

Theatricality, Voyeurism, and Molière's *Misanthrope*: Yesterday and Today

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The pleasures of eyeing other people are in many ways common to the seventeenth century and the present, although certain of yesterday's pleasures have turned into today's embarrassments. In this light, I will view the theatrical economy of Molière's 1666 *The Misanthrope* in performance, from the perspective of the actors and then of the spectators, to compare their visual relationships, then and today. I share the view of many literary historians that in his satire of both aristocratic and bourgeois orders Molière sets his sights on their various theatrical behaviors, "the histrionic bases of individual and social identity."¹ Indeed, *The Misanthrope* shows different characters play acting for other, spectating characters, and makes us laugh at the narcissistic and often hollow society of the *theatrum mundi*.

However, in this literary view the characters strut about within the confines of the stage, behind the footlights, and the milieu they portray is mostly outside the theater walls, in court and salon. This perspective is somewhat constricting for my purpose. I propose to shift the theatrical frame by focusing on the visual relations between the actors and their immediate audience, relations peculiar to Molière's Palais Royal Theater in the latter part of the seventeenth century. The goal, and my desire, are to reestablish the theatrical dynamic of the period in its specificity, having its own pleasures, its own psychological and ideological dimensions, by foregrounding the (by us) largely unappreciated presence of spectators on the stage, the (for us) unusual lighting conditions, and the absence of proscenium frame, all of which must have spawned a spectacle much more intimately baroque than what we are accustomed to today.²

What was spectatorship like when "people of quality" occupied the stage during performance? Is it because contemporary accounts are so scarce that historians have rarely taken into full account this phenomenon³ (which lasted from 1637 until 1759), save to quote contemporaries who lament the practice of spectators moving about onstage?⁴ However, this stage turbulence had to have shaped decisively the relationship between actors and audience. In Molière's day, numbering ten on average—and at times as many as thirty-six, and later in the hundreds⁵—these spectators enter, exit, move about, converse, all during the

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progress of the play. More significantly, they chat up the actresses and argue with the pit. In the main they are petty nobility, *petits marquis* or *petits maîtres*, dandies willing to pay top prices for seating in order to make a spectacle of themselves. Positioning themselves close to the prestigious actors on the stage no doubt allowed them to compensate momentarily for the anonymity of court life.

On the theatrical level, the relationship between stage and spectators is affected in a way peculiar to the seventeenth century and singularly so for *The Misanthrope*. At times the onstage spectators were a confusing interruption. Before 1689 no railings kept these spectators to the side, which made it possible to take spectators for actors when the latter wore contemporary costumes.⁶ However, could the interruption also have become part of the spectacle, a comedy within the comedy? Molière himself once suggested as much.⁷ A mingling of actors and onstage spectators was unavoidable and may have led to improvised interchanges between actors and onstage spectators. In one of those scenes where social satire is foregrounded and plot momentarily recedes, the *petit marquis*' on-stage behavior is targeted by the actor playing Acaste, who apes their self-importance. He congratulates himself for having such perfect taste that, in his words: “. . . I can judge without the least reflection, / And at the theater, which is my delight, / Can make or break a play on opening night, / And lead the crowd in hisses or bravos, / And generally be known as one who knows” (III.1).⁸ Given the *petit marquis*' brazenness, one can easily imagine the jibe provoking a riposte, followed by the actor's victorious wink to the audience: “touché.”

The same spontaneous stage business is possible in other plays where Molière makes fun of the speech mannerisms and gesticulations typical of the very *petits marquis* conspicuously seated a few feet away and with whom he would be communicating in a large number of asides and soliloquies.⁹ An important effect of the proximity of—and likely interaction between—actors and onstage audience is to slow the evolution of theater history, to put off the impending segregation of spectators and actors, and delay the creation of a new concept of the stage as the illusion of a space offstage, independent, lifelike—“real.”¹⁰ Delayed is the theater of the future with its spectator who observes rather than participates, who watches from the outside through the keyhole of the proscenium arch, with the illusion of seeing autonomous human action rather than a theatricalization of such.¹¹

In contrast, the spectacle of Molière's day, cozy and rather inelegant, was viewed differently by the Palais Royal audience. From the farthest seats, sixty-odd feet away,¹² the spectator's lofty gaze provides intellectual mastery over the show taken in as a plot—generating suspense (will Célimène ever say yes?) and articulated by stage business (Alceste's rows with Philinte, Oronte, or Célimène, his obsessively storming on, off, and on stage). However, for the spectators close by in the privileged *loges* or onstage *balcons* or standing in the *parterre*, a more intense visual pleasure joins and perhaps dilutes the dramatic pleasure. A much more active glance replaces

the panoramic gaze.¹³ Ranging over a wider angle, with frequent lateral movements, the eye takes intermittent glimpses, making local discoveries: the smiling lips of Mlle de Brie (Eliante), the furrowed brow of Molière (Alceste), the plump hand of Armande Béjart (Célimène), and, of course, the spectacle within the spectacle, the *petit marquis*' already theatricalized court appearance—their beribboned outfits, blond wigs, and fashionably long fingernails (II.1.479-82).

There has always been great pleasure in looking at the human form. According to Freud, the origin of the look is the urge to see the "private parts." This immodest curiosity must be sublimated so that by adulthood we have learned to scan the whole body. Nevertheless, viewing and being viewed oneself is often so libidinally exciting, that, as Freud pursues, "in scopophilia and exhibitionism the eye corresponds to an erotogenic zone."¹⁴ The admiring look becomes a desiring look and, under certain conditions, may slide into the obsessive, perverse look. *In extremis*, it is that of Peeping Tom, for whom looking is not foreplay and whose desire is satisfied perversely because secretly and only through the eye.

We will return to what this visual encounter meant at the Palais Royal in the 1660s. But first, we focus on what, for the last twenty-five or so years, a "perverse" look has occasioned as a vexing problem of theatricality, the relationship of male viewer and female in spectacle. The problem is posed in a number of critiques of the ideology of conventional, narrative fiction film, critiques that also pertain to modern theater performance, in a way that throws into sharp relief the theatricality of seventeenth-century France. In question is the so-called "male gaze," along which spectators (male and female) must align themselves. An important aspect of the gaze is voyeurism made of libidinal attraction.¹⁵ We can "get pleasure from using another person as an object of sexual stimulation through sight."¹⁶ We can get pleasure by visually seizing upon other people as passive objects, "subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze."¹⁷ What's more, this type of voyeurism has an important sadistic component: The source of pleasure is not just in controlling, but "judging and indeed punishing (or forgiving) the guilty object of our gaze."¹⁸ That guilty object is Woman, a pleasure to look at, but also dangerous, signifying lack of penis, thus threatening castration. According to this analysis, the narrative fiction film offers the male unconscious two ways to calm the resulting anxiety. First is an aggressive voyeuristic gaze "(investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery), counterbalanced by the devaluation, punishment or saving of the guilty object . . ." The other escape route is "complete disavowal of castration by the substitution of a fetish object or turning the represented figure itself into a fetish so that it becomes reassuring rather than dangerous. . . . This second avenue, fetishistic scopophilia, builds up the physical beauty of the object, transforming it into something satisfying in itself."¹⁹

Although it is tempting to focus on beauty as fetish (given the unfailingly glamorous appearance of heroines), of primary importance here is the problem of

voyeurism, which can be contextualized in a specific question: Must our modern-day Célimène be made to participate in “a scopic economy which reduces her to the passive status of the beautiful object of men’s contemplation?”²⁰ Has she thus been trapped—as she supposedly would be on a movie screen—into dependency on the spectator’s “masculine gaze”?

The answer must be a provisional yes, since *The Misanthrope* allows for it, both in its plot and in the traditional modern staging. The pleasure of looking takes on a sadistic component when it not only satisfies the urge to look in an exploratory, erotic way, but also slips (as it may, on a continuum) into the desire to *see* in the penetratingly inquisitive sense: “see into,” “see about,” “oversee.” “To see” is an investigation motivated by the desire to know invasively—seeing as possession from the inside.²¹ That is in good measure Alceste’s passion and the primary motivation of his three rivals.²² We know Alceste as a histrionic character whose moral outrage is a performance.²³ But let us also remember that he is also, *volens nolens*, the most voracious of spectators. As for Célimène, Alceste’s paired opposite, she wants to show—but only so much, to be looked at but not seen—in order to maintain her power over her suitors. So the conflict of *The Misanthrope* can indeed be staged in visual terms of seeing and showing. The irresistible urge to see, and the playful, witty resistance to being seen, are the desire and obstacle that form the motor of the plot. A typical staging of the denouement, permitted the director by Molière’s usual absence of stage directions,²⁴ represents punishment of that resistance. Célimène is “seen through” for attracting the courtiers’ glances, while refusing to satisfy their appetites. This, the usual interpretation, invites the spectator to participate in an equivocal surveillance. The look is motivated by the pleasurable desire to “know” Célimène’s seductiveness and also to subject it to a parental authority: a thinly disguised desire to contain female sexuality.²⁵

But to find the sole source of spectating pleasure in a phallic and misogynistic economy is to make simplistic assumptions about correct viewership—banishing the female viewer, for instance—and, simultaneously, about gender identity. The problem is not just the “male” gaze: It is the invasive, one-way stare, and a single, compulsory form of identification. There are different ways of staging the gaze²⁶ to avoid the perversity of that look and to avoid the automatic pairing of male spectator/female actor (active looker/passive looked at) as the invariable couple. In reality the structures of the theatrical gaze are fluid, and feminist critics remind us that multiple pleasurable identifications can be established with all the characters as objects of our gaze.²⁷ Female spectators can indulge in “libiditized looking,” both at female and male actors.²⁸ There is also a non-perverse “masochistic gaze,” which challenges the “notion that male scopic pleasure must center around control—never identification with or submission to the female.”²⁹ I, as male viewer, can look at Célimène with desire and surrender to the fascinating and seductively powerful woman.

Here masochism is not merely a deviant form of sexuality; nor is it, as the conventional Freud would have it, the flip side of sadism, its complementary opposite. Rather it is a core psychic pattern that originates in the infant's desire to reunite with the powerful oral mother, a mother who is present, but withdraws, then returns, then withdraws again, causing alternate joy and fear, unity and loss, "a peculiar pleasure-pain complex."³⁰ This primordial desire, which drives many narrative fictions, is located in the pre-castration (thus pre-sadism) anxiety phase and "draws . . . on pregenital sexuality and the pleasure of the symbiotic bond, a bond that is re-presented ambivalently (since it cannot be achieved with its true object, the mothering parent) in the form of recovery and loss, suspense, delay, fantasy, and punishment."³¹ Now the latter are precisely among the "formal structures . . . [which] overlap with the primary structures that enable classic narrative cinema to produce visual pleasure."³²

Masochistic desire—for the mother and subsequently for the powerful female—has a corresponding aesthetic form, which conditions viewing pleasure in cinema and similarly (although not identically) in theatre. Consequently, there are different and variously complex forms of identification. Returning to *The Misanthrope*, I laugh the laughter of superiority *with* Célimène as she satirizes court figures and administers her witty tongue lashings to Alceste. As male spectator, I also watch with a mixture of awe and desire as she cleverly, seductively manipulates all four suitors until the last moment. In spite of their protestations to the contrary (III.1.8805-822), they (and I with them) accept and have pleasure in being, properly speaking, the *object* of her charms. Simultaneously there is the other, empathetic identification, with the suffering partner in the dynamic couple. Obeying the masochistic pact, the plot constantly³³ interrupts Alceste's suit or pulls him away from Célimène, repeated separations that leave him dangling in dramatic suspense. He returns, as moth to the flame, but without gaining satisfaction. This putting off of gratification, far from extinguishing the masochistic desire only irritates it the more exquisitely. Does the dénouement, the *Misanthrope* claiming he will abandon both Célimène and society (V.4), represent yet another loss in a series to be repeated eternally? Or, in contrast to most classical French comedies, which end in marriage, is it a final, bitter non-consummation? Regardless, and regardless of the satiric laughter the play excites, it is a painful dynamic—all aspects of which the spectator as *subject* assimilates fantasmatically.

In terms of spectator positions, there is dual identification; or better, there are coexisting subject and object identifications with Célimène and Alceste. Temporarily, through the dramatic fantasy, we (female and male spectators) have "the pleasures of re-experiencing the primary identification with the mother and the pleasurable possibilities of gender mobility through identification . . ." We understand that "same-sex identification does not totally exclude opposite-sex identification. The wish to be both sexes—to overcome sexual difference—

remains."³⁴ In a recent overview of theories of spectatorship a critic notes that "Freud demonstrates the possibilities for the subject of fantasy to participate in a variety of roles—sliding, exchanging and doubling in the interchangeable positions of subject, object and observer. . . . The subject of the fantasy thus becomes a mobile and mutable entity rather than a particular gendered individual."³⁵

Different staging can produce different viewing pleasures. However, most modern stagings of the classical *Misanthrope* vary little, perhaps because directors correctly assume that public spectating is an ambivalent pleasure, which excites but also inhibits us. It is ambivalent because we modern, adult, middle class spectators are inhabited by the guiltiness of the stare, instilled by parents in fear of the invasive curiosity of children, who, with disconcertingly candid, voyeuristic insistence, fasten their eyes on the picturesque individual (ugly or beautiful, in the street or on the family stage) and must be quickly reproached with the disapproving whisper, "Don't stare at people like that." This reproach is inspired by the fear that the child's inquisitive stare will be caught and cause the spying parent to be also caught looking—wanting to look—even if obliquely, both at the young viewer and the object of that look. What's more, the adult fear of being seen seeing is often joined by its opposite—fear of seeing—as an indecent, punishable invasion of sexual privacy.³⁶ (One will appreciate the example of Peeping Tom of Coventry who was punished by being blinded—castrated, for Freud—for having peered out on the naked Godiva).³⁷ More specifically, we feel the rising anxiety and the fear of punishment at the very idea of witnessing the primal scene. The paired opposites, scopophobia and scopophilia, unite in the fundamental ambivalence of modern spectatorship.

Although today's spectators obviously attend performances for the pleasure of watching, theater architecture and the electric light bulb do little to alleviate the inhibiting pressures. At the end of the nineteenth century, by shining his spotlight on the stage, André Antoine completed its transformation into the private room with the open fourth wall toward which it had been evolving since the triumph of the proscenium frame and segregation of actors and spectators at the end of the seventeenth century. Even in theaters designed to reunite stage and audience (in-the-round sets, or thrust designs such as that of Chaillot), the lighting reestablishes that very separation.³⁸ Active and illuminated, the actors usually pretend not to see the spectators, passive bodies hidden more or less in the shadows. Spectators learn to hold still and keep quiet, for fear of attracting the hostile attention of fellow spectators or the actors, who in most cases because of the focus of the spotlights see each other much better than us. Comparison with cinema is helpful again.³⁹ Under conditions provided by certain proscenium stages facing deep halls, the stage actually may act like a movie screen, the sole source of light and that draws the individual spectator's gaze unilaterally, because the screen does not look back.⁴⁰ The more viewing becomes a discreet, inhibited one-way stare, the more the

spectators turn into caricatures of Tom, peeping secretively into that private room. Few performances of classical plays escape this fate.⁴¹

In Molière's day, however, such ambivalence, such reticence,⁴² were not in evidence, because the viewing habits of spectators were produced by different lighting conditions and because the *petits marquis*' exhibitionism, with which we began this essay, now adds another eye-catching component. If it seems strange that these onstage spectators, who paid dearly for their seats, often found much of the stage hidden from view by the actors right in front of them,⁴³ it is because they were also there to play Don Juan, to ogle the actresses from up close, or put in more genteel terms, "to engage in close-range flirtation in the very midst of the play."⁴⁴ We do not know just how indiscrete this was, nor what the female actors' (nor the male actors') reactions were. In any case, what represented a serious distraction for the grand style of tragedy and high comedy did not necessarily impoverish *The Misanthrope* as comic spectacle. Far from it—what could give a more singularly comical display than the play of mirrors in this the highest of comedy? The onstage dandy was exhibitionist, voyeur and would-be seducer all at once. Giving oneself to be seen flirting tied the exhibitionist desire to the attempt at seduction and, for the audience, made flirtation into a public ceremony.⁴⁵

What's more, given the seductive power of the heroine, the play could just as appropriately have *The Coquette* as its title. Here, where dramatic fiction mimics the flirtation of Paris salons, actual flirtation on stage could simultaneously reflect back upon, and intensify, the fiction: while the characters Clitandre and Acaste flirt with Célimène, a *petit marquis* is making eyes at Armande Béjart, Mlle de Molière, who it was said played Célimène the coquette with a natural ease—and we take the gossip seriously.⁴⁶ And he is doing so under the nose of Monsieur de Molière, who apparently played the jealous Alceste with equally natural ease. Nor is it improbable that another *petit marquis* is murmuring inappropriate sweet nothings to Mlle de Brie (the modest Eliante) or—and this would be a spicy impropriety—to Mlle du Parc, the prudish but far from passionless Arsinoé. Spectators are thus suspended between fiction and virtual reality, between the fantasy of carnal knowledge that inspires the flirtation at the heart of the plot, and the spectacle of real and present desire, the potential satisfaction of which might take place afterwards, elsewhere.

Did such a spectacle attract a "perverse" gaze? In all probability no, and from this perspective we can envision how different the bilateral relationship was between audience and stage in Molière's day. The Palais Royal spectator's look is not a furtive one. The spectators in the pit are not hidden in the shadows. The footlight candles light mainly the actors, of course, but unlike our usually hidden floods and spots, the great chandeliers hang in full view to the right and left of the front of the Palais Royal stage and illuminated the pit as well as the stage, the whole play long. The two-tiered, stage front *balcons* encouraged spectators to look at each other⁴⁷

as well as to follow the action below. These spectators and those in the pit observed not only the actors and the *petits marquis* on stage but could also observe one another looking at the ceremony of flirtation, while those on stage, actors and *petits marquis*, from their different angles saw those watching from the pit and balconies: All are watching people watching people flirting, voyeurs of voyeurs rendered innocent, happy scopophiliacs.⁴⁸

The most hostile detractors of theater, rather than its invested defenders, often keenly appreciate its powers of seduction. Bossuet, bishop of Meaux (who frequented the theater daily before succumbing to the piety that pervaded the end of the century)⁴⁹ shows how this full-blown spectatorship influences acting style when he thunders against the actresses for “the glances they attract and those they cast.”⁵⁰ Bossuet is incensed by the powerful effects of eye contact between actors and audience. He begins by imagining the reactions of a viewer to an “immodest painting:”

If immodest Paintings do naturally convey into the mind the filthy Ideas of what they express, and for that reason are condemned, because no Beholder can relish all that a Masterly hand designed to express, without sharing in the Temper and Disposition of the painter, and imagining himself (as it were) in the postures he sees so drawn⁵¹

Even though the nude (let’s say one of the voluptuous Rubens of the famous Medici Cycle that Bossuet had undoubtedly seen in the Luxembourg palace) lies motionless, she nonetheless compels us to share the painter’s dirty inclination and to project ourselves into the painting. If a flat, unmoving, unseeing canvas can kindle such feelings, imagine what theater can do. It is not the words spoken for the ear that inflame us but the eyes lost to passion, shedding and drawing tears, spreading desire about the theater like wildfire.

How much more vigorous must those impressions be, which the Stage makes upon us, where everything hath reall Life and Action; where we have not to do with a dead pencill and dry Colours, but with living Persons, with reall Eyes burning with Love, or soft Glances sunk and overwhelmed with Passions; with real Tears in the Actors which likewise draw Tears from the Spectators. In short, with such true motions and gestures, as kindle and Scatter the same Sentiments all around, and set the Pit and Boxes on fire.⁵²

Bossuet is upset specifically by the actor-spectator reciprocity, a reciprocity made even more dangerous by the meeting of the eyes, by “the desire to see and be seen, an unfortunate encounter of eyes searching for one another . . . ”⁵³ Indeed, what sums up his anger is this “concupiscence of the eyes.”⁵⁴

Bossuet establishes the reciprocity of the theatrical look and thus enables its various permutations. As the mischievous Célimène, Armande Béjart might play character to character, or coquettishly entertain the pit’s gaze. But also, in a move predating Brecht—and why not under these pre-Italianate conditions?—she might well reverse the visual relationship by returning the audience’s look and redirecting it. She could appeal to us to laugh with her at the envious Arsinoé, at the impatient suitors, and especially, at the unseemly Alceste. The look as well as the word aims satirical laughter on stage. “The laughs are for you, Madame” (II.4.681) complains Alceste because Célimène’s cohorts, as well as we spectators, are looking at him through her eyes. This mastery of and solidarity with the audience is historically significant, one of the features that distinguish *The Misanthrope*. Because it is seldom given to Molière’s female leads that they have the power not only to inspire laughter but to aim it as well, they consequently remain alienated by those who get to laugh and make us laugh.⁵⁵ Armande Béjart could thus play with spectator identification by going in and out of character, by returning the audience’s gaze as both character and as actor, alternately.

In full theatricality we know that those on stage see us watching them. One of the crucial consequences of the performer showing rather than hiding the keen awareness of being looked at is that it transforms both gaze and identification:

The possibility of pleasurable identification . . . is effected not through imaginary projection onto an ideal but through a triangular structure of actor-subject—character—spectator. Looking at the character, the spectator is constantly intercepted by the actor-subject, and the latter, heeding no fourth wall, is theoretically free to look back. The difference, then, between this triangle and the familiar Oedipal one is that no one side signifies authority, knowledge, or the law.⁵⁶

And as Jill Dolan details it,

The gaze circulates along the triangle, providing three separate subject positions. The one-way nature of the male gaze, owned by a spectator who is obscured in a darkened theatre, specularizes the female body, which is not allowed to gaze back. In Diamond’s formulation, the gaze itself is fore grounded—the spectator and actor-subject as character watch each other watching.⁵⁷

Nietzsche said in *The Birth of Tragedy* that to be an actor is to transform oneself, that is, to become (but not to be) another person. However, actors not only transform themselves: They exhibit the transformation in front of knowledgeable and hungry viewers. It must be underlined that posing is not a unilateral act, neither on the street, nor—obviously—on stage. The precondition to a full theatricality is that without spectators there are no actors, and without actors, no spectators. We don't just see the actors, we watch them giving themselves over to our gaze, tacitly imploring it. Present as witnesses, the spectators collectively assist, institute and install "civilians" as actors, actors simultaneously assuming roles, and we watch and identify with that transformation. Every actor is a spectator before coming on stage, and once off stage returns to being a spectator, once more on the *theatrum mundi*. And the corollary: every spectator has been, willy nilly, an actor on the stage of the world, at least once upon a time, before the onset of inhibition. Full theatricality is a two-way street. However, in neither case is the transformation total; we always have the memory of the complementary state. What gives complete theatricality the electrical charge absent from the one-way gaze is that people are watching people who know they are being watched and in varying degrees watch the watchers. The onlooker and the looked at are linked by this complicity, unacknowledged perhaps, but intimate and efficacious, for actor and audience are constituted by this reciprocal gaze.

Thus the theatrical gaze is not perverse of necessity. The stage character Céliimène is not a painted nude in a museum's frame,⁵⁸ nor is she a film image on a movie screen,⁵⁹ both of which presume surreptitious observation of the female figure (and consequently, either her devaluation or idealization) by unseen spectators. The seductive power of this reciprocity comes, in good part, from the fact that theatricality is an essential component of psychic life, the pleasure of theater being linked to the scopic drive. The *theatrum mundi* is not a metaphor, it is where the constitution of the subject takes place. I am looked at, therefore I am.⁶⁰ Whether actor or spectator, I exist even more intensely—the heart jumps—in that visual encounter between stage and pit. The seduction of the gaze goes in both directions: The pleasure of posing and feeling oneself enveloped by the gaze corresponds to the no less acute sensation of capturing with the eyes. To capture the other's glance is to let oneself be captivated by it—there is both surrender and appropriation.

Most modern spectators are, however, unable to live the visual experience as variously and voraciously as Molière's spectators, delivered over as they were to the scopic drive. Most stagings of *The Misanthrope* are still proscenium framed, which revives that fundamental ambivalence and satisfies the "audience's desire to perceive itself as constituted somehow outside of a reciprocal gaze."⁶¹ In the theater of the 1660s, though more sophisticated than earlier in the century, the play is still an unreserved social spectacle as well as an artistic one.⁶² "La folie du

voir”—the craze for seeing—is a felicitous phrase that characterizes artistic viewing in the baroque era.⁶³ Its festive, gregarious nature makes the staging of this reputedly most “Classical” of Molière’s comedies, a joining of past and future. On the Palais Royal stage a vestige of baroque and medieval theater persists; spectators and actors are not segregated physically and psychologically. The rising modern Italianate stage, which will triumph along with Cartesian rationalism and the absolute monarchy, is not yet dominant.

Notes

1. Ziad Elmarsafy, *The Histrionic Sensibility: Theatricality and Identity from Corneille to Rousseau* (Tubingen; Gunter Narr Verlag, 2001) 81.

2. In a 1971 article Robert Nelson convincingly shows how various baroque features in Molière (formal characteristics, dramatic structure, characterization, “theatrical self-consciousness,” philosophical orientation) are “sacrificed to the Racinian teleology by the classicizing tendencies of French culture.” See “Classicism: the Crisis of the Baroque in French Literature,” *Esprit créateur* 11.2 (1971) 178. Here, in the perspective of performance, we attempt to show that Molière’s supposedly most classical play was seen in a most baroque setting.

3. Barbara Mittman, *Spectators on the Paris Stage in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor U.M.I Research P, 1984) xvii. That is why we must be grateful to Barbara Mittman, who has written one of the few scholarly accounts of this phenomenon, and to James Carmody, who has shown its necessary effect on acting styles in *Rereading Molière: mise en scène from Antoine to Vitez* (Ann Arbor U Michigan P, 1993).

4. Eraste does so in *Les Fâcheux* (I.1.13-62). See *Théâtre complet de Molière*, ed. Robert Jouanny, 2 vols (Paris: Garnier 1962), vol 1. However, note that although he is critical of the behavior of the *petit marquis* on stage, he is there himself and does not question the custom, which was 24 years old in 1661. As the phenomenon lasted fully 122 years, we must assume it had a real fascination besides providing lucrative gain for the troupes. See Eugène Despois, *Le Théâtre français sous Louis XIV* (Paris: Hachette, 1874) 118. Molière himself was on stage as a spectator at least once (Jouanny, ed, *Théâtre complet*, vol 1, note 659).

5. Mittman 27.

6. 12-13.

7. See *La Critique de l’Ecole des femmes* (scene 5), where he describes a contemptuous *petit marquis* making a fool of himself by refusing to share a laugh with the pit.

8. Richard Wilbur, translator, *Molière, The Misanthrope, Tartuffe* (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1965) 79-80.

9. In addition to *Les Fâcheux* and *La Critique de l’Ecole des femmes*, see *L’Impromptu de Versailles*, scenes 2 and 3, where he pretends he is only satirizing manners in general, not those of specific persons. Carmody underlines the dramatic irony of Chysale’s observation in the opening scene of *L’Ecole des femmes* that he and Arnolphe can talk “sans crainte d’être ouïs” (without fear of being heard), words spoken in the immediate presence of onstage spectators (101). (See also 105-106, 128-

34). Similarly, Alceste's bitter realization that he is more laughable than he himself thought could have been addressed to his onstage audience, which is laughing just as heartily as Clitandre and Acaste (II. 6. 773-74).

10. Carmody 49-51.

11. Antoine in *Le Cid* (1907), Bérjart in *Les Plaisirs de l'île enchantée*, Chéreau in *Dom Juan* (1969) and Planchon in *Dom Juan* and *Athalie* (1980) actually attempted to recreate 17th century conditions by putting "spectators" on the stage (Carmody 26), but it is highly unlikely the audience-stage relationship was anywhere near the same.

12. On the dimensions of the Palais Royal, see T. E. Lawrenson, *The French Stage and Playhouse in the 17th Century* (New York: A.M.S.P., 1986) 241.

13. On the distinction between *gaze* and *glance* see Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting, the Logic of the Gaze* (New Haven: Yale U P, 1983) 93-117.

14. Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on a Theory of Sexuality* (New York: Avon, 1965) 61. See also 46 and 110.

15. One of the main proponents of this critique is Laura Mulvey, who follows Freud and Lacan in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Movies and Methods*, ed Bill Nichols, 2 vols (Berkeley: U of California P, 1985) 2: 303-315. The gaze's other component, which concerns us less here, is narcissistic identification with the ideal, presumably strengthening masculine ego as represented by the hero on screen.

16. Mulvey 308.

17. 307.

18. 311.

19. The preceding quotes are from Mulvey 311.

20. Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 1986) 23.

21. Compare Freud 92.

22. Clitandre and Acaste make this clear in III. 1. 807-22, 841-45.

23. Elmarsafy 85.

24. Maya Slater, "Molière and His Readers," *Reading Plays, Interpretation and Reception*, eds. Peter Holland and Hanna Scolnicova (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991) 161-70.

25. Dorothy Kelly, *Telling Glances, Voyeurism in the French Novel* (New Brunswick Rutgers UP, 1992) 33.

26. I am borrowing this term from the title of Barbara Freedman's book, *Staging the Gaze, Postmodernism, Psychoanalysis, and Shakespearean Comedy* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991).

27. Gaylyn Studlar, "Masochism and the Perverse Pleasures of the Cinema," *Movies and Methods*, ed. Bill Nichols, 2 vols. (Berkeley: U of California P, 1985) 2: 614-16.

28. On the lesbian gaze, see Jill Dolan, *The Feminist Spectator as Critic* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1991) 116-17.

29. Studlar 607.

30. Gilles Deleuze, *Sacher-Masoch, An Interpretation* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971) 93.

31. Studlar 602-603.

32. 605.

33. See I.2; II.2; II.5-6; III.5 and IV.4.1478-80.

34. Studler 615-16.

35. Phil Powrie, *French Cinema in the 1980's: Nostalgia and the Crisis of Masculinity* (Oxford Clarendon P, 1997) 25.

36. See Davis W. Allen, *The Fear of Looking, or, Scopophilic or Exhibitionistic Conflicts* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1974).

37. "The story (of Godiva) is embellished with the incident of Peeping Tom, a prying inquisitive tailor, who was struck blind for popping out his head as the lady passed by." See "Peeping Tom," quote 1837, *Oxford English Dictionary* (compact edition, 1980).

38. Thus, in spite of stunning, non realist mises en scène imagined or inspired by Artaud and Brecht, then put on by Vitez, Planchon, Mnouchkine and others, segregation of actors and spectators typical of commercial theater still dominates most performances of classical drama, from small university stages to those of Paris or Avignon. See Carmody 159.

39. But of course we do not believe theater viewing always parallels viewing in cinema, where, for instance, one finds the opposition "between the 'subjective camera' (which 'places the spectator in the position of a character') and the 'objective camera' (which makes the spectator the ideal, immaterial 'voyeur' of a pro-filmic pseudo-reality)." Steven Heath, *Questions of Cinema* (Bloomington Indiana UP, 1981) 46.

40. See Christian Metz, "Story/Discourse: Notes on Two Kinds of Voyeurism," *Movies and Methods*, ed. Bill Nichols, 2 vols. (Berkeley: U of California P, 1985) 2: 546-48.

41. A rare but notable exception is London's reconstituted Globe, where, during an afternoon performance with both stage and audience under natural light, I, part of the swarm in the pit, was acutely aware of the reactions of fellow spectators.

42. It is noteworthy that the critics of the practice of spectators sitting on stage never complain of the staring and the exhibitionism it encourages, save in the case of Bossuet we quote below.

43. Mittman 19.

44. 29.

45. 20, 28-29.

46. Jouanny, *Théâtre complet*, vol 1: note 985.

47. This was true of the Ancienne Comédie theater from 1689 on (Mittman 12). It seems to have been the case at the Palais Royal too. See *La Critique de l'Ecole des femmes*, scene III, where Uranie describes the women spectators doing this.

48. Obviously this challenges the notion that Molière's acting style was "natural", or at least more "natural" than the reputedly overblown style of the Hôtel de Bourgogne or that of some of his own colleagues. See Roger Herzog, "Le Jeu 'naturel' de Molière et de sa troupe," *XVIIe Siècle* 132 (1981) 279-83. Since we have no detailed, independent description of the latter, it is unwise to assume that Molière's style was "natural" in our modern sense of "realistic." We must also remember that Molière was known for his grimaces as "le plus grand farceur de France" and that he was blamed for mixing high and low styles in the same play (Carmody 7).

49. W. S. Brooks, P. J. Yarrow, eds. *The Dramatic Criticism of Elizabeth Charlotte, Duchesse d'Orléans* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1996) 12.

50. Georges Mongrédien, *La Vie quotidienne des comédiens à l'époque de Molière* (Paris: Hachette, 1966) 22 (my translation).
51. Jean-Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, *Maxims and Reflections upon Plays*, anonymous translation (London, 1699) 13-14.
52. Bossuet 13-14.
53. 13.
54. 15.
55. See Roxanne Decker Lalande, *Intruders in the Play World, The Dynamics of Gender in Molière's Comedies* (Madison-Teaneck: Farleigh Dickinson P, 1986) 31 and Frances Gray, *Women and Laughter* (Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 1994) 1-17.
56. Elin Diamond, "Brechtian Theory Feminist Theory, Toward a Gestic Feminist Criticism", *Drama Review* 32.1 (1998) 82-94.
57. Dolan 114.
58. John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 1972) 25-27.
59. Metz 547.
60. Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire, Livre XI Les Quatre Concepts fondamentaux* (Paris: Seuil, 1971) 71.
61. Freedman 2-3.
62. It has been suggested that this social spectacle compensates the public for the loss of baroque stage spectacle that had been shunted aside by the classical unities (Mittman 37; Lawrenson 331).
63. Catherine Buci-Glucksmann, *La Folie du voir, de l'esthétique baroque* (Paris: Galilée, 1986) 35-37.