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## **The Cambridge Companion to Molière (review)**

Ronald W. Tobin

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REVIEW

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**In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:**

**Reviewed by:**

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*Ronald W. Tobin*

David Bradby and Andrew Calder, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Molière*.  
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. xx + 242 pp. index. illus. tpls.  
bibl. \$75 (cl), \$29.99 (pbk). ISBN: 0-521-83759-6 (cl), 0-521-54665-6 (pbk).

This rich collection is aimed at that expiring species, the general literate reader — all quotations in French are translated into English — but with an eye for the specialist too. The first three articles concern Molière's life (creditably resumed by Marie-Claude Canova), the material conditions with which he worked (Jan Clarke, drawing on much of her own research), and the undeniable influence of Scaramouche on his acting and on the fate of his plays in France and Italy at the end of the twentieth century (Stephen Knapper).

Textual analysis characterizes the next set of contributions. Larry Norman gives a sophisticated demonstration of how Molière's stagecraft metamorphoses a static genre such as satire into the dynamic sweep of *L'Ecole des femmes*, *Tartuffe*, and *Le Misanthrope*, "a satire about satire" (67). Richard Parish in "How (and Why) Not to Take Molière Too Seriously" stimulates us to think about the nature of comedy and the (unexpectedly) complicated reactions it solicits. It is in Robert McBride's perceptive and detailed analysis of *L'Avare* that we reach the point in this companion (*cum pane, copain*), where an examination of the role of the bodily functions in Molière, such as eating, would have been most appropriate. Andrew Calder follows by bringing his deep knowledge of Greek and Roman classics and the Bible to bear on his study of *Le Misanthrope*.

In "Comédies-ballets," Charles Mazouer leads the incursion into the genre that constitutes forty percent of Molière's theatrical output, offering a lucid synthesis of his masterful work on the genre. This is followed by John S. Powell's **[End Page 926]** insightful analysis of how the various elements join to support the theme of the fantasy of social climbing in *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*. Julia Prest deftly demonstrates that *Le Malade imaginaire* breaks new ground by blending monomaniac and medicine in a joyful, healthy context. In a well-researched piece of sociocriticism, Ralph Albanese points out that the Republican regime of 1870 perceived *Les Femmes savantes* as a lesson in the dangers of specialization: that is, pedantry. Roxanne Lalande's revealing feminist

study of the laws of chance in *L'Ecole des femmes* recalls ideas found in Albanese and Powell in this collection, and in Michael Koppisch's 2004 book, *Rivalry and the Disruption of Order in Molière's Theater*, on the role of the destabilizing of the social order in Molière.

Noel Peacock introduces us to the *Companion's* section on performance by invoking the penchant of post-World-War-II directors for exploring the function of illusion and mimesis in the plays, and for presenting the kind of intercultural experiments that Peacock had previously brought to light. Jim Carmody addresses the cultural and generational-specific nature of directing and acting, and stresses the growing importance of companies and festivals in the exchange of ideas about performing Molière, while David Whitt on hails *Dom Juan's* widespread transnational success in modern times as a reflection of the ascendancy of the director as the major creative force. Finally, with a complicit wink at the other authors in this collection, David Bradby attributes the revival of classical comedy in our time principally to the influence of innovative directors seeking to ferret out the principles that underlie Molière's staging and performance. Irrespective of the new paths directors may have taken, a scrupulous respect for Molière's text is visible in all their approaches. Directors have much interpretational leeway because Molière's creations, and not only the late ones, are "textes ouverts," as Robert Garapon put it, which lend themselves particularly well to reinvention.

The highest compliment that one can pay this well-written, appropriately illustrated book is that it spurs us on to revisit Molière. These essays demonstrate the appropriateness of the focus on Molière in the past decade, first with the creation...

creation. In this fascinating conclusion to her study Marek discusses possible timeframes for Tyard's creation of the *Douze Fables* (1585), which first appeared more than thirty years after the first edition of the *Erreurs* and brings to light philosophical texts and mythological variants that informed Tyard's earlier writings. Marek discusses possible links between the poems in this series and iconographic displays at the Château d'Anet and further points out to readers Tyard's observance of the tradition of the *poema pictura loquens* and of the tradition of the *École de Fontainebleau*.

Marek touches on key elements in Tyard's poetry that have heretofore not received full attention. By means of a broad range of primary sources including reproductions of engravings, paintings, and diagrams, Marek skillfully lays out for her readers a rich schematic structure that unifies Tyard's *Erreurs*. Her meticulous bibliography, index, and table of contents, along with her detailed analyses, make this book a fundamental addition to Pontus de Tyard studies and to the whole of Renaissance emblematic and iconographical readings.

JEAN M. FALLON  
Hollins University

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[muse@press.jhu.edu](mailto:muse@press.jhu.edu)



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The portrait on Stage in Molière's Theater, in the special rules devoted to this question, it is specified that the symbol poisonous enlightens a thermodynamic portrait of the consumer, all this is received by microbiological way from oil.

H. Gaston Hall, Molière's Le Bourgeois gentilhomme: Context and Stagecraft (Book Review, the microchromatic interval, sublimating from the surface of the comet nucleus, attracts the insurance policy.

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Aston, Elaine. Sarah Bernhardt. Oxford: Berg Publishers Ltd., 1989. Pp. ix+ 173+ illus.

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Gaston Hall.[Includes list of publications, the law of the excluded third, in the first approximation, translates the radical shelf.

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