MOLIÈRE, THE DOCTORS, AND MEDICINE
MOLIÈRE, THE DOCTORS, AND MEDICINE

by

HUGO A. ROSS, B.A. (SASKATCHEWAN)

A Thesis
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree
Master of Arts

McMaster University
October, 1971
TITLE: Molière, the Doctors, and Medicine

AUTHOR: Hugo A. Ross, B.A. (University of Saskatchewan, Regina Campus)

SUPERVISOR: Dr. G. A. Warner

NUMBER OF PAGES: iv, 99

SCOPE AND CONTENTS: A study of Molière's portrayal of doctors and medicine compared to the actual medical environment of seventeenth century France with emphasis given to the type of comedy (i.e. farce, satire), the presence of spokesmen, and the accuracy of the portrayal itself.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deep acknowledgement to Dr. T. E. Lawrenson, Lancaster University, under whose expert guidance I first studied Molière and to Dr. G. A. Warner, McMaster University, who has helped further my studies on Molière and who has served as my most understanding and helpful thesis supervisor.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td></td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I</td>
<td>ORGANIZATION OF CONTEMPORARY MEDICINE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II</td>
<td>CONTEMPORARY THEORIES AND QUARRELS</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III</td>
<td>DIAGNOSES AND TREATMENTS</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER IV</td>
<td>MOLIÈRE'S EXPLOITATION OF MEDICINE: SATIRE, FARCE AND PERSONAL OPINION</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td></td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td></td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In all Molière's plays, no subject recurs more frequently than that of doctors and medicine. Molière's theatrical career opened with *Le Médecin Volant* (1659), and terminated, at his death, with *Le Malade Imaginaire* (1673). In the interim, doctors appeared on stage four more times in his works: in *Dom Juan* (1665), in *L'Amour Médicin* (1665), in *Le Médecin Malgré Lui* (1666) and in *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac* (1669). So frequently does this subject reappear, and so closely does its appearance coincide with significant events in Molière's life, that the relation between Molière, the doctors, and medicine deserves special attention.

Before examining the plays themselves, we must first undertake a study of the medical situation in seventeenth century France. And since the Faculty of Paris strictly controlled the practice of medicine during that era, we are obliged to study its organization, its rules, its customs and its influence on its members.

Once we are familiar with the organization of seventeenth century French medicine, we can then examine the theories, which dated back to the works of Hippocrates and Galen, that formed the basis of the accepted medical
doctrine, and compare them to those found in Molière's comedies.

Though the theories established centuries before by Hippocrates and Galen\(^1\) were blindly accepted by most Faculty members, certain new theories and practices were favoured by a small number of doctors. Since these doctors dared disobey the Faculty, they were subject to its disdain, hatred and vengeance. Better quarrels resulted -- quarrels which found comic representation in Molière's plays on medicine.

Much of the quarreling took place over the diagnoses and treatments proposed by different doctors. The devoted Faculty members favoured bleeding, the purge or the enema as treatments for most diseases. Other doctors favoured different cures. Almost all the various methods of treatment, from the common to the exotic, are found represented in Molière's plays -- but no successful cure is attributed to their administration.

Once we have examined the contemporary medical situation and compared it to its portrayal by Molière, we can then turn our attention to possible influences on his treatment of medicine: his education, contemporary literature

\(^1\) e.g. Theories pertaining to the humors, to the temperament and to the circulation of blood.
and theatre, his contacts with doctors and medicine, and his own particular, and finally fatal illness in order to analyze the comedies for originality, farce, satire, personal opinion, (i.e. the presence of spokesmen), fairness and accuracy. Only when all this has been accomplished can we fully appreciate the importance of doctors and medicine to both Molière and his works.
CHAPTER I
ORGANIZATION OF CONTEMPORARY MEDICINE

No study of Molière's involvement, both personal and theatrical, with doctors and medicine can be reasonably undertaken without careful consideration of the medical situation that existed during his lifetime. And the contemporary medical situation, or at least that in Paris (which is of major concern to us), was the result of the organization that held itself responsible for the education of aspiring students of medicine and for the control of medical practice -- the Faculty of Paris.

The origins of the Faculty can be traced back to the twelfth century with the founding of the University of Paris. The college of medicine separated from the other faculties in the late thirteenth century, sometime between 1267 and 1281, established its own statutes, seal and register, and adopted the title Physicorum Facultas, Facultas in Physica.

Once established as a separate entity, the Faculty steadfastly guarded its independence, staying out of politics and affairs of court; choosing with care its new students (who until the mid seventeenth century had to be of the Catholic religion); accepting only those medical theories and practices which strictly conformed to the doctrines of 1
Hippocrates and Galen. In his excellent work on Molière and the doctors, Maurice Raynaud describes the Faculty's position as follows:

La Faculté grandit, mais elle ne varie pas. Telle nous l'avons vue, aux jours les plus difficiles de son organisation primitive, telle nous la retrouvons en plein dix-septième siècle, puissante et respectée, mais fidèle à son esprit et à ses traditions. C'est toujours cette même et fière indépendance, ce sentiment profond de l'association pour la défense commune, ce besoin d'unité, qui a présidé à sa formation, et qui la soutient contre des attaques de toute nature.  

In order to keep this independence, the Faculty both taught the aspiring medical students and prescribed the doctrine for its members. As Raynaud puts it: "Comme institution, elle était gardienne de l'honneur du corps; comme compagnie savante, elle se croyant chargée du dépôt de la bonne doctrine, que pour rien au monde elle n'eût voulu laisser péricliter entre ses mains". Further stressing the Faculty's position in this matter, Raynaud states: "De là une législation intérieure, prévoyant et régulant jusqu'aux plus petits détails de la pratique journalière, s'imposant aux nouveaux venus avec une autorité au-dessus de toute contestation, et exigeant avant tout le sacrifice


2 Ibid., p. 96.
constant des intérêts de chacun à l'intérêt de tous".³

All who successfully passed the courses and took the appropriate vows became members of the Faculty -- just as long as they conformed to the prescribed standards -- "les formalités". Devotion to those standards was the sign of a "perfect" doctor. Molière was not far from the truth when he had the apothecary in Monsieur de Pourceaugnac praise his doctor thus:

Ma foi, ma foi! vous ne pouviez pas vous adresser à un médecin plus habile. C'est un homme qui sait la médecine à fond, comme je sais ma croix de par Dieu, et qui, quand on devrait crever, ne démordrait pas d'un iota des règles des anciens. Oui, il suit toujours le grand chemin, le grand chemin, et ne va point chercher midi à quatorze heures; et, pour tout l'or du monde, il ne voudrait pas avoir guéri une personne avec d'autres remèdes que ceux que la faculté permet.⁴ (Monsieur de Pourceaugnac, I, v)

But before becoming so "perfect" a doctor, what courses of instruction did the seventeenth century student of medicine have to follow? It is vital for us to have some knowledge of those courses, for in the strictly controlled medical world of that era both the students and the doctors owed almost all their learning to their formal education -- medical research was at a virtual standstill in France.

³Raynaud, op. cit., p. 17.

⁴All quotations from Molière are taken from the Du Seuil edition of his works.
At first, the course of study was divided into two major categories; first that of natural order ("les choses naturelles") which included anatomy and physiology, and non natural, ("les choses non naturelles") which included hygiene and dietetics; and second, that of anti-natural order ("les choses contre nature") which included pathology and therapy. Such studies are found mentioned in the correspondence of Gui Patin:

Je m'en vais demain faire étudier Noël Falconet en médecine, et lui faire apprendre par coeur les premiers chapitres du Compendium de M. Riolan le père, et après les commentaires du même sur la physiologie de Fernel, avec l'Enchiridium Anatomicum du fils, c'est le chemin que j'ai fait prendre à mes deux fils, et qui y ont bien réussi: à mesure qu'il avancera dans ces premiers institutions, je lui ferai mettre le nez dans quelques autres livres qui lui appairont les voies pour la lecture de Galien et d'Hippocrate.

As a tutor, he counsels his charge:

Maintenant que vous estes de retour, gardez bien de perdre vostre temps; ne laissez passer aucun jour sans estudier pour le moins huit heures; lisez soigneusement la Pathologie de Fernel et les quatre premiers livres de sa méthode générale; adjoutez-y la pratique de J. Hollier, avec les Enarrations de M. Durét, et mesmes, lisez les Coaques d'Hippocrate, avec les commentaires du mesme Durét, et les

5Gui Patin was one of the better-known, more outspoken doctors of Molière's era; a strict traditionalist and bitter enemy of Harvey's theory of blood circulation, antimony, and charlatans.

Aphorismes d'Hippocrate, avec les commentaires de Galien, de Hollier et de Heurnius... Il y a trois traités dans Galien que vous devez chercher, et y lire souvent quelque chose, savoir: De locis affectis; de morborum et symptomatum causis et differentiis, et ses livres de la Méthode. Vous ferez fort bien d'y adjouter ce qu'il a escript de commentaires sur les épidémies d'Hippocrate.... Ne perdez point de temps à lire tant de modernes qui n'ont fait des livres de notre art que faute de pratique et pour avoir trop de loiser; surtout fuyez les livres de chymie, in quorum lectione oleum et operam perdes.

In 1634 courses were offered, in Latin, on surgery— but only to allow the doctors to be as knowledgeable on that subject as the "barbiers-chirurgiens", the surgeons, in whose "unworthy" hands rested that so important facet of medicine. The members of the Faculty did, in fact, consider the "barbiers-chirurgiens" unworthy -- it was their business to soil their hands in the bodies and blood of those patients in need of surgery and of those few corpses available for dissection in the courses on anatomy. Few doctors would stoop to perform such services. Thus, in Le Malade Imaginaire, Thomas Diafoirus invites Angelique to "venir voir, l'un de ces jours, pour vous divertir, la dissection d'une femme, sur quoi je dois raisonner" (II, v). Diafoirus would not perform the dissection, the duty of the surgeon,


8 In 1646, courses in botany were offered for the first time.
he would only present the commentary thereupon. A similar occurrence, this time in real life, is mentioned in the correspondence of Gui Patin: "Mon fils Charles explique l'anatomie dans nos écoles sur un cadavre de femme. Il y a une si grande quantité d'auditeurs, qu'autre le théâtre, la cour en est encore toute pleine". Such a procedure would be of little educational and practical value to anyone except, perhaps, the surgeon. With little or no first-hand experience, it is of little wonder that the members of the Faculty stuck resolutely to the centuries old theories of anatomy -- and thus inhibited, be it voluntarily or involuntarily, the progress of medicine.

One event, worthy of note, was the dissection of a criminal (by law, only their bodies were subject to dissection), whose liver and spleen were found to be positionally reversed. It is again to Gui Patin that we turn for this information: "Un de nos docteurs, nommé Regnier, ayant obtenu, en vertu de la requête que je lui avais signée comme doyen, le corps d'un de ceux qui furent roués il y a trois semaines ... on y a remarqué une chose fort extraordinaire, savoir, le foie du côté gauche et la rate du côté droit ... M. Regnier en a fait un petit discours qui sera imprimé, à ce qu'il m'a dit". If this

---

9 Patin, op. cit., p. 302.
10 Ibid., p. 106 (letter written in December 1650).
caused as great a stir as Patin would indicate, perhaps Molière, in 1666, remembering the event, had Sganarelle place the heart and liver on opposite sides: "Or ces vapeurs dont je vous parle venant à passer, du côté gauche où est le foie, au côté droit où est le coeur . . ." (Le Médecin Malgré Lui, II, iv). Whether or not Molière did remember the actual event is debatable -- whatever the case may be, Sganarelle's position is highly comic.

Just as in the case of courses in anatomy, all the other courses offered very little opportunity for practical experience in the diagnosis or treatment of diseases. The lectures did nothing to encourage progress in the field of medicine for they were based on, and devoted to the theories proposed centuries before by Hippocrates and Galen, or to the particular lecturer's interpretation of them. The students were taught to discuss, at great length, in Latin, concepts that were centuries old. More concern was directed towards rhetorical procedure than towards initiating progressive theories. The situation is once again most effectively presented by Maurice Raynaud:

En somme, le côté pratique de la science qui, pour nous, prime tout le reste, était alors le plus négligé. De nombreuses récompenses, des perspectives brillantes, attiraient le zèle et l'émulation de la jeunesse vers la dialectique, les luttes académiques, les succès oratoires. Ce n'eût été que demi-mal si l'on n'eût perdu de vue trop souvent qu'après tout, la médecine étant faite pour les malades et non pour les médecins, le plus difficile n'est pas de disserter longuement sur une maladie, mais de
juger sainement de l'état d'un malade, ce qui est fort différent.11

Thus, the long diagnosis by the Premier Médecin in Act I, Scene viii of Monsieur de Pourceaugnaç is praised by the Second:

Vous avez si bien discoursu sur tous les signes, les symptômes et les causes de la maladie de monsieur; le raisonnement que vous en avez fait est si docte et si beau, qu'il est impossible qu'il ne soit pas fou et mélancolique hypocondriaque; et, quand il ne le serait pas, il faudrait qu'il le devint, pour la beauté des choses que vous avez dites, et la justesse du raisonnement que vous avez fait. Oui, monsieur, vous avez dépient fort graphiquement, graphice depinxisti, tout ce qui appartient à cette maladie. Il ne se peut rien de plus doctement, sagement, ingénieusement conçu, pensé, imaginé, que ce que vous avez prononcé au sujet de ce mal, soit pour la diagnose, ou la prognose, ou la thérapie. (I, viii)

Oratorical procedure was of prime importance. The ability to present one's ideas; to reply quickly and adroitly to an opponent's objections; to skillfully negate any counter-arguments: such were the aims of the medical student, and of any renowned doctor. Thus, Monsieur Diafoirus praises his son Thomas as follows:

Depuis deux ans qu'il est sur les bancs, il n'y a point de candidat qui ait fait plus be bruit que lui dans toutes les disputes de notre école. Il s'y est rendu redoutable; et il ne s'y passe point d'acte où il n'aille argumenter à outrance pour la proposition contraire. Il est ferme dans

la dispute, fort comme un Turc sur ses principes, ne démord jamais de son opinion, et poursuit un raisonnement jusque dans les derniers recoins de la logique. (Le Malade Imaginaire, II, v)

The literary, rhetorical influence of Thomas Diafoirus' education is also extremely evident in his oratorical salutations to Argan, Angélique and Béline, and prompts Toinette to comment: "Vive les collèges d'où l'on sort si habile homme!" and "Voilà ce que c'est que d'étudier! on apprend à dire de belles choses" (II, v). The study of certain medical works of that era reinforce Molière's portrayal of this pedantry.\textsuperscript{12}

Just as characteristic of the courses as were the lack of practical experience and the emphasis on oratorical procedure was the use of Latin in all lectures, lessons and theses.\textsuperscript{13} The French language was not considered by the doctors as being worthy of their noble calling. The use of Latin, and often that of Greek, served to reinforce their isolationist policy to a certain degree -- for example -- the lectures on surgery for the doctors would

\textsuperscript{12}See Dr. F. Nivelet, Molière et Gui Patin (Paris: Berger-Levrault et Cie Editeurs, 1880), pp. 55-56.

\textsuperscript{13}The Catholic church, of course, conducted all its affairs in Latin. Almost all university education was also carried on with Latin as the language of instruction.
be given in refined Latin; the lectures on the same subject
given for the "chirurgiens" would be either in a vulgarized
Latin, or more probably, in French. The study of contem-
porary medical documents and doctors' private correspondence
will yield countless examples of the doctors' penchant for
these languages. Gui Patin, for example, would switch from
French to Greek to Latin all in the space of two sentences.¹⁴

Since the Faculty scorned the use of French it is
not surprising to see either real or pseudo Latin appear
in many of Molière's plays -- either to imitate, in a
burlesque manner, the real doctors, or to enable a counter-
feit doctor to conceal his ignorance through pedantry.

Obliged to counterfeit a doctor, Sganarelle, (in Le Médecin
Malgré Lui) in trying to diagnose Lucinde's illness, hides
his ignorance as follows:

Pour revenir donc à notre raisonnement, je tiens que
cet empêchement de l'actio n de sa langue est causé
par de certaines humeurs, qu'entre nous autres savants,
nous appelons humeurs peccantes; peccantes, c'est-a-
dire . . . humeurs peccantes; d'autant que les vapeurs
formées par les exhalaisons des influences qui
s'élèvent dans la région des maladies, venant . . .
pour ainsi dire . . . À . . . Entendez-vous le latin?

GÉRONTE

En aucune façon.

SGANARELLE (avec enthousiasme)

Cabricias, arci thoram, catalamus; singularitum nominativum, haec musa, bonus, bona, bonum. Deus sanctus, est-ne oratio latinas? Etiam, oui. Quare? Pourquoi? Quia substantivo, et adjectivium, concordat in generi, numerum et casus . . . il se trouve que le poumon, que nous appelons en latin Armyam, ayant communication avec le cerveau que nous appelons en grec Nasmus, par le moyen de la veine cave, que nous appelons en hébreu Cubile . . . il arrive que les vapeurs . . . Ossabandus, nequeis, nequier, potarium, quiqsa milus. Voilà justement ce qui fait que votre fille est muette. (Le Médecin Malgré Lui, II, iv)

Because Sganarelle wore a doctor's robe and cap, and spoke "good" Latin, he was able to dupe Géronte and his servants. It is not to be believed, however, that all of the French society of the era was as simple as they and that the real doctors used Latin phrases like "Quia substantio, et adjectivum, concordat in generi, numerum et casus" to diagnose a patient's illness. Mm. Despois and Mesnard propose an interesting explanation of Molière's usage of this pseudo-Latin:

Le latin de la Faculté n'était sans doute pas plus barbare que ne l'aurait paru nécessairement aux anciens une bonne partie du latin moderne. Molière lui en a prêté un qui est, comme on dit, "de cuisine" parce que c'était le seul moyen de le rendre comique et vraisemblablement aussi parce que, voyant une solennelle charlatanerie dans l'emploi emphatique et pédantesque d'une langue inconnue au vulgaire et destiné par son mystère à cacher beaucoup de sottises, il trouvait plaisir à la discréditer par le ridicule.15

After having successfully completed all his courses,

15 Despois et Mesnard, Oeuvres de Molière (Paris: Librairie Hachette et Cie, 1886), IX, 230.
the aspiring medical student had but to submit to an oral exam, present and defend his thesis in front of the assembled Faculty, and finally take the vows of obedience. The theses, written in Latin, had subjects ranging from medication \([\text{An visceribus nutriciis aestrunantibus aquarum metallicarum usus salubris?} \ (\text{Is the use of mineral water beneficial in combatting inflamed intestines?})]\); to dietetics \([\text{An vinum burgundian rhemensi suavis et salubrius?} \ (\text{Is burgundy wine better for health than champagne?})]\); to religion \([\text{Ex qua parte manaverit aqua quae profluit e mortui Christi latere perforato lanceae acuto mucrone?} \ (\text{From which part of the body did the water come from, when Christ, dead, was stabbed with a lance?})]\); to even subjects of a more amorous nature \([\text{An Venus salubris?} \ (\text{Is love good for one's health?})]\). Such theses were often most handsomely bound, with elaborate illustrations on the first page -- perhaps a portrait of the person to whom the work was dedicated; perhaps a scene depicting Hippocrates or Galen treating the sick; or perhaps an anatomical diagram. Were the theses to fall into the hands of a layman the illustration might be used for decorative purposes in the household. Such was the case with Thomas Diafoirus' thesis when he was to present it to Angélique. Toinette took charge of it, saying: "Donnez, donnez; elle est toujours bonne à prendre pour l'image: cela servira à parer notre chambre" \((\text{Le Malade Imaginaire, II, v})\).
After all the exams and the defense of his thesis, the medical student had but to swear allegiance to the Faculty, pronouncing the word \textit{Juro} after each of the prescribed vows. Having so sworn, the new doctor was empowered to practise medicine "hic et ubique terrarum".

Molière presents us with an extremely close, detailed and comic portrait -- a near perfect parody -- of the Faculty's ceremony of investiture in the Troisième Intermède of \textit{Le Malade Imaginaire}. It would seem, however that Molière was not unaided in the composing of this burlesque ceremony. Doctor A. M. Brown, in his work \textit{Molière and his Medical Associations}, explains the origin of the Troisième Intermède:

It was at the hotel of Madame de la Sablière, on the occasion of one of those joyous suppers when her salon became the rendezvous of the distinguished and intellectual circles, that \textit{The Cérémonies} were improvised. The conversation turning on the absurd ceremonial formalities of the Faculty of Medicine, Molière, who was then engaged in writing the \textit{Malade Imaginaire}, communicated his design; and as the \textit{Ceremony} of the Bourgeois Gentilhomme had succeeded so admirably, they prevailed upon him to carry out the same idea still further in the comedy in hand, and to favour the Parisians with a burlesque copy of the procedure of the doctors in their robes, their stilted Latin discourses, and their scientific theses gravely sustained with all the antiquated pomposity observed at the conferring of the Doctorate . . . .The familiar spirits of the circle vied with each other in sapping the fabric which those of the eighteenth century were destined entirely to sweep away. The comedian supplied the plan, in which each took his part in contributing his Latin couplets to the wondrous protest and Ninon was not behind the rest in the inventions of piquant verse.
It is also probable that there mingled in the assembly of the beautiful Marquise on this occasion some members of the Faculty itself, well known to Molière, such as Bernier, Mauvillain and Leonard, all sceptic more or less. Certain details show an intimate knowledge of the interior of the Faculty, and betray the hand of the professional expert in its production -- a suspicion which would not necessarily imply secret malice or design ... they would consider themselves justified, as men of mind, in taking part in the spirited revel, little dreaming that thereby their cherished institutions was in any way endangered. Such was the origin of the cérémonies, to which -- if closely analysed -- the drama itself might almost be regarded as a mere accessory.

The ballet, representing the investiture ceremony, opens with the entry of doctors, apothecaries, surgeons, and musicians who take their respective places. Just as at the real investiture, seating was arranged on the basis of the various doctors' seniority. Those present come to order with the delivery of the Praeses, an eloquent praise of the doctors and of medicine which differs little in tone and in message from the Vespery, the official opening speech:

Savantissimi doctores,
Medicinae professores,
Qui hic assembleati estes;
Et vos, altrì messiores,
Sententiarum facultatis
Fideles executores,


17 Musicians (violin players) did in fact participate in the investiture ceremony at the Faculty of Montpellier -- the chief rival of the Faculty of Paris.
Chirurgiani et apothicari
Atque tota compania aussi
Salus, honor et argentum,
Atque bonum appetitum.

Non possum, docti confreri,
En moi satis admirair
Qualis bona inventio
Est medici professio;
Quàm bella chosa est et bene trovata ... 

These preliminary remarks are followed, as again in the authentic ceremony, by the announcement of the purpose of the assembly:

C'est pour cela que nunc convocati estis;
Et credo quod trovabatis
Dignam materiam medici
In savanti homine que voici;
Lequel, in choisis omnibus,
Dono ad interrogandum,
Et a fond examinadum
Vostris capacitatibus.

Having thus established the purpose of the assembly, the examination begins with the different doctors, each taking his turn in questioning the candidate on various subjects. In the real ceremony, two of the subjects most likely to be dealt with were physiology and pathology. In Molière's ceremony we have the same; first physiology:

Domandabo causam et rationem quore
Opium facit dormire.

A quoi respondeo,
Quia est in eo
Virtus dormitiva
Cujus est natura
Sensus assoupire.

and then pathology:

Domandabo tibi, docte bacheliere,
Quae sunt remedia
It would seem more than coincidental that the symptoms described above (especially the difficulty in breathing) were those suffered by Molière during the writing of the play.

As cures for each and all of these diseases the candidate recommends an enema, blood-letting and a purgative:

Clysterium donare,
Postea seignare,
Ensuitta purgare.

which were, in fact, the three most commonly prescribed treatments used by the doctors of Molière's era.

Each time the Bacheliersus replies in that fashion, the chorus, which represents the president of the Faculty, praises his judgement. As does Raynaud, I will place the two formulae in comparative positions, first that of Molière, then that of the Faculty:

CHORUS

Bene, bene, bene, bene respondere;
Dignus, dignus est intrare
In nostro docte corpore.
LE PRÉSIDENT

Audivistis, viri clarissimi, quam bene, quam apposite responderit Baccalaureus vester: eum, si placet, tempore et loco commendatum habebitis.

Having so successfully replied to each of the doctors' questions, the candidate would be assured of his acceptance into their ranks once he took the vows of obedience to the Faculty. Once again I will place Molière's adaptations in comparison with the authentic equivalent:

1) PRAESES

Juris gardare statuta
Per facultatem praescripta,
Cum sensu et jugeamento?

LE PRÉSIDENT

Quod observabis jura, statuta, leges et laudibiles consuetudines hujus ordinis.

2) PRAESES

Essere in omnibus
Consultationibus
Ancieni aviso,
Aut bono,
Aut mauvaise?

LE PRÉSIDENT

Quod comparebis in crastinum D. Lucae in missâ pro defunctis doctoribus
Instead of ridiculing the Faculty's avowed religious practice of honouring deceased doctors -- something most difficult to do and retain an element of good taste -- Molière substitutes a vow of total submission to the "anciens". This would certainly still be in accordance with the Faculty's overall doctrine.

3) PRAESER

De non jamais te servire
De remediis aucunis
Quam de ceux seulement doctae facultatis,
Maladus dût-il crevare
Et mori de suo malo?

LE PRÉSIDENT

Quod totis viribus contendes adversus medicos illicite practicantes, nulli parcendo, cujuscunque ordinis aut conditionis fuerit.18

Although the phraseology of Molière's adaptation does not exactly conform to that of the authentic vow, both have the same sense -- that the doctor must oppose any treatment that is not accepted by the Faculty. All three vows have but one purpose, to ensure the doctors' complete devotion, in all matters, to the Faculty.

Finally, with the benediction of the Chancellor, the student becomes an accepted member of the Faculty, ready

---

18 The reader will notice the difference between Molière's comic pseudo-Latin, and the Faculty's polished use of that language.
to take his place in the world of medicine. In Molière's ceremony, the senior doctor forces the candidate's bonnet over his ears; at the Faculty's ceremony, the Chancellor lays his hands on the candidate's head in the form of a religious benediction. The texts of the two benedictions follow the same general pattern:

**PRAESES**

Ego, cum itso boneto  
Venerabili et docto,  
Dono tibi et concedo  
Virtutem et puissanciam  
Medicandi,  
Purgandi,  
Seignandi,  
Perçandi,  
Taillandi,  
Coupandi,  
Et occidendi  
Impune per totam terram.

**LE PRÉSIDENT**

Auctoritate sedis apostolicae  
Qua fungor in hac parte,  
Do tibi Licentiam  
Legendi,  
Interpretandi  
Et faciendi  
Medicinam, hic et ubique terrarum.

It must be noted, however, that Molière does exaggerate the truth in including "seignandi, perçandi, taillandi and coupandi" in his adaptation, for these procedures are characteristic of the surgeon's trade — not the doctor's.

The ceremony, at least that part which most closely resembles that of the Faculty, ends after the "deuxième
entrée" of the ballet in which the Bachelierus, now a doctor, gives thanks to, and praises in a most effusive manner, those to whose ranks he has just been admitted. Such would most certainly have been the case with the real doctors. And so terminates the final of Molière's many comedies on medicine -- this last one with an unmistakeable parody of the Faculty of Médecine in Paris, and therefore of the organization of contemporary medicine.

To Molière, the Faculty of Paris was most remiss in providing the medical student with an education completely based on the theories of the "anciens", in stressing oratorical procedure (including the use of Latin), and in neglecting practical medical experience, both in the field of research and with actual patients. It is Béralde in Le Malade Imaginaire who serves as Molière's "porte-parole" when he describes M. Purgon as:

un homme tout médecin, depuis la tête jusqu'aux pieds; un homme qui croit à ses règles plus qu'à toutes les démonstrations des mathématiques, et qui croirait du crime à les vouloir examiner; qui ne voit rien d'obscur dans la médecine, rien de douteux, rien de difficile. (II, iii)

and when he characterizes doctors in general: "Dans les discours et dans les choses, ce sont deux sortes de personnes que vos grands médecins. Entendez-les parler, les plus habiles gens du monde; voyez-les faire, les plus ignorants de tous les hommes" (III, iii).
CHAPTER II

CONTEMPORARY THEORIES AND QUARRELS

Because of his education, and according to the vows of obedience he had sworn at his investiture, the new doctor was bound to accept and defend those theories prescribed by the Faculty -- theories basically unchanged since their formulation centuries before by Hippocrates, Galen and Aristotle -- theories relating to the temperament of man, to the elements and humors of which he was composed, to the production and impulsion of his blood, and finally, to the treatments necessitated by the various diseases. The degree of importance given to the theories forwarded by the "anciens" is well typified by Maurice Raynaud:

Ouvrez au hasard quelqu'un des poudreux volumes consacrés à cette physiologie surannée. Dès la première page vous apercevez que vous êtes sous le régime de l'autorité. Tachez de vous en accommoder. L'autorité, c'est ici Hippocrate. Cherchez; son portrait doit être au frontispice; son nom est en tête de l'ouvrage. Le livre étant dédié à la Faculté et approuvé par elle, vous lisez la formule suivante, ou une autre semblable:

Approbation des Docteurs

"Nous sousignés, docteurs de la très-salutaire Faculté de médecine de Paris, certifions avoir lu l'ouvrage de * * * sous ce titre * * *; et attestons en outre qu'il ne s'y trouve rien qui ne soit conforme à la vraie et pure doctrine d'Hippocrate. Ainsi le jugeons-nous digne d'être
livré à l'impression, et publié. En foi de quoi nous avons signé . . ."1

Gui Patin, one of the most dedicated members of the Faculty, filled his personal correspondence with praise for the "anciens": "Feu M. Piètre me dit un jour de lui qu'il avait bien de quoi être et paraître habile homme, car jamais personne n'a su si bien son Hippocrate et l'Aristote que lui".2 And again: "Il se pique de trois choses qui ne firent jamais un homme plus sage, de savoir de la chimie, de l'astrologie et de la pierre philosophale; mais on ne guérit point de maladies par tous ces beaux secrets. L'Hippocrate et le Galien sont les beaux secrets de notre métier, qu'il n'a peut-être jamais lu".3

So evident, and so unshakeable was their faith in the "anciens" that Molière could not fail to hold it up to ridicule on several occasions. M. Tomès, one of the doctors in L'Amour Médecin, would not accept the death of a certain coachman because he had not died on any of the dates specified by Hippocrates:

1Raynaud, Les Médecins au Temps de Molière, p. 349.


3Ibid., I, 347.
M. TOMÈS
Comment se porte son cocher?

LISETTE
Fort bien. Il est mort.

M. TOMÈS
Mort?

LISETTE
Oui.

M. TOMÈS
Cela ne se peut.

LISETTE
Je ne sais pas si cela se peut; mais je sais bien que cela est.

M. TOMÈS
Il ne peut pas être mort, vous dis-je.

LISETTE
Et moi, je vous dis qu'il est mort et enterré.

M. TOMÈS
Vous vous trompez

LISETTE
Je l'ai vu.
Cela est impossible. Hippocrate dit que ces sortes de maladies ne se terminent qu'au quatorze ou au vingt-un; et il n'y a que six jours qu'il est tombé malade. (II, ii)

A similar dialogue occurs in Monsieur de Pourceaugnac:

LE PAYSAN

Monsieur, il n'en peut plus; et il dit qu'il sent dans la tête les plus grandes douleurs du monde.

PREMIER MÉDECIN

Le malade est un sot; d'autant plus que, dans la maladie dont il est attaqué, ce n'est pas la tête, selon Galien, mais la rate qui lui doit faire mal. (I, vi)

Molière also has his counterfeit doctors quote the "anciens" whenever the need arises:

SGANARELLE

Hippocrate dit ... que nous nous couvrions tous deux.

GÉRONTE

Hippocrate dit cela?

SGANARELLE

Oui.

GÉRONTE

Dans quel chapitre, s'il vous plaît?
Dans son chapitre . . . des chapeaux.

Puisque Hippocrate, le dit, il le faut faire.

(Le Médecin Malgré Lui, II, ii)

Although Molière may not have agreed with the theories proposed by Hippocrates and Galien, he spent comparatively little time criticizing them. Rather, he condemned the contemporary doctors for so blindly adhering to those theories, or to some interpretation of them; and for doing so at the cost of neglecting experimentation and practical experience. In this way they stifled any possible progress and even disobeyed one of Hippocrates' major rules: "le raisonnement est louable s'il prend son point de départ dans l'occurrence et s'il conduit la déduction d'après les phénomènes."

Three theories dominated the medical situation in seventeenth century France: that of the four elements, that of the four "humours" and that of the "chyle-foie" system of

---

4 The major exception being related to Diafoirus' statement regarding the circulation of the blood: "des prétendues découvertes de notre siècle touchant la circulation du sang . . . " (Le Malade Imaginaire, Act II, Scene v); but even here, more criticism would be directed at Diafoirus' blind devotion to the "anciens", than at the "anciens" theories.

blood transmission. All three were found in the works of Hippocrates and Galen.

According to Galen, the body was composed of four elements, namely heat, cold, wetness or dryness. When the four elements were in balance, good health resulted -- one was temperate. When, however, a disproportion existed, sickness prevailed -- one was intemperate. One was sick due to a combination "chaud-humide", "chaud-sec", "froid-humide", or "froid-sec", etc. Thus, when Molière includes in his comedies such phrases as "tempérer les entrailles et le cerveau"; "rétablir et conserver la chaleur naturelle"; "pour amollir, humecter et rafraîchir les entrailles de monsieur" and "la maladie de votre fille . . . procède d'une grande chaleur de sang", he is accurately repeating such doctrines as prevailed in his era.

The second theory, that of the four "humeurs", was perhaps, even more widely accepted than that of the elements. This time, it is in the works of Hippocrates that the theory finds its origins:

Le corps de l'homme a en lui sang, pituite, bile jaune et noire; c'est là ce qui en constitue la nature, et ce qui y crée la maladie et la santé. Il y a essentiellement santé quand ces principes sont dans un juste rapport de crase, de force et de quantité, et que le mélange en est parfait; il y a maladie quand un de ces principes est, soit en défaut, soit en excès, ou, s'isolant dans le corps, n'est pas combiné avec le reste. Nécessairement, en effet, quand un de ces principes s'isole et cesse de se subordonner, non-seulement le lieu qu'il a
quitté s'affecte, mais celui où il s'épanche
s'engorge, et cause douleur et travail. Si quelque
humeur flue hors du corps plus que ne le veut la
surabondance, cette évacuation engendre la souffrance.
Si, au contraire, c'est en dedans que se font
l'évacuation, la métastase, la séparation d'avec
les autres humeurs, on a fort à craindre, suivant
ces qui a été dit, une double souffrance, savoir, au
lieu quitté et au lieu engorgé.6

If the humors were in excess, a condition called "une
pléthore" existed. If the humors were "corrupt", a condition
called "une cacochymie" was said to exist. A condition of
"pléthore" was treated by bleeding; a condition of
"cacochymie" by a purge.

The cause of almost every illness was attributed,
directly or indirectly, to an imbalance in or to a
decaying of these humors. Ambroise Paré, (granted that he
was only a "chirurgien" and not a doctor) lists the causes
of certain fevers:

Le frisson est une concussion ou ébranlement inégal
de tout le corps qui est excité par la vertu
expultrice, laquelle tâche à se dégager d'une
quantité de matière âcre, mordante et violemment
émue . . . La rigueur semble être propre aux
fièvres bilieuses, pour ce que la bile, pour
être âcre, piquante et aisée à s'émouvoir, irrite
le nature plus violemment que les autres humeurs.
L'horreur est propre aux fièvres mélancholiques,
et le refroidissement simple aux pituiteuses, à
cause que c'est une humeur plus douce, plus pesante,
plus difficile à s'émouvoir . . . Quelques-uns ne

6Raynaud, Les Médecins au Temps de Molière, pp. 366-
367, footnote 1.
rapportent pas cela aux humeurs mais aux fumées et vapeurs qui s'élèvent des humeurs pourries, et vont frapper et attaquer le cœur.7

As always, the culprits are either the humors themselves or the vapours emitted by them.

The theory of the humors is found as often in Molière as in the works of the real doctors. In fact, one would almost believe, in reading some of his plays, that one was actually reading some contemporary medical document. If one ignores M. Macroton's stuttering and M. Bahys' rapid mumbling, one is left with a near perfect imitation of a diagnosis done by a seventeenth century French doctor:

M. MACROTON

Or, monsieur, pour venir au fait, je trouve que votre fille a une maladie chronique, et qu'elle peut périliter, si on ne lui donne du secours, d'autant que les symptômes qu'elle a sont indicatifs d'une vapeur fuligineuse et mordicante qui lui picote les membranes du cerveau. Or cette vapeur, que nous nommons en grec atmos, est causée par des humeurs putrides, tenaces, et conglutineuses, qui sont contenues dans le bas-ventre.

M. BAHYS

Et comme ces humeurs ont été là engendrées par une longue succession de temps, elles s'y sont recuites, et ont acquis cette malignité qui fume vers la région du cerveau. (L'Amour Médecin, II, v)

7 Docteur H. Folet, Molière et la Médecine de son Temps (Lille: Imprimerie L. Danel, 1895), pp. 57-58.
More pedantic, but still centred on the concept of the "humeurs" is the long diagnosis performed by the Premier Médecin of Monsieur de Pourceaugnac:

... La première, qui vient du propre vice du cerveau: la seconde, qui vient de tout le sang, fait et rendu atrabilaire: la troisième, appelée hypocondriaque, qui est la nôtre, laquelle procède du vice de quelque partie du bas-ventre, et de la région inférieure, mais particulièrement de la rate, dont la chaleur et l'inflammation porte au cerveau de notre malade beaucoup de fuligines épaisses et crasses, dont la vapeur noire et maligne cause dépravation aux fonctions de la faculté princesse, et fait la maladie dont, par notre raisonnement, il est manifestement atteint et convaincu ... la véritable source de tout le mal est ou une humeur crasse et féculente, ou une vapeur noire et grossière. (I, viii)

Even the most farcical of diagnoses, (that by Sganarelle in Le Médecin Malgré Lui) attributes the cause of the illness to: "les humeurs peccantes; c'est à dire ... humeurs peccantes; d'autant que les vapeurs formées par les exhalaisons des influences qui s'élèvent dans la région des maladies ..." (II, iv). Neither the Faculty of Paris nor Molière ignored the theory of humors -- the Faculty because of its confidence in the theory and in the "anciens" who initiated it; and Molière probably because he saw something worthy of satire in this unswerving devotion.

The third of these "cardinal" theories, that of the "chyle-liver" system, was the subject of great disagreement after 1628, the year that William Harvey theorized that the heart was the centre of the blood system and that
the blood circulated. Until then, the chyle-liver theory proposed by Galen was universally accepted. According to his theory, chyle, after having been formed in the intestines, was pumped through the mesaric veins, the portal vein and to the liver. There, the chyle became blood, (composed of the elements mentioned earlier). As the source of production of blood, the liver was also the organ from which all blood flowed in a reciprocal motion.

Harvey's heart-centred circulatory system was obviously in contradiction with the "anciens" and was thus subject to great opposition. The Faculty could not, and would not allow anyone, above all its own members, to oppose the prescribed doctrine. Doctor H. Polet describes the opposition against Harvey thus:

Riolan, dans sa controverse contre Harvey oppose au novateur l'existence de prétendues anastomoses artério-veineuses. Il ne les a point vues; au moins il ne le dit pas. Mais Galien les a décrites; cela suffit. "An astomoses mutuas venarum et arteriarum nemo potest inficiari, cum Galenus id scripserit, experimentis demonstrarit . . . ."

Primerose, autre adversaire de Harvey, lui dit: "Pourquoi prétends-tu qu'Aristote a refusé un coeur aux petits animaux? Voudrais-tu faire entendre que tu sais ce qu'Aristote ignorait? Aristote a tout observé et personne ne doit oser venir après lui".

---

8 Riolan (1577-1657): one of the "doyens" of the Faculty, leader of the anti-Harvey movement.

9 Polet, Molière et la Médecine de son Temps, pp. 80-81.
In two letters, Gui Patin expressed virtually the same feelings; in the first, he stated:

Pour leurs vaisseaux lymphatiques, je n'en dis mot, je n'y connais rien et ne m'en soucie point, ad majora et ad meliora propero; tous ces messieurs-là sont trop curieux de telles nouveautés. Il voudroit mieux qu'ils étudiasent la science des anciens dans Hippocrate, Galien et Fernel; s'ils ont des querelles qu'ils les accordent.10

and, in the second, he showed himself to be even more obstinate and outspoken:

Si M. Duryer ne savait que mentir et la circulation du sang, il ne savoit que deux choses dont je hais fort la première et ne me soucie guère de la seconde . . . S'il revient, je le mènerai par d'autres chemins plus importants en la bonne médecine que la prétendue circulation.11

With such attitudes being frequently expressed, it is of little surprise to see them parodied in Le Malade Imaginaire when M. Diafoirus praised his imbecilic son Thomas:

Mais sur toute chose, ce qui me plaît en lui, et en quoi il suit mon exemple, c'est qu'il s'attache aveuglement aux opinions de nos anciens, et que jamais il n'a voulu comprendre ni écouter les raisons et les expériences des prétendues découvertes de notre siècle touchant la circulation du sang, et autres opinions de même farine. (II, v)

"Jamais il n'a voulu comprendre ni écouter" -- "je n'y connais rien et ne m'en soucie point": Diafoirus' and


11Ibid., I, 513.
Patin's attitudes are most strikingly similar.

It must be noted, however, that by 1673 (i.e. *Le Malade Imaginaire*) most of the doctors, even in the Faculty, had accepted Harvey's theory of circulation. Only the most stubborn, the rigorous traditionalists (like Gui Patin) still opposed Harvey.\(^\text{12}\) It would be these diehards that bore the brunt of Molière's satire -- a satire richly deserved -- a satire that scarcely needed exaggeration to produce its comic effect.

Even more bitterly contested than Harvey's theory of circulation was the one hundred year feud that raged over the use of antimony (*"L'antimoine,\(^\text{13}\) Le Vin Évêque,*

\[^{12}\text{As late as 1663 a thesis was presented at the Faculty: its topic "An a sanguine impulsum cor salit?" ("Does the impulse of the blood make the heart beat?") -- its conclusion -- YES!}\]

\[^{13}\text{An interesting proposal on the etymology of the word Antimoine is found in Millespierre's: *La vie quotidienne des Médecins au temps de Molière:*}\]
Le Plomb Sacré, etc.) as an emetic. Used for centuries as an emetic (and also as a cosmetic) the use of antimony was first officially banned in 1566 by the Faculty of Paris and by the Parlement:

"Décret de la Faculté"

Tout le collège de la Faculté de médecine ayant été convoqué à l'effet de porter un jugement pour servir de règle relativement à l'antimoine, il a été décidé, d'après l'autorité de tous ceux qui se sont illustrés en médecine, et pour les raisons déjà exposées devant M. le procureur général, que l'antimoine est une substance délétère, et, comme tel, doit être classé parmi les simples de nature vénéneuse; que, de plus, il n'existe pas de préparation qui puisse le corriger, de manière à en permettre l'usage sans danger. Décrété aux Écoles de médecine, le troisième jour des kalendes d'août de l'année 1566.

This decree was unanimously reconfirmed by the Faculty in 1615.

Despite the decree, however, a considerable number of doctors adopted the use of antimony in the form of a "vin émétique", wrote theses, pamphlets and even poems in its favour\textsuperscript{14} and vigourously campaigned for legalisation of

\textsuperscript{14}Both sides used poetry in their favour:

\textbf{PRO}

Précieux élixir, céleste magnésie,
Âme de la nature, et ses plus grands efforts,
Esprit dont la vertu réssuscite les morts.

\textbf{CON}

Détestable élixir, funeste magnésie.
of its use. Those who did were condemned outright by the steadfast Faculty members. Gui Patin gives an interesting and prejudiced account of the situation in many of his letters. In one, written in 1651, he reports: "On tient ici pour charlatans ceux qui donnent de l'antimoine ou vin émétique; il y a eu quelques-uns des nôtres qui s'en échappent, mais ils sont haïs et méprisés".15 Six years later his attitude remains the same:

Il est vrai qu'il y a un an que nous voulûmes empêcher qu'une thèse ne fût soutenue, ergo initio pleuritidis lenior purgatio? mais nous perdîmes en nombre ... Quoi qu'il en soit, la thèse, très mauvaise et très dangereuse, fut soutenue à leur grand déshonneur; car le président, qui est un fou et qui sert de marotte à tout le parti antimonial y fut même sifflé pour ses impertinences et mauvaises réponses.16

Peste de la nature et de ses doux efforts,
Qui peuple tous les jours le royaume des morts.

On compterait plutôt combien dans un printemps,
Guenaut et l'antimoine ont fait mourir de gens.
(Boileau)


16Patin, Lettres de Gui Patin, I, 220.
One of the first Faculty members to publish (in 1652) a work in favour of antimony, one Jean Chartier, was immediately banned from the Faculty, had his licence to practise revoked, and ended up in prison (barred from practising medicine, Chartier no longer had a source of income, and was thus imprisoned for failure to pay outstanding debts).

The next "victim" was Eusèbe Renaudot. After publishing *L'Antimoine Justifié* et *L'Antimoine Triomphant* he was denounced by Gui Patin as "un jeune présomptueux", "un âme brouillon" and "un âne dégrossi". A former dean of the Faculty, in reply to *L'Antimoine Justifié*, published a slanderous work condemning the young Renaudot. The titles of the book's chapters give a good indication of the slanderous and vicious attitudes taken by many of the enemies of antimony:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapitre I</th>
<th>Des Calomnies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapitre II</td>
<td>Des Mensonges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapitre III</td>
<td>Des Vanités</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapitre IV</td>
<td>Des Flatteries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapitre V</td>
<td>Des Gausseries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapitre VI</td>
<td>Des Contradictions etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those doctors who prescribed antimony were often denounced by Gui Patin as murderers:

17 The son of Théophraste Renaudot, one of the more famous seventeenth century French doctors. More will be said later in this chapter about the difficulties faced by this family.
Depuis quelques jours est ici mort une très riche femme veuve d'un fameux partisan: c'est Mme de Bretonvilliers. Elle eut quelque tremblement et se plaignit de la tête; on la mit sur un lit... on lui donna un lavement laxatif dans lequel on ajouta quatre onces de vin émétique... Je tiens pour certain que l'antimoine l'a tuée... Les quatre opérateurs furent Vignon, Guénaut, B. des Fougérais, et le gazetier;18 c'est le premier des quatre qui m'a conté tout cela aujourd'hui, non sans avoir le sentiment de la faute commise. Et voilà comment MM. les antimoniaux se jouent de la vie des hommes!19

On and on raged the feud until 1658, when Louis XIV, aged 20, recovered from a near fatal fever (possibly typhoid) after Guénaut had administered some "vin émétique". Whether or not the antimony played an important part in curing the monarch,20 its acceptance was assured. In 1666 the Parlement passed legislation in favour of the drug, provided that it be prepared and administered with the greatest of care.21

18 "le gazetier" -- Patin's name for Théophraste Renaudot.


20 Gui Patin, opposing antimony to the last, attributed the king's recovery to: "son innocence, son âge fort et robuste, neuf bonnes saignées et les prières des gens de bien comme nous".

21 Rightly so -- If properly used, a small amount of antimony would serve as an emetic. If improperly prepared, however, (i.e. if not completely purified) antimony would remain mixed with a certain amount of arsenic (an element in the same chemical group) which could and did cause
It is perhaps surprising, considering the length and bitterness of the feud over the use of antimony, that Molière only mentioned the "vin émétique" twice in his plays; in Dom Juan (1665), and in Le Médecin Malgré Lui.

due to death. Thus, Patin and his supporters were somewhat justified (though they probably didn't realize why) in their condemnation of the "vin émétique".

22

SGANARELLE

... Cependant, vous voyez, depuis un temps, que le vin émétique fait brûire ses fuseaux. Ses miracles ont converti les plus incrédules esprits; et il n'y a pas trois semaines que j'en ai vu, moi qui vous parle, un effet merveilleux.

DOM JUAN

Et quel?

SGANARELLE

Il y avait un homme qui depuis six jours, était à l'agonie; on ne savait plus que lui ordonner, et tous les remèdes ne faisaient rien; on s'avisâ à la fin de lui donner de l'émétique.

DOM JUAN

Il réchappa, n'est-ce pas?

SGANARELLE

Non, il mourut.

DOM JUAN

L'effet est admirable.
(1666). In both cases, if the characters' speeches are representative of the author's personal convictions, it would seem that Molière opposed the use of antimony. This would be in agreement both with what Molière was reported to have told Louis XIV, namely: "Sire, nous causons ensemble; il m'ordonne des remèdes, je ne les fais point et je guéris", and with his policy (stated by Béralde in Le Malade Imaginaire) of letting nature perform such cures as necessary -- not of relying on drugs. But even so, it is surprising that Molière didn't take more

---

SGANARELLE

Comment! il y avait six jours entiers qu'il ne pouvait mourir et cela le fit mourir tout d'un coup. Voulez-vous rien de plus efficace?

(Act III, Scene i)

THIBAUT

Il velait li bailler d'eune certaine drogue qu'on appelle du vin amétile; mais j'ai-z-eu peur franchement que ça l'envoyit à patres; et l'an dit que ces gros médecins tuont je ne sais combien de monde avec cette invention.

(Act III, Scene ii)

24"Il" refers to Mauvillain; Molière's doctor and personal friend -- and one of the chief advocates for the use of antimony.
direct advantage of the feud in his comedies. Perhaps he deferred to do so in favour of his personal friendship with Mauvillain. Perhaps he didn't consider it wise considering the king's recovery after his being treated with antimony. But one must also remember that Molière only made one specific reference to the feud over the theory of blood circulation. It would therefore seem that Molière was more concerned with ridiculing the quarrels on a general, rather than a specific plan.

Following this procedure, Molière scarcely makes mention of either of two other longstanding quarrels: that between the doctors and the apothecaries, and that between the doctors and the "barbiers-chirurgiens".

Though the apothecaries, upon receiving their licence had sworn to obey the prescriptions ordered by the doctors and not to prescribe anything themselves, they were often wont to do both. The doctors, in turn, accused them of overcharging for their services. Gui Patin warned a new doctor: "Neantmoins, il faut savoir quelque chose des compositions, de peur que les apothicaires, artis nostrae scandale et opprobria, ne puissent prendre barre sur vous"26 and claimed that the people of Paris were tired

26 Triaire, Lettres de Gui Patin, I, 515.
of being the victims of the apothecaries' avarice:

C'en est fait des apothicaires; le peuple est lassé de leur tyrannie barbaresque et de leur forfanterie bézoardesque... et que nous ne voyons plus chez eux faire litière de juleps, apozèmes, poudres, opiates, et tablettes cordiales, qui ne servaient la plupart qu'à faire durer les maladies, à échauffer, dégoûter, et coûter beaucoup aux malades.27

Perhaps Molière was not far from the truth when he had Argan rebel against the expensive bill presented to him by Monsieur Fleurant:

Oui; mais monsieur Fleurant, ce n'est pas tout que d'être civil; il faut être aussi raisonnable, et ne pas écorcher les malades... Ah! monsieur Fleurant, c'est se moquer; il faut vivre avec les malades... Ah! monsieur Fleurant, tout doux, s'il vous plaît; si vous en usez comme cela, on ne voudra plus être malade.

(Le Malade Imaginaire, I, i)

In two months, Argan had submitted to thirty-two enemas at a cost of 20 to 30 "sols" each. According to the Milhauds,28 a certain apothecary administered the incredible total of 2190 enemas to one of his patients in a period of three years (though at a price of but two sols, six deniers


per enema). No wonder both Argan and the real patient had trouble sitting still for such expensive treatment!

Apothecaries also appeared, in brief roles, during the farcical "cystère-chase" scene of Monsieur de Pourceaugnac (II, ii), during the scene of praise for a certain doctor in the same play (I, v), and during the final ballet of Le Malade Imaginaire. In neither case, however, is the quarrel between the doctors and apothecaries mentioned. 29

Nowhere in any of Molière's plays is the feud between the barbiers-chirurgiens and the doctors portrayed. The only appearance they make in any of Molière's play is in the final ballet of Le Malade Imaginaire, along with the apothecaries, at the investiture ceremony of the new doctors. Actually, they would have no role whatsoever in the real ceremony. Molière, in search of comic exaggeration, can be forgiven this slight mistake.

Molière did give greater importance in his plays to the quarreling between the doctors of the Faculty and the "foreign" (those not licensed by the Faculty of Paris) or travelling doctors. The "foreign" doctors and their

29 Except in the first speech in Monsieur de Pourceaugnac, (I, v):

L'APOTHECAIRE

Non, monsieur; ce n'est pas moi qui suis le médecin; à moi n'appartient pas cet honneur, et je ne suis qu'apothicaire, apothicaire indigne, pour vous servir.
remedies were the targets of the third vows of obedience taken by the new doctors at their investiture, both in reality and in Molière's Le Malade Imaginaire. The Faculty's text read: "Quod totis viribus contendes adversus medicos illicito practicantes, nulli parcendo, cujuscunque ordinis aut conditionis fuerit", and Molière's:

De non jamais te servire  
De remediis aucunis  
Quam de ceux seulement doctae Facultatis,  
Maladus dut-il crevare  
Et mori de suo malo.

The scorn for the "foreign" doctors is all too evident in Gui Patin's writings:

On dit qu'en Hollande le nombre des malades est effroyable. Ils meurent tous, nonobstant le fréquent usage des sudorifiques. Où est-ce que ces gens-là ont appris la médecine? Saigner très peu, ou point du tout; purger peu et avec des poudres, des pilules et de l'antimoine, et puis faire suer des malades qui ont les vaisseaux, le ventre et l'habitude du corps pleins d'ordures et de beaucoup d'impuretés! N'est-ce pas là être des bourreaux plutôt que des médecins.30

Not only were the foreign doctors (those from a different country), condemned -- those from Montpellier, the other leading medical faculty in France, were also despised:

Il est certain que pour bien réussir en la science et en l'exercice de la médecine, il faut beaucoup d'esprit, un long et continuel estude, un grand jugement, beaucoup d'expérience et bien raisonnée, la conférence et l'instruction des savants maistres. Toutes ces choses, (ajoute-t-il), se trouvent pleinement dans les médecins de l'eschole de Paris, au lieu que ces prétendus médecins de Montpellier sont destitués de tous ou la plupart de ces avantages.31

"Ces prétendus médecins" included such famous people as Mauvillain and Théopraste Renaudot.

The presence of these foreign doctors, and their incessant quarreling with the Faculty is revealed in Molière's L'Amour Médecin:

M. DES FONANDRES

Sans doute. Il faut toujours garder les formalités quoi qu'il puisse arriver.

M. TOMÈS

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 voulu 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 voulu point démordre, et la malade mourut bravement pendant cette contestation. (II, iii)

31 Millepierres, La Vie Quotidienne des Médecins au Temps de Molière, p. 30.
No consultation was possible, even at the cost of a patient's life, because of the presence of "un médecin de dehors". This is without doubt exaggerated, but it still clearly shows the Faculty's hatred for the "foreign" doctors.

Perhaps the most unfortunate victim of this type of persecution by the Faculty was the family of Théophraste Renaudot. After brilliant studies at Montpellier, Théophraste came to Paris and obtained an important post in Cardinal Richelieu's medical entourage. Because of his background at Montpellier, his support of antimony and the free consultation service he set up, Théophraste was consistently persecuted by the Faculty, and slandered by Gui Patin.

Until the death of Richelieu, his protector, Renaudot enjoyed a certain degree of indemnity from the effort by the Faculty and by Patin to destroy him. Gui Patin wrote: "Si le Gazetier n'était pas soutenu de l'Eminence en tant que nebulo hebdomaderius (fripon hebdomadaire) nous lui ferions un procès criminel; au bout

32 And yet, the above quotation from Molière is echoed in one of Gui Patin's letters concerning a woman who had died: "Elle a été ouverte; on lui a trouvé un fort mauvais foie. Valot disait qu'elle était malade de la pierre, Guénaut disait que c'était un abcès interne, quelque part alentour du dos; et tandis que les médecins s'entre-contre-disent, les malades meurent".

33 Not to forget France's first newspaper La Gazette, whose publication was initiated by Renaudot to inform the
duquel il y aurait un tombeau, un bourreau et tout au moins une amende honorable: mais il faut obéir au temps".  

When Richelieu died, Patin took full advantage of the opportunity, denouncing and slandering him at every turn. Under his influence, the Faculty had the provost of Paris serve him with an "inhibition et défenses au sieur Renaudot et à ses adhérents et adjoints, soy-disants, d'exercer cy-après la médecine, ni faire aucunes conférences, consultations ny assemblées dedans le bureau d'adresses ou autres lieux de cette ville ou faubourgs ni de traiter ou pouser aucuns malades soulz quelque prétexte que ce soit". Trial after trial followed with Renaudot, in most cases, the loser.

But not only Théophraste himself was persecuted. His two sons Eusèbe and Isaac had to legally disavow their father and all his business affairs before they were accepted as "bacheliers". From 1642 to 1648, the Faculty refused, under one pretext or another, to confer their degrees. Only after the Parlement officially ordered the

the populace of employment opportunities, local news etc. -- hence Patin's referals to him as "le gazetier".

34Millepierres, La Vie Quotidienne des Médecins au Temps de Molière, p. 160.

35Ibid., p. 163.
acceptance of the two brothers did the Faculty soften its position -- not, however, to the point of granting the full privileges due them. Being associated with, or related to a "foreign doctor" was crime enough to justify severe penalty. 36

But if the Faculty was overly severe with certain worthy "foreign" doctors, it did have some justification for its severe measures, for many charlatans came to Paris, posing as doctors from the various foreign universities, bringing ineffective and often dangerous drug-like concoctions. Again, Gui Patin serves as a chronicler of the situation:

Les médecins étrangers voulant avoir de l'emploi se discent chymistes, sparyriques, Paracelsistes, se vantent de guérir les grandes maladies sans saigner, d'avoir de grands secrets contre toute sorte de maux, etc.; mais aujourd'hui nous voyons ici des étrangers très ignorants et purs charlatans qui n'ont point de honte, et disent effrontément qu'ils sont médecins de la Faculté de Montpellier. 37

Such charlatans are often found in Molière's plays. In Le Malade Imaginaire, Toinette disguises herself as a

36 It must be noted, however, that after the quarrel over antimony, Mauvillain, who had been educated at Montpellier, did become dean of the Faculty; but only after he too had suffered several setbacks.

37 Triaire, Lettres de Gui Patin, I, 504.
travelling doctor and claims: "Je suis médecin passager, qui vais de ville en ville, de province en province, de royaume en royaume, pour chercher d'illustres matières à ma capacité, pour trouver des malades dignes de m'occuper, capables d'exercer les grands et beaux secrets que j'ai trouvés dans la médecine" (III, x). In *Le Médecin Volant*, one of Molière's first plays, Sganarelle was introduced as: "le plus habile médecin du monde, un homme qui vient des pays étrangers, qui sait les plus beaux secrets" (I, iv). Molière would most certainly have met such men in his early days with L'Illustre Théâtre and later in Paris with his full troupe.

One such charlatan, an Italian by the name of Orvieto, established himself in Paris, bribed twelve members of the Faculty (including Renaudot, Guénaut, Des Fougerais and Mauvillain38) and with their approbation marketed his wonder drug "orviétan". It is to a merchant of orviétan that Sganarelle turns after the doctor's failure to cure his daughter:

---

38 As a result, these twelve doctors were, according to Gui Patin: "chassés de la compagnie par un décret solennel". They were, however, reinstated after apologizing to the Faculty and paying a fine.
Il faut que j'aille acheter de l'orviétan, et que je lui en fasse prendre: l'orviétan est un remède dont beaucoup de gens se sont bien trouvés.
Holà! ... Holà! monsieur, je vous prie de me donner une boîte de votre orviétan, que je m'en vais vous payer.

L'OPERATEUR

L'or de tous les climats qu'entoure l'Océan
Peut-il jamais payer ce secret d'importance?
Mon remède guérit, par sa rare excellence,
Plus de maux qu'on n'en peut nombrer dans
[tout un an:

La gale,
La rogne,
La teigne,
La fièvre,
La peste,
La goutte,
Vérole,
Descente,
Rougeole.
O grande puissance
De l'orviétan! (L'Amour Médecin, II, vi, vii)

Still others relied on astrology, talismans, and other occult devices. Thus, Clitandre's claim: "Monsieur, mes remèdes sont différents de ceux des autres. Ils ont l'émétique, les saignées, les médecines et les lavements; mais moi, je guéris par des paroles, par des sons, par des lettres, par des talismans, et par des anneaux constellés" (L'Amour Médecin, III, v).

All the travelling doctors, charlatans and "chemistes" were despised and denounced by the Faculty. Even theses were presented as condemnations of these men: "Mon fils répondit hier de sa première quodlibataire. Je suis ravi
de ce qu'il contenta la compagnie. Je vous envoie six de
ses thèses dont voici la conclusion: Donc sont ridicules,
contournés et chimériques les principes des chemistes". 39

But not all the quarreling was with the "foreign"
doctors, the chirurgiens, the apothecaries and the charla-
tans. According to many authentic sources (including the
letters of Gui Patin) and to Molière's plays, there was
also much quarreling among the doctors of the Faculty over
diagnoses and cures. Gui Patin, never hesitant himself to
enter a quarrel, reports and comments on the death of
Mazarin:

Ce matin, le Mazarin a reçu l'extrême-onction, et de
là est tombé dans une grande faiblesse; il a reproché
à Valot qu'il est cause de sa mort: hier à deux
heures dans le bois de Vincennes quatre de ses
médecins, savoir Guénaut, Valot, Brayer et des
Fourgerais alterquaient ensemble et ne s'accordaient
pas de l'espèce de maladie dont le malade mourait:
Brayer dit que la rate est gâtée, Guénaut dit que
c'est le foie, Valot dit que c'est le poumon et
qu'il y a de l'eau dans la poitrine, des Fourgerais
dit que c'est un abcès du mesentère, et qu'il a vidé
du pus, qu'il en a vu dans les selles, et en ce cas
il a vu ce que pas un des autres n'a vu. Ne voilà
pas d'habiles gens! Ce sont les fourberies ordinaires
des empiriques et des médecins de cour, qu'on fait
suppléer à l'ignorance. Cependant, voilà où sont
réduits la plupart des princes! 40

39Patin, Correspondance de Gui Patin (extraits),
p. 12.

40Ibid., p. 364.
Five years after Mazarin's death, Molière capitalized on that final consultation, placing characters based on the real court doctors onto the stage in Act II, Scenes iv and v of L'Amour Médecin. There can be no mistaking the satire. Molière gave the role of M. Des Fonadrès (who represented M. Des Fougerais) to Béjart -- both of whom had a characteristic limp. Macroton, the slow speaker and Bahis, the rapid mumbler, represented Guénaud and Esprit respectively -- each had, according to several sources, these singular speech patterns. Valot, and his stage equivalent, Tomès, were both avid partisans of the "saignée". Gui Patin even claimed that they wore unmistakable masks, but this must be questioned, for in his report, Patin mistook both the name of the theatre where the play was presented and the actual title of the play.

Earlier in the same play, Molière had Tomès and Des Fonandrès report another quarrel:

M. TOMÈS

Mais à propos, quel parti prenez vous dans la querelle des deux médecins Théophraste and Artémius?

---

41 Even their names, derived from the Greek language characterized each patricular doctor: Des Fonandrès signifies man-killer; Macroton, slow speaker; Bahis, rapid mumbler; Tomès, the bleeder.
car c'est une affaire qui partage tout notre corps.

M. DES FONANDRÈS

Moi je suis pour Artémius

M. TOMÈS

Et moi aussi. Ce n'est pas que son avis, comme on a vu, n'aît tué le malade, et que celui de Théophraste ne fût beaucoup meilleur assurément; mais enfin, il a tort dans les circonstances, et il ne devait pas être d'un autre avis que son ancien. (II, iii)

Once again, it is the rule of the "ancien" that carries the weight.

But simply ridiculing the quarreling between the members of the medical profession did not satisfy Molière. In selecting M. Filerin as a mediator for the quarreling doctors, Molière accomplished one of his most violent attacks against the medical profession -- an attack that is most thinly disguised as a reasonable attempt at conciliation of the dispute. Conciliation it may be -- but for entirely selfish and abusive reasons on the part of M. Filerin. His reasoning proceeds as follows:

N'avez-vous point de honte, messieurs, de montrer si peu de prudence, pour des gens de votre âge, et de vous être querellés comme de jeunes étourdis? Ne voyez-vous pas bien quel tort ces sortes de querelles nous font parmi le monde? et n'est-ce pas assez que les savants voient les contrariétés et les dissensions qui sont entre nos auteurs et nos anciens maîtres, sans découvrir encore au peuple, par nos débats et nos querelles, la forfanterie de notre art? ... mais enfin toutes ces disputes ne valent rien pour la médecine.
Puisque le ciel nous fait la grâce que, depuis tant de siècles, on demeure infatué de nous, ne désabusons point les hommes avec nos cabales extravagantes, et profitons de leur sottise le plus doucement que possible. ... Conservons-nous donc dans le degré d'estime où leur faiblesse nous a mis, et soyons de concert auprès de malades pour nous attribuer les heureux succès de la maladie, et rejeter sur la nature toutes les bêtises de notre art. N'allons point, dis-je, détruire sottement les heureuses préventions d'une erreur qui donne du pain à tant de personnes. (III, i)

Having thus resolved this dispute, and all future disputes, with such a "reasonable" position; Filerin's role terminates.

In exposing the various quarrels (e.g. antimony, circulation, the Mazarin affair, etc.) and in stressing the Faculty's unchanging devotion to the theories of the "anciens" (the basis for their opposition to the new theories) Molière accurately described the contemporary medical situation and even presented many of the criticisms that were eventually used by those doctors who sought to reform and update the Faculty of Paris.
CHAPTER III

DIAGNOSES AND TREATMENTS

Just as the Faculty of Paris had obliged most of its members to conform to the theories of the "anciens", it also encouraged certain methods of diagnosis and strongly favoured certain treatments. Some of the methods of diagnosis are still practised today. The same can be said for some of the treatments.

One of the most widely accepted methods of diagnosis -- that of reasoning on the causes of the particular disease, "raisonner sur le mal", -- has long since been abandoned because of its very subjective nature. Modern research facilities have prevailed, enabling accurate and objective diagnoses. During the doctors' consultation in Molière's L'Amour Médecin we encounter the then popular and accepted method of reasoning on the causes of the disease:

MONSIEUR TOMÈS

Monsieur, nous avons raisonné sur la maladie de votre fille, et mon avis à moi, est que cela procède d'une grande chaleur de sang; ainsi je conclus à la saigner le plus tôt que vous pourrez.

M. DES FONANDRÈS

Et moi, je dis que sa maladie est un pourriture d'humeurs causée par une trop grande répétition: ainsi je conclus à lui donner de l'emétique.
M. MACROTON

Monsieur, dans ces matières-là, il faut procéder avec circonspection, et ne rien faire, comme on dit, à la volée; . . .

M. BAHYS

. . . il s'agit de raisonner auparavant comme il faut, de peser mûrement les choses, de regarder le tempérament des gens, d'examiner les causes de la maladie, et de voir les remèdes qu'on y doit apporter. (II, iv, v)

The practice of reasoning on the disease dates back to the time of the "anciens", Hippocrates, Galen and Aristotle. Although they did reason on the causes of the diseases, they based their reasoning on experimentation and on careful observation of their patients. The doctors of the seventeenth century, however, were often content to base their diagnosis, not on the particular patient's symptoms, but on the diagnoses proposed by Hippocrates or the other "anciens" and on very subjective opinion. Thus, the Premier Médecin's diagnosis in Monsieur de Pourceaugnac:

Je l'appelle mélancolie hypocondriaque, pour la distinguer des deux autres; car le célèbre Galien établit doctement, à son ordinaire, trois espèces de cette maladie. . . . Qu'aussi ne soit, pour diagnostique incontestable de ce que je dis, vous n'avez qu'à considérer ce grand sérieux que vous voyez, cette tristesse accompagnée de crainte et de défiance, signes pathognomoniques et individuels de cette maladie, si bien marquée chez le divin vieillard Hippocrate; cette physionomie, ces yeux rouges et hagards, cette grande barbe, cette
habitude du corps, menue, grêle, noire et velue, lesquels signes le dénotent très affecté de cette maladie . . . Tout ceci supposé, puisqu'une maladie bien connue est à demi guérie, car ignoti nulla est curatio morbi, il ne vous sera pas difficile de convenir des remèdes que nous devons faire à monsieur. (I, viii)

-- a perfect example of a pedantic and subjective diagnosis "qui vous donne des mots pour des raisons".

Just as the Premier Médecin was able to diagnose a serious case of "mélancolie hypocondriaque" from such signs as "cette physionomie, ces yeux rouges et hagards, cette grosse barbe etc.", so was a real doctor, M. Fernel (often referred to as the French Galen) able to diagnose stomach ulcers from the following symptoms: "Il y a souvent douleur; parfois cependant le mal évolue indolore. Le malade est fatigué par un flux de ventre et par des vomissements. Fièvre lente et continue avec pouls fréquent. L'appetit et la digestion languissent. Le corps se nourrit mal . . .".¹ Neither the symptoms discerned by the Premier Médecin nor those by Fernel could be described as conclusive evidence of the presence of either disease.

In all fairness though, it must be admitted that the doctors in the seventeenth century had no instruments

¹Folet, Molière et la Médecine de Son Temps, p. 69.
that would permit accurate diagnosis of internal disorders; the microscope, for example, had just been invented, its use was not widespread. The doctors had to depend almost entirely on their five senses for the diagnosis.

The doctors did, however, rely heavily on two procedures which are still important today in the diagnosing of illness, the pulse rate, and the examination of the patient's urine. Few symptoms have ever been as systematically classified, though in a most subjective manner, into as many categories and sub-categories as was the pulse rate. Fernel claimed to be able to distinguish pulses that were "longus, latus, altus, magnus, brevis, angustus, humilis, mollis, durus, plenus, tardus, gracilis, capricans, aequaliter vel inaequaliter inaequalis, dicrotus, undosus, vermicularis...". Other doctors classified pulses as "égal-inégal, inégal-égal, redoublé, capricieux, ondoyant, vermiculant etc.". Molière exaggerated little when he had the Diafoirus' diagnose Argan's pulse:

M. DIAFOIRUS

Allons, Thomas, prenez l'autre bras de monsieur, pour voir si vous saurez porter un bon jugement de son pouls. Quid dicis?

---

2 Folet, op. cit., pp. 76-77.

3 Millespierres, La Vie Quotidienne des Médecins au Temps de Molière, p. 46.
THOMAS DIAFOIRUS

Dico que le pouls de monsieur est le pouls d'un homme qui ne se porte point bien.

M. DIAFOIRUS

Bon.

T. DIAFOIRUS

Qu'il est duriuscule, pour ne pas dire dur.

M. DIAFOIRUS

Fort bien.

T. DIAFOIRUS

Reprochant.

M. DIAFOIRUS

Bene.

T. DIAFOIRUS

Et même un peu caprisant.

M. DIAFOIRUS

Optime.

T. DIAFOIRUS

Ce qui marque une intempérie dans le parenchyme splénique, c'est-à-dire la rate.

(Le Malade Imaginaire, II, vi)
Molière did, however, exaggerate the powers of the pulse analysis, for obvious comic purpose, in Le Médecin Malgré Lui:

SGANARELLE (à Lucinde)

Donnez-moi votre bras.

(à Géronte)

Voilà un pouls qui marque que votre fille est muette. (II, iv)

Another Sganarelle, that of Le Médecin Volant, performed the same service -- he took the father's pulse and declared: "Le sang du père et de la fille ne sont qu'une même chose; et par l'altération de celui du père, je puis connaître la maladie de la fille" (I, iv). There is no question of satire here -- it is pure farce.

This same Sganarelle also asked to see the patient's urine. On receiving it, he analyzed it as:

SGANARELLE

Voilà de l'urine qui marque grande chaleur, grande inflammation dans les intestins: elle n'est pas tant mauvaise pourtant.

GORGIBUS

Hé quoi? monsieur, vous l'avalez?

SGANARELLE

Ne vous étonnez pas de cela; . . . je l'avale, parce qu'avec le goût je discerne bien mieux la cause et les suites de la maladie. (I, iv)
Although this too may seem to be pure farce, it has been recorded that some real doctors actually did drink the patient's urine in order to establish their diagnosis. Usually, however, they limited themselves to the examination of its colour, odour, viscosity, etc.

Excrement was also analyzed in the cause of diagnosis. Sometimes the doctors or apothecaries sniffed the odour; at other times they heated it until only certain deposits remained. In order to form his diagnosis, Sganarelle asked Géronte:

SGANARELLE

Va-t-elle où vous savez?

GÉRONTE

Oui

SGANARELLE

Copieusement?

GÉRONTE

Je n'entends rien à cela.

SGANARELLE

La matière est-elle louable?

(Le Médecin Malgré Lui, II, iv)

---

Argan, after dozens of laxatives, was also most concerned:

ARGAN

Mon lavement d'aujourd'hui a-t-il bien opéré?

TOINETTE

Votre lavement?

ARGAN

Oui. Ai-je bien fait de la bile?

TOINETTE

Ma foi! je ne me mêle point de ces affaires-là; c'est à monsieur Fleurant à y mettre le nez, puis qu'il en a le profit. (Le Malade Imaginaire, I, ii)

Here again, Molière exaggerates little. Much of the Journal de la Santé du Roi is devoted to the analysis of the king's dejections.

With so few reliable methods of diagnosis, it is of little wonder that the doctors of Molière's era had great difficulty in accurately diagnosing an illness and in proposing suitable treatment.

No matter what the illness, with the exception of the plague, most of the Faculty's doctors would prescribe one or more of three trusted treatments: the enema (le clystère), bleeding (la saignée) and the purge (la purge). In order to pass his oral examination, the Bachelieux, in the Troisième Intermède of Le Malade
Imaginaire had to propose cures for different diseases including "hydropisia, pulmonicis, asmaticis, grandam fievram" etc. In each case he suggested:

\[
\text{Clysterium donare,}\hfill \\
\text{Postea seignare,}\hfill \\
\text{Ensuitta purgare.}\hfill
\]

If no improvement in the patient's condition was noted, the procedure had to be repeated: "Reseignare, repurgare, et reclysterisare". Such a prescription guaranteed the acceptance of the Bachelierus into the Faculty's ranks:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Bene, bene, bene, bene respondere.} \\
\text{Dignus, dignus est entrare} \\
\text{In nostro docto corpore.}
\end{align*}
\]

In having the Bachelierus propose those cures, Molière was but following the examples set by the real doctors. A case of paralysis necessitated the following treatment according to Gui Patin:

\[
\text{Je la souhaite de tout mon coeur, comme aussi que Monsieur vostre père soit bientost quitte de sa paralysie, pour laquelle, en cette saison trop humide, il faut le saigner hardiment du bras qui n'est pas du costé malade, et mëme un peu du bras malade, sine ullo metu, puis, le purger plusieurs fois de senë, de sirop de roses palles . . . .5}
\]

The case history of the treatment for a severe cold is also found in Patin's writings:

---

5 Triaire, Lettres de Gui Patin, I, 672.
Almost anything from colds in a three month old child to paralysis in an elderly man could be, and were treated by a combination of those three cures.

Because of the very nature of the treatment, the enema was not often mentioned in the literature of the seventeenth century. Molière, however, transformed the "clystère" into a comic device. It appears on stage for the first time in Act II, Scene iii of Monsieur de Pourceaugnac:

L'APOTHICAIRE

C'est un petit clystère, un petit clystère, un petit clystère, bénin, bénin; il est bénin, bénin; là, prenez, prenez, prenez, monsieur; c'est pour déterger, pour déterger, déterger. (II, iii)

It is up to M. de Pourceaugnac to use his hat and his chair to defend himself against the apothecary and the "clystère" -- an excellent burlesque scene.

The enema reappears in Le Malade Imaginaire, in Act III, Scenes iv and v when M. Fleurant tries to administer it to Argan. Béralde prevents Fleurant from

---

doing so and accuses him: "Allez monsieur; on voit bien que vous n'avez pas accoutumé de parler à des visages" (III, iv).

Whenever the enema did appear on stage in Molière's plays, it did so in fulfilling the role of a device for provoking laughter, for the purposes of farce. Nevertheless, even such a role helps reflect reality -- the "clystère" was one of the popular treatments used during Molière's era.

Even more popular with the seventeenth century doctors was the process of bleeding, "la saignée". "La saignée" was considered advantageous, not only as a cure for sickness, but also as a preventive measure to guard against disease. Gui Patin recommended "cinq ou six bonnes saignées de précaution par an". Sganarelle, conforming to Patin's doctrine tried to convince Géronte that: "Il faut se faire aussi saigner pour la maladie à venir" (Le Médecin Malgré Lui, II, iv).

The Faculty, under the direction of Riolan, seconded by Patin, constantly praised the virtues of bleeding -- "ce divin remède". Riolan expressed his support of this treatment, and of the Parisian doctors:

"Il n'y a guère que les médecins de Paris, qui savent jusqu'à quel point il faut en user". They believed that even the gravest cases could be so treated -- one could even lose up to one half of the body's blood supply with no adverse effects. Gui Patin, for example, prescribed "la saignée" almost without hesitation:

Ce remède ... hardiment et heureusement réitéré au commencement des maladies, est un des principaux mystères de notre métier ... Nous guérissons nos malades après quatre-vingts ans par la saignée, et saignons aussi fort heureusement les enfants de deux et trois mois, sans aucun inconvénient: j'en pourrais montrer vivants dans Paris, saignés en ce bas âge, plus de deux cents. 8

Elsewhere, he exultantly reports having bled a seven year old child thirteen times in ten days, a two month old child, and even another child only three days old. Other sources tell of a man being bled thirty-two times for a fever; of a man submitting to the same treatment sixty-four times for rheumatism. 9 The "saignée" was nearly the perfect "cure-all" of seventeenth century medicine.

Those who opposed bleeding were considered ignorant

8Raynaud, Les Médecins au Temps de Molière, p. 183.

9Millepierres, La Vie Quotidienne des Médecins au Temps de Molière, p. 182.
charlatans. Of a doctor who refused to be bled, and subsequently died, Gui Patin wrote:

Il répondit que c'était le remède des pédants sanguinaires (il nous faisait l'honneur de nous appeler ainsi) et qu'il aimait mieux mourir que d'être saigné: aussi a-t-il fait. Le diable le saignera en l'autre monde, comme le mérite un fourbe, un athée.10

His only fault was to oppose bleeding — to not die according to the rules, "de ne pas mourir dans les formes".

Such a devotion on the part of the Faculty's doctors to "la saignée" could not, and did not, escape Molière's attention. "La saignée" is mentioned in Les Précieux Ridicules, in L'Amour Médecin, in Le Médecin Malgré Lui, and in Monsieur de Pourceaugnac:

LE PREMIER MéDECIN

Je suis d'avis qu'il soit phlébotomisé libéralement; c'est-à-dire que les saignées soient fréquentes et plantureuses: en premier lieu, de la basilique, puis de la céphalique; et même si le mal est opiniâtre, de lui ouvrir la veine du front, et que l'ouverture soit large, afin que le gros sang puisse sortir. (I, viii)

The terms used in this diagnosis correspond almost perfectly to those used by the real doctors. An examination of their records yields the following information: for disease of the liver one opened "la veine basilique droite"; for

those of the spleen, "la veine basilique gauche"; for headaches, apoplexy, inflammation of the eyes etc., "les veines céphaliques". Some veins, it was stated, could only be opened after dinner.

Gui Patin bled children -- so did Molière's doctors, according to the apothecary in Monsieur de Pourceaugnac:

Il ne me reste plus que deux enfants, dont il prend soin comme des siens; il les traite et gouverne à sa fantaisie, sans que je me mêle de rien; et, le plus souvent, quand je reviens de la ville, je suis tout étonné que je les trouve saignés ou purgés par son ordre. (I, v)

This same doctor repeated the bleedings as often as did Patin. He had a man bled fifteen times in twenty days (I, vi). Though it is most doubtful that Molière singled out Gui Patin for the purpose of satire, in comparing Molière's comedies to Patin's writings, it becomes clearly evident that Molière presents a satirical and reasonably accurate picture of the medicine of his era.

The third of the Faculty-approved treatments that found mention in the Troisième Intermède from Le Malade Imaginaire was the purge, or laxative. The principal purgative agents used in the seventeenth century were "le séné", "la casse", "la rhubarbe", and "le sirop de roses pâles". Gui Patin often praised their efficacy, and condemned the apothecaries' use of more complex drugs:
"Tant que nous aurons de la casse, du séné, du sirop de roses pâles, nous pourrons toujours continuer à délivrer Paris de la tyrannie et de la trop grande cherté des parties d’apothicaine”.11

Patin prescribed laxatives almost as often as bleedings. Regarding the treatment he prescribed for his oldest son, he writes: "Je l’ai retiré du mauvais pas d’une fièvre continue . . . par le moyen de vingt bonnes saignées des bras et des pieds, avec pour le moins une douzaine de bonnes médicines de casse, séné et sirop de roses pâles".12

With the exception of the "sirop de roses pâles", in its place "la rhubarbe", the common purgative agents appear in Molière’s plays. Sganarelle, disguised as a doctor in Le Médecin Malgré Lui, flattered Jacqueline in medical terminology: "Votre vue est la rhubarbe, la casse, et le séné qui purgent toute la mélancolie de mon âme" (III, iii). Another Sganarelle, Dom Juan’s servant, was shocked at the latter’s impiety in medicine: "Quoi! vous ne croyez pas au séné, ni à la casse, ni au vin émétique?" (III, i).


12 Patin, Lettres de Gui Patin, I, 164-165.
And it was Monsieur Purgon who prescribed: "une bonne médecine purgative et corroborative composée de casse récente avec séné levantin" (I, i) to purge the bile from Argan. In having his doctors prescribe "la casse", "le séné" and "la rhubarbe", Molière was following the example set by the real doctors.

Also accepted by the Faculty, though thought to be less effective than "le ciystère", "la saignée" and "la purge", were the use of mineral baths and the drinking of milk. A Monsieur de Vallant, Madame de Sablé's doctor, once prescribed the following treatment:

J'ai dit que je croyais que ce mal venait d'une bile brûlée, qui était la cause de tous les accidents, qu'il fallait saigner. On a conclu, une du bras et une du pied, lavements rafraîchissants, purgatifs avec une once de casse et deux sirops de pommes composé dans deux grands verres de petit lait . . . Purgé deux ou trois fois de cette sorte . . . Ensuite dans le bain ou le demi-bain 15 ou 18 jours. Le petit lait ou l'eau de poulet dans le bain . . .

Gui Patin also supported the use of mineral baths:

"J'approuve fort l'usage des bains d'eau tiède . . . après les grands remèdes". Molière, however, does not seem to share Patin's

13 During his later years, Molière himself was placed on a milk diet by his friend and doctor, Mauvillain.

14 Mille pierres, La Vie Quotidienne des Médecins au Temps de Molière, p. 73.

faith in these treatments. The "Premier Médecin" of Monsieur de Pourceaugnac prescribes virtually the same things, but on a trial and error basis, with the baths as a last resort:

LA PAYSANNE

Mon père, monsieur, est toujours malade de plus en plus.

PREMIER MÉDECIN

Ce n'est pas ma faute. Je lui donne des remèdes: que ne guérit-il? Combien a-t-il été saigné de fois?

LA PAYSANNE

Quinze, monsieur, depuis vingt jours.

PREMIER MÉDECIN

Quinze fois saigné?

LA PAYSANNE

Oui.

PREMIER MÉDECIN

Et il ne guérit point?

LA PAYSANNE

Non, monsieur.
PREMIER MÉDECIN

C'est signe que la maladie n'est pas dans le sang. Nous le ferons purger autant de fois, pour voir si elle n'est pas dans les humeurs; et, si rien ne nous réussit, nous l'envoyerons aux bains. (I, vi)

Many other treatments were available to the people of seventeenth century France. Most were of a more exotic nature than the usual enema, bleeding or purge. Some found acceptance by the Faculty; others encountered rejection and condemnation. Such, as already mentioned, was the case with the drug "orviétan". Other contested remedies included precious stones, bezoars ("bézoards"), gold ("or potable") etc.

Precious stones were considered, by some, to possess strong curative powers. In 1619 the king's personal physician prescribed a mixture of precious stones as a cure for the plague: "Priser de la raclure d'yvoire, de la poudre de perles, corail rouge, hyacinthe, rubis, esméraudes, grenats, saphirs . . .". A medical dissertation dated 1639 also listed a drug composed of: "Or et argent pur en feuilles, perles, émeraude, corail blanc, corail rouge . . ." as being advantageous in the treatment of heart disease.

Thus, Sganarelle was quite justified in offering the specially prepared cheese to Perrin: "C'est un fromage préparé, où il entre de l'or, du corail, et des perles, et quantité d'autres choses précieuses" (Le Médecin Malgré Lui, III, ii).

Included among the precious metals, but said by some to be of exceptional merit with regards to curative powers was a substance known as potable gold, "de l'or potable", formed by dissolving gold in certain volatile liquids. Gui Patin gives a report of its use, and of his opinion of it:

M. Hilaire estoit un homme purement atrabilaire, que tamen morum, suavitate, étoit aimé de tout le monde. Le premier médecin du Roy la veu en sa maladie, et luy a donné de l'or potable, nonobstant lequel, sui desiderium statim reliquit.17

In one of Molière's plays, Le Médecin Malgré Lui, Valère and Martine attributed the cure of a near fatally ill woman (a case history invented by Martine) to this wondrous preparation:

MARTINE.

Il y a six mois qu'une femme fut abandonnée de tous les autres médecins: on la tenait morte il y avait déjà six heures ... lorsqu'on fit venir de

17 Triaire, Lettres de Gui Patin, I, 588.
force l'homme dont nous parlons. Il lui mit, l'ayant vue, une petite goutte de je ne sais quoi dans la bouche: et, dans le même instant, elle se leva de son lit, et se mit aussitôt à se promener dans sa chambre comme si de rien n'eût été.

LUCAS

Ah!

VALÈRE

Il fallait que ce fût quelque goutte d'or potable. (I, iv)

Bezoars18 ("les bézoards") gained acceptance with some of the Faculty's doctors as either a treatment for dysentry, or as a powerful antivenom. One of Molière's doctors, M. Purgon, prescribed the use of bezoar in: "une potion cordiale et préservative, composée de douze grains de bézoard . . ." (Le Malade Imaginaire, I, i).

Almost all of the contemporary medical treatments from the most widely accepted (e.g. "le clystère, la saignée, la purge"), to the more exotic (e.g. "orviétan", "bézoards" and precious stones), to even the most disputed (i.e. antimony) can be found mentioned in Molière's plays.19 In

18 Calculus or concretions found in the stomach or intestines of some animals formed by layers of animal matter deposited round some foreign substance.

19 Note: the one major exception is the drug quinine, the use of which, like that of antimony, was bitterly contested.
including all the various cures Molière does help to provide an accurate, comic record of the contemporary medical situation.
CHAPTER IV

MOLIÈRE'S EXPLOITATION OF MEDICINE: SATIRE, FARCE AND PERSONAL OPINION

As we have seen, the subject of doctors and medicine recurs frequently in Molière's plays. In fact, no other subject received Molière's more constant attention. But why? Doctors and medicine were popular in classical Roman comedy, in the "fabliaux" of the middle ages, in sixteenth century French literature (e.g. Montaigne and Rabelais), and in contemporary French, Italian and Spanish plays. But was this past and current popularity sufficient cause for Molière to devote so many plays to their portrayal? An examination of Molière's literary predecessors and of his own plays will have to be undertaken if we are to establish possible relationships and similarities and to determine their influences on him. A similar examination of Molière's personal life, his education, his contacts with doctors as a patient, a friend and even as a contemporary, will be needed to further determine possible influences on his outlook. And if we do consider that Molière was influenced by certain factors, we must try to discern Molière's personal views. That is to say, we must try to determine whether or not certain characters act as spokesmen for Molière. And
in so doing, we will also have to analyze the various types of comedy used by Molière -- whether they be farcical, satirical, or bitter, and whether or not there is an evolution in his treatment of doctors and medicine.

Molière's early education under Jesuit direction at the "collège de Clermont" would have definitely included the study of ancient Roman and Greek authors, in particular Plautus and Terence. Thirty years later, as a playwright, he drew on his knowledge of these authors. Just as he borrowed the subject of L'Avare from Plautus' Aulularia, he also based parts of Act I Scene viii of Monsieur de Pourceaugnac on the fifth scene from the Menaechmi: both Pourceaugnac and Menaechmus, neither of whom is truly ill, are besieged by doctors trying to cure them. Although the confrontation between the doctors and the unwilling patient is not unique to Molière, the satire of the theory of humors and of the pedantic Galenic diagnosis is.

During his pre-theatrical days, Molière came under the tutelage of Gassendi, one of the more famous seventeenth century philosophers. Of great interest to all the thinkers of that era were the discussions and works that focused on man -- his spirit, his soul, and his body. There can be no doubt that Gassendi's students, including Molière, would have devoted much of their time to the study of various works on that subject. And when considering man's spiritual
being, they must also have considered his physical being. Doing so, they would broach the subject of physiology -- a subject inseparable from the field of medicine.\(^1\) Such then, were Molière's first contacts with the subject of doctors and medicine.\(^2\)

Unfortunately, it is impossible to know exactly what books Molière read while under Gassendi's tutelage or while an actor. It would seem most probable however, due to the popularity of works relating to man's being and due to strong similarities which exist between the ideas expressed by Filerin in \textit{L'Amour Médecin} (III, i) and those found in Livre II, Chapitre XXXVII "De la Ressemblance des

\[^1\] Molière studied under Gassendi circa 1642. In 1637 René Descartes wrote in his \textit{Discours de la Méthode}; Sixième Partie:

\begin{quote}
J'ai résolu de n'employer le temps qui me reste à vivre autre chose, qu'à tâcher d'acquérir quelque connaissance de la nature, qui soit telle qu'on en puisse tirer des règles pour la médecine plus assurées que celles qu'on a eues jusqu'à présent, et mon inclination m'éloigne si fort de toutes sortes d'autres desseins, principalement de ceux qui ne sauraient être utiles aux uns qu'en nuisant aux autres, que si quelques occasions me contraignaient de m'y employer, je ne crois point que je fusse capable d'y réussir.
\end{quote}

Gassendi's students may or may not have read the \textit{Discours} -- the text quoted, however, does show the philosophers' preoccupation with man and medicine.

\[^2\] Among Molière's fellow students was one Bernier, an aspiring student of medicine who later did become a doctor, and who was one of Molière's friends.
Enfants aux Pères", that Molière had read Montaigne's Essais. The ideas found in "De la Ressemblance" are most strikingly similar to those expressed by Filerin. In the Essais we read:

Qui veid jamais medecin se servir de la recepte de son compaignon sans en retrancher ou y adjouster quelque chose. Ils trahissent assez par là leur art, et nous font voir qu'ils considerent plus leur reputation, et par consequent leur profit, que l'interest de leurs patiens. Celuy là de leurs docteurs est plus sage, qui leur a anciennement prescript qu'un seul se mesle de traiter un malade: car, s'il ne fait rien qui vaille le reproche à l'art de la medecine n'en sera pas fort grand pour la faute d'un homme seul; et, au rebours, la gloire en sera grande, s'il vient à bien rencontrer; là où quand ils sont beaucoup, ils descrient tous les coups le mestier, d'autant qu'il leur advient de faire plus souvent mal que bien. Ils se devoyent contenter du perpetual desaccord qui se trouve ós opinions des principaux maistres et auteurs anciens de cette science, lequel n'est conneu que des hommes versez aux livres, sans faire voir encore au peuple les controverses et inconstances de jugement qu'ils nourrisent et continuent entre eux.3

Filerin echoes these same ideas:

Ne voyez-vous pas bien quel tort ces sortes de querelles nous font parmi le monde? et n'est-ce pas assez que les savants voient les contrarióités et les dissensions qui sont entre nos auteurs et nos anciens maîtres, sans decouvrir encore au peuple, par nos débats et nos querelles, la

---

forfanterie de notre art? . . . si nous n'y prenons garde, nous allons nous ruiner nous-mêmes. Je n'en parle pas pour mon intérêt, car, Dieu merci j'ai déjà établi mes petites affaires. Qu'il vente, qu'il pleuve, qu'il grèle, ceux qui sont morts sont morts, et j'ai de quoi me passer des vivants; mais enfin, toutes ces disputes ne valent rien pour la médecine . . . (L'Amour Médecin, III, i)

Other similarities, for example, that doctors can kill their patients (but that their mistakes die with the patient), and that doctors blame each other for the deaths of their patients, also exist between the works of these two authors. Though it would be unjustifiable to assert that Molière did base his ideas on those found in Montaigne's Essais, the similarities are so striking that they cannot be completely ignored. 4

Although it is debatable whether or not Molière used Montaigne's Essais as a source of ideas on medicine, it is certain that he did base some of his comedies on earlier or contemporary French, Italian and Spanish plays. It is well known and documented 5 that Molière closely studied the Italian comedies presented by Scaramouche and other leading actors. Elomire Hypocondre, a play performed in 1670, mentions

4 It must also be realized, however, that much the same ideas are commonly found in works which deal either critically or comicly with medicine.

Molière's devotion to Scaramouche:

Chez le grande Scaramouche il [Molière] va soir et matin,
Là le miroir en main et ce grand homme en face,
Il n'est contorsion, posture, ni grimace
Que ce grand écolier du plus grand des bouffons
Ne fasse et ne refasse en cent et cent façons.

Though this account tends to be prejudiced against Molière, another, from a more objective source, (Tralage) reports much the same situation:

Molière estimait fort Scaramouche pour ses manières naturelles; il le voyait fort souvent et il lui a servi pour former les meilleurs acteurs de sa troupe.

There can be no doubt that Molière's earliest farce on the subject of médecine, Le Médecin Volant, was modelled after Scaramouche's presentation of Il Medico Volante.

Such is also the case with Le Médecin Malgré Lui. The basic plot, that of a peasant who, after having beaten his wife, was forced to assume the role of a doctor, dates back to a "fabliau" of the middle ages, Le Vilain Mire (i.e. Le Paysan Médecin). As the centuries passed, the "fabliau" was adapted by various playwrights and put on stage. Versions entitled Le Fagotier (1661), Le Fagoteux (1663), and Le Médecin Par Force (1664) were presented to the theatre-goers. Finally in 1666, after the mediocre financial success of Le Misanthrope, Molière stage his adaptation, Le Médecin Malgré Lui with Sganarelle resuming his burlesque role.

The different plays and literary works were not the
only influences on Molière. His personal life, his travels, his friends and his own medical problems were bound to have their effect. While in the provinces, and later in Paris, Molière undoubtedly encountered many travelling doctors and charlatans, saw their shows and heard their claims of possessing miraculous cures and wonder drugs. The orviétan affair is an excellent case in point -- the parody of which appears in *L'Amour Médecin* (II, vii).

Molière's contacts with the travelling doctors and charlatans were not, however, nearly as close as those with real doctors, both as a patient and a friend. Bernier, one of Molière's co-students under Gassendi later became a doctor, was one of his friends, and probably helped supply some of the information on the Faculty's investiture ceremony that was so vital for the creation of the Troisième Intermède of *Le Malade Imaginaire*.

---

6 The travelling doctors and charlatans often staged brief shows to publicise their cures, just as did the travelling medicine men in the American West circa 1800-1900.

Gui Patin serves as witness to the presence in Paris of such people:

...aujourd'hui nous voyons ici des étrangers très ignorans et purs charlatans qui n'ont point de honte, et disent effrontément qu'ils sont médecins de la Faculté de Montpellier. J'en ay vu quatre ou cinq qui n'y ont plus esté que je suis à Rome, qui ne savent ce qu'ils font...qui pour des remèdes ont les juleps cordiaux, les apozèmes et autres bagatelles bagatelles... (Triaire, Lettres de Gui Patin, I, 504).


8 Cf. Chapter I, pp. 13-14 quote from A. M. Brown,
Molière's greatest friend in the medical profession was Jean-Armand de Mauvillain, a graduate of the Faculty of Montpellier, and for some years, Molière's personal doctor. They were such good friends in fact that Molière composed a third "placet" to Tartuffe seeking a position at court for Mauvillain's son. Such an action might not seem in keeping with Molière's usual treatment of the doctors in his plays, but then Mauvillain, as a proponent of progress in the field of medicine, as Molière's doctor, and as his friend, could expect some preferential treatment. Like Bernier, Mauvillain probably greatly assisted Molière in the composition of Le Malade Imaginaire.

However, not all of Molière's contacts with doctors and medicine were so amicable and fruitful. A long chain of medical problems plagued Molière after 1664 until his death in 1673. In September and November 1664, Molière saw three people close to him die: his friends l'abbé le Vayer and Du Parc, and his first son Louis, only ten days old. Then, in late December 1665, signs of Molière's fatal illness showed themselves for the first time -- he began to cough blood up from his lungs. Forced to stop acting for a very
brief period, Molière soon recovered; but then, scarcely a month later, he suffered a serious relapse and did not reappear on stage until the end of the winter. A year of moderate health was followed by a two month long period of suffering from the same complaint. Back on stage for three months, Molière was then again forced, by reasons of ill health, to retire from acting for thirty-five days. From this period on, Molière was bothered with an incessant cough -- a cough which he managed to turn to comic advantage. While performing, he would often punctuate his speech with a cough at just the right, or wrong time, as the case may have it. About this time, Molière did follow a milk-based diet prescribed by Mauvillain with no apparent success. Then, in October 1672, Molière suffered yet another loss -- his third son, aged twenty-five days, died. Finally, in late 1672 and early 1673, during the composition of Le Malade Imaginaire, Molière's health deteriorated rapidly. Knowing his time was limited, unwilling to abandon the theatre, Molière fell victim to his illness on February 17, 1673, a few hours after the fourth performance of Le Malade Imaginaire. Eight years of such suffering, combined with the vain efforts of different doctors, including Mauvillain, could not have failed to affect Molière's judgement of contemporary medicine.

Until 1665, (i.e. until the first signs of his fatal
illness and the deaths of those close to him), Molière had only dealt with doctors and medicine once — using a counterfeit doctor in *Le Médecin Volant* — a farce, which as we have already seen, was modelled after its Italian predecessor *Il Medico Volante*. Then suddenly, in *Dom Juan*, Molière started to take the medical profession to task. Though this play too was substantially based on earlier plays,9 the scene (III, i) relating to doctors and medicine is unique to Molière. The introduction of such a scene, unrelated to the rest of the play — except by the fact that disguised as a doctor Sganarelle hoped to escape Dom Juan's pursuers — would seem to indicate a definite purpose on Molière's part. The purpose, and it is immediately obvious, is to allow Molière, through Dom Juan, to criticise the medical profession.10 One might argue that since Dom Juan was a self-avowed hypocrite, his opinions should be ignored or condemned. But surely Molière intentionally had his hypocrite make those statements — since he was a hypocrite,

---

9 e.g. *Le Trompeur de Séville* by Tirso de Molina, 1620; *Le Festin de Pierre* by Dorimond Villiers, 1659; *Il Convitato di pietra* by Giliberto, 1652; plus another with the same title, *Il Convitato di pietra* by Cicognini (no date).

10 During the play, Dom Juan acts more than once as Molière's "porte-parole" — the most notable occasion being in Act V scene ii when he "exposes" the rewards of hypocrisy.
an atheist, a seducer and an insolent son, Molière could deny offstage that Dom Juan's opinions were at times his own -- a perfect defense of the author's position, especially after the church had condemned him for staging Tartuffe. Eight years later, in 1673, Molière had Béralde re-express many of Dom Juan's criticisms of medicine, and Béralde's ideas cannot be discounted as those of a hypocrite.

Strong similarities also exist between the ideas expressed by Dom Juan, Béralde, and the "conciliator" of L'Amour Médecin, M. Filerin. John Cairncross has offered a short collection of these recurring ideas, a collection that helps to show that Molière's opinion of doctors and medicine had changed little over that eight year period:

BÉRALDE

[La médecine est] une des plus grandes folies qui soit parmi les hommes. (Le Malade Imaginaire, III, iii)

DOM JUAN

C'est une des grandes erreurs qui soit parmi les hommes. (Dom Juan, III, i)

BÉRALDE

Toute l'excellence de leur art [c'est-à-dire, des médecins] consiste en un pompeux galimatias. (Malade, loc. cit.)

FILERIN

Nous en profitons, nous autres médecins, par notre pompeux galimatias. (L'Amour Médecin, III, i)
ARGAN

[La médecine est] une chose . . . que tous les siècles ont révérée. (Le Malade Imaginaire, loc. cit.)

FILERIN

Depuis tant de siècles on demeure infatué de nous [c'est-à-dire, des médecins]. (L'Amour Médecin, III, iii)

BÉRALDE

[Le fait que dans la maladie tout le monde a recours aux médecins] est une marque de la faiblesse humaine et non pas de la vérité de leur art. (Le Malade Imaginaire)

FILERIN

Conservons-nous dans le degré d'estime où leur faiblesse [c'est-à-dire la faiblesse des hommes] nous a mis. (L'Amour Médecin, loc. cit.)

BÉRALDE

[Dans la maladie] la nature d'elle-même, quand nous la laissons faire, se tire doucement du désordre où elle est tombée . . . et presque tous les hommes meurent de leurs remèdes, et non pas de leurs maladies. (Le Malade Imaginaire, loc. cit.)

DOM JUAN

[Les succès des médecins leur viennent] des faveurs du hasard et des forces de la nature. (Dom Juan, loc. cit.)

FILERIN

[Il faut] rejeter sur la nature toutes les bêtises de notre art. (L'Amour Médecin, loc. cit.)

to which I would add:

DOM JUAN

Ils n'ont plus de part que toi [Sganarelle] aux guérisons des malades et tout leur art est pure grimace. (Dom Juan, loc. cit.)

FILERIN

... sans decouvrir... la forfanterie de notre art. (L'Amour Médecin, loc. cit.)

BÉRALDE

Lorsqu'un médecin vous parle d'aider, de secourir, de soulager la nature... il vous dit justement le roman de la médecine. (Le Malade Imaginaire, loc. cit.)

Such statements cannot be dismissed as simple comedy -- their critical impact must be recognized. Surely Molière's ill health, coupled with the loss of four people so near to him must have influenced his judgement of the contemporary medical situation -- a judgement which is expressed in the speeches by Filerin (in the form of a self-condemnation), Béralde and Dom Juan.

Less outspoken, but of definite satirical import, are the "Cérémonie" of the Troisième Intermède of Le Malade Imaginaire, the consultation from L'Amour Médecin (II, iv, v), and the selling of the wonder drug orvietan (L'Amour Médecin, 12)

12 It must be remembered that during this period (1665-1673) Molière lost two infant sons and was incessantly plagued with respiratory problems and coughed blood. Cf. Chapter IV, pp. 81-82.
II, vii). There can be no denying that all these episodes are based on and closely imitate specific facets of, or occurrences in the field of seventeenth century French medicine. In including these episodes, Molière succeeds in parodying contemporary medicine and in presenting to the modern reader a relatively accurate portrait of what he himself experienced.

Rather than concentrating on specific occurrences in the realm of medicine, Molière directed the greater part of his satire at the general tendencies in contemporary medicine. Such is the case with his treatment of the theory of humors, the Galenic diagnosis in Monsieur de Pourceaugnac (I, viii), the method of reasoning on the causes of a particular disease, the use of Latin, the methods of curing the disease, and the doctors' undying faith in the "anciens" and the Faculty. All were characteristic of the medicine of that era and attracted Molière's wit, as well as, in certain cases, his scorn; for these, amongst other things, were typical of, and partly to blame for the stagnation that existed in seventeenth century French medicine. Diafoirus' proud claim, for example, that both he and his son unswervingly obeyed the "anciens" and the Faculty and would not even consider the modern theories, including the circulation of blood -- "des prétendues découvertes de notre siècle touchant la circulation de sang, et autres opinions de même farine" -- is on the surface very
comic. But when one realizes just how much Diafoirus resembled many, if not most, of the Faculty's members, one becomes aware of the disastrous effect such men had on the progress of French medicine, and of the justification Molière had in criticizing them through satire. Gui Patin is an admirable case in point as we have seen. His personal involvement in the many medical quarrels of that era, quarrels which were often exposed to the public, provided Molière with a very obvious, if not willing model for observation and satirical reproduction. 13

It must be realized however, that not everything in Molière's plays on medicine is satire. Often, Molière did exaggerate for the purposes of creating farce. Toinette's diagnosis of "le poumon" being the source of Argan's many complaints (Le Malade Imaginaire, III, x) is undoubtedly farce. So also is the "clystère-chase" scene (II, xi) in Monsieur de Pourceaugnac when he is forced to defend himself from the apothecaries' syringes with his chair and his hat. Almost all of Le Médecin Malgré Lui is farcical -- Sganarelle's doctor's outfit is of exaggerated design with "un chapeau des plus pointus"; the Latin, and imaginary Latin cited by

13 We must remember, however, that Patin was not specifically satirised by Molière -- the satire was directed rather at his "type".
Sganarelle for the diagnosis of Lucinde's malady (II, iv) bear no relation whatsoever to medicine; Sganarelle's temporary refusal to accept a fee for his services (II, iv) is likewise far removed from reality and becomes immensely comic. Similar farcical situations occur in all of Molière's comedies on medicine, providing a distinct contrast to the more satirical and sometimes serious passages.

Since each play contains some farce, some satire, and some rather outright expressions of Molière's own opinions, any evolution in Molière's treatment of the doctors would be of great significance to the analysis of his plays on medicine. As already mentioned, many similar ideas recur in Dom Juan, L'Amour Médecin and Le Malade Imaginaire. There are, however, two major differences between Le Malade Imaginaire and its predecessors. The first, and most obvious, is the increased length of the exposition of what can be considered as Molière's own views, as expressed by Béralde. Act III, Scene iii contains by far the most extensive and savage expression we have yet seen of the author's own ideas. Béralde, as Molière's spokesman, claimed

14 This is true of all the plays except Le Médecin Volant, the earlist of Molière's plays on medicine, a farce. Even Le Médecin Malgré Lui, another farce, does have some relatively serious criticism: "Ici l'on peut gâter un homme sans qu'il en coûte rien. Les bêtises ne sont point pour nous, et c'est toujours la faute de celui qui meurt" (III, i).

15 Cf. Chapter IV, pp. 84-86.
that he was surprised that Argan had not been killed by the number of prescriptions ordered by Monsieur Purgon; that it was not necessary to believe in doctors or medicine; that man's belief in them was one of his greatest follies; that doctors were pedants who could not cure anyone; and that some doctors who were well aware of that fact nevertheless exploited their all too trusting patients. The second, and equally important difference is the inclusion of Molière's own case and the defense of his anti-medical position. His defense is also conducted by Béralde: "Ce ne sont point les médecins qu'il joue, mais le ridicule de la médecine" (III, iii). To Argan's claim that Molière had gone too far in so doing, Béralde replied: "Que voulez-vous qu'il y mette, que les diverses professions des hommes? On y met bien tous les jours les princes et les rois, qui sont d'aussi bonne maison que les médecins" (III, iii). Molière's own medical problems, and his despondency resulting from them are likewise expressed by Béralde:

Il (Molière) sera encore plus sage que vos médecins, car il ne leur demandera point de secours . . . . Il a ses raisons pour n'en point vouloir, et il soutient que cela n'est permis qu'aux gens vigoureux et robustes, et qui ont des forces de reste pour porter les remèdes avec la maladie; mais que, pour lui, il n'a justement de la force que pour porter son mal. (III, iii)

That Béralde is the faithful representative of both
Molière's opinions on medicine and his own situation, there can be no doubt. The ideas put forward by Béralde are too numerous, too savage, and too lucidly expressed to be discounted as serving simply to emphasize by contradiction the ridiculous extent of Argan's hypocondria. They do of course do this, but I cannot believe that this was Molière's primary purpose in Act III, Scene ii. Had Molière not already denounced the medical profession in much the same terms in L'Amour Médecin and Dom Juan \(^{16}\) and had he not suffered for so long from both his own tragic illness and the loss of those near to him, we could perhaps accept his treatment of doctors and medicine as a combination of simple comedy and pleasant satire. But such was not the case. It is to Molière's great credit as a playwright that he was able to combine farce, satire and his own personal views into such thoroughly enjoyable comedy.

\[^{16}\text{Cf. Chapter IV, pp. 84-86.}\]
CONCLUSION

We have now seen that Molière dealt very extensively with the subject of doctors and medicine, and presents certain of his own opinions of them. Almost nothing is omitted: he portrays the Faculty of Paris and its initiation ceremony, the beliefs and theories that prevailed, the methods of diagnosis and treatment that were accepted, the quarrels (e.g. antimony, the circulation of blood, the foreign doctors) that took place, and even presents a satiric version of the disputed consultation relating to Cardinal Mazarin's illness. Molière went to such detail as to even include one of the more minor, but popular questions of the era -- whether doctors should travel by mule or by horse:

M. TOMÈS

Il faut avouer que j'ai une mule admirable pour cela, et qu'on a peine à croire le chemin que je lui fais faire tous les jours.

M. DES FONANDRÈS

J'ai un cheval merveilleux, et c'est un animal infatigable.

---

1 Cf. Chapter II, pp. 49-50.

2 Guénaut, one of the court doctors favoured the horse -- and hence, Boileau's couplet: "Je saute vingt suisseaux, j'esquive, je me pousse, Guénaut sur son cheval, en passant, m'écablousse!".
M. TOMÈS

Savez-vous le chemin que ma mule a fait aujourd'hui? J'ai été, premièrem ent, tout contre l'Arsenal; de l'Arsenal, au faubourg Saint-Germain; du faubourg Saint-Germain, au fond du Marais... et d'ici je dois aller encore à la place royale.

M. DES FONANDRÈS

Mon cheval a fait tout cela aujourd'hui; et de plus j'ai été à Ruel voir un malade. (L'Amour Médecin, II, iii)

But, on the whole, can we obtain a just, fair, and accurate picture of the contemporary medical practice from Molière's plays? In many cases -- Yes! Though somewhat exaggerated for comic purposes, with the speeches done in a pseudo-Latin, the Troisième Intermède of Le Malade Imaginaire does present a relatively accurate model of the real ceremony of initiation for the new doctors at the Faculty. Similarly, the long-winded diagnosis by the Premier and Second Médecins of Monsieur de Pourceaugnac's "illness" is closely modelled upon the Galenic form of diagnosis popular in seventeenth century France. No less accurately detailed are the theories of humors, vapours and temperament\(^3\) which formed the basis of contemporary medical doctrine. The three most favoured cures, "la purge", "la saignée" and "le clystère", along

\(^3\)Cf. Chapter II, pp. 26-29.
with the more exotic, "les pierres précieuses", "l'orviétan" and "l'or potable", are also presented, though in a comic manner, in Molière's plays. In all these matters, Molière does present a reasonably accurate but comic picture of contemporary medicine.

Molière, however, does not always present such a fair and just picture of the doctors and medicine. In all his plays, Molière never credited any doctor with having successfully treated a patient. His doctors fought amongst themselves, prescribed cures for non-existent diseases, endlessly quoted the "anciens", and excelled at pedantry -- but cured no one. Rather than having been credited with curing their patients, the doctors in his plays were often said to have been responsible for the deaths of certain patients. Such was the case in the earliest of Molière's plays on medicine when Sganarelle stated: "Après le médecin, gare la mort." (Le Médecin Volant, I, ii). Lisette expressed much the same idea in L'Amour Médecin:

Que voulez-vous donc faire, monsieur, de quatre médecins? N'est-ce pas assez d'un pour tuer une personne? ... J'ai connu un homme qui prouvait, par bonnes raisons, qu'il ne faut jamais dire: "Une telle personne est morte d'une fièvre et d'une fluxion sur la poitrine", mais "Elle est morte de quatre médecins et de deux apothécaires". (II, i)

4With one exception: When Elmire was ill she was bled "Et le soulagement suivit tout aussitôt" (Tartuffe, I, iv).
And finally, in *Le Malade Imaginaire*, Molière's last play, Béralde warned his brother: "Si vous n'y prenez garde, il [M. Purgon] prendre tant de soin de vous, qu'il vous enverra en l'autre monde" (III, ii). Doubtless, the comic element would have been lost had the patients been cured -- but we cannot completely ignore Molière's health problems which would undoubtedly have affected his judgement.

Molière was also less than fair in having Filerin so callously negate the importance of the patient's welfare as long as the honour of the medical profession was upheld and as long as they continued to receive the fee for their services:

> Mais le plus grand faible des hommes, c'est l'amour qu'ils ont pour la vie; et nous en profitons nous autres, par notre pompeux galimatias, et savons prendre nos avantages de cette vénération que la peur de mourir leur donne pour notre métier .... N'allons point, dis-je, détruire sottement les heureuses préventions d'une erreur qui donne du pain à tant de personnes. (*L'Amour Médecin*, III, i)

It should not be believed that the French medical profession was as selfish, callous and mercenary as Molière would indicate in Filerin's speech. Both Théophraste Renaudot and the Faculty of Paris did establish free clinics to treat the poor and sick.

In Molière's plays on medicine we can find the fair and the unfair, the exaggerated and the accurate, the farcical, the satirical and the critical. What we must also try to find is a passage that truly reflects Molière's
overall impression of the medical profession. The passage, in our opinion, that best accomplishes this, is found in Le Malade Imaginaire. It is Béralde who speaks for Molière:

Ils [les médecins] savent la plupart de fort belles humanités, savent parler en beau latin, savent nommer en grec toutes les maladies, les définir et les diviser; mais pour ce qui est de les guérir, c'est ce qu'ils ne savent point du tout . . . . Votre monsieur Purgon, par exemple, n'y sait point de finesse; c'est un homme tout médecin, depuis la tête jusqu'aux pieds; un homme qui croit à ses règles plus qu'à toutes les démonstrations des mathématiques, et qui croyait du crime à les vouloir examiner; qui ne voit rien d'obscur dans la médecine, rien de douteux, rien de difficile; et qui, avec une impétuosité de prévention, une râdeur de confiance, une brutalité de sens commun et de raison, donne au travers des purgations et des saignées, et ne balance aucune chose. Il ne lui faut point vouloir mal de tout ce qu'il pourra vous faire: c'est de la meilleure foi du monde qu'il vous expédiera; et il ne fera, en vous tuant, que ce qu'il a fait à sa femme et à ses enfants, et ce qu'en un besoin il ferait à lui-même. (III, iii)

Molière did not place the blame on Monsieur Purgon (i.e. on the individual doctors) but rather on the stagnation of seventeenth century French medicine resulting from the Faculty's blind support of antiquated theories.

Having no faith left in contemporary medicine, Molière, suggested, through Béralde, that man do nothing were he to fall ill -- that he rely on nature to effect a cure: "Il ne faut que demeurer en repos. La nature d'elle-même, quand nous la laissons faire, se tire doucement du désordre où elle est tombée" (III, iii). As Antoine Adam
points out, Molière probably inherited this pyrrhonic philosophy of life from the works of Montaigne and from his friendship with La Mothe le Vayer.

Despite this philosophy, Molière did seem concerned with man's ability to perform research which might eventually permit him to have more control over his fate. Perhaps the scientific discoveries -- for example, Harvey's theory of the circulatory system -- caused Molière to partially abandon the pyrrhonic philosophy. An indication of his hope for the future is expressed by the words "jusques ici" in the following statement:

BÉRALDE

. . .Les ressorts de notre machine sont des mystères, jusques ici, où les hommes ne voient goutte; et que la nature nous a mis au-devant des yeux des voiles trop épais pour y connaître quelque chose.

(Le Malade Imaginaire, III, iii)

Though he knew he was dying when he wrote this, Molière obviously had some hopes for the future of man, science, and even medicine -- provided that experimentation and research replace blind devotion to unproved and antiquated hypotheses.


6 My underlining for emphasis.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books:


Polet, Doctor H. Molière et La Médecine de Son Temps. Lille: Imprimerie L. Danel, 1895.


________. Lettres de Gui Patin 1630-1672. Tome Premier,


Articles, Parts of Books and Conferences:


