The Italian and Spanish sources of Molière's plays

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Thesis
The Italian and Spanish Sources of Molière's Plays.

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The Italian and Spanish Sources of Molière's Plays.

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The Italian and Spanish Sources of Molière's Plays.

To Molière belongs the distinction of being the creator of modern French comedy. From Italy and Spain, from other sources, and above all from his own genius, he drew those qualities which have perpetuated his name, and which became the starting point for the comedies which were to follow. Before him, in France, can be seen only the barest elements to which he was to give life. There were the "moralité's", comic pieces with moral precepts, and comedy-satires, so-called "soties". The masterpiece of this age before Molière, is "l'Avocat Pathelin", a farce. After this follows a long list of authors, prolific but hardly notable -- Adam de la Halle, Gringoire, Jodelle, Grévin, Larrivey, Turnèbe, Hardy, Rotron, Scarron, Quinault, de Bergerac. Their comedies are not artistic. The characters are not outlined; they are still cut of one cloth, to one pattern, and are wholly without individual traits. In 1637, Desmarests de St. Sorlin inaugurated the comedy of manners with "les Visionnaires", and in "le Menteur" Corneille gave the first outlines of the comedy of characters, altho the outstanding features were still the complication and imbroglio of intrigue. With these mediocre and superficial attempts, modern comedy still remained to be created. Finding the field at home very narrow, and the very things he
lacked existing in Italy and Spain, Moliere went unhesitatingly and freely to them.

The ascent to his masterpieces was slow. Beginning with farces of the most pronounced type, by enlarging and enriching, he made them the rungs of the ladder to his chefs-d'oeuvre, the comedies of manners and character. And then, although his reputation had been firmly established, he was forced, on account of competition and financial conditions, to return again and again to the type of play that had started him on the road to fame.

It is an established fact that he did not hesitate to adopt and recreate whatever seemed to suit his purpose. Accused of plagiarism for taking a whole scene verbatim from Cyrano de Bergerac, and from de Boisrobert, he uttered the words, "je prends mon bien ou je le trouve". But Moliere was not a plagiarist. With his profound knowledge of human nature, his delightful, penetrating sense of comedy, and his ardent French spirit, all he borrowed became, under these influences, his own creation. He instilled into the old material a new meaning, a new life, and uncovered previously disregarded depths. It is this faculty of molding the seemingly commonplace and trite into the ever new and everlasting, that has given Moliere his place in literature.

To Italian sources Moliere is indebted more than to any other. He drew on these at first and most frequently. His extensive tour thru the provinces, bringing him frequently
into contact with the Italians, and his unique position in Paris, when he alternated in the presentation of plays with Italian troupes, gave him peculiarly fortunate opportunities to do so.

Catherine de Medeci had introduced the Italian players to the Spanish court. In 1570 a troupe directed by a man called Ganasse gave a number of public performances. In 1577, by command of Henry III the most famous Italian troupe of the "commedia dell'arte", under the leadership of Flaminio Scala, came to France and played in the Salle des États at Blois.

The Italian players had become very proficient in this type of comedy. Each actor played a fixed character in every piece, so that he came soon to be identified with that character, and to be called by its name. The personages of the play, their manners of speech and actions and their foibles, never varied. In different situations the physical reactions were necessarily different, but the mental reactions were the same. Thus an actor, after some experience, had a certain number of speeches, and made use of the appropriate one as occasion demanded. However, these never became mechanical, as the versatile Italian temperaments were forever creating new responses. To put on a play, all that was necessary was to hang a scenario in view of the actors several minutes before their appearance. This would be read over by each actor to refresh his mind. Once on the stage, the comedy would proceed
freshly and spontaneously, and never fail to succeed with either Italian or French audiences.

On Henry's return to Paris, he brought with him this company, and under the title of "Gelosi" they were given letters of patent, permitting them to install themselves at the Hôtel de Bourbon. After several months stay, they returned to Italy, but a precedent had been established.

In 1584 and 1585 Paris was visited by the Amici Confidenti, and in 1588 the Gelosi reappeared. In 1600 they were again called, and came, still under the leadership of Scala, but with an entirely new personnel. It was in this theatre of the Gelosi, under Scala's direction, that the commedia attained its highest point of perfection.

The comic element does not prevail exclusively in these plays. Sentiment, drama and passion all have their place. The "bouffonerie" is often only accessory and episodic. The "lazzi", or tricks are employed while more or less important events are transpiring behind the scenes, or to enliven the end of an act. A certain number of the repertoire was purely burlesque - from one end of the play to another mistakes and exchanges of costumes, pushing, thumping, cuffing and whacking raining from all sides followed each other in quick succession. Great license reigned in the theatre of the Gelosi and some of the scenes are risqué.

Accustomed to play the "commedia dell' arte", they could also play written comedy, the "commedia sostenuta". It was only natural that a comedy that had obtained success as an improvisation, should be written out in full by the author.
of the scenario. On the other hand, the plots of written comedies were used as skeletons by the improvisors, so that the two came to resemble each other greatly. In this way also, the principal types tended to standardization. Here can be found the originals of the types of Molière -- the pedant, the ridiculous lover, the miser, the old man, the resourceful, unscrupulous valet, the parasite, the soubrette, the "followers" of both sexes.

In 1613, another troupe, the "Fedeli", came to Paris, and remaining until 1618, alternated with the French comedians at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. In 1621, they again returned from Italy, and played extensively. They gave performances again in the season of 1624-1625. With this troupe, the commedia dell' arte declined. The extravagant fantasy was given full reign. Strange, monstrous inventions, machines, pompous spectacles, singing and music held sway. All these creations are to be evidenced in Molière's plays.

Niccolo Barbieri, playwright and actor, under the name of Beltrame, formed a troupe. He gave the written comedy a new importance and it regained some of its former prestige. Here we find the economical but indulgent father, and the debonair husband who bides his time for his revenge.

After the death of Richelieu and Louis XIII, Italian troupes, presenting all kinds of plays, flocked to Paris. In 1645, a very good, sizable company installed itself at the Petit-Bourbon. Here these excelled in the commedia dell' arte; and one actor made the character of Scaramouche so famous that he was continually being called before the king to present it.
Whether it is true or not that Molière's grandfather took him to the theatre regularly, it is incontestable that he knew of the Italian troupes and their work. At the Jesuit College where he was educated, Latin plays were frequently given, and the boy, who from early youth had shown such an interest in dramatics and had taken part in the school presentations, could not but have been intrigued by the splendid performances given by the Italian troupes at theHôtel de Bourgogne and the Petit-Bourbon. A little later he felt their influence more strongly, when unable to compete with their splendid spectacles, he could not pay the debts he had contracted as head of the "Illustré Théâtre", and was imprisoned. Shortly after this episode, Molière left for the provinces.

During the days of the Frond, from 1648 to 1653, there were no Italian troupes at Paris, due in large part to the hostility toward their countryman, Mazarin. As soon as his authority was reestablished, however, his compatriots came flocking back, and were still there when Molière returned to Paris with his troupe under the title of "Troupe de Monsieur".

This troupe was, with the exception of a few changes in its cast, the very same which under the name of the "Illustré Théâtre" had left Paris twelve years before. Molière, now thirty-six years old, had already written "l'Étourdi" and "le Docteur amoureux", and was the director of the troupe.
The debut before the court was made in 1658, with Nicomede by Corneille. As a result, Moliere was given the right to use the theatre of the Petit-Bourbon for his performances, together with the Italians. As his part of the expenses, he contributed to them fifteen hundred "livres", and began to play on the free days -- Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday. In 1659 the Italian troupe left for Italy, leaving Moliere sole master of the theatre. He then took for his performances the so-called "regular" days -- "jours ordinaires" -- Sunday, Tuesday and Friday -- which were best for theatrical performances.

The Italians returned in 1662 with the intention of establishing themselves permanently. At the king's order they restored to Moliere the sum he had given them in 1658, and they in their turn took the remaining available days, "jours extra-ordinaires". (They remained in France until 1697, when they were forbidden by the king to continue further, becoming gradually almost entirely French in character).

Thus Moliere was not only in close association with the Italians professionally, but socially, for under the patronage of the king they frequented the court and the same society together. It can be easily seen how they transmitted to him not only many and diverse modes of expression but whole plots, essences of intrigues and denouements, and even characters. They taught him how to relieve the monotony of comic ideas and give them vigor; they showed him numberless situations, pantomime, theatre "business".
While the Italians used all these elements almost exclusively with no other end in view but that of the action per se, Molière employed them for a purpose. He made them serve as background for a sentiment, a passion, a phase of character, or a state of mind, as the case might be. The fundamentals are alike, but in the one they are primitive, unthinking, while in the other they are highly developed, reflecting deeply.

Molière also had the opportunity of acquainting himself with the Spanish drama thru several sources. First, there were the adaptations in French of Corneille (Thomas), Scarron, and several others. Spanish troupes did not have the vogue in France that the Italians had, but one troupe did come to Paris and give performances for some time. In 1660, the "troupe de Prado" under the leadership of Joseph de Prado, established itself in Paris as part of the retinue of Marie Thérèse. There is no record of their repertoire, beyond the fact that they presented comedies and tragedies, and danced and sang in numerous ballets. Their stay was short (they departed a little before Molière's death), for the "comédiens de Castille" had no such success as their Italian counterparts had met with. Possibly they were not understood by the masses, and their offerings may have been too highly colored and too peculiarly characteristic of Spain even to those French who understood their language. Certain it is that Molière had good occasion to study them and their methods, for from 1660 to 1673 they alternated with the comedians of the Hôtel de Bour-
gagne at that theatre, as Molière alternated with the Italians at the Petit-Bourbon and later at the Palais-Royal.

It is most likely that Molière knew Spanish well, for several things point to that fact. Among his books, found in the inventory after his death, were several volumes in Spanish of Lope de Vega, Calderon and Moreto. The greater part of his work was done during the years when the language of the Spanish Queen was almost as popular at Paris as the French.

In 1675 appeared a manuscript by de Tralage, the title page of which read:

"LE CARNAVAL, MASCARADE, 1675
LES VERS FRANÇAIS SONT DE
LES VERS ESPAGNOLS SONT DE MOLIERE".

The Spanish verses referred to are the ones that are sung by the Spaniards in the third entrance of the "Ballet des Nations" after the last act of "le Bourgeois Gentilhomme".

Another striking fact is that no translation of Moreto's "el desden con el desden" existed in the seventeenth century.

In the "Princesse d'Elide" can easily be recognized a thorough knowledge and exact appreciation of the nuances and delicate shades of meaning of the original Spanish text. Another play which Molière seems to have used, and of which no signs can be found in contemporary French plays or Italian scenarios is "el marido hace mujer" by Mendoza.
In the Spanish "comedias" blood flows freely and laughter bursts forth spontaneously, swords and bon mots meet and cross each other, weird, improbable situations arise in the midst of the gravest scenes, high flown, literary effusions are mixed inextricably with most tragic compositions. All these things are characteristic of the taste of Spain. Molière had to make use of different elements that would appeal to his French audiences. He went neither to the "autos" nor to the "comedias divinas", which continued the tradition of the mysteries and the miracles of the middle ages. These mixtures of laughter and religious faith would have seemed to them sacrilegious, and the symbolism would have perhaps escaped them. A Christian legend never would have been allowed as the theme of a comedy. (Rotron and Corneille, in presenting plays drawn from the lives of saints, made them tragedies). The comedias treating of tradition and national history with their bizarre and bloody scenes were fitting only to the soil which had been their birthplace.

The Spanish drama did not gain a foothold in France until the second half of the seventeenth century. The comedias then in vogue in the Spanish theatre were the comedia of "capa y espada", which represented the life and costumes of the time and country in ideal form; and the comedia of "figuron", which made some grotesque figure the recipient of blow upon blow and the butt of gales of laughter.

It was neither the imbroglio type of comedy, which depended for its effect upon the peculiar situations, nor the comedy produced by play on words upon which Moliere drew.
What he saw and used was the comedy that characterized man. Spanish comedy called forth not only uproarious laughter, but delicate smiles. Clever shafts of wit and a light form of irony, which are so common in French comedy, are found frequently in the Spanish. The burlesque of Spain delighted in great contrast between familiar realities and farfetched extravagances; Molière delighted in the spectacle of impotent human ignorance uprising against nature. Here he found also suggestions for the painting of his valets. His knowledge of the Spanish "graciosas" and "graciosos" enabled him to give his servants their clearly defined personalities. It is the Spanish servant who makes his master appear ridiculous, it is he who opens the master's eyes to the imperfections of his love, and counsels him; and in the same way it is the "graciosa" who acts as informer and accomplice to her mistress and is no little cog in the wheel of action.

Molière may also have found some ideas for his ballets and "intermedes" in the mixtures of comic scenes, songs and dances common to the Spanish theatre, for France borrowed freely from these for the court spectacles. At the end of the "Ballet du Soleil", "dansé devant le roi et la reine---", one reads: "Le lecteur est aderty que la pluspart de ces vers ont esté premièrement composez en espagnol, puis traduits en français pour contenter les curieux qui en ont fait recherche".

LE MEDECIN VOLANT.

LA JALOUSIE DE BARBOUILLE.

Molière brought back with him from the provinces two farces, "le Médecin volant" and "la Jalousie du Barbouille", both undoubtedly of Italian origin. Le Médecin volant is a faithful
reproduction of the scenario of a commedia dell'arte entitled "il Medico volante". One of Molière's enemies, the comic poet Somnalse, called this imitation or adoption "une singerie dont il était seul capable"; and in 1661, Boursault, using the same subject for a play said, "Le sujet est italien: il a été traduit dans notre langue, représenté de tous côtés."

In "la Jalousie de Barbouille" the Italian origin is quite evident, but unfortunately the manuscript from which it was taken has been lost. Molière's troupe, which had spent about twelve years in the southern provinces, became well acquainted with Italian methods before coming to Paris, for the Midi was frequently visited by Italian companies from the other side of the Alps, as well as by French troupes. It is very likely, that in presenting these two farces, much was left to improvisation, altho the French could never do this so successfully as the versatile Italians.

The quick action of the farces is Italian, as is the type of intrigue here employed. The verbose, meaningless reasonings of the doctor, the helplessness of le Barbouillé in the face of his wife's stratagems, the ruse of Angéligue, who finding the door closed, pretends to kill herself, and slips into the house closing out her husband when that harassed individual runs down to search for her, the stupidity of Gorgibus, the feigning of illness, and the stratagem of the servant Sganarelle who jumps in and out of the window to transform himself from valet into doctor -- all these are Italian. It is true that the false doctor and the pretension of illness can be found in the
Spanish "el Acero de Madrid", but Molière did not yet know this comedy. To Italy alone Molière owes these two farces. Altho they are without originality or particular interest, they are valuable in that they may be used as a departure for comparison with his later works.

L'ÉTOURDI.

Molière's first comedy, "l'Étourdi on les Contre-temps" found its source in Italy, in the comedy entitled "l'Inavvertito overo Scappino disturbato e Mezzettino travagliato", by Nicolo Barbieri. Barbieri was not only an author, but under the name of Beltrame an actor at the head of his own company (He had been a member of the Fedeli). Molière first learned of him in the provinces, where he was well-known and admired. The play was at first merely a scenario; Beltrame afterwards developed the dialogue and had it printed.

The comedy is in five acts. Fulvio and Cintio are in love with the slave-girl Celia. Scapin, Fulvio's valet, makes it a point of honor to gain the girl for his master. He devises many ingenious schemes which Fulvio unwittingly spoils. He tries to complete a bargain for Celia, and her owner becomes suspicious when Fulvio appears and tells him just the opposite of Scapin's story. Scapin tries to buy the slave girl for somebody else. He uses various disguises and subterfuges - and all are put to naught by his master. A captain is introduced. He gains the girl, but on finding her sister to whom he had been engaged
yields Celia to Fulvio. Fulvio is appalled by his previous blunders, and now, when everything seems so certain, fears he will make some mistake. He turns continually toward Scapin for encouragement and at last everything is cleared.

Molière made use of all the situations in the Italian play, but changed the ending slightly. As a whole, the play consists of several intrigues which might easily be made wholes in themselves, quite in the Italian manner. Mascarille established definitely the type of clever intriguing valet.

LE DÉPIT AMOUREUX.

In 1656 appeared the next play "le Dépit amoureux". The play is almost wholly Italian, with some of the Spanish influences beginning to show. It has two parts, the imbroglio and the lovers' scenes of quarrel and reconciliation. The story of the Italian play "l'Interesse", by Nicolo Secchi, is followed with only a few changes.

Ricciardo and Pandolfo had bet on the gender of a child that was to be born to the latter. He lost the bet, but to get the money, brings up his daughter as a boy. Now he is bitter with remorse, but his valet advises against restitution of the money. Lelio, who is in reality a girl, learns of Fabio's love for her sister Virginia. She takes her place, and they are married. Fabio's rival learns of
the marriage and denies it, for Virginia is faithful to him. Ricciardo, Fabio's father, comes to Pandolfo to beg forgiveness for his son's secret marriage. Pandolfo, conscious of his guilt, begs forgiveness of Ricciardo, and the fears of both, unknown to the other, give rise to a very comic scene. Virginia, when confronted by Fabio, denies the marriage vigorously. Finally the truth is revealed by a servant; Fabio is satisfied with Lelio who now appears as a woman. Virginia is united to her lover, and the fathers are content.

Many of the episodes in the Italian play are exceedingly coarse. Moliere has made of Tebaldo the polished Mascarille; and the bold Lelio has become the womanly Ascagne - Dorotheée. The situations are handled with greater delicacy and charm in the French play, which is altogether an improvement over the Italian.

The idea of the reconciliation of the lovers after the various vexations experienced, resembles that in Lope de Vega's "el Perro del Hortolano". Just as Marcela becomes engaged to Fabio out of spite, so Lucile, thinking she has been unfairly treated, shows her friendliness for Valère. Eraste implores pardon like Théodore, and like him is refused. In both plays the lovers experience numerous regrets, and reproach each other; and in both they are finally reconciled. In these things, the French play is less passionate and more delicate.
There is also a little psychology in the study of two of Lope's characters that made an impression on Molière. The remarks that Tristan makes to his master often are not mere shafts of wit, but the expression of keen thought and observation. Diana is a mixture of spite and envy, pride and unexpressed desires; a soul which knows love first thru jealousy, and then does not wish to possess the heart that she cannot accept. She is like the "gardener's dog", who altho he himself does not eat, nevertheless does not wish others to.

SGANARELLE.

After "les Précieuses ridicules", which was based on Molière's own observation of "préciosité" in Paris, and could hardly draw its source from other plays (altho several pieces of stage business were familiar to the Italian theatre; and altho "préciosité" had already invaded Spain and had there been inevitably ridiculed), came "Sganarelle, on le Cocu imaginaire".

Molière is supposed to have found the source of this play in the Italian "il Ritratto ovvero Arlecchino cornuto per l'Opinione", but the intrigue founded on the portrait is more likely to have come from that inexhaustible source of such things, the commedia dell' arte, rather than the commedia sostenuta. While the intrigue of the play is Italian, the tone of it as a whole and its fine wit, are
decidedly French in character.

Here Molière departs from Mascarille as a fixed type, and adopts one that is less rigid, and more pliable. Mascarille is always a valet of the commedia dell'arte; Sganarelle resembles the versatile figure of the commedia sostenuta of Beltrame, and becomes now a valet, a peasant, a father or tutor, as the case may be. He had appeared in "le médecin volant", and was to come up in different guises in "l'École des Maris", "le Mariage forcé", "le Festin de Pierre", "l'Amour médecin" and "le Médecin malgré lui"; in succession a tutor, the future husband of Dorimène, Don Juan's valet, Lucinde's father and the fagot-maker.

DON GARCIE DE NAVARRE.

After Sganarelle, came "don Garcie de Navarre" - a total failure. It was Molière's first attempt at tragi-comedy, and perhaps on this account, and because he was known as a writer of comedy only, the public refused to accord it the reception given his previous plays. Many plays less meritorious were meeting the public favor at this time, and later in the "le Misanthrope" the same words and many of the same situations were instantly appreciated. Perhaps this failure was not unfruitful of good results, for it showed Molière that his work lay in the field of comedy, and to this he now devoted himself wholly.

"Don Garcie de Navarre", with which, in 1661,
Molière opened his sojourn at the Palais-Royal, is taken directly from the Italian, from a play called "le Gelosie fortunate del principe Rodrigo", by the Florentine, Giacinto-Andrea Cicognini. This piece, however, was originally from the Spanish, just as were many others by the same author. The Spanish play "don Garcia de Navarra" is not known today, but several circumstances show that such a play may well have existed.

Italian intrigue dominates the play, but the conception of honor is Spanish. Don Garcia's jealousy springs not only from his love, but from a sense of outraged honor. Cicognini had made quite a success in Italy and had been attacked for violating the "unities". Quite a few of his plays were adaptations from the Spanish to suit his Italian audiences. In the preface to a comedia "Amore opera a caso", published in Florence in 1668, the Marquis Maltias Maria Bartolommei, the author, cites six plays of Cicognini that have a Spanish origin.

Molière has transformed the Italian play. As always, he has changed the freely outspoken, vulgar scenes into things of delicacy and beauty. Don Garcia's fits of passion become rather colder, but are still wonderful expressions of a beautiful sentiment; and the scenes between the two lovers evidence a pure love. The whole tone of the play is rather more serious, and loses much of the breathless,
rapid gaiety of the Italian piece. With this play, Molière abandons his policy of adopting whole plays from the Italian. The Spanish theatre now exercises more influence over him for a time, but he is to come back to the Italian theatre again and again for separate scenes and detached episodes.

L'ÉCOLE DES MARIS.

An idea for "l'École des Maris" may have come to Molière from Boccaccio's Décameron, the third day. A lady who is in love with a young man adopts a ruse as a last means of acquainting him of her love. At confession she requests a monk to return to him a purse and belt which she says he has given her. The monk carries out her commission and the young man reads the lady's love in these tokens. All this story furnished to Molière, however, was an idea of a scene for comedy. Isabelle makes Sganarelle, her lover, the unwilling messenger of her love to Valère.

The real source of the comedy is the comedia "el Marido hace mujer, y el trato muda costumbre", by Antonio Hurtado de Mendoza. Sganarelle's words "Ma foi, les filles sont ce que l'on les fait être", are an interpretation of Mendoza's title. The story of the Spanish play is as follows:

Two brothers, don Juan and don Sancho marry two sisters, doña Leonor (who, in love with don Diego, has married don Juan unwillingly), and doña Juana, who enters upon her marriage with greater resignation than her sister. Don Juan gets possession of a letter to his wife from Don Diego,
but not wishing to condemn her on this account, decides to save her by showing his confidence in her. He treats her gently, and allows her to go out freely. In the end he wins both his wife's love and don Diego's respect.

Don Sancho, on the other hand, uses other methods. By his constant nagging and injustice he turns Juana's resignation into exasperation, and the desire for revenge is born in her. Finally dona Juana is taken away from don Sancho and his cruel stupidities by an uncle.

Molière, with his dramatic instinct, has made the situation more effective by timing the scene before the marriages have taken place, and has made the brothers tutors instead of husbands. The ending is also free from the awkward "deus ex machina", for Sganarelle, mistaking Isabelle for Leonor, signs a contract of marriage for her, which gives up all his claims.

In Boisrobert's translation ("la folle Gageure") of Lope de Vega's "el Mayor imposible" and in "la Discreta enamorada", also by Lope, Molière may have found the ruses employed by Isabelle, and also the idea that the "height of impossibility is to take care of a woman who does not take care of herself".

In this play Molière has shown his true genius. All his characters here are human, and distinctly French, and unobtrusively the play also teaches a lesson.
LES FACHEUX.

"Les Facheux", the first of Molière's plays written for the king's entertainment, was also the first of its kind in France, and met with immediate favor. To his own ingenuity he owes the idea of uniting the ballets to the action of the comedy without interrupting the sequence of the story. Altho the play is entirely original, there is a little of the Spanish atmosphere in it. La Montagne, the valet, bears a resemblance to the Spanish "gracioso", with his freedom in the confidences of his master, and with the tricks by which he detains him under pretext of fixing his clothes (first scene of act one). The cunning with which he excites his master's impatience (act two, scene three), is also Spanish, as is the entire relation between him and his master. Eraste's saving his enemy who wishes to take his life is a characteristic of the "heroic generosity" introduced from Spain.

ÉCOLE DES FEMMES.

In "l'École des Femmes", two Spanish sources are easily seen. The idea of the ignorant woman, who cannot protect herself because of her ignorance, comes from the story "el Prevenido engañado" by Maria de Zayas y Sotomayor, and was probably known thru Dorimond's translation, "l'École des Cocus". The story is:

Don Fadrique takes possession of the daughter of the girl with whom he is in love, and has her brought up by a relative while he journeys abroad. Many adventures in love have disillusioned him about the clever woman, so that on his
return, finding Garcia, the young girl, as stupid as she is beautiful, he marries her. To test her innocence, he asks her to stand guard over him on their wedding night. This she does. He is suddenly called away, and a young man enters the room. When don Fedrique returns, Garcia herself tells him what has happened. He then realizes how "useless" his "precautions" have been.

The idea of the transformation of the stupid girl into the bright, womanly woman, comes from "la Dama Boba", by Lope de Vega. Liseo, learning from Leandro that his fiancée Finea is a simpleton, despairs, for he cannot break his word. Octavio, the father of Finea and Nise, deplores the ignorance of the one and the erudition of the other. Nise is greatly interested in Laurencio, who belongs to her learned circle. When Finea's dowry is greatly increased over her sister's so that her defects of mind may prove less repellent to a suitor, Laurencio abandons Nise for her. Liseo meets Finea, and despairing turns to Nise. Finea's mind gradually improves. She grows conscious of the influence of Laurencio's suit, and becomes thoughtful, resourceful and witty. Liseo, having been refused by Nise, and noticing Finea's advance, decides to go back to Finea. But Laurencio has already received her promise of marriage. They decide to deceive Liseo into thinking that Finea is still as ignorant as ever. Liseo is convinced, and goes back to Nise. Octavio yields Finea to
Laurencio, and Nise accepts Liseo.

Every scene in this play reflects Molière's nationality and his times. In addition it contains a psychological study, for in his innovation of revealing tragic possibilities in a character of comedy, Molière shows that he knew how near laughter is to tears. It also shows the difference between intelligent adaptation for creation, and mere servile imitation. The importance of the play can be evidenced in the fact that it gave rise to just such a quarrel as had raged about Corneille's "Cid". All the action lies in the dialogue, contrary to the custom of the Spanish and Italian theatres.

LE MARIAGE FORCÉ.

"Le Mariage forcé" is a mixture of Spanish and Italian elements which go to make up a French whole. The ballets resemble the Spanish, and the comic elements, the Italian. This play is one of those written for the entertainment of the king, and serves as vehicle for the ballets.

"La Princesse d'Élide" is taken directly from "el desden con el desden", by Augustin Moreto. Altho Molière wrote his play in several days, under pressure of orders from the king, and altho the Spanish play was the result of careful work and the masterpiece of its author, the French play, inferior in some respects, nevertheless shows some improvement over its model.
The Spanish play is as follows:

Carlos, falling in love with Diana, analyzes his emotions and comes to the conclusion that what he feels is desire not love. Diana is wooed by two other nobles, who, despairing of her utter indifference, decide to end it by giving her fetes and all manner of surprises. Diana has been well-educated, and by a false system of logic tries to convince her ladies-in-waiting that love is wrong and should be avoided. She even declares to her father that death would be more welcome to her than marriage. Carlos decides to win the princess' love, and for this purpose his servant Pollila introduces himself into her household and immediately wins her favor. While they are speaking of love, Carlos enters, and when asked for his views, arouses Diana's curiosity by declaring that he does not love, nor does he ever wish to.

Following Pollila's counsel, Carlos ignores Diana as much as he can, altho he needs constant reminders and encouragement from the resourceful servant who is ever creating new situations to pique Diana. At a carnival, Diana manoeuvres to have Carlos as her knight. He declares his love for her, and first as she is rejoicing, he says that he is only fulfilling the requirements of the carnival. Diana now truly loves Carlos, altho she rails against him and at love in general. To bring him to terms, Diana tells Carlos that she has decided to accept another, and he tells her he loves one of her ladies. As the men are congratulating each
other, Diana unable to bear it any longer, avows her love for Carlos, and chooses him as her husband, while her other suitor and the lady-in-waiting find consolation in each other.

Molière who knew what a princess' station was, and also understood the heart of a woman does not make the princess declare her love outright. She half avows to her father that she loves Carlos, and requests him to refuse the prince her cousin as his wife, to punish him for his unfeeling heart. The father consents and requests her to ask the prince in marriage herself. With great finesse the princess remarks that it is not she whom he desires, and here the prince must necessarily throw himself at her feet. To soften the hardness of her previous actions, the princess now demands time to think.

Not only the ending bears the print of the master's hand, but several scenes -- Diana's gradual knowledge of her love, her vain struggle against it, her tirade against marriage, and then her complete surrender; and the prince's struggle to keep up the pretense of indifference and disdain which seem to him so unfruitful. Here Molière also pursues his belief in the close relation of joy and sorrow, altho this sorrow is neither deep nor lasting.

DON JUAN.

It is strange that don Juan should be accepted by the world thru Moliere. The so-called "don Juan Legend" had been known for centuries before Tirso de Molina (Pater
Gabriel Tellez) gave the libertine of Seville the name "don Juan de Tenorio" and definitely molded his character. Molière made don Juan a hypocrite, and as such he was received, altho in Tirso's version, which is superior to Molière's, he is a different character.

Whether or not Molière knew the original "el Burlador de Sevilla ó el Convidado de Piedra" is unknown. The legend was very popular in Molière's day, and it is quite likely that he obtained his groundwork thru the plays of his contemporaries on the same subject. In 1652 a translation by Giliberti, "il Convitato di Pietra", appeared in Italy, and was taken up by the theatrical troupes who brought it to Paris in 1667. "Le Festin de Pierre" by Dorimond and "le Fils criminel" of Villiers had this and the play by Cicognini as models. All these were known to Molière. The Italian versions were hardly more than vehicles for their "stunts" and fixed characters, yet Molière's version differs but little from Tirso's play as far as situations and events go.

In this play, don Juan, in the guise of the Duke Octavio, betrays Isabella, his fiancée. His uncle Pedro, who is Catholic ambassador at the court of Naples, helps him make his escape. Octavio, who is accused of the crime, escapes to Spain. Meanwhile at Seville, don Alfonso, King of Castille, promises don Juan as a husband to don Gonzalo's daughter.

Don Juan has been shipwrecked, and is saved by his servant Catoloneu. He meets Tisbea on the shore, overcomes all her objections with promises, and leaves her. At Seville, don
Juan's father tells the king about his son and Isabella, whereupon the king decides to give Octavio, who has arrived at court, to Anna. Don Juan and Octavio meet in Seville and protest their friendship. He also meets de la Mota, who tells him of his love for Anna. Don Juan obtains from Anna's nurse a letter asking de la Mota to come to her at ten o'clock, as her father has betrothed her to another man. Don Juan delivers the message verbally, setting the time at twelve. De la Mota shows him Anna's house and lends him his cloak under don Juan's pretense of standing guard for him. Anna discovers the deception in time. Don Juan kills her father and escapes; and de la Mota, coming up at the time, is taken prisoner and sentenced by the king.

At a wedding celebration, don Juan wins the bride Aminta from Patricio, by promises of riches and grandeur. He flies in the morning with the very horses she has made ready for the both of them. Tisbea meets Isabella. They both go to the king. Near don Gonzalo's grave, don Juan pulls the beard of his statue, and invites it to dine with him. The statue accepts, comes, and then returns the invitation.

Isabella is to marry don Juan, and Anna, de la Mota. Altho don Juan is being anxiously awaited, he says he has other work to do, and goes into the church to visit the statue. The table is black, the dish contains scorpions and vipers, and the wine is vinegar and gall. Don Juan begins to
grow feverish; he gives his hand to the statue, then calls for a priest. The stone which had been raised, revealing the table, now sinks, covering don Juan and don Gonzalo. Isabella and Octavio, and de la Mota and Anna are married.

Tirso de Molina was not only a playwright, but a churchman. In his play he criticises false oaths that are taken in the name of God, and the Spanish Catholic conception of the cleansing powers of confession. It is only natural that don Juan, who knows he can efface all his sins by a sincere avowal of them, should put off the day and enjoy himself meanwhile. Altho this don Juan is a despicable creature in many ways, his courage cannot but be admired. In Molière's piece, don Juan is a non-believer. His cowardice is evident, and his hypocrisy is clear to himself, altho he looks upon it as an expression of his scorn of others. Molière in his version has also lost some of the majestic awe of the statue scene. The only improvement over his predecessor is seen in Sganarelle, the unsurpassed comic type, and in Elvire, who is more of a woman than her Spanish counterpart.

Molière's reputation as a playwright was now firm, but he had as ever present rivals the Italians, with their ever pleasing commedias of which the French never seemed to weary. It was not enough that he give his public masterpieces of character delineation, he must keep its interest at the highest point by the force of plot. He saw and analyzed the preferences of his audiences and went back unerringly to the
Italian commedia.

L'AMOUR MéDECIN. LE MéDECIN MALGRÉ LUI.
LE MALADE IMAGINAIRE.

Altho the conception of the satires was formed as a result of Molière's own observation of their practices and his failure to be cured by any of them, a precedent can be found in the commedia dell'arte, with its fixed type of doctor, pedant, fool, and illogical reasoner. The germs of the plots of the three satires, "l'Amour médecin", "le médecin malgré lui", and "le malade imaginaire", can be traced back to Dominique's "il medico volante", which also gave Molière the ideas for one of the two first farces, "le médecin volant". Some of the devices, however, are Spanish, and can be found in several comedias, most notably in "el Acero de Madrid". Such are the feigning of illness and the revelation of love under guise of something else. The pedant doctor was a familiar figure for satire in the Spanish theatre as well as in the Italian. But Molière's satires attain a breadth and degree of universality that make them masterpieces and entirely new creations.

GEORGE DANDIN.

The idea of the comedy "George Dandin on le Mari confondu" can be found in the seventh day stories of the Decameron. The character of the commoner who has hoped to raise himself above the station of his birth by marriage into an upper class, and his wife, and her parents who confer upon
him the honor of accepting him as a son-in-law, are distinctly Molière's own creations; but the rapidity of the succession of events, the duping of the simple, defenceless and always righteous George Dandin are Italian, and savoir of the "la Jalousie de Barbuillé" and are distinct reproductions of the tricks in trade of the Italian commedia dell'arte.

**L'AVARE.**

The surprises and denouement of "l'Avaré" are Italian, but Mariane and Cleante use the old Spanish device of declaring their love in the presence of others (this is found in "la Discreta enamorada"); Molière made use of it in "l'École des Maris" and many other plays. The miser is a type common to both the Italian and Spanish comedy, but Molière's miser is French, and common to the world.

**LES FEMMES SAVANTES.**

The idea of women devoting themselves to learning, which is the motivation of "les Femmes savantes" was not new, for there had been many "blue-stockings", real and imagined, before Molière, and he himself had occasion to meet several of them. As in all his masterpieces, this play comes from his understanding which is the result of his penetrating observation of humanity and his wide reading rather than from any particular plot.
LES FOURBERIES DE SCAPIN.

The plot of "les Fourberies de Scapin" is indebted directly to Terence's "Phormio", the "Emilia" of Lingi Groto, and "il Capitano", by Flaminio Scala. The stories of all three, as well as of the French play, hinge about the same situations. There is nothing Spanish here; Scapin and his "fourberies" are decidedly Italian. Adaptation from the Italian closed, as well as opened Molière's career as manager, actor and playwright.

It is a sign of Molière's greatness that from such varied sources, he created an integral whole, the modern French comedy. With no precedents to follow in his own country, and little material that he could borrow, he went outside. Here he found the raw materials which his genius molded into such a finished product.

In Italy he found his characters, the elements of popular appeal, and the "élán" necessary to comedy and farce. The characters do not merely drop the Italian terminations of their names, they become French, and the situations they find themselves in, and the words they use, coincide with their nationality.

Spain also provided him with plots and characters, and showed him the germs of what the Italian commedia did not possess -- psychological study. The nationality of these is transformed, just as the Italian.

These two theatres were for him a workshop in which he experimented, and from which he created his new theatre.

And it is because he is so characteristically French, and
yet so characteristically universal, that Moliere will live.
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Molière is the creator of modern French comedy. With the exception of a number of mediocre farces and a few attempts at comedy of character, little had been done in the French theatre before him. It remained for Molière, with his genius and talent for adaptation, to begin his career as founder of the modern French comedy, with farces and comedies which found their sources in the Italian and Spanish theatres. Throughout his career he used materials of these two countries; as he himself has said, "Je prends mon bien où je le trouve."

He became acquainted with the Italians thru his tour of the provinces. They had been in Paris during Molière's boyhood, and when he returned from the Midi, he shared with them the theatre of the Petit-Bourbon, and later the Palais-Royal.

The Spanish theatre he came to know thru his knowledge of the language, and thru the numerous French translations and copies of his contemporaries. There was also a Spanish troupe at Paris for a while — the troupe of Joseph de Prado, which Molière doubtless knew.

Altho Molière's great plays owe nothing to other writers, it must not be forgotten, that the plays which led to his fame were the farces and early comedies which were undoubtedly borrowed from two sources the French and Italian.

He began by using whole plays from the Italian, calling on both the commedia dell' arte, or improvised comedy, and the commedia sostenuta, or comedy in which all the speeches
were written and learned.

The first two farces, which he brought back with him from the provinces, were "la Jalousie de Barbouille" and "le Médecin volant", both adopted from the play "il Medico volante". The next play is "l'Étourdi", from "l'Inavvertito", by Nicolo Beltrame.

"Le Dépit amoureux" from "l'Intéresse" by Secchi, and "el Perro del Hortolano" by Lope de Vega, and "Sganarelle", from "il Ritratto ovvero Arlechino cornuto per l'Opinione" follow each other rapidly.

The Spanish influence now begins to make itself felt. "Don Garcie de Navarre" is taken from an Italian play by Cicognini, which can be traced to the Spanish, and "l'École des Maris" has in it elements of several Spanish plays.

"L'École des Femmes", a continuation of "l'École des Maris" is Spanish in source. "Le Mariage forcé" has in it both Italian and Spanish characteristics. "La Princesse d'Elide" is one of the most complete adaptations made by Molière. It is taken from the play by Moreto, "el Desden con el Desden". Don Juan is related to "el Burlador de Sevilla", and also to numerous Italian and French translations and versions of the Spanish story.

Starting with the Italian as his source of inspiration, Molière gradually turned to the Spanish. Then, when competition with the Italians was keen, altho he had made his reputation as a student of character, he resorted again to the Italian comedies for "action", altho he did not desert the
Spanish wholly. There is this difference. He no longer uses whole plots, but merely detached scenes and comic situations.

"L'Amour médecin", "le Médecin malgré lui" and "le malade imaginaire", are all related to "il medico volante", and also have some situations which savor of the Spanish.

"George Dandin", "l'Avare", "les Femmes savantes" and "les Fourberies de Scapin" all show elements of Italian origin.

From Italy, Molière obtained his characters, the elements of popular appeal, and the "élan" necessary to comedy and farce. Spain provided him with plots and characters also, and in addition, the suggestions for psychological study. It is a mark of Molière's genius that, with no precedents in the French theatre to follow, and from all the diverse sources upon which he drew, he should have created a new comedy, entirely original, entirely French -- for the road to his masterpieces was paved by the farces which he adapted and created from the Spanish and the Italian.