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Course Material

Department of English and Modern European Languages

M.A. SEMESTER IV

S M Mirza

Paper-XIV(C) : Comparative Literature

Unit IV : Drama

Aristophanes : *The Frogs*

Shudrak : *Mrichchakatikam (The Clay Cart)*

Moliere : *The Miser*

Luigi Pirandello : *Six Characters in Search of an Author*

Dear Students,

Hello.

Only **the texts highlighted** above remain to be taught.

I'm providing you course material below for **Moliere : *The Miser*** so that you can understand it and prepare your answers for the exam.

Prepare the following: **critical appreciation**, satirical elements, the play as a comedy of manners, characterization of Harpagon.

I'll send you course material on the remaining texts soon.

In case you have any doubts you can contact me on phone or send queries to my email.

All the best!

Moliere : *The Miser*

Biographical note

Molière {mohl-yair'}, whose real name was Jean Baptiste Poquelin, composed 12 of the most durable and penetratingly satirical full-length comedies of all time, some in rhyming verse, some in prose, as well as six shorter farces and comedies. As a comic dramatist he ranks with such

other distinctive masters of the genre as Aristophanes, Plautus, and George Bernard Shaw. He was also the leading French comic actor, stage director, and dramatic theoretician of the 17th century.

In a theatrical period, the early baroque, dominated by the formal neoclassical tragedies of Pierre and Thomas Corneille, and Racine, Molière affirmed the potency of comedy as a serious, flexible art form.

He was born on Jan. 15, 1622, to Marie and Jean Poquelin; his father was a Parisian furniture merchant and upholsterer to the king. Jean Baptiste received his early education at the College de Clermont, a Jesuit school, becoming a promising scholar of Latin and Greek. Although he proceeded to study law and was awarded his law degree in 1642, he turned away from both the legal profession and his father's business.

Instead, he incorporated (1643) an acting troupe, the Illustre Theatre, in collaboration with the Bejart family, probably because he had fallen in love with their oldest daughter, Madeleine Bejart, who became his mistress. At roughly the same time he also acquired the pseudonym Molière. With this company, Molière played an unsuccessful season in Paris and went bankrupt, then left to tour the provinces, primarily in southern and southwestern France, from about 1646 to 1658.

In the late 1660s, Molière developed a lung ailment from which he never recovered, although he continued to write, act, direct, and manage his troupe as energetically as before. He finally collapsed on Feb. 17, 1673, after the fourth performance of *The Imaginary Invalid*, and died at home that evening.

Four days later, on the night of February 21, he was interred in Saint Joseph's Cemetery. Church leaders refused to officiate or to grant his body a formal burial. Seven years later the king united Molière's company with one of its competitors; since that time the French national theater, the Comédie Francaise, has been known as the House of Molière.

The strongest influence on Molière's theater came from the Italian *commedia dell'arte* troupes -- with their stock characters and situations -- that he encountered during his travels. This influence was enhanced by Molière's sharing of the Théâtre du Petit-Bourbon in Paris with the Italian Players, led by the celebrated Scaramouche. In his longer comedies, Molière immensely refined the *commedia* themes and techniques, setting most of his plots in and around Paris and raising neoclassical French comedy to a plane of artistry and inventiveness never attained before or since. He applied the *alexandrine*, or rhymed hexameter line -- borrowed from contemporary tragedies, many of which he had staged -- to a relaxed dialogue that imitated conversational speech. He also created a gallery of incisive portraits: Tartuffe the religious hypocrite, and Orgon, his dupe; Jourdain the social climber; Don Juan the rebel and libertine; cuckolds such as Arnolphe, Dandin, and Amphitryon; Alceste the stony idealist; Harpagon the miser; Scapin the trickster; Argan the hypochondriac; Philaminte the pretentiously cultured lady; and many more.

Molière's principal plays include **The School for Husbands** (1661), **The School for Wives** (1662), **Tartuffe** (1664), **Don Juan** (1665), **The Misanthrope** (1666), **The Miser** (1668), **The**

Bourgeois Gentleman (1670), **The Learned Ladies** (1672), and **The Imaginary Invalid** (1673).

Publication

The Miser is a five-act comedy in prose. It was first performed on September 9, 1668, in the theatre of the Palais-Royal in Paris and published in 1669.

Overview

The plot concerns the classic conflict of love and money. The miser Harpagon wishes his daughter Elise to marry a wealthy old man, Anselme, who will accept her without a dowry, but she loves the penniless Valère. Harpagon himself has set his eye on young, impoverished Mariane, whom his son Cléante also loves. Much of the play's action focuses on Harpagon's stinginess. Valère and Mariane are revealed to be Anselme's long-lost children, and they are happily paired with the miser's son and daughter by the play's end, after Harpagon insists that Anselme pay for both weddings.

Although *The Miser* is usually considered to be a comedy, its tone is one of absurdity and incongruity rather than of gaiety. The play, based on the *Aulularia* of Roman comic playwright Plautus, recasts the ancient comic figure of the miser who is inhuman in his worship of money and all too human in his need for respect and affection.

Background

Molière's *The Miser* (in French, *L'avare*) is a five-act stage play generally classified as a comedy of manners. Throughout the play, the author brilliantly blends satire and farce with a fast-moving plot that features many surprises.

Notes and Analysis

Sources

Molière modeled the protagonist in *The Miser* on a character in *Aulularia* (*Pot of Gold*), a comedy by the ancient Roman playwright Plautus (254-184 BC), according to the nineteenth-century French scholar Eugène Benoist. Benoist translated *Aulularia* in an edition published in Paris in 1878 by Librairie Hachette.

In the Plautus work, an elderly Athenian named Euclio finds a pot of gold that he keeps hidden from others while in the midst of arranging for his daughter to marry a wealthy neighbor. In the

Molière play, an elderly Parisian named Harpagon keeps hidden a vast sum paid to him while in the midst of arranging a marriage between himself and an attractive young woman.

Setting

The action takes place in Paris in the 1660s at the residence of an elderly miser named Harpagon. The sun king Louis XIV sits on the throne of France, presiding over an age of high fashion, architectural splendor, titillating gossip, and court intrigue.

Characters

Harpagon: Title character and protagonist, who spends most of his time guarding his hoard of money and devising ways to reduce or avoid paying household expenses. He is a widower who has one son, Cléante, and one daughter, Élise. Although he is over seventy, he is attempting to arrange a marriage between himself and an attractive young woman, Marianne.

Cléante: Son of Harpagon. He loves Marianne, the young woman his father wishes to marry, and attempts to procure a loan to help her and her sick mother, who are impoverished. **Élise:** Daughter of Harpagon and beloved of Valère. Against her wishes, Harpagon hopes to marry her to a wealthy man of his choosing.

Valère: Son of Anselme (Don Thomas d'Alburci) and beloved of Élise. He accepts a job as steward in Harpagon's household to be close to Élise.

Marianne: Beloved of Cléante, who had saved her from drowning.

Marianne's Mother: Sick woman cared for by her daughter. It is revealed near the end of the play that she is also the mother of Valère and husband of Anselme (Don Thomas d'Alburci). She has no speaking part.

Anselme (Don Thomas d'Alburci): Man to whom Harpagon wishes to marry Élise. Near the end of the play, it is revealed that he is the father of Valère and Marianne, whom he had thought were lost in a shipwreck. He is reunited with them after sixteen years.

Frosine: Matchmaker who arranges for Harpagon to meet Marianne.

Maître (Master) Simon: Go-between engaged by La Flèche to obtain a loan for Cléante.

Maître (Master) Jacques: Harpagon's cook and coachman.

La Flèche: Cléante's valet.

Dame Claude: Harpagon's housekeeper.

Brindavoine, La Merluce: Servants assigned to washing glasses and serving wine at a special dinner in Harpagon's house.

Police Magistrate (Commissaire): Officer who hears Harpagon's complaint that his money cache has been stolen.

Clerk: Assistant of the police magistrate. He has no speaking part.

Pedro: Elderly servant who survived a shipwreck with Valère. He has no speaking part.

Spanish Captain: Seaman who rescued Valère and Pedro and raised Valère as his own son. He has no speaking part.

Picard: Neighbor of Harpagon. He has no speaking part.

Plot Summary

Note: All the scenes take place in the Paris home of a miser named Harpagon.

Élise, the daughter of the miser Harpagon, tells Valère that she loves him very much but worries that he will lose interest in her.

“I fear that cruel coldness with which your sex so often repays the too warm proofs of an innocent love” (1.1), she says.

When he reaffirms his love for Élise, her spirits rise and she praises him for his attentions to her, beginning with the time when he saved her from drowning. That was when they first met and fell in love. Thereafter, for her sake, he neglected searching for his parents, from whom he was separated years before by a shipwreck that cast him adrift. A Spanish ship rescued him and his elderly servant. The fate of his parents was unknown. Valère also reminds Élise that he gave up his title of nobility in order to become her father's household steward. To get the job, Valère flattered Harpagon, praised his weaknesses as strengths, and pretended to agree with him on all matters.

Also living in the household is Élise's brother, Cléante. The next time she is alone with him, he confides to her that he loves a young woman named Marianne. She devotes herself to caring for her sick mother but has little money to pay for necessities. When Cléante visits her at her home, they have no time for courtship. She does not even know his name, although he realizes that she loves him. Cléante would like to provide financial assistance for her and her mother, but he cannot because of the tight knot his father keeps around the family purse strings. Cléante reminds his sister that they do not even have decent clothes to wear because of their father. Cléante then asks her to speak with their father about his predicament in regard to Marianne. If he refuses help, Cléante says, he will leave home.

“It is but too true that every day he gives us more and more reason to regret the death of our mother,”
Élise says.

When they hear their father approaching, they go elsewhere to finish their talk.

Harpagon is browbeating La Flèche, Cléante's servant, for no particular reason other than he wishes to do so. When Harpagon orders La Flèche out of the house, he pats him down and checks his pockets to make sure that he does not walk off with some valuable from the house. After La Flèche leaves, Harpagon talks to himself, saying, “I hardly know whether I did right to bury in my garden the ten thousand crowns which were paid to me yesterday.” (He does not keep the money in the house for fear that a thief will find it.)

Cléante and Élise, having completed their talk, approach their father and say they wish to speak with him about marriage. Harpagon says they need not bother themselves about that subject, for he has already made plans that he says will please everyone. Then he asks Cléante whether he knows a young girl named Marianne, who lives nearby. Cléante acknowledges that he does. Harpagon next asks Cléante what he thinks of her. Believing that his father has chosen for him

the very girl that he already loves, Cléante praises her as charming, modest, intelligent, thrifty—perfect in every way. When Harpagon notes that she lacks a fortune, Cléante says money is of small importance compared with virtue. Delighted with his son's responses, Harpagon then announces that he plans to marry Marianne “provided I find she has some dowry” (1.5).

Shocked, Cléante leaves the room to be alone. Turning to Élise, Harpagon says he has selected a widow for Cléante to marry and has chosen a certain Mr. Anselme for Élise, noting that he is “a staid and prudent man, who is not above fifty, and of whose riches everybody speaks” (1.6).

Élise politely refuses to marry Anselme. Harpagon insists that she marry him. She again refuses.

“You will marry him this very evening” (1.6), he says.

Élise vows that she will kill herself rather than marry him. Harpagon refuses to back down but says he is willing to let Valère decide the matter. Élise thinks it a good idea, especially since she and Valère are secretly in love.

When Harpagon tells Valère that they have chosen him to settle an argument, Valère immediately sides with Harpagon without knowing what the argument is about. (He does so to avoid provoking Harpagon.) Harpagon then reveals that he has chosen Anselme as Élise's future husband. Valère is dismayed but does not object. When he is alone with Élise, he tells her that opposing Harpagon would only have worsened their chances of getting their way. The best thing to do, he says, is to play along with Harpagon for the time being. As for the scheduled wedding in the evening, he tells her to pretend that she is sick.

Meanwhile, on orders from Cléante, La Flèche has struck a deal on a loan of fifteen thousand francs for Cléante. If the deal goes through, Cléante will use the money to help Marianne and further his goal of being with her. La Flèche tells Cléante that he had to use a broker, Master Simon, to negotiate the loan agreement with a lender who wishes to remain anonymous. The lender will charge an interest rate of only 5.5 percent, La Flèche says. But because the lender himself must borrow money for the loan at a rate of twenty percent, Cléante will have to pay a total of 25.5 percent interest. Cléante is understandably upset, but he says he will accept the terms. However, there is another condition: The lender will provide only twelve thousand francs in coins. He will provide the rest in property, including a bed, chairs, wall hangings, a walnut table, a brick furnace, a lute, a table, and a stuffed lizard skin. Cléante complains that he will not be able to sell the items for even a fraction of the additional three thousand francs he is to receive.

Sometime later, Simon comes in and tells Harpagon about a young man “who will submit to all your conditions” in order to secure the money he needs. (The audience learns at this point that Harpagon is the anonymous lender.) When Harpagon asks whether the borrower is trustworthy, Simon says the young man comes from a wealthy family whose money he will inherit. His mother is already dead and, says Simon, his father is expected to die within eight months.

Nearby, but out of earshot, are Cléante and La Flèche, who are surprised to see Simon conferring with Harpagon. When Simon looks their way and sees La Flèche, he assumes that the young man

with La Flèche is the person for whom La Flèche was seeking the loan. Consequently, he introduces Harpagon to Cléante, unaware that they are father and son, saying that Cléante is the borrower. Harpagon and Cléante then exchange insults. Simon runs off. La Flèche hides. The heat of the conversation intensifies.

HARPAGON. It is you who are ruining yourself by loans so greatly to be condemned!
CLÉANTE. So it is you who seek to enrich yourself by such criminal usury!
HARPAGON. And you dare, after that, to show yourself before me?
CLÉANTE. And you dare, after that, to show yourself to the world? (XX.3)

After they exchange more insults, Cléante leaves. The audience then learns the following in the next several scenes:

Harpagon has never met Marianne, although he has seen her. To win her for himself, he had engaged the services of a devious matchmaker, Frosine, who has arranged for Marianne to come to dinner in the evening under the pretense that she is to assist Élise in completing a marriage contract pledging her to Anselme. Marianne and Élise are to attend a fair, then return in time for the dinner.

When Frosine arrives to report to Harpagon, she confers with Harpagon on a matter of paramount importance to the old miser: whether Marianne will have a handsome dowry. Frosine says Marianne will have a dowry of twelve thousand francs a year. Harpagon is pleased until Frosine explains further details. Because Marianne eats little, Harpagon's savings in food will total three thousands francs. Because she does not not require fancy clothes, jewels, or furniture, Harpagon will save four thousand francs more. Finally, because she does not gamble, Harpagon will save an additional five thousand francs. Thus, the savings will total twelve thousand francs—the amount of the dowry.

When Harpagon balks at this arrangement and demands something of material value, Frosine says he will benefit from land Marianne's family owns in a “certain country.” Harpagon then observes that Marianne might not like him because of his advanced age. Frosine assures him, however, that Marianne is attracted only to men who are at least sixty. The walls of her room, in fact, are decorated with portraits of old men of antiquity, including [Priam](#), [Nestor](#), and [Anchises](#), she says.

Frosine then asks payment for her services, noting that she needs money urgently for a lawsuit. Harpagon ignores the plea. Frosine further praises Harpagon, saying Marianne will be very pleased with him. Then she asks again for money. Harpagon again ignores her. After Frosine asks several more times, Harpagon says someone is calling him, then leaves.

Later, Harpagon instructs his servants—Dame Claude (the housekeeper), La Merluche,

Brindavoine, and Maitre Jacques—on their duties for the dinner. Jacques is both coachman and cook, an economizing measure that enables Harpagon to pay one man for the services of two. When he instructs Jacques about the food, Jacques removes his stable coat and dons cook's garb. Later, when he orders Jacques to clean his carriage and prepare his horses for a trip to the fair, Jacques changes back into his stable clothes.

After Marianne arrives and Harpagon introduces himself, Marianne quietly tells Frosine what an unpleasant man Harpagon seems to be. When Harpagon asks Frosine what Marianne said, Frosine says that she thinks he is perfect. Meanwhile, Élise comes in, followed by Cléante—to Marianne's surprise. After Harpagon introduces his son, Cléante welcomes Marianne but expresses his opposition to a marriage between her and his father. Marianne then avows that she will not marry Harpagon. Harpagon interrupts, calling his son impertinent and silly. Marianne defends Cléante. Cléante then lavishly praises Marianne and says that the man who marries her would possess the greatest treasure on earth. Marianne and Élise then go to the fair.

After they return, Cléante asks Marianne whether she has seen a diamond more stunning than the one on his father's finger. When she remarks how beautiful it is, Cléante removes the ring and shows it to Marianne, saying her father wishes to give it to her. She is hesitant. Harpagon, dumfounded, calls his son aside to protest; but Cléante tells Marianne that his father has indicated that he will be offended if she does not take the ring. Harpagon becomes visibly furious with Cléante. Cléante then coaxes Marianne to accept the gift. She tells Harpagon, "I will keep it now, Sir, in order not to make you angry [with Cléante]. . . ." (3.12)

When Harpagon and Cléante are alone later, they argue over Marianne, and Harpagon says he disowns and disinherits his son, then curses him.

Meanwhile, La Flèche has discovered Harpagon's money box in the garden and secretly shows it to Cléante, saying Cléante's problems are solved. However, Harpagon, who regularly checks the garden to make sure his money is safe, discovers that the box is missing. When Cléante and La Flèche hear Harpagon approaching from the garden, they disappear.

"Thieves! thieves! assassins! Murder!" Harpagon shouts. "Justice, just heavens! I am undone; I am murdered; they have cut my throat; they have stolen my money!" (4.7).

Harpagon reports the theft to a police magistrate. When the latter asks Harpagon whom he suspects, Harpagon replies, "Everybody! I wish you to take into custody the whole town and suburbs" (5.1). When the officer questions Jacques, he blames Valère for the theft (to get revenge on him for intervening when Jacques asked for more money to cook the meal). When Valère comes in, Harpagon questions him about the treasure he has stolen. Valère, believing that Harpagon is referring to Élise, confesses that he has stolen Harpagon's most precious treasure.

They continue to talk about the stolen item until Valère refers to it as “your daughter,” saying they have signed a marriage promise. Harpagon tells the policeman to arrest Valère. Élise enters and pleads for Valère, saying he once saved her from drowning. But Harpagon says, “Justice must have its course” (5.4).

When Anselme arrives for dinner, he asks Harpagon why he is so upset. Harpagon explains what has happened. Anselme then says he does not wish to force anyone to marry him; “but as far as your interests are concerned, I am ready to espouse them as if they were my own” (5.5).

After Harpagon further berates Valère, saying he is unworthy of his daughter, Valère reveals that he is the son of a noble and upright man known to all of Naples, Don Thomas d'Alburci. Anselme well knows the name but doubts that Valère is telling the truth. Valère says he can prove what he says. Anselme then recalls that d'Alburci perished in a shipwreck with his wife and children when Don Thomas was attempting to save them during uprisings against nobility.

Valère says there was indeed a shipwreck but that he, then seven, and a servant were rescued by a Spanish vessel. The captain of the ship took him in and raised him as his own son. “The profession of arms has been my occupation ever since I was fit for it” (5.5), Valère says. Recently, he notes, he heard that his father had not died after all. While searching for him, he encountered Élise and fell in love with her. After disguising himself as a servant, he gained work in Harpagon's house to be close to her and sent a representative to look for his father.

When Anselme asks for proofs, Valère mentions, his father's ruby seal, a bracelet his mother gave him, and the servant, an old man named Pedro. Marianne says she can vouch for all he says, for she now knows that he is her brother and that her mother is also Valère's. Anselme then reveals himself as their father. He had survived the shipwreck—with all his money—but thought the rest of his family had died. After sixteen years, he had decided to seek a new wife in another country and to change his name to Anselme “to forget the sorrows of a name associated with so many and great troubles” (5.5).

Harpagon then says Anselme is responsible for the money Valère stole from him. When Valère swears that he did not steal it, Cléante tells Harpagon that he knows where the money is. If Harpagon approves of his marriage to Marianne, he will produce the money. Harpagon then says he has no money to give his children for their weddings, but Anselme says he will take care of all the expenses. In addition, he will pay the police officer for his trouble.

Anselme then goes off with his children to see his wife. Harpagon is left with his casket of money.

. . **Themes**

Obsessive Greed

Harpagon ranks among the most tight-fisted characters in world literature. Famous fictional misers such as Ebenezer Scrooge and Silas Marner reformed. Harpagon never even thinks of doing so. At the end of the play, he is more concerned with his money than he is with the welfare of his children.

Love

After the shipwreck, the captain of the Spanish ship takes in young Valère and rears and loves him as his own son. To be close to Élise, Valère—a nobleman by birth—humbles himself and works as a steward in the home of Élise's father, Harpagon. Cléante jeopardizes and eventually loses his inheritance to help his beloved, Marianne, and her mother. To sustain her mother, Marianne provides her constant nursing care while enduring poverty. Don Thomas d'Alburci (Anselme) provides large sums of money to see that his children are happily married.

Serendipity

Luck, coincidence, serendipity—call it what you will—is at work throughout the play to bring people together and resolve conflicts. For example, Frosine the matchmaker unwittingly strikes an agreement that brings Marianne to the home of her beloved, Cléante, and her brother, Valère. Later, La Flèche just happens to find the money cache that Cléante later uses to force Harpagon to approve Cléante's marriage to Marianne. Don Thomas d'Alburci (Anselme), believing his wife and children were all lost in a shipwreck, begins a new life sixteen years after the sea disaster—and settles in the very town where his wife and children are living. In Molière's fictional seventeenth-century world, it seems, serendipity often plays the same role that fate did in the mythological world of the ancient Greek dramatists.

All That Glitters Is Not Gold

Harpagon regards his money as his greatest treasure. But, as Shakespeare points out in *The Merchant of Venice*, “All that glisters [glitters] is not gold” (2.7.67). More valuable by far are love, friendship, family harmony, and common decency. In all of these things, Harpagon is poverty-stricken.

The Miser as a Satire

Molière's chief goal in *The Miser* was to satirize well-to-do Parisians who amassed tidy little fortunes through avarice and usury. Molière achieves his goal mainly through witty, sharp-edged dialogue that ridicules the central character, Harpagon. The following passage in the fifth scene of Act 3 contains such ridicule. Jacques, the cook and coachman, is conversing with Harpagon.

JACQUES. I am sorry to hear every day what is said of you; for, after all, I have a certain tenderness for you; and, except my horses, you are the person I like most in the world.

HARPAGON. And I would know from you, Master Jacques, what it is

that is said of me.

JACQUES. Yes, certainly, Sir, if I were sure you would not get angry with me.

HARPAGON. No, no; never fear.

JACQUES. Excuse me, but I am sure you will be angry.

HARPAGON. No, on the contrary, you will oblige me. I should be glad to know what people say of me.

JACQUES. Since you wish it, Sir, I will tell you frankly that you are the laughing-stock of everybody; that they taunt us everywhere by a thousand jokes on your account, and that nothing delights people more than to make sport of you, and to tell stories without end about your stinginess. One says that you have special almanacks printed, where you double the ember days and vigils, so that you may profit by the fasts to which you bind all your house; another, that you always have a ready-made quarrel for your servants at Christmas time or when they leave you, so that you may give them nothing. One tells a story how not long since you prosecuted a neighbour's cat because it had eaten up the remainder of a leg of mutton; another says that one night you were caught stealing your horses' oats, and that your coachman,—that is the man who was before me,—gave you, in the dark, a good sound drubbing, of which you said nothing. In short, what is the use of going on? We can go nowhere but we are sure to hear you pulled to pieces. You are the butt and jest and byword of everybody; and never does anyone mention you but under the names of miser, stingy, mean, niggardly fellow and usurer.

Role of Servants

In 1668 (when Molière debuted *The Miser*), a typical European family of means employed a staff of servants to cook, keep house, watch children, maintain stables, and so on. Even middle-class families of modest income usually had some servants. Domestics not only made life easier for their employers but also enabled them to brag about the quality and number of their hirelings in the same way that modern families brag about the quality and number of their automobiles and home amenities. Household servants in seventeenth-century France may have included maids, coachmen, cooks, stewards, wet nurses, gardeners, and tutors. Good servants often received clothing and other rewards in addition to wages.

Of course, servants in the fictional household of Harpagon receive anything but generosity. Their presence in the play helps to underscore Harpagon's overzealous attention to his possessions. Consider, for example, his instructions to Dame Claude for the special dinner he is hosting.

To you I commit the care of cleaning up everywhere; but, above all, be very careful not to rub the furniture too hard, for fear of wearing it out. Besides this, I put the bottles under your care during supper,

and if any one of them is missing, or if anything gets broken, you will be responsible for it, and pay it out of your wages. (3.1)

Dramatic Irony

Molière uses dramatic irony to demonstrate Harpagon's inability to see in himself the shortcomings for which he blames others. In the following passage, Harpagon criticizes Jacques for always thinking of money. Harpagon, of course, is the one who is obsessed with money.

English

HARPAGON. Tell me, can you give us a good supper?

JACQUES. Yes, if you give me plenty of money.

HARPAGON. The deuce! Always money! I think they have nothing else to say except money, money, money! Always that same word in their mouth, money! They always speak of money! It's their pillow companion, money! (3.5)

Source: Michael J. Cummings

Moliere as satirist

Moliere transforms contemporary satire into timeless theatre. First, Molière's shrewd manipulation of the audience's sense of self-recognition led him to develop a satire that deftly mixed the particular and the general, the individual and the universal. This adroit mixture is, after all, essential to satire's continuing success. A too contemporary and individualised portrayal quickly loses its appeal as time passes and as people and manners change. On the other hand, a satire too general and too universal proves a flabby and dull affair, lacking the spice of keen characterisation and lifelike detail. Molière's genius lies in the adroit blending of the two. Secondly, and most importantly, Molière transforms this same tension between direct and indirect satire into a motor for dramatic action. Perhaps more than any other playwright before or after, Molière turns an often purely discursive and prescriptive literary form, satire, into an essentially dramatic and theatrical machine.

Molière's comedies teach the dynamics of satire as it is practised every day in every social situation. From them we learn that even the most vicious – and funniest – portrait cannot be easily dismissed; that those who wish to flee the judgements of others are doomed not only to endlessly repeat their follies, but also to live in profound ignorance of themselves.

See Wikipedia