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In the Loge

Marilyn Bushman-Carlton

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In the Loge
(from a painting by Mary Cassatt)

It's all about seeing and about being seen without knowing and about who sees whom.

The woman in black is the closest and first one we see. Her face and dress lack the color and lace that would bring our eyes back again and again.

Limply tied at her neck is a matching black hat. What catches our eyes are the glasses held to her eyes with one hand; the other, clutching a closed gold fan, lays in her lap. We see through transparent gloves, her ivory flesh.

Her glasses are trained, not on the lit white stage, where the baritone bows and an ardent soprano curves at his feet, but on someone outside of the frame whom we cannot see.

Farther back and unseen by the woman in black is the blur of a man in an opposite box.

He, too, is suited in black, and he leans his white head toward us and toward the woman. Like her, his right hand holds glasses to his eyes; his point precisely at her.

Both the woman in black and the man in black watching her rest their arms on the rim of the rail, linking the two, unaware, in a velvet-toned curve. Though through the eyes of the painter, we see the woman and man in the black, gold and red composition, neither we, nor that man, see who is seen by the woman in black, the same seen by the painter who kept her or him forever out of our sight.

—Marilyn Bushman-Carlton