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The Theatrical *lieu de culture* within Molière's Theater

Molière's theater is itself, by definition, a *lieu de culture*. The performance of one of his plays transforms the space in which it occurs into a *lieu de culture* by virtue of the presence of two crucial features. First, the performance belongs to a cultural domain, in this case specifically the theater. By 'culture' I mean simply that which is tied to the arts, letters, manners, and scholarly pursuits.¹ Second there must be an audience present for that performance. The same basic situation obviously holds true for any playwright whose plays are performed. What makes Molière interesting is the degree to which he incorporates these self-same elements *within* many of his plays. He stages numerous embedded performances — whether of music, dance, or various kinds of role-playing — and often these cultural interventions have appreciative and/or aware audiences within the play itself.² In this study, I propose to examine these embedded performances in order to better understand how both performance and culture function within Molière's theater, as well as the comic ends to which they are used.

Molière's *comédies-ballets* are a privileged, if certainly not exclusive, site for the creation of a *lieu de culture* within his dramatic oeuvre. Some combination of music, dance, and theater is performed onstage for an audience made up of characters of the outer play. The level of integration of the embedded performance within the play varies considerably.³ *Les Amants magnifiques*, itself part of the extra-theatrical *lieu de culture* organized by Louis XIV as the *Divertissement Royal* of 1670, contains six *intermèdes* laced with music and dance. Two of the early *intermèdes* present theatrical performances that are essentially unrelated to the play's action, but motivated by the competing Princes' desires to win the hand of the Princesse through the lavish entertainments they provide for her and her mother.

As the play progresses, the *intermèdes* lose even that rationale for their presence and become pure performance that threatens to overwhelm the main plot.⁴ At one point, for example, as the Princesse Ériphile enters a grotto, eight statues spontaneously start to dance (*intermède* 4), and in a later scene, her mother reacts to the rejected Princes' recriminations with the blithe *non sequitur*: 'couronnons par ce pompeux spectacle cette merveilleuse journée' (V, 4), introducing yet another performance involving costumes and music. Molière exploits the mirror effect of embedded *lieux de culture*, insofar as two distinct audiences — the onstage and the offstage — appreciate the embedded performances, and the onstage audience at least is not overly concerned that they are unrelated to the story line.⁵ We find the same basic process at work in *La Princesse d'Élide*, performed in the context of the celebration entitled *Les Plaisirs de l'île enchantée* (1664), but here three of the *intermèdes* contain comedy as well as performance in the form of the court jester Moron's unsuccessful courtship of Philis. And when he sings for her, it is hardly an example of high culture.

Les Amants magnifiques, a play commissioned by the king who explicitly requested the structure of embedded performances of music, song, and dance,⁶ is however not typical of Molière's *comédies-ballets* or other plays that embed a *lieu de culture* in some fashion. More often in Molière's theater, the *lieu de culture* is an invitation to comedy or other forms of subversion.⁷ At times, the performances that Molière embeds in the action of a *comédie-ballet* constitute a comic extension of the main plot. For example, in *Les Fâcheux*, the singing and dancing are integrated into the action and function to make the street an unexpected *lieu de culture*, while simultaneously comically subverting the cultural associations with such singing and dancing. Aside from two pastoral moments of dance (a gardener alone on stage and a shepherd dancing with a shepherdess), the numerous balletic performances and occasional singing all involve *fâcheux* keeping someone from doing what they want.

Monsieur de Pourceaugnac is similarly punctuated by highly comical *intermèdes* involving music and dance, such as the hero's unusual consultation with two preposterous lawyers: 'deux avocats musiciens dont l'un parle fort lentement, et l'autre fort vite' accompanied by pairs of dancing *Procureurs* and *Sergents* (II, 11). Thus the notion of the *lieu de culture* is often expanded or altered by Molière for comic ends.

The term *lieu de culture* has two components, *lieu* and *culture*. Up to this point we have taken the place to be Molière's stage, an indisputable *lieu de culture*. But the nature of the space in which the cultural performances are enacted within a given play is relevant as well. A *lieu de culture*, by virtue of the necessity of an audience, implies a relatively public space. In *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* (1670), *Le Malade imaginaire* (1673), as well as the five plays that take place in a salon, the tension between private and public becomes germane to an understanding of Molière's use of the *lieu de culture*. Indeed, it is in this group of plays that he ties cultural space and cultural performance to personal aspiration.

Le Bourgeois gentilhomme is the play where Molière experiments most heartily with transforming the private — specifically a private home — into a public space, and one dedicated to culture. Monsieur Jourdain aspires to turn his home into a *lieu de culture* of aristocratic refinement.⁸ In order to do so, there must be a performance of culture. Insofar as it is the place itself that must be converted into a *lieu de culture*, performances by others that are paid for by Jourdain suffice. Among these are the *Ballet des Nations* and the sumptuous repast described by Dorante in IV, 1. In conjunction with the meal we also find the 'danse des six cuisiniers' (III, 16) and the two 'chansons à boire' (IV, 1). Mme Jourdain indicates her husband's success at creating a *lieu de culture* when she complains: 'c'est ainsi que vous festinez les dames en mon absence, et que vous leur donnez la musique et la comédie, tandis que vous m'envoyez promener' (IV, 2). Jourdain's home, clearly, is a

reflection and extension of himself, so in order to control and dominate the *lieu de culture* he creates, he must make himself an embodiment of that culture as well. He undertakes to do so by engaging the series of four instructors whose job it is to make him appreciate and perform music, dance, the martial arts, and rhetoric. Under their tutelage, he strives to execute the cultural acts of the group he adulates: he has the *maître à danser* teach him how to bow appropriately to the *marquise* and he asks the *maître de philosophie* for advice in wording his *billet d'amour*.

Furthermore, Jourdain employs clothing to the same end. He is eager to show off the lavish outfit he has just had made and announces his intention to take a stroll whose sole function is to exhibit his new clothing and his lackeys (III, 1). This sartorial performance of his upper-class aspirations is a cultural performance as well insofar as the aesthetics of his dress are strongly foregrounded and it takes place on the public street (albeit off stage). The notion that clothing constitutes a cultural performance is made clear earlier when the four tailor's assistants dress Jourdain on stage in an elaborate musical ceremony (II, 5).⁹

The second *sine qua non* of a *lieu de culture*, as I mentioned at the outset, is the presence of a passive or participating audience. Jourdain has chosen a select audience, specifically the aristocratic Dorante and Dorimène, to observe and enjoy the cultural performances that he provides. For him, their role as appreciative audience is essential to his project of transforming his home into a *lieu de culture* and himself into a *gentilhomme*. Dorante, of course, takes the aspects of this *lieu de culture* that appeal to him — specifically the dinner and the *Ballet des Nations* — and presents them as his own to Dorimène.¹⁰

Unable to make distinctions between the type of culture on offer and governed by the principle that more is better, Jourdain eagerly accepts Cléonte's proposal to transform him into a *Mamamouchi*. The 'Turkish' ceremony that Cléonte and his valet Covielle perform involves music, dance, and song. Jourdain,

much to his delight, is given a central role, one he plays in front of an audience composed of Dorante and Dorimène, whose presence offers him implicit validation of the ceremony's importance. Jourdain's house is thus explicitly a *lieu de culture* at this juncture. And Jourdain himself is transformed, albeit in a new direction, but one that accords him a noble title. The costume and turban in which Jourdain is ceremoniously clothed recall the new suit he donned in Act II. The clothes make the man; here they make him into a representative of Turkish high culture while simultaneously undermining his own transformative aspirations through ridicule. The audience both onstage and off interpret the full range of cultural performances attendant to the Turkish ceremony not primarily for their aesthetic value, but rather as an inversion of high culture. The *Ballet des Nations* in Act V, while less connected to the specific action of the play, provides further proof that Jourdain's home has become a *lieu de culture*, but again its precise meaning is open to interpretations that are far less favorable to Jourdain.¹¹ Like the *Mamamouchi* ceremony in Act IV, the *Ballet des Nations* suggests a geographic cultural expansion by incorporating singing and dancing associated with diverse French provinces, Spain, and Italy. The *Ballet* ends with everyone singing and dancing at once, in harmony, thereby implying the successful, if at times comic, transformation of Jourdain's home, if not Jourdain himself, into a *lieu de culture*.¹²

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A different notion of cultural space is conveyed by the seventeenth-century salon, a space that, while less public than a theater, is certainly more open than Jourdain's home.¹³ A site for social gatherings, led by a woman, the salon is strongly tied to culture, its criticism, and its performance. The salon is a recurring space in Molière's comedies, appearing in *Les Précieuses ridicules* (1659), *Le Misanthrope* (1666), *La Critique de l'École des femmes* (1663), *La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas* (1671), and *Les Femmes savantes* (1672). In these salons, we find a broad range of

possibilities for the creation of, or more often, the failure to create, a *lieu de culture*, as though Molière were experimenting with different ways of mocking the cultural pretensions of its denizens. Cultural performances, while typical of the seventeenth-century salon, do not in fact have a particularly large role in any of these five plays. In *Les Femmes savantes*, it is only during two long scenes that we can even speak of a salon. Throughout the rest of the play, it is a matter of the private affairs of the members of a family in a private home.¹⁴ In Act 3, the presence of first Trissotin and then Vadius, both outsiders equipped with various forms of verse to share, transforms the setting into a salon, at least to some extent. Trissotin first reads his sonnet aloud and then an epigram to an audience made up of only the four female members of the family (III, 2). The broader audience of a *lieu de culture* as well as the true exchange of ideas that one might expect in a salon (rather than these women's mindless adulation or, in the case of Henriette, complete indifference) seems to be promised by the arrival of Vadius (III, 3). But a disagreement between the two men prevents Vadius from reading his ballad to the assembly and leads to his premature departure. And the supposed *lieu de culture* of the salon returns to its former narrow state. The issues raised are similar in *Les Précieuses ridicules*, where Mascarille, after listing his supposedly prodigious literary output in the salons of Paris,¹⁵ offers a four-line *Impromptu* to the appreciative Magdelon and Cathos:

Oh, oh, je n'y prenais pas garde,
Tandis que sans songer à mal, je vous regarde.
Votre œil en tapinois me dérobe mon cœur,
Au voleur, au voleur, au voleur, au voleur. (scene 9)

Mascarille's cultural aspirations are severely undermined both by the nature of his audience (the eponymous *précieuses*) and by the quality of his verse. The similarity between the two salon scenes taken from the antipodes of Molière's theater is

striking: in both cases the salon is made up of one external envoy of culture (or, in both cases, briefly two) and a few female family members who function as an absurdly non-critical audience. In *Les Précieuses ridicules* we find the added dimension that the cultural engine of this supposed salon is an obvious imposter, a valet disguised as a gentleman. Later Mascarille and another disguised valet, Jodelet, perform a ballet accompanied by violins (scene 12) that is no more sophisticated than the former's *impromptu*. It is obvious that Molière is making fun of the salon as a *lieu de culture*, showing the culture to be of poor quality in a space that is limited rather than exclusive.

Molière's goals in *La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas* and *Le Misanthrope* are rather different. In the *La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas* (1671), the culture on offer is more varied — a traditional love sonnet read by the vicomte to his beloved as the two are alone on stage (scene 1), two considerably less polished epigrams by the Countess's suitor shared with all of the salon attendees, and the beginning of a theatrical performance for the group, accompanied by violins (scenes 7-8).¹⁶ The space is less restricted as well, with a variety of guests. Célimène's home in *Le Misanthrope* is similarly open to a public of her friends. Two scenes involve the performance of culture and support our understanding of Célimène's salon as a *lieu de culture*. In the first act, Oronte, in an ostensible gesture of a desire for friendship with Alceste, reads him the sonnet he wrote recently. The reason he gives for the reading ('savoir s'il est bon qu'au public je l'expose,' I, 2, l. 297) references a cultural activity that is a commonplace of the salon. However, Oronte is not performing a salon reading; he is asking Alceste alone whether he should undertake such a performance (Philinte is a third wheel in the scene). Thus the scene, like that in which the Vicomte presents his sonnet to Julie early in *La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas*, is essentially private. When, in the same scene, Alceste responds to Oronte with his 'vieille chanson', cultural exchange devolves into a competition that is both hostile and,

through incongruity, comic. There is a more ample group of participants for *Le Misanthrope*'s portrait scene (II, 4) which is Molière's most developed depiction of a literary salon. With the participation and encouragement of her guests, Célimène creates a series of eight impromptu verbal portraits of absent individuals. The *esprit* that the hostess exhibits in their performance is a sign of accomplishment and sophistication. While one might argue that the portraits do not constitute culture, but merely wit, it is clear that Célimène takes *médiance* to the height of an art form. Portraits appear elsewhere in the play as well, but they leave the domain of pure, aesthetic performance in those other scenes because the external spectators know the individuals being described (e.g. Arsinoé, and in the final scene, Alceste, Clitandre, Acaste, and Oronte) and thus their *ad hominem* nature comes more to the fore. In the portrait scene itself, the fact that the external audience is unfamiliar with the individuals portrayed allows for our pure, aesthetic contemplation of the verbal portrait. Thus Célimène's salon, like the other three, can be said to aspire to or attain, albeit briefly, the status of a *lieu de culture*. The association of ridicule with cultural performance differs between the plays. Molière mocks the cultural aspirations of the *salonnières* of *Les Femmes savantes* and *Les Précieuses ridicules* through the low cultural value of the performances in their salons; he does the same in the case of *La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas* where only the vicomte's cultural performances are exempt from ridicule (his sonnet and the final theatrical performance). In *Le Misanthrope*, no ridicule is attached to Célimène for her performance of portraits in Act II, scene 4; instead it is the objects of her portraits who are made to look ridiculous.¹⁷

La Critique de L'École des femmes is dissimilar from the other four salon plays. It maintains the most concentrated focus on culture. The primary subject of conversation from beginning to end, Molière's comedy *École des Femmes*, is indeed cultural. The space — Uranie's salon in her home — is similar in its openness and

choice of guests to what we find in *Le Misanthrope*. However, there is no actual performance of culture here, only its critique. Molière thus presents a second-degree *lieu de culture* in *La Critique de l'École des femmes* through the discussion of the dramatic arts.¹⁸ Overall, the salons in Molière's theater share significant characteristics with a *lieu de culture*, but the playwright is invariably more concerned with satirizing salon language, activities, and the *salonnières* than in their potential as a showcase for cultural performance.

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Molière's final play, *Le Malade imaginaire*, presents yet another set of issues. From the beginning, the comedy focuses on an alternate form of culture, medicine. Whereas elsewhere we find performances of music and dance, here doctors and apothecaries perform their arts. From one end of the play to the other — from Purgon's elaborate invoice to the final induction ceremony, the medical arts are on display and transform Argan's home into a medical *lieu de culture*. Thomas Diafoirus, a newly minted doctor and Angélique's betrothed, undertakes a demonstration of his diagnostic skills (II, 6); Fleurant attempts to deliver an enema (III, 4); Purgon intones a medical malediction (III, 5); and Toinette imitates a man of medicine as she performs a parody of a medical consultation. The young Diafoirus even invites Angélique to another medical *lieu de culture* in order to witness the spectacle of the dissection of a woman.

Other arts are at times conjoined with the medical as in the cases of Purgon's highly rhythmic and dramatic incantation of the ills that will befall Argan and Toinette's purely theatrical turn as a doctor. Dance and music are fundamental parts of Argan's induction ceremony at the end of the play. A similar conflation of medicine with the more traditionally aesthetic arts occurs in the earlier *L'Amour médecin* (1665) with the four dancing doctors on their way to a consultation (*premier entracte*) and in *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac* (1669) where the apothecary,

accompanied by a group of musicians and dancers, chase Pourceaugnac around the stage in order to administer the prescribed enema (I, 11).

Le Malade imaginaire raises the problem of public versus private, however, in a way that none of the other plays we have considered does. In *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* and the salon plays the action takes place inside a private home which, unlike the theater itself, has no claim *a priori* to be a *lieu de culture*. As we saw, private space may be transformed into a *lieu de culture* by the introduction of representatives of particular cultural spheres along with an external audience for their performances. The space in *Le Malade imaginaire*, however, is less permeable to the outside, both in terms of cultural performers and audiences. As far as performers are concerned, while their number is not inconsiderable — Polichinelle sings and the watchmen dance (ostensibly outside Argan's home) in the first *intermède*; Argan's brother Béralde brings in a group of Egyptian dancers and musicians who perform (along with a number of monkeys) in the *deuxième intermède*; and later, a theatrical troupe made up of Béralde's friends performs the ceremony of investiture for a medical doctor — they are far less dominant than the representatives of the medical establishment. Indeed, it is no accident that the final cultural performance (Argan's induction as a doctor) breaks down the barrier between the two groups, with the theatrical performers impersonating the doctors. The question of the audience for the performances in *Le Malade imaginaire* is more problematic because Argan is almost the sole spectator. The doctors and pharmacists (real or otherwise) perform their arts for him; he is the sole beneficiary of the Egyptian troupe and their monkeys; and the final ballet / induction ceremony is centered around and solely for the benefit of Argan. In certain respects, the hypochondriac resembles Monsieur Jourdain: both men have abundant wealth, a starring role in a specific cultural performance of metamorphosis, and a desire to

transform their home into a *lieu de culture*. However, unlike Jourdain, Argan does not take pains to provide an audience other than himself.

There are two scenes in *Le Malade imaginaire* that arguably do provide a broader audience. In II, 5 Cléonte, disguised as Angélique's voice instructor, sings a duet with her in response to Argan's request that they perform: 'Monsieur, faites un peu chanter ma fille devant la compagnie.' The audience, other than members of the household, includes the guests Monsieur Diafoirus and his son Thomas. That they are an unlikely audience for the high culture of opera or that Cléante and Angélique are not singing a real opera, but merely using the operatic form to communicate in secret, matter little: the structural conditions for a *lieu de culture* are present. One might also consider that Argan's induction ceremony at the end satisfies the conditions for a *lieu de culture*. Leaving aside for a moment the fact that the ceremony is purely theatrical and carries no weight in the real world, an induction ceremony is performed not only for the initiate and invited guests, but also for the members of the group into which he is being inducted. These members are thus actors in the cultural performance and simultaneously its audience.

Argan's own efforts to transform his home into a medical *lieu de culture* are largely solipsistic, however, and his aesthetic appreciation of the medical arts is purely egotistical. Almost immediately in the first scene of the play, Argan notes how well-written the pharmaceutical invoices are. He cites: 'un petit clystère insinuatif, préparatif, et rémollient, pour amollir, humecter, et rafraîchir les entrailles de Monsieur,' and then comments: 'Ce qui me plaît de Monsieur Fleurant, mon apothicaire, c'est que ses parties sont toujours fort civiles' (I, 1). To a large extent the lack of a wider audience is a function of the art in question: medicine is not generally performed in public. In *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* Jourdain's motivation was social ascension, and class means nothing without a wide audience. Here, Argan's goal is to attain health (or cheat death) through the performance of

medical arts. Thus the medical *lieu de culture* that Argan has created is deeply personal. There is, however, a public dimension to Argan's obsession with illness and doctors. He is very conscious of performing his role as a sick man for family members and visitors. Toinette calls attention to the theatrical nature of his performance when she makes him forget that role by goading him into chasing her around the room (I, 5). She later takes advantage of his hunger for a respectful audience when she passes easily for a noted doctor by addressing Argan as an 'illustre malade' whose 'réputation ... s'étend partout' (III, 10). By and large, however, Argan is the sole audience for the cultural performances he pays to have performed, just as he is alone onstage for the long first scene of the play. The association with the solitude of death is patent. At the same time Argan's aspirations to lord over a medical *lieu de culture* are comic because what he desires — protection from suffering and death — is, although universal, absurd. Argan's brother Béralde, as well as the young lovers Angélique and Cléante, seek, through the use of more traditional comic performances, to make Argan's home a *lieu de culture* focused on life, not death.

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In conclusion, it should be clear that a rather sizable portion of Molière's theater engages with the notion of the *lieu de culture*. Characters aspire to own and control a *lieu de culture*, while the disproportion between those aspirations and the reality of the situation gives rise to comedy. The collision between the seriousness of Jourdain's purpose in his performances and their comic absurdity in the context of Molière's play is the source of much of *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme's* charm. The performances themselves may be risible (e.g. the Turkish ceremony or the dancing doctors) or not (Célimène's portraits or Jourdain's lavish dinner), but all are lodged within and therefore reflections of the indisputable *lieu de culture* that is the performance of a play by Molière, and they thus encourage speculation concerning

the relationship between the two levels. The resulting mirror effect leads to the conclusion that there is at least a hint of self-subversion in Molière's treatment of the *lieu de culture*. Whoever tries to harness the space and possess the culture performed therein runs the risk of hubris and, in the hands of Molière, ridicule.

Notes

¹ I will leave aside the question of high or low culture, because in Molière's theater the two are frequently in play.

² Norman notes that 'Molière's *œuvre* presents an astonishing number of stage portraits of theater spectators'. Larry F. Norman, *Public Mirror. Molière and the Social Commerce of Depiction* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1999), p. 113.

³ Forestier summarizes the possibilities: 'Les relations entre pièce-cadre et pièce intérieure peuvent être de trois ordres. Un grand nombre de pièces, au premier rang desquelles les comédies-ballets, présentent un lien très relâché entre les deux niveaux dramatiques; le spectacle enchâssé n'a aucun rapport avec l'intrigue et il est introduit de manière artificielle: l'influence de la vieille comédie à intermèdes se fait, à ce niveau, encore largement sentir. D'autres, des comédies des comédiens pour la plupart, contiennent des spectacles qui entretiennent une relation avec l'intrigue, sans être, cependant, intégrés véritablement dans l'action principale. [...] Enfin quelques œuvres mettent en œuvre le rapport optimal entre les deux niveaux dramatiques, celui où le spectacle enchâssé est un élément indispensable de la progression de l'action principale.' Georges Forestier, *Le Théâtre dans le théâtre* (Geneva: Droz, 1981), p. 125.

⁴ The interludes of pastoral, music, and dance in this play take up more stage time than the primary action of the play itself. See Jacques Guicharnaud, 'Les Trois Niveaux critiques des *Amants magnifiques*', in *Molière: Stage and Study*, ed. by W. D. Howarth and Merlin Thomas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 22.

⁵ Mazouer observes that our aesthetic tastes have changed and that the modern spectator's reaction to the admixture typical of the *comédie-ballet* is not

that of the seventeenth-century audience. He describes his own response to Jean-Marie Villégier's 1990 staging of *Le Malade imaginaire* which included the prologue and all of the musical and dance elements: 'Je me souviens encore de la surprise des spectateurs les mieux disposés ... : cette belle musique, ces danses avaient un peu l'air de reléguer au second plan Argan et sa famille. Nous ne sommes plus habitués à cette profusion des ornements'. Charles Mazouer, *Molière et ses comédies-ballets* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1993), p. 236.

⁶ 'Avant-propos', *Les Amants magnifiques, Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Georges Forestier and Claude Bourqui (Paris: Gallimard, 2010), vol. 2, p. 946. All references to Molière's plays are to this two-volume edition.

⁷ The notion of subversion may apply to *Les Amants magnifiques* as well: Molière altered the king's own outline for the play by not awarding the princess to one of the princes, but instead to Sostrate, an obscure general of the playwright's own invention. The very arbitrariness of the spectacles performed within the play may perhaps point to a critique by Molière himself of the significant social position of theater in both court society and Paris. See Marie-Claude Canova-Green, 'Le Roi, l'astrologue, le bouffon et le poète, figures de la création dans *Les Amants magnifiques* de Molière', *Seventeenth-Century French Studies* 18 (1996), 129.

⁸ For a discussion of Jourdain's social aspirations and their quixotic nature, see Volker Kapp, 'Langage verbal et langage non-verbal dans le *Bourgeois gentilhomme*', in *Le 'Bourgeois gentilhomme'. Problèmes de la comédie-ballet*, ed. by Volker Kapp (Tübingen: Biblio 17, 1991), pp. 103-04.

⁹ Both Merlin-Kajman and Bold underline the importance of Jourdain's clothes. Hélène Merlin-Kajman, 'Mamamouchi-Molière, ou les enjeux du signifiant au XVII^e siècle', *XVII^e siècle*, 56 (2004), 319; Stephen Bold, 'Textual Harmonies in *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*', *Romance Notes*, 48.1 (2007), 27.

¹⁰ It is clear in IV, 1 that Dorimène believes that Dorante has paid for the meal when she says to him: 'Comment, Dorante, voilà un Repas tout à fait magnifique!' As the play draws to a close, Dorante suggests ownership again with: 'Voyons *notre* Ballet' (V, 6, italics mine). The diamond that Dorante appropriates in a similar fashion, while hardly a performance per se, is certainly an aesthetic object to be displayed before an audience, in some respects equivalent to Jourdain's new clothes.

¹¹ Purkis reads the onstage spectators in the first part of the *Ballet*, who clamor for the attention of the *donneur des livres*, as representing Jourdain through their 'inflated sense of their own importance'. Helen M. C. Purkis, 'Monsieur Jourdain, Dorante and the *Ballet des Nations*', *Studi francesi*, 24.2 (1980), 227. Canova-Green describes the same part of the *Ballet des Nations* as a 'une remise en ordre, une restauration de la hiérarchie traditionnelle, une régression parodique à ce que Monsieur Jourdain pouvait être dans le temps pré-dramatique'. Marie-Claude Canova-Green, « *Ces gens-là se trémoussent bien...* ». *Ébats et débats dans la comédie-ballet de Molière* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 2007), p. 146.

¹² Fleck underlines the transformative power of cultural performance: 'Ainsi la maison de Monsieur Jourdain sera de façon transitoire le site de la Turquerie avant de devenir celui des quarante minutes du Ballet des Nations, conversion ultime dans l'élévation de la maison bourgeoise en lieu d'un somptueux

divertissement de cour, où l'élégance et la fantaisie déployés *in extenso* se renforcent pour étendre le plaisir presque à l'infini.' Stephen Fleck, 'Représentation et spectacle dans les comedies-ballets: de la représentation du monde à la création du spectacle total', in *L'Âge de la représentation: L'art du spectacle au XVII^e siècle*, ed. by Rainer Zaiser (Tübingen, Gunter Narr, 2006), p. 201.

¹³ Critical discussions of whether seventeenth-century salons constituted a public or private space come to no firm consensus. See, for example, Erica Harth, *Cartesian Women* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992); Carolyn C. Lougee, *Le Paradis des femmes* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1976); and Joan DeJean, *Tender Geographies* (New York: Columbia UP, 1991).

¹⁴ Gaines provides an interesting analysis of the competition between the salon and the household in the play, noting an almost perfect balance in terms of lines assigned to characters from each camp. James Gaines, 'Ménage versus Salon in *Les Femmes savantes*', *L'Esprit créateur*, 21.3 (1981), 51–52. Those in the salon camp do not seem aware that they are in fact largely alone together at home.

¹⁵ 'Pour moi, tel que vous me voyez, je m'en escrime un peu quand je veux, et vous verrez courir de ma façon dans les belles Ruelles de Paris, deux cents Chansons, autant de Sonnets, quatre cents Épigrammes, et plus de mille Madrigaux, sans compter les Énigmes et les Portraits' (*Les Précieuses ridicules*, scene 9).

¹⁶ Canova-Green suggests that Molière plays with the line separating illusion and reality when she notes the confusion between this spectacle offered within the play by the vicomte to the comtesse and Molière's real offering of *La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas* to the king. Marie-Claude Canova-Green, 'Feinte et comédie dans *La*

Comtesse d'Escarbagnas de Molière', in *Essays on French Comic Drama from the 1640s to the 1780s*, ed. by Derek Cannon and George Evans (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2000), p. 72.

¹⁷ Célimène's salon is destroyed, at least temporarily, because she does not adequately control the specific make-up of her audience. She breaks the cardinal rule of witty verbal portraiture: one must praise the individuals present and blame the absent. See Jean Mesnard, 'Le *Misanthrope*, mise en question de l'art de plaire', *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France*, 72 (1972), 869; see also Norman, pp. 169-182.

¹⁸ Similarly, although not in the context of a salon, *L'Impromptu de Versailles* contains a critique of another play that attacks Molière.

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