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An Analysis

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An Analysis

Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"Molière, complying with the demands of Louis XIV of France, presented in 1670 a remarkable parody on Turkish customs and language. *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* has brought the plaudits of critics and audiences alike since that time. The play or piece is composed of three acts of character comedy in the folly on Monsieur Jourdain, and two of exaggeration and parody in the events leading up to and the Turkish ceremony. The action develops through a series of episodes rather than a well knit, unified intrigue. Superimposed on the satire on society is a whole-hearted humor prompted by the ignorance and credulity of the central figure, Jourdain, a tradesman who wishes to become a gentleman. He is not an arbitrary figure or character type, but a real human being with exaggerated idiosyncrasies. Molière had associated with this type character in his father's shop. Some critics say that the author would have liked to write of this subject with a more exalted humor, but hurriedly debased it to farce in an effort to suit the wishes of the king."

Cover Page Footnote

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"*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*" embraces the many aspects of the 17th century Classical Comedy. We find the *Farce* exemplified in the battle of the masters (Act II, Scene XVI) and in the crass display of the reverence shown Dorimene (Act III, Scene XVI); the *Comédie Ballet*—typified by the ballet music in the tailor scene (Act II), the music of the banquet scene (Act IV), the Turkish ceremony (Act IV) and the ballet between acts; the *Comédie de Caractère*—in the ridiculousness of M. Jourdain—The rich Bourgeois attempts to become a man of nobility by aping the habits of the nobility; the *Comédie de Moeurs*—displayed in the subtle attacks on Parisian society.

The question is—with which elements of the *Comédie* was Molière most concerned in the presentation of "*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*"?

Superficially it appears that the *Comédie de Caractère* is best illustrated in this play since it is M. Jourdain's folly which gives rise to the play and provides the foundation upon which the true construction is built. But if we analyse the purpose for which the play was written, and take into consideration the wit of Molière, we come to the realization that the underlying motive was farther reaching than a superficial character sketch, and intended for more than the mere folly of the immediate audience.

Actually "*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*" is more indicative of the *Comédie de Moeurs*. King Louis XIV had been humiliated before the public by a Turkish ambassador who scorned his court and the hospitality shown him at Versailles. Molière's favor to his king was to create a Comedy poking fun at the Turks. (The source of his ideas was undoubtedly provided by "*La Soeur*" written by Rotrou in 1645). This "whiplash on society" would certainly seize the opportunity to point his finger at many other absurdities in the 17th century Parisian society.

ROY F. ENGELS '57