A FORESHADOWING OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION
AS SEEN IN SELECTED PLAYS OF MOLIÈRE

THESIS

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The problem with which this investigation is concerned is that of revealing certain liberated female traits that are to be found as early as the seventeenth century in certain plays of Molière. A study of the major events in Molière's life and of the social climate and salons of his time, together with a close analysis of the plays themselves, is necessary to understand this important aspect of his works.

In essence, this study attempts to show how Molière's women emerge as independent individuals who refuse the role society usually assigns them. Although these female characters are products of the seventeenth century, their actions and attitudes are used in this thesis to indicate a fore-shadowing of the twentieth-century, liberated woman.
It would indeed be difficult for the modern reader or theatregoer not to be struck by the strength of the female characters in the works of Molière. The naive, who think every woman was a clinging vine before the arrival of activist Germaine Greer, may even experience shock at Molière's representations of the very strong and aggressive female. The more sophisticated individual should at least be expected to manifest a somewhat milder surprise.

An investigation of the facts of Molière's life and a study of the social climate of his times are necessary to understand this important aspect of his plays. Thus, it is the purpose of this work to investigate these elements and to demonstrate a foreshadowing of women's liberation as it emerges in the seventeenth century in selected plays of Molière. It is suggested that this emergence is both a reflection of his own personal involvement with women, as well as their growing social and political importance, which would continue until the age of Napoleon.

Although some critics do not believe that Molière's personal life influenced his works, this study will attempt to add weight to the beliefs of those literary historians who see his personal life as a major influence on his work, especially in regard to the role played by women. One
critic who takes the viewpoint that Molière was completely objective in his plays is Brander Matthews, who says, "Molière is too completely a dramatist to set on the stage any single character as the mouthpiece for his own opinions. It is his duty as a dramatist to let the persons in his play express the sentiments by which they are severally animated" (10, pp. 298-299).

Another critic, Arthur Tilley, takes the opposing view that some of Molière's personal experiences are evident in his plays. When speaking about the play L'Ecole des Femmes, Tilley states as follows:

The subject of his new play is more or less the same as that of L'Ecole des Maris, that is to say the failure of a middle-aged lover to win the affection of his ward whom he has brought up in a deliberate system of repression and seclusion. It will be seen that it is in part Molière's own story. When he wrote L'Ecole des Maris, he, a man of thirty-nine, was contemplating marriage with a young girl. When he produced L'Ecole des Femmes he had been married to her for ten months, but he had not succeeded in winning her affection. It is natural to suppose that his own situation gave the subject a sort of fascination for him, and it is interesting to notice that he is careful to tell us the ages of both Sganarelle and Arnolphe, and that they closely correspond with his own (12, p. 79).

It is perhaps this relationship with his wife Armande that had the greatest effect on Molière and his plays. This relationship, along with his earlier experiences with his mistress Madeleine, his liaisons with various women in the theatre, and his lack of maternal attention, probably en masse are the reasons why some of his female characters
emerge so domineering over their male counterparts. From a historical point of view, the feminine influence on Molière's life, as seen in his plays, is significant as it further emphasizes the important role women were gaining in the salon period of seventeenth-century France.
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CHAPTER I

THE INFLUENCE OF WOMEN IN MOLIÈRE'S LIFE AND
IN THE PRECIOUS SALONS OF HIS AGE

Three women in particular left their impact on Molière. They were his mother, Marie Poquelin, his mistress and theatrical partner, Madeleine Bejart, and his wife, Armande. Other women also influenced Molière, such as the actresses Genevieve and Catherine de Brie and a dancer by the name of Madame de Gorla.

When reading or seeing the plays of Molière, one wonders if the playwright was personally affected by a lack of maternal attention, for Molière rarely, if ever, mentions his mother, Marie Poquelin, who died when he was only ten years old. Although his father, Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, III, remarried in 1633, Molière's stepmother lived only four years. Thus, from the time of his early childhood until his early adult years, a time during which he received his education and made his choice of a career, Molière lived in a male-dominated environment, devoid of maternal influence. Brander Matthews makes the following observation:

It has been pointed out by more than one commentator that, although Molière presents many fathers, he scarcely ever introduces a mother, and that he gives us no single portrayal of maternal love, in spite of the unusual strength in France of the bond between mother and child. We can account for this omission by
recalling the fact that Molière's own mother had died when he was very young, and that he prefers to put into his plays no sentiment he had not witnessed at first hand (10, p. 345).

In some of his plays, Molière could have been searching for the image of a dominant mother, whom he never fully enjoyed as a child.

It was not until after having studied law for five years that Molière had any significant, intimate relationship. In 1642, while following in his father's profession as valet tapissier to the king, Molière met Madeleine Bejart, who had been the mistress of the Comte de Modène. The critic Ramon Fernandez says,

About this period she was the mistress of a singular personage known as Messire Esprit-Raymond de Moirmoron, Comte de Modène; he was chamberlain to the Duc d'Orleans, only brother of the king. . . . Madeleine had had a daughter by him in 1638. Aware that Madame de Modène was ill, she could only cling for a long time to an expectation of becoming the Comte's wife. He did not gratify that expectation, but he did continue to be his mistress's friend as long as he lived. In 1640 Monsieur de Modène, becoming involved in a conspiracy against Louis XIII, came under sentence of death and fled to Brussels for asylum. Madeleine, who had already done some acting, must have resumed that occupation at just the time when Jean-Baptiste was traveling through Roussillon (6, pp. 8-9).

When Molière met Madeleine, he was not content with his position as superintendent of royal upholstery. After seeing Madeleine's enthusiasm for the theatre, as well as being influenced by other factors, Molière quit his position and in 1643 plunged wholeheartedly into the profession of acting.
It was at this time that he went to live with Madeleine and began his twenty-year cohabitation with her (6, p. 106).

Molière was only four years younger than the gay, twenty-four-year old Madeleine and was attracted to her beauty and her cheerful disposition. She was a redhead with exquisite manners and had a genuine talent for acting. She was intelligent, had fine taste, knew literature, and wrote poetry (6, p. 45). The understanding between them appears to have been both sudden and fundamental. Madeleine, a resourceful woman with a talent for business, greatly helped Molière toward the building of his fortune (7, p. 8). Although the business aspect of their relationship was undoubtedly successful, during the years they lived together their intimate relationship was marked by constant strain. In fact, there is even some controversy as to whether Molière ever really loved Madeleine. Some critics believe there is no question of their love for each other. On the other hand, others contend that Molière could not possibly have loved Madeleine, as Molière is known to have disliked intensely the so-called femme de tête (7, p. 58). Still other critics, in an attempt to resolve this conflict, suggest that Molière in truth did love Madeleine but, as she already had a lover, he soon turned his attention to other young women. Two of these were Geneviève, a young comedienne in his troup, and Catherine de Brie, engaged by Molière to play female leads (7, p. 60).
According to the writer Léopold Lacour, once a friend asked Molière why he liked Catherine de Brie. Lacour says, "Est-ce la vertu, la beauté ou l'esprit," lui dit-il. "Qui vous font aimer cette femme-là? Vous savez que la Barre et Florimont sont de ses amis; qu'elle n'est point belle, que c'est un vrai squelette, et qu'elle n'est pas le sens commun." "Je sais tout cela, monsieur," lui répondit Molière; "mais je suis accoutumé à ses défauts, et il faudrait que je puisse trop sur moi pour m'accomoder aux imperfections d'une autre..." (7, p. 156).

Catherine was followed by an excellent young dancer, Madame de Gorla, who created a sensation as a first-rate tragedienne. In fact, throughout the years, Madeleine had been given cause for jealousy as she knew of Molière's affairs with other women. In all likelihood she suffered intensely, but we have no written proof of her reactions to these affairs. Be that as it may, Madeleine's greatest wound was yet to come, that of the unexpected marriage of her young sister Armande to Molière.

On February 20, 1662, Molière, now a man of forty, married Armande Gesinde Béjart, who was barely twenty years of age. There was a fairly widespread rumor in Molière's day that Armande was Madeleine's daughter; but in 1821, police chief Beffara found the certificate of the former's marriage in which it stated that she was the daughter of Joseph Béjart and Marie Hervé, thus the sister of Madeleine. Furthermore, both in her will of January 9, 1672, when she was gravely ill, and in a codicil of February 14, which she added three days before her death, Madeleine calls Armande her
sister (12, p. 19). Arthur Tilley further elaborates on this point:

One would have thought that this put the question beyond doubt, but it is easier to start a scandal than to stop it, and there are still biographers and critics of Molière who with more ingenuity than common sense propound elaborate theories, no two of which agree, to show that Molière's wife was the daughter of Madeleine Bejart, that both families conspired to make a false statement in the marriage contract, and that Madeleine Bejart on her death-bed confirmed the lie in a legal document (12, pp. 19-20).

Molière probably reflected long before deciding to marry Armande. There was much public controversy about his marriage, not only because of the age difference between Armande and himself, but more importantly because of her kinship to Madeleine Béjart, Molière's mistress of twenty years. His enemies lost no time in seeking vengeance with the accusation that he had committed the grave crime of incest by marrying his own daughter. There is no convincing proof that the rumors were justified. Molière no doubt was disturbed by the accusation of possible incest. Furthermore, Louis XIV lends substance to the legitimacy of Molière's marriage by becoming the godfather of Molière and Armande's first-born child, which leads one to believe that the king put no faith in the rumors.

After the wedding, Molière and his bride moved to the Rue de Richelieu. Troubles soon besieged the family as it became apparent that husband and wife were totally unsuited to one another (3, pp. 141-144). In addition, Armande
possessed unusual charm and beauty. Because of this, she aroused bitter enmity in her relationship with other women. She was even the victim of an atrocious libel purporting her intrigues (11, p. 107). Brander Matthews reports that

The anonymous book in which she is insulted is absolutely untrustworthy; many of its specific assertions have been shown to be contrary to fact; and it may be dismissed as inspired by malignant envy. It deserves no credence; and yet it has stained her fame and even cast a shadow on the glory of Molière (10, p. 107).

Neither the enmity nor the pain that Molière suffered should be surprising in view of Armande's unorthodox behavior. He tried to salve his wounds by creating antipathetic, jealous males, while, at the same time, defending female emancipation as a subterfuge for his own jealousy and the resentment he felt toward flirtatious women. It was at this time that Molière wrote L'Ecole des Femmes, which demonstrates his reactions regarding jealousy and liberty, a matter which will be examined later.

It is not surprising that the marriage of a man of Molière's years and temperament with a young, coquettish girl like Armande contained small chance of happiness for either of them. Although Molière loved Armande passionately, it is unlikely that she returned his ardent affection (10, p. 108). Matthews states the following in this matter:

He was twice her age; and a man of forty was held to be far older than he is now, as we can discover by a study of Molière's own comedies. He was not good looking—at least he could not be accepted as distinguished for manly beauty. He was melancholy always,
often moody, and even on occasion abrupt. He was very busy, being the manager of the theater and the stage-manager of the company. . . . He was absorbed in his work as a dramatist, having to please both the king and the playgoers of Paris. There is no reason to suppose that this girl of twenty was competent to appreciate him. In other words, she was the ordinary wife of an extraordinary man, the commonplace companion of a genius (10, p. 108).

Armande was something of a flirt, and Molière reacted to her coquetry in the manner of a jealous husband. This same jealousy, as seen in his personal life, appears as the main-spring of the action in several of his plays (10, p. 111).

The marital differences between Molière and his wife increased, as observed by Brander Matthews:

Very likely he was acutely conscious of the differences in their ages. The time came when their incompatibility was manifest to both of them; and for a season they separated, only to come together again a little while before his fatal seizure (10, p. 111).

One must try to understand the relationship between Molière and the women in his life in order to appreciate fully his plays. The absence of a maternal upbringing, the business-love arrangement with a headstrong mistress, and the unhappy marriage to a young, flirtatious girl no doubt were instrumental in forming the thematic content of Molière's plays.

There remains one other important feminine influence on Molière's life, that of the précieux salons, especially the salon of Madame de Rambouillet. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, there developed in France a movement called préciosité, an exaggerated concern for elegance and
refinement in manners, dress, and language. Fastidious words replaced ordinary conversation. This politeness and refinement represented a reaction against the coarseness seen in King Henry IV's court (9, p. 813). In the concern for elegance, even love became an artificial convention, as seen in the novel of Honoré d'Urfé, *L'Astrée*. An example of the artificiality can be seen in this passage:

> Or sur les bords de ces délectables rivières on a vu, de tout temps quantité de bergers, qui pour la bonté de l'air, la fertilité du rivage et leur douceur naturelle, vivent avec autant de bonne fortune, qu'ils reconnaissent peu la fortune, et crois qu'ils n'eussent deu envier le contentement du premier siècle, si Amour leur eust aussi bien permis de conserver leur félicité, que le ciel leur en avait esté prodigue. Mais endormis en leur repos ils se sousmirent a ce flatteur, qui tout après changer son autorité en tyrannie (5, p. 28).

It was at the famous Hotel de Rambouillet, presided over by the Marquise de Rambouillet, that the literary movement first developed. *Préciosité* was to continue and to reach its peak of importance in the latter part of the seventeenth century. The term *précieux* was applied particularly to the group of cultivated men and women who frequently visited this salon of Madame de Rambouillet, located on the street of Saint-Thomas-du-Louvre near the Seine. The most famous room of the hotel was *La Chambre Bleue*, a room filled with Flemish tapestries, a gift of Louis XIII, and a profusion of curiosities such as vases of china and Venetian glass (1, pp. 30-31). Thus, this famous room was so appointed as to fit the elegance and sophistication of the conversations held therein.
The gatherings at the hotel were, of course, dominated by the Marquise de Rambouillet, née Catherine de Vivonne. She was noted for her pretty, sparkling, black eyes, which revealed a lively and dashing character. She was an intelligent woman who spoke several languages and liked to surround herself with lively, animated people (1, pp. 34-35). In the group which gathered about Madame de Rambouillet, habitual deference was shown to the gentle sex, amounting at times to a near deification of woman. Such deference gave her not only a new importance but, in addition, a more liberal standing in society than she had held before. Many gentlemen who acknowledged the spiritual superiority of woman were frequently led to the point of admitting her intellectual equality as well (10, p. 71).

Mademoiselle de Scudéry, the successor of Madame de Rambouillet, is best remembered for the famous section in her novel Clélie entitled "La Carte du Tendre." The Carte is a map of different roads leading to love and represents the very essence of the précieux spirit found in the salons of the seventeenth century (2, p. 61). The importance of woman in this emerging precious society is well exemplified in the following verses:

A la beauté les hommes seulement
Avoient borné nostre partage,
Reservant pour eux l'avantage
D'escrire et parler doctement.
Mais, fille illustre autant que sage,
Pour avoir change cet usage,
Et triomphé si glorieusement,
Ne vous devons-nous pas un grand remerciement (11, p. 123).
The effects of this general awareness of the new roles to be played by women can easily be seen in many of the plays of Molière. These roles were brought about by two major factors: first, the précieux salons, which served as the sounding boards for the emerging women and influenced the types of women portrayed by the playwright, and second, Molière's personal relationships with the women he knew well. Thus, it is the combination of these two elements that will set the stage for the emergence of the liberated woman in certain exemplary plays of Molière.
CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY


CHAPTER II

MAJOR PLAYS OF MOLIERE DEMONSTRATING FEMALE DOMINANCE

Seven plays of Molière will be examined in this study. They include L'Ecole des Maris, L'Ecole des Femmes, Le Misanthrope, Les Femmes Savantes--plays which most critics consider to be among Molière's major works. Three of the plays generally listed as minor works will also be studied. These are Le Mariage Forcé, La Princesse d'Elide, and George Dandin.

An examination of each play, with a particular emphasis on the liberated feminine characters, will attempt to show how these plays reflect the emerging importance of women during the era of Molière.

The first major play to be studied is L'Ecole des Maris, written about the time that Molière was planning to marry. Many critics say that Molière poured his most personal feelings into this work. It is significant to note that in this play the sympathy between the characters Ariste and Léonor undoubtedly delineates the ideal relationship that Molière was projecting for himself and his future wife (2, p. 85). L'Ecole des Maris, a three-act comedy in verse, which was first presented in June, 1661, met with instant success.
The story is original, although Molière made use of ideas from Boccaccio and Lope de Vega (5, p. 93).

In this play, two theories of educating young girls are set against each other and the consequences of each theory are shown. Ariste and Sganarelle, two brothers, are the guardians of two sisters, Isabelle and Léonor. Each brother wants to marry his young ward. Ariste tries to win the love of Léonor by treating her indulgently; he is rewarded by her affectionate regard. Sganarelle, on the other hand, who is a domestic tyrant, is resented by Isabelle as she does not like his domineering attitude and his selfishness. Therefore, she disguises herself as her sister and tricks her guardian into consenting to the wedding with Valère, her preferred suitor. Sganarelle, her guardian, believes that he is aiding the elopement of Léonor. The play shows the resentment of Léonor, who is unduly protected and sheltered by her guardian. It also portrays the struggle she goes through in order to live her own life as she wishes.

In Act I, Lisette, the servant of Léonor, has a conversation in which she tells Léonor that she finds Sganarelle's commands and requests harsh. Lisette shows a liberal attitude when she says,

En effet, tous ces soins sont des choses infames. Sommes-nous chez les Turcs pour renfermer les femmes? Car on dit qu'on les tient esclaves en ce lieu, Et que c'est pour cela qu'ils sont maudits de Dieu. Notre honneur est, Monsieur, bien sujet à foiblesse, S'il faut qu'il ait besoin qu'on le garde sans cesse. Pensez-vous, après tout, que ces précautions
Servent de quelque obstacle a nos intensions,  
Et quand nous nous mettons quelque chose a la tete,  
Que l'homme le plus fin ne soit pas une bête?  
Tout ces gardes-la sont visions de fous:  
Le plus sûr est, ma foi, de se fier en nous.  
Qui nous gêne se met en un peril extrême,  
Et toujours notre honneur veut se garder lui-même.  
C'est nous inspirer presque un désir de pécher,  
Que montrer tant de soins de nous en empêcher;  
Et si par un mari je me voyois contrainte,  
J'aurais fort grande pente à confirmer sa crainte  
(4, pp. 323-324).

Ariste, who often speaks for Molière, tells Sganarelle,

Leur sexe aime à jouir d'un peu de liberté;  
On le retient fort mal par tant d'austérité  
(4, p. 324).

Sganarelle replies that these remarks are nonsense to him.

Another example of an outspoken female is in Act I, Scene II,  
when Léonor says to Sganarelle,

Sil faut que par l'hymen il reçoive ma foi:  
Il s'y peut assurer; mais sachez que mon âme  
Ne répondroit de rien, si j'étois votre femme  
(4, p. 327).

Isabelle, Léonor's sister, also speaks out in Act II,  
Scene IX, when she tells Sganarelle,

Je sais qu'il est honteux  
Aux fille d'exprimer si librement leurs voeux  
...  
Mais en l'état où sont mes destinées,  
De telles libertés doivent m'être données;  
Et je puis sans rougir faire un aveu si doux  
A celui que déjà je regarde en époux (4, p. 346).

Thus, the reactions to woman's lack of freedom as compared to man's and the need of women for greater autonomy are a constant theme in this work. L'Ecole des Mari pictures the rebellious nature of a sheltered girl in the character of Isabelle. It is quite probable that Molière's
wife Armande was a model for this character and like Isabelle, who rebelled against the strict authority of her guardian, history records that Armande disliked her sheltered existence with Molière. Both women express liberal desires, Isabelle by her retorts to Sganarelle and by the trickery she resorts to in order to marry her love, Valère, and Armande through her flirtatious actions.

*L'Ecole des Femmes* is another play which demonstrates the emerging dominance of female characters. Although *L'Ecole des Femmes* was very successful, it aroused violent opposition in many quarters—from the Hôtel de Bourgogne, where receipts must have suffered from the rivalry of the new company, from the précieuses who branded the play as indecent, from the dévots who complained of its anti-religious sentiments, and from the critical pédants who detected in it violations of the rules. (As a result, Molière replied to his critics in a one-act comedy, *La Critique de L'Ecole des Femmes*, which still remains the best exposition of the principles of his art) (10, pp. 21-22). *L'Ecole des Femmes*, written in 1662, is Molière's first example of "high comedy." It is the result of realistic observation and is a psychological study of freedom versus regimentation.

The main character, Arnolphe, is the guardian of the young, innocent Agnès. Arnolphe wishes to marry Agnès, so he rears her in isolation, keeping her from the outside world
and unaware of the ways of life. However, a young man named Horace also loves Agnès and wants to take her away. Horace does not know that Agnès' guardian Arnolphe is an old friend of his father. Unaware of the relationship between Arnolphe and Agnès, Horace tells Arnolphe that he loves Agnès. When Arnolphe learns of Horace's intentions in regard to Agnès, he decides to take added precautions to keep his ward secure, but Agnès soon confesses to Arnolphe that she loves Horace. Arnolphe thwarts Horace's plans to visit the girl, and Agnès very deliberately and openly tells Arnolphe that she does not love him and that she plans to escape with Horace. Arnolphe is both stunned and saddened and reveals the intensity of his passion for Agnès. He is fiercely jealous, convinced of his own importance, and cannot understand how Agnès could prefer to him a young lover she hardly knows.

Agnès symbolizes the young, innocent girl who, with little say as to her own destiny, has been subjected to a narrow and strict education. Be that as it may, Agnès openly expresses the desire of many women to be emancipated by wishing to select her husband on the basis of her own personal desires. She shows that not all women will blindly obey the dictates of parents or elders, but must come to a realization of their own self-fulfillment. Agnès strengthens the concept that security and social standing are less important than emotion and sentiment. An example of the
importance that emotion plays in her life can be seen in this statement made by Agnès about Horace:

Il juroit qu'il m'aimoit d'une amour sans seconde,  
Et me disoit des mots les plus gentils du monde,  
Des choses que jamais rien ne peut égaler,  
Et dont, toutes les fois que je l'entends parler,  
La douceur me chatouille et là dedans remue,  
Certain je ne sais quoi dont je suis toute émue  
(4, p. 429).

This play parallels in many ways the life of Molière, especially his relationship with his wife Armande. In the character of Arnolphe, Molière speaks from personal, sad experiences when he warns against trying to mold a wife from childhood according to a husband's own standard. Molière saw the failure of his own efforts with Armande, whom he had known since childhood. Very likely the marital differences he was experiencing stemmed from the great age difference between himself and Armande, a difference paralleled in the lives of his fictional characters Arnolphe and Agnès in L'Ecole des Femmes (4, p. 28).

In Act II, Agnès tells Arnolphe of the visits of Horace to her balcony and of his declarations of love for her. Agnès then tells Arnolphe that she would like to be married immediately. To this request, Arnolphe responds,

A choisir un mari vous êtes un peu prompte.  
C'est un autre, en un mot, que je vous tiens tout prêt,  
Et quant au Monsieur, là, je prétends, s'il vous plait,  
Dût le mettre au tombeau le mal dont il vous berce  
(4, p. 433).

He then tells Agnès that he really has chosen another man for her to wed, and that she should no longer see Horace.
Agnès protests, "Je n'aurai pas le coeur . . ." (4, p. 433). They continue to argue until Arnolphe in a masterly fashion tells Agnès, "C'est assez. Je suis maître, je parle: allez, obéissez" (4, pp. 433-434). Arnolphe continues his male chauvinistic attitude when he prepares Agnès for marriage by reading to her her duties from Les Maximes du Mariage, ou Les Devoirs de la Femme Mariée. Maxime I states,

Celle qu'un lien honnête
Fait entrer au lit d'autrui,
Doit se mettre dans la tête,
Malgré le train d'aujourd'hui,
Que l'homme qui la prend, ne la prend que pour lui (4, p. 437).

It is no doubt evident that the maximes of marriage make a woman appear nothing more than a prisoner of man. This attitude can be seen in Maxime II, which says,

Elle ne se doit parer
Qu'autant que peut désirer
Le mari qui la possède:
C'est lui que touche seul le soin de sa beauté;
Et pour rien doit être compté
Que les autres la trouvent laide (4, p. 437).

Maxime IV further emphasizes the secondary role taken by the women when it says,

Sous sa coiffée, en sortant, comme l'honneur l'ordonne,
Il faut que de ses yeux elle étouffe les coups,
Car pour bien plaire à son époux,
Elle ne doit plaire à personne (4, p. 437).

These above mentioned maxims are demonstrative of the tyrannical attitude of Arnolphe, who adamantly insists that Agnès obey them. In contrast to the overly protective Arnolphe, Horace, who is resourceful and enthusiastic, plans only to
win the lady of his heart. He loves Agnès so much that he says,

Considérez un peu, par ce trait d'innocence,
Où l'expose d'un fou la haute impertinence,
Et quels fâcheux périls elle pourrait courir,
Si j'étois maintenant homme à la moins cherir.
Mais d'un trop pur amour mon âme est embrasée;
J'aimerois mieux mourir que l'avoir abusée (4, p. 459).

Agnès, who gradually rebels while reading Les Maximes du Mariage, finally shows her emancipation and strength in Act V, when Arnolphe speaks of marriage. He says, "Oui. Mais pour femme, moi je prétendois vous prendre; /Et je vous l'avois fait, me semble, assez entendre" (4, p. 463). Agnès bluntly responds:

Oui. Mais, à vous parler franchement entre nous,
Il est plus pour cela selon mon goût que vous.
Chez vous le mariage est fâcheux et penible,
Et vos discours en font une image terrible;
Mais, las! il le fait, lui, si rempli de plaisirs,
Que de se marier il donne des désirs (4, p. 463).

She then tells Arnolphe that she loves Horace. Arnolphe is astonished at her forthrightness and says, "Et vous avez le front de le dire à moi-même!"(4, p. 463). Agnès responds, "Et pourquoi, s'il est vrai, ne le dirois-je pas?" (4, p. 463).

One very liberal statement made by Agnès is in Scene IV of Act V, when she says,

Croit-on que je me flatte, et qu'enfin, dans ma tête,
Je ne juge pas bien que je suis une bête?
Moi-même, j'en ai honte; et, dans l'âge ou je suis,
Je ne veux plus passer pour sotte, si je puis (4, p. 465).

Finally, Arnolphe shows his weakness when he gives in to Agnès, trying to win her love by telling her she can
do as she pleases and have whatever she wishes. Very drama-
tically she responds: "Tenez, tous vos discours ne me
touchent point l'âme:/ Horace avec deux mots en feroit plus
que vous" (4, p. 467). This last remark must have dealt a
final blow at Arnolphe, especially since it comes from the
meek, innocent ward he has molded.

_Le Misanthrope_, performed in 1666, did not receive great
acclaim at its opening. One reason could be that this play
was a dramatic change from Molière's other works. The more
somber mood of this play may have stemmed from the changes
taking place in Molière's life. He had lost his first child;
his marital woes were increasing; and his health was failing.
In addition, his professional life was becoming very hectic
because of the attacks and plots of his enemies. It is,
therefore, not surprising that he chose an intellectual and
philosophical humor for this play. _Le Misanthrope_, in which
Molière's usual comic devices are absent, presents a more
serious and complicated view of life and society; and, yet,
it is not a tragedy. The critic John Palmer states, "_Le
Misanthrope_ is not the tragedy of a man mismated in affection;
it is the comedy of a man, who from an inflamed sense of
virtue, is ridiculous in all his relationships" (9, pp. 398-399).
Thus, the play is primarily a psychological study of the
protagonist Alceste. It is also a play of manners, reveal-
ing to its audience some aspects of society in the time of
Louis XIV. Finally, Molière presents in *Le Misanthrope* the problem of communication of the individual within society.

The two principal characters of the play will be sketched briefly. They are the protagonists Célimène and her lover, Alceste; Alceste is considered to be the most philosophical and profound of Molière's characters.

Alceste has been called the "Hamlet" of Molière, as well as a "Don Quixote." He places great importance upon the self, and, believing himself incapable of doing wrong, he never consents to a possible compromise. As a result, Alceste fails to achieve his goals and alienates himself from everyone he meets. At times, he is most philosophical and profound, as he represents both tragedy and comedy. He is in essence a serious character, lacking in humanity, but is so exaggerated in his rigidity that at times he is laughable (4, p. 52).

Célimène's bold and flirtatious nature causes great jealousy in her husband. A comparison can be seen readily here between Molière and Armande. Like Célimène, Armande and her flirtatious ways caused more than one restless night for her husband.

The play opens with a quarrel between Alceste and his friend Philinte. The subject of the quarrel is Philinte's flattering conduct toward a new acquaintance. Alceste says that men are not as sincere as they should be, especially within the confines of the elaborate etiquette of the court.
In fact, he is so upset with mankind in general that he has thought of fleeing to the country to live as a hermit.

Alceste then engages Philinte in the discussion of a lawsuit in which Alceste is involved. At this point, the conversation turns to Alceste's relationship with Célimène. Philinte does not understand why Alceste is in love with a woman who represents all the faults that Alceste dislikes. He wonders why this affection is not showered upon one of the two other ladies of the court, Eliante and Arsinoé, who typify Alceste's philosophies. Alceste admits that he is aware of Célimène's shortcomings, but is so charmed by her that he believes he can reform her following their marriage. Alceste tells Philinte, "Je confesse mon foible, elle a l'art de me plaire: . . ." (5, p. 828). He further states: "Il est vrai: ma raison me le dit chaque jour;/ Mais la raison n'est pas ce qui règle l'amour" (5, 824-825). It is precisely because Célimène is the most sought after and worldly of women that he falls in love with her. She commands that which he secretly desires so much—the admiration of the world (3, p. 78).

In Act II, the strained relationship which exists between Alceste and Célimène gradually unfolds. Alceste scolds her for her flirtatious manners with men. In turn, Célimène denies these accusations and says she cannot be held responsible if men find her personality so charming and attractive. Alceste is especially upset with a certain Clitandre, whom
Alceste considers to be one of the most notorious members of the court. Thus, Célimène infuriates Alceste when she says that she has been seeing Clitandre to help him in winning a lawsuit.

While they continue talking, the arrival of Acaste, another gentleman of the court, is announced. This angers Alceste further, as he can never be alone with Célimène. He prepares to leave until he hears that Clitandre is also coming. Alceste then confronts Célimène with the ultimatum that she must choose between Clitandre and himself. Célimène ignores him and indulges in a type of idle chatter that Alceste detests. Alceste and Clitandre, who has just arrived, then begin to argue, when an officer enters ordering Alceste to appear in court.

In Act III, Clitandre and Acaste discuss their love for Célimène in a gentlemanly way, while Célimène has a visitor, Arsinoé. Arsinoé tells Célimène that the purpose of her visit is to enlighten Célimène as to the recent gossip concerning her flirtations. Angry, sarcastic remarks are exchanged between the two women. Arsinoé says,

"Helas! et croyez-vous que l'on se mette en peine
De ce nombre d'amants dont vous faites la vaine,
Et qu'il ne nous soit pas fort aisé de juger
A quel prix aujourd'hui l'on peut les engager?
Pensez-vous faire croire, à voir comme tout roule,
Que votre seul mérite attire cette foule (5, p. 851)?"

When Alceste arrives, Arsinoé warns him against Célimène, since she thinks her to be unworthy of such a man as Alceste.
Alceste, however, suspects that Arsinoé is trying to woo him and asks for proof of Célimène's misconduct.

Act IV is highlighted by a letter which supposedly contains proof of Célimène's unfaithfulness to Alceste. At first, Célimène refuses to tell Alceste that the letter was intended for Oronte. She knows that this will drive Alceste insane with jealousy. While they continue discussing the letter in question, Alceste receives news that friends have written a note urging him to flee from the city.

The final act shows Alceste ready to abandon society, as his enemies have combined against him to cause the loss of his lawsuit. Philinte urges him to appeal in court, but Alceste refuses. Oronte, who also seeks Célimène's favor, enters and asks Célimène to choose between himself and Alceste. Célimène, however, does not want to make such a choice in public. When she is pressured to explain the letter, Célimène admits to Alceste that she has wronged him. Célimène is urged by Alceste to flee from society, but he soon realizes that she does not love him and that she is unwilling to renounce the world at so early an age. Alceste is now indeed determined to live as a hermit, isolated from society and faithful to his ideas.

Célimène reveals her desire for liberation principally in her flirtatious actions. According to the critic Jacques Guicharnaud, she is "devoid of fortuitousness and has no illusions" (4, p. 140). In Act II, Alceste criticizes
Célimène for just such conduct when he states,

Je ne querelle point; mais votre humeur, Madame,
Ouvre au premier venu trop, d'accès dans votre âme:
Vous avez trop d'amants qu'on voit vous obséder,
Et mon coeur de cela ne peut s'accommoder (5, pp. 832-833.)

Célimène defends herself by responding,

Des amants que je fais me rendez-vous coupable?
Puis-je empêcher les gens de me trouver aimable?
Et lorsque pour me voir ils font de doux efforts,
Dois-je prendre un bâton pour les mettre dehors.

In Act II, when the prudish Arsinoé comes to reprimand
Célimène for her loose behavior, Célimène very openly retaliates by telling Arsinoé that people have criticized her two-sided character. In each instance, Célimène tells Arsinoé that she has defended her honor. However, she adds,

Mais tous les sentiments combattirent le mien;
Et leur conclusion fut que vous feriez bien
De prendre moins de soin des actions des autres,
Et de vous mettre un peu plus en peine des vôtres
(5, p. 850).

Célimène further shows her liberal attitudes when she tells Arsinoé,

Madame, on peut, je crois, louer et blâmer tout,
Et chacun a raison suivant l'âge et le gout.
Il est une saison pour la galanterie;
Il en est une aussi propre à la pruderie.
On peut, par politique, en prendre le parti,
Quand de nos jeunes ans l'éclat est amorti:
Cela sert à couvrir de fâcheuses disgrâces.
Je ne dis pas qu'un jour je ne suive vos traces:
L'âge amènera tout, et ce n'est pas le temps,
Madame, comme on sait, d'être prude à vingt ans
(5, p. 851).

In Act IV, Scene II, Alceste seems surprised that Célimène does not blush as typically a woman should when caught in an
act of deception. Here he is referring to the letter to Oronte. Célimène simply replies, "Et par quelle raison faut-il que j'en rougisse?" (5, p. 861). Célimène continues to play with Alceste's jealous nature by telling him that she wants people to believe that the letter was intended for Oronte. She substantiates her affections for Oronte by saying,

Non, il est pour Oronte, et je veux qu'on le croie; Je reçois tous ses soins avec beaucoup de joie; J'admire ce qu'il dit, j'estime ce qu'il est, Et je tombe d'accord de tout ce qu'il vous plait (5, p. 862).

Further enraged by Alceste's jealousy, Célimène tells him, "Allez, vous êtes fou, dans vos transports jaloux;/ Et ne méritez pas l'amour qu'on a pour vous" (5, p. 863). Anticipating the liberated woman of the 1970's who speaks boldly of her needs, Célimène tells Alceste, "Non, vous ne m'aimez point comme il faut que l'on aime" (5, p. 863). In Act V, when Alceste chooses to go into exile rather than remain in a social environment with which he cannot conform, he asks Célimène to accompany him. She replies: "Moi, renoncer au monde avant que de vieillir,/ Et dans votre désert aller m'ensevelir!" (5, p. 876). She further states, "La solitude effraye une âme de vingt ans;/ Je ne sens point la mienne assez grande, assez forte,/ Pour me résoudre à prendre un dessein de la sorte" (5, p. 876).

As has been seen, Célimène, much like the young wife of Molière, is not ready to accept a conventional life. She
is young, flirtatious, and openly appreciates the admiration of others.

The last major play to be examined in this study is *Les Femmes Savantes*, where Molière's concern for the attitudes of the middle class is to be seen. The middle-class attitudes toward proper marriages, the role of the sexes, and the exclusion of foreign ideas are expounded by Molière so as to contrast with the exotic appeal of the learned and précieux. The play actually does not condemn préciosité in itself, but rather the excesses of the movement and its followers.

The main characters in this play are two sisters: Armande, the purely intellectual woman, and Henriette, who represents the traditional attitude of the faithful wife. Molière makes evident his own beliefs by contrasting the etherealized views of Armande with the practical, commonsense attitudes of Henriette. (It is worth noting that Molière used the very name of his wife to characterize a woman who exhibited so many of his wife's desires and beliefs.) Other characters of importance include Clitandre, Henriette's suitor; the parents of Henriette and Armande, Chrysale and Philaminte; and a scholar-pedant named Trissotin.

The setting of the play is Paris. The play opens with a quarrel between the two sisters over Henriette's marriage intentions. She wants a simple life of love with a husband
and a home. Armande finds these desires too common, as she wishes to become a learned lady like her mother. The contrast between the two sisters is emphasized by their language. Henriette uses simple language, whereas Armande employs the précieux, exaggerated idioms of the day. Armande criticizes Henriette's choice of Clitandre as a husband. She boldly asserts that she has first claim to him since he loved her before he loved Henriette. Armande then states, "Ne soyez pas, ma soeur, d'une si bonne foi,/ Et croyez, quand il dit qu'il me quitte et vous aime,/ Qu'il n'y songe pas bien et se trompe lui-même" (6, p. 686). When Clitandre appears, Armande asks him to declare his love. Having been spurned already by Armande, he says his true love is for Henriette. Armande is naturally angered and reminds them that they must still obtain parental approval for marriage. Clitandre does not like the idea of speaking to Henriette's mother Philaminte, because she is a learned lady. Clitandre is ill at ease in the company of intellectuals, and particularly dislikes Philaminte's précieux tutor Trissotin.

In Act II, when Clitandre speaks to Chrysale, who is Henriette's father, Belise, the sister of Chrysale, appears and says that Clitandre is actually in love with her. Clitandre and his brother Ariste find this news humorous indeed.

In addition, there is an ironic twist in the portrayal of the traditional, dominant character. Philaminte fires
a servant, Martine, because she refuses to use elegant language. Chrysale criticizes Philaminte and verbally attacks her. "Comment diantre, friponne! Euh? a-t-elle commis . . . " (6, p. 699). He finally tells Philaminte that woman's place is in her home where she should remain relatively uneducated: "Il n'est pas bien honnête, et pour beaucoup de causes,/ Qu'une femme étudie et sache tant de choses" (6, p. 704). Philaminte, however, asserts her independence and authority when she says she has selected Trissotin as Henriette's husband. Philaminte tells Chrysale, "Ce Monsieur Trissotin dont on nous fait un crime,/ Et qui n'a pas l'honneur d'être dans votre estime,/ Est celui que je prends pour l'époux . . . (6, p. 705).

Act III is reminiscent of a salon précieux as the women are listening to Trissotin recite poetry. He says,

"Votre prudence est endormie,  
De traiter magnifiquement,  
Et de loger superbement  
Votre plus cruelle ennemie." (6, p. 711)

Only Henriette, ordered by her mother to be present, appears to be aloof to the flowery speech.

In Act IV, while Armande tells her mother about Henriette's plans to marry Clitandre, the latter overhears the conversation. He comes forth and engages in a debate with Armande, while admitting,

Vos charmes ont d'abord possédé tout mon coeur;  
Il a brûlé deux ans d'une constante ardeur;  
. . .  
Tous mes feux, tous mes soins ne peuvent rien sur vous;
Je vous trouve contraire à mes voeux les plus doux. Ce que vous refusez, je l'offre au choix d'une autre (6, p. 728).

Clitandre has clearly fallen hopelessly in love with Henriette. On the other hand, Armande criticizes Clitandre for being concerned only with the carnal side of marriage, rather than with the intellectual achievements of his spouse. She says,

Vous ne pouvez aimer que d'une amour grossière? Qu'avec tout l'attirail des noeuds de la matière? Et pour nourrir les feux que chez vous on produit, Il faut un mariage, et tout ce qui s'ensuit? (6, p. 729)

One can see in Armande, no doubt, the liberated woman of the 1970's, with her insistence upon the education. In spite of all, the closing act of the play culminates in the marriage of Henriette and Clitandre.

The two main spokeswomen for female liberation in *Les Femmes Savantes* are Armande and her mother Philaminte. In Act I, on the subject of marriage, Armande asks her sister,

Ne concevez-vous point ce que, dès qu'on l'entend, Un tel mot à l'esprit offre de dégoûtant? De quelle étrange image on est par lui blessée? Sur quelle sale vue il traîne la pensee? N'en frissonnez-vous point? et pouvez-vous, ma soeur, Aux suites de ce mot résoudre votre coeur? (6, p. 683)

Henriette merely replies in an unliberated way:

Et qu'est-ce qu'à mon âge on a de mieux à faire, Que d'attacher à soi, par le titre d'époux, Un homme qui vous aime et soit aimé de vous, (6, p. 684)

The liberated Armande answers her sister:

Mon Dieu, que votre esprit est d'un étage bas! Que vous jouez au monde un petit personnage,
De vous claquemurer aux choses du ménage,
Et de n'entrevoir point de plaisirs plus touchants
Qu'un idole d'époux et des marmots d'enfants!
Laissez aux gens grossiers, aux personnes vulgaires,
Les bas amusements de ces sortes d'affaires;
A de plus hauts objects élévez vos désirs, (6, p. 684).

Henriette knows that it is her mother who rules the house
rather than her father when she tells Clitandre in Act I,
Scene III,

Le plus sûr est de gagner ma mère:
Mon père est d'une humeur à consentir à tout,
Mais il met peu de poids aux choses qu'il résout:
Il a reçu du Ciel certaine bonté d'âme,
Qui le soumet d'abord à ce que veut sa femme;
C'est elle qui gouverne, et d'un ton absolu
Elle dicte pour loi ce qu'elle a résolu (6, p. 689).

Philaminte's authority is further revealed in Act II, Scene
VI, when she tells her husband,

Je ne veux point d'obstacle aux désirs que je montre.
Et vous devez, en raisonnable époux,
Être pour moi contre elle, et prendre mon courroux
(6, p. 699).

Later, speaking of the role of women, Chrysale tells Phila-
minate,

Il n'est pas bien honnête, et pour beaucoup de causes,
Qu'une femme étudie et sache tant de choses.
Former aux bonnes moeurs l'esprit de ses enfants,
Faire aller son ménage, avoir l'œil sur ses gens,
Et régler la dépense avec économie,
Doit être son étude et sa philosophie.
Nos pères sur ce point étoient gens bien sensés,
Qui disoient qu'une femme en sait toujours assez
Quand la capacité de son esprit se hausse (6, p. 704).

After Chrysale finishes his lengthy commentary on a woman's
role in society, Philaminte comments, "Quelle bassesse, ô
Ciel, et d'âme, et de langage!" (6, p. 705). Thus, she
speaks as a woman who fervently believes that the education of women should not be limited.

While reading this particular play, one may duly reflect upon the higher education of women. It is evident that Molière does not here introduce us to women who have actually become equal to men, but, nevertheless, the question of female equality is raised.

Thus, the major plays studied in this chapter reflect the role of women as seen both from the male point-of-view as well as from that of the female protagonists themselves. One has seen the narrow-minded ideas of such men as Arnolphe with his Maximes du Mariage in L'Ecole des Femmes and of such as Chrysale in Les Femmes Savantes. In Lisette, the servant in L'Ecole des Maris, in Isabelle, Léonor's sister in the same play, in the characters of Agnes in L'Ecole des Femmes and Célimène in Le Misanthrope, and with the liberated Armande in Les Femmes Savantes, we have seen the emerging liberal views of these women. They are not content simply to marry and raise a family, but rather they are in pursuit of more intellectual and challenging careers. The open-minded, determined females that have been mentioned in this chapter are not only bold in language, but in their actions as well. They desire to further their education, choose whom they will marry, and decide for themselves their destiny. They, in essence, foreshadow the liberated women of the twentieth century.
CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY


CHAPTER III

MINOR PLAYS OF MOLIÈRE DEMONSTRATING

FEMALE INDEPENDENCE

Three of the so-called minor or lesser-known plays of Molière have been selected as representative of showing liberated female characters. They include *Le Mariage Forcé*, *La Princesse d'Elide*, and *George Dandin*.

Ten days after Molière's wife gave birth to their first son, Molière's troupe presented *Le Mariage Forcé* in the queen's suite at Versailles. Since Molière knew that Louis XIV loved to dance, he flattered the king by asking him to dance in the ballet of this play. The king appeared in the second act dressed in a costume of an *Egyptien* (3, p. 543). The theme of this particular play is reminiscent of Molière's personal life, as it involves the love relationship between Sganarelle, an elderly man, and his young love Dorimène. The latter only wishes to marry Sganarelle so as to escape from her strict father.

The opening scene shows Sganarelle, the main character, asking his friend Géronimo for advice as to whether or not he should marry Dorimène. Géronimo tells Sganarelle that, because of the age gap between Dorimène and him, he does not think that they should marry. Géronimo says,
Mon Dieu, le calcul est juste; et là-dessus je vous dirai franchement et en ami, comme vous m'avez fait promettre de vous parler, que le mariage n'est guère votre fait. C'est une chose à laquelle il faut que les jeunes gens pensent bien murement avant que de la faire; mais les gens de votre âge n'y doivent point penser du tout; et si l'on dit que la plus grande de toutes les folies est celle de se marier, je ne vois rien de plus mal à propos que de la faire, cette folie, dans la saison où nous devons être plus sages (3, p. 549).

Géronimo soon changes his opinion, though, after his friend tells him about the extent of his love for Dorimène and that he has already asked permission from Dorimène's father for her hand in marriage. She does not really return his love, however, for later in Scene II when Sganarelle discusses marriage with her, Dorimène tells him that the real reason she wishes to be married is to escape from her father's severity. Dorimène explains, "Tout à fait aisé, je vous jure; car enfin la sévérité de mon père m'a tenue jusques ici dans une sujétion la plus facheuse du monde" (3, p. 553). We have, thus, still another example of a young woman's quest for greater freedom.

In Scene III, Géronimo tells Sganarelle that he knows a friend who has a beautiful diamond that Sganarelle might be interested in having made into a ring for Dorimène. Sganarelle admits to Géronimo that he is under pressure to buy a ring, but he would rather discuss with him a dream he had. Géronimo does not care to listen to this account of a dream, so he tells Sganarelle to retell his dream to Marphurius and Pancrace, two friends of Géronimo. Sganarelle is not anxious to speak to Pancrace, as he finds it difficult to
converse with a philosopher who is so enthralled in metaphysical thoughts. Sganarelle states,

Vous avez raison. Oui, vous êtes un sot et un impudent de vouloir disputer contre un docteur qui sait lire et écrire. Voilà qui est fait: je vous prie de m'écouter. Je viens vous consulter sur une affaire qui m'embarrasse. J'ai dessein de prendre une femme pour me tenir compagnie dans mon ménage (3, p. 557).

Nor does he want to talk to Marphurius, as he is not a good advisor, according to Sganarelle. Nevertheless, he agrees to retell his dream to them. After his discussion with his two friends, Sganarelle meets two Egyptians. They tell him that he will soon marry a nice women who will bring him many friends and give him a good reputation. Sganarelle's only worry at this point is that of being henpecked.

In the meantime, Dorimène's lover Lycaste comes to see her. She tells him that she loves him and that he should not worry about her marriage to Sganarelle. Dorimène makes it clear that it will be marriage not of love, but of convenience and wealth. She speaks further about Sganarelle:

... C'est un homme qui mourra avant qu'il soit peu, et qui n'a tout au plus que six mois dans le ventre. Je vous le garantis défunt dans le temps que je dis; et je n'aurai pas longuement à demander pour moi au Ciel l'heureux état de veuve. Ah! nous parlions de vous, et nous en disions tout le bien qu'on en sauroit dire (3, p. 568).

In Scene VIII, Sganarelle talks to Dorimène's father Alcantor and tells him that he has reconsidered his marriage to Dorimène. Because of their age difference, he does not feel that he is well suited to be Dorimène's husband.
Alcantor disagrees with him, telling him that he would make a good husband for his daughter. Be that as it may, he promises Sganarelle that he will see what can be done. Soon, however, Alcidas, Dorimène's brother, comes and tells Sganarelle that if he does not marry Dorimène he must have a duel with him. Alcidas continues:

D'autres gens feraient du bruit et s'emporteroient contre vous; mais nous sommes personnes à traiter les choses dans la douceur; et je viens vous dire civilement qu'il faut, si vous le trouvez bon, que nous nous coupions la gorge ensemble (3, p. 572).

Reluctantly, Sganarelle agrees to the marriage despite his doubts about its success.

Dorimène demonstrates her free-thinking ideas when she speaks to Sganarelle of their approaching marriage. She tells him,

... Il y a je ne sais combien que j'enrage du peu de liberté qu'il me donne, et j'ai cent fois souhaité qu'il me mariât, pour sortir promptement de la contrainte, ou j'étais avec lui, et me voir en état de faire ce que je voudrai. Dieu merci, vous êtes venu heureusement pour cela, et je me prépare désormais à me donner du divertissement, et à reparer comme il faut le temps que j'ai perdu. Comme vous êtes un fort galant homme, et que vous savez comme il faut vivre, je crois que nous ferons le meilleur ménage du monde ensemble, et que vous ne serez point de ces maris incommodes qui veulent que leurs femmes vivent comme des loups-garous. Je vous avoue que je ne m'accommoderai pas de cela, ... (3, p. 553).

Dorimène reveals the kind of marriage she wants when she tells Sganarelle, "... je ne vous contraindrai point dans vos actions, comme j'espère que, de votre côté, vous ne me contraindrez point dans les miennes; ... (3, p. 553). She
further reveals her desire for a liberal wedded union in which her identity will not be lost when she says, "... Enfin nous vivrons, étant mariés, comme deux personnes qui savent leur monde. ..." (3, p. 553).

Another liberated character in a minor play of Molière is the Princesse d'Elide in the play by the same name. This work is a melange of music and ballet, and was presented for the first time at Versailles in May, 1664. It tells the story of the love of the young prince Euryale for the indifferent Princesse d'Elide, and the struggle between the two to see if a man's passions can conquer a stubborn, passive woman.

Euryale, prince of Ithaque, wishes to marry the Princesse d'Elide. Unlike many of her female contemporaries, the Princesse d'Elide says that she would prefer to go hunting rather than be married. She expresses her strong negative views of marriage when she says, "Me donner un mari, et me donner la mort, c'est une même chose; ..." (3, p. 596). Euryale is then advised by Moron, the plaisant of the princess, that if he wishes to succeed in gaining her affection he should not show her his true feelings. Euryale finds this difficult to do, but follows Moron's advice. Two other princes—Théocle, prince of Pyle, and Aristomène, prince of Messène—also seek the affection of the princess and shower her with many compliments. In contrast, Euryale tells her that he has no desire for her heart. Since the princess is
unaccustomed to being treated in the abrupt and cold manner of Euryale, she takes notice of him and tells her cousin Cynthie that she would derive great pleasure by being able to change Euryale's haughty style. The princess exclaims,

Je vous avoue que cela m'a donné de l'émotion, et que je souhaiterais fort de trouver les moyens de châtier cette hauteur. Je n'avais pas beaucoup d'envie de me trouver à cette course; mais j'y veux aller exprès, et employer toute chose pour lui donner de l'amour (3, p. 598).

Later, when the princess talks to Moron, she asks him if Euryale has spoken of her and is disappointed when Moron tells her no. Finally, however, Euryale and the princess do meet and talk of love. Euryale tells her, "Non! Madame, rien n'est capable de toucher mon coeur. Ma liberté est la seule maîtresse à qui je consacre mes vœux; . . ." (3, p. 605). The princess takes these remarks as a personal challenge to see if she can make him less interested in his liberty and more interested in her. She, therefore, devises her own plan of action. She tells Euryale that despite her past commentaries on marriage she has decided to marry the prince of Messène. This news upsets Euryale, which in turn pleases the princess. However, Euryale continues pretending to be indifferent to her. The princess is now completely devastated, as is seen when she says,

De quelle émotion inconnue sens-je mon coeur atteint, et quelle inquiétude secrète est venue troubler tout d'un coup la tranquillité de mon âme? Ne seroit-ce point aussi ce qu'on vient de me dire! et, sans en rien savoir, n'aimerois-je point ce jeune prince? Ah! si cela étoit, je serois personne
a me désesperer; mais il est impossible que cela soit, et je vois bien que je ne puis pas l'aimer. Quoi? je serois capable de cette lâcheté! . . . J'ai méprisé tous ceux qui m'ont aimé, et j'aimerois le seul qui me méprise! (3, p. 614).

The princess soon learns that Euryale plans to marry her cousin Aglante. Completely overwhelmed upon hearing this news, the princess asks her uncle not to consent to the marriage between Aglante and Euryale. He asks her why he should grant her request, and she replies: "... Il me devoit aimer comme les autres, et me laisser au moins la gloire de le refuser. . . ." (3, p. 617). Meanwhile, Euryale finally abandons his indifferent attitude and declares his love to the Princesse d'Elide. She, in turn, tells Euryale that she is still unsure of her desires. However, in the last ballet scene, Venus, goddess of love, announces that the princess' attitude has changed and that she will surrender to her love for Euryale.

The Princesse d'Elide is a liberated woman who is uninterested in matters of the heart or in attentions of her admirers. She shows her one true love, that of nature, in Act II when she says,

Oui, j'aime à demeurer dans ces paisibles lieux; On n'y découvre rien qui n'enchanté les yeux; Et de tous nos palais la savante structure Cède aux simples beautes qu'y forme la nature. Ces arbres, ces rochers, cette eau, ces gazons frais Ont pour moi des appas à ne lasser jamais (3, p. 593).

When her cousin Aglante tells her that she should look at the pompous spectacles each prince has prepared for her
benefit and at least show some interest in their efforts, the princess responds,

Quel droit ont-ils chacun d'y vouloir ma présence? Et que dois-je, après tout, à leur magnificence? Ce sont soins que produit l'ardeur de m'acquérir, Et mon coeur est le prix qu'ils veulent tous courir. . . (3, p. 593).

The princess further reveals her closed attitude toward love when she interrupts the conversation between her two cousins Aglante and Cynthie. Aglante says,

Pour moi, je tiens que cette passion est la plus agréable affaire de la vie; qu'il est nécessaire d'aimer pour vivre heureusement, et que tous les plaisirs sont fades, s'il ne s'y mêle un peu d'amour (3, p. 594).

In Act IV, discussing the subject of marriage, the princess says, "J'ai toujours regardé l'hymen comme une chose affreuse, et j'avais fait serment d'abandonner plutôt la vie que de me résoudre jamais à perdre cette liberté pour qui j'avais des tendresses si grandes; . . . (3, pp. 609-610). She further states, "... Le mérite d'un prince m'a frappé aujourd'hui les yeux; et mon âme tout d'un coup, comme par un miracle, est devenue sensible aux traits de cette passion que j'avais toujours méprisée. . ." (3, p. 610).

Although the Princess d'Elide shows a weakening toward the end of the play in her otherwise strong, liberated stand, it is not because of the beguiling, romantic gestures of her suitors, but is rather the result of the indifference of prince Euryale. In Act V, when she learns that the prince despises her, she desires him even more, as she considers
it a challenge to win his affections. The princess tells
her father, "J'en prends, seigneur, à me venger de son
mépris; et comme je sais bien qu'il aime Aglante avec beau-
coup d'ardeur, je veux empêcher, s'il vous plaît qu'il ne
soit heureux avec elle" (3, p. 617). Although she does
succumb to the passion of love, it is in a reversed role.
She is liberated in her ideas and desires for personal free-
dom, yet feels rejected when not treated in the fashion to
which she has become accustomed.

The last minor play to be examined for its theme of
female liberation is George Dandin. In the notice by Robert
Jouanny, editor of Molière's works, the former says that one
of the problems in this play is "... de la liberté des filles
dans le choix d'un époux, ..." (4, p. 186). It has even
been pointed out by those who feel that Molière may need a
moral apology that this is the only play he ever wrote with
adultery as a theme. It would, however, take a pertinacious
lawyer to prove misconduct; and, the offense, although
imminent, is not the subject of the play (5, p. 451).
Actually, Dandin's aims may be considered nihilistic, as
perceived by the critic Lionel Gossman. Gossman states
that Dandin fears Angélique's unfaithfulness and yet de-
sires for it to be known. Dandin really knows that he
cannot win Angélique, so if he can show her to be unfaith-
ful, he will at least win a slight victory (1, p. 15).
The main characters in this play include George Dandin, a rich peasant; Angélique, his wife of higher social class who expresses her desire for liberation; and Clitandre, a man who loves Angélique. Thus, the plot is rather simple. Clitandre pursues Angélique through messages sent by his servant Lubin. During one of his intermediary ventures, Lubin meets Dandin and tells him that he has come to speak to Angélique in behalf of Clitandre. Lubin doesn't know that Dandin is Angélique's husband. Dandin feels humiliated and hurt upon learning of the relationship between his wife and Clitandre. He is tempted to tell Angélique's parents, so they will know what their daughter is really like and, thus, be sympathetic with his feelings. At first, Dandin does not receive support from Angélique's parents, who do not want their daughter's reputation degraded.

Later in the play Angélique slips out during the night to be with Clitandre, and Dandin again summons the parents of Angélique. When they arrive, their daughter tells them that because of her husband's jealousy and drinking he doesn't know what he is doing. She insists that he has made up stories about her. She continues by saying that she can no longer tolerate living in such conditions and, therefore, finds it impossible to remain with him. She appears the liberated woman when she says,

Tout mon malheur est de le trop considérer; et plutôt au Ciel que je fusse capable de souffrir, comme il dit, les galanteries de quelqu'un! je ne serois
pas tant à plaindre. Adieu: je me retire, et je ne puis plus endurer qu'on m'outrage de cette sorte (4, p. 201).

Dandin wishes to obtain a legal separation, but Angélique only wants a de facto one. The critic Judd Davis Hubert says that such a separation "... gives her complete freedom without endangering her reputation or jeopardizing the material benefit which she and her family have derived from her misalliance" (2, p. 196).

Angélique further reveals her liberation when she and Dandin are discussing the role of marriage in Act II, Scene II. Dandin says, "Mon Dieu! nous voyons clair. Je vous dis encore une fois que le mariage est une chaîne à laquelle on doit porter toute sorte de respect, et que c'est fort mal fait à vous d'en user comme vous faites. ..." (4, p. 208). Angélique openly defies this viewpoint when she responds,

... je vous déclare que mon dessein n'est pas de renoncer au monde, et de m'enterrer toute vive dans un mari. Comment? parce qu'un homme s'aveise de nous épouser, il faut d'abord que toutes choses soient finies pour nous, et que nous rompions tout commerce avec les vivants? C'est une chose merveilleuse que cette tyrannie de Messieurs les maris, et je les trouve bons de vouloir qu'on soit morte à tous les divertissements, et qu'on ne vive que pour eux. Je me moque de cela, et ne veux point mourir si jeune (4, p. 209).

She continues expressing her liberality when she tells Dandin, "... je veux jouir de quelque nombre de beaux jours que m'offre la jeunesse, prendre les douces libertés
que l'âge me permet, voir un peu le beau monde, et goûter le plaisir de m'ouir dire des douceurs" (4, p. 210).

One final illustration of her liberal attitude is in Act III, when Angélique knows that Dandin is aware of her evening rendezvous with Clitandre. Angélique admits her guilt, but tells Dandin,

Il est vrai que j'ai failli, ... Mais enfin ce sont des actions que vous devez pardonner à mon âge; des emportements de jeune personne qui n'a encore rien vu, et ne fait que d'entrer au monde; des libertés où l'on s'abandonne sans y penser de mal, ... (4, p. 227).

Near the end of the play Dandin is upset, not only with Angélique's flirtations with Clitandre, but especially by her treatment of him as an "object-in-the-world" (1, p. 155). The critic Lionel Gossman uses this phrase to refer to the small esteem Angélique has for Dandin. George is so depressed by this indifference on the part of Angélique that he sees no other remedy for his plight other than drowning himself, which is the closing idea of the play.

The minor plays, like the major plays, contain female characters who represent the liberated woman--forthright, outspoken, and unorthodox. The characters simply do not wish to follow the traditional role of women in marriage. Perhaps the most liberated aspect of Dorimène in Le Mariage Force is her desire to have no restraints on herself and her willingness to accord the same rights to her husband. In La Princesse d'Elide, one finds a woman who equates
marriage with death, and yet succumbs to her heart's desires when she does not receive from Euryale the customary atten-
tions she expects. Finally, with Angélique in George
Dandin, one sees that the heroine is willing to marry, but she has no intention of letting the marriage curtail her private life and personal desires. Therefore, it can be said that Dorimène, Princesse d'Elide, and Angélique exemplify the liberated woman as they share common attri-
butes in regard to the role of marriage. Thus, these women of the minor plays, as the females from the major plays, foreshadow twentieth-century liberated women.
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CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study, as has been stated previously, is to show an emergence of the liberation of women in seven selected plays of Molière. In his choice of female characters, the playwright appears to have selected women who have several traits in common. The females are rebellious toward authority, especially in the matter of having their mates chosen by another. The heroines are characteristically young girls who enjoy being audaciously flirtatious and who enjoy the rather dubious attentions of young suitors.

In the more important or major plays cited here—L'Ecole des Maris, L'Ecole des Femmes, Le Misanthrope, and Les Femmes Savantes—it is interesting to note the similarities among the leading female characters. Célimène in Le Misanthrope is reproached by Alceste for her flirtatious manner toward men. She is scolded not only by her suitor Alceste, but also by Arsinoë, a lady of the court. Célimène demonstrates her liberation primarily by doing as she pleases, despite the desires or comments of those around her.

Showing the same liberation, but on a somewhat more intellectual level, are the female characters in the three
other major plays. They include Armande in Les Femmes Savantes, Agnès in L'Ecole des Femmes, and Isabelle in L'Ecole des Maris. Armande represents the purely intellectual woman who desires companionship in marriage, but scorns the sexual side of a marital union. She is determined to choose the husband she wants and to make her decisions as she sees fit. Her sister Henriette, on the other hand, represents the traditional view of a woman's role, to which the précieux and learned ladies of the day were opposed.

Like Armande, Agnès in L'Ecole des Femmes expresses the desire of many women to be emancipated. Agnès feels that she should be able to select her own husband on her own terms. For Agnès, like Armande, emotions and sentiment are very important and must of necessity be of a personal nature.

Isabelle is also like Armande in that she resents the authority of men who prescribe what she may do or whom she may see. Under the strict observation and narrow-mindedness of her ward Sganarelle, Isabelle in L'Ecole des Maris resents her guardian's domination and selfishness, and, as a result, plays a trick on Sganarelle so that she may be with her chosen lover.

In each of these women, independence, outspoken actions, and a defiant nature are present. Similarly, in the minor or less well-known plays here studied, La Princesse d'Elide, George Dandin, and Le Mariage Forcé, evidence of complementing desires and emancipated ideas can be seen in the female
protagonists. These characters include Angélique in George Dandin, the princess in La Princesse d'Elide, and Dorimène in Le Mariage Forcé.

La Princesse d'Elide and Dorimène are both single girls who are being pursued by suitors wishing to marry them. The women share a deep concern for the rights of the wife in a marriage. La Princesse d'Elide defiantly criticizes marriage and believes it to be the same as death. Similarly, Dorimène tells Sganarelle, her intended, that she believes he will not treat her as a wolf in a cage, as so many husbands treat their wives. She further shows her liberation by advocating an open marriage, in which no restraints would be placed on her husband or herself.

Angélique, unlike La Princesse d'Elide and Dorimène, is already married. Nevertheless, she shows perhaps even more liberation than the two aforementioned female characters. Angélique does not consider that her role as a wife exists totally so as to please her husband. Contrary to Dandin's stated beliefs, Angélique expresses defiance when she tells Dandin that she does not wish to bury herself alive in her husband. Angélique is even so liberated as to want to indulge in affairs, for she tells her husband that she plans to profit from life and taste the sweet liberties accorded to those of her age. As proof, Angélique does not discourage the advances made to her by Lubin. In fact, she
responds openly and even tells Dandin that she has sneaked out to be with Lubin.

As can be seen in the three leading ladies of the minor plays here cited, each is in control of her own destiny, unafraid to express her desires or to pursue them. They do not intend to lose their identity in marriage or in any male-female relationship. In essence, they, like the female characters of the major plays, demonstrate the essential characteristics of the liberated woman.

Perhaps it would be helpful to recapitulate briefly the scene which most clearly demonstrates the liberation of the female characters in each of the seven plays presented in this study.

The most "liberated scene" in Le Misanthrope is no doubt Scene IV, Act III. It is the conversation between Celimene and Arsinoë in which Arsinoë is criticizing Celimene's unorthodox behavior. Arsinoë says,

\[
\text{Hélas! et croyez-vous que l'on se mette en peine}
\]
\[
\text{De ce nombre d'amants dont vous faites la vaine,}
\]
\[
\text{Et qu'il ne nous soit pas fort aise de juger}
\]
\[
\text{A quel prix aujourd'hui l'on peut les engager?}
\]
\[
\text{Pensez-vous faire croire, à voir comme tout roule,}
\]
\[
\text{Que votre seul merite attire cette foule (2, p. 851)}?
\]

Celimene is undisturbed by Arsinoë's accusations. She simply states,

Madame, on peut, je crois, louer et blamer tout,
Et chacun a raison suivant l'âge et le gout.
Il est une saison pour la galanterie;
Il en est une aussi propre à la pruderie.
On peut, par politique, en prendre le parti,
Quand de nos jeunes ans l'éclat est amorti:
Cela sert à couvrir de facheuses disgraces.
Je ne dis pas qu'un jour je ne suive vos traces:
L'âge amenera tout, et ce n'est pas le temps,
Madame, comme on sait, d'être prude à vingt ans (2, p. 851).

Agnes in L'Ecole des Femmes shows her liberation openly in Scene V, Act II, when she admits to Arnolphe that she has been seeing Horace. Agnes says,

Il juroit qu'il m'aimoit d'une amour sans seconde,
Et me disoit des mots les plus gentils du monde,
Des choses que jamais rien ne peut égaler,
Et dont, toutes les fois que je l'entends parler,
La douceur me chatouille et là dedans remue
Certain je ne sais quoi dont je suis toute émue (2, p. 429).

Lisette, Léonor's confidante in L'Ecole des Maris, demonstrates her strength of character and independence in Scene II of Act I when she speaks:

En effet, tous ces soins sont des choses infâmes.
Sommes-nous chez les Turcs pour renfermer les femmes?
Car on dit qu'on les tient esclaves en ce lieu,
Et que c'est pour cela qu'ils sont maudits de Dieu.
Notre honneur est, Monsieur, bien sujet à foiblesse,
S'il faut qu'il ait besoin qu'on le garde sans cesse.
Pensez-vous, après tout, que ces précautions
Servent de quelque obstacle à nos intentions,
Et quand nous nous mettons quelque chose à la tête,
Que l'homme le plus fin ne soit pas une bête?
Toutes ces gardes-là sont visions de fous:
Le plus sûr est, ma foi, de se fier en nous.
Qui nous gêne se met en un peril extrême,
Et toujours notre honneur veut se garder lui-même.
C'est nous inspirer presque un désir de pécher,
Que montrer tant de soins de nous en empêcher;
Et si par un mari je me voyois contrainte,
J'aurais fort grande pente à confirmer sa crainte (2, pp. 323-324).

Armande, as shown earlier, is a representative character of both independence and intellectual pursuits in Les Femmes Savantes. Unlike her conventional sister Henriette, who
wants to marry and be "a good wife," Armande is more interested in the arts, science, and philosophy. Her criticism of Clitandre in Scene II, Act IV, reflects the liberality of her views when she exclaims,

Appelez-vous, Monsieur, être à vos voeux contraire, Que de leur arracher ce qu'ils ont de vulgaire, Et vouloir les reduire à cette pureté Ou du parfait amour consiste la beauté? Vous ne sauriez pour moi tenir votre pensée Du commerce des sens nette et débarrassée? Et vous ne goutez point, dans ses plus doux appas, Cette union des coeurs ou les corps n'entrent pas? Vous ne pouvez aimer que d'une amour grossière? Qu'avec tout l'attirail des noeuds de la matière? Et pour nourrir les feux que chez vous on produit, Il faut un mariage, et tout ce qui s'ensuit? Ah! quel etrange amour! et que les belles ames Sont bien loin de bruler de ces terrestres flammes! Les sens n'ont point de part à toutes leurs ardeurs, Et ce beau feu ne veut marier que les coeurs; Comme une chose indigne, il laisse là le reste. C'est un feu pur et net comme le feu celeste; On ne pousse, avec lui, que d'honnêtes soupirs, Et l'on ne penche point vers les sales désirs; Rien d'impur ne se mêle au but qu'on se propose; On aime pour aimer, et non pour autre chose; Ce n'est qu'a l'esprit seul que vont tous les transports, Et l'on ne s'aperçoit jamais qu'on ait un corps

The most "liberated scene" of George Dandin is at the time of the conversation between George and Angélique in Scene II, Act II, when she says,

Oh! les Dandins s'y accoutumeront s'ils veulent. Car pour moi, je vous déclare que mon dessein n'est pas de renoncer au monde, et de m'enterrer toute vive dans un mari. Comment? parce qu'un homme s'avise de nous épouser, il faut d'abord que toutes choses soient finies pour nous, et que nous rompions tout commerce avec les vivants? C'est une chose merveilleuse que cette tyrannie de Messieurs les maris, et je les trouve bons de vouloir qu'on soit morte à tous les divertissements, et qu'on ne vive que pour eux. Je me moque de cela, et ne veux point mourir si jeune (3, p. 209).
In Scene IV, Act II, of La Princesse d'Elide, the princess expresses her dislike of marriage when she declares,

Seigneur, je vous demande la licence de prévenir par deux paroles la déclaration des pensées que vous pouvez avoir. Il y a deux vérités, seigneur, aussi constantes l'une que l'autre, et dont je puis vous assurer également: l'une, que vous avez un absolu pouvoir sur moi, et que vous ne sauriez m'ordonner rien ou je ne réponds aussitôt par une obéissance aveugle; l'autre, que je regarde l'hyménée ainsi que la trepas, et qu'il m'est impossible de forcer cette aversion naturelle. Me donner un mari, et me donner la mort, c'est une même chose; mais votre volonté va la première, et mon obéissance m'est bien plus chère que ma vie. Après cela, parlez, seigneur, prononcez librement ce que vous voulez (2, p. 596).

Finally, Dorimène's desire to keep her own identity in marriage, which she describes in Scene II, Act I, of Le Mariage Forcé, is a striking example of Molière's portrayal of the liberated woman. Dorimène says,

... Comme vous êtes un fort galant homme, et que vous savez comme il faut vivre, je crois que nous ferons le meilleur ménage du monde ensemble, et que nous ne serons point de ces maris incommodes qui veulent que leurs femmes vivent comme des loups-garous. Je vous avoue que je ne m'accorderais pas de cela, et que la solitude me désespère. J'aime le jeu, les visites, les assemblées, les cadeaux et les promenades, en un mot, toutes les choses de plaisir, et vous devez être ravi d'avoir une femme de mon humeur. Nous n'aurons jamais aucun démèlè ensemble, et je ne vous contraindrai point dans vos actions, comme j'espère que de votre côté, vous ne me contrairiez point dans les miennes; car, pour moi, je tiens qu'il faut avoir une complaisance mutuelle, et qu'on ne se doit point marier pour se faire enrager l'un l'autre. Enfin nous vivrons, étant mariés, comme deux personnes qui savent leur monde. Aucun soupçon jaloux ne nous troublera la cervelle; et c'est assez que vous, serez assure de ma fidélité, comme je serai persuadée de la votre ... (2, p. 553).
The female characters who have been examined in this study in actuality progressed in their struggle for the acknowledgment of their individual worth. As Germain Greer writes in her book *The Female Eunuch*:

The staple of French and English farce was the unwitting cuckoldom of the hardworked and henpecked husband whose wife will not keep house or cook for him. . . . The characteristics of middle-class marriage are present: the wife is chief consumer and showcase for her husband's wealth: idle, unproductive, narcissistic, and conniving. She had been chosen as a sexual object, in preference to others, and the imagery of obsession became more appropriate to her case. This is the class who were not exposed to the popular literature of escapist wedding which grew out of the collision of upper-class adulterous romance (1, pp. 223-224).

The female protagonists of this study--Celimène, Agnès, Isabelle, Armande, Angelique, la Princesse d'Elide, and Dorimène--rebelled against being forced into Germain Greer's example of a showpiece: the uneducated, middle-class, married women. Molière's women emerged as independent, forthright women who refused the role society usually assigned to them, who openly expressed their desires, and who attempted to create their own destinies. Although these women were in the seventeenth century, their attitudes and actions were undoubtedly a foreshadowing of the twentieth-century, liberated woman described by Germain Greer as revolting against the traditional image. Miss Greer acknowledges the existence of the theme of female liberation in this early literature when she refers to the following statement made by Laclos in 1783 in his work *On the Education of Women*:
Draw near, women, and hear what I have to say. . . .
Come and learn how you were born the companion of men and became his slave; how you grew to like the condition and think it natural; and finally, how the long habituation of slavery so degraded you that you preferred its sapping but convenient vain to the more difficult virtues of freedom and repute. . . (l, p. 6).

It is generally recognized that not only does contemporary woman not conform to the "slave" described by Laclos, but, if Molière is to be believed, there were seventeenth-century women who also refused to do so. The liberated woman of the twentieth century might well be surprised to know that so many of her ideals were treated so dramatically and effectively in the theatre of Molière some three hundred years earlier. Just as in the agitated years of the 1960's and the 1970's, Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, called Molière, created strong, relatively liberated women, who refused to play the role society had dictated for them.
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