his father is the exorbitant usurer whom he looked to as an escape from his situation. In both scenes the miser has no feeling whatsoever that he has shown himself badly in the eyes of the world and only thinks his son has. The conditions of the loan are essentially the same with Fielding's play recreating the list of absurd objects that are to be part of the loan, the only difference being that Molière's list contains primarily things useless, in the sense of being terribly antique, dated and common, whereas Fielding's list contains mostly objects worn and broken, with their state excused. Molière's items are generally furnishings; Fielding's are not. Two items do remain essentially the same, the tapestry and the bed and chairs. Other major comic sequences which Fielding transfers into his play are the "sans dot" scene between Harpagon, Valère, and Élise in which Harpagon exposes his obsessive avarice by returning to the same response after each of Valère's ironic statements, and the dinner preparation scene between
Harpagon, Maître Jacques and Valère, which is considerably condensed by omitting the roles of the other servants. One of the sequences which fits most easily into the play's new structure is that between Frosine and Harpagon in which she praises his health and appearance, convinces him of Mariane's frugality and infatuation with sixty-year-old men, and tries unsuccessfully to get money from him. In Fielding's adaptation, this sequence takes on added delight because we have already seen Mariana. The obvious ludicrousness of the proposed relationship, as well as the gross untruth of the picture Lappet paints, adds much to the comic effect of the situation. Other important comic scenes which are more or less completely retained are the courting of Mariane by Cléante under the guise of speaking for his father, the present of the diamond ring, the desperate soliloquy of Harpagon when he has lost his gold, and the misunderstanding between the miser and Valère about stolen money and a stolen daughter. In each case, Fielding's technique has been to translate the dialogue of the French play, cutting out parts of it but not changing greatly those parts he does translate.

In addition to these larger comic sequences, The Miser also reproduces many of the smaller traits of Harpagon's character which Molière employed to underline the ridiculousness of his avarice. His almost paranoiac suspiciousness is presented through many of the same details. The early scene where Harpagon accuses La Flèche of robbing him and searches his pockets is retained by Fielding, though he does omit the "other hands" joke which Molière had borrowed from
Plautus in which Harpagon, after examining La Flèche's hands for stolen goods, insists on seeing his other hands. Other illustrations of this same quality are the inclusion of the scene where Harpagon almost gives his secret away to his children because he is so afraid they have overheard him, his having to run constantly to check on his treasure, his imagined hearing of a dog digging in the garden, and his wanting to put everyone in his household to the torture to discover his cashbox. Throughout the play, Fielding adapts such material from L'Avare in order to develop Lovegold through his own actions as well as through the comic situations.

In a general sense, it would seem that Fielding found Molière's use of farcical comic situations and actions well suited to his own talents and aims as a comic dramatist. He particularly took to a characteristic kind of Molièresque comic situation, the ironic miscommunication, where two characters are carrying on a conversation in which one or both of them are not aware of what is being said. This breakdown in communication may be caused by a number of factors. One person may be trying to deceive the other as Frosine does Harpagon; or he may have a fuller knowledge of the present situation as does Cléante when he praises Mariane in place of his father. On the other hand, both characters may be ignorant of important facts and create the marvellous comic effect of the broker relaying Cléante's comments on his father to Harpagon himself. Likewise, each party in a conversation can misunderstand what the other says, because of the set of his own mind, and create the complete confusion of Harpagon
and Valère's conversation over the cassette where they are not communicating at all but think they are. These kinds of comic miscommunication, which comprise such a large part of L'Avare, seem to have had great appeal for Fielding, for they make up a good portion of the material he retained in his adaptation.

In addition to retaining so much of Molière's material depicting the ironic miscommunication, Fielding actually applied this technique to some of the best comic material which he added to the play. A minor instance of this device is found in Mariana's response to Lovegold's statement that he is "a very young fellow:" "If you were five years younger, I should utterly detest you" (Miser, III.xi). He, of course, takes this statement to be evidence that she is exactly as Lappet described her. A more striking example of Fielding's use of this technique, though, is in the confusion of the conversation between Lovegold and Ramilie, where the latter states his denial of Lappet's words so vaguely that they have exactly the opposite effect from what he intends. This same technique of faulty communication is also the basis for the previous scene between Lappet and Lovegold. This scene, which is perhaps the best comic scene Fielding added to the play, has Lappet playing the role of a heart-broken friend. Besides being an illustration of ironic miscommunication, however, it has other Molièresque characteristics as well. The scene begins with Lappet trying to convince Lovegold of Mariana's extravagance and his attempts to override her arguments because of his infatuation with Mariana:
Lappet. Alas! sir, she would have deceived anyone upon earth, even yourself: for, sir, during a whole fortnight since you have been in love with her she has made it her whole business to conceal her extravagance and appear thrifty.

Lovegold. That is a good sign though; Lappet, let me tell you, that is a good sign; right habits as well as wrong are got by affecting them. And she who could be thrifty a fortnight gives lively hopes that she may be brought to be so long as she lives.

Lappet. She loves play to distraction: it is the only visible way in the world she has of living.

Lovegold. She must win then, Lappet; and play, when people play the best of the game, is no such very bad thing. Besides, as she plays only to support herself, when she can be supported without it, she may leave it off.

Lappet. To support her extravagance, in dress particularly; why, don't you see, sir, she is dressed out to-day like a princess?

Lovegold. It may be an effect of prudence in a young woman to dress, in order to get a husband. And as that is apparently her motive, when she is married that motive ceases; and to say the truth, she is in discourse a very prudent young woman.

(Miser. IV.viii)

At this point, the two characters engage in a rapid dialogue in which each takes up an opposite position:

Lappet. Think of her extravagance.

Lovegold. A woman of the greatest modesty!

Lappet. And extravagance.
Lovegold. She has really a very fine set of teeth.

Lappet. She will have all the teeth out of your head.

Lovegold. I never saw finer eyes.

Lappet. She will eat you out of house and home.

Lovegold. Charming hair!

Lappet. She will ruin you!

Lovegold. Sweet kissing lips, swelling breasts, and the finest shape that was ever embraced.  

(Miser. IV.viii)

After this dialogue builds to a climax, in which Lappet, bursting into tears, paints a terrifying picture of Lovegold, old, starving and deprived of all his gold, the two characters reverse their positions and reenact the original argument on opposite sides.

Lovegold. Oh! my poor old gold.

Lappet. Perhaps she has a fine set of teeth.

Lovegold. My poor plate that I have hoarded with so much care.

Lappet. Or I'll grant she may have a most beautiful shape.

Lovegold. My dear lands and tenements.

Lappet. What are the roses on her cheeks, or lilies in her neck?

Lovegold. My poor India bonds, bearing at least three and a half per cent.  

(Miser. IV.viii)
This scene, which is one of the most effective in the play, has no parallel in \textit{L'Avare} but is certainly Molièresque in spirit and technique.

In a number of the illustrations of comic miscommunication already presented, an additional aspect of Molière's comic technique is apparent as an influence on Fielding's play, the device of role-playing. Comic role-playing abounds in \textit{L'Avare} with almost every major character putting on a false character, at least momentarily, to mask his real feelings or situation. Some of the best comic effects of that play are created in those situations where Frosine, Valère, and Maître Jacques enact roles that the audience knows to be false ones. Even Harpagon and Cléante play parts, on occasion, to mask their true feelings about Mariane from one another. This comic device, with its suggestive reflection on the nature of man's social habits, must have been particularly appealing to Fielding. Not only did he reproduce nearly all of Molière's scenes which involve role-playing, but he also emphasized this comic situation in most of the material he added to the play. The social mask was evidently a concept that fit very well into the new structure of the plot as Fielding developed it.

It has been suggested that Fielding, in his adaptation of \textit{L'Avare}, attempted to fuse the essential aspects of that play with certain requirements of the comedy of manners as it existed in his day. In general, he seemed most interested in the French play insofar as it is a comedy of character, employing farcical techniques in its development. He replaced the romanescque
elements of the earlier play with Restoration qualities, although in the transformation these new elements come to have a more significant part in the play than their predecessors had. It remains, then, to assess what effect this attempted fusion had on the actual language of the play and on its prevailing tone.

Although Fielding stays close to actual translation in most of the material he takes from Molière, he does make some changes in that dialogue in his adaptation. La Flèche's speech to Frosine, "Le seigneur Harpagon est de tous les humains l'humain le moins humain, le mortel de tous mortels le plus dur et le plus serre" (L’Avare. II.iv), is, for example, translated into a collection of the already-trite witticisms of the Restoration stage:

Sooner than to extract gold from him, I would engage to extract religion from a hypocrite, honesty from a lawyer, health from a physician, sincerity from a courtier, or modesty from a poet.

(Miser. II.v)

Another illustration of Fielding's adding Restoration elements in his translation of dialogue is the obvious sexual innuendo of Lovegold's admonition to Harriet to listen to what Clermont says, "And you, madam, I dare say he will infuse good things into you too, if you will but hearken to him." (Miser. III.ii)

In addition, the use of "humour names" for such characters as Lovegold, Lappet, Wheedle, and the tradesmen who appear in the last act, is definitely reminiscent of the Restoration tradition.
One other kind of change that Fielding made in the dialogue is best typified by the addition of the words "or black and white rather" to Harpagon's comment about having Valère's quotation on eating, "il faut manger pour vivre, et non pas vivre pour manger," engraved in letters of gold and hung over the chimney in his dining hall (Miser. III.iii). One wonders, in this instance, if Fielding thought the subtlety of Molière's remark was too deep for his audience, or if he thought he actually was improving the original. On the whole, however, such alterations are unusual. Usually those passages and scenes which Fielding took from L'Avare are faithful to the original in word as well as in spirit.

With those materials which Fielding created and added to his adaptation, the difference in tone from L'Avare is more apparent. One hint of Restoration influence is the inclusion of numerous satiric quips on doctors, lawyers, chambermaids, and women in general. More noticeable, however, are those few witty speeches on fashionable life, money, and marriage, mostly by Mariana, which might have come out of any Restoration comedy. The most striking of these is Mariana's reply to Frederick's assertion that there is nothing in Lovegold which could captivate a woman of her sense:

You are mistaken, sir; money; money, the most charming of all things; money, which will say more in one moment than the most elegant lover can in years. Perhaps you will say a man is not young; I answer he is rich. He is not genteel, handsome, witty, brave, good-humoured; but he is rich, rich, rich, rich, rich—that one word contradicts every thing you can say against him; and if you were to praise a person for a whole hour, and
end with, "But he is poor," you overthrow all you have said; for it has long been an established maxim, that he who is rich can have no vice, and he that is poor can have no virtue.

(Miser. III.vii)

This Restoration tone is even more evident in a later scene between Frederick and Clermont, a scene which seems to exist almost solely for the purpose of allowing them to rail wittily at society. Both the subject matter and the use of clever analogy in this exchange of dialogue suggest the Restoration tradition:

Frederick. Women of her beauty and merit have such a variety of admirers, that they are shocked to think of giving up all the rest by fixing on one. Besides so many pretty gentlemen are continually attending them, and whispering soft things in their ears, who think all their services well repaid by a curtsey or a smile, that they are startled, and think a lover a most unreasonable creature, who can imagine he merits their whole person.

Clermont. They are of all people my aversion; they are a sort of spaniels, who, though they have no chance of running down the hare themselves, often spoil the chase. I have known one of the fellows pursue half the fine women in town, without any other design than of enjoying them all in the arms of a strumpet. It is pleasant enough to see them watching the eyes of a woman of quality half an hour, to get an opportunity of making a bow to her.

Frederick. Which she often returns with a smile, or some more extraordinary mark of affection; from a charitable design of giving pain to her real admirer, who, though he can't be jealous of the animal, is concerned to see her condescend to take notice of him.

(Miser. IV.iv)
With the exception perhaps of the above dialogue, however, Fielding manages to blend the Restoration elements of his style into his adaptation so that the tone is smooth, though reminiscent of the comedy of manners. One reason for the general success of this fusion is probably that the Restoration qualities are centered in so few characters, Mariana, who eventually disavows her coquetry, Lappet, whose evaluation of the importance of "interest" to a fashionable lady is proven wrong, and the series of tradesmen, who are satirized directly.

Curiously enough, a more serious alteration or deficiency in the tone of The Miser stems from the characterization of the less prominent set of lovers, Harriet and Clermont. Each of these characters is prone, at times, to preach. Early in Act I, for example, Harriet becomes the mouthpiece for one of Fielding's oft-repeated opinions on happiness in marriage. Speaking of Clermont, she says:

Honest creature! what happiness may I propose in a life with such a husband! what is there in grandeur to recompense the loss of him! Parents choose as often ill for us, as we for ourselves. They are too apt to forget how seldom true happiness lives in a palace, or rides in a coach and six.

(Miser. I.iv)

Later in the play she assumes a preaching stance again to tell Mariana what she thinks of her treatment of Frederick:

My friendship, madam, naturally cools, when I discover its object less worthy than I imagined
I can never have any violent esteem for
one, who would make herself unhappy, to make
the person who dotes on her more so; the ridiculous
custom of the world is a poor excuse for such a
behavior. And, in my opinion, the coquette, who
sacrifices the ease and reputation of as many as she
is able to an ill-natured vanity, is a more odious,
I am sure she is a more pernicious creature, than
the wretch whom fondness betrays to make her lover
happy at the expense of her own reputation.
(Miser. Ill.viii)

This tone of sentimental preaching recurs periodically throughout the play and
is emphasized clearly at the end by Clermont who has the final speech. He
speaks in reference to Frederick's hopes that his sister will prove a fortune
equal to Clermont's deserts:

While I am enabled to support her in an
affluence equal to her desires, I shall
desire no more. From what I have seen
lately, I think riches are rather to be
feared than wished; at least, I am sure
avarice, which too often attends wealth
is a greater evil than any that is found
in poverty. Misery is generally the end
of all vice: but it is the very mark at
which avarice seems to aim; the miser
endeavors to be wretched—

He hoards eternal cares within his purse;
And what he wishes most, proves most his curse.
(Miser. V.xix)

While the preaching tone of such examples does not dominate the play, it
does break the prevailing comic tone when it appears. The reasons for
Fielding choosing to place some of his characters in this didactic, preaching
stance cannot be conclusively determined. Perhaps it is simply the result of
the movement toward sentimental comedy which was affecting the contemporary theater. On the other hand, if we look at Fielding's work in general, we see that he often manifests a tendency to preach, though in his better works he can handle this tendency with a more delicate touch. Where Molière succeeded in enframing his social criticism in the play, Fielding may have been too heavy-handed (and immature as a dramatist) to follow his lead. Whatever the reason for the sentimental tone of some of these characters' speeches, the play does, at times, come perilously close to fulfilling Hugh Kelly's later dictum that "the stage should be a school of morality" (False Delicacy. V). 8 This intrusion of a preaching tone in The Miser is perhaps the most serious weakness in an otherwise fine adaptation.

Looking at Fielding's dramas from the easy vantage point of two centuries, it is fairly clear that his comedy, particularly his attempts at classical five-act comedy like The Miser, was shaped by two general influences. One of these, stemming from his being an Augustan writer, was his knowledge of, admiration for, and desire to emulate the great masters of the past. The other important influence was the theater of his own time, which was both his model and his livelihood. Coming as he did, at the tail-end of the dying Restoration tradition, Fielding was still, willingly or unwillingly, influenced by that tradition. Unfortunately, while Fielding admired Congreve and Wycherley greatly, they were no longer realistic models for the practicing dramatist of the 1730's. The reaction against the excesses of Restoration comedy had already taken its
toll; the Restoration tradition as it appeared in the theater of Fielding's day was a vitiated, decadent one. Yet, its forms remained and imposed themselves upon the dramatist who aimed at producing comedy.

Fielding often deplored the state of contemporary comedy and wished for a return to the true spirit of comedy, for him exemplified usually by Molière and Jonson. In as unlikely a place as Pasquin, one of his dramatic satires, Fielding has Trapwit, the ludicrous comic dramatist, introduce his new play with a reference to Molière. Trapwit contrasts his play with other modern plays because it has no wit in it: "this is a play consisting of humour, nature, and simplicity; it is written, sir, in the exact and true spirit of Molière" (Pasquin. I.i). While the many-edged irony of this speech strikes out in several directions, at Trapwit, at his play, at the audience, and at current playwrights, it does not under-cut the comment on Molière; he remains as the representative of true comedy after all else is cut down.

In the prologue to The Miser, this same state of affairs is denounced. Modern comedy has distorted the comic muse of Jonson and Molière who drew their characters from nature. Modern writers are concerned with the conversation of wits, rather than the actions of fools, thus their plays lack nature, morals, and plot. As a result, "high comedy" has become only "a dull collection of insipid jokes." The prologue ends with a eulogy of Molière, who drew his characters by actions, not "low jests." These are the qualities the author hopes to bring back to the English stage. If we consider the fact that many of the
criticisms of the contemporary stage could justly be applied to some of Fielding's own comedies, even to The Miser, we get some idea of how strongly the young dramatist was pulled between these two traditions. Though it may not be necessary to make a value judgment on the influence of the Restoration tradition in this particular play, it would certainly seem that that tradition accounts for most of the significant alterations in the original play and gives the Fielding play its distinct character. It was only in the novels that Fielding freed himself from the limitations of Restoration comedy and was really able to follow the plan laid out in the last lines of the prologue to The Miser.
Notes to Chapter III


2 Lawrence, pp. 48-49.

3 François Marie Arouet de Voltaire, Vie de Molière, avec des jugements sur ses ouvrages (Amsterdam: J. Catuffe, 1739), pp. 67-68.

4 All references to The Miser are taken from Henry Fielding, The Miser, A Comedy, Taken from Plautus and Molière (London: J. Watts, 1733).

5 Northrop Frye, in the third essay of Anatomy of Criticism, discusses the basic comic myth ("the mythos of comedy") in great detail. His concern in this essay is to define the structural principles or generic plots which underlie—and pre-date—the ordinary literary genres. He traces the mythos or generic plot of comedy directly to its roots in early ritualistic celebrations of the mythic death of a fertility god in winter and his revival or rebirth in spring. Drawing upon its connection with this basic myth, Frye relates the movement and resolution of the comic plot to the seasonal victory of spring over winter, and thus life over death, youth over age, fertility over sterility. In addition, when this cyclical rebirth pattern is brought into a religious, particularly a Christian, context, the death and rebirth of the god usually can be connected with miracle, grace, or divine sanction. This aspect of the comic mythos is evident in the contrived quality of some comic denouements, which suggest a structure more romantic than realistic, in which the basic mythical elements are very little displaced (New York: Atheneum, 1969), pp. 158-186.

6 In several Molière plays, a servant character becomes the focal point of the plot—Dorine in Tartuffe, Toinette in Le Malade imaginaire, Scapin in Les Fourberies de Scapin, and Mascarille and Jodelet in Les Précieuses ridicules. However, these servant characters are not self-interested, self-serving types as is Lappet. Her characterization suggests a type of clever and self-centered servant who became a popular character in French plays of the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, such as Le Sage’s Tercaret (1709).
All references to L'Avare are taken from Jean Baptiste Poquelin Molière, *Oeuvres de Molière*, ed. Eugène André Despois and Paul Mesnard (Paris: Hachette, 1873-1900), VII.


CHAPTER IV

MOLIÈRESQUE INFLUENCE IN FIELDING'S DRAMA

The question of the extent to which Fielding the dramatist modelled his works on the plays of Molière or learned from him is a difficult one to answer concisely. His close acquaintance with the comedy of the French dramatist is evident throughout his theatrical career. In addition to his having actually adapted two Molière plays, L'Avare and Le Médecin maigre iui, Fielding frequently expressed his admiration for the comedy of the French author in his prefaces, prologues, and literary satires. Moreover, evidence of Molièresque influence in specific Fielding plays can be found as early as his very first production, Love in Several Masques (1728), with a large percentage of his other plays showing similar evidences of influence.

The main difficulty in establishing the aspects of Fielding's plays which reflect Molièresque comedy stems from the fact that the English playwright was also clearly well-read in and influenced by his Restoration predecessors. Thus, the well-known tendency of Restoration dramatists to borrow freely and extensively from Molière for their plots and characters might lead one to suspect that Fielding received his seemingly Molièresque influences by way of Congreve, Wycherley, or other Restoration writers. However, in spite of the fact that Fielding admired some of the Restoration playwrights greatly, such a suspicion about the nature of
his borrowings from Molière does not appear to be true. In the first place, Fielding was admittedly well-acquainted with the plays of Molière and held them in high esteem. With a writer like Fielding, who believed in going to school to the great writers of the past in order to build his own style, this esteem for Molière's comedy is itself a rather clear indication that that comedy would influence his own style in the same genre. What seems generally to be true of the use of Molière in Fielding's plays is aptly illustrated by his practice in the two adaptations already discussed, The Miser and The Mock-Doctor. In both cases, Fielding shows no evidence of having relied on earlier English versions of the French plays for the construction of his adaptations. Rather, what Fielding appears to have done in his plays is to follow the lead of his Restoration predecessors in borrowing freely from Molière for his own plots and characters. Although he often handles this borrowed material in the manner of the Restoration tradition, he does go directly to Molière as his source.

Evidence of Fielding's having been influenced by his knowledge of Molière's comedy does not run throughout all of his dramatic work. These borrowings are generally found in Fielding's regular five-act comedies and in some of the shorter farces. The irregular plays, like the literary burlesques, dramatic satires, and satiric ballad-operas, can be connected to the French dramatist's technique only in the remotest of ways. Fielding's typical use of plot and character materials borrowed from Molière is clearly illustrated in the construction of his first comedy Love in Several Masques (1728). This play is
essentially a Congrevian comedy of manners with its plot centered on three main love intrigues. It is virtually filled with the stuff of Restoration comedy—masked ladies, secret meetings, misdirected and misdelivered notes of intrigue, drawing-room courting scenes, and the familiar device of the lover disguised as a parson. Furthermore, its characters are basically those which had peopled the comedies of the Restoration—Sir Apish Simple and Sir Positive Trap, country-bumpkin squires, the latter of whom claims both Hercules and Julius Caesar for his family tree; Rattle, the fop, and his rival Lord Formal, who are competing for the hand and money of Lady Matchless; Lady Matchless, the clever and beautiful coquette; Lady Trap, the amorously-inclined old aunt of Helena who tries to compete with her niece for the attentions of Merital; and Catchit, the clever maid who turns all of the play's intrigues into hard cash. In its attitude toward marriage, love, and money, the tone of the play is predominantly Restoration. This tone is suggested in Lady Trap's statement after she has tricked her husband into getting, for her own use, a note to Merital in Helena's handwriting: "It is strange that women should contend for wit in a husband, when they may enjoy such an advantage from having a fool" (Love in Several Masques. II.x). ¹ Likewise, the play is filled with the typical Restoration associations of marriage and money and the tendency always to discuss love in monetary or financial terms. In Act I, Merital makes a basically Restoration statement, "In short, beauty is now considered as a qualification only for a mistress and fortune for a wife" (Love in Several Masques. I.iv). Earlier in
the same act, Malvil speaks of the progress of his love affair in financial and legal terms: "Why faith! our affair is grown as dull as a chancery suit; but, if it be much more prolix, my stock of love will be so far exhausted, that I shall be like a contested heir, who spends his estate in the pursuit of it, and when his litigious adversary is overthrown, finds his possessions reduced to a long lawyer's bill for more than he is able to pay" (Love in Several Masques. 1.i). Later in the play, Lord Formal speaks of beauty and virtue in similar monetary terms. "O, yes, I will allow an ugly woman to be as virtuous as she pleases, just as I will a poor man to be covetous. But beauty in the hands of a virtuous woman, like gold in those of a miser, prevents the circulation of trade" (Love in Several Masques. 1.v). This Restoration atmosphere of the play is further reinforced by a good deal of railing at life and society as well as witty exchanges of dialogue. The penchant of the comedy of manners for drawing clever analogies is evident in this dialogue between Merital and Malvil, which closes the first scene of the play:

Merital. Well, you are the first in the class of romantic lovers. But, for my part, I would as soon turn chemist and search for the philosopher's stone, as a lover to run headlong after an Ignis Fatuus, that flies faster the more it is pursued.

Malvil. These are the known sentiments of you light, gay, fluttering fellows; who, like the weathercock, never fix long to a point till you are good for nothing.
Merital. And you platonic lovers, like the compass are ever pointing to the same pole, but never touch it.

Malvil. You are a sort of sportsmen, who are always hunting in a park of coquets, where your sport is so plenty that you start fresh game before you have run down the old.

Merital. And you are a sort of anglers ever fishing for prudes, who cautiously steal and pamper up their vanity with your baits, but never swallow the hook.

(Love in Several Masques. 1.i)

The play has several qualities, however, which move it away from the comedy of manners tradition. Undoubtedly the most striking of these is the absence of any emphasis on illicit affairs. Merital, who would have been the Horner or Dorimant of an earlier comedy, is pictured as a reformed rake. Thus, although the Merital-Helena plot does have manners overtones, its prevailing emphasis is on romantic love. Similarly, the Malvil-Vermilia plot has as many sentimental as Restoration overtones.

Curiously enough, the influence of Molière on this play is most evident in the main plot, dealing with the love affair between Lady Matchless and Wisemore, the most Restoration in tone of the love intrigues in the play. This tone, however, is tempered significantly by the use of certain material from Molière, as well as by Fielding's general tendency to eliminate the illicit love intrigue from the techniques he acquired from the Restoration. In this play, the most obvious instance of the influence of Molière is in the portions of plot and characterization borrowed from Le Misanthrope. The hero of the main
love plot, Wisemore, is a bucolic misanthrope, a sort of country Alceste. Here
the evidence of Fielding's having gone directly to Molière rather than to his
Restoration imitators, is perfectly clear. Wisemore shows no relation at all to
Manley in Wycherley's The Plain Dealer, undoubtedly the best-known of the
Restoration interpretations of Molière. He is neither as crude nor as spiteful as
Wycherley's misanthrope, and his moral indignation at the world has a healthier
complexion. Wisemore is more clearly modelled on Alceste of Molière's play
than on Wycherley's Manley, though he is neither as outrageous nor demanding as
his French counterpart. This toning-down of the excesses of Alceste's misanthropy
is perhaps due most to the difference in the basic structures of the two plays.
The title of Molière's comedy clearly suggests its focus as a study of the charac-
ter of Alceste, and its plot is accordingly centered on the Alceste-Célimène
relationship. In Love in Several Masques, however, the three main love intrigues
are given nearly equal emphasis. The Wisemore-Lady Matchless plot is central
only in the sense that she is highest in rank of the characters in the play and
presides over a social circle which gathers around her. Thus, Wisemore is not
in nearly as central a position in Love in Several Masques as is Alceste in Le
Misanthrope. Nevertheless, Wisemore, is modelled on Alceste in a number of
ways. He is like Alceste in being in love with a much-courted beauty against
his reason, will, and better judgment. One aspect of this parallel is evident
in the scene where he, in a manner similar to his French counterpart's, acts
rudely in company toward his mistress' other suitors. In Act II of the French
play, Alceste attacks Acaste and Clitandre for encouraging Célimène in the
nasty pastime of character assassination and gossiping:

Non, morbleul c'est à vous; et vos ris complaisants
Tirent de son esprit tous ces traits médisants.
Son humeur satirique est sans cesse nourrie
Par le coupable encens de votre flatterie;
Et son coeur à railler trouverait moins d'appas,
S'il avoit observé qu'on ne l'applaudit pas.
C'est ainsi qu'aux flateurs on doit partout se prendre
Des vices où l'on voit les humains se répandre.

(Le Misanthrope. 11. iv)²

Likewise, in Fielding's play, Wisemore is rudely outspoken to his rivals, Lord
Formal, Rattle, and Sir Apish Simple. The following exchange between Wisemore
and Lord Formal, in the presence of the rest of the company, indicates this
parallel between the actions and motivations of Alceste and those of Wisemore:

Wisemore. O nature, nature, why didst thou
form woman, in beauty the masterpiece of creation,
and give her a soul capable of being caught with
the tinsel outside of such a fop as this! this empty,
gaudy, nameless thing!

Lord Formal. Let me presume to tell you, that
nameless thing will be agreeable to the last, in spite of your envy.

Wisemore. Madam, by all that's heavenly, I
love you more than life; would I might not say,
than wisdom. If it be not in my power to merit
a return, let me obtain this grant, that you would
banish from you these knaves, these vultures; wolves
are more merciful than they. What is their desire,
but to riot in your plenty? to sacrifice your boundless
stores to their licentious appetites? to pay their
desponding creditors with your gold? to ravage you,
ruin you; nay, to make you curse that auspicious day
which gave you birth.

(Love in Several Masques. III.viii)
Not only is Wisemore an English Alceste in the treatment of his mistress' suitors, but he is also like his counterpart in being straightforward and outspoken to the lady herself. At the beginning of Act II of *Le Misanthrope*, Alceste scolds Célimène for being too gracious and encouraging to the mob of suitors which surround her. Similarly, Wisemore echoes this complaint when he first enters Lady Matchless' house upon arriving in London:

> How was I deceived by my opinion of your good sense! but London would seduce a saint. A widow no sooner comes to this vile town, than she keeps open house for all guests. All, all are welcome. Your hatchments were at first intended to repel visitants; but they are now hung out for the same hospitable end as the bills, "Lodgings to let;" with this difference only, that the one invites to a mercenary, the other to a free tenement.

*(Love in Several Masques. III.viii)*

This passage sounds particularly like Alceste in his frequent complaint about his mistress' lack of discrimination in considering the merit of the people she admits to her circle and her tendency to welcome all the world, at least from her lover's point of view. Another parallel example of Wisemore's tendency to speak bluntly to his mistress is his willingness to admit her faults to her, even in the presence of company. In *Le Misanthrope* Alceste chides Célimène for her faults in front of her other admirers:

> Non, Madame, non: quand j'en devrois mourir,
Vous avez des plaisirs que je ne puis souffrir;
Et l'on a tort ici de nourrir dans votre âme
Ce grand attachement aux défauts qu'on y blâme.

*(Le Misanthrope. II.iv)*
Clitandre and Acaste immediately insist that they cannot find any faults in Célimène, but Alceste replies that he can see them all and cannot conceal his disapproval of them. In much the same fashion, Wisemore speaks of the errors he can see in Lady Matchless. Following his rude and abrupt statement when he first enters her drawing-room, he says:

Madam, I may have been too rude; I hope you'll pardon me. The sudden surprise of such a sight hurried away my senses, as if I sympathized with the objects I beheld. But I have recovered them. My reason cools, and I can now paint out your errors. Start not at that word, nor be offended that I do it before so many of your admirers: for tho' my colours be never so lively, the weak eye of their understanding is too dim to distinguish them. They will take them for beauties: they will adore you for them. You may have a coronet, doubtless. A large jointure is as good a title to a lord, as a coronet is to a fine lady.

(Love in Several Masques, III.viii)

Finally, Wisemore is like Alceste in his hatred of the town and all it stands for. Although this hatred is expressed in terms of the typical Restoration dichotomy between the town and the country, it is essentially directed against the same set of social values as is Alceste's disgust with mankind. Alceste continually rails against the vanity and hypocrisy of his society; and, at the end of the play, insists, "Je vais sortir d'un gouffre ou triomphent les vices, / Et chercher sur la terre un endroit écarté / Où être homme d'honneur on ait la liberté" (Le Misanthrope, V.iv). Wisemore is a man who has forsaken the city, hopefully forever, to make his home in the country. He sees London as a place filled
with "vanities, hurries, and superficial, empty, ill-digested pleasures" (*Love in Several Masques*. 1.ii). In spite of his good intentions, however, the very night before his intended marriage to Lady Matchless, she flees to the city, so that, after struggling with himself for five months, he is forced to follow her. His reaction to London is plainly stated in his reply to his old friend Merital, who is so surprised to see him in London that he suggests that Wisemore may be an apparition:

> Look ye, sirs, of all places in the world my spirit would never haunt this. London is to me what the country is to a gay, giddy girl, pampered up with the love of admiration; or a young heir just leapt into his estate and chariot. It is a mistress, whose imperfections I have discovered, and cast off. I know it; I have been a spectator of all its scenes. I have seen hypocrisy pass for religion, madness for sense, noise and scurrility for wit, and riches for the whole train of virtues. Then I have seen folly beloved for its youth and beauty, and reverenced for its age. I have discovered knavery in more forms than ever Proteus had, and traced him through them all, till I have lodged him behind a counter, with the statue of bankruptcy in his hand and a pair of gilded horns in his pocket.  

(*Love in Several Masques*. 1.ii)

Perhaps the main difference between this aspect of the two characters' misanthropy is that the desire to escape the artificial society of London and live in the country does not seem nearly as distasteful a solution to the problems of living in a hypocritical society as does Alceste's resolve to leave the company of men forever. At the end of *Love in Several Masques*, there is every indication that
Wisemore and Lady Matchless will return to the country to live and will be contented with that life.

Along with the parallel between Molière's Alceste and Fielding's Wisemore, the character of Lady Matchless, the rich and coquettish widow, is perhaps even more clearly modelled on that of Célimène in _Le Misanthrope_. The similarity of her role in the plot has already been implied in the description of the role of her lover. In addition, however, her character itself is evidently drawn from that of Célimène. As she presides over the circle of devotees in her drawing-room, Fielding has given her the same beauty, wit, and ability to handle eager admirers which so clearly mark her French counterpart. Much like Célimène, she carries on polite raillery, leading the fops on and keeping them in their places. An example of her wit, as well as of her likeness to Célimène, is her painting the character of her lovers for Vermilia at the beginning of Act II in a manner that reminds one immediately of _Le Misanthrope_ (II. iv, V. iv). In reply to Vermilia's statement that her friend has "as many slaves in your assemblies as the French king in his galleys," Lady Matchless responds:

Lady Matchless. Why, really, I sometimes look on my drawing room as a little parliament of fools, to which every different body sends its representatives. Beaus of all sorts. The courtly lord, who addresses me with a formal, well-bred dissimulation; the airy Sir Plume, who always walks in the minuet-step, and converses in recitativo.
Vermilia. And is a Narcissus in everything but beauty.

Lady Matchless. Then the robust warrior, who proceeds by way of storm or siege. The lawyer, who attacks me as he would a jury, with a cringe, and a lie at the tip of his tongue. The cit, who would cheat me by way of bargain and sale. And--your settling country 'quire, who would put my life into half his estate, provided I would put his whole family's into all mine.

Vermilia. There is a more dangerous, though a more ridiculous fool than any of these, and that is a fine gentleman, who becomes the disguise of a lover worse than any you have named.

Lady Matchless. O, ay; a man of sense acts a lover just as a Dutchman would a harlequin. He stumbles at every straw we throw in his way, which a fop would skip over with ease.

(Love in Several Masques, II.i)

This kind of pointed thumb-nail sketch is typical of the witty raillery of both Célimène and her English counterpart, Lady Matchless. Thus, although Lady Matchless differs from Célimène in several ways, particularly in the degree of her attachment to the social life in which she so evidently thrives, her basic characterization is clearly copied from that of Molière's Célimène.

One other significant parallel between Love in Several Masques and the comedies of Molière lies in the way Fielding effects the denouement of his play. Although both Love in Several Masques and Le Misanthrope bring about the dispersion of the self-interested suitors by means of a letter delivered or revealed, the real parallel between the Fielding play and Molière's drama is with
the denouement of another of the French dramatist's plays, Les Femmes savantes. In Le Misanthrope, the letter revealed at the end of the play is one Célîmène has written to an unnamed person in which she lampoons each of her suitors in turn. This circumstance has no connection with the Fielding play. However, the device which brings about the denouement of Molière's Les Femmes savantes is nearly identical to the one used by Fielding in this play. In both cases, the sincerity of a lover is tested by the sudden arrival of a false letter of bad tidings for the lady who is being courted. In the French play, Philaminte, the leader of "les femmes savantes," has decided that her daughter, Henriette, must marry the pedantic, would-be poet Trissotin, who is an attendant at her "learned academy," even though Henriette is in love with Clitandre and has her father's permission to marry him. Philaminte respects Trissotin for the idealistic viewpoints he constantly expresses and is sure his motivations for marrying Henriette are far above any worldly considerations of her beauty or fortune. Just before the bad news arrives, Trissotin indicates his intention to marry Henriette under any conditions, whether she and the rest of the family want him or not. At this point, Ariste, the uncle of Henriette and friend of Clitandre, appears with two letters which announce, essentially, that the fortune of Philaminte and Chrysale, along with Henriette's dowry, of course, has been lost. The speed with which Trissotin gives up his claims to Henriette and reverses his statements is evident in the dialogue which immediately follows Ariste's announcements:
Philaminte. Ah! quel honteux transport! Fii tout cela n'est rien.
Il n'est pour le vrai sage aucun revers funeste,
Et perdant toute chose, à soi-même il se reste.
Achevons notre affaire, et quittez votre ennui:
Son bien nous peut suffire, et pour nous, et pour lui.

Trissotin. Non, Madame: cessez de presser cette affaire.
Je vois qu'à cet hymen tout le monde est contraire,
Et mon dessein n'est point de contraindre les gens.

Philaminte. Cette reflexion vous vient en peu de temps!
Elle suit de bien près, Monsieur, notre disgrâce.

Trissotin. De tant de résistance à la fin je me lasse.
J'aime vieux renoncer à tout cet embarras,
Et ne veux point d'un coeur qui ne se donne pas.

Philaminte. Je vois, je vois de vous, non pas pour votre gloire,
Ce que jusques ici j'ai refusé de croire.

Trissotin. Vous pouvez voir de moi tout ce que vous voudrez,
Et je regarde peu comment vous le prendrez.
Mais je ne suis point homme à souffrir l'infamie
Des refus offensants qu'il faut qu'ici j'essaie;
Je vaux bien que de moi l'on fasse plus de cas,
Et je baise les mains à qui ne me veut pas.

(Les Femmes savantes. V. iv)

By this device the true nature of Trissotin's love is revealed to Philaminte and she will now consent to the marriage between Henriette and Clitandre. In a final reversal of the situation, Ariste then reveals the letters to have been false, invented by him to help the young lovers.

This same basic device is used for similar reasons in the denouement of Fielding's Love in Several Masques, although the number of false lovers exposed
in that play is increased. Just before the arrival of the letter containing the ill tidings, Lord Formal, Rattle, and Sir Apish Simple are contending over who will marry Lady Matchless; and Rattle and Sir Apish Simple are even insisting on a duel with Lord Formal, who is seemingly the current favorite. At this point, Wisemore, the sincere lover, who is certain of the avaricious nature of the others' passion, appears disguised as a serjeant and informs Lady Matchless that her entire estate is endangered by a suit from a cousin, Mr. John Matchless. As in the French play, the supposed reversal of fortune causes the lovers quickly to abandon their pursuit of the lady:

Lady Matchless. Well, as most misfortunes bring their allay with them, so this dispute of my estate will give me an opportunity to distinguish the sincerity of a lover.

Lord Formal. He, he, he! it has always been my good fortune to conduce to the entertainment of the ladies, and I find your ladyship has a most inexhaustible vein of raillery.

Lady Matchless. Raillery, my lord!

Lord Formal. Ah, madam, it were an unpardonable vanity in me to esteem it otherwise. It would be contrary to all the rules of good manners for me to offer myself up at the shrine of your beauty. Ah! 'tis a sacrifice worthy a title higher than mine. Indeed, I have some thoughts of purchasing, which, when I do, I shall throw myself at your feet in raptures; but till then I am, with the greatest distance, madam, your ladyship's most obsequious, humble servant.

Rattle. Why, indeed, I think all raillery is unseasonable on so serious an occasion; therefore,
to drop the jest, dear widow, I do assure you, all
that has passed between us has been mere gallantry;
for I have been long since engaged to a widow lady
in the city.

Sir Apish Simple. And to show you, madam, that no
slights from you can lessen my affection, I do entirely
relinquish all pretension to any promise whatsoever.

(Love in Several Masques. V xi)

As in the Molière play, Wisemore then reveals himself and the fact that the
bad news was false, and the correct lovers are united. The principal difference
between the use of this borrowed device in the two plays is that, in Fielding's
play, Lady Matchless expects the desertion of her false lovers and is not shocked
by their actions. The real discomfiture in the English play is reserved for the
suitors.

The kinds of material Fielding borrowed from Molière during his career
as a practicing dramatist are typified by the previously-discussed influences of
the French playwright on Love in Several Masques. One particular technique
of Molière which Fielding seems to have found especially agreeable to his own
aims in comedy is the earlier dramatist's fondness for using contrasted pairs of
characters—the two guardians in L'École des maris, the two sisters in Les Femmes
savantes, the two brothers in Le Malade imaginaire, the two philosophers in Le
Mariage forcé, the two servants in Amphitryon, and the two well-meaning friends
in Le Misanthrope. While this technique has been a standard one in comedy
throughout its history, Molière, by the frequency and skill with which he used
it, appears to have been more than usually fond of it. Fielding's borrowing of
this kind of material was seen, to some extent, in *Love in Several Masques*, with the contrast between the lover who hates the social life of the city and his mistress who finds it entertaining and enjoyable. It is even more evident, however, in Molière's influence on Fielding's second five-act comedy, *The Temple Beau* (1730). This play is parallel to *Love in Several Masques* in having definite Restoration overtones, particularly in its attitudes toward marriage and money and in the intrigues Young Wilding carries on. In some of its characterization and situations, it also faintly reminds one of Jonsonian comedy. It does, however, suggest definite influences of Molière's comedy in certain characters and devices, particularly in the comic device of the two opposite sisters. Such a pairing of extremes is popular in several of Molière's plays. Arguments between two contrasted sisters, Armande and Henriette, are a central device of *Les Femmes savantes*. However, the opening scene of *The Temple Beau* particularly suggests, in its contrast between the prude and the coquette, the exchange of "compliments" between Célimène and Arsinoé in Act II, scene iv of *Le Misanthrope*. In each case, the two women are more-or-less competing for the same man. Thus, in the French play, while Arsinoé pretends to be frank out of her great concern and friendship for Célimène, she tells the latter all the malicious gossip about her that is circulating around. She is supposedly concerned for Célimène's reputation which is being ruined by her freedom and coquettish manners. Célimène then returns the compliment by speaking frankly of the public opinion of Arsinoé's prudery and affectation. This scene is quite closely reproduced in
the opening of Fielding's play where the two sisters, Lady Lucy Pedant and Lady
Gravely, express their candid and friendly opinions of each other. Lady Lucy
Pedant in this play particularly resembles Célimène in her coquetry, wit, and
position as leader of a fashionable circle. The two sisters' dialogue very clearly
echoes that of Le Misanthrope. Lady Lucy begins by telling her sister what the
world says of her:

Lady Lucy Pedant. The world knows what you are--

Lady Gravely. How, madam! the world knows nothing
of me.

Lady Lucy Pedant. It says it does; it talks of you very
freely, child. First, that you are not so young as you
would seem; nor so handsome, or good as you do seem;
that your actions are as much disguised by your words,
as your skin by paint; that the virtue in your mouth no
more proceeds from the purity of your heart, than the
colour in your cheeks does from the purity of your blood.

Lady Gravely. Very fine, indeed!

Lady Lucy Pedant. That your ardency to improve the
world is too often rank envy; that you are not angry
with the deformities of the mind, but the beauties of
the person: for it is notorious, that you never spoke
well of a handsome woman, nor ill of an ugly one.

Lady Gravely. Impudent scandall!

Lady Lucy Pedant. That you rail at the diversions of
the town, for several reasons: but the love of goodness
has nothing to do with any. Assemblies, because you
are very little regarded in them; operas, because you
have no ear; plays because you have no taste; balls,
because you can't dance: and lastly—that you went to
church twice a day, a whole year and a half, because—
you was in love with the parson; ha, ha, ha!

(The Temple Beau. 1.1)
When Lady Lucy insists that her speaking frankly about these matters is "the truest sign of friendship," Lady Gravely proceeds to return the favor by telling Lady Lucy what the world says of her:

Lady Gravely. . . . I'm glad that your last hint has awakened me to a perfect sense of my duty; therefore sister, since we are in private, I'll tell you what the world says of you.--In the first place, then, it says that you are both younger and handsomer than you seem.

Lady Lucy Pedant. Nay, this is flattery, my dear!

Lady Gravely. No, indeed, my dear! for that folly and affectation have disguised you all over with an air of dotage and deformity.

Lady Lucy Pedant. This carries an air of sincerity--thank you, my dear.

Lady Gravely. That admiration is the greatest pleasure, and to obtain it, the whole business of your life; but that the ways you take to it are so preposterous, one would be almost persuaded you aimed rather at contempt; for the actions of an infant seem the pattern of your conduct. When you are in the playhouse, you seem to think yourself on the stage; and when you are at church I should swear you thought yourself at the playhouse, did I not know you never think at all. In every circle you engross the whole conversation, where you say a thousand silly things and laugh at them all; by both which the world is always convinced, that you have very fine teeth and very bad sense.

Lady Gravely continues her friendly sincerity in this vein with Lady Lucy pretending to laugh and treat it very lightly. Both the scene from Molière and the one from Fielding create the same essential effects: the cattiness of the two women, a frigid politeness in which they call each other by endearing terms, and a strained control as they hold back their angry emotions.
The influence of this particular relationship in *Le Misanthrope* is further extended in a later part of Fielding's play. As Arsinoe, in Molière's play, tries to slander Célimène to Alceste and turn him against her, so Lady Gravely makes the same kind of attempt to discredit her sister with Sir Avarice Pedant. In both cases the ladies say they will prove to the lovers the unworthiness and infidelity of their mistresses. Although the characters of the two men involved are quite different in this case, the scene from *The Temple Beau* definitely seems to echo that from *Le Misanthrope*.

One final evidence of Molière's influence on *The Temple Beau* comes from the character of Young Pedant, a learned fool who seems obviously to have been modelled on Thomas Diafoirus of *Le Malade imaginaire*. At his first appearance in that play, Molière describes Thomas Diafoirus as "un grand benêt, nouvellement sorti des Ecoles, qui fait toutes choses de mauvaise grace et a contre-temps" (*Le Malade imaginaire*. II.v). In a similar manner, Valentine, in *The Temple Beau*, speaks to Veromil of Young Pedant as a person "whom I believe you remember at the university, who is since, with much labour and without any genius, improved to be a learned blockhead" (*Temple Beau*. I.vi). Each of these characters has a tendency to talk constantly in a language which no one around him understands and each scatters appropriate references to antiquity liberally throughout his conversation. Moreover, neither is very knowledgeable about the courting of young ladies and each goes about this process in absurd fashion. In *Le Malade imaginaire* Molière's Thomas Diafoirus courts
Angèlique by presenting to her a treatise he has written against the newly proposed theory of the circulation of the blood and caps his attempts to win her favor with a rather unusual invitation: "Avec la permission aussi de Monsieur, je vous invite à venir voir l'un de ces jours, pour vous divertir, la dissection d'une femme, sur quoi je dois raisonner" (Malade imaginaire. II.v). Although Young Pedant does not repeat these specific actions, his courting of Bellaria is essentially very similar. As with Diafoirus, he entertains the lady with his knowledge, thus indirectly with his foolishness, by treating her to a discourse in logic. When Bellaria objects to Pedant's statement that he must marry her out of "obedience to a parent," he immediately begins to lecture her:

Young Pedant. Nay, nay, I shall not require any thing to be given which admits of a dispute—or which (as Mr. Locke very well observes) does not receive our assent as soon as the proposition is known and understood. Let us introduce then this syllogism:

Whatever the law of nature enjoins is

indispensably just:

But the law of nature enjoins obedience to

a parent:

Ergo, Obedience to a parent is indispensably just.

Bellaria. Nay, but what have we to do with the law of nature?

Young Pedant. O, if you require farther—the divine law confirms the law of nature. I shall proceed to show it is approved by profane writers also, translating them as they occur for their more immediate comprehension. (Temple Beau. III.vi)
While Bellaria quietly slips out of the room, Young Pedant becomes lost in his dissertation, quoting Virgil, Euripides, Alexander, Plautus, and Herodotus, before he is interrupted by Valentine and Veromil. This latter use of the authority of the ancients also suggests the characterization of Thomas Diafoirus, who in a similar argument in Act II, scene vi of Le Malade imaginaire, uses the weight of their authority to justify to Angélique the correctness of taking a woman against her own will as long as the father promotes the match. It is true that these two learned fools are essentially different in their attitudes toward the proposed marriages—Diafoirus is anxious to promote his match, while Young Pedant wishes he could avoid that fate. Nevertheless, there are enough parallels between the two characters to suggest that Fielding must have had Molière's portrait at least in the back of his mind when he drew the character of Young Pedant.

The foregoing discussion of Fielding's two earliest comedies suggests a blending of the traditions of Restoration comedy and Molièresque comedy that typifies Fielding's influence by Molièresque elements in his regular, five-act comedies. Although specific borrowings are less easy to pinpoint in the remaining plays, it is certainly possible to make some general observations on the influence of Molière in these plays. Perhaps the most obvious evidence of the French dramatist's influence on Fielding's technique is one discussed previously in connection with The Temple Beau, the use of contrasting pairs or sets of characters for comic effect. Molière seems to have used this
technique more frequently than any of the other comic artists whom Fielding admired and used as models for his style. A later comedy which employs this device, *The Universal Gallant, or, The Different Husbands* (1735), suggests the basic contrast of the play in its sub-title. Sir Simon Raffler, an outrageously jealous husband, is played off against his overly-trustful brother, Colonel Raffler. The central action of the play concerns the supposed intrigue of the effeminate fop, Captain Spark, with Lady Raffler and the actual intrigue of Mr. Mondish, a Horner-Dorimant type, with Mrs. Raffler. Like their husbands, the two wives in the play also represent opposite types. Lady Raffler is a woman of strictest virtue and propriety; however, she will not go out of her way to appease her husband's constant suspicions and even taunts him with them at times. Mrs. Raffler, on the other hand, although quite free in bestowing her favors, is very careful to make sure her husband suspects nothing. Colonel Raffler and his wife's lover are, in fact, the best of friends; and, if she feigns anger at Mondish, her husband insists on their making up their quarrel. This basic set of contrasts, so suggestive of Molière's technique, creates a number of comic situations reminiscent of the French dramatist's plays. The arguments between the two brothers, each of whom totally disapproves of the other's attitudes, reminds one of the relationship between Ariste and Sganarelle in *L'École des maris* or between Chrysalde and Arnolphe in *L'École des femmes*. Sir Simon's obsessive fear of cuckoldom also echoes Arnolphe's state of mind in the latter play. The conversation between Lady Raffler and Mrs. Raffler on the relative
merits of the possession of virtue and the appearance of virtue is reminiscent of the conversation between Célimène and Arsinoé in Le Misanthrope in which each cuts the other down. Finally, the play is filled with a kind of dramatic irony that recalls many of Molière's plays in such scenes as those where Colonel Raffler brags to Mr. Mondish about his wife's unassailable virtue or where the foolish Captain Spark unwittingly hints to Sir Simon that he has had an affair with his wife.

Like The Universal Gallant, Fielding's The Wedding-Day (1743) is basically a Restoration comedy, tempered by some use of Molièresque techniques, particularly the use of contrasting characters as a comic device. Its attitudes are basically Restoration, as is its use of masqued ladies, letters delivered and misdelivered, scorned lovers, and assignations. Young Mutable is the typical Restoration fop and Millamour is clearly a descendent of Horner and Dorimant. In spite of the prevailing Restoration tone of the play, however, it does contain some suggestions of Molière's influence. The relationship between Millamour and Brazen, his servant, echoes a number of Molière plays portraying the overly-familiar, out-spoken servant. As the characterization of the clever servant and the familiarity between master and servant was one of the aspects of Molière's comedy often appropriated by the Restoration dramatists, however, it is difficult to ascertain whether this parallel comes directly from Molière or not. Another possible instance of Molière's influence is the unusually contrived denouement of the play where Mrs. Plotwell discovers in Mr. Stedfast the lover who deserted
her in Paris twenty years before, making Clarinda their daughter and, thus, an impossible marriage partner for him. This solution, which seems the only way out of a hopeless situation, is a *deus ex machina* ending scarcely less believable than many of Molière’s.

Undoubtedly the clearest suggestion of Molière influence in the play, however, is the use of the contrasting fathers, Mr. Stedfast, who says, "I am now in the fiftieth year of my age, and never broke one resolution in my life yet," (Wedding-Day. III.vi) and Mr. Mutable who "never kept a resolution two minutes in his life." (Wedding-Day. II.vi) These two characters are trying to arrange a marriage between Mr. Stedfast’s daughter, Charlotte, and Young Mutable, with Mr. Mutable constantly changing his mind about the match and Mr. Stedfast making unalterable resolutions about it.

Besides the parallel between this play and Molière’s comedy in the use of this device of the comic contrast, *The Wedding-Day* suggests one additional possibility of influence through these two characters. Particularly in Fielding’s later five-act comedies, early indications of his developing techniques of comic characterization come to the surface. He begins to center more and more attention on the development of general comic types rather than simply the stereotyped characters of the Restoration intrigue. Here, an obviously Restoration intrigue shares the stage with a set of characters that present a very different kind of comedy. The ridicule of these two general types of men, the irresolute and the immovable, creates a kind of comedy quite close to Molière’s. Particu-
larly with the character of Stedfast, we can feel this kinship. Much of what is comic about this character has nothing to do with the Restoration intrigue of the play. Mr. Stedfast wishes not only to marry off his daughter, but also to run his household by unchangeable resolutions. When he is informed by a servant that dinner cannot be ready by nine, he responds that it will have to be eaten raw, for he has decided to eat at precisely that hour. In another scene, his servants must appear dressed in liveries that are not complete because the tailor could not finish sewing them by the time their master had resolved they should wear them. While this contrasting set of characters are not really the center of the play, they do make up the most entertaining part of it and represent some early evidences of a concept of comic characterization similar to Molière's which Fielding will develop fully in the comic novels.

This aspect of the development of Fielding's characterization can be seen in several of his five-act comedies. Alongside the wits, fops, clever servants and conniving aunts of Restoration comedy, he began to draw a more traditional kind of comic character, based like so many of Molière's characters on a sense of comic disproportion or humour. This tendency could be seen to a slight extent in his portraits of Sir Avarice Pedant, Young Pedant, and Sir Harry Wilding in The Temple Beau. In later plays it accounts for the presence of such obviously non-Restoration comic types as Mr. Boncour and Sir Gregory Kennel of The Fathers and Squire Badger of the five-act ballad-opera, Don Quixote in England, the latter being an early model for the character of Squire
Western in Tom Jones. This movement away from the characterization of Restoration drama is clearly illustrated by Fielding's practice in Rape upon Rape; or, The Justice Caught in his own Trap (1730), later re-titled The Coffee-House Politician. Although this play retains many Restoration traits, it does show the author moving towards a traditional Molière-esque type of comedy. At the center of this comedy are two great portraits of general comic types, Judge Squeezum, the trading justice, and Mr. Politic, the coffee-house politician. The author's intention is clearly to expose the follies of these general types through their actions on the stage. Judge Squeezum is a representation of the dishonest judge, using his position to acquire money and power, victimizing the destitute and defenseless. The portrait of Mr. Politic presents a man so engrossed in the probabilities of political events that he is unable to deal rationally with the real world. He has become so lost in the forty to fifty newspapers he reads each day and his coffee-house discussions of them that he almost loses his daughter. Even when she has slipped out of the house and a messenger brings Politic the news that she has been arrested and put in jail, he cannot keep his mind on his duties as a father, but instead gets into a political argument with the messenger. A speech by Politic's friend, Worthy, in this play suggests the premise upon which his character is drawn: "I recollect the dawning of this political humour to have appeared when we were at Bath together but it has risen finely in these ten years. What an enthusiasm must it have arrived to, when it could make him forget the loss of his only daughter! The greatest part of mankind labour
under one delirium or other; Don Quixote differed from the rest, not in madness, but the species of it. The covetous, the prodigal, the superstitious, the libertine, and the coffee-house politician, are all Quixotes in their several ways" (Rape upon Rape. II.xii). This statement of the basis of his character of Politic indicates a movement in Fielding's technique away from the stereotypes of Restoration comedy toward a comic characterization more like Molière's. Furthermore, as a result of these new types of characters, Rape upon Rape moves closer to Molière's comedy in several other general ways. It has a current of realism and social satire not evident in Fielding's earlier five-act comedies. Although its prime target is the corrupt world of the dishonest justices and constables of London, its satiric thrust is really pervasive and strikes out at many areas of the society. In addition, as usually happens in basically satiric comedy, the blocking characters of this play are brought to the foreground and made the focus of the play's development. The portraits of Justice Squeezum and Mr. Politic are given much more of the author's attention than the promotion of the match between Hilaret and Constant. Finally, as a result of the conception of the blocking characters and their effect on the plotting of the play, the solution of the lover's problem requires a _deus ex machina_ ending as far-fetched as those in _L'Avare_ and _Tartuffe_. The necessity for this kind of ending seemingly stems from this source: that the essential nature of the blocking characters has not been and cannot be changed; thus, the outward circumstances of the lovers must be altered in order to effect a comic resolution.
Fielding's last comedy, *The Fathers; or, The Good-Natured Man*, written in 1743, several years after his active theatrical career, shows some of the possible influences of Molière already discussed with the earlier plays. It is a very curious comedy in several ways. It is not a Restoration manners comedy, though at times Restoration attitudes seem to creep in; nor is it a sentimental comedy, though at times it reminds one of that genre. The most striking fact about the play is that in spite of all the marriageable sons and daughters (three sons and two daughters, each of whom is in love with one of the others at the outset), there are no marriages at the end of the comedy. As the title of the play suggests, the focus of the action is on the characters of the fathers; thus, the tendency is once again to shift the center of the play clearly to the blocking characters. Perhaps the most obvious parallel between Molière's and Fielding's techniques in this play, however, is in the repeated use of the pairs of contrasting characters. The principal contrast is, of course, between the two fathers of the play, Mr. Boncour, the "good-natured man" who has raised his family by complaisance and generosity, and Mr. Valence, who has raised his family with severity, discipline and niggardliness. Mr. Boncour is further contrasted with his brother Sir Anthony Boncour, a man who believes in moderating the excesses of good-nature with judgment and reason and who forms a kind of norm for this play. The shift to the development of the blocking characters, as well as the effective use of comic contrast, may indicate some general influence
of Molière's technique on this play, although there are no specific parallels to be drawn.

Among Fielding's eight regular, five-act comedies, the only one which appears to be completely outside the realm of possible Molière influence is The Modern Husband. The play was Fielding's first attempt at comedy with a serious moral end, but, like its successor, The Universal Gallant, its frank tone left a bad taste in the mouth of its audience. The plot of the play combines elements of Restoration comedy and of sentimental comedy. The Moderns, supposedly a representative contemporary couple, have arranged to sell Mrs. Modern's favors for their mutual advancement and profit. They are brought into conflict with the Bellamants, a couple who could have stepped out of any Steele or Cumberland sentimental comedy. The play is most reminiscent of Cibber's Love's Last Shift or Van Brugh's The Relapse, and its heavy-handed morality and curious tone set it far apart from Molière's comedy.

Although the main evidences of Molière's influence on Fielding's dramas are perhaps found in his five-act comedies, there are also some indications of this influence in his short farces and afterpieces. In his three-act farce, The Letter-Writers; or, a New Way to Keep a Wife at Home (1731), Fielding once again makes use of that technique of the comic contrasting of pairs of characters that was so prevalent in the regular comedies. In this play, Fielding employs the old husband-young wife relationship which Molière often presents. Two old husbands, worried about keeping their wives from running about town visiting and
from making them cuckold, contrive a plan in which they send their wives letters threatening their lives if they venture from the house. As a result, Mrs. Wisdom decides to stay at home continually, while Mrs. Softly, wanting to show her courage, simply hires additional guards as attendants and goes abroad even more than usual. The letters, however, do not prevent either wife from carrying on a secret affair with Rakel, a typical Restoration lover. The effect of the contrast is to comically set off the reactions and the attitudes of both the two wives and the two husbands against each other. A typical instance of this technique is in the irony of the scene where Mr. Wisdom brags about his wife's staying at home and Mr. Softly counters with his assurance that his wife is "Lucretia the second" just as they are about to hear revealed a letter of assignation from each of their wives to Rakel. The use of this comic device in Fielding's play strongly suggests Molière's employment of effective comic contrast in such works as L'École des maris.

Another of Fielding's shorter pieces, probably influenced by Molière's comedy, is the three-act farce, The Debauchees; or, The Jesuit Caught (1732), which seemingly owes a debt to Tartuffe for some aspects of its central situation. The play was based upon an actual incident at Toulon in which a Jesuit priest seduced his young confessor. Father Martin, the Jesuit of Fielding's play, who has as much power over Old Jourdain as Tartuffe had over Orgon, uses this power over the father to get the daughter, Isabel, in a position where he can seduce her. He veils his intentions with a mask of piety and religion and uses
his control over Jourdain so cleverly that, like Orgon with Elmire, Isabel is forced into uncomfortable interviews with the priest through the insistence of her father. Old Jourdain's blindness and inability to see through the hypocritical priest are analogous to Orgon's failure with Tartuffe. He will hardly believe the evidence of his senses because his belief in Father Martin is so strong and almost has to see his daughter actually raped before he is convinced. The discovery of the villain in this play may also owe its conception to Tartuffe. As in the Molière play, the hypocrite is exposed by the trick of hiding Old Jourdain in a place where he can actually observe the priest's attempt to seduce Isabel and, thus, the revelation of his true character.

In the two short farces written immediately after his adaptations of Molière, Fielding also shows some evidence of having borrowed ideas from the French playwright. The first of these plays, The Intriguing Chambermaid (1733), a two-act farce in ballad-opera form, was written expressly to show off the talents of Kitty Clive, to whom the author also dedicated the play. The part of Lettice, the clever, vain chambermaid, is very similar to the role of Lappet in The Miser, which Mrs. Clive had taken earlier that year. Besides its relationship to that Molière adaptation, however, this portrait also contains echoes of other Molière servant roles and seems to be a combination of the attributes of several characters. In her outspoken familiarity with her superiors, particularly Mrs. Highman and Mr. Oldcastle, Lettice reminds us of such Molière servants as Dorine of Tartuffe and the nurse Jacqueline of Le Médecin malgré
lui. These echoes are particularly clear when she gives her opinion on the idea of marrying a young girl to an old husband she dislikes. Perhaps the character she is most reminiscent of, however, is the clever and outspoken Toinette of Le Malade imaginaire. She is like Toinette in her over-familiarity with her superiors and continual giving of unasked-for opinions, her sympathy for the young lovers and willingness to help them, and her quick-witted ingenuity for getting out of tight situations and inventing stories. She uses one technique that seems particularly Molièresque in its conception. When Goodall, her master's father, returns suddenly from abroad, she must hide the son's extravagance. She convinces him that his son, Valentine, has spent all his money investing in real estate. When Goodall asks which house Valentine has bought, Lettice finally identifies that of Mrs. Highman. To explain this unusual sale, she invents a story that Mrs. Highman has gone mad and her family has sold the house. At this point Mrs. Highman appears down the street. In a maneuver much like Maitre Jacques' appeasement of both Harpagon and Cléante in L'Avare, Lettice takes Mrs. Highman aside and convinces her that Goodall has gone mad during his travels and is going to be committed to an asylum by his son. The ensuing conversation only supports the belief in each of their minds that the other is mad, until by an accident Lettice's duplicity is discovered. This kind of comic miscommunication is a technique definitely reminiscent of Molière's practices.

Fielding's second play written after the Molière adaptations, An Old Man Taught Wisdom; or, The Virgin Unmask'd (1734), is a one-act farce in ballad-
opera form. Mrs. Clive played Lucy, the "virgin" of the title. The plot of the farce turns on the central situation of a father who has amassed a considerable fortune during his lifetime and has decided to give himself pleasure by rewarding merit with it. As the play opens, he has called together several poor relations, on one of whom he will bestow his fortune by allowing his only daughter to choose a husband from among them. The hint of Molière's influence enters the play in the character of the daughter, Lucy, whose background is very suggestive of Agnès in Molière's L'École des femmes. In the opening soliloquy of the play, Goodwill suggests the parallel between Lucy and Agnès by describing the sheltered way in which he has attempted to bring his daughter up:

... The girl I have bred up under my own eye; she has seen nothing, knows nothing, and has consequently no will but mine. I have no reason to doubt her consent to whatever choice I shall make.-- How happily must my old age slide away, between the affection of an innocent child and the grateful return I may expect from a so much obliged son-in-law! I am certainly the happiest man on earth. 8

In this speech, Goodwill's expectations about the effects of being raised in ignorance of the ways of the world echo those of Arnolphe at the opening of L'École des femmes. This similarity continues throughout the play as Goodwill discovers that he has been mistaken about his daughter's nature and lack of will. Lucy has made up her mind to marry either a man with a coach or Mr. Thomas, Lord Bounce's footman. When her father protests that marrying a footman would not be correct for her, she replies:
... A footman, indeed! why Miss Jenny likes him as well as I do; and she says, all the fine young gentlemen that the ladies in London are so fond of, are just such persons as he is.—Icod, I should have had him before now, but that folks told me I should have a man with a coach, and that methinks I had rather have, a great deal.

*(An Old Man Taught Wisdom. I)*

This speech also suggests a second comparison between Lucy and Molière's Agnès in the fact that Lucy really is innocent and unaffected and thus reacts completely naturally to everything that is said to her. Like Agnes, she has not developed the usual social facade and says exactly what she thinks to people. This trait results in marvellous comic effects when Lucy is confronted with her greedy and distasteful suitors, as, for example, when she responds openly to Blister the apothecary's question of what he has done to earn her hate: "You have done nothing; but you are such a great ugly thing; I can't bear to look at you; and if my papa was to lock me up for a twelvemonth I should hate you still" *(An Old Man Taught Wisdom. I)*. Such dialogue reminds one of Agnès' frankness to Arnolphe about her wish to marry Horace rather than him. Like her counterpart in Molière, Lucy makes the correct choice intuitively at the end of the play by marrying Thomas the footman.

It remains now to make some comment on the body of Fielding plays which includes his burlesques and dramatic satires, perhaps the most commercially successful group of plays in the contemporary theater. Contrary to what one might at first expect, these plays show little evidence of Molière's influence
and are, for the most part, outside the concerns of this study. They have only the most general qualities of satire in common with the Molière plays. While Fielding does show some evidence of having been influenced by Molière's satiric comedy, this influence shows up in plays already discussed such as Rape upon Rape, The Temple Beau, and The Fathers, which, at least in part, ridicule general comic types and poke fun at the follies of society. Fielding's burlesques and dramatic satires, however, are dramatic pieces that make use of clearly different techniques, structures, and kinds of satire than Molière's plays generally do. This fact is more-or-less inherent in the nature of the dramatic burlesques, The Tragedy of Tragedies and The Covent-Garden Tragedy. In each case, Fielding is parodying a specific literary work or works and thus looks to those specific plays for his influences. In each case, the resulting work is a kind of mock-heroic tragedy, with overtones of political satire, a kind of drama that would seem to have little connection with the comedies of Molière. The remaining group of major plays, which can be linked under Fielding's own term "dramatic satires," have a number of basic traits that set them apart from possible Moliere influence. They tend often to be virtually plotless. The Historical Register for the Year 1736, for example, consists of a series of brief sketches satirizing such contemporary topics as political graft, Italian opera, and auctions, held together only by the fact that the playwright, Medley, has supposedly written them. They frequently make use of such forms as the rehearsal play, the journey to the world of the dead, and the puppet show. However, more significant than the forms
which Fielding uses in these dramatic satires are the unconventional techniques he employs. In this group of plays, he typically takes what Charles B. Woods in the introduction to his edition of The Author's Farce calls an "emblematical" rather than a realistic approach to satire in drama. This emblematical method, a term borrowed from the critic sneerwell in Fielding's own Pasquin, generally manifests itself in the tendency to give characters and plot an allegorical significance and the absence of any concern for representing the surface appearance of life as it is really lived. Thus, the puppet show of The Author's Farce presents an allegorical picture of the various popular entertainments of the time courting the favors of the Goddess of Nonsense, within the framework of a kind of Lucianic voyage to the world of the dead. The characters of the play consist not only of allegorical figures like the Goddess of Nonsense, Signior Opera, and Monsieur Pantomime and real figures, like Luckless the struggling playwright and his greedy landlady, Mrs. Moneywood, but also of the mythical figure, Charon, the boatman, and the traditional puppet-show characters, Punch and Joan. The juxtaposing and mixing of realistic and non-realistic elements is clearly underlined in the denouement of The Author's Farce where the real and symbolic characters are hilariously found to have family ties. Many of these same techniques are evident throughout Fielding's dramatic satires. The Grub-Street Opera is a well-worked-out allegory of the political situation in England with the members of the Apshicken family clearly representing George II, Queen Caroline, the Prince of Wales, Walpole, Lord Hervey, the Duke of
Newcastle and Molly Skerrit, Walpole's mistress. In the tragedy rehearsed in 
*Pasquin*, symbolic characters representing law and medicine under the leadership 
of religion plot the overthrow of Queen Common-Sense and her replacement with 
Queen Nonsense. The point, of course, is that this kind of non-representational 
satirical drama has little in common with Molière's realistic social satire. Perhaps 
the closest Molière's plays come to this satire is in the endings of such *comédie-
ballets* as *Le Malade imaginaire* and *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*. Such a resemblance, however, is only of the vaguest sort. Fielding's main influences in the 
techniques of the dramatic satires come from the satirists Pope, Gay, Dryden, 
Buckingham, Lucian, and Aristophanes, rather than from the masters of realistic 
social comedy, Molière and Jonson.

Finally, the dramatic satires of Fielding are separated from the comedy 
of Molière by the extremely topical quality of the English dramatist's satire. In 
Molière, the tendency toward topical satire is almost non-existent. While there 
are instances of his ridiculing a specific individual such as the Abbé Cotin in 
the character of Trissotin in *Les Femmes savantes*, these instances are definitely 
the exception rather than the rule. On the other hand, Fielding's dramatic 
satires are built on specific topical materials. The proof of this difference is 
that, while *L'Avare* or *Tartuffe* can still delight and entertain audiences with 
little knowledge of seventeenth century France, hilariously funny satires like 
*The Grub-Street Opera*, *The Author's Farce*, and *The Historical Register* can 
only be understood by someone who is willing to dig into the political, literary,
and social background of Fielding’s London. Just considering the characters alone, Fielding’s The Author’s Farce requires the viewer to have some knowledge of the characters of such scarcely well-known figures as Colley Cibber, Edmund Curll, Sir John Gonson, Eliza Haywood, John James Heidegger, John Henley, Samuel Johnson of Cheshire, John Rich, Seedo, Francesco Bernardi Senesino, Lewis Theobald, and Robert Wilks. Much of the humor of Fielding’s character Master Owen Apshinken in The Grub-Street Opera loses its bite if one is not aware of the rumored impotence of Frederick Louis, Prince of Wales; and Ground-Ivy’s discussion of Shakespeare’s King John in The Historical Register would not be nearly as funny to someone unacquainted with Colley Cibber’s recent attempts to “improve” this Shakespearean play. Thus, because of their extremely topical nature, as well as their unusual techniques and forms, Fielding’s dramatic satires remain, for the most part, outside the concerns of this discussion of the influence of Molière’s comedy on Fielding the dramatist.

To assess the general extent of Molière’s influence on Fielding’s plays is a difficult and problematical undertaking. As we have just seen, there is a small group of his plays that show no apparent relation to Molièresque comedy. However, besides the two actual adaptations of Molière, there are a number of passages and characters in his other comedies which seem almost certainly to have been borrowed from the French writer. In addition, we can see, in Fielding’s plays, some movement toward a kind of moral satire and a taste for general comic characters that reminds us of Molière’s comedy. Perhaps the curious point about
the question of Molièresque influence in the plays is that, while Fielding so often pointed to the French author's comedy as a model of true comedy and suggested his attempts to emulate that model, he never managed to do so in his plays, with the exception of scattered passages and characters. The reasons for this falling-short are no doubt impossible to ascertain, but two facts present themselves as at least partial explanations.

The most obvious of these points is that Fielding the playwright was in a sense trapped by the Restoration tradition. He never really rid himself of the Restoration influence in his career as a dramatist, as witnessed by the fact that the comedies, *The Wedding-Day* and *The Universal Gallant* written near the end of his dramatic career show as much as, if not more, Restoration influence than his very first comedy, *Love in Several Masques*. The unhappy aspect of this influence, however, is that it was not really one suited to Fielding's temperament and genius and was seldom completely successful in the plays. That urbanity and satirical delicacy so necessary to great comedy of manners are often lacking in his plays. Fielding's comic spirit, so close in sympathy with that of Molière, was to a large extent stifled by the conventions of artificial comedy.

Secondly, the failure of Fielding to reproduce the spirit and naturalness of Molière's comedy may perhaps be attributed in part to his inexperience and his youth. During his dramatic career, he had not yet acquired the detached philosophical attitude he would later show and which is so central to Molièresque
comedy. Molière began to write at the age of forty, by which time he had a profound acquaintance with life and human nature and could paint the vices of society naturally, but without bitterness. Fielding, on the other hand, began his dramatic career at twenty-one and ended it before he was thirty. Perhaps partly because of this youth, his sensitivity and reaction to vices were sometimes too violent, his portrayal of traits too exaggerated, his satire frequently too bitter. Thus, although Fielding admired Molière's comedy and tried to imitate it, that comedy was often falsified because the young playwright did not possess the detachment which would enable him to find the comic in human nature without anger or bitterness. Later, in his comic novels, Fielding would acquire this quality and be able to write the kind of comedy he admired in Molière. However, during his dramatic career, he seldom succeeded in reaching this goal because he too often saw Molière through the artificial Restoration tradition and the vigorous anger of youth.
Notes to Chapter IV

1 All references to Love in Several Masques are taken from Henry Fielding, Love in Several Masques (London: J. Watts, 1728).

2 All references to Le Misanthrope are taken from Jean Baptiste Poquelin Molière, Œuvres de Molière, ed. Eugène André Despois and Paul Mesnard (Paris: Hachette, 1873-1900), V.

3 All references to Les Femmes savantes are taken from Jean Baptiste Poquelin Molière, Œuvres de Molière, ed. Eugène André Despois and Paul Mesnard (Paris: Hachette, 1873-1900), IX.

4 All references to The Temple Beau are taken from Henry Fielding, The Temple Beau, A Comedy (London: J. Watts, 1730).

5 All references to Le Malade imaginaire are taken from Jean Baptiste Poquelin Molière, Œuvres de Molière, ed. Eugène André Despois and Paul Mesnard (Paris: Hachette, 1873-1900), IX.


7 All references to Rape upon Rape are taken from Henry Fielding, Rape upon Rape; or, The Justice Caught in his own Trap (London: J. Watts, 1730).

8 All references to An Old Man Taught Wisdom are taken from Henry Fielding, An Old Man Taught Wisdom; or, The Virgin Unmask'd (London: J. Watts, 1734).

CHAPTER V

MOLIÈRESQUE INFLUENCE ON THE THEORY AND TECHNIQUE
OF THE COMIC NOVELS OF FIELDING

Before exploring the possibility of Molièresque influence on Fielding's development of the comic novel, it is necessary to consider the relationship between these two authors as literary theorists. While Fielding certainly had some theory of what comedy was and how it functioned during his career as a dramatist, he did not concern himself with explaining that theory to any great extent. With the production of the great comic novels, however, Fielding became very conscious of the need to articulate the basic rules and aims of his new genre. Thus, he produced a preface to *Joseph Andrews*, perhaps the first formal criticism of the English novel; the introductory chapters to each book of *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*; and numerous periodical papers discussing the various aspects of his "comic epic-poem in prose." An examination of the portions of this sizable body of critical material which deal directly with Fielding's conception of comedy clearly suggests some definite parallels between what he set as his goals in comedy and the aims and practices of Molière's comedy. Moreover, the possibility that these parallels stem, at least partly from a specific influence of the English author by the French is enhanced by
Fielding's inclusion of Molière in the group of geniuses of the comic and satiric modes whose spirits he wishes to be inspired by in Tom Jones (XIII.i).

In the broadest sense, both Molière and Fielding wrote comedy that, theoretically at least, was Classical and Aristotelian in nature, although in practice each combined this comedy with a number of other traditions. This fact is perhaps most difficult to see in the case of Molière, both because of his strong influence by the Italian commedia dell'arte and his not really being known as a theoretician at all. Molière did, however, feel called upon to defend his comedy (in prefaces, in dedications and in the plays themselves) at several times during his career; and, when he did so, he almost invariably spoke of its aims in traditional classical terms. One seemingly outstanding exception to this assertion is the much-quoted passage from La Critique de l'école des femmes where Dorante asks, "Je voudrois bien savoir si la grande règle de toutes les règles n'est pas de plaire, et si une pièce de théâtre qui a attrapé son but n'a pas suivi un bon chemin" (La Critique de l'école des femmes, VI).¹

On the surface, this comment would suggest that Molière only accepted one-half of Horace's dictum that art should both divert and instruct. However, if one looks closely at the context of the statement, this suggestion becomes less certain. The question of the argument is not whether a play should entertain or instruct, but if it is preferable to have a play which no one likes but which follows the rigid rules of Aristotle's interpreters, or whether it is better to have a play which everyone enjoys but which breaks some of these rules. Neither Fielding
nor Molière was so unpragmatic and foolish as to accept the former alternative. Neither was a classicist in the sense of exhibiting a belief in the slavish attention to rules in disregard of nature and reason. In essence, each was willing to mold his art to the demands of his time, although the foundation of that art remained, in a general and theoretical sense, classical.

At the basis of both Fielding and Molière’s theories about their art and its aims are Aristotelian and Horatian concepts of what comedy is and what its ends should be. Although Aristotle’s treatise on comedy has been lost, the surviving section of his Poetics dealing with tragedy, did leave his successors with some general ideas of what he believed comedy to be. According to this treatise, it is basically an imitation of the actions of characters of an inferior moral bent, but only insofar as their follies and faults are ludicrous, rather than painful or harmful. This central idea of the ridicule of mankind’s ludicrous aspects suggests the essentially satirical nature of Aristotelian comedy and is further reinforced by Horace’s insistence in his Ars Poetica that art has a double purpose—to divert and to instruct. Thus, implicit in both Aristotle’s and Horace’s definitions of the genre is the view that comedy is primarily satire. The basic theories of these two classical scholars were seemingly the foundation for the comic theories of both Fielding and Molière. The French dramatist defended his plays several times by arguing that they did not promote vice, but rather that they sought to correct men’s viciousness through ridicule. In the preface to a very early play, Les
Précieuses ridicules, Molière attempted to justify his satire of the précieuses in terms of the rules of classical comedy:

J'aurais voulu faire voir qu'elle se tient partout dans les bornes de la satire honnête et permise; que les plus excellentes choses sont sujettes a être copiées par de mauvais singes qui méritent d'être bernés, que ces vicieuses imitations de ce qu'il y a de plus parfait ont été de tout temps la matière de la comédie; et que, par la même raison les véritables savants et les vrais braves ne sont point encore avisés de s'offenser du Docteur de la comédie, et du Captain; non plus que les jueges, les princes, et les rois, de voir Trivelin, ou quelque autre, sur le théâtre, faire ridiculement le juge, le prince ou le roi: aussi les véritables précieuses auraient tort de se piquer, lorsqu'on joue les ridicules qui les imitent mal.

Even more striking as an example of the essentially classical basis of Molière's comic theory are numerous comments on comedy in his preface and three "Placets au roi" to Tartuffe. In the preface to the play, Molière defends himself against the charge that his subject is not a fit one for the stage by pointing to the effectiveness of ridiculing men's vices in front of all the world:

Si l'emploi de la comédie est de corriger les vices des hommes, je ne vois pas par quelle raison il y en aura de privilégiés. Celui-ci est, dans l'État, d'une conséquence bien plus dangereuse que tous les autres; et nous avons vu que le théâtre a une grande vertu pour la correction. Les plus beaux traits d'une sérieuse morale sont moins puissants le plus souvent que ceux de la satire; et rien ne
reprend mieux la plupart des hommes que la peinture de leurs défauts. C'est une grande atteinte aux vices que de les exposer à la risée de tout le monde. On souffre aisément des répréhensions, mais on ne souffre point la raillerie. On veut bien être méchant, mais on ne veut point être ridicule.4

Later in the preface, Molière makes a statement of what the value of comedy is, which bases its argument on comedy's two-fold purpose of diverting and correcting mankind:

On connaîtra sans doute que n'étant autre chose qu'un poème ingénieux qui par des leçons agréables reprend les défauts des hommes, on ne saurait la censurer sans injustice. Et si nous voulons ouïr là-dessus le témoignage de l'antiquité, elle nous dira que ses plus célèbres philosophes ont donné des louanges à la comédie, eux qui faisaient profession d'une sagesse si austère, et qui croient sans cesse après les vices de leur siècle; elle nous fera voir qu'Aristote a consacré des veilles au théâtre, et s'est donné le soin de réduire en préceptes l'art de faire des comédies.

Finally, in his first "Placet" to Tartuffe Molière states very clearly the classical bias of his comic theory. His statement of the purpose of comedy as the correction of men's faults through the ridicule of the vices of his time is certainly a reference to the traditional requirements of Aristotelian satirical comedy. This passage also goes on to defend the portrayal of hypocrisy, as Fielding did later, not only as a fitting subject for comedy, but also as one of the most important and necessary of its subjects:
Le devoir de la comédie étant de corriger les hommes en les divertissant, j'ai cru que dans l'emploi où je me trouve, je n'avais rien de mieux à faire que d'attaquer par des peintures ridicules les vices de mon siècle; et comme l'hypocrisie sans doute en est un des plus en usage, des plus incommodes, et des plus dangereux, j'avais eu, Sire, la pensée que je ne rendrais pas un petit service à tous les honnêtes gens de votre royaume, si je fасois une comédie qui décrit les hypocrites, et mit en vue comme il faut toutes les grimaces étudiées de ces gens de bien à outrance, toutes les friponneries couvertes de ces faux-monnayeurs en dévotion, qui veulent attraper les hommes avec un zèle contrefait et une charité sophistiqué.

Even in the prologues of his early plays, Fielding made passing references to the role of comedy which indicated that his conception of it was basically classical, in much the same way as Molière's. In the prologue to The Temple Beau he suggested the use of ridicule for both diversion and instruction: "The comic muse, in smiles severely gay, / Shall scoff at vice, and laugh its crimes away." 5 Similarly, in the prologue to The Modern Husband, he speaks of the purposes of the comic stage as "to divert, instruct, and mend mankind." 6 That Fielding connected this view of comedy with classical models is indicated in his prologue to Rape upon Rape. This prologue follows a familiar eighteenth century pattern, the lamentation over the present degradation of the comic stage and the announcement that the author will try to remedy this sad state by presenting a play which draws its rules from a former, more illustrious time. In this case, as the opening lines suggest, the model is the Aristotelian comedy of Classical Greece:
In Ancient Greece, the infant Muses' school,
Where vice first felt the pen of ridicule,
With honest freedom and impartial blows
The Muse attacked each vice as it arose:
No grandeur could the mighty villain screen
From the just satire of the comic scene:
No titles could the daring poet cool,
Nor save the great right honourable fool.
They spared not even the aggressor's name,
And public villainy felt public shame.7

The prologue then goes on to describe the contrasting weakened and impotent
character of contemporary comedy and ends with the heroic resolve of the author
to attempt to combat that situation:

But the heroic Muse, who sings to-night,
Through these neglected tracts attempts her flight.
Vice, clothed with power, she combats with her pen,
And, fearless, dares the lion in his den.

These passages are representative of the comments Fielding made about his comedy
throughout his dramatic career. In no place, however, did he actually stop and
discuss in any detail his theory of comedy and what he was trying to achieve
with it until the preface and introductory chapters to his first comic novel,
Joseph Andrews, where Aristotelian theory is the underlying foundation for all
he says about the "comic epic-poem in prose."

In the preface to Joseph Andrews, Fielding clearly revealed the same
classical basis for his ideas about comedy as Molière had displayed in his dramatic
prefaces. Basing his argument for the validity of his new genre, the "comic
epic-poem in prose," entirely upon Aristotelian authority, he suggested that his
book, though it seemed innovative, was built upon acceptable classical rules.
Thus, he began his justification of the new form by tracing its roots back to the lost comic epic of Homer which Aristotle stated had had "the same relation to comedy which his Iliad bears to tragedy." He distinguished his genre, the comic romance or comic epic-poem in prose, from the serious epic in clearly Aristotelian terms:

It differs from the serious romance in its fable and action, in this; that as in the one these are grave and solemn, so in the other they are light and ridiculous: it differs in its characters by introducing persons of inferior rank, and consequently, of inferior manners, whereas the grave romance sets the highest before us: lastly in its sentiments and diction, by preserving the ludicrous instead of the sublime.

In emphasizing the inferiority in rank and manners of his characters and the ridiculous aspects of their actions, Fielding consciously follows the same classical tradition which Molière had seen as the basis of his comedy. Fielding goes on in his preface to distinguish between burlesque and comedy by stating that, while they both deal with the ridiculous, the former depicts what is "monstrous and unnatural" while comedy confines itself to the "just imitation of nature."

Finally, he points out that, while he is following Aristotle closely in the conception of his work, the Greek author is noticeably silent on one important point, the definition of "the Ridiculous." Although Aristotle explains clearly what "the Ridiculous" is not, that it does not include what is painful or harmful, he does not state what it actually is. Fielding then goes on to assert that af-
fection is the "only source of the true ridiculous" and that its two principal causes are vanity and hypocrisy. He particularly emphasizes the importance, as well as the appropriateness, of hypocrisy as a subject for comic ridicule, much as Molière had defended the same subject in his preface to Tartuffe.

The decidedly classical foundation of Fielding's comic theory is evident in Fielding's second comic novel, Tom Jones, as well. In his dedication of the work to George Lyttleton, the author states that his endeavor in the novel has been "to recommend goodness and innocence." His description of the methods he has employed to achieve these ends link him clearly with the tradition of Aristotelian comedy: "For these purposes I have employed all the wit and humour of which I am master in the following history; wherein I have endeavoured to laugh mankind out of their favorite follies and vices." This goal is exactly the design which Molière had proposed for his comedy in the preface to Tartuffe.

One additional point of comparison between the two authors' comic theories which is very important in seeing the fundamental similarity of their aims in comedy, is their emphasis upon the imitation of the general, rather than the specific in their portraits of the life of their times. Both men were extremely annoyed by those critics who insisted in finding specific well-known individuals in their comic portraits. In L'Impromptu du Versailles, Bercourt expresses the author's anger at this type of criticism by reporting what Molière has said to him in a conversation:
Il disoit qui rien ne lui donnoit du déplaisir comme d’être accusé de regarder quelqu’un dans les portraits qu’il fait; que son dessein est de peindre les moeurs sans vouloir toucher aux personnes, et que tous les personnages qu’il représente sont des personnages en l’air, et des fantômes proprement, qu’il habilte à sa fantaisie, pour réjouir les spectateurs; qu’il seroit bien fache d’y avoir jamais marqué qui que ce soit; et que si quelque chose estoit capable de le dégoûter de faire des comédies, c’etoit les ressemblances qu’on y vouloit toujours trouver, et dont ses ennemis tâchoient malicieusement d’appuyer la pensée, pour lui rendre de mauvais offices auprès de certaines personnes à qui il n’a jamais pensé. 10

In *La Critique de l’école des femmes*, Molière had stated more overtly the correct aim of comic portraiture in Uranie’s speech in reply to Climène’s attack on *L’Ecole des femmes* for having offensive satire of women in it:

> Pour moi, je me garderais bien de m’en offenser et de prendre rien sur mon compte de tout ce qui s’y dit. Ces sortes de satires tombent directement sur les moeurs, et ne frappent les personnes que par réflexion. N’allons point nous appliquer nous-mêmes les traits d’une censure générale; et profitons de la leçon, si nous pouvons, sans faire semblant qu’on parle à nous.

(*La Critique de l’école des femmes*. VI)

In his introductory chapter to Book III of *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding makes almost identical claims for his purpose in comedy by warning his readers against seeing specific individuals in his portraits:

> I question not but several of my readers will know the lawyer on the stagecoach the moment they hear his voice. It is likewise odds but the wit and the prude meet with some of their
acquaintance, as well as all the rest of my characters. To prevent, therefore, any such malicious applications, I declare here, once for all, I describe not men, but manners; not an individual, but a species.

(Joseph Andrews. III.i)

One indication of the basic similarity in the way these two writers looked at their art is, curiously enough, that they end these discussions of their comic characterization with nearly identical images. In her defense of comic portraiture in Molière's play quoted above, Uranie uses the image of the comic character as a public mirror: "Toutes les peintures ridicules qu'on expose sur les théâtres doivent être regardées sans chagrin de tout le monde. Ce sont miroirs publics, où il ne faut jamais témoigner qu'on se voie; et c'est se taxer hautement d'un défaut, que se scandaliser qu'on les reprendre" (La Critique de l'école des femmes. VI). In much the same terms, Fielding describes his purpose in his comic characterization as "not to expose one pitiful wretch to the small circle of his acquaintance; but to hold the glass to thousands in their closets, that they may contemplate their deformity, and endeavour to reduce it, and thus by suffering private mortification may avoid public shame." (Joseph Andrews. III.i)

Doubtless, Fielding held this basic theory of comedy during the period he spent as a practicing dramatist; however, due perhaps to those circumstances already suggested in the previous chapter, he relatively seldom produced comedy that might be termed Molièresque in nature. Only once, in The Miser, had he
reached very close to Molièresque comedy of character. It is in the novels, then, that his method, as well as his theory, approaches closest to that of Molière. In addition to borrowings of numerous specific materials from the French dramatist, much as he had done in the plays, the novels also manifest considerable parallels to Molière's work in their general method and technique. Perhaps the most significant of these parallels is in the concept and method of their comic characterization. In one sense, it might be said that the novels are the real comedies of character of Fielding. The fact that Molière's greatness as a comic author stems more from his masterful comic characterization than from his plotting and other aspects of the plays would make this parallel between the two writers an important one indeed. In addition, Fielding, as early as the prologue to The Miser had indicated his admiration for Molière's comic characterization and implied that his own aim in comedy would be to emulate Molière's methods.

(See Chapter III, p. 75 for a discussion of this passage.)

Possibly the most significant effect of this parallel on the general comic structures of the two authors lies in the fact that, although for slightly different reasons, they show a basically identical concept of the comic character. Both Fielding and Molière conceived of their characters' personalities and essential make-up as fixed and unchanging. In this sense, character in their comedies determines plot rather than being molded or swayed by its demands. A character, in their works, may be sobered or moderated by experience, but his essential nature does not change. With Molière, this basic concept of characterization
was probably derived to a great extent from his influence by the Italian commedia
dell'arte. This comedy was basically improvised comedy, developing a set scenario
but without written dialogue; and, more importantly, it was played in masks.
Each mask represented a fixed character which would be immediately recognizable
to the audience who would judge the actor's skill by his facility in recreating
the expected role. Thus, in the commedia dell'arte, all of the actor's efforts
would be bent toward fulfilling a definite and clear character. When Molière
began his career as a playwright, he employed a conception of comic characteri-
ization very close to that of the commedia dell'arte; and, while the use of masks,
white face, and even names from the Italian comedy disappeared early in his
work, the conception of the character as fixed remained in all essentials through-
out his career. There are no conversions in Molière's comedy; the rogues
remain rogues and the fools remain fools. Harpagon, Alceste, and Tartuffe are
perhaps slightly sobered by their experiences but are in no essential way changed.
In fact, in some plays like Le Bourgeois gentilhomme and Le Malade imaginaire,
the denouement actually reinforces the folly of the central character, and he
remains self-deceived. Thus, while Molière often wrenches probability in his
resolution of plot structure, he seldom does so in his characterization. Once a
character's essential nature is established, he remains true to himself throughout
the play.

This concept of the fixed character was also the basis of Fielding's comic
characterization. In this case, however, it stemmed from Fielding's own view of
life which saw men's characters as essentially fixed at birth. One could perhaps by good or poor education, bring certain aspects of this character to the foreground, but the character remained basically the same. There is, of course, no reason to think that Molière did not see the fixed character as true-to-life. In view of the fact that he was writing realistic comedy, he undoubtedly did see his portrayal of men's characters as rigid and unlikely to change as accurate pictures of life in general. However, Molière does not talk specifically of this aspect of his thought at any point so that any conclusions about it must simply be suppositions based on the evidence of his practice in the plays themselves. Fielding, on the other hand, discussed his viewpoint on this basic question at several times during his career. In "An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men," first published in the Miscellanies of 1743, Fielding suggests that our characters may be fixed at birth: "Yet, among all these, there subsists, as I have before hinted, so manifest and extreme a difference of inclination or character, that almost obliges us, I think, to acknowledge some unacquired, original distinction, in the nature or soul of one man, from that of another."12 In A Journey from this World to the Next, Fielding makes this point even more clearly by his allegorical description of how man receives his essential character. In addition, this passage, even more obviously than the first, suggests Fielding's basic agreement with Pope's theories of the "ruling passion," that doctrine which Samuel Johnson, in his Life of Pope, would later term "pernicious" and a kind of "moral predestination."13 In this passage from A Journey from this World to
the Next, the traveller has arrived at a place where those spirits who are returning to the world draw lots from a gigantic wheel of fortune to determine their stations in life. He then describes the method of equipping each soul for its entrance into the flesh, in which the soul receives:

... a small phial inscribed, THE PATHETIC POTION, to be taken just before you are born. This potion is a mixture of all the passions but in no exact proportion so that sometimes one predominates, and sometimes another; nay, often in the hurry of making up, one particular ingredient is, as we were informed, left out. The spirit receiveth at the same time another medicine called THE NOUSPHORIC DECOCTION, of which he is to drink ad libitum. This decoction is an extract from the faculties of the mind, sometimes extremely strong and spirituous, and sometimes altogether as weak; for very little care is taken in the preparation. This decoction is so extremely bitter and unpleasant, that notwithstanding its wholesomeness, several spirits will not be persuaded to swallow a drop of it, but throw it away, or give it to any other who will receive it; by which means some who were not disgusted by the nauseousness drank double and treble portions.14

This passage clearly expresses Fielding's conception of man's character as fixed at his birth. In his introduction to Book VIII of Tom Jones, he actually applies this theory to the task of the comic writer. The chapter itself deals with the importance for the writer of remaining within the bounds not only of possibility but also of probability. His last requirement in this critical discussion is that the writer remain within the limits of "what the dramatic critics call conservation of character." He goes on to point out "that for a man to act in direct contradiction to the dictates of his nature, is, if not impossible, as improbable and as miraculous as anything which can well be conceived." This discussion ends with Fielding's
criticism of modern comedies for just the method of characterization which he has been deploring, a criticism which Molière would probably have quickly seconded if he had read the plays spoken of:

Our modern authors of comedy have fallen almost universally into the error here hinted at: their heroes generally are notorious rogues, and their heroines abandoned jades, during the first four acts, but in the fifth, the former become very worthy gentlemen, and the latter, women of virtue and discretion: nor is the writer often so kind as to give himself the least trouble to reconcile or account for this monstrous change and incongruity. There is, indeed, no other reason to be assigned for it than because the play is drawing to a conclusion; as if it was no less natural in a rogue to repent in the last act of a play, than in the last of his life; which we perceive to be generally the case at Tyburn, a place which might, indeed, close the scene of some comedies with much propriety, as the heroes in these are most commonly eminent for those very talents which not only bring men to the gallows, but enable them to make an heroic figure when they are there.

(Tom Jones. VIII.i)

Fielding thus attempts to rectify in his novels the faults of these modern comedy writers by creating realistic characters who remain true to themselves and do not undergo sudden and unexpected transformations. In reality these characters are fixed in the same sense as are Molière's. Their essential natures remain constant throughout the novels. As in the French plays, there are no eleventh-hour conversions in Fielding's comic novels. Not only do the good characters, the Adamses, Allworthys, Josephs, and Mrs. Millers, remain essentially the same
at the conclusion of their stories, but so, too, do the villains, the Lady Boobys, Blifils, Thwackums, and Lady Bellastons. Even with Tom Jones, who might seem to undergo a change at the end of the novel, Fielding very carefully lets us know that this reformation is no essential change in the boy's nature. Early in the novel, Allworthy indicates that Tom has a basically good nature but must learn to temper it with prudence in order to possess happiness. Thus, his final character is the same as it was at the outset, one of generosity, goodness, and honor, but moderated by the experiences he has had during the course of the novel.

One striking effect of this concept of characterization is certainly the influence it has on both authors' comic denouements. If the characters in a comedy are fixed and cannot change, the circumstances of these characters, whether realistically or unrealistically, must give way to bring about the festive conclusion. In a work which does not emphasize a cleverly-contrived intrigue, this change in the external circumstances of the hero and heroine often is accompanied by a decided wrenching of probability. This situation is true in so many of Molière's great comedies, L'Avare, Tartuffe, L'École des femmes, Le Bourgeois gentilhomme, Le Malade imaginaire, Les Fourberies de Scapin. These endings, often the reverse of inevitable with the intervention of the King or the discovery of long-lost parents or children, are conditioned by the requirements of the comic plot which demands that somehow the correct lovers be allowed to marry in spite of obdurate parental opposition.
In Fielding's adaptation of *L'Avare*, he had evidently seen this problem of the artificial and improbable denouement in the French play as a weakness to be overcome, for he went to great lengths to contrive an intrigue which would work the plot out in the same way as Molière had, without relying on the *deus ex machina* ending. However, when Fielding turned to a more Molièresque comedy of character in the novels, he was faced with exactly the same situation as the French writer had been. The resulting denouement of *Joseph Andrews* is as contrived as anything Molière wrote. The unbelievably chance meeting of two babies stolen by gypsies and their respective parents, twenty years later, at Lady Booby's manor is hard enough to swallow; but the fact that one baby was male and the other female and that the parents seemingly did not become concerned about the sexual switch is even more far-fetched. The coincidental nature of this discovery scene certainly, at the very least, denies the probable, if not the possible in its circumstances. As with Molière's much-criticized denouements, however, it is necessary to bring about the comic resolution which cannot come through changes in the characters. Lady Booby will not change her attitude toward the marriage no matter what anyone does, so the lovers must be put outside of her power. Even in *Tom Jones* where Fielding has prepared his denouement so carefully, it still seems somewhat artificial, because of the limitations of the genre itself, rather than of the author's technique.

Besides furnishing a basic source of Molière's technique of characterization, the concept of the mask also brings to mind one other important and basic parallel
between the methods of comic characterization of Fielding and Molière. This comparison stems from the idea of masking, the putting on of a role by the comic actor, extended by these authors to suggest the tendency of all men to play roles in real life. Perhaps because masking in one way or another is so much a part of man's social life, it seems to be at the center of both of these authors' comic visions and suggests several definite parallels between their comic art. To find this aspect of Molière's art, we must turn essentially to the plays themselves.

The affectation of both the women and the would-be poets of Les Femmes savantes is so effective a mask that it hides the falsity of their pedantry even from themselves. In his earliest play, Les Précieuses ridicules, Molière had soundly attacked that particular kind of affectation. Later, in La Critique de l'école des femmes, he once again berated the pretense of delicacy and preciosity in an argument between Climène and Uranie where the latter seems to have the last word. In both cases, these affectations are described as a kind of masking or assuming false roles. In Les Précieuses ridicules, this point is made even more clearly by the fact that the two servants, Mascarille and Jodelet, are actually disguised and playing the roles of the two affected marquises. If one looks at Molière's comedy in general, it becomes clear that role-playing is a central aspect of many of his plays, both the farces and the great comedies. In addition to Les Précieuses ridicules, such farces as Le Médecin malgré lui, Les Fourberies de Scapin, Monsieur de Pourceaugnac, and L'Amour médecin revolve around the central device of role-playing. Moreover, nearly all of Molière's major comedies involve the concept
of the comic mask in some way. Tartuffe is an obvious example of the role-
player, but one can easily point to similar devices in other of the comedies—
Arnolphe pretends to be the disinterested friend of Horace; Don Juan and
Sganarelle disguise themselves as a countryman and doctor; Monsieur Jourdain
plays the role of a gentleman; Argan assumes the part of an invalid and deceives
even himself about his health; and L'Avare is filled with characters who assume
false masks at various times. Whether the mask is put on consciously or uncon-
sciously, the technique of role-playing, from the sheer amount of times it is
used by Molière, would seem to have been a central concept in his comic char-
acterization.

In examining Fielding's works, we can be even more certain that this
concept was a controlling idea for the comic characterization. Most obviously,
Fielding's definition of the ridiculous in the preface to Joseph Andrews firmly
indicates a basic connection between the ridiculous and masking by defining the
source of the ridiculous as affectation, stemming either from vanity or hypocrisy.

While Fielding's comic characterization, in practice, turned out to have a broader
base than this definition suggests, the statement still applies to a large percentage
of Fielding's comic characters. Furthermore, in his introduction to Book VII of
Tom Jones, Fielding clearly ties his idea of characterization to the metaphor of
the actor on stage: "Some have considered the larger part of mankind in the
light of actors, as personating characters no more their own, and to which, in
fact, they have no better title, than the player hath to be in earnest thought
the king or emperor whom he represents. Thus the hypocrite may be said to be a player; and indeed the Greeks called them both by one and the same name" (Tom Jones. VII.i). The general importance in Fielding's thought of this concept of life as a masquerade for most of mankind is more fully stated in a passage from his "Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men," a passage which might serve as a description of the plot, as well as of the characters of Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews: "Thus while the crafty and designing part of mankind, consulting only their own separate advantage, endeavour to maintain one constant imposition on others, the whole world becomes a vast masquerade, where the greatest part appear disguised under false vizors and habits; a very few only showing their own faces, who become by so doing, the astonishment and ridicule of all the rest."15 This passage perhaps better than any other, describes the relationship between Parson Adams and the host of parsons, doctors, inn-keepers and noblemen with whom he is confronted during his journey. Insofar as this affectation or masking is ridiculous, rather than painful or evil, it is the basis of Fielding's comic novels and a central point of comparison with the comedy of his French master.

The importance of the mask to the comic methods of Fielding and Molière also suggests an emphasis on its comic corollary, the process of unmasking. The surprise and delight when the mask finally falls is one of the most successful comic effects of these authors. Whether it is the exposure of Tartuffe through his illicit passion or the exposure of Lady Booby who finally has to make her
intentions painfully obvious in order to convey them to Joseph, the falling of the
mask is a tribute, at least partially, to the fact that man cannot keep his essential
nature down. In one of the most thorough studies of the actual technique of
Molière's plays, W. G. Moore sees this process of unmasking as a central structural
principle of the plays: "The point of interest, for him, and for us, is the point
when the mask slips or falls, when the underlying man appears. This distinction
is never absent from Molière's plays. All his situations gravitate to that moment
when the mask is removed; he steers them towards the abandonment of the mask
and consequent emergence of the natural." 16 Moore then goes on to demonstrate
how this principle applies to various aspects of Molière's plays. In its simplest
form, it is evident in the social mask of politeness to those of whom we do not
necessarily approve or of subservience to an employer. The two contrasting por-
traits of Don Juan that Sganarelle gives in and out of the presence of his master
and the comic effect of Maître Jacques telling Harpagon what he thinks of him
are illustrations of this kind of social unmasking. Moore also mentions the kind
of mask imposed by a character's views or attitude, a false view of the world by
people who see it incorrectly, like Argan or Harpagon, in which instance the
mask is unconscious. Finally, Moore suggests that Molière employs unmasking to
reveal the nature of characters who are consciously masked, people like Tartuffe,
Arnolphe, and Alceste whose plans for themselves or others are thwarted by their
falling in love. In each case, Moore suggests that the central principle behind
these comic situations is that the mask must and does fall. No matter how clever
the masquerader, his nature will eventually reveal itself.

This view of unmasking is central to Fielding's conception of man as a
masquerader as well. In "An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men,"
Fielding, who has been trying to give the innocent and naive person some advice
on judging men's characters, follows his rather pessimistic view of life as generally
a great masquerade with the following hopeful assurance:

   But however cunning the disguise be which a
masquerader wears; however foreign to his age,
degree, or circumstance, yet if closely attended
to, he very rarely escapes the discovery of an
accurate observer; for Nature, which unwillingly
submits to the imposture, is ever endeavouring to
peep forth and show herself; nor can the cardinal,
the friar, or the judge, long conceal the sot, the
gamester, or the rake. 17

Thus, both Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones are filled with rogues who cannot keep
the mask firmly in place, who convict themselves unconsciously out of their own
mouths or by their own actions—Lady Booby, Parson Trulliber, Peter Pounce,
Lady Bellaston, Mr. Square, and a host of lawyers, doctors, and other professional
types. As for Molière, role-playing, whether conscious or unconscious, is in
Fielding a masquerade of deception in which the face, though hidden, is always
behind the mask waiting to be revealed.

One additional point which Moore makes about the structures of Molière's
plays is interesting for the light it sheds on a certain basic structural principle
both Fielding and Molière seem to use. He suggests that the dynamic principle
of French farce and the Italian comedy from which Molière drew much of his comic technique was the inter-play between the two comic figures, the fool and the rogue. 18 This comment becomes relevant here because the imposition of the rogue upon the fool is a natural corollary of the concept of comic role-playing. That many of Molière's plays develop this basic conflict almost goes without saying. Sganarelle, in his many disguises in various plays, is always outwitted and fooled. Orgon and Jourdain are deceived in similar ways. Rogues appear as Mascarille, Scapin and Sbrigani and, on a greater scale, as Tartuffe and Don Juan. Moore ends his discussion of this point by suggesting that in characters like Alceste or Argan, we have admittedly "an almost incredible refinement" of the fool and in those like Tartuffe or Arnolphe, of the rogue of old comedy. Basically, though, this relationship between fool and rogue does seem to be a central structural principle for many of Molière's plays.

This view of Molière's use of these character types as a structural device can interestingly be compared with Fielding's technique in Joseph Andrews. Although it is true that Parson Adams is a much more complex comic type than even Fielding himself allowed for in his preface and that he is decidedly non-Molièresque in some aspects, this explanation of comic structure does seem to have some relevance in regard to the basic structure of the novel. The people whom Adams meets on his travels are certainly rogues and do generally impose upon his almost unbelievable innocence of the ways of the world. In spite of the fact that Adams is meant to be a positive character within the total meaning
of the novel, he still is, in at least one respect, a very refined version of the fool. His structural role in the comedy is seemingly to serve as the fool in order to expose the rogues he meets. Moreover, in doing so, he does reveal his own foolishness, though it is not a foolishness the author wishes us to condemn. Such a comment would not seem as applicable to the structure of Tom Jones, although Tom’s imprudent good nature does lead him to play the fool for many rogues in that novel.

During this discussion of rogues, it may be appropriate to bring up one particular group of these characters where the parallel between Fielding and Molière seems especially strong, the portraits of professional types. Molière was notably harsh on the members of the medical profession throughout his plays. To this group Fielding added lawyers and clergymen, though he often handled these two additional groups in about the same way as both he and Molière depicted the doctors. In Fielding’s portraits of the members of this profession, he always attributes to them the same traits, the same ways of acting, sometimes nearly the same words that Molière had in the doctors of his plays. They are often ignorant, dishonest, mercenary, and given to cultivating an air of mystery about them to cover up these former faults. Just at the beginning of his career as novelist, Fielding commented on the ignorance and vanity of so many doctors of his period in a number of his first periodical, The Champion. The reference to Molière at the end of this passage clearly indicates that Fielding connected this kind of professional satire with Molière’s portraits of doctors:
Physicians have dosed more people out of the world than have ever died for want of medicines. The Apothecary in Garth tells the Doctor:

Your ink descends in such excessive showers;
Tis plain you can regard no health but ours.

Molière, who was the severest enemy to this faculty, hath levelled his sharpest satire against this part of their character. 19

It would be superfluous to list all the details borrowed or possibly borrowed by Fielding from Molière's satiric portraits of doctors. A few examples of these parallels will perhaps suggest the extent to which Fielding applied to his observations of his own countrymen essentially the same satiric techniques which Molière had used. Both authors often present doctors as ignorant charlatans always ready to dispute and display an empty and pompous erudition. In Molière's L'Amour médecin, M. Toms reports the following experience to his colleagues when the question of the niceties of form and professional etiquette comes up: "Pour moi, j'y suis sévère en diable, à moins que ce soit entre amis; et l'on nous assembla un jour, trois de nous autres, avec un médecin de dehors, pour une consultation, où j'arrêtai toute l'affaire, et ne voulus point endurer qu'on opinât, si les choses n'allaient dans l'ordre. Les gens de la maison faisaient ce qu'ils pouvaient et la maladie pressait; mais je n'en voulus point démordre, et la malade mourut bravement pendant cette contestation" (L'Amour médecin. II.iii). 20

In the following scene, the four doctors who have been called in to consult on Sganarelle's daughter's illness get into a huge argument over the proper treatment of
the disorder, while the patient lies supposedly near to death. This scene is reproduced by Fielding in Book II of *Tom Jones* where the two physicians who arrive for Captain Blifil, instead of exerting their efforts in an attempt to revive the patient, agree that he is "absolutely dead" and enter into a lengthy debate on the cause of his death. Fielding describes this dispute as follows:

Hence arose a dispute between the learned men, in which each delivered the reasons of their several opinions. These were of such equal force, that they served both to confirm either doctor in his own sentiments, and made not the least impression on his adversary. To say the truth, every physician almost hath his favorite disease to which he ascribes all the victories obtained over human nature. The gout, the rheumatism, the stone, the gravel, and the consumption, have all their several patrons in the Faculty; and none more than the nervous fever, or the fever on the spirits. And here we may account for those disagreements in opinion concerning the cause of a patient's death, which sometimes occur between the most learned of the College; and which have greatly surprised that part of the world who have been ignorant of the fact we have above asserted.

*(Tom Jones. II.ix)*

Fielding continues the satire of this same aspect of the medical profession in Book IV, where he describes the actions of the surgeon who appears to set Tom's broken arm:

The surgeon now ordered his patient to be stripped to his shirt, and then entirely baring the arm, he began to stretch and examine it, in such a manner that the tortures he put him to caused Jones to make several wry faces; which the surgeon observing, greatly wondered at, crying,
'What is the matter, sir? I am sure it is impossible I should hurt you.' And then holding forth the broken arm, he began a long and very learned lecture of anatomy, in which simple and double fractures were most accurately considered; and the several ways in which Jones might have broken his arm were discussed, with proper annotations showing how many of these would have been better, and how many worse than the present case.

(Tom Jones, IV.xiv)

Another of Molière’s favorite points of attack in his satire of doctors is the use of jargon to create an aura of mystery about the profession and to cover up ignorance. The doctor who attends Joseph Andrews after his being robbed and beaten clearly echoes the character of Sganarelle in Le Médecin malgré lui, delightedly spouting Latin after he ascertains none of his audience knows the language. In response to Mr. Tow-wouse’s praise of his knowledge and skill, the doctor carries on this dialogue with a gentleman who has just arrived:

"Why, I believe, landlord," cries the doctor, "there are few men, though I say it, within twelve miles of the place, that handle a fever better.--Veniente accurrite morbo: that is my method.--I suppose, brother, you understand Latin?" "A little," says the gentleman. "Ay, and Greek now, I'll warrant you: Ton dapomibominos poluflosboio thalasses. But I have almost forgot these things; I could have repeated Homer by heart once."

(Joseph Andrews, I.xiv)

When this doctor begins to describe the case and condition of Joseph to the gentleman, he is also reminiscent of other Molière physicians in his empty pedantry, particularly Thomas Diafoirus of Le Malade imaginaire and M. Macrotom of L’Amour médecin:
"Sir," says the doctor, "his case is that of a dead man.—The contusion on his head has perforated the internal membrane of the occiput, and divelicated that radical small minute invisible nerve which coheres to the pericranium; and this was attended with a fever at first symptomatic, then pneumatic; and he is at length grown delirious, or delirious, as the vulgar express it.

In Tom Jones, furthermore, another doctor pronounces a discourse which is a veritable masterpiece in the Molièresque style. This physician, who has just treated Tom after his quarrel with Ensign Northerton, is careful never to commit himself to any diagnosis as he is questioned by the lieutenant:

The lieutenant immediately asked how his patient did. But he resolved him only by saying, 'Better, I believe, than he would have been by this time, if I had not been called; and even as it is, perhaps it would have been lucky if I had been called sooner.'—'I hope, sir,' said the lieutenant, 'the skull is not fractured.'—'Hum,' cries the surgeon, 'fractures are not always the most dangerous symptoms. Contusions and lacerations are often attended with worse phenomena, and with more fatal consequences, than fractures. People who know nothing of the matter conclude, if the skull is not fractured, all is well; whereas I had rather see a man's skull broke all to pieces, than some contusions I have met with.'—'I hope,' says the lieutenant, 'there are no such symptoms here.'—'Symptoms,' answered the surgeon, 'are not always regular or constant. I have known very unfavourable symptoms in the morning change to favourable ones at noon, and return to unfavourable again at night.'

(Tom Jones. VII.xiii)

The surgeon then launches into a pedantic discourse reminiscent of so many of Molière’s doctors:
'Of wounds, indeed, it is rightly and truly said, Nemo repente fuit turpissimus. I was once, I remember, called to a patient who had received a violent contusion in his tibia, by which the exterior cutis was lacerated, so that there was a profuse sanguinary discharge; and the interior membranes were so divellicated, that the os or bone very plainly appeared through the aperture of the vulnus or wound. Some febrile symptoms intervening at the same time (for the pulse was exuberant and indicated much phlebotomy), I apprehended an immediate mortification. To prevent which, I presently made a large orifice in the vein of the left arm, whence I drew twenty ounces of blood; which I expected to have found extremely sivy and glutinous, or indeed coagulated, as it is in pleuritic complaints; but, to my surprise, it appeared rosy and florid, and its consistency differed little from the blood of those in perfect health. I then applied a fomentation to the part, which highly answered the intention, and after three or four times dressing, the wound began to discharge a thick pus or matter, by which means the cohesion--But perhaps I do not make myself perfectly well understood?--'Not really,' answered the lieutenant, 'I cannot say I understand a syllable.'

(Tom Jones. VII.xiii)

In addition to this parallel between the doctors of Fielding and Molière, Fielding applies much the same techniques and attacks much the same qualities, in his portraits of other professional types, notably lawyers and clergymen.

One other general area of possible Molièresque influence on the comic novels is the tendency on the part of both authors to combine comedy and farce in their works. While each wrote dramatic farces during his career, it is also true that they combined some farcical material with their more serious social comedy. For both playwrights farce became, at times, a kind of satiric method.
Even such serious Molière comedies as *L’École des femmes*, *Don Juan*, and *Tartuffe* employ a certain amount of farcical materials and methods in their plots. Moreover, *L’Avare*, the Molière comedy with which Fielding was perhaps most familiar, is the best example of Molière’s combining the farcical and comic elements. In *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding made a similar combination of farce and comedy. Actually, the comic effect of the novel stems from three main sources, the comic, the farcical, and the mock-heroic, although the two latter qualities are close to each other in essential nature. The farcical aspects of the novel are quite evident in the many rough-and-tumble battle scenes of the book, the uproar when Mrs. Tow-wouse discovers her husband and Betty in bed, the battle in which Parson Adams receives a pan of hogsblood in the face, the comic result of his falling in Trulliber’s pigsty, the epic confrontation between the parson and the hounds, and, finally, the fight with the captain, poet and player where Joseph empties the chamber-pot on the captain’s head and Adams is doused with a dirty mop. Undoubtedly the most fully developed farcical scene of the book is the final confusion of the bedchambers where Parson Adams, in a series of mistaken judgments, first finds himself in bed with Mrs. Slipslop, and then returns to Fanny’s, rather than his own bed, to spend the rest of the night. Even in the actual characterization of Adams, though Fielding denied it in his preface, there is some tendency toward the farcical. The parson’s absentmindedness, his unusual apparel, his frequent tendency to snap his fingers and brandish his crab-stick, and his extreme willingness to use his strong right fist to defend a good
cause are all exaggerated to a point at least close to farce. Although the farcical element in *Tom Jones* is not as extensive as in the earlier novel, one can nevertheless cite many examples of it. In addition to the several mock-heroic battle scenes, the discovery of Square in Molly’s bedroom, the breaking in on Tom and Mrs. Waters by Mr. Fitzpatrick, the unfortunate concealment of Lady Bellaston and Mrs. Honour in the same place in Tom’s bedroom, and the abandonment by Squire Western of the search for his daughter in order to join a fox-hunt are all scenes which add a farcical flavor to the novel.

One observation which might be made in relation to the question of farce in the two novels is the fact that at least on the surface, *Joseph Andrews* appears to have more definite parallels with the Molière plays than the later novel, *Tom Jones*. Certainly in some senses, the observation is a valid one. The earlier novel has more of the farcical flavor in its comedy than *Tom Jones*. It, in fact, comes much closer than its successor to that peculiar combination of the farcical and romanesque that Molière managed to attain in *L’Avare*. As was suggested earlier, its ending also resembles more clearly the artificial, contrived denouement of that Molière play. Furthermore, in one additional aspect, the novel is much closer to certain of Molière’s works—its plot structure itself is very similar, in that it tends to be episodic. This point has often been made about certain of Molière’s plays. *Les Fâcheux* is certainly an extreme example of the type, but throughout Molière’s plays one can find scenes that scarcely seem attached to the plot and yet are not in competition with it. As René Bray
points out, the scenes of *Les Fâcheux* could be multiplied endlessly or stopped abruptly at any point; nor is there any logic to their order, the succession being arbitrary. The first two acts of *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* are another case. In that play, these two acts consist almost entirely of very effective gags and the business of the play scarcely starts until Act III. Among the more conventionally-constructed plays, *L'Avare* is the best example of Molière's tendency toward the episodic structure. Within that play, the dinner party, the loan to the son, and the theft of the cashbox have little to do with each other. In his study of Molière, Bray describes Molière's ordering of scenes, his process of composition in certain of the plays, as "la composition en sketches, étant étendu qu'on désigne par là des scènes ayant chacun leur unité, leur valeur propre, et une certaine indépendance dans l'ensemble. La comédie molièresque est parfois une suite de sketches; même quand elle comporte un enchaînement plus étroit, certain episodes s'en détachent facilement." In conclusion, Bray points out that one can find traces of this technique in many of Molière's comedies, even the greatest. Interestingly, Bray's comment on this Molière technique might easily be applied to Fielding's construction of *Joseph Andrews*. That comment is, in fact, quite close in its basic conception to the point of view of Martin Battestin, the critic who has done the most to assert the structural integrity of the Fielding novel. In opposition to those critics who see the novel as a beadstring of incidents, randomly strung together, Battestin defends it as "a series of separate adventures, detached from and independent of each other, yet all tending to one great end." He later states that "theme
imparts both meaning and cohesiveness to the loosely-strung adventures and episodes of Fielding's odyssey of the road. The point here, of course, is that those adventures, for whatever reason, are loosely-strung and episodic. As in a play like *L'Avare*, the scene with the Tow-wouses at the Dragon Inn, the experience with Parson Trulliber, the arrest of Parson Adams, and the bedchamber mix-up at the end have little structurally to do with each other. Thus, in this aspect of the novel, as well as in those mentioned earlier, the parallels between *Joseph Andrews* and Molière's comedy seem to be more extensive than those of *Tom Jones*. However, as the influence of Molière's aspects of characterization is so strong in the latter novel, and is perhaps the most significant aspect of the comedy, this statement may be slightly misleading. What perhaps ought to be said is that *Joseph Andrews* is more obviously modelled on a particular type of Molière comedy, represented best by *L'Avare*, which Fielding had earlier adapted, a comedy which is episodic in structure and which succeeds in the difficult blending of farce, realistic social comedy, and the romanesque.

Whatever the progression of Fielding's views as a novelist might have been, however, it is certainly true that, by the time his fourth novel, *Amelia*, was published in 1751, he was writing a very different kind of comedy. The question of Molière's influence in *Amelia* can be dismissed with a few general comments. In several very basic ways, the novel is decidedly unlike Molière's comedy and is, in fact, a comic novel only in the broadest sense of the term. Its most obvious roots lie in the domestic drama of the time, particularly in
sentimental comedy. Its good characters are very good and its bad, very bad, which is one indication of that black-and-white world. Its heroine is a model of perfect virtue, patience, and forgiveness and is given to crying at any and all times. No one laughs in the book, nor does anything seem at all comic to the reader. The hero is a type familiar in the sentimental comedy of the time, the fallible, but good-hearted man, who actually solves the complications of the plot by being suddenly converted to Christianity at the end, a solution that, at least theoretically, would never do for Molière. In short, in reading the novel, one acquires a vague feeling that Fielding began it with a list of all the social and political ills of the time, as his last few years as justice of Westminster had shown them to him, and proceeded to put each one into his novel and portray it in the worst possible light. The tone of the novel is heavy and moralizing and thus far removed from Molièresque comedy.

At this point it is also convenient to comment upon an earlier Fielding novel which has not been mentioned in this study, The Life of Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great, first published in the Miscellanies of 1743. This novel remains generally outside this discussion of the influence of Molière on Fielding's comedy for some of the same reasons that the dramatic satires and burlesques were dismissed from the concerns of the previous chapter on the dramas. An an ironic mock-heroic biography with decided allegorical implications, its technique and structure are not particularly Molièresque. Likewise, its satire, which could suggest a connection with Molière's comedy, is as topical as that of the dramatic
satires and can only be related to Molière's satirical comedy by the most general comparisons. Most important of all, however, Jonathan Wild does not impress one as a comedy. The novel clearly focuses on the great thief-taker; and, although justice triumphs at the end with Wild's hanging, this fact does not noticeably lighten the somber, pessimistic tone of the book. Added to its heavy tone is the fact that in Jonathan Wild, vices are being attacked rather than follies ridiculed. The faults of Jonathan Wild are actually painful and harmful and thus, as Fielding himself insisted in the preface to Joseph Andrews, are not proper subjects for comedy. What has happened is that we have moved in plot structure and tone from satirical comedy, much closer to irony and satire. The world of this novel more nearly approximates the world of satire as Alvin B. Kernan describes it in his book, The Cankered Muse, than it does the world of Molière's plays. Kernan pictures the satiric world as a crowded scene where "the deformed faces of depravity, stupidity, greed, venality, ignorance and maliciousness group closely together for a moment," and "stare boldly out at us." It is a world in which "everywhere the satirist turns he finds idiocy, foolishness, depravity and dirt . . . where vice is so omnipresent and so arrant that it cannot be avoided." Finally, it is a world where the ideal and decent are typically represented as weakened and impotent, often on the very edge of extinction by the overpowering force of vice. The satiric scene in Jonathan Wild approximates this world more closely than that of Molière's comedy. On the other hand, the world of the novel, its tone, and its techniques of satire are possibly indebted
to the other great influence upon Fielding's comedy, Ben Jonson. These aspects of the novel bring to mind such Jonsonian plays as _Volpone_ and _The Alchemist:_ more readily than they do even the darkest in tone of Molière's comedies. It is true, for example, that the rogue-fool relationship between Jonathan Wild and Heartfree could suggest a Molièresque influence; however, the whole tone of this relationship is more strongly reminiscent of Jonson's use of this same structural principle. As do the rogues in many of Jonson's plays, Jonathan Wild asserts the power of the rogue and hypocrite and the relative weakness of the fool or good man.

It remains, finally, to deal with those specific techniques and materials which Fielding has seemingly borrowed from the Molière plays. Some of these have already been presented in the discussion of Fielding's portrayal of professional types. Of the rest, the following illustrations are representative of his general practice. One of the Molièresque devices of which Fielding seems to have been fondest was the abrupt and ludicrous contradiction. Perhaps the best-known example in Molière is the philosophy master of _Le Bourgeois gentilhomme_ who preaches control of anger and the passions and immediately gets into a fight. This use of comic contraries is found numerous times in Fielding's novels. In _Tom Jones_, it forms the basis for the famous scene in the grove where Tom declares that he will love only Sophia forever, no matter how futile his passion is, and that no other beauties will have any charms for him. At precisely that moment Molly, the exact opposite of the heavenly beauty he has been describing,
appears; and, after a brief discussion, they go off into the woods together. Earlier in the novel, the same effect of ludicrous contradiction is created when the philosopher Square, pronouncing a discourse on the contempt for pain, bites his tongue and begins to curse and cry with violence. Joseph Andrews also makes frequent use of this comic technique, as in the obvious example of the hunter who discourses on bravery to Adams, but runs away immediately when they hear a woman screaming for help. Even more significant, though, is the number of times this comic technique is used to describe Adams. It is almost the central comic device for his character and actually the only respect in which he is criticized in the novel. Adams is constantly and comically failing a little short of what he preaches. He preaches resignation to the will of God to Mr. Wilson who has lost his eldest son, to Joseph whose mistress has just been carried off to be raped, and to the same young man when Fanny appears to be his sister. However, in Book IV, when he is reiterating this favorite doctrine that "no Christian ought so to set his heart on any person or thing in this world, but that whenever it shall be required or taken from him in any manner by Divine Providence, he may be able, peaceably, quietly, and contentedly, to resign it," a messenger interrupts him with the news his youngest son has drowned. Unable to follow his own advice, he goes into uncontrollable, hysterical grief over the boy's loss, which shifts to wild joy, when he hears a peddler has saved the boy. At an earlier point in the book, Adams is lamenting the wickedness of vanity, when he remembers a sermon he has at home on the subject, which is so good that he would
almost be willing to walk the long distance to get it so his listener could read it. Similarly, in Book II, Adams denounces the folly of becoming involved in disputes and immediately gets into an argument with the justice over whether Adams should or should not have been committed.

Another Molière technique which Fielding frequently employs in the novels is the comic miscommunication where one or both characters do not really realize what is being said. Perhaps the most obviously borrowed example of Fielding's use of this technique is in the scene where Sophia and Mrs. Western are both supposedly discussing the niece's lover but are talking about two different men. Eventually, the action builds up to the comic revelation that it is Jones rather than Blifil that Sophia loves. The technique is clearly modelled on similar scenes between Harpagon and Cléante in L'Avare and Angélique and Argan in Le Malade imaginaire. In Book XI, Fielding employs an almost identical method to achieve his comic effect. As the novel takes place during the rebellion of 1745 when James the Stuart Pretender tried to reclaim the throne, the landlord of an inn assumes Sophia may be the fleeing Jenny Cameron, James' beautiful mistress. Sophia's frightened and furtive actions confirm this suspicion for him. A long conversation follows in which the landlord thinks he is speaking to Jenny Cameron about the rebellion, but everything he says is applied by Sophia to her flight from her father to London and the possibilities of its success. Another typical scene in which Fielding uses the ironic miscommunication skillfully in a Molieresque manner is the scene where Tom has discovered Sophia at Lady Bellaston's
and their conversation is interrupted by the latter before they get a real chance to talk. In this case, the different levels of awareness among the three characters is very complex and our knowledge of this complexity results in great comic effects. At the most basic level, Sophia, who thinks she knows the most about the situation, actually knows the least. The comic effect of her trying to convince Lady Bellaston that Tom is just a man who has returned her lost pocketbook is set off against our knowledge of the relationship between Lady Bellaston and Tom. These three illustrations are representative of the ways in which Fielding employs this comic technique in the novels.

In the discussion of the plays, the fondness of Fielding for the use of Molièresque opposites was discussed in detail. In the novels, Fielding seems to retain this liking for pairing and contrasting characters and types, particularly in *Tom Jones*. The two squires and the two tutors of that novel are notable examples. Undoubtedly his most complete and most Molièresque pairing of opposites in the novels, however, is the marvellous comic relationship between Squire Western and his sister, Mrs. Western who are exact opposites in every way, except their love for Sophia. She is a Hanoverian; he, a Jacobite. She loves the city; he, the country. Every discussion they have seems to end in an unresolvable argument, as they try to decide the correct methods for raising Sophia and getting her married. As two of the most successful characterizations in the novels, it is perhaps significant that they show this Molièresque influence.
One final scene from Joseph Andrews should be mentioned as it is so clearly modelled on a specific passage from Molière. The dialogue between the poet and player in Book III of the novel is surprisingly like that between Trissotin and Vadius in Molière's Les Femmes savantes. In each instance the two men begin with mutual compliments and respect for each other and end in violent recrimination and expressions of scorn and contempt.

Although the above examples do not exhaust all the instances of possible Molièresque influence on specific passages in the Fielding novels, they do give an adequate illustration of the kind of detailed borrowings one can find. With the novels, the important point of comparison and real basis for suggesting the kinship between the two authors, comes from more general considerations of comic structure and characterization. In general, Fielding no longer needed or wanted to rely on bits of plot lifted from other authors, but instead created his own plots, based on the life of the English countryside as he knew it. What he did, however, was to bring to this material a comic viewpoint and comic methods very much like those of the French master he admired. The great comic characters who are born from this blending of the knowledge of Molière's comedy and Fielding's own powers of observation and of comic creation are definitely English in spirit and in fact, though they seem, at times, to be just the way Molière might have drawn them if he had found himself living in mid-eighteenth century England.
Notes to Chapter V

1 All references to La Critique de l'école des femmes are taken from Jean Baptiste Poquelin Molière, Œuvres de Molière, ed. Eugène André Despois and Paul Mesnard (Paris: Hachette, 1873-1900), III.

2 This discussion of comic theory also clearly suggests Jonsonian comedy. Molière and Ben Jonson are probably the two most significant influences on Fielding's comedy. Fielding referred to Jonson and Molière together as the masters of true comedy in his prologue to The Miser. In the preface to Joseph Andrews, he stated that Jonson understood the Ridiculous better than any other man. It is not always possible to separate clearly these two influences on Fielding, however, because the comedy of Molière and that of Jonson share some basic similarities. The classical basis of their theory is, for all practical purposes, identical. Thus, it is not possible to ascertain which writer Fielding might have been most influenced by in this aspect of his own comic theory. In the passage from Tom Jones quoted on page 129, for example, the language seems to be predominantly Jonsonian; but, in the passage discussed on page 131, the imagery and language seem to be Molièresque. In the plays, the influence of both writers operates, sometimes within a single play. The Temple Beau, for example, has some aspects that appear definitely Molièresque in origin and others that appear definitely Jonsonian. The purpose of the ensuing discussion, however, is to demonstrate the parallels between Fielding's and Molière's basic conceptions of comedy, rather than to demonstrate actual influence, so that the fact that Jonson viewed comedy in the same way and may also have influenced Fielding does not negate the validity of these parallels.

3 All references to Les Précieuses ridicules are taken from Jean Baptiste Poquelin Molière, Œuvres de Molière, ed. Eugène André Despois and Paul Mesnard (Paris: Hachette, 1873-1900), II.

4 All references to Tartuffe are taken from Jean Baptiste Poquelin Molière, Œuvres de Molière, ed. Eugène André Despois and Paul Mesnard (Paris: Hachette, 1873-1900), IV.


7 Henry Fielding, Rape upon Rape; or, The Justice Caught in his own Trap (London: J. Watts, 1730).


10 Jean Baptiste Poquelin Molière, Oeuvres de Molière, ed. Eugène André Despois and Paul Mesnard (Paris: Hachette, 1873-1900), III.

11 In the introduction to his translation of Les Précieuses ridicules, Morris Bishop points out that Mascarille and Gorgibus were stock names and stock types from the commedia dell'arte. Also, he records that Molière wore a mask in playing Mascarille and that Jodelet appeared in white-face. Sganarelle, the character of the Italian comedy most frequently reproduced by Molière, might seem to contradict the assertion that these stock types disappeared early in Molière's career, because of his appearance as late as Don Juan (1665) and Le Médecin malgré lui (1666). However, the Sganarelle of these plays is a much more refined, complex character than his predecessors and retains only traces of the stock character of the commedia dell'arte.


13 This theory of the ruling passion has very clear connections with the Jonsonian concept of the "humour" in comic characters. In No. 55 of the Covent-Garden Journal Fielding discussed the theory of the humour, recounting both Congreve's and Jonson's views of it. Fielding's own definition of the term was "a violent impulse of the mind, determining it to one particular point, by which a man becomes ridiculously distinguished from all other men." He stated that the ridiculous comes from either the manner or the degree in which this impulse is asserted (The Covent-Garden Journal, ed. Gerard Edward Jensen
Molière's characters—the miser, the would-be gentleman, the hypocrite, the hypochondriac, the misanthrope—are basically characters of humours. However, when Fielding discusses the theory behind this kind of character, he seems to do so in Jonsonian terms.


17 *Works*, XIV, p. 283.

18 Moore, pp. 71-72.

19 *Works*, XV, p. 244.


22 Bray, p. 203.


24 Battestin, p. 86.

25 In *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye outlines four mythoi or generic plots in literature. These mythoi form two opposing pairs: comedy and tragedy constitute one of these contrasting pairs; and romance and irony, the other. Comedy is said to blend imperceptibly into romance at one extreme and irony at the other. Similarly, romance may be comic or tragic; tragedy may be romantic or ironic; and
irony may be comic or tragic. Thus, the effect of the four mythoi graphically presented would be circular (p. 162).

CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

When Henry Fielding undertook the adaptation of two Molière plays for the English stage, he suggested his feelings of kinship with the comic aims and techniques of Molière. His admiration for the comedy of the French author was made explicit in his comments on him in the preface to The Mock-Doctor and in the prologue to The Miser. With his first adaptation, The Mock-Doctor, Fielding remained relatively close to his original, his basic tendency being to shorten the English play by removing certain elements of Molière's farce. His most significant alterations in this adaptation were the use of the ballad-opera form, the heightening of the topical satire, the expansion of the character of Dorcas, and the refining out of the prevailing elemental tone of the French play.

In his second adaptation, The Miser, Fielding altered his French model more significantly. He restructured the basic plot of L'Avare, moving it closer to the typical intrigue plot of Restoration comedy, thus radically changing the roles of some characters as well as the over-all tone of the comedy. Its tone is also modified by the dialogue of Mariana who adds a Restoration element to the play, and by the conversations of Harriet and Clermont who, at times, sound like lovers from the sentimental comedy of the period. The adaptation does succeed, however, in reproducing nearly all the essential aspects of Molière's miser
in the character of Lovegold. If the author does not fully succeed in restoring true comedy, represented for him by Molière and Jonson, to the contemporary stage with this play, one can lay a good deal of the blame to the debilitating influence of the Restoration tradition upon the young playwright. This decadent, but still accepted tradition accounts for most of the significant alterations in Fielding's adaptation. As a dramatist, Fielding never really freed himself from the limitations of the Restoration tradition, although Molièresque comedy fit his temperament and comic aims more fully. Nevertheless, in spite of *The Miser's* retention of a good deal of the Restoration influence that dominates Fielding's other plays of its type, it moves much closer than do those plays to the comedy of character Fielding admired in Molière.

In Fielding's plays in general, the influence of Molière is found predominantly in the five-act comedies and in some of the briefer farces. In the comedies, it is typically combined with Restoration elements in much the same way the two traditions were fused in *The Miser*. Such plays as *Love in Several Masques* and *The Temple Beau* show evidence of extensive borrowing of specific material from Molière. Several of the comedies, as well as some of the farces, make use of the seemingly Molièresque technique of humorously playing off characters who represent opposite viewpoints against each other. Finally, in these comedies and farces, Fielding shows signs of moving in his comic characterization from the stereotypes of Restoration comedy toward a more Molièresque kind of comic character based on a sense of comic disproportion or humour. In general
Fielding's dramas do show a preference for and a movement towards the kind of comedy Molière created, although the English writer only succeeded in reproducing that comedy in scattered passages and characters in the plays. In the novels, he would be able to write the kind of comedy he admired in Molière; but during his career as playwright in the 1730's, this goal generally eluded him, partly because of the limiting influence of the Restoration tradition he inherited and partly because of his youthful anger at the vices of the world which prevented him from achieving the balance and restraint necessary to Molière's comic view.

In the comic novels, Fielding moved much closer to Molièresque comedy in technique. Once again, there are evidences of detailed borrowings of plot materials from the French plays. However, these borrowings are here neither the most prevalent nor the most significant indications of Molière's influence. When Fielding undertook to define his theory of comedy, he clearly did so in terms of the same classical foundations that Molière had accepted earlier. Furthermore, the two authors interpreted this classical basis in nearly the same way when they attempted to apply it to portraying the life of their own times. Undoubtedly, the most important aspect of this parallel between the two writers is the fact that in his novels, Fielding came very close to writing a Molièresque comedy of character. The basic assumptions and methods of characterization in Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones are perhaps the most extensive and significant parallel between the two writers' comedy. The fact that we think of Molière, first and foremost, as the great creator of comic characters, gives additional weight to this parallel.
From a general standpoint, there are three primary reasons for assuming a significant Molièresque influence on Fielding's comic technique and theory, in addition to the number of actual parallels which can be drawn between the two comic authors. The first is, of course, the careful and detailed knowledge of Molière's comedy which the adaptations of L'Avare and Le Médecin malgré lui indicate. Secondly, the extent of this influence is suggested by the number of obvious borrowings of character and plot suggestions from Molière's plays throughout Fielding's dramas and novels. These borrowings come from a wide range of the French dramatist's plays but indicate that Fielding was particularly fond of Le Misanthrope, Les Femmes savantes, Le Malade imaginaire, L'École des femmes, and Tartuffe by the frequency of his borrowings from those plays. However, the third, and perhaps most important indication that Fielding's comic theory and technique were influenced by Molière is the fact that the English novelist, at several different times during his career, expressed his great admiration for Molière as a representative of true comic genius. The fact that he became a model for Fielding's own technique is sufficiently indicated in that passage from Tom Jones where he invokes the French dramatist's spirit as one of the sources of inspiration for his novel. However, even without such specific suggestions as the passage from Tom Jones, we could be reasonably assured that Fielding was influenced by Molière simply from the fact of his frequently-expressed admiration for his predecessor in comedy. This assurance stems from Fielding's location within the Augustan tradition of eighteenth-century literature, a position which
tells us a good deal about the kind of writer he was. It suggests above all the
tendency to learn from the great past masters of a literary genre in order to build
individual style. Along with Dryden, Pope, and Gay, Fielding was a writer who
believed in the appropriateness and necessity of going to school to the best
writers of the past in order to know how to write about the present. Thus, his
frequently-expressed admiration for Molière as a genius of the comic mode is an
almost certain indication that he hoped to learn from the French dramatist in the
development of his own style and technique in that genre.

Looking at the comedy of Fielding and Molière from the broadest view-
point, one senses a kindred comic spirit between them. In an essay on Molière,
B. L. Nicholas makes an interesting statement about the French dramatist, which
links him philosophically to the eighteenth century and perhaps suggests why we
feel this kinship of spirit between the two author's viewpoints:

... though Molière shares much of Pascal's and
La Rochefoucauld's pessimistic psychology, and in-
deed, at times seems to be dramatically illustrating
the latter's Maximes, he stands temperamentally out-
side the contemporary debate on the nature of man.
Rather, he looks forward to the next century's more
practical, less metaphysically anxious concern for
human well-being. The philosophy of co-existence,
the good-humoured attention to the empirical situation--
these have implications other than of facile sociability.¹

This passage brings to mind at least one important aspect in the kinship between
the comedy of Fielding and Molière. For Fielding, as for seventeenth and
eighteenth century France and England in general, Molière was the Comic
Spirit, a spirit of sanity and balance. This parallel is evident, for instance, in both writers' tendencies to exalt good sense over ready-made rules. Though both men accepted the essential substance of the classical tradition as set down by the critics of Aristotle, they could, and often did, laugh at rigid rules as they were applied by stupid men. In many aspects of their plays as well, they suggested that nature and good sense were a better guide than authority. Each, for example, preferred the healing powers of nature to physicians' dogmas, suggested marriage was better founded on love than on material advantage, and indicated that real piety resided in an upright spirit rather than in outward forms and ceremonies. It is probably this basic parallel between the two authors' views of essential human nature that made it possible for Fielding to lift so many of Molière's characters directly out of the seventeenth-century French plays and place them in eighteenth-century England. The qualities of sanity and balance so central to the comic vision of both authors were doubtless an important reason for the strong Molièresque influence on Fielding’s comic technique and theory as evidenced in his plays and comic novels.
Notes to Chapter VI

APPENDIX I

SCENES FROM LE MÉDECIN MALGRÉ LUI ADAPTED BY FIELDING

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Molière</th>
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*Underscoring indicates a scene only partially adapted by Fielding.
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## APPENDIX II

**SCENES FROM L'AVARE ADAPTED BY FIELDING**

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APPENDIX II (Cont.)

Molière

Act V, scene v
Act V, scene vi

Fielding

Not Included
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