

Molière en Angleterre, 1660-1670 by J. E. Gillet

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The Modern Language Review, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Jan., 1914), pp. 127-131

Published by: [Modern Humanities Research Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3713446>

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where the soul of the poet cries from the depths of shame. But in so far as he was a Swinburnian and a pagan—and it seems that Wilde's spiritual nature only awoke after he had drained the cup of pleasure—he has no relation whatever to Baudelaire. It is quite un-Baudelairian to celebrate Swinburne as one who

Hath kissed the lips of Proserpine
And sung the Galilæan's requiem. (p. 239.)

Many a poet beside Baudelaire has distrusted the 'idea of progress' and has hated democracy (p. 240). We cannot follow Mrs Turquet-Milnes in finding in this 'aristocratic attitude' any proof of Baudelairian influence.

Before closing we must say a word as to Mrs Turquet-Milnes own style. Although we differ from her on some points, we have no small measure of admiration for her thought—but we have no word of praise for the prose in which she has clothed it. It jars upon the ear like a solo on the kettle-drum: it is as jog-trot as 'the butter-women's rank to market'—totally devoid of rhythm and harmony of phrase. The effect is a continual staccato which at times becomes nerve-racking. We think that Mrs Turquet-Milnes might considerably increase her popularity, without reducing the lucidity of her prose, if she would remember that the full-stop is not the only mark of punctuation in use in English.

The bibliography should have mentioned M. Cassagne's *La Théorie de L'Art pour l'Art*, indispensable to all students of the period; and M. T. de Visan's *L'Attitude du Lyrisme Contemporain*, if only to make it clear that despite a sonnet of which Mrs Turquet-Milnes makes too much (she is not alone in this), Baudelaire and the 'Symbolists' have very little, if anything, in common.

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DUBLIN.

Molière en Angleterre, 1660–1670. By J. E. GILLET. Paris: Champion. 1913. 8vo. 240 pp.

In a merry passage written in 1665, Sprat declared that the English 'have far exceeded' the French 'in the representation of the different humours. The truth is, the French have always seemed almost ashamed of the true comedy, making it not much more than the subject of their farces.' Sprat's contemporaries did not apparently share his opinion. In 1663 or 1664, Davenant borrowed the second act of *The Playhouse to be let* from *Sganarelle*; adaptations by various playwrights followed in quick succession, and, from 1663 to 1670, no less than eleven other plays were indebted to Molière's art. How Molière was first brought to the notice of the English public, what were Tartufe's and

Alceste's naturalisation papers on British soil, are the points dealt with at great length in the present essay.

M. Gillet claims to have verified and completed the accounts given of the subject by previous scholars: 'Pour saisir le fil de la continuité historique, il fallait s'arrêter à ces débuts modestes avec une attention minutieuse, ne négliger aucun détail de bibliographie ou d'histoire théâtrale....Je me suis attaché à traiter l'époque des origines avec une patience et une prudence spéciales....Voici donc un travail assez sec, mais, je l'espère, précis et complet et vide d'hypothèses risquées et d'amplifications' (p. 4). This is well said and here was the right way to do good and unselfish service in the cause of literary history. It may be wished, however, that the many opponents of the so-called bibliographical method and some of its friends would realize its main disadvantage, which is its treacherousness in the hands of an over-confident and unskilled workman; briefly speaking, 'n'est pas bibliographe qui veut'....As they stand, M. Gillet's investigations display much labour and are likely to benefit students of comparative literature; for instance, his list of the dates of production of early English Moliéresque plays (pp. 200—208) and his reprint of parallel passages from John Lacy, John Caryl, Matthew Medbourne, and Thomas Betterton (pp. 146—199) can hardly be dispensed with. The greater pity it seems, therefore, that M. Gillet should have wandered far from his own professed and very high ideal. In fact, a good opportunity has been lost of giving a final answer to an interesting question.

First, M. Gillet's analysis of his sources of information (pp. 7—10) is unsatisfactory. Instead of being told, however candidly, that 'après avoir étudié Molière dans le texte de MM. Despois et Mesnard, il fallait se familiariser avec la littérature moliéresque,' we should have preferred to know to what precise extent the present contribution is based upon Langbaine's *Account of the English Dramatic Poets*, Giles Jacob's *Poetical Register* and Van Laun's articles in the *Moliériste*. Similarly, we should like to have seen Mr Harvey Jellie's *Sources du théâtre anglais à l'époque de la Restauration* and Mr M. Kerby's *Molière and the Restoration Comedy*, briefly dismissed as feeble attempts at criticism. Not so; Mr Kerby is severely taken to task: 'et ceci est plus grave—l'auteur ne mentionne que sept sur douze des pièces que nous allons bientôt examiner et ne leur consacre en tout que seize pages' (p. 10). True, but in 1691, Langbaine traced out pilferings from Molière in Davenant's *Playhouse to be let* (1), Flecknoe's *Damoiselles à la Mode* (2), Dryden's *Sir Martin Mur-all* (3), Shadwell's *Sullen Lovers* (4), Sedley's *Mulberry Garden* (5), Dryden's *Evening's Love* (6), Lacy's *Dumb Lady* (7), Caryl's *Sir Solomon* (8), Medbourne's *Tartuffe or the French Puritan* (9). Betterton's *Amorous Widow* (10) was added to this list by Giles Jacob, and Van Laun made valuable suggestions. Lastly, Molière's influence on Etheridge in *The Comical Revenge* (11) and *She wou'd if she cou'd* (12) did not pass unnoticed by Mr Edmund Gosse and Mr A. W. Verity. Our conclusion is that the making up of the above list is not due to M. Gillet's efforts, as might be inferred from his preface. His reticence,

on one hand, and his useless comments, on the other, cannot be justified; however, they mean that our author has wished to do better and to claim more than he could.

The truth is that, in many a case, M. Gillet has omitted to acknowledge what he necessarily owes to his authorities. There are but three insignificant references to Langbaine in the chapter on *An Evening's Love*, yet Langbaine wrote, with some precision: 'This play is, in a manner, wholly stolen from the French, being patched up from Corneille's *Le feint Astrologue*, Molière's *Dépit amoureux* and his *Les Précieuses ridicules*, and Quinault's *L'amant indiscret*, not to mention little hints borrowed from Shakespeare, Petronius Arbiter, etc. The main plot of this play is built on that of Corneille's or rather Calderon's play called *El Astrologo fingido*.... Aurelia's affectation in her speech, p. 31, is borrowed from Molière's *Les Précieuses ridicules*; the scene between Alonzo and Lopez, p. 39, is translated from Molière's *Dépit Amoureux*, Act II. Sc. 6; Camilla's begging a new gown of Don Melchor, p. 61, from the same, Act I. Sc. 2. The love quarrel between Wildblood and Jacinta, Maskall and Beatrix, Act IV. Sc. the last, is copied from the same play, Act IV. Sc. 3 and 4...¹' We hear that, in *Sir Martin Mar-all*, Dryden 'fait aussi des emprunts...au roman de Francion de Sorel, à Voiture dont il traduit très gentiment la chanson L'amour sous sa loy...et enfin à une pièce de Shakerley Marmion' (p. 60). Let us now turn to Langbaine (*op. cit.*, p. 170): 'There are several other turns of the plot copied from other authors as Warner's playing on the lute instead of his master....See *Francion* written by M. du Pare, lib. 7. Old Moody and Sir John being hoisted up in their altitudes is taken...from Shakerley Marmion's *Fine Companion*, Act IV. Sc. 1². The song of Blind Love to this hour...is translated from a song made by M. de Voiture, though I must do Mr Dryden the justice to acquaint the world that he has kept to the sense and the same measure of verse.' And why should M. Gillet have thought it fit, not only to transcribe, but also to correct Gerard Langbaine? 'Langbaine que suit docilement M. Halliwell (*Dict. of Old Engl. Plays*), réfère le passage en question à la *Francion* de M. du Parc!...Dryden l'a emprunté à la *Vraie histoire de Francion composée par Charles Sorel*, pp. 281—282 de l'édition Colombey, Paris, 1858.' In the first place, Langbaine has *M. du Pare*, not *M. du Parc*, and Halliwell writes *M. du Parc*, but these are trifles; in the second place, the mark of exclamation may be transferred to M. Gillet himself, who will consult Colombey's edition of *Francion* (Avant-propos, p. 4) with profit: 'Sorel n'a jamais cessé de décliner la paternité de Francion...La première édition de ce livre...est intitulée: "Histoire comique de Francion, fléau des vicieux." Presque toutes les autres éditions portent ce titre uniforme: "La vraie histoire comique de Francion composée par Nicolas de Moulinet, Sieur du Parc"³.' Further

¹ Langbaine, *op. cit.*, pp. 163 and 164.

² M. Gillet points out (note 5, p. 60) 'l'erreur de Langbaine qui renvoie à iv, 3.' Langbaine has 'Act 4, sc. 1' and his reference is the right one.

³ Cf. the first English translation (1655): *The Comical History of Francion...by M. de Moulines, sieur du Parc...etc.*

on (p. 109), 'Langbaine nous assure que le Tartufe [Medbourne's adaptation] fut reçu *par des applaudissements universels*.' Not so, indeed: 'This play was received with universal applause on our English stage, *if we believe our author*, and is accounted by him the masterpiece of Molière's productions.' One more instance of first-hand knowledge and accurate scholarship: Betterton's *Amorous Widow* was produced sometime in 1670: 'C'était l'époque où l'on représentait chaque année, au 9 novembre, fête du Lord-Maire, *The London Cuckolds* de Ravenscroft, farce pleine d'outrages envers les paisibles habitants de la Cité' (p. 115). This passage is practically by Van Laun, according to whom and many others Ravenscroft's play was *first performed in 1682*: 'On avait l'habitude de représenter cette pièce...le jour même de l'installation du lord maire de Londres, pour montrer le mépris qu'on ressentait pour les gens de la Cité.' I need not insist upon other blunders; several footnotes are incomplete and one of them (p. 49) refers to a passage in the appendix which I have not been able to discover; the English translation(?) (footnote, p. 225) of Sprat's *Observations on Monsieur de Sorbière's Voyage into England* will not be found anywhere; lastly, Andrew Marvell did not write 'Fleckno, un prêtre irlandais à Rome' (p. 40).

Failing as a scientific bibliographer, M. Gillet also fails as critic. On the whole, his appraising of Molière's fortune in the first ten years of the Restoration, is correct (p. 134). Molière's simple plots did not prove suitable to the native taste for a great 'variety of actions' and 'many other little contrivances²'; his conception of 'l'honnête homme' and his ethical tendencies were not understood; alone, some characters of his, thanks perhaps to their affinities with Jonsonian humours, succeeded in leaving a lasting mark on English literature; the deformations they underwent bear witness to the brutal realism and coarseness of the age³. My quarrel with M. Gillet is that his few judicious remarks have to be rescued out of a jumble of unfit materials; his literary sense either runs away with irrelevant scraps of information, or indulges in sayings like the following: 'Il se fait ainsi que Sam Weller, des *Pickwick Papers*, est un descendant authentique, d'une part, des valets espagnols que Smollett a empruntés à Lesage, d'autre part, de l'immortel Dufoy-Mascarille' (p. 140), 'Et ne vous récriez pas sur la corruption de la société anglaise....Au point de vue de la moralité, Charles II et Louis XIV se valent....La différence entre les deux pays était que l'un ignorait l'art du vernis' (p. 138). Sam Weller will have a ready answer, and this 'art du vernis,' whatever is meant by it, was not a little responsible for Molière's career and genius. Again—but here an error of judgment is tacked on to an error of fact: 'A l'origine, ne l'oublions pas, leur curiosité [of the founders of the Royal Society] s'étendait à la littérature....La Royal Society, avant de devenir exclusivement scientifique, etc....' (p. 15).

¹ Van Laun in *Le Moliériste*, Nov. 1880, p. 238. Cf. Halliwell, *Dict. of Old Engl. Plays*, under *The London Cuckolds*.

² Sprat, *Observations on M. de Sorbière's Voyage into England*, p. 168.

³ Cf. Dufoy in *The Comical Revenge and Mascarille*.

My sole object in giving so much room to the present work has been to defend the bibliographical method. But surely, this method does not demand that French should be butchered on every possible occasion; it does not even approve of such an expression as 'une farce de Molière, farce un peu longuette' (p. 26).

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MINOR NOTICES.

An attractive little volume among the 'Cambridge Manuals of Science and Literature' is *The Ballad in Literature* by T. F. Henderson (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1912). The book consists of four chapters: 'The Literary Form, Character and Sources of the Ballad,' 'Ballad Themes,' 'The Origin and Authorship of Ballads,' and 'The Later British Ballads.' The most important is the third, in which the views of communal composition developed by Professor Kittredge and Professor Gummere are subjected to a searching criticism, which, it must be said, seems to be to a great extent successful, at least as against the more extreme positions, and the essential differences between their views and those of Child are effectively pointed out. Speaking of the ballad of *Robyn and Gandeley* Mr Henderson concludes: 'Any one who chooses to believe that the genius of the improvising throng and the chance of blind tradition are, together, sufficient to account for the production of this fine ballad, may be left in the possession of his conviction: my own mental faculties will not permit me to conceive its possibility.' As a convenient popular guide to the subject this little handbook may be heartily recommended.

We are indebted to Miss Edith J. Morley for an attractive reprint of Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (London, Frowde, 1911) together with one of his dialogues relating to 'the golden age of Queen Elizabeth.' It was time that these should be made more accessible than they hitherto have been. No separate reprint had appeared for more than a century, and, apart from the early editions, all that was available was the collected edition of the works of Hurd, and this was published as long ago as 1811. By way of introduction to this most interesting text, we are given an outline of the author's life in the form of autobiographical notes 'found among his papers after his decease': also a well-written essay on the significance of the *Letters*, the substance of which leaves little to be desired. Miss Morley has contrived to emphasise just those features of Hurd's work which most needed