

Thomas Shadwell (c. - 19 November) was an English poet and playwright who was appointed poet laureate in The Sullen Lovers, or the Impertinents.

See Article History Alternative Title: Although his father clearly intended him to take over his royal appointment, the young man renounced it in , apparently determined to break with tradition and seek a living on the stage. He was to give himself entirely to the theatre for 30 years and to die exhausted at the age of . The number of theatregoers in 17th-century Paris was small, and the city already had two established theatres, so that a continued existence must have seemed impossible to a young company. From the end of , for no fewer than 13 years, the troupe sought a living touring the provinces. No history of these years is possible, though municipal registers and church records show the company emerging here and there: Clearly they had their ups as well as downs. His rapid success and persistence against opposition when he finally got back to Paris is inexplicable without these years of training. His first two known plays date from this time: Some French biographers have done their best to read his personal life into his works, but at the cost of misconstruing what might have happened as what did happen. The truth is that there is little information except legend and satire. Two of the plays were in fact pirated. Comedies, in his view, were made to be acted. This fact was forgotten in the 19th century. To keep his actors and his audiences was an unremitting struggle against other theatres. He won this contest almost single-handed. He held his company together by his technical competence and force of personality. The Petit-Bourbon was demolished apparently without notice , and the company moved early in to a hall in the Palais-Royal , built as a theatre by Richelieu. Such failures were rare and eclipsed by successes greater than the Paris theatre had known. The delicate portrayal in this girl of an awakening temperament, all the stronger for its absence of convention, is a marvel of comedy. He also wrote plays that were privately commissioned and thus first performed elsewhere: There were three children of the marriage; only a daughter survived to maturity. He had to wait five years and risk the livelihood of his actors before his reward, which proved to be the greatest success of his career. Most men would surely have given up the struggle: It is a priceless example of his art. The central character, Dom Juan, carries the aristocratic principle to its extreme by disclaiming all types of obligation, to either parents or doctors or tradesmen or God. Yet he assumes that others will fulfill their obligations to him. His servant, Sganarelle, is imagined as his opposite in every point—earthy, timorous, superstitious. He made up for lack of authors by writing more plays himself. He could never be sure of either actors or authors. Pensions were often promised and not paid. The court wanted more light plays than great works. The receipts of his theatre were uncertain and fluctuating. To meet the cumulative misfortunes of his own illness, the closing of the theatre for seven weeks upon the death of the Queen Mother, and the proscription of Tartuffe and Dom Juan, he wrote five plays in one season . In the preceding season, however, *Le Misanthrope* , almost from the start, was treated as a masterpiece by discerning playgoers, if not by the entire public. The structure of the play is as simple as it is poetic. A five-act version of Tartuffe was played in , but once only: His miser is a living paradox , inhuman in his worship of money, all too human in his need of respect and affection. In breathtaking scenes his mania is made to suggest cruelty, pathological loneliness, even insanity. The play is too stark for those who expect laughter from comedy; Goethe started the dubious fashion of calling it tragic. The basic comic suggestion is one of absurdity and incongruity rather than of gaiety. It centres on a fool, who admits his folly while suggesting that wisdom would not help him because, if things in fact go against us, it is pointless to be wise. As it happens, he is in the right, but he can never prove it. The subject of the play is trivial, the suggestion is limitless; it sketches a new range of comedy altogether. In permission was somehow obtained, and the long run of Tartuffe at last began. More than 60 performances were given that year alone. Of the three versions of the play, only the last has survived; the first presented in three acts played before the king in probably portrayed a pious crook so firmly established in a bourgeois household that the master promises him his daughter and disinherits his son. At the time, it was common for lay directors of conscience to be placed in families to reprove and reform conduct. The final version contains two seduction scenes and a shift of interest to the comic paradox in Tartuffe

himself, posing as an inhuman ascetic while by nature he is an all-too-human lecher. It is difficult to think of a theme more likely to offend pious minds. *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* treated a contemporary theme—"social climbing among the bourgeois, or upper middle class"—but it is perhaps the least dated of all his comedies. The protagonist Jourdain, rather than being an unpleasant sycophant, is as delightful as he is fatuous, as genuine as he is naive; his folly is embedded in a bountiful disposition, which he of course despises. It is a powerful play in its delineation of medical jargon and professionalism, in the fatuity of a would-be doctor with learning and no sense, in the normality of the young and sensible lovers, as opposed to the superstition, greed, and charlatanism of other characters. He aspired to be a tragic actor, but contemporary taste was against him. His public seemed to favour a tragic style that was pompous, with ranting and roaring, strutting and chanting. Offstage he was neither a great talker nor particularly merry, but he would mime and copy speech to the life. He had the tireless energy of the actor. He was always ready to make a scene out of an incident, to put himself on a stage. He gave one of his characters his own cough and another his own moods, and he made a play out of actual rehearsals. The characters of his greatest plays are like the members of his company. It was quite appropriate that he should die while playing the part of the sick man that he really was. The actor in him influenced his writing, since he wrote at speed what he could most naturally act. Something more than animal energy and a talent for mime was at work in him, a quality that can only be called intensity of dramatic vision. Here again actors have helped to recover an aspect of his genius that the scholars had missed, his stage violence. To take his plays as arguments in favour of reason is to miss their vitality. His sense of reason leads him to animate the absurd. His characters are imagined as excitable and excited to the point of incoherence. He sacrifices plot to drama, vivacity, a sense of life. He possesses an excellent education as a writer, yet he is ready to defy all rules of writing. It is intellectual rhythm rather than what happens, the discussion more than the story, that conveys the charm, so that to recount the plot may be to omit the essential. In fact, 40 percent of his plays combine the arts of comedy, music, and dance. These plays gave great pleasure to Louis XIV and his court, and the libertine dramatist took equal pleasure in creating these paeans to freedom, love, and joy. The masterpieces of the genre are *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* and *Le Malade imaginaire*, both first performed in the 1670s. The attacks on them also drew from the poet a valuable statement of artistic principle. On *Dom Juan* he made no public reply since it was never officially condemned. The *Lettre*, though anonymous, is much more important. To know the comic we must know the rational, of which it denotes the absence, and we must see wherein the rational consists. This is his invention and his glory. Characters are made to play a part, then forget it, speak out of turn, overplay their role, so that those who watch this byplay constantly have the suggestion of mixed registers. He utters inanities about Hippocrates, is overjoyed to find a patient ignorant of Latin, so that he need not bother about meaning. He looks for the heart on the wrong side and, undeterred by having his error recognized, sweeps aside the protest with the immortal: A French genius After the French were roundly defeated in the Franco-German War of 1871, they looked to strengthen two cultural institutions that, they believed, were the sources of their weakness: The Académie Française was of the utmost importance, since it involved all the strata of society, present and future. His theatre was thus proposed as a representation of traditional bourgeois values; at its heart, however, it espoused just the opposite. Three of these are noteworthy. First, formality permeates all his works. He never gives realism—"life as it is"—alone, but always within a pattern and a form that fuse light and movement, music and dance and speech. Characters are grouped; scenes and even speeches are arranged; comic repartee is rounded off in defiance of realism. Second, where foreigners see psychology, the French more often stress the poetry. They take the plays not as studies of social mania but as patterns of fantasy that take up ideas only to drop them when a point has been made. *Le Misanthrope* is not considered as a case study or a French Hamlet but as a subtly arranged chorus of voices and attitudes that convey a critique of individualism. The play charms by its successive evocations of its central theme. A third quality admired in France is his intellectual penetration in distinguishing the parts from the whole. Many of his dialogues start with politeness and end in open insults. His comedy embraces things within the mind and beyond it; reason and fact seldom meet. As the beaten servant in *Amphitryon* observes: But it is so, for all that.

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Shadwell was born at either or the Impertinents (), produced the 'Sullen Lovers,' based on Moliere's ' Les Facheux,' at Lincoln's Inn Fields.

Chapter 5 : Moli  re - Les F  cheux - Chapitre 5

Peste l'impertinent! Va-t'en suivre leurs pas, Vois ce qu'ils deviendront, et ne les quitte pas. La montagne, revenant. Il faut suivre de loin?   raste.

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Il m'a fait,    l'abord, cent questions frivoles, Plus haut que les acteurs   levant ses paroles. Chacun le maudissait, et moi pour l'arr  ter.