

The Mercurian



A Theatrical Translation Review *Volume 4, Number 1*

Editor: Adam Versényi
Editorial Assistant: Michaela Morton
ISSN 2160-3316

The Mercurian is named for Mercury who, if he had known it, was/is the patron god of theatrical translators, those intrepid souls possessed of eloquence, feats of skill, messengers not between the gods but between cultures, traders in images, nimble and dexterous linguistic thieves. Like the metal mercury, theatrical translators are capable of absorbing other metals, forming amalgams. As in ancient chemistry, the mercurian is one of the five elementary “principles” of which all material substances are compounded, otherwise known as “spirit”. The theatrical translator is sprightly, lively, potentially volatile, sometimes inconstant, witty, an ideal guide or conductor on the road.

The Mercurian publishes translations of plays and performance pieces from any language into English. *The Mercurian* also welcomes theoretical pieces about theatrical translation, rants, manifestos, and position papers pertaining to translation for the theatre, as well as production histories of theatrical translations. Submissions should be sent to: Adam Versényi at anversen@email.unc.edu or by snail mail:

Adam Versényi,
Department of Dramatic Art, CB# 3230,
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill,
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3230.

For translations of plays or performance pieces, unless the material is in the public domain, please send proof of permission to translate from the playwright or original creator of the piece. Since one of the primary objects of *The Mercurian* is to move translated pieces into production, no translations of plays or performance pieces will be published unless the translator can certify that he/she has had an opportunity to hear the translation performed in either a reading or another production-oriented venue. **All material published in *The Mercurian* is protected by international copyright law.** Inquiries related to production or reproduction should be directed to the translator of the piece in question.

The Mercurian

Volume 4, Number 1

Table of Contents

Editor's Note	3
<i>CREDO: 18 Thoughts on Translating for the Theatre</i> by Michael Evans	4
Introductory/Translator's Notes on <i>Noise in the Waters</i> Marco Martinelli/Thomas Simpson	14
<i>Noise in the Waters</i> by Marco Martinelli Translated by Thomas Simpson	17
<i>Love in Disguise: Introduction</i> Daniel Smith	54
<i>Love in Disguise</i> by Marivaux Adapted and Translated by Daniel Smith	57
<i>School for Mothers</i> by Marivaux Translated by Samuel Buggeln	109

Editor's Note

This issue of *The Mercurian* begins with Michael Evans' meditation on theatrical translation, *Credo: 18 Thoughts on Translating for the Theatre*. A U.S. dramaturg working in Norway since the 1980s, Evans offers a thoughtful and provocative essay that should be of interest to anyone engaged in *theatrical* translation, as well as those selecting theatrical translations for production. Both Evans and *The Mercurian* welcome a dialogue with readers about any of his "18 Thoughts".

The issue continues with Thomas Simpson's translation of Marco Martinelli's *Noise in the Waters*. Martinelli is one of the founders of Teatro delle Albe and the producing organization Ravenna Teatro, both of which have been doing exciting work with young performers around the world since 1991 through their "non-school" project. *Noise in the Waters* premiered in July 2010 and deals with illegal African immigration to Italy. Mass migration due to war, poverty, natural disaster, and political upheaval, amidst a host of other causes, is one of our most pressing contemporary problems and Martinelli's play treats it with intelligence and compassion. In our ongoing effort to publish as many different types of theatrical translation as we can, *Noise in the Waters* also represents a first for *The Mercurian*: publication of a bilingual version of the text. Readers can follow the Italian and the English side by side, should they desire to do so. *Noise in the Waters* was first published in the online journal *California Italian Studies*, and we thank them for their permission to reprint the translation here.

The issue concludes with two comedies by the eighteenth century French playwright Marivaux: *Love in Disguise*, translated and adapted by Daniel Smith, and *School for Mothers*, translated by Samuel Buggeln. Smith and Buggeln submitted their translations independently of one another, providing us with the happy opportunity to publish not one, but two charming translations of Marivaux's work.

Back issues of *The Mercurian* can now be found under "Related Links" on the website of the Department of Dramatic Art at the University of North Carolina, <http://drama.unc.edu/>, where we will maintain a permanent web presence. As the theatre is nothing without its audience, *The Mercurian* welcomes your comments, questions, complaints, and critiques. Deadline for submissions for consideration for Volume 4, No. 2 will be January 1, 2013.

--Adam Versényi

Advisory Board

Neil Blackadder, Knox College

Catherine Coray, hotINK at the LARK/New York University

Richard Davis, George Mason University/Theater of the First Amendment

Jean Graham-Jones, The Graduate Center, The City University of New York

David Johnston, Queen's University, Belfast, N.Ireland

Kirsten Nigro, The University of Texas-El Paso

Caridad Svich, Playwright/Translator

Paul Walsh, Yale School of Drama

CREDO: 18 Thoughts on Translating for the Theatre

By Michael Evans

By way of introduction: I'm an American expatriate and have been living and working as a dramaturg in Norway since the 1980's. Dramaturging in a small country in Europe means working frequently with plays in translation: commissioning translations, working with translators, polishing up old translations for new productions, and on occasion, translating plays myself. I haven't counted, but I've probably worked (in varying degrees of depth) on a hundred productions of plays in translation. I present these eighteen thoughts to American dramaturgs and literary managers not because I have anything terribly original to say. On the contrary, most of my colleagues here in Norway would agree with most of what I have to say. It is rather because foreign-language plays are so rarely produced in the U.S. that very few American dramaturgs will have anything like my experience.

M.E.

1. Good writing skills are more important than deep knowledge about the source language.

If you're looking for a translator and can choose between a real expert in the foreign language in question or somebody who is less adept at the foreign language, but whose ability to fashion dialogue you admire, go with the latter.

When you commission a translator for a project, choose one whose language feels right. There is no such thing as a good translator for all projects. For example, I don't do current youth slang, in either Norwegian or English. My few and feeble attempts have been laughable (I'm told).

2. Good translators are always good close readers.

More important than deep knowledge of the foreign language is deep knowledge of the play to be translated. Many of the questions about language that arise in reading a play can be answered by re-reading the play.

Here's an example: A few years ago my theatre here in Norway produced an American play written in the 1980's. One of the characters entered a room with this friendly greeting:

Hey guys, what's happening?

The translator, unaccustomed to American slang from the 60's or 70's, translated the expression directly, rendering it equivalent to this:

What is going on here, guys?

An obvious mistake. But the problem wasn't that the translator wasn't conversant in hippie-inspired slang (although that would have helped), but rather that he hadn't read the play carefully enough. Making a real question out of the character's friendly greeting simply didn't fit the context of the scene. It got the scene off on the wrong foot. The translator should have suspected something was wrong with his interpretation.

3. Keep the pace of the piece—and beware of text creep.

My first draft of an English translation of a Norwegian or Danish play will typically increase the number of words by about five percent. Funny thing is, when I translate the other way, from English to Norwegian, the number of words still goes up by about five percent.

I think the reason for this is that playwrights are naturally attracted to expressions in their language that say a lot in few words. This presents the translator with a dilemma. Of course we want to translate the whole meaning of the line. But if by doing so we use five percent more words than the playwright used, we slow things down. By hewing too closely to the text's semantic meaning we do the playwright a disservice.

Therefore a careful translator shouldn't be afraid to cut small things like repetitions, adverbial phrases, and the like. Maintaining the pace of play is as important as being "correct."

4. And try to keep the rhythm, too.

Is the character attacking with a series of quick jabs, or winding up for the decisive punch? Is she beating around the bush, hoping the whole thing will go away, or is she charging into the conflict? Is a character blurting out his line, or has he thought things through first?

All of these different ways of speaking have different rhythms, and good playwrights write them. Your job is to reproduce them. In some cases, getting the rhythm right is more important than being semantically faithful to the original.

5. If nobody is going to get it, change it.

Look at this exchange from Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*. Tom has just informed Amanda that he has invited a friend over for dinner—the Gentleman Caller Amanda has been hectoring him to find for Laura:

Amanda: What's his name?

Tom: His name is O'Connor.

Amanda: O'Connor—he's Irish and tomorrow's Friday—that means fish. Well, that's all right, I'll make a salmon loaf....

Here Williams lets Amanda skip over a couple of steps in her train of thought. He lets us see Amanda's thoughts racing ahead, encountering a small problem and quickly finding a solution. Her full thoughts run like this:

1. *O'Connor*

2. *He's Irish.*

3. *Probably Catholic.*

4. *Tomorrow is Friday.*

5. *Catholics aren't supposed to eat meat on Fridays.*

6. *Solution: I'll serve fish—a salmon loaf.*

Steps 3 and 5 are left unstated. In the U.S., at least at the time Williams wrote the play, audiences would immediately fill in the blanks. It was common knowledge then that it would be insensitive to invite a Catholic over for meat on a Friday. But in a strongly Protestant country like Norway, nobody would be able to fill in the blanks quickly enough. What to do?

When I worked on an older translation of the play for my theatre's production, I tried first to fill in the blanks. That didn't work. The line became unwieldy; Amanda's mind wasn't racing, it was deliberating. The solution was to cut, trimming the line down to this (translated here back into English):

Amanda: O'Connor. Irish. Well, that's all right. (a new thought) I'll make a salmon loaf!

Not as good as Williams' line, but perfectly playable. Amanda's mind is still racing, and who cares about Catholics' meatless Fridays?

Another change is that Amanda's *Well, that's all right* in my version pertains to the Gentleman Caller's Irishness, not the fish dish. I kept the expression in because I liked the rhythm, but also because it adds something I felt was appropriate. It shows that Amanda worries about ethnicity, but is desperate to find someone for Laura. This is a bit free, but a nice touch.

6. Good translators always put their own creativity into the mix.

You're not a machine. Hopefully you are a theatre person, with a good portion of creativity. Use it. Don't let yourself be cowed by the author's surface intent. Your duty is as much to the production as a whole as to the author. Good productions are good for the author.

7. How "American" should you go?

This is often a real problem. Look at these lines:

You've gotta give her credit. Susanne stepped up to the plate when it really mattered.

Robert didn't get to first base with Michelle last night.

Now, what if you encountered them in a play translated (but not adapted) from, say, French? Would they bother you?

They would bother me. They would pull me out of the experience of the play for a moment and make me wonder what the author really wrote. I can't imagine a French author drawing on metaphors from the American national pastime. For me, these expressions would be a distraction — which is too bad, because they are colorful and precise.

In general, we don't want the translation to call attention to itself. If we use references to specifically American things, we risk making the translation too visible. But on the other hand, we're translating a play into (presumably) American English, and sports metaphors or what have you are an everyday part of our language.

If you read some of the anthologized translations of European plays from the 1950's—plays by Ionesco, Dürrenmatt or Anouilh, for example—you'll usually find a geographically neutral, mid-Atlantic form of English that often strikes me as simply bland.

So this is a true dilemma. As a translator you want to have at the ready the full arsenal of expressions that American English has to offer, but you don't want the translation to pull the audience out of the experience.

It's a balancing act.

8. How modern can you go?

Can a character in a play by Chekhov complain about having to multi-task? Maybe. At least I can envision good productions where this kind of howling anachronism would be right at home. But unless the production is in most other ways anachronistic, expressions like this will pull the audience out of the experience of the play for a moment.

This is basically the same dilemma as the nationality dilemma. When we translate older plays, we want the dialogue to be fresh, not stale or Victorian. What we're usually shooting for is not authentic period dialogue, but a simulacrum of the period's language: a style that feels appropriate and that doesn't call attention to itself, but that is as fresh and as clear as the author's language was when the play was written.

Again, it's usually a balancing act.

9. Play to the strengths of your target language.

Each language has inherent strengths and weaknesses. Make liberal use of your target language's strengths. That's what the author would have done, if he or she had been writing in your language.

One of the delights of the English language is its rich and complex tense system. Take a look at this sentence:

Melissa was taking a shower when the phone rang.

This sentence seems unremarkable to English speakers, but it is more complex than meets the eye. There are two types of past tense going on. The first is the continuous background action, *Melissa was taking a shower*, rendered with an *-ing* form. The second is the abrupt action that interrupted the background action, *the phone rang*, rendered in the simple past tense. Background, foreground. Clear and crisp.

Continuous verbs are common in English, but we don't have them in Norwegian. If you wanted to use Norwegian to describe Melissa's showering, you would have to write something along the lines of:

Melissa showered when the phone rang.

This sounds awkward to ears accustomed to English, but Norwegians don't complain. That's just the way their language is.

Continuous tenses are a fundamental feature of the English language, and they have many uses. *It rains* and *It is raining* are simply two different ideas for the native speaker of English. The first is general:

It rains a lot in October.

The second is specifically now:

It's raining outside at the moment.

In Norwegian, as in many other languages, there's no grammatical distinction between the two:

Det regner mye i oktober

and

Det regner ute akkurat nå.

The verb form is the same in both; the general or specific meaning is conveyed by the rest of the sentence and the context.

So: when I translate from Norwegian (or Danish) into English, I always have to comb through my rough draft, looking for sentences where I really should be using a continuous tense. Continuous tenses are one of the glories of the English language and they should occur as frequently in English versions of foreign plays as they do in texts penned in English. If I don't consciously add a few continuous tenses, my version will not necessarily be incorrect—sometimes you can use either tense – but it won't pass the smell test either.

Make liberal use of features your target language has that your source language lacks.

10. Translate actions, not words.

Think like an actor: What does my character want to achieve by saying this line? Most plays, most of the time, are not about the language; they're about the actions of the characters. Focus on getting the actions right and a lot of the words will fall into place. If one character hurls an insult at another, find an equivalent insult in the target language. It doesn't always matter what the hurled insult is; what matters is how strong it is.

A few years ago a Norwegian cabinet minister called his British opposite number a “shit-bag”—at least that was how his insult was (far too literally) translated. A front page, international diplomatic incident ensued.

A less literal but more correct translation would have been “jerk”—several degrees milder. Obviously, “jerk” doesn't mean the same thing as “shit-bag.” But *referential* meaning is only one kind of meaning, and often of lesser importance.

Don't let the words fool you. Translate the action, not the words.

11. Thou shalt not make a bad line. Ever.

If a line in your translation is bad, fix it. It doesn't matter whether you think the fault is the author's or whether the problem is due to some deficiency in your target language. The author will be grateful (or should be).

One line that I've never liked in a truly great play is this one:

So attention must be paid.... Attention, attention must finally be paid to such a person.

You'll recognize this as Linda, Willy Loman's wife in *Death of a Salesman*. The line has entered the canon of quotable quotes; a Google search returns tens of millions of hits. But is it a good line?

First a bit of context. Linda is at her wit's end. Her beloved husband of many years is suicidal and delusional, and her sons are avoiding the problem instead of helping her deal with it. Her world is falling apart, her dream of a secure and happy future is in tatters. She is speaking to her slacker sons, trying to get them to face the facts.

In this line I think Miller just got carried away. After the dry prose of *All My Sons*, Miller wanted to sing. *Salesman* is generally very well written, but many of the lines are wordy and some are over the top "poetic." Why should Linda lapse into the passive voice in the middle of her harangue? Who exactly does she think should be paying attention to Willy? Her sons? Willy's employer? The whole world? Perhaps a bit of all three. And what does she mean, specifically, by paying attention? There's something squishy about Miller's lapse into abstraction here, a straining for effect that detracts.

I see where Miller is going. He wants to kick it up a notch: It's not just the plight of Willy he bemoans, but the plight of every other little guy caught in capitalism's salivating maw. There is more than a whiff of 1930's agitprop hanging in the air. But using Linda as his mouthpiece at this emotional point in her story strikes me as unconvincing.

Yet the line's canonical status gave me pause when I translated the play into Norwegian. Do I dare disturb the universe and *change* Miller's oft-quoted line? What clinched the matter was my inability to find a Norwegian equivalent that wasn't truly awful.

One of the strengths of Norwegian is its pithiness. There is a no-nonsense, no-frills directness about good Norwegian that I've come to admire. Passive sentences are rarer than in English, and sentences demanding (of no one in particular) that "something must be done" stick out like a sore thumb even more than in English. These airy sentences are unusual (except in bureaucrat-speak), and when they occur, they are often unintentionally funny. Henrik Ibsen used them to great comic effect with Hjalmar Ekdal, the pompous main character in *The Wild Duck*. (I've never seen a translation of Ibsen's masterpiece that fully captured the inflated absurdity of Hjalmar's language.)

My version cleaned up this problematic passive voice. I had Linda simply demand of her sons: *Look at him! Look at him!* while pointing through the fourth wall at Willy. He is puttering about in the yard, at night, with a flashlight, talking to a older brother who's not there.

Did my version depoliticize the play? Definitely not! Miller's trenchant, bitter attack on capitalism is fully embodied in the play's story. It doesn't need "big speeches."

So when to change a line?

Go with your gut. You're responsible for getting the script into shape for the actors and director. Unless the play is truly terrible, it's your fault if there are lines that don't work. (And if the play is terrible, why are you wasting your time?)

12. A good ear for dialogue and buckets of patience

Some would say that a good translator needs "literary talent." I don't know what that means, but I do know that many, perhaps most, of the professional translators I've worked with have never published a novel or short story, nor written poetry or plays. They apply their creativity to the noble but thankless task of bringing someone else's creativity to life in a new language. Their talent is an ear for what works and doesn't work on the stage, and the patience to massage a translation until the words click into place and the lines are actor-ready.

Take a look at these two versions of a line:

He gave the book to Astrid.

He gave Astrid the book.

Which one is best? This is the kind of thing translators mull over.

Both versions have exactly the same referential meaning, i.e. they describe exactly the same action. They *can* be used interchangeably, but they typically have different uses. The first version is (more or less) about the book. It answers the implied question, *What did he do with the book?* The second is about Astrid. It could be a response to the question, *What did he do to/for/with Astrid?* So which one is best will be dictated by the context. You have to decide what the character is really talking about: the book or Astrid. That decision can be made pretty quickly in simple cases like this. But in more complicated cases it takes time and patience. You have to explore a myriad of possibilities and weigh them against each other before settling on one. Your solution will depend on your interpretation of the scene.

13. Tiny moments of suspense: dialogue that crackles

This little excursion into Linguistics 101 highlights an interesting feature of the English language. We typically put the new piece of information at or near the end of the sentence. In (i) we determined that the characters have already been talking about some guy ("he") and a book. The speaker now adds the fact that "he" gave the book *to Astrid*. That's the new piece of information, and it comes last. Now, what would happen if you used version (ii) in this context? One character asks,

What did he do with the book?

The other one answers,

He gave Astrid the book.

This puts the new information in the middle. Is this wrong?

Grammatically, no. But the line does fall flat—and for a very specific reason. The last two words carry little meaning. As soon as the speaker says *gave Astrid* we've gotten the answer, and the rest of the line just trails off.... The translator has missed a chance to create a tiny moment of suspense.

Rearranging the answer to something along the lines of (i), i.e. *He gave it to Astrid*, is livelier because the answer to the question doesn't come until the very last word. We don't get the gist of what the speaker is saying until the end of the line. This word order keeps us in suspense a fraction of a second longer. That may not seem like much, but these tiny moments of suspense add up in a script. They are one of the differences between dialogue that crackles and dialogue that fizzles. We see this principle mostly clearly in how to tell a joke:

Two elephants were standing under a tree when a naked man walked by. "I wonder how he manages to eat?" said one elephant to the other.

Now, massage the punchline so that the point of the story comes at the very end:

Two elephants were standing under a tree when a naked man walked by. One elephant said to the other, "I wonder how he manages to eat?"

See the difference?

14. A "literal" translation?

Some theatres get a language person to make what some call a "literal translation," which they then give to a director or a playwright to make an adaptation from.

I don't know what a literal translation is. Is it a version full of mistakes like the one I pointed out above in (2), mistaking the friendly greeting "What's happening?" with a real question? Would a version full of mistakes like that be of use to anyone? A "literal translation," taken literally, is not really a translation at all.

I once asked an American literary manager what he meant by a literal translation. He said "A straight translation without any, you know, interpretation." He obviously had never translated anything more than a few sentences of high school Spanish. To translate *is* to interpret, but not to, you know, *adapt* – for example, by changing the nationality of the characters.

An "adaptation" of a whole play, for me at least, is a very free version, with deep cuts and/or additions, especially a version that changes the period of the piece or moves it to a different country. My small changes to *Death of a Salesman* or *The Glass Menagerie* are, I suppose, small, local adaptations. But for me they are simply a part of the job of making a playable translation for production in Norway. They're part of the normal process of translating.

15. On adaptation

There's a lot of legitimate discussion about whether or not it is best to adapt foreign plays, instead of merely translating them.

To my mind there is no one correct answer. It always depends on the play and the coming production – and on how enlightened your audience is.

In the U.S., productions of contemporary plays written in languages other than English are extremely rare, and what few productions there are, are usually highly adapted. The action of the play is moved from, say, Paris to New York, the characters get new American names, and local references and customs are changed. Jean and Marie now call themselves John and Mary, and they no longer eat chocolate croissants for breakfast, but cornflakes.

This always drains some of the blood out of the play. But a lot of theatres in the U.S. feel—perhaps correctly, I don't know—that their audiences would be put off by a play if the characters weren't typically American. (If so, there is a deplorable cultural impoverishment in the U.S.)

Adaptations come in all sizes and depths, and the boundary between adapting and translating may be hazy. Certainly if you change the country, culture or period of the play, you've adapted it. But what about the case of lots and lots of small changes, like the examples in translations of Miller and Williams? I would argue that a few small changes like those are translating, not adapting. But if you make a lot of them—say five or six per page—then you're probably adapting, not just translating.

There is an even scale from “bringing the text into the new culture” to “letting the text stay strange.” Anglo-American practice tends to favor a high degree of the former. European theatre trends toward the latter. Our audiences in Europe appreciate seeing foreign plays that are, well, foreign.

16. Collaboration

Why go it alone?

If you're translating for a particular production, it's obviously important to know what kind of production the director envisages. Deeply anachronistic? Fully adapted to the U.S.? Is this play supposed to be the season's laugh riot? Its serious drama? Is the theatre focusing on a specific theme? Can they say anything about the casting?

Ask. Get in a dialogue with the producers. Of course, any changes you make to the text should be pointed out to them. I like explaining my choices in footnotes.

If you're translating in the hope of someday finding a producer, talk to your theatre friends. Run ideas by them. Do readings with them.

Actors can often have good input. When I translate a play for a production, I try to get to the early table reads. If an actor stumbles on a line more than two or three times, I usually suggest changes. Why should actors have to jump through hoops? Generally speaking, good lines should be easy to say; they should sound natural and the actor should feel comfortable saying them. (There are exceptions, of course.)

A problem we often encounter here in Norway is with older translations of plays. Most of the well-known American and European plays from the 1940s on have already been translated, and instead of commissioning a new translation, theatres will typically try to save money by dusting off the old one. This can be fine—if the theatre gets someone (for example a dramaturg) to sit down and work on the text, updating the out-of-date bits, correcting errors, sharpening a point or two, etc.

What doesn't work out so well is starting rehearsals with the old translation and letting the actors modernize the lines as they go. This wastes time and almost always leads to chaos. Some actors modernize so much that you lose all sense of the period the play takes place in—which can be fine, if that's what you want—but not when others modernize far less, keeping more of the original flavor. And some of the actors' proposed modernizations simply don't hit the mark.

Polishing up an old translation in a way that produces a stylistically coherent text is not something that groups do well. Far better to get one person to do it, and then let the others offer comments.

17. Recycled translations

When we put on a familiar play, we usually hire a designer. We don't recycle sets from previous productions of the play. Why, then, do we often recycle translations?

In an ideal world we would make a new translation for each new production of a play. There is no one "right" way to translate a play. A translation can be really good in one production, and bad in another. Translating is a creative endeavor, on a par with directing, designing and acting.

18. Practice makes perfect.

In his autobiography *Timebends*, Arthur Miller has a few words to say about courses in playwriting. He claims that budding playwrights either have the talent to write dialogue that sails over the footlights, or they don't. Writing talent would seem to be a gift from the gods.

I couldn't disagree more, at least with regard to translation. The ability to fashion good lines from a play written by somebody else in another language, the *sine qua non* for any theatrical translator, is a talent that develops over time. When I look at my first efforts at translating Norwegian plays into English many years ago, I'm appalled at how bad they are. If there is any divine gift here, it is the *persistence* to keep at it.

No small gift, that.

Rumore di acque/Noise in the Waters Introductory Notes

Marco Martinelli and Teatro delle Albe

Writer and director Marco Martinelli (b. 1956) founded the theatrical cooperative Teatro delle Albe in 1983 together with Ermanna Montanari, Luigi Dadina, and Marcella Nonni. From the beginning, the sharing of duties within the group - conception, composition, production, performance and staging - are such as to speak rather of collective than of individual authorship. Having already used Romagnol dialect as a vehicle to explore the mythic roots of local and marginal cultures from a global perspective, in 1988 the company expanded their principle of *meticciato teatrale* by working with several Senegalese actors, including Mandiaye N'Diaye, a collaboration that continues to today. One result of this has been *I ventidue infortuni del mor Arlecchino*, a restaging of a *commedia dell'arte* scenario by Carlo Goldoni, in which the traditional mask of Arlecchino becomes an African immigrant. In 1991 the company established the producing organization Ravenna Teatro and in the same year initiated their *non-scuola* project to train young performers. A notable development of the on-going *non-scuola* has been *I Polacchi*, a re-conception of *Ubu Roi*, in which the demonic couple at the center of Jarry's text are surrounded by an army of young *palotini*, who simultaneously conjure and suffer the violence of Mère and Père Ubu. *I Polacchi* has grown into stagings with young actors in Chicago, Naples, Sarajevo, and Diol Kadd, Senegal. The Senegalese production has subsequently been presented in Limôges, Naples and Modena.

Simultaneous to and consistent with their explorations of *meticciato* and their radical engagement with contemporary issues, the company and its members have continued to respond to the classics of the European tradition, as exemplified in the *Cantiere Orlando*, based on Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, for the 2003 Venice Biennale, their adaptation of Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and their re-conceptions of works by Molière, including most recently *L'Avare*.

At the same time, through their producing organization Ravenna Teatro and their work at the annual Santarcangelo Festival, the company has become a major motor and organization point for avant garde theatre, linking Eastern and Western Europe, Africa, and the United States.

One of the leading contemporary theatre cooperatives of Europe, the company and its actors, especially Ermanna Montanari, have received dozens of awards. These awards, a full description of the company's work and Martinelli's bibliography can be found at <http://www.teatrodellealbe.com>.

Staging and Publication

Rumore di acque was first performed on July 10, 2010 at Teatro Rasi in Ravenna, Italy, directed by the author, Marco Martinelli, and performed by Alessandro Renda. The Fratelli Mancuso composed and performed the musical score. Producers: Ravenna Festival, Teatro delle Albe-Ravenna Teatro, 'Circuito del Mito' of the Regione Siciliana, and Sensi Contemporanei.

The text of *Rumore di acque*, including Marco Martinelli's note, was published in 2010 by Editoria & Spettacolo, in Riano, Romagna. ISBN: 978-88-89036-93-8. www.editoriaespettacolo.it

Note on *Rumore di acque*
Marco Martinelli

The first story of the crossing I heard at Mazara, at the San Vito Onlus center, came from a minute, brave Tunisian woman: timid, speaking in broken Italian, she was almost too shy to raise her eyes. I have changed her name to Jasmine and transformed her story while keeping the essentials. It's the first story I heard and the only one, among all those evoked by the general, that's not about drowning or disappearance, about death, but about a life saved. But was she saved? Saved into the talons of the old Italian lecher who smirks that he, "never failed to please"? After she spoke I asked her, knowing what she now knows, if she would have done it all over again. Her answer was a decisive, "No." She would have stayed in Tunis.

Robert Louis Stevenson spoke about the "brownies," which he described as "those tiny men who direct the little theatre inside each of us." They're our main collaborators, the ones who construct our nightly "spectacles," the dreams we dream. I'm indebted to the "brownies" for the character of the general. But at first he wasn't a man in uniform: he was a monstrous being, half-man, half-animal. Some undiscovered animal. His back is to me, he wants to turn toward me but cannot, he can just barely turn his head, as though he has a crick in his neck. I can't see who it is. He resembles someone, but who? Naked, hairy as if wearing a fur, he's bent over a mass of papers, a pile of sheets covered with badly written numbers, scribbled and scrawled. He looks them over, puts them in order, but the salt water has worn them away; these words are unreadable, this number too. Exasperated, he suddenly hurls the papers to the ground. Accounting, bureaucracy as the only way to bear the horror. Not to think about it. To avoid becoming a carrier of horror.

In rehearsal we thought about Qaddafi and called the character "Qaddafi." We wanted that to be the show's title. We read his speeches, examined his photos. But then...it was just too simple to blame him, "that" scheming, bloody dictator, to strap the mask of guilt over his face. He is guilty, of course, very guilty, the umpteenth replica of Father Ubu. But what about us? And me? Are we innocent? Am I? Can I claim no responsibility for all those tragedies that take place elsewhere, far from my little home? Do I have anything to do with the death of a brother? That embittered, neurotic general, that bureaucrat sick to death of sitting there adding up numbers and dead and listing them in order, that nasty job, every day the same and badly paid on top of it by the chiefs in the capital; that demonic, sarcastic little accountant, that impotent spectator of tv news, that guy: That's us. That's me. The face that finally turns toward me, half-human half-animal, and looks straight into my eyes: that's my face.

His outburst came gushing out, an unstoppable wave of numbers and images. I wrote it in snow-covered Mons, Belgium, during off days from rehearsals of our show, *detto Molière*. On Sundays I shut myself up in my room and dived into the Sicilian Channel, the gray sky of Northern Europe turned to Mediterranean sunlight. I reread the notes I'd taken during a year of trips to Mazara. Histories and testimonies, but not only stories: there was also the song of the muezzin on Italian soil. The intricate alleys of the casbah. The brilliant green of the cathedral cupola. And I fed off the strongest impressions of my travel companions: Ermanna had immediately sensed the presence of the volcano, an undersea volcano, water red with fire, and from that she had immediately pictured a soldier (typical of her, to intuit beyond logical connection well before my dream of a half-man, half-animal general); and Alessandro, who filmed everything with his video camera as he picked up bits of

Tunisian Arabic from working with the teens in our *non-scuola* program, and came to see his roots in Mazara in a new light, weaving together genealogies with tapestries of family legends.

The Mancuso Brothers have enriched this oratorio for the sacrificed with their voices, as powerful as ancient satyrs who seem to cry out the pain of humanity from the depths of an abyss.

Translator's note

There are at least three translations here: first there's the translation of a live performance event into a two-dimensional script, then there's the translation of an Italian text into English, and then there's the eventual translation of a performance event in Italy in 2010 into a performance event in the United States at some future, unlikely date. This English version therefore is offered only as a jumping-off point for its transformation through the voice and presence of an actor into the sensory apparatus of a live audience.

Sparing the reader the obvious excuses, two points of translation call for comment and serve as examples of difficulties particular to this play:

The title, *Rumore di acque*, epitomizes the deceptive simplicity of the entire text, for *rumore* in this context suggests something more haunting and troubling than mere "sound", and the plural *acque* similarly evokes something more haunting and remote than the obvious, singular "water". The genitive preposition *di* is problematic for its summoning of source, origin, cause and composition. Thus the English title given here is provisional. This is the kind of issue that must be addressed during a rehearsal process, as the text evolves toward a new being in a new setting.

In the section of the play that describes the massacre of seventy-seven immigrants due to the ineptitude of a navy officer, the author writes "*Esse o esse / Esse o esse / Essere o essere*," alluding simultaneously to the naval distress signal SOS and to a variation on the Italian for Hamlet's "To be or not to be" (in Italian, *essere o non essere*). The Italian homophony of *esse*, the written-out form of the letter "s," and the infinitive *essere*, to be, cannot be transferred to English, thus missing Martinelli's bitter play on the difference between Hamlet's choice and the absence of choice for the doomed immigrants. As with everything else here, I appeal to readers for suggestions.

Special thanks for their great help with the translation to Rita Filanti and Franco Nasi, to CIS, and for laying out the text to Lindsey Hook.

Thomas Simpson

Rumore di Acque / Noise in the Waters

Marco Martinelli

translated by Thomas Simpson

Rumore di acque by Marco Martinelli/Teatro delle Albe,
published 2010, Editoria & Spettacolo
Translation copyright, 2011 © Thomas Haskell Simpson

For reproduction and performance rights contact :
Thomas Haskell Simpson
ths907@northwestern.edu

Reprinted from California Italian Studies
(http://escholarship.org/uc/ismrg_cisj)

E chi ci legge qui?
Non ci si capisce niente
Tutto una confusione
Ma guarda te
Guarda niente
Non c'è niente da guardare
Solo segnapci ovunque
Incomprensibili
Veh, neanche i numeri
Almeno capire i numeri
Così da metterli in ordine
Dai, su
Sforzati almeno di leggere quelli
Se riesci a leggere le cifre
È già un passo avanti
Un numerino dopo l'altro
Ordine
C'è bisogno di ordine
Poi va a finire
Che se la prendono con te
Che non hai lavorato bene
Ecco qui c'è un 1
Son quattro cifre
La prima è un 1
E la terza è sicuramente un 4
Ma la seconda?
Un 2?
Un 6?
O un 8?
La curva in alto è chiara
Ma sotto?
Manca troppo là sotto
Manca
E chissene frega se manca
Io interpreto
La scienza è interpretazione
Ricalcolo
Quello è un 2
Niente dubbi
È un 2
Ricalcolo
Quattro cifre
1
2 appunto
La terza è un 4

Can anyone read this?
Can anyone make this out?
What a mess
Would you look at this?
Look at what
Nothing to look at
Just scribbles everywhere
Unreadable
Look, not even the numbers
At least make out the numbers
Line them up in order
Come on, let's go
Force yourself at least to read those
If you can make out the figures
It's a step in the right direction
One little digit after another
Order
We need order here
Then it ends up
That it's all your fault
That you did it all wrong
Here we go, this is a 1
Four numbers here
The first is a 1
And the third is a 4 for sure
But the second?
A 2?
A 6?
Or an 8?
This curve above is clear
But underneath?
Too much missing underneath
Missing
Who cares what's missing
I interpret
Science is interpretation
Recalculate
That's a 2
No doubt
It's a 2
Recalculate
Four digits
1
2 right
The third is a 4

Se la quarta è poniamo un 6
 O un 7
 Un 8
 Giusto
 L'8 che non era prima
 Giusto
 È un 8
 Prima era un 2
 Il numero intero mi viene
 1248
 1248
 Suona bene
 E poi è solo per cominciare
 1248
 1248
 1248
 Chi non annega nei primi cento metri
 Ha altri cento chilometri per farlo
 E se non è la barca che prende acqua
 E affonda
 È il motore che si rompe
 Patatrac
 E la manda alla deriva
 Per giorni, settimane
 Nel buio della notte
 Ghiaccio e tenebre
 Nel sole del meriggio
 Arsura
 E la merce va a male
 1248
 1248
 Chi può essere
 Guarda quest'altro
 Facile questo
 291
 E poi
 E poi un bel 7
 Ma sì
 2917
 Ma sei sicuro che
 È un 7, non c'è dubbio
 Questo è un ragazzino
 2917

Let's say the fourth is a 6
 or a 7
 An 8
 Right
 The missing 8
 Right
 It's an 8
 Before it was a 2
 The whole number comes up
 1248
 1248
 Sounds good
 A start anyway
 1248
 1248
 1248
 If you don't drown in the first hundred meters
 You have a hundred kilometers more to drown in
 And if it's not the boat that takes on water
 And sinks
 It's the motor breaks down
 Patatrac
 And you're adrift
 For days, weeks
 In the dark of night
 Ice and blackness
 Blazing sun
 Scorching
 And the merchandise goes bad
 1248
 1248
 Who could that be
 Look at this other
 Easy this one
 291
 And then
 And then a nice 7
 Of course
 2917
 But are you sure that's
 A 7, no doubt
 This is a kid
 2917

2917

Un nome a caso
Yusuf
Yusuf suona bene
Questo viene dal Sahara Occidentale
Nientemeno
La data non c'è
Cancellata
Che rabbia quando mi si cancellano le date
Yusuf è un ragazzino
Pelle nera
Cosa vuoi che capiscano questi qua
Capiscono niente
Pelle nera
E vai a parlar loro di democrazia
Ridicolo
Sono ancora sugli alberi
magari si mangiano ancora tra loro
E gli si va parlare di democrazia
Tempo perso
Yusuf
Da poco più di due mesi
Con i pescatori della laguna
La laguna di Naila
Fenicotteri rosa
Pesci e capre nella bassa marea
Una bella cartolina
Qui le acque salate son calme
Ma fuori il mare fa paura
L'Oceano
Yusuf non lo ha mai visto
L'Oceano
Il mare aperto
Sta appena imparando
Guida la barca del padrone
Un due metri nero e blu
Yusuf è uno sbruffone

2917

Sa-tutto-lui
Sempre stato così
Solo perché ha imparato
A mandare avanti la barcuza del padrone
Si crede chissachi
Comincia a far girar la voce
Per scherzo

2917

Grab a name from the hat
Yusuf
Yusuf sounds good
This kid from Western Sahara
No less
There's no date
Erased
I hate it when the dates fade
Yusuf is a kid
Black skin
What can you expect from these people
They understand nothing
Black skin
And you talk to them about democracy
Ridiculous
They're still up in the trees
Still eating each other maybe
And we tell them about democracy
Waste of time
Yusuf
Barely two months
With the fishermen in the lagoon
Naila Lagoon
Pink flamingos
Fish and goats at low tide
Nice postcard
Here the salt waters are calm
But out there the sea is scary
The Ocean
Yusuf's never seen it
The Ocean
The open sea
He's just learning
Drives his boss's boat
Black and blue two meters
Yusuf is a braggart

2917

A know it all
Always been that way
Just because he learned
To drive his boss's dinghy
Who's he think he is
Word starts going around
As a gag

Inizia per scherzo
 Vi porto io in Europa
 In Spagna
 Le Canarie sono lì
 E che ci vuole
 La barca ce l'ho
 Si parte quando si vuole
 Mi date la metà
 La metà mi basta
 Non sono onesto?
 La metà esatta
 Di quel che vi spillano gli altri
 Le Canarie sono lì
 Sono Spagna
 A un passo
 Una notte di viaggio
 E che ci vuole
 E va a finire
 Che quelli ci credono
 Cominciano a cercarlo
 Yusuuf!
 A portargli i soldi
 Yusuuf!
 Non ha mai visto tanti soldi
 Tutti assieme
 Ma lui non diceva sul serio
 Vatti a fidare
 Quelli l'han preso sul serio
 E gli portano i soldi
 Tanti soldi
 Lui non li ha mai visti tanti soldi
 Tutti assieme
 Lui è uno sbruffone
 Lui è un so-tutto-io
 Lui diceva per ridere
 So fare
 Ho imparato
 Vi porto alle Canarie
 Vi porto in Spagna
 Barcellona
 Real Madrid
 Sbruffone
 Sa guidare solo il due metri del padrone
 Il due metri nero e blu
 Nelle acque calme della laguna

Starts as a gag
 I'll take you to Europe
 To Spain
 The Canary Islands are just out there
 Nothing to it
 I got the boat
 We'll leave any time
 Give me half
 Half is enough for me
 Don't you trust me?
 Exactly half
 What the others scam you for
 The Canary Islands are just out there
 That's Spain
 One step away
 One night's travel
 And what's it take
 And it ends up
 That they believe it
 They seek him out
 Yusuuf!
 Money in their hands
 Yusuuf!
 Never seen so much cash
 All in one place
 But he didn't mean it
 And you're gonna believe
 They thought he meant it
 And they bring him money
 Lots of money
 He's never seen so much cash
 All in one place
 He's a braggart
 He's a know it all
 He was only kidding
 I know how
 I learned
 I'll take you to the Canaries
 I'll take you to Spain
 Barcelona
 Real Madrid
 Braggart
 Can barely handle his boss's dinghy
 Black and blue two meters
 In the calm waters of the lagoon

Sono in tanti
Gli stanno addosso
Coi soldi nella busta
Lo fissano
Gli occhi come rasoi
Quando si parte
Quando
Stanotte dice Yusuf
E tiene in mano tutti quei soldi
E fa finta di non aver paura
Ma sotto se la fa addosso
E di notte
Scende di corsa le scale del molo
Sbruffone
Yusuf
2917
Ha il fiatone
Dentro!
Tutti su!
Sedici passeggeri
Tutti saharawi
Tutti scesi dall'albero
Cosa vuoi pretendere
Yusuf canticchia
Fa finta di aver coraggio
Gli occhi che ridono
Vi porto alle Canarie
In Spagna vi porto
A vedere il Real Madrid
Il Barcellona
Ha il cuore in gola
Lo sbruffoncello
Accende il motore
Partenza
Stretti stretti
Su quei due metri neri e blu
Neri come la notte
Blu come la paura
Il motore canta a pieni giri
Sulle acque piatte come minerale
Della laguna di Naila
Fenicotteri rosa
Pesci e capre nella bassa marea
Una bella cartolina

There's so many of them
They're all over him
Cash in an envelope
They stare at him
Eyes like razors
When do we leave
When
Tonight says Yusuf
And holds all that money in his hand
And pretends he's not afraid
But he's pissing himself
And at night
He runs down the wharf
Braggart
Yusuf
2917
Gasping for breath
All aboard!
Everybody in!
Sixteen passengers
All Saharawi
Barely out of the trees
What do you expect
Yusuf sings
Pretends to be brave
Eyes laughing
I'll take you to the Canaries
To Spain I'll take you
To see Real Madrid
Barcelona
Heart in his throat
The little braggart
Yanks the cord
They pull away
Crushed together
Onto those black and blue two meters
Black as night
Blue as fear
Motor's humming along full
On those waters smooth as a diamond
Of the Naila lagoon
Pink flamingos
Fish and goats at low tide
Nice postcard

(silenzio)

Appena usciti dalla laguna
Un'onda di due metri
Barcuzza piena d'acqua
Annegano tutti
Sprofondano
Anche lo sbruffone
Finito

(silenzio)

In certi punti il mare sa di carne morta

(silenzio)

3999
Se quello è un 9
E quest'altro
3455
Mah
E chi ci legge qui?
Non ci si capisce niente
C'è poca luce
in questa baracca di lamiera
C'è poca luce in tutta l'isola
Certo che
Potrebbero far qualcosa
Chiamare un tecnico
Chiamarlo io?
Me la devo sbrigare da solo?
Dovrebbero loro
mettermelo a disposizione
ventiquattrore su ventiquattro
mi fan fare tutto 'sto lavoro
da solo
Ma guarda te
Guarda niente
Non c'è niente da guardare
Solo segnapci ovunque
Incomprensibili
Veh, neanche i numeri
Almeno capire i numeri
Così da metterli in ordine
Dai, su

(silence)

Just outside the lagoon
A two meter wave
Dinghy fills with water
Everyone drowns
Down to the bottom
Even the braggart
All over

(silence)

In some places the sea tastes like dead flesh

(silence)

3999
If that's a 9
And this other one
3455
What?
Can anyone read this?
Can anyone make this out?
So little light
in this sheet metal shack
So little light on this whole island
Sure
They could do something
Call in a technician
Do I call him?
I have to take care of it?
They should
have someone here for me
twentyfour seven
they leave all this work to me
by myself
Would you look at this
Look at what
Nothing to look at
Just scribbles everywhere
Unreadable
Look, not even the numbers
At least make out the numbers
Line them up in order
Come on, let's go

Sforzati almeno di leggere quelli
 Se riesci a leggere le cifre
 È già un passo avanti
 Un numerino dopo l'altro
 Ordine
 C'è bisogno di ordine
 Poi va a finire
 Che se la prendono con te
 Che non hai lavorato bene
 vogliono la lista come si deve
 Ti strigliano
 Alzano la voce
 E pagano, sì
 Ma quando pare a loro
 Una miseria
 Bravi quelli
 bravi
 a fare i grossi nei salotti
 il caviale, lo champagne
 le signorine
 ma poi il lavoro sporco
 lo lasciano al sottoscritto
 Ecco qui c'è un 7
 Son quattro cifre
 La prima è un 7
 E la terza è sicuramente un...
 Un 7...
 Ma la seconda?
 Direi
 Ma potrei sbagliare
 È un 7 anche questa?
 E pure la quarta è un 7
 Troppo facile
 7777
 Troppo facile
 7777
 Settanta volte sette
 E chisseneffrega se è facile
 Mica son pagato
 Per fare un lavoro difficile
 Son pagato e basta
 La scienza è interpretazione
 Ordine
 Se c'è ordine e chiarezza
 Tutti col naso all'insù

Force yourself at least to read those
 If you can make out the figures
 It's a step in the right direction
 One little digit after another
 Order
 We need order here
 Then it ends up
 That it's all your fault
 That you did it all wrong
 They want the list just so
 They rake you over the coals
 Raise their voices
 And they pay, yeah
 But only when they want to
 Peanuts
 Sharp they are
 sharp
 play the big shots in their lounges
 caviar, champagne
 the girls
 but then the dirty work
 they leave to yours truly
 Here this is a 7
 Four numbers
 The first a 7
 And the third has got to be a . . .
 A 7 . . .
 But the second?
 I'd say
 Could be wrong but
 Is this a 7 too?
 Even the fourth's a 7
 Too easy
 7777
 Too easy
 7777
 Seventy times seven
 Who cares if it's easy
 Not that I'm paid
 To do a hard job
 I'm paid that's it
 Science is interpretation
 Order
 If there's order and clarity
 All with their noses in the air

Tutti assicurati
A dire che va bene
Che tutto regge
Ordine e chiarezza
Le tabelline
I numeri messi in fila
Per benino

(silenzio)

Però questa è bella
7777
7777
Questo 7777 non mi torna
Qui dentro non c'è un nome solo
Dentro a un numero così
ce ne possono stare settantasette
Te pensa la coincidenza
Settantasette nel 7777
Tutti su un barcone
Ammasso di gambe, braccia, teste
E allora
se sono in settantasette
perché me li mettono su un foglio solo?
Tirano a risparmiare
Settantasette nel 7777
Oppure è mania di simmetria
Sarà
A me non piace la simmetria
Comunque quelli gridano, pregano
nella notte
Gridano e pregano
Quelle cose là
stipati nel barcone
infradiciati
mangiati da un freddo atroce
schiaffeggiati dalle onde
gridano e pregano
pregano e son presi a schiaffi
una bibbia, un corano
inzuppati nell'acqua
lo stomaco che urla dalla fame
patetici
Arrivano i soccorsi
L'ammiraglio è un italiano

All so secure
It's all going fine
It all holds together
Order and clarity
The charts
The numbers lined up in rows
Just so

(silence)

But this is something
7777
7777
This 7777 doesn't add up
There's not one name only here
Inside a number like this
there could be seventy-seven
What a coincidence
Seventy-seven in 7777
Crammed onto a big boat
Pile of legs, arms, heads
So then
if there's seventy-seven
why'd they give me this one sheet?
Cost-cutting
Seventy-seven on 7777
Or they're nuts for symmetry
Could be
I don't like symmetry
Either way they cry out, they pray
into the night
They cry out and pray
That stuff of theirs
crammed onto the big boat
soaking wet
chewed up by the biting cold
slapped around by the waves
they cry out and pray
pray and get slapped
a bible, a koran
drenched with water
stomach screaming from hunger
pathetic
Here comes the rescue
Admiral's an Italian

Figlio d'arte
 Ammiraglio figlio di ammiragli
 Una dinastia
 Una garanzia
 Una famiglia di ammiragli
 Quando chiama il padre al telefono
 Sì signor Padre
 Sì signor Padre
 Stirpe di ammiragli
 Sì signor Padre
 Manco fosse quello là nei cieli
 Sì signor Padre
 Al telefono
 Chiede consigli
 Come si fa signor Padre
 In questi casi come si fa
 Il barcone pieno di corpi
 Ammasso di gambe, braccia, teste
 Come si fa
 Arrivano i soccorsi
 La motovedetta dei militari
 quella dell'ammiraglio Signor Figlio
 e la nave dei pescatori
 quella di Totò
 che un pescatore a quei tempi
 se vede gente a mare subito si butta
 a quei tempi
 Insomma il barcone
 la motovedetta
 e il peschereccio
 tutti e tre in un fazzoletto d'acqua
 tre caravelle messe lì dal Destino
 il barcone
 la motovedetta
 e il peschereccio
 partono i soccorsi
 ognuno fa la sua parte
 Poi una manovra sbagliata
 Il barcone si spezza in due
 È un classico
 E l'ammiraglio figlio di
 Invece di spegnere subito le eliche
 Che fa?
 Che fa?
 Non fa

Born to the corps
 Admiral son of admirals
 A dynasty
 A guarantee
 Whole family of admirals
 Calls his father on the phone
 Yes Father sir
 Yes Father sir
 Race of admirals
 Yes Father sir
 Admiral Who Art in Heaven
 Yes Father sir
 On the phone
 He wants advice
 What's done now Father sir
 What's done in these cases
 Boat loaded with bodies
 Pile of legs, arms, heads
 What's done now
 Here comes the rescue
 The military launch
 of Admiral Sonny
 And the fishing boat
 belongs to Totò
 a fisherman from the old days
 sees a man overboard, jumps right in
 the old days
 Anyway the big boat
 the military launch
 and the fishing boat
 all three in a handkerchief of water
 three caravels fated there by Destiny
 the boat
 the launch
 the fishing boat
 to the rescue
 every man at his post
 Then a wrong maneuver
 Boat splits in two
 Classic
 And the admiral's son, son of a
 Instead of shutting down the propellers
 What's he do?
 What's he do?
 He doesn't

Non spegne subito le eliche
e i settantasette sprofondano
La prima cosa da fare
Quando c'è gente a mare
È spegnere le eliche
Quello se lo dimentica
Ammiraglio figlio di ammiragli
Sì Signor Padre
Lui se lo dimentica
Tre minuti
In tre minuti
In quei brevi tre minuti
Tutti
Tutti son risucchiati
Fatti a pezzi
Massacrati dalle eliche
Triturati dalle eliche
Tutti i settantasette
Bastano tre minuti
Braccia di qua gambe di là
Pastura per i pesci
Mica è colpa loro
Delle eliche intendo
Le eliche non pensano
Le eliche non hanno il cervello
Gli ammiragli dovrebbero
Dico il cervello
Gli ammiragli dovrebbero avercelo
In dotazione
Sciocchezze!
Tuona l'Ammiraglio Padre
Sciocchezze!
Stiam qui a guardare
Sottigliezze
Stupidaggini
E soprattutto silenzio!
Acqua in bocca!
Che nessuno fiati!
Che anno era quello
Quello dei settantasette nel 7777
Ma diavolo
Se mi cancellano pure le date
comunque
erano anni quelli che di esse o esse
ce n'erano anche due o tre al giorno

He doesn't shut down the propellers
and the seventy-seven fall in
First thing to do
Man overboard
Shut down the propellers
But the guy forgets
Admiral son of admirals
Yes Father sir
He forgets
Three minutes
In three minutes
In those three short minutes
Everyone
Everyone sucked in
Sliced to pieces
Massacred by the blades
Diced by the blades
All seventy-seven
Only takes three minutes
Arms here legs there
Feast for the fish
Can't blame them
The propellers I mean
Propellers can't think
Propellers have no brain
Admirals should
A brain I mean
Admirals should have one
Standard equipment
Foolishness!
Thunders Admiral Father
Foolishness!
We stand here watching
Fine points
Nonsense!
And above all, silence!
Swallow your words!
Not a breath!
What year was that
The one of the seventy-seven in 7777
But hell
If they erase the dates on me
anyway
in those days SOS
two or three times a day

Esse o esse
 Esse o esse
 Essere o essere
 Alla fine
 Non essere
 Erano anni quelli
 ogni giorno due tre barconi
 alla deriva
 Su ogni barcone
 minimo un cadavere
 che mica stavi a riportarlo a terra
 lo ributtavi a mare
 quello era il suo funerale
 Non c'è cimitero più efficiente
 economico
 Un posticino laggiù non costa niente
 addobbato come si deve
 Ambiente
 che dire dell'ambiente
 luce e pesci, sabbia e scogli
 suggestivo
 quello era il suo funerale
 Su ogni barcone
 minimo un cadavere
 Sì Signor Padre
 Sì Signor Padre
 Ho sbagliato Signor Padre
 Ma certo Signor Padre
 Nessuno lo verrà a sapere
 Signor Padre
 Agli uomini sarà chiesto il silenzio
 Sì Signor Padre
 Il silenzio
 Fuggire i giornalisti
 Fuggire le interviste
 Fuggire i ficcanaso
 Fuggire le responsabilità
 Fuggire le televisioni
 Fuggire le tentazioni
 Fuggire le commissioni
 sì Signor Padre
 il silenzio
 il silenzio
 il silenzio
 il silenzio

S or S
 S or S
 To be or to be
 In the end
 Not to be
 In those days
 every day two three boats
 cut adrift
 On every big boat
 minimum one cadaver
 you're not going to tow it to land
 toss it back in the sea
 there's a funeral for you
 No more efficient cemetery than that
 economical
 cozy little space down there costs nothing
 furnished to a t
 Atmosphere
 consider the atmosphere
 light and fish, sand and reefs
 evocative
 there's a funeral for you
 On every boat
 minimum one cadaver
 Yes Father sir
 Yes Father sir
 I made a mistake Father sir
 Certainly Father sir
 No one will know
 Father sir
 Silence from the crew
 Yes Father sir
 Silence
 Flee the reporters
 Flee the interviews
 Flee the nosy buggers
 Flee responsibility
 Flee the television
 Flee temptation
 Flee the inquests
 Yes Father sir
 the silence
 the silence
 the silence
 the silence

il silenzio
il silenzio
una bella colata di silenzio

(silenzio)

44
Possibile?
44
Un numero così piccolo
44
ah certo che
con un numero così
si va un po' lontano
parecchio lontano
negli anni
44
Sakinah
44
neanche lei è sola
insieme ad altre trenta
nigeriane
bambine quasi
un carico prezioso
queste facevano vela
queste si muovevan per mare
queste andavano per andare
queste le mandavano a fare
di là
sull'altra sponda
il mestiere più antico del mondo
un carico prezioso
belle fanciulle
molte di loro già violentate
in mezzo al deserto
usate e abusate
sulla pista degli schiavi
prima i trafficanti
poi i poliziotti di Agadez
poi di nuovo i trafficanti
poi ancora i poliziotti
libici stavolta
alla fine
tutte sul barcone
un barcone già malandato

the silence
the silence
A cement coating of silence

(silence)

44
Is that possible?
44
such a small number
44
ah, sure
such a number
takes us way back
quite a ways
years ago
44
Sakinah
44
she's not alone either
together with another thirty
Nigerian girls
little girls almost
precious cargo
They went to sea
They took to sail
They rode the waves
They braved the spray
beyond
on the other shore
world's oldest profession
precious cargo
pretty girls
many already raped
out in the desert
used and abused
on the slave routes
first the traffickers
then the cops in Agadez
then more traffickers
then more cops
Libyan this time
finally
all aboard
boat's a relic

legno pessimo
un rottame
a occhio lo vedi
che non terrà l'acqua
alla fine
tutte in fondo al mare
Sakinah
Sakinah e le altre trenta
invece che profumate
nei letti dei bianchi
tra le lenzuola di raso
ora giacciono là
nel fondo
smangiucchiate dai pesci
le ossa mutate in corallo
le perle al posto degli occhi

(silenzio)

e il trafficante che canta

(silenzio)

Tutti dan la colpa a me
Tutti dan la colpa a me
Ma che colpa ne ho io
Se il tempo era rio

(silenzio)

La barca non ha retto
Il legno era in difetto

(silenzio)

Tutti dan la colpa a me
Tutti dan la colpa a me
Ma che colpa ne ho io
Se il tempo era a schifio

(silenzio, si guarda attorno)

Oh
Fermi
statevene fermi voi

sodden planks
boat's a wreck
just look at it
can't hold water
finally
all of them into the drink
Sakinah
Sakinah and the other thirty
instead of perfume
in white men's beds
between satin sheets
now they lay
on the bottom
fish eaten
of their bones are coral made
those are pearls that were their eyes

(silence)

and the trafficker sings

(silence)

They all blame me
They all blame me
But the fault ain't mine
If the weather's unkind

(silence)

The boat didn't hold
wood not up to code

(silence)

They all blame me
They all blame me
But it ain't my sin
If the clouds roll in

(silence, he looks around)

Oh
Hold it
hold it right there you

silenzio
 fermi ho detto
 Osktù!
 Osktù!
 Yezzi!¹
 Statevene fermi spiriti
 Spiriti dei dispersi
 Spiriti inabissati
 Spiriti liquidi
 in poltiglia
 che cento, mille volte
 avreste preferito una morte asciutta
 non muovetevi
 qui nessuno si muova
 finchè non lo dico io
 finchè non ho rimesso tutto in ordine
 che quelli là
 quelli delle capitali
 mi strigliano se non lavoro bene
 Certo che la nostra
 è una grande politica
 su quest'isola li accogliamo tutti
 su quest'isola vi accogliamo tutti
 spiriti
 non respingiamo nessuno
 la politica degli accoglimenti
 l'ho inventata io
 sono il più accorto io
 sono il signore dei numeri io
 di me si possono fidare
 Mi pagano
 Quelli delle capitali
 Mi pagano il giusto
 ogni numero un versamento
 in banca
 Ordine e chiarezza
 Mica per niente ho il petto
 gonfio di medaglie
 Ordine e chiarezza
 Tutti in fila
 L'elenco come si deve
 Un morto dopo l'altro
 La lista aggiornata
 È un lavoraccio

¹ Silenzio! Silenzio! Basta!

quiet
 hold it I said
 Osktù!
 Osktù!
 Yezzi!¹
 Hold still spirits
 Spirits of the lost
 Spirits in the deep
 Liquid spirits
 mashed to pulp
 a hundred, thousand times
 you'd rather a dry death
 don't move
 no one moves
 until I say so
 until I straighten this out
 because those guys
 those guys in the capital
 rake me raw if I screw up
 Sure our
 policy is grand
 on this island all are welcome
 on this island you're all welcome
 spirits
 we refuse no one
 open door policy
 my own invention
 I'm the wisest of all
 I'm the lord of numbers
 count on me
 They pay me
 those guys in the capital
 Fair pay for honest work
 every number a deposit
 into my account
 Order and clarity
 Not for nothing my chest
 is puffed with medals
 Order and clarity
 All in a row
 Listed just right
 One dead body after another
 Up-to-date list
 Hell of a job

¹ Silence! Silence! Enough!

Medaglie o non medaglie
 Il lavoro sporco tocca a me
 A quelli come me
 Lasciamo perdere
 Inutile lamentarsi
 Ti strigliano anche se ti lamenti
 Ti fanno il contropelo
 I lamentosi son di quella razza
 Che vuole vivere con il culo nel burro
 Facile per quelli
 Sparare sentenze
 Ma in mezzo a 'sta marmaglia
 Dalla sera alla mattina
 Chi ci sta?
 Il sottoscritto!
 Dove andate?
 Spiriti state qua
 Osktù!
 Osktù!
 Restate in fila!
 Hayya yallah yallah
 Yezzina mel hess
 We ennat kil jnun wel afarit
 Arkou sci'uyya.
 Yezzi!²
 Ve l'ho già detto
 Vi accogliamo tutti qui
 Nessuno escluso
 Non facciamo favoritismi qui
 Non avrete da lamentarvi
 La politica degli accoglimenti
 Questa è la mia isola
 qua comando io
 sono io il generale
 io il presidente
 Non muovetevi
 È un ordine
 Anche se il mare ribolle
 Lo so
 Anche se l'isola trema
 Lo so
 Colpa del vulcano qua sotto

² Basta, smettetela di fare tutto questo baccano.
 Smettetela di saltellare come i gin e i trickster.
 Fermatevi un po'. Basta!

Medals or no medals
 I do the dirty work
 Guys like me
 Forget about it
 Useless to complain
 They rake the whiners raw
 First one way, then back
 Whiners are that type
 They want to sit their asses in butter
 Easy for them
 To spew out judgments
 But in the middle of this mob
 Doing the night shift
 Who's there?
 Yours truly!
 Where are you going?
 Spirits, wait
 Osktù!
 Osktù!
 Stay in line!
 Hayya yallah yallah
 Yezzina mel hess
 We ennat kil jnun wel afarit
 Arkou sci'uyya.
 Yezzi!²
 I told you
 All are welcome
 No one refused
 No favoritism here
 No cause to complain
 Open door policy
 This is my island
 I'm the one in charge
 I'm the general
 I the president
 Don't move
 That's an order
 Even if the sea boils
 I know
 Even if the island shakes
 I know
 Fault of this volcano below

² Enough, Cut out all this uproar.
 Stop jumping around like djinns and tricksters.
 Stop it a moment. Enough!

(silenzio)

Sto perdendo il conto

(silenzio)

Qui

Qui sono tutti morti

sim

a qualcuno

è più morto degli altri

un affollamento di scintille

vicine e lontane

ce ne sono miliardi

non c'è più differenza di colore

tra il cielo e la terra

nero sopra

nero in basso

un ragazzino

disidratato

emana un odore terribile

nella notte si è svuotato di diarrea

dentro i pantaloni

capita

non bisogna fare gli schizzinosi

capita

mica siamo al club mediterranea

labbra e palpebre secche

lingua bianca e asciutta

schacciato là in mezzo

un ammasso di gambe, braccia, teste

e quel ragazzino là in mezzo

una montagna di culi

capita

ingombro di cuori, fegati, budella

non riconosci un proprietario dall'altro

la vita non è proprietà di nessuno

è data a tutti in prestito

come suona vero

che poi cosa vi credevate

quando siete partiti

lo sapevate

lo sapevate, eccome

quando siete partiti all'alba

dal fondo del deserto

(silence)

I'm losing count

(silence)

Here

They're all dead here

yes

but some

are deader than others

a crowd of sparks

near and far

billions of them

all the same color

between heaven and earth

black above

black below

a little boy

dehydrated

gives off such a stink

dumped his diarrhea last night

in his pants

these things happen

no sense being squeamish

these things happen

this ain't Club Med

lips and lids parched

tongue white and dry

crushed in between

a mass of legs, arms, heads

and that little boy in the middle

mountain of asses

these things happen

load of hearts, livers, guts

can't tell who they belong to

life belongs to no one

it's on loan to all of us

how true that sounds

anyway what'd you think

when you set out

you knew

you knew, for sure

when you set out at dawn

from deep in the desert

quando per sfuggire ai massacri
vi siete intruppati
dentro a quel camion scassato
quel grappolo di bidoni d'acqua
lo sapevate
abbandonati a rincorrere il camion
a piedi nudi
sulla sabbia rovente
il camion che riparte per la Libia
e vi lascia lì
dopo tre giorni senza cibo
inginocchiati
a ricevere le frustate
i colpi dei militari
tubi di gomma
cavi elettrici
lo sapevate
fammi un regalo
gridano i militari
fammi un regalo, su
oh ma questi son testardi
niente vogliono regalarci
e giù frustate
su, diecimila franchi
cosa vuoi che sia
diecimila franchi
quando sarai in Europa
li guadagnerai in due ore
lo sapevate
e i militari ridono
e i militari sfottono
noi già pregavamo Dio
che voi ancora suonavate i tam tam
e vi mangiavate come animali
ridono i militari
e vi trascinano
nella baracca delle torture
tubi di gomma e cavi elettrici
qualcuno paga
qualcuno no
qualcuno telefona a casa
ci vogliono altri soldi
altri soldi vi scongiuro
ma come
ma per chi

when to escape the massacres
you herded into
that broken old truck
with a handful of water tanks
you knew
running full out after the truck
barefoot
on the scalding sand
truck heading for Libya
leaves you there
three days no food
on your knees
to be whipped
the soldier's blows
rubber tubes
electric cables
you knew
gimme a present
the soldiers scream
gimme a present, come on
my they're stubborn
where's our presents
blows rain down
come on, ten thousand francs
that's nothing
ten thousand francs
when you get to Europe
you'll make that in two hours
you knew
and the soldiers laugh
and the soldiers mock
we were already praying to God
while you were still beating drums
and eating each other like animals
the soldiers laugh
and they drag you
to the torture room
rubber tubes and electric cable
some pay
some don't
some phone home
they want more money
more money I beg you
but how
but for who

siamo nella miseria
in mezzo alle bombe
e tu ci chiedi ancora soldi?
Te li abbiamo già dati
te ne abbiamo già dati un mucchio
alla partenza
ci siamo indebitati fino al collo
e non ti son bastati?
Non dovresti già essere in Francia
a quest'ora?
In Italia?
In Svezia?
lo sapevate
abbandonati nel deserto
a cuocere vivi
a impazzire sotto il sole
a dimenticare anche il vostro nome
lo sapevate
che nessuno vi avrebbe tirato fuori
né padre
né madre
né fratello
né Stato
nessun governo alzerà la bandiera
nessun cristiano piangerà la vostra
sorte
morte
lo sapevate
figli di un cane
figli di nessuno
e allora?

(silenzio)

6 e poi?
E poi 5
E poi?
6 e 5 e poi
ancora 5
e poi?
E poi mi stai antipatico
6 e poi 5 e ancora 5
mi stai antipatico
lasciamo perdere
passiamo a un altro

we don't have it
they're bombing us
and you want more money?
We already gave you
we gave you so much
when you set out
in debt up to our necks
that's not enough for you?
Shouldn't you be in France already
by now?
In Italy?
In Sweden?
you knew
abandoned in the desert
to roast alive
going mad in the sun
forgetting your own name
you knew
that no one could get you out
neither father
nor mother
nor brother
nor State
no country will raise the flag
no Christian will weep over your
wasted breath
empty death
you knew
sons of bitches
sons of nobody
so now what?

(silence)

6 and what?
And then 5
And then?
6 and 5 and then
another 5
and then?
And then I don't like you
6 and then 5 and another 5
I don't like you
leave it
move on to the next

oh, questo sì
 questo sì che si legge
 1 e poi
 e poi niente
 sembra che lo fanno apposta
 l'acqua
 la salsedine
 le carte
 i numeri si cancellano
 e tocca a quelli come me
 hai voglia di protestare
 il petto gonfio di patacche
 e invece tocca a me
 a quelli come me
 sgobbare
 qua sotto
 al buio
 che perdo il conto
 ricomincia, su
 ricalcolo
 ero sull'1
 ho capito ma poi
 ricalcolo
 poi c'è un altro 1
 e un altro 1
 e un altro 1
 sta a vedere che come prima
 tutti quei 7
 adesso
 1111
 1111
 possibile
 possibile che vengano fuori
 numeri così raggianti
 in questa oscurità
 1111
 a me non piace la simmetria
 1111
 Jasmine
 da Tunisi
 dalla casbah
 su per il canale di Sicilia
 1111
 Jasmine
 a ottocento metri dalla riva

oh yeah, this one
 this one you can read
 1 and then
 and then nothing
 It's like they do it on purpose
 the water
 the salt
 the papers
 the numbers fade
 then it's up to those like me
 I should protest
 chest puffed with medals
 but it's up to me
 and others like me
 slaving away
 down here
 in the dark
 I lose count
 come on, start over
 recalculate
 I was on 1
 I get that but then
 recalculate
 then there's another 1
 and another 1
 and another 1
 how about that, before
 it was all 7s
 now
 1111
 1111
 is it possible
 is it possible that such
 blazing numbers shine
 in this darkness
 1111
 I don't like symmetry
 1111
 Jasmine
 from Tunis
 from the casbah
 crossing the channel up to Sicily
 1111
 Jasmine
 eight hundred meters from shore

patatrac
 la barcaccia si spezza
 Jasmine impavida
 li fa a nuoto quegli ottocento metri
 tirandosi dietro l'amica
 a nuoto se la tira dietro
 ma no che non ce la fa
 l'amica ha le gambe spezzate
 un corpaccione
 uno scatolone di donna
 1111 invece
 testarda
 Jasmine
 forzuta e piccolina
 se la porta dietro
 come un valigione di grasso
 quella sua amica
 gli ultimi ottocento a nuoto
 non finiscono mai
 alla fine ce la fa
 la Sicilia
 la Sicilia encantada
 la mettono a lavorare
 non perdono tempo quelli
 quelli che l'han portata lì
 fidati, Jasmine
 la mettono a sgobbare
 dall'alba al tramontare
 da un ottantenne
 nella casetta di un ottantenne
 nella villetta di un ottantenne
 la serva, fa
 fa un po' di tutto
 la serva serve
 1111
 Jasmine lo serve l'ottantenne
 anche per quella cosa là
 perchè
 chi può sostenere
 che a ottantanni non si sia in grado
 anche quella cosa là
 1111
 a Jasmine non piace
 a chi piace?
 ma lei la fa

patatrac
 the wreck of a boat splinters
 Jasmine fearless
 she swims those eight hundred meters
 towing a friend behind her
 she swims and tows her friend
 but no, she can't make it
 her friend's legs are broken
 big fat body
 big square box of a woman
 but 1111
 stubborn
 Jasmine
 little and strong
 tows her friend behind
 like a big suitcase of fat
 that friend of hers
 swims that last eight hundred
 it never ends
 but she makes it
 Sicily
 Sicily encantada
 they put her to work
 they don't waste time there
 the ones who sent her there
 trust us Jasmine
 they put her to work
 dawn to dusk
 eighty year old man
 little house of an eighty year old
 little bungalow of an eighty year old
 she works like a servant
 does a little of everything
 the servant serves
 1111
 Jasmine serves the eighty year old
 does that too
 because
 who can say
 that just because someone's eighty
 he can't do that too
 1111
 Jasmine doesn't like it
 who would?
 but she does it

pensa a quegli altri
smangiucchiati dai pesci
e la fa quella cosa là
anche con l'ottantenne
pensa giorno e notte
ai parenti a casa
che aspettano
aspettano da lei
aspettano che lei
Jasmine la fa
anche con l'ottantenne
lui
non si crede male
dice che è sempre piaciuto lui
che mai ha avuto problemi lui
con le femmine

(silenzio)

paga
lui
paaaagaaaaa

(silenzio)

12345
non identificato
12876
non identificato
14545
non identificato
26
accidenti
non identificato
ma un numero così
se fossi un collezionista
varrebbe oro
3462
non identificato
4359
non identificato
6758
non identificato
4445
non identificato

thinks about the others
gnawed at by the fish
and so she does that too
with the eighty year old
thinks night and day
about her folks back home
waiting
waiting on her
waiting for her
Jasmine does it
with the eighty year old too
he
thinks he's good stuff
says he never failed to please
never had any problems
with the skirts

(silence)

he pays
he
paaaayyyys

(silence)

12345
unknown
12876
unknown
14545
unknown
26
damn
unknown
but a number like that
if I were a collector
would be pure gold
3462
unknown
4359
unknown
6758
unknown
4445
unknown

789	789
non identificato	unknown
3989	3989
non identificato	unknown
1290	1290
non identificato	unknown
15677	15677
non identificato	unknown
23591	23591
possibile?	is that possible?
Un numero così alto	that's too high
forse c'è un errore	maybe an error
comunque	either way
non identificato	unknown
2487	2487
non identificato	unknown
2488	2488
non identificato	unknown
2489	2489
non identificato	unknown
sabbia nericcia	blackish sand
fumo e bitume	smoke and bitumen
qua sotto il vulcano lavora	here below the volcano works
altro se lavora	damn if it doesn't
2490	2490
non identificato	unknown
2491	2491
non identificato	unknown
2492	2492
non identificato	unknown
2493	2493
non identificato	unknown
Scirocco senza vento	Desert heat no wind
fa squagliare anche le pietre	melts even the rocks
2494	2494
non identificato	unknown
2495	2495
non identificato	unknown
2496	2496
non identificato	unknown
2497	2497
non identificato	unknown
lapilli e spruzzi sulfurei	spitting stones and sulfur
schegge e lava incendiaria	shards and flaming lava
il cratere di ceneraccio	crater of lye ash

e fango scuro
 e chi ci vede con tutto 'sto fumo
 Tunisi sarà laggiù
 sarà laggiù?
 dall'altra parte c'è Malta
 in mezzo Lampedusa
 l'isola dei Conigli
 ma chi le vede adesso
 chi le vede
 lapilli e spruzzi sulfurei
 dentro gli occhi
 schegge e lava incendiaria
 giù nella gola
 certi giorni non mi ci raccapezzo
 brucio dalla testa ai piedi
 perdo le coordinate
 3389
 non identificato
 569
 non identificato
 16781
 non identificato
 6546
 non identificato
 6743
 non identificato
 7122
 non identificato
 1681
 non identificato
 1601
 non identificato
 luce rossa
 non identificato
 acqua verdognola
 non identificato
 tremolio e vomito
 non identificato
 ricoperto dalle alghe
 fino alla coscia
 fino al ginocchio spappolato
 non identificato
 ripescato qualche giorno dopo
 faccia irriconoscibile
 faccia divorata dai pesci

and dark mud
 and who can see with all this smoke
 Tunis must be down there
 is it down there?
 Malta on the other side
 Lampedusa in the middle
 Rabbit Island
 but who can see them now
 who can see them
 spitting stones and sulfur
 into my eyes
 shards and flaming lava
 down my throat
 some days I don't know which way's up
 I burn from head to toe
 I lose my bearings
 3389
 unknown
 569
 unknown
 16781
 unknown
 6546
 unknown
 6743
 unknown
 7122
 unknown
 1681
 unknown
 1601
 unknown
 red light
 unknown
 greenish water
 unknown
 trembling and vomit
 unknown
 coated with algae
 up to the thigh
 kneecap gnawed away
 unknown
 fished out days later
 face unrecognizable
 fish-eaten face

non identificato

(silenzio)

certo che i pesci son delinquenti
non guardano in faccia a nessuno

(silenzio)

Maledetti squali
maledetti pescecani
maledette triglie
e tonni
e leviatani
e bahamuth
e orche
e zaratani
maledetti sampietrini
maledetti pesci palla
maledetti pesci spada
e martello
e tigre
e coltello
maledetti pesci lupo
iene dalla bocca larga
maledetti voi
sciacalli e sciacalletti degli abissi
voi
belve del mare
mandrie così assatanate
che non fate differenza
tra questo e quello
non fate differenza
e con le larghe mascelle spalancate
tirate morsi
a tutto quel ben di dio
che vi capita intorno
a pacchi ve li trangugiate
quei cadaveri
quei corpicini senza più luce
maledetti voi
che impedito a me
ammè
di fare il mio lavoro
di metterli in fila

unknown

(silence)

no respect for the law, these fish
no respect for anyone

(silence)

Damn sharks
damn barracuda
damn mullet
and tuna
and leviathans
and behemoths
and killer whales
and giant turtles
damn John Dorys
damn blowfish
damn swordfish
and hammerheads
and tigerfish
and cutlassfish
damn seawolves
wide mouth hyenas
damn you all
jackals and jackalettes of the deep
you
beasts of the sea
roaming in demonic packs
you make no distinction
between one thing and another
you make no distinction
those jaws gaping wide
bite off chunks
of all that bounty
pouring down from above
in packs you gobble down
those cadavers
those little lightless bodies
damn you
you keep me
me
from doing my work
of lining them up

di dargli un nome
a quei trapassati inquieti
che non stan fermi un secondo
mi riempiono l'isola di strida
maledette voi
creature delle acque
ve la meritate questa predica
altro se ve la meritate
vi ingozzate di tutto
non fate differenza tra polpa e polpa
tutto buttate giù
in questo mare di mezzo
chi vi credete?
I becchini ufficiali?
I becchini dell'impero?
Chi vi ha autorizzato?
E prima fatemeli contare, no?
Delinquenti
delinquenti organizzati
ve la meritate questa predica
ho il sangue avvelenato
ho il fegato grosso
non si mettono i bastoni tra le ruote
a un sorvegliante integerrimo
a un funzionario solerte come me
eh no, così non si fa
non sta bene
perchè non distinguete
tra numero e numero?
Perché non siete più precisi?
Cos'è tutta 'sta confusione?
'Sto magna magna?
E d'altronde
A ben guardarvi
non avete testa!
La testa, dico
Voi non ce l'avete
Un collo
che ve la distingue dal corpo
Voi non ce l'avete
E quindi
Cosa si può pretendere alla fin fine
Da gente come voi?
Come vi devo parlare,
squali?

of giving a name
to those restless departed
they won't stay still a second
they fill my island with screams
damn you
creatures of the sea
you deserve this sermon
you deserve lots worse
you suck it all down
you can't tell flesh from flesh
you cram it all in
in this middle sea
who do you think you are?
The official gravediggers?
The gravediggers of empire?
Who appointed you?
At least let me count them first, hey?
Criminals
organized criminals
you deserve this sermon
you poison my blood
you burst my liver
you don't sabotage
a superhonest supervisor
a hard worker like me
nope, it's not fair
it's not right
can't you tell
one number from another?
Can't you be more exact?
What's all this chaos?
This all-you-can eat?
Anyway
look at you
you have no head!
A head, I'm saying
You don't have one
No neck
to set your head off from your body
You don't have one
And so
What can we expect after all
from such as you?
How can I talk to you,
sharks?

Devo gridare?
Fare come il Tonitruante
Governatore e motor del cielo
Imitarne il vocione?
Cosa devo strologare
per aprirvi le orecchie
quelle orecchie da pesci che neanche avete
sturarvi il cerume che ve le sbarra
perchè proviate un po' di pena
per me in primis
ma anche
toh
per quella pazzarella
per quello scheletrino tra le rocce
la 6132
Obedience la posso chiamare
bel nome
Obedience
scappata dalla guerra e dalle bombe
Obedience
chiamiamola così
che obbediente ha seguito il suo destino
e che doveva fare
che scelta aveva
libero arbitrio direte voi
il questurino dei Fati dico io
ha deciso di scappare
un giorno qualunque
impugnare l'alba come un coltello
e fuggire
fuggire la sua patria incerta
la terra natia
e le torture certe
per farsi sbucanare prima
dai soliti militari infoiati
dai trafficanti
e poi
perduta negli abissi
farsi spolpare da voi
squali!
Per essere ospite
una delle tante
al vostro banchetto!
Maledetti ingordi!
Bella conclusione

Do I have to yell?
Thunder down like Jupiter
Governor and driver of the stars
Come on with the big voice?
What hocus pocus
Will ever open your ears
do you fish even have ears?
scrape out the wax that clogs them
so you feel some pity
for me in primis
but also
come on
for that silly little girl
for that little skeleton on the rocks
number 6132
Obedience I'll call her
pretty name
Obedience
fled from war and bombs
Obedience
let's call her
who obediently followed her destiny
what else could she do
what choice did she have
you talk about free will
the beat cop of Fate I'd say
she decided to escape
one day just like the others
seize dawn in her fist like a knife
and flee
flee her uncertain homeland
her native land
and certain torture
only to get punctured
by the usual horny soldiers
then the traffickers
and then
lost in the deep
get her flesh torn away by you
sharks!
To be a guest
one of the many
at your banquet!
Damned gluttons!
Nice conclusion

Obedience
obbediente al Fato
obbediente al vostro stomaco
che non si sazia mai!
Squali!
Porci del mare!
Che tutto divorate
sfigurate
e non vi basta mai!
Siate un po' più umani,
squali!

(silenzio)

E Jean-Baptiste?

(silenzio)

E Jean-Baptiste?

(silenzio)

Jean-Baptiste
è un pischello
poco più che un bimbo
in mezzo a tutti gli altri
il gommone alla deriva
da cinque giorni alla deriva
ne teneva dodici
son partiti in quaranta
ma il motore
patatrac
e allora alla deriva
sballottati sul gommone
Jean-Baptiste guarda i più grandi
qualcuno ha gli occhi spenti
vuole dormire
come si fa a dormire
non dovete dormire
con l'acqua che ci arriva
all'ombelico
non si deve dormire
Jean-Baptiste resiste
ma se non resistono loro
che facevano i grossi

Obedience
obedient to Fate
obedient to your gut
that never gets enough!
Sharks!
Pigs of the sea!
You devour everything
disfigure everything
and it's never enough for you!
Be a little more humane,
sharks!

(silence)

And Jean-Baptiste?

(silence)

And Jean-Baptiste?

(silence)

Jean-Baptiste
is a sprout
hardly more than a baby
in with all the others
rubber raft adrift
five days adrift
it holds twelve
forty piled in
but the motor
patatrac
so they're adrift
tossing on the rubber raft
Jean-Baptiste watches the grownups
One with eyes extinguished
he wants to sleep
how can you sleep
better not sleep
with water up to
your belly button
better not sleep
Jean-Baptiste stay awake
but if the grownups can't
who were so bossy

alla partenza
 solo acqua tutto attorno
 l'orizzonte
 il cielo
 sembrano anche loro d'acqua
 niente più da mangiare
 niente più da bere
 sei in mezzo a tutta quell'acqua
 e non puoi berne una goccia
 le onde cominciano
 trascinano i più deboli nel fondo
 Jean-Baptiste no
 Jean-Baptiste è poco più che un bimbo
 ma è forte
 la mamma lo ha riempito di gri gri
 e lui ora se li divora
 ce n'è uno apposta per non annegare
 fatto di sabbia e di ossicini
 di formule magiche
 se lo mangi non annegherai
 stai sicuro
 poi ne ha un altro
 che serve a diventare invisibili
 a cosa gli serve adesso
 a niente
 quello avrebbe dovuto usarlo
 nel campo da calcio
 nel campo da calcio del villaggio
 là sì
 diventare invisibile
 e far impazzire gli avversari
 fargli lo sgambetto
 rubargli il pallone tra le gambe
 e passarlo ai suoi
 a cosa gli serve adesso
 il gri gri per diventare invisibile
 il gommone alla deriva
 non dormite, non dormite
 se dormite è peggio
 tengono gli occhi spalancati
 fuori dalle orbite
 schizzati
 che cosa vedono
 quei cerchi bianchi
 che cosa vedono

at the start
 nothing but water everywhere
 to the horizon
 the sky
 they seem water too
 nothing left to eat
 nothing left to drink
 you're in the middle of all that water
 and you can't drink a drop
 the waves rise up
 drag the weakest down
 Jean-Baptiste no
 Jean-Baptiste is hardly more than a baby
 but strong
 mama filled him with gri gri
 and now he devours them
 one protects from drowning
 made of sand and little bones
 magic spells
 if you eat it you'll never drown
 you're safe
 he's got another
 that'll make him invisible
 what use is it now
 none
 he should have used it
 on the soccer field
 on the soccer field in the village
 there, yes
 become invisible
 drive your opponents crazy
 trip them up
 steal the ball from between their legs
 pass it to your team
 but what use is it now
 gri gri for invisibility
 rubber raft drifting
 don't sleep, don't sleep
 worse if you sleep
 eyes wide open
 bulging from their sockets
 bugged out
 what do they see
 those white circles
 what do they see

vedono torri e città fantasma
 vedono minareti e palazzi
 vedono fate e sirene
 vedono i soccorritori che non soccorrono
 non ci sono
 vedono e stravedono
 la morte no
 quella non la vedono quella
 li ha già afferrati per il collo
 e se li trascina giù come un braccio armato
 Jean-Baptiste
 Jean-Baptiste
 è partito anche se la madre
 non voleva
 ah no
 non voleva
 solo questo figlio mi è rimasto
 questo non lo posso perdere
 lo scafista
 l'aveva assicurata
 stai tranquilla
 con me tuo figlio è già di là
 è già in Europa che lavora
 e ti telefona tutte le sere
 stai tranquilla
 lo scafista
 che ha messo in moto il gommone
 e dopo trecento metri si è buttato
 è ritornato a nuoto
 e dopo poco era già là
 a bersi una birra coi soci
 all'asciutto
 stai tranquilla
 lui è tornato a nuoto
 e li ha lasciati là a bisticciare
 chi lo guida il gommone
 i grandi che fanno i grossi
 lo guido io
 no, lo guido io
 tutti che vogliono comandare
 lo scafista
 stai tranquilla
 trecento metri
 e poi è tornato a nuoto
 Jean-Baptiste tace

they see phantom towers and cities
 they see minarets and palaces
 they see fairies and mermaids
 they see rescuers who don't rescue
 they're not there
 they see and they see beyond
 death no
 that they can't see
 it already has them by the neck
 and drags them down with an iron fist
 Jean-Baptiste
 Jean-Baptiste
 he left although his mother
 was against it
 ah no
 was against it
 the only son I have left
 I can't lose this one
 the trafficker
 reassured her
 don't worry
 with me your boy's already on the other side
 already in Europe with a job
 he calls you every night
 don't worry
 the trafficker
 who started the motor running
 and after three hundred meters jumped
 and swam back to shore
 in no time was back
 having a beer with his pals
 nice and dry
 don't worry
 he swam back
 and left them there to quarrel
 who's guiding this raft
 the grownups start shouting
 I'll pilot
 no, I'll pilot
 everyone's the boss
 the trafficker
 don't worry
 three hundred meters
 then he swam back
 Jean-Baptiste keeps quiet

troppo piccolo
che ci pensino i grandi
e i grandi ci pensano
ma sono tutti impauriti
quelli il mare non l'han mai visto
quelli son tutti contadini
vai di qua
gira di là
le stelle
non le sai leggere le stelle
vai dritto incapace
incapace a me?
Quasi le mani addosso
tre giorni passati a girare
attorno allo stesso punto
fin quando il motore si è rotto
quattro, cinque giorni alla deriva
sei, sette, otto giorni alla deriva
Jean-Baptiste non impazzire
pensa a tua madre
quando sarai di là
la chiamerai tutte le sere
sto bene, mamma
lavoro
i soldi qua si trovano per strada
non ti bastano
quelli che ti ho mandato ieri
te ne manderò altri
Jean-Baptiste resisti
non ti addormentare
non chiudere gli occhi
prega Jean-Baptiste
prega
io questo gri gri me lo conservo
sabbia e conchiglie
questo è fatto apposta
questo mi servirà davanti alla polizia
metti che mi sparano addosso
sabbia e conchiglie mi proteggeranno
devieranno i colpi
Jean-Baptiste non cedere
è un bambino, poco più
ma è forte
il gommone è alla deriva
c'è confusione là sopra

too little
leave it to the grownups
let the grownups handle it
but they're all afraid
no one's ever seen the sea
a bunch of farmers
go this way
turn that way
the stars
can't you read the stars
go straight you fool
you call me a fool?
Almost a fistfight
three days circling
around the same point
until the motor died
four, five days adrift
six, seven, eight days adrift
Jean-Baptiste don't lose your mind
think of mama
when you get there
you'll call her every night
I'm fine, mama
I have a job
money grows on trees here
if what I sent yesterday
isn't enough
I'll send you more
Jean-Baptiste stay awake
don't fall asleep
don't close your eyes
Jean-Baptiste pray
pray
I'll set this gri gri aside
sand and shells
this one special
for when the police come
say they're shooting at me
sand and shells will protect me
will turn away the shots
Jean-Baptiste don't give in
he's a baby, little more
but strong
the raft adrift
noise up front

tutti quei grandi come donnicciole
chi piange
chi grida
chi vomita
qualcuno va fuori di testa
vede la terra
terra!
terra!
e si butta
solo un miraggio
il mare lo inghiotte
Jean-Baptiste
non far lo scemo
tu non ti buttare
lì dentro devi stare
il gommone è la salvezza
il gommone ti porterà di là
il gommone
anche se adesso gira su se stesso
il gommone
è il guscio che ti protegge
il gommone è come un gri gri
accanto a Jean-Baptiste
c'è uno dei grandi
uno di quelli
che litigavano alla partenza
abbandonati dallo scafista
uno che gridava forte
più forte degli altri
so io come guidarlo 'sto coso
se non mi date retta
vi spacco la testa
adesso è la sua testa che penzola
Jean-Baptiste lo chiama
grida il suo nome
prova a smuoverlo
gli occhi spalancati
quello non batte ciglio
la testa a pelo d'acqua
penzola come cosa morta

(silenzio)

Nubi che oscurano il cielo
stanotte non ci sono stele

all those grownups like old women
some weeping
some screaming
some vomiting
one's out of his head
he sees land
land!
land!
and jumps in
only a mirage
sea swallows him
Jean-Baptiste
don't be stupid
don't jump in
stay there inside
the raft is salvation
the raft will get you there
the raft
although now it's spinning
the raft
is the shell protecting you
the raft is like a gri gri
next to Jean-Baptiste
is one of those grownups
one of the ones
who was arguing at the start
abandoned by the trafficker
one who yelled the loudest
louder than the others
I know how to run this thing
if you don't listen to me
I'll crack your head open
now his head's lolling
Jean-Baptiste calls him
yells his name
tries to budge him
eyes bugged out
that one doesn't blink
head brushes the water
hangs like a dead thing

(silence)

Clouds cover the sky
no stars tonight

nero sopra
nero in basso
A un tratto
Jean-Baptiste si alza in piedi
dice, sicuro
io torno da mia madre
e si tuffa

(silenzio)

Nuota per un po'
quanti metri
venti?
trenta?
e poi viene tirato giù
scompare

(silenzio)

scompare

(silenzio)

È vero che a volte
mi invitano
alle loro feste
mi sorridono
mi fanno sentire importante
generale Lei
non mi chiami generale
presidente Lei
non mi chiami presidente
ma come cazzo vuol esser chiamato
e va bene
vada per presidente
su
riprenda col panegirico
e quello riprende
presidente Lei
è un simbolo di libertà
presidente Lei
è un modello per le nuove generazioni
presidente Lei
la sua politica degli accoglimenti
mi sorridono

black above
black below
All at once
Jean-Baptiste stands up
says, sure of himself
I'm going home to mama
and jumps in

(silence)

He swims a little
how far
twenty meters?
thirty?
then gets pulled down
disappears

(silence)

disappears

(silence)

True, sometimes
they invite me
to their parties
they smile
make me feel important
Mr. General
oh, don't call me General
Mr. President
oh, don't call me President
so what the fuck should I call you
okay then
let's go with President
hup
again with the panegyric
so he starts again
Mr. President, you
you are a symbol of liberty
Mr. President, you
are a model for the younger generation
Mr. President
your open door policy
they smile at me

mi intervistano
mi fanno sentire utile
sono tutti amici
anche quelli che prima
voltavano la testa
dall'altra parte
anche quelli che un tempo
fingevano di non conoscermi
anche quelli
quando è il momento
anche quelli mi cercano
fanno affari col sottoscritto
mi strizzano l'occhietto
anche quelli
non si tirano indietro
quando è il momento
senza la Sua politica
presidente
i nostri governi faticherebbero
e te credo
grazie alla Sua politica
presidente
le nostre democrazie rifiatano
e te credo
per questo Le siamo riconoscenti
grazie
prego
i nostri accordi bilaterali
presidente
illuminano il mondo
mi offrono lo champagne
il caviale
scattiamo le foto insieme
siamo gente di mondo
Roma
Berlino
Mosca
Parigi
Tri-po-li
ci incontriamo regolarmente
sappiamo sorridere
rispondere ai giornalisti
anche ai rompicoglioni
fare le battute
al momento giusto

they interview me
they make me feel useful
they're all friends
even the ones who used to
turn their heads
away
even the ones who used to
pretend not to know me
even them
when the moment comes
even they seek me out
they make deals with yours truly
they give me the wink
even them
they're not shy
when the moment comes
without your program
President
our administrations would suffer
believe you me
thanks to your program
President
our democracies thrive
believe you me
we are so grateful to you
thank you
you're welcome
our bilateral accords
President
enlighten the world
they offer me champagne
caviar
we take group pictures
we are men of the world
Rome
Berlin
Moscow
Paris
Tri-po-li
we have regular meetings
we know how to smile
answer the reporters
even the ballbreakers
kid around with them
at the right moment

usare le parole chiave
libertà!
progresso!
felicità dei popoli!
fanculo i popoli
convivenza civile!
fanculo la convivenza civile
crociere per tutti!
fanculo le...
no...
non fanculo le crociere
anzi
viva
viva le crociere
un settore che non conosce crisi
quelli che vanno in crociera
aumentano giorno dopo giorno
è un'epidemia
un tempo era roba da ricchi
come il tennis
oggi è un passatempo popolare
turismo di massa
ne vedo passare tre al giorno
di navi da crociera
li sento divertirsi
là sopra
ballano e se la spassano
allegria!
baldoria!
là sopra fan di tutto
è lì il segreto
certo che mi pagano poco
mi pagano
non dico di no
ma troppo poco
una miseria
se paragonato al lavoro che faccio
su questo schifo di isola
mica c'è luce qua sotto
un fetore
colpa del vulcano
lavoro sporco, ripeto
accogliere e contare
contare e accogliere
tenere la lista aggiornata

toss in the key words
freedom!
progress!
the people's happiness!
fuck the people
shared community!
fuck the shared community!
cruises for all!
fuck the. . .
no. . .
don't fuck the cruises
on the contrary
long live
long live the cruises
a sector that knows no recession
the cruise shippers
grow by the day
it's an epidemic
used to be for the rich
like tennis
now it's for everyone
mass tourism
I watch three go by a day
cruise ships
I hear them having fun
up there
they dance and party
let's have fun!
let's go wild!
they do it all up there
that's the secret
sure, they don't pay me much
they pay me
I don't say they don't
but too little
peanuts
considering the work I do
on this wretched island
no light down here
the stench
because of the volcano
dirty work, I repeat
collect and count
count and collect
keep the list up to date

un lavoraccio
vaglielo a spiegare
al Ministro dell'Inferno
lui la fa facile
il Ministro dell'Inferno
lui alza la voce
il Ministro dell'Inferno
è più facile accogliere che respingere
è più facile accogliere che respingere?
non è mica vero
è falso
non c'è niente di più falso
signor Ministro
solo una carogna
può mettere in giro una voce simile
da quanto tempo sono alle sue dipendenze
signor Ministro?
da quanto tempo sgobbo come uno schiavo?
tenere la lista aggiornata
degli annegati
le sembra cosa da poco
signor Ministro?
Le sembra cosa da poco
questa montagna di morti
che si alza immacolata verso il cielo
le sembra cosa da poco?
La vede Lei la cima
signor Ministro?
La vede?
E poi tenerli tutti qua
ammassati
che ancora non ho capito
come facciamo a starci tutti
su questo sputo di terra
su questo francobollo
Jean-Baptiste per esempio
si alza in piedi, sicuro
io torno da mia madre
si tuffa
scompare
che numero è Jean-Baptiste
a che numero mi corrisponde
signor Ministro
io non lo so
io, generale e presidente

nasty work
try to explain it
to the Secretary of the Inferno
easy job for him
the Secretary of the Inferno
he raises his voice
the Secretary of the Inferno
It is easier to accept than reject
Is it easier to accept than reject?
That's not true
it's false
nothing more false than that
Mister Secretary sir
only a bastard
could spread that idea
how long have I worked for you
Mister Secretary sir?
how long have I labored like a slave?
keep the list up to date
of the drowned
Does it seem so little to you
Mister Secretary sir?
Does it seem so little to you
this mountain of dead
that rises immaculate to the sky
does it seem so little?
Can you see the top
Mr. Secretary sir?
Can you see it?
And keeping them all here
piled up
I still don't understand
how we can all fit
on this spit of land
this postage stamp
Jean-Baptiste for example
rises to his feet, sure of himself
I'm going home to mama
he jumps in
disappears
what number is Jean-Baptiste
which number do I put
Mister Secretary sir
I don't know
me, general and president

incaricato del censimento
io non lo so
che numero è Jean-Baptiste

(silenzio)

Non ci leggo

(silenzio)

Non ci leggo
signor Ministro

(silenzio)

Non ci leggo

(silenzio)

Eh no, proprio non ci leggo

(silenzio)

NON-CI-LEG-GOOO!

charged with the census
I don't know
what number is Jean-Baptiste

(silence)

I can't make it out

(silence)

I can't make it out
Mister Secretary sir

(silence)

I can't make it out

(silence)

No, I can't make it out at all

(silence)

I-CAN'T-MAKE-IT-OOOUTTT!

Marco Martinelli founded the Teatro delle Albe with Ermanna Montanari in 1983. The company has continuously produced original works that interweave the search for the “new” with the teachings of traditional theater, in order to create a contemporary theatrical language. For their work they have received awards and acknowledgements in Italy and abroad, including nine Ubu Prizes, the Lo Straniero Prize dedicated to the memory of Carmelo Bene, and two Golden Laurel awards at the MESS International Festival of Sarajevo. In 1991 Albe created Ravenna Teatro, one of the more lively theatrical centers in Italy, and in 2011 Martinelli was the artistic director of the International Festival of Santarcangelo.

Thomas Simpson is Distinguished Senior Lecturer in Italian, Assistant Chair for Italian and Associate Director of the WCAS Drama Major at Northwestern University. His recent publications include: *Murder and Media in the New Rome* (Palgrave, 2010); editor and translator, with Nerenberg and Marini-Maio, Marco Baliani's 'Body of State' (FDUP, 2011); contributor to *Dramatic Interactions* (CSP 2011). His translations include: Antonio Fava, *The Comic Mask in the Commedia dell'Arte* (NU Press, 2007); PP Pasolini, "Manifesto for a New Theatre" and "Affabulazione" (PAJ, Winter 2007); Ermanno Rea, *Mystery in Naples* (Guernica, 2003).

Love in Disguise: Introduction

Set in Barcelona at an indeterminate historical moment, *Love in Disguise* is the story of a Princess who is torn between her love for a nobleman (Lélio) and a more politically expedient match with the Prince of Castille, and of her friend Hortensia, who initially encourages her to pursue Lélio. But when it turns out that Lélio is the man who saved Hortensia from bandits, she wants him for herself. Love mingles with political intrigue, as the old minister Frederic enlists a soubrette named Lisette to corrupt Lélio's servant Harlequin, after the Princess has appointed Lélio Secretary of State. Will Hortensia and Lélio escape together? What will the Princess do if she finds out her best friend is her rival for Lélio's affections? And how much does it matter that Lélio is a prince in disguise (a fact he reveals in a soliloquy early in the play)?

The original French title of *Love in Disguise* is *Le Prince travesti*. *Le Prince travesti* premiered at the Comédie-Italienne in Paris on February 5, 1724. Apparently the third act was not as well-received as the first two acts had been, and Marivaux revised the play for subsequent performances. The play was presented eighteen times during that season, a very healthy run at the time. Marivaux fell out of favor during the nineteenth century, but directors rediscovered him in the twentieth century. English-speaking audiences might be more familiar with *The Game of Love and Chance* or *The Triumph of Love*, thanks to the translation efforts of Stephen Wadsworth and James Magruder. Marivaux's work is frequently produced in France, especially in theatre with smaller budgets, because his casts tend to be small and his plays tend to provide interesting challenges for actors and strong roles for women. He is also the fifth-most produced playwright in the repertoire of the Comédie Française, after Molière, Racine, Corneille and Alfred de Musset.¹ French directors have been especially fond of *L'Ile des esclaves* (*Slave Island*), a utopian work in which characters land on an island where slaves become masters and masters become slaves. But there have been several important productions of *Le Prince travesti* in France (dir. Jo Tréhard, 1970; dir. Daniel Mesguich, 1974; dir. Antoine Vitez, 1983) and in Canada (dir. Claude Poissant, 1992). To my knowledge, my translation is the first version of *Le Prince travesti* in English.

How did *Le Prince travesti* become *Love in Disguise*? When I looked at Marivaux's plays, I was drawn to the title because "travesti" in contemporary French tends to mean "transvestite," and, before reading the play, I envisioned a translation entitled *The Drag Prince*. But "travesti" was somewhat less specific in the eighteenth century, and indeed can also have the sense of a burlesque. (Marivaux himself wrote a parody of Fénelon's *Télémaque* entitled *Télémaque travesti*.) This anecdote serves as a good reminder to translators working on plays from the past: it is important to use a period dictionary and to consider multiple potential definitions of a word.

In early drafts of the translation, I used *The Prince in Disguise* as a working title. I have chosen to change the title for several reasons. First, *The Prince in Disguise* gives away a fairly important plot detail. While that information is revealed to the audience early in the play, it is only gradually dispensed to other characters. From the perspective of a theatre historian, I think Marivaux's title suggests that surprise functioned differently for spectators in the eighteenth century than it does now. A second reason for changing the title is that *The Prince in Disguise* could be taken to suggest that Lélio is the protagonist. *Love in Disguise* encompasses Lisette's seduction of Harlequin and the political intrigue of the Ambassador from Castille (who also turns out to be a prince in disguise).

¹ This is according to the Comédie-Française website: <http://www.comedie-francaise.fr/histoire-et-patrimoine.php?id=525>, viewed July 18, 2012.

Finally, I was encouraged to change the title by Ed Golden, who directed the production of my translation at UMass in 2002. We agreed that *Love in Disguise* had a certain “je ne sais quoi” that was lacking in *The Prince in Disguise*.

It was only recently that I realized that Stephen Wadsworth’s play *Changes of Heart* changed Marivaux’s title from what would literally be *Double Inconstancy*.² I can certainly see other potentially problematic Marivaux titles, such as *La Seconde Surprise de l’Amour* (which comes across as simply recycling the title *La Surprise de l’amour*). Additional challenges of translating Marivaux have been well documented by other translators; while Marivaux writes in prose, it is a dense, poetic prose that offers nuanced descriptions of various shades of love and lust. In terms of linguistic translation, the complicated passages about love and the specificity of feelings present the most difficulty. In my own translation, I followed some of James Magruder’s advice about being playful.³ For instance, I used citations of song lyrics to convey some of the excessive discourse of love. When Harlequin gives in to Lisette and agrees to spy on Lelio, he says in French, “Arlequin est à vous. Tournez-le, virez-le à votre fantaisie.” I rendered this in English as “Bend me, shape me, any way you want me.” This was a polarizing choice for audiences, receiving laughs and groans in production. I also played with medical language, using words that make the characters’ analysis of their situation sound clinical: “What am I supposed to do in the company of a man with whom any ocular function is improper?” In French, Hortensia speaks of the “fonction de mes deux yeux” [“the function of my two eyes”].

Beyond linguistic challenges, the dramaturgy of Marivaux presents narrative challenges for the translator. Many of Marivaux’s plays race toward a “happy ending” that is only really happy for two or three of the characters. The ending of *Love in Disguise* adds some extra lines for Harlequin in an effort to lighten the mood (“Let’s all have a glass of wine”). Harlequin also asks to stay with Lisette, adding a third couple to the potential marriages at the end of the play, with the bonus effect of getting as many people on stage as possible. The Princess has the last word in my English version: “Well, Hortensia, it looks like a happy ending for both of us.” This reflects a line in French, “de si grands événements méritent qu’on se hâte à les finir” [“such great events deserve that we make haste to finish them”]. I wanted to translate this metatheatrical moment by also commenting on the tone of the ending. In the UMass production, Margaret Reilly’s delivery of the Princess’s last line about the happy ending implied that, for the Princess, the ending was not as happy as she would have liked. Another possibility would be to play the Princess as actually having fallen in love with the Ambassador who she now knows is actually the King of Castille himself.

Why does the Princess change her mind after intercepting Hortensia’s letter to Lelio? Why does she realize she should no longer trust Frederic? These issues seem not to have been a problem for Marivaux’s audience. Indeed, a comparison to the deus ex machina ending of *Tartuffe* might be fruitful, especially given its emphasis on the wisdom of the sovereign. The ending of *Love in Disguise* hinges on the absolute power of the Princess, and the script gives her little reason to change her mind. Director Ed Golden and scenic designer Miguel Romero came up with the ingenious idea of having the Princess watch the final love scene between Lelio and Hortensia through a two-way mirror. By seeing the anguish of these two characters (played by Chamaio Cheyenne-Rindge and

² The occasion was an invitation to speak with Timothy Douglas about Remy Bumppo’s 2011 production of *Changes of Heart*. That interview is available as a podcast on WBEZ: <http://www.wbez.org/story/between-lines-changes-heart-95001>. Viewed July 18, 2012. I rather like “Double Inconstancy” as a title. It reminds me of “Double Indemnity.” That may be precisely why Wadsworth chose not to use it.

³ James Magruder, “Love Has Entered My Vocabulary: A Cautionary Tale,” in Susan Jonas et al, eds. *Dramaturgy in American Theater: A Source Book* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1996).

Audrey Nevada Chaney), the Princess realizes that even if she were able to force L  lio to marry her, she would not have all of his love.

I was able to workshop the translation in two courses, an additional staged reading, and a full rehearsal process. Hearing actors stumble over lines made me realize where the translation was trying too hard for linguistic dexterity, and hearing it before several test audiences allowed me to see where the jokes were falling flat. For a long time, I had Harlequin say, "We are courtesans, my master and me," because I thought that was a funny mistake for him to make. But every French speaker who looked at or heard the script thought that I was mistranslating the word "courtisan," which means "courtier." In the final version of the script, I was able to maintain a sense of Harlequin being out of his depth in the conversation with the Princess by having him say, "we've been courticized," thus avoiding that potential perception of linguistic incompetence.

Marivaux's plays explore the complications of love with a wonderful sense of dark humor and tremendous witty wordplay. They mostly require casts of young people preparing to get married, so they are excellent choices for college and university production seasons. *Love in Disguise* has a political dimension that would work well in developing interdisciplinary connections with history or political science. My choices as a translator have been intended to render a stageworthy play that works for a contemporary audience, to make Marivaux's play live for today.

-- Daniel Smith

LOVE IN DISGUISE

By Marivaux
Adapted and Translated by Daniel Smith

Copyright © 2003 by Daniel Smith
1742 W. Carmen Ave., #1
Chicago, IL 60640
(773) 592-2973
dansmith_251@yahoo.com

CHARACTERS

PRINCESS of Barcelona

HORTENSIA, her confidante

Prince of Léon, under the pseudonym LÉLIO

HARLEQUIN, Lelio's valet

FREDERIC, minister to the Princess

LISETTE, a servant

The King of Castile, posing as an AMBASSADOR

Two GUARDS

SETTING

A room in the castle of the Princess of Barcelona.

TIME

The past. Probably the eighteenth century.

Act II continues where Act I leaves off. Some time passes between Act II, scene 1 and Act II, scene 2.

Act I

A room in the Princess' castle. Two guards stand at attention. The Princess enters, dreamily.

PRINCESS

Where is Hortensia? *(to GUARD)* Go find her and tell her I am becoming impatient.

(Guard exits and returns quickly with Hortensia.)

PRINCESS

There you are, Hortensia! *(Princess dismisses guards.)* I've been waiting for you.

HORTENSIA

You seem very upset.

PRINCESS

My dear cousin, in the year of your absence many things have happened in my life.

HORTENSIA

Go on, Madam. I'm listening. I hope you still trust me with the secrets of your heart.

PRINCESS

Of course I do. But I'm afraid you will condemn my weaknesses.

HORTENSIA

I'd never condemn your weaknesses. Besides, having no weaknesses is a weakness in and of itself. What good is a perfect person? Could such a person understand the rest of us and the petty needs of our hearts? The black and white logic of a perfect person has no place amid our inconsistencies. Believe me, my dear, if you hope to survive in this world your reason will have to mingle with folly. If you want to understand your subjects completely, you would need to throw out reason altogether. But I digress. What seems to be the problem?

PRINCESS

I'm in love. There is my pain.

HORTENSIA

Why not say, "I'm in love; there is my pleasure?" For this pain of which you speak is made to be a pleasure.

PRINCESS

Not for me, I assure you. This love pains me very much.

HORTENSIA

Why? Is it unrequited?

PRINCESS

I have a flicker of hope that the gentleman in question might return my feelings...

HORTENSIA

What? Some tongue-tied imbecile is forcing you to guess how he feels about you? That simply will not do. Love must speak loudly and clearly. And with correct pronunciation.

PRINCESS

But I am the ruler here; the gentleman in question probably thinks it would be presumptuous of him to express himself in words or actions that go beyond the respect he owes me as the Princess.

HORTENSIA

Empower him to speak further! His respect is surely love disguised as discretion. Show him your feelings with a gentle glance. All women know how to do that. Caress him with your eyes. That'll free up his tongue.

PRINCESS

Oh, Hortensia. My last shred of dignity holds me back.

HORTENSIA

Dignity and love keep little company nowadays. But, really, my dear, it's about time for you to enlighten me further. Who is "the gentleman in question"?

PRINCESS

Since you've been away for so long, you probably wouldn't know of him. His name is L  lio.

HORTENSIA

L  lio? Everyone at court has told me about how he joined up with our army and single-handedly won the crucial battle against Castile.

PRINCESS

At my request, the commander of the army ordered him to come here to serve me. Since his arrival, his sage advice has been as valuable as his courage. And his soul is so very generous...

HORTENSIA

Is he young?

PRINCESS

He is at the perfect stage of ripeness.

HORTENSIA

And attractive?

PRINCESS

In my eyes at least.

HORTENSIA

Young, attractive, valiant, generous, and wise. This man has given you his heart. You have given him yours in return, a heart for a heart, and I think you've gotten a good deal in the exchange. Let's do some quick arithmetic. Here we have a lover, and a minister, and a general, and a husband, if necessary. One, two, three, four men for the price of one! Are you paying attention to this calculation?

PRINCESS

Are you ever serious? This man who is worth four, and whom you want me to marry, do you know that, in his own words, he is merely a gentleman, and that I must have a Prince? It is true that in our State the privilege of reigning Princesses is to marry whomever they wish; but it is not always appropriate to take advantage of such privileges.

HORTENSIA

You must have a Prince, or a man who deserves to be a Prince. It's all the same. Pay attention, please. With youth, kindness, generosity, courage, and wisdom, the man would be a blueblood even if he'd been born in a horse barn. This Léo is a Prince in my book. I defy you to find a better man. Believe me, Madam; I do speak seriously sometimes. You and I are the last of our line. Give your subjects a virtuous king; his virtue will help them get over his lack of birth.

PRINCESS

You're right. I'm starting to feel better. But I have one more problem: the ambassador from Castile has just arrived and I know he is charged with proposing to me on behalf of his master. Would it be proper for me to refuse a Prince in order to marry a subject?

HORTENSIA

Is anyone going to stop you? Refuse him politely. A polite refusal is a proper refusal.

PRINCESS

I shall take your word for it. But you must do me a favor. I am unable to tell Léo directly how I feel. Would you be so kind as to relay the message to him with your usual wit and charm?

HORTENSIA

Why not? I enjoy performing good deeds. I only have one condition. Once you have married this gallant man, you must ask the court historian to include a small article in the annals of your reign about my role in this momentous political event. I'll write it myself. "It was the wise and beautiful Hortensia who procured this great fortune for the People. The Princess feared that her marriage to Léo would be improper; the wise and beautiful Hortensia calmed her fears and removed her doubts, which would have deprived this Republic of its long train of brilliant princes descended from Léo the Great." In those exact words, please, so that my progeny will revel in the glory of having such a venerable ancestor as me.

PRINCESS

Oh, that is too delightful. You may dictate that to the court historian on the day of the wedding. But what do you mean by progeny? You spent only one year with your husband, who left you no children. And, as young as you are, you claim you do not wish to remarry.

HORTENSIA

You're right. I'd forgotten that. There goes my posterity! But if you can find me someone who is almost as worthy as Léo, I might just change my mind. You know I have good reasons for not wanting to remarry. Before Count Rodrigo married me, there was no love, ancient or modern, that could rival the love that burned in his soul. Cries of joy at the smallest kind glance; torrents of tears at the tiniest hint of coolness in my eye. Adoring me one day, idolizing me the next, eventually I thought he had formed a new religion dedicated to the secret worship of graven images of me. If you had shared his passion among a million hearts, there would have been more than enough to go

around. The only thing I feared was that he would die from excess of love before our wedding day. Once we were married, I thought he might die of joy. Alas, he didn't die before or after. His body somehow handled his joy. The first month it was violent; the second it calmed down, as he had started sharing it with one of my maids. After the third month, his passion could no longer be seen with the naked eye.

PRINCESS

It must have been very painful for you...

HORTENSIA

Painful? Put yourself in my shoes. Imagine being humiliated, rejected, and abandoned all at once, and you will have a slight inkling of what a young woman in that situation feels. To be loved by a man as I was loved is to be his happiness, to be the object of all he does. It is to reign over him, to be in charge of his soul. It is to see his life consecrated to your desires and to pass your life in the vain belief that you are beautiful. It is to see constantly how lovable you are. Oh, what a lovely sight to behold! What a delightful point of view for a woman! In truth, all is lost when you lose that. What would you do if you had been promised never-ending love, and all of a sudden love ended? What a pretty picture! You speak to him, all his responses are monosyllabic. Approach him and he runs away. What a life! What a fall from grace! The tragic ending is enough to destroy your ego completely. Every time I think about embarking once again on the turbulent waters of love, I feel seasick. I know it will just end in another shipwreck. Unless of course I could find another Léo.

PRINCESS

I'm going to find some way to reconcile you with men.

HORTENSIA

That would be useless. Only one man in the world can change my mind--a man I don't really know—a man I saw for two brief and wonderful days. I was on my way to join my husband in the country when bandits attacked my carriage. I thought they were going to kill me. This valiant man heard my screams and came to my rescue. He fought off the entire band of thieves. As they were running away, he came to me--I had almost fainted—he came to me and revived me. I looked up into his eyes and saw the kindest, most beautiful man I had ever seen. If I hadn't been married, I don't know what would have become of my heart...I don't know what has become of my heart as it is. But it wasn't meant to be. I begged him to forget me. He insisted on following me closely for two days. In the end I told him that he must go. I added that I was to join my husband, and I took a diamond from my finger and offered it to him in gratitude. But he rode off quickly without even looking at it. He seemed quite melancholy. My husband died two months later. I don't know why, but I think about this man all the time. But I can't imagine we'll ever see each other again. Thus, my heart is safe. But who is this coming toward us?

PRINCESS

That's Léo's valet.

HORTENSIA

Wait, that gives me an idea. Wouldn't he know something about his master?

PRINCESS

Not necessarily. Léo lost all his servants during the last battle. This is a new one.

HORTENSIA

Still, it wouldn't hurt to ask him a few questions.

Harlequin enters, mystified, looking around in utter confusion. He sees the Princess and Hortensia and prostrates himself.

PRINCESS

What are you looking for, Harlequin? Is your master in the palace?

HARLEQUIN

Your Highness! I didn't know you were here. I beg Your Principality to pardon the impertinence of my stupidity. You shouldn't ever have to look at the poor servant folk.

(He moves to exit.)

PRINCESS

Stay, stay...

HORTENSIA

Do you enjoy working for Léo?

HARLEQUIN

Oh, yes, very much! We live together in good friendship. I don't like noise, and neither does he. I like to laugh, and that amuses him. He pays me well, feeds me well, and clothes me well, as you can plainly see. And he gives me some small profits, in addition to the ones he doesn't know about, but that he wants me to have. It's a beautiful situation.

PRINCESS *(Aside)*

He's as talkative as he is humorous.

HARLEQUIN *(to HORTENSIA)*

Can you think of a better situation for me, Madam?

HORTENSIA

No, I don't know of anyone who is better than your master. Everyone at court has told me he's a great man.

HARLEQUIN

He seems to come from good stock.

HORTENSIA

It sounds like you don't really know who he is.

HARLEQUIN

Well, I don't know anything about him, and that's the truth. I met him as he was coming from battle. I did him a small favor. He said, "Thank you very much." He told me that his servants had been killed. I replied, "That's too bad." He said to me, "I like you. Do you want to come with me?" I said, "Sure. Why not?" He found some other servants, and then he had to come here and he wanted to bring me with him, and then there we were on our way, galloping along, at breakneck speed. I was bouncing up and down in the saddle like you wouldn't believe. It was worse than a spanking!

Speaking respectfully, it was a month before I was able to sit down again. I hate horses!

PRINCESS (*laughing*)

You are a very precise historian.

HARLEQUIN

Oh, when I tell a story, I never forget a thing! Your Highness found him to be brave. You favored him with your favor. People call him your favorite, you know. He's no more conceited than he was for that, nor am I for that matter. We've been courticized, my master and I.

PRINCESS (*to HORTENSIA*)

We clearly are not going to learn anything from him. Let's go. (*to HARLEQUIN*) Good-bye, Harlequin. (*Exit PRINCESS and HORTENSIA*)

HARLEQUIN

(*Prostrating himself again, until the Princess has gone.*)

That Princess is a nice lady.

(*LÉLIO enters and sees him.*)

LÉLIO

What are you doing here?

HARLEQUIN

I was just chatting with the Princess. I think she likes me.

LÉLIO

You've seen the Princess? Where is she?

HARLEQUIN

She just left.

LÉLIO

Well, what did she say?

HARLEQUIN

Oh, lots of things. She asked me how we're getting along, you and I, um, what's the name of your father, what's the name of your mother, do you have any brothers and sisters, what do they do for a living, do they live off of their income or on credit? I said to her, "Damned if I know! I don't know what they look like. I don't know if they're aristocrats or farmhands or gentlemen or merchants." But I said you seemed to come from honest stock. After that she said, "Thanks. Have a nice day." And I said, "Oh, you are too kind." That's that.

LÉLIO

And in the end you told her you don't know who I am?

HARLEQUIN

Yes. I sure would like to know. Sometimes it bothers me that I don't. There are so many evil people in the world who want to take advantage of you, and some of them have trustworthy faces like yours. But I don't think you are wearing a mask to hide your inner evil.

LÉLIO (*laughing*)

No, Harlequin, I can assure you that I'm not.

HARLEQUIN

You pay me well. I don't need any other assurance. And even if you are some sort of bohemian, who cares? At least you've got a full wallet.

LÉLIO

All right, let's not get carried away.

HARLEQUIN

Sometimes, on the other hand, I think you might be some blueblood, traveling incognito. I've heard of princes who gallivant across the countryside under a different name, to amuse themselves.

LÉLIO

And what makes you think I'm a prince in disguise? Is it my wealth or the beauty of my horse that leads you to that conclusion?

HARLEQUIN

No, other people have money. But no one has your courage or generosity, and I hear those are the marks of a true Prince.

LÉLIO

It's possible to be good-hearted without being a Prince. In fact, Princes have to work harder at it than ordinary people. But since you're close to me, I'll confide that I am a student of human behavior. I observe how people act in different parts of the world. I think this knowledge will be very useful someday. That's my secret, Harlequin.

HARLEQUIN

You know, that course of study will teach you nothing but misery. Galloping around the world to make a study of...people! Who wants to learn about humanity's worst faults? You can't learn anything from people but pettiness and cruelty.

LÉLIO

Right. So they won't be able to fool me anymore.

HARLEQUIN

Then you'll be spoiled.

LÉLIO

How so?

HARLEQUIN

While you're studying all these scoundrels, some of their scoundrelhood is bound to rub off on you.

LÉLIO

(*Aside*) He's got a point there. (*to HARLEQUIN*) Thanks for the tip. I'll keep that in mind. Now that you know who I really am, please keep it secret. I'm off to find the Princess.

HARLEQUIN

Wait! I haven't had my snack yet. Where's the kitchen?

LÉLIO

You still don't know your way around? Just go through the next room.

(HARLEQUIN exits.)

LÉLIO *(Alone.)*

So the Princess wants to know more about me. This confirms my suspicions. She is grateful for my service, and my respect has given her the impression that I love her, but am afraid to tell her so. Since I left my father's kingdom to gain the experience that will be required of me, should I take over as King, I have stayed nowhere longer than here. Where else can my journey lead? My father wants me to get married, and leaves the choice of a wife up to me. This Princess is an excellent candidate. She is kind and beautiful. If I please her, I can be sure she cares about me because of who I am, and not simply because of a title I possess. She doesn't know I'm a Prince. The search is over. I must steal her away from the King of Castile, who has sent a messenger with a proposal. I am not indifferent to her charms, but I wish I could love her without the haunting memory of that wondrous creature I saved from the hands of thieves.

(HORTENSIA enters. They recognize one another.)

LÉLIO *(surprised)*

I know that woman.

HORTENSIA *(taken aback)*

What do I see?

LÉLIO *(approaching her)*

Do you recognize me, Madam?

HORTENSIA

I believe so.

LÉLIO

Are you going to run away this time?

HORTENSIA

Perhaps.

LÉLIO

Why? Am I so odious you can't stand the sight of me?

HORTENSIA

Sir, this conversation has begun in a manner that is making me quite uncomfortable. I do not know how to respond to you. I am afraid it would be impossible for me to say that you please me.

LÉLIO

I'm worthy only of your indifference?

HORTENSIA

It wouldn't be proper for me to say that you are worthy of more...much more. I esteem you, yes, and I owe you a tremendous debt of gratitude. And now we find each other here, together, but you have no need of me. You have the Princess. What could you possibly want from me now?

LÉLIO

Give me the consolation of opening my heart to you.

HORTENSIA

Don't have so much faith in my powers of consolation. My talents as a confidante are overrated.

LÉLIO

I didn't ask you to be my confidante. You don't want to understand what I'm saying.

HORTENSIA

I am simply naïve. Please do elaborate further if you wish. I won't stop you.

LÉLIO

My melancholy spirits as I left you all those months ago weren't enough to communicate my feelings?

HORTENSIA

Your melancholy spirits? And what was the reason for your sadness? Remind me.

LÉLIO

I lost everything when I left you. I wanted to stay with you forever, and yet I had to separate myself from you.

HORTENSIA

This was the reason for your melancholy? I wish you hadn't told me that right now.

LÉLIO

Obviously you're not interested in hearing any more on the subject.

HORTENSIA

(with a sidelong glance at him)

Is it true that you didn't forget me?

LÉLIO

I couldn't get you out of my mind. And now that I see you again, I know I never will. Your image is burned into my thoughts forever. But I've clearly misjudged your feelings for me. As I was riding off I looked into your eyes and saw what I thought was a look of love. I realize now I was mistaken.

HORTENSIA

I remember that look.

LÉLIO

And what were you thinking when you looked at me that way?

HORTENSIA

I was thinking I owed you my life.

LÉLIO

Then it was simply gratitude?

HORTENSIA

I would have trouble making you understand. I was penetrated by the service you had done for me, by your generosity. You saved my life. Who wouldn't be grateful for that? You were about to leave me. I could tell you were sad. Perhaps I was a little sad myself. I looked at you that way because I didn't know what to say. Such looks can be deceiving. It's hard to control how much or how little one expresses. All I know is that I would rather not know your secret at this moment. What can I say to you? I don't trust myself...

LÉLIO

You certainly owe me your pity. You'll never love me, and you told me you were married.

HORTENSIA

Well, I'm a widow now. And as for not being loved by me...

LÉLIO

Go on, Madam.

HORTENSIA

Suppose I love you. What about the Princess? She thinks you love her. She may indeed love you. She is not only my friend, but also the ruler here, and has absolute power over both of us. What good would my love be to you?

LÉLIO

None at all, as long as it remains hypothetical.

HORTENSIA

Did I propose it as hypothetical? I can't talk about this anymore. You asked me for the consolation of opening your heart to me. I have foolishly allowed you to look into mine. I know your secret. That's all. (*Exits*)

LÉLIO (*Alone.*)

Here is a stroke of chance that changes my plans. There is no longer any question of marrying the Princess. I must confirm that my beloved returns my feelings.

(*HORTENSIA enters.*)

HORTENSIA

There's something I forgot to tell you: the Princess loves you and you may aspire to her hand in marriage. Whatever will be, will be. Farewell.

LÉLIO

One moment, Madam. Explain this to me. The Princess herself sent you on an errand to tell me...

HORTENSIA

I know, I know. This is all very exciting for you. But I am not charged with carrying back a response. I have said what I came to say. I do not have time to repeat myself. Good day. (*She tries to leave again, but Lelio stops her, annoyed.*)

LÉLIO

Well, Madam, my response is I love you. And I am going to bring that message to the Princess immediately.

HORTENSIA

What are you thinking? If she finds out you love me you will no longer have a tongue to tell me so.

LÉLIO

That thought gives me pause. How cruel it is to be given all the joy in the world and then to have all hope dashed to the ground.

HORTENSIA

You're right to be angry. It would have been better if you had never seen me again. I can see that your heart is filled with sorrow...

LÉLIO

No, my heart is filled with nothing but feelings of desire that will end only with my life.

HORTENSIA

And what do you expect me to do about them?

LÉLIO

Honor me by returning them, in some small degree.

HORTENSIA

I wouldn't dare. Who am I to love you? Giving you my love would keep you from a throne. My love could take away your freedom, or worse, your life! No, Lelio, we must never speak of this again. Give yourself to the Princess. I absolve you of your passion for me. Don't ask for mine again. I'm not sure I'll be able to restrain myself. I can never give myself to you. I love you too much to be the cause of your destruction. I love you too much to lose you. Farewell.

LÉLIO

I must speak with you again.

HORTENSIA

Be careful. One conversation will lead to another.

LÉLIO

Don't refuse me.

HORTENSIA

Don't take advantage of my desire to consent.

LÉLIO

I beg you.

HORTENSIA

All right. Fine. Cause your own ruin, if that's what you want. (*Exit HORTENSIA*)

LÉLIO (*Alone.*)

I have reached the height of joy! I have found the one I lost, the only one I love. She loves me. The only thing left to do is to disentangle myself from the Princess.

(*FREDERIC, an old courtier, enters.*)

FREDERIC

May I have the honor of a word with you?

LÉLIO

Certainly, sir.

FREDERIC

I am proud to consider myself one of your friends.

LÉLIO

I'm honored to know you feel that way.

FREDERIC

On that note, allow me to take the liberty of asking you for a small favor. You know the Secretary of State passed away recently. I would like to replace him. This promotion is only one step above my current rank. Of course, I believe I have earned the position. I have served the state faithfully for years as an advisor to the Princess. I know how much she respects your opinion. Would you be willing to put in a good word for me, as it were? No one is more truly your servant than I. All the court knows how highly I speak of you.

LÉLIO

You speak well of me there?

FREDERIC

Of course.

LÉLIO

Would you be kind enough to look me in the eye when you say that?

FREDERIC

I would say it again and again. Do you not trust me?

LÉLIO

(After having examined him for a moment)

Yes, you hold up well to scrutiny. What an admirable courtier you are!

FREDERIC

I do not understand.

LÉLIO

Allow me to explain myself better. An honorable man wouldn't scrape and bow to someone he dislikes just to get a promotion.

FREDERIC

You think I dislike you?

LÉLIO

I think you hate me. In fact, I know you do. I don't wish you ill because of it; but I find your deceptive compliments offensive.

FREDERIC

One of my enemies has poisoned your mind against me.

LÉLIO

The Princess herself informed me of your feelings. And although she made no secret of your hatred, I wouldn't have brought it up if you hadn't complimented me so falsely. I don't know why you fear her confidence in me, but since my arrival, you have done nothing but sow doubts about my credibility in her mind. One day you say I'm an enemy spy. The next day I'm a bandit who will run off with all the money in the kingdom. If you call that friendship, you certainly have a lot of it for me. But I think you'd have some difficulty getting that definition into the dictionary.

FREDERIC

Since you are so well informed, I swear to you, frankly, that my concern for the welfare of the State led me to say such things to the Princess. As a prudent advisor, I believed it might be dangerous to give you too much power.

LÉLIO

So you merely tried to orchestrate my ruin because you thought I would be dangerous to the State? I applaud your patriotism. I think I'll follow your example. You advised the Princess against trusting me because I could be a spy. I'm going to advise the Princess against promoting you, because you could be detrimental to the State. Aren't you going to applaud my patriotism?

FREDERIC

Calm down, Sir. Why not be my ally? You are young. The Princess respects you...I have a lovely daughter to offer you in exchange for your help in this matter.

LÉLIO

You're not thinking clearly, Sir. Such a marriage would be a conspiracy against the State if my influence led to your promotion.

FREDERIC

You refuse my offer?

LÉLIO

Do you really want a spy for your son-in-law? Reconsider, for the sake of your daughter. Have pity on her. Do not sacrifice her to your ambition.

FREDERIC

I thought I was offering my daughter to a man of honor. And besides, ambition is no crime. What man would not want to lead a nation?

LÉLIO

A man who's worthy of doing so.

FREDERIC

A man who is worthy?

LÉLIO

Someone whose virtue exceeds his ambition and greed. But such a man would never want to lead a nation.

FREDERIC

You have too much pride for your own good.

LÉLIO

Not pride. Patriotism.

FREDERIC

Don't flatter yourself! One day the Princess will see you for what you really are, and then you'll fall off your high horse.

LÉLIO

Ah, now I see your real face. Not a pretty sight, but much better than the mask you were wearing before.

(The GUARDS enter, followed by the PRINCESS.)

PRINCESS

I've been looking for you, Lélio. You are a distinguished man, and a ruler would be wise to listen to your opinion. I would like you to stay on here as my Secretary of State. I hope you will accept the position.

LÉLIO

Your kindness knows no bounds, Madam. But my job is war.

PRINCESS

Military heroes are often the best government ministers. And if we need you to go to war, you can always appoint a temporary replacement.

LÉLIO

There are others here who have served you well for many years. Take their seniority into consideration.

PRINCESS

In this case your superior merit outweighs their seniority. The only other person who could handle the job is Frederic, but since Frederic and I are such old friends, I am sure he agrees with my choice. Frederic, do befriend Léo and give him as much help as you can. (*Frederic shakes Léo's hand obsequiously.*) Good. Now, today is my birthday, and as is customary, the court is putting on a play for my entertainment. Léo, lend me your arm. Will we see you there, Frederic?

FREDERIC

Madam, the theater no longer agrees with me.

(*The PRINCESS and LÉLIO exit, followed by the GUARDS.*)

FREDERIC (*Alone.*)

If I cannot succeed in ruining this man, I shall be the one who is ruined. A man with no name, no parents, no homeland has stolen my post right out from under me. This is the thanks I get for years of devoted service? I cannot stomach this reversal of fortune. No savvy politician, but love has taken my promotion away. The Princess has a weakness for this man. I must learn the history of his vagrant life and then make some arrangements with my ally, the Ambassador from Castile. (*He notices HARLEQUIN entering.*) Here is the adventurer's valet. I must bring him into my corner no matter what the cost.

(*HARLEQUIN enters, counting money in his hat.*)

FREDERIC

Good day, Harlequin.

HARLEQUIN

Shhh! Twenty-four, twenty-five, twenty-six, twenty-seven. I had thirty before. Would you count them, Sir? I think I'm missing three silver coins.

FREDERIC

It looks that way.

HARLEQUIN

Then to hell with gambling and thieves!

FREDERIC

Do not curse the loss of such a paltry sum. Here. This gold piece is for you.

HARLEQUIN

Oh, you're a wonderful man. You deserve a dance! (*Dances.*)

FREDERIC

I'm glad I could make you feel better.

HARLEQUIN

But I'm still missing my three pieces of silver.

FREDERIC

Not at all. A gold coin from my pocket is worth thirty pieces of silver.

HARLEQUIN

Really? Thirty pieces of silver? But that doesn't bring back the three silver coins from my hat.

FREDERIC

I see you need another. (*Gives HARLEQUIN a second gold coin.*)

HARLEQUIN

Ho-ho! A second dance! (*Dances again.*)

FREDERIC

You like money?

HARLEQUIN

Very much.

FREDERIC

You'd enjoy making a small fortune?

HARLEQUIN

I'd wait patiently for a large one.

FREDERIC

Listen to me. I'm afraid that your master's good luck won't last much longer. The finger of fate is fickle.

HARLEQUIN

It's just like playing cards. He's on a roll.

FREDERIC

Do you know him well?

HARLEQUIN

No, I think he's an orphan or something.

FREDERIC

You should attach yourself to someone more stable. Like me.

HARLEQUIN

You're too old.

FREDERIC

Too old?

HARLEQUIN

Yep. You're going to die soon and then where will I be?

FREDERIC

I hope you're wrong about that. But I could do a lot of good for you in very little time.

HARLEQUIN

Interesting...you may be onto something there. I might not be too smart, but I do think I have some common sense. As I always say: "If a man is happy sitting down, why should he stand up?" My master gives me good bread, good wine, and good meat. He's a nice guy and he pays me a decent salary. Why would I leave him?

FREDERIC

But I can afford to double your salary. And in addition to the financial rewards, I would like to arrange your marriage to a very lovely and wealthy young woman.

HARLEQUIN

Good lord! My common sense tells me you're right. I'm standing up, and you're offering me a seat. That's much better. You'd treat me like a son! That's nothing to sneeze at. More money and a beautiful girl! You must really love me.

FREDERIC

Yes. I like the look of you. I think you would be a good servant.

HARLEQUIN

And I'm really funny! We'll laugh like hyenas together! Now bring on the money and the girl!

FREDERIC

That's all part of the deal, I assure you. But you must do me a small favor first, son.

HARLEQUIN

Of course, father.

FREDERIC

What I'm asking for is really nothing at all. You live with L  lio. I'd like to find out more about him. Stay with him for another three or four weeks and report back to me, in detail, on what you hear him say and see him do. Sometimes people do and say things in private that reveal a lot about them. Observe him carefully. (*Gives HARLEQUIN more money*) Consider this an advance.

HARLEQUIN

I'd rather consider the girl an advance. The money can come later.

FREDERIC

I disagree. Take care of my business first. What are you waiting for?

HARLEQUIN

Well, to be frank, what you want me to do makes me uncomfortable.

FREDERIC

You have my money in your pocket and you refuse my orders?

HARLEQUIN

We're not talking about your money. Why do you want to know what my master Lélío says in private?

FREDERIC

Curiosity.

HARLEQUIN

Curiosity could kill my master. I don't trust you.

FREDERIC

What do you mean? Harlequin, you aren't thinking clearly.

HARLEQUIN

Leave me alone. You shouldn't tempt a poor boy with a soft spot for women. It's hard for me to keep from giving in. My conscience will be the end of me! Why should I go without thirty pieces of silver and a beautiful girl? That was very clever of you, to throw that girl into the bargain!

FREDERIC (*aside*)

This idiot worries me with his talk of conscience. (To HARLEQUIN) All I am asking you to do is bring me some innocent information about an unknown man who may run out of luck tomorrow and leave you in the gutter. Do you realize I am offering you a fortune?

HARLEQUIN

You know what I think? I think your offer stinks to high heaven, and thank goodness the stench has strengthened my wavering honor. Your beautiful girl is a dog! The jobs you want me to do aren't fit for a rat! That's my last word on the subject. I am going to find the Princess and my master. Maybe they can replace the fortune I've lost.

FREDERIC

What makes you want to find them?

HARLEQUIN

I'm going to tell them all about my misery and your treachery.

FREDERIC

How dare you? You would humiliate me and dishonor me?

HARLEQUIN

You have no honor. What good is a clean reputation to you?

FREDERIC

If you breathe a word of this to anyone, my vengeance will be swift and violent. You will answer me with your life. Is that clear?

HARLEQUIN

You don't scare me with your threats. I'll be drinking good wine thirty years after you're in the ground. You're as old as the hills, and I'm younger than springtime. Good-bye.

FREDERIC

Stop! Harlequin! You've hurt me deeply. You don't know the consequences of what you are about to do. My son, you frighten me. In asking you to save my honor, I'm also asking you to save yourself. Please think about this. Your harsh judgment has already punished me severely.

HARLEQUIN

What? This is absurd! I'm just walking along, minding my own business, with no evil thoughts in my head. Then all of sudden there you are offering me women and giving me one gold piece to replace my three pieces of silver. Who does that? I take it, because I'm a good boy, and then you confuse me with I-don't-know-how-many more gold pieces. I have them in my pocket and I'll bring them as evidence against you, for staining the heart of an innocent. I'm glad I had my conscience and the fear of a beating to keep me from betraying my master, who is the kindest, most wonderful man in the world and the right-hand-man of the Princess. How can I allow your actions to go unpunished?

FREDERIC

All right, I admit my wrong. Let me buy your silence. Name your price.

HARLEQUIN

It's not going to be cheap, that's for sure.

FREDERIC

Please just tell me what you want.

HARLEQUIN

I want the pretty girl.

FREDERIC

You called her a dog.

HARLEQUIN

I never said I didn't like dogs.

FREDERIC

All right. I'll try to get her for you.

HARLEQUIN

Then I'll try to keep quiet. (*Calling offstage.*) Oh, Master!

FREDERIC

All right. All right. Since you absolutely must have her, here she is. (*Motions for LISETTE to enter. She does. Then, aside*) Perhaps she can corrupt him better than I could...

HARLEQUIN

Oh, my goodness.

FREDERIC

I shall leave you two alone to talk things over. (*He exits.*)

HARLEQUIN

My jewel, I have committed a terrible offense against you. I must beg for your forgiveness, while I am in a repentant mood.

LISETTE

What? How could a beautiful boy like you ever offend anyone?

HARLEQUIN

A beautiful boy like me? Oh, I am not worthy of my daily bread.

LISETTE

Why do you need to ask my forgiveness? What did you do?

HARLEQUIN

Something stupid. Tell me, would you rather have me kneeling down or standing up when I beg your forgiveness? Beat me! Humiliate me! Don't hold back!

LISETTE

I don't want to beat you or see you down on your knees. Just tell me what you said.

HARLEQUIN (*kneeling*)

My darling, you're not nearly cruel enough, but I know my duty.

LISETTE

Stand up, my dear. I've already pardoned you.

HARLEQUIN

Listen to me. I said...I was speaking of your perfect person...I said...oh, the rest is so awful...I can't bring myself to say it.

LISETTE

You said...?

HARLEQUIN

I said...I said you were...a dog!

LISETTE (*angry*)

A dog? How can you love me if you think I'm a dog?

HARLEQUIN

I was wrong!

LISETTE

I thought I was at least somewhat attractive, and that's the truth.

HARLEQUIN

Didn't I tell you I feel awful? But when I called you that, I hadn't seen your beautiful face yet. You're like an angel with a halo...oh...oh...oh...

LISETTE

You didn't even know who I was? You hadn't seen me yet?

HARLEQUIN

Not even the tip of your nose.

LISETTE

Oh, my dear Harlequin, I can't stay mad at you. You like me now, right?

HARLEQUIN

You are...delicious.

LISETTE

Well, then, let's not think about this anymore, OK?

HARLEQUIN

When I look at you, I feel like I'm drunk.

LISETTE

That's wonderful! I'm so glad you love me, because I sure do like you.

HARLEQUIN

My love for you is so big I can't measure it.

LISETTE

And you want to marry me?

HARLEQUIN

I'm not just fooling around here. I'm seeking you honestly, in front of God and everybody.

LISETTE

You'll be all mine?

HARLEQUIN

Like a package of needles to keep in your sewing-box.

LISETTE

Do you want me to be happy?

HARLEQUIN

I want to give you all the most wonderful things. I want you to be happy all the time. Eating, drinking, and sleeping.

LISETTE

Well, my friend. I have something to tell you. Last week I had my horoscope done.

HARLEQUIN

Ooooooh!

LISETTE

You walked by and the astrologer said: “Do you see that attractive young man with the brown hair? His name is Harlequin.”

HARLEQUIN

He got that right!

LISETTE

“He will fall in love with you.”

HARLEQUIN

What an amazing astrologer!

LISETTE

“Mister Frederic will ask him for his service against an unknown man. At first he will refuse to do anything, because he thinks Mister Frederic has bad intentions. But you will be able to get him to do what Mister Frederic couldn’t. And once he does it, the two of you will receive a great fortune and get married.” That’s what the astrologer said. You love me and you want to marry me. His prediction is very far along. As for Frederic’s proposition, I don’t know what it is; but you know what he told you. All the astrologer said to me was that I should love you, and I’m doing pretty well at that, as you can plainly see.

HARLEQUIN

Wow! This is astonishing! I love you. That’s true. I want to marry you. That’s true, too. But it’s also true that Mister Frederic wanted me to betray my master. I didn’t want to do it, but I guess I’m going to have to. Once something is predicted, our fates are sealed.

LISETTE

Wait a minute! The astrologer didn’t say Frederic actually wanted you to betray your master. He only said you would take it that way.

HARLEQUIN

I did believe that. And apparently I was wrong.

LISETTE

That goes without saying.

HARLEQUIN

I’m such an idiot! But honestly, it sounded like betrayal to me, or my name isn’t Harlequin. I’m sorry I was so mean to good Mister Frederic. I made him give me all his money. The astrologer didn’t say anything about giving it back, did he?

LISETTE

Of course not. You should keep the money he gave you.

HARLEQUIN

If I gave it back, it would ruin your horoscope, and it's not a good idea to defy an astrologer.

LISETTE

You're right. Just obey the prediction by doing what Mister Frederic asked, so you can win the great fortune it promised us.

HARLEQUIN

Good point. We're winners. Harlequin is at your service! Bend me, shape me, any way you want me. This prediction has delivered me to you. It knows what it's doing. I can't stop it. I'll submit to the fates. I love you, I must marry you, I must betray my master L  lio. I must go wherever the wind takes me, and right now the wind is pushing me to kiss you, so I must kiss you.

LISETTE (*laughing*)

The astrologer didn't say anything about that!

HARLEQUIN

Maybe he forgot.

LISETTE

Apparently. But let's go find Frederic so you can reconcile yourself to him.

HARLEQUIN

Here's my master! I need to spend three more weeks with him to spy on what he does. I'm going to see if he needs anything from me. Good-bye, my love. Wait for me at Frederic's place.

LISETTE

Don't be late. (*She exits.*)

(*L  lio enters, dreamily, without seeing Harlequin, who hides.*)

HARLEQUIN (*aside*)

He can't see me. This is the perfect time to eavesdrop on his private thoughts.

L  LIO

I've gotten myself into a fine mess!

HARLEQUIN (*aside*)

He's messed up...

L  LIO

What if the Princess noticed the way I was looking at her friend during the play? The thought of it makes me shiver.

HARLEQUIN (*aside*)

He's shivering because of the Princess...it's an affair of State! Oh my goodness!

L  LIO

If the Princess finds out how I feel, she might take the one I love away from me, or worse.

HARLEQUIN (*aside*)

He's cheating on the Princess! Mister Frederic is going to love that one! I may be able to but a house of my own with what he'll pay me.

LÉLIO

I must arrange a rendezvous.

HARLEQUIN

A ron-day-voo? He's speaking French. Maybe I should tell Mister Frederic that, too. But I do feel sorry for my master. After all, this could kill him. But a man's got to do what his horoscope says he's got to do. Maybe I could get his permission... (*He leaves stealthily and comes back in as if he were just arriving.*) My dear master!

LÉLIO

What do you want?

HARLEQUIN

I came to ask for my small fortune.

LÉLIO

What are you talking about?

HARLEQUIN

Well, Mister Frederic promised me a small fortune if I told him secrets about you. I'm supposed to eavesdrop on your conversations and go through your things and find out who you are. He told me not to tell anyone he was paying me to spy on you, so I'm not going to tell you. I'm just making conversation. Do you mind if I tell him all your secrets? You know I don't have much money, so I could really use the small fortune he said he would give me.

LÉLIO

Frederic is such a coward! He should learn to do his own dirty work. But my life is an open book. Go ahead and tell him everything you know, Harlequin. Take his money and tell him my secret.

HARLEQUIN

You're sure?

LÉLIO

Yes, I'm sure.

HARLEQUIN

Don't just give me your permission because you're nice. If you really don't want me to, I won't talk to Frederic anymore.

LÉLIO

No, please do. And don't forget to tell him I don't trust him at all.

HARLEQUIN

As you wish.

LÉLIO

Good-bye, Harlequin. Go earn your money. *(He exits.)*

HARLEQUIN *(Alone.)*

With a little panache—ooh, I seem to be learning French--it's easy to get what you want. Sure, I could have sold out my master without asking for permission. But now if I hurt him, I'm in the clear! Everything's coming up roses for Harlequin. I can't wait to see what happens next!

(During this speech, a GUARD has entered with a placard. Now the GUARD clears his throat and Harlequin takes the placard and shows it to the audience. The placard reads "Intermission.")

CURTAIN

Act II

Scene 1.

(Lights up on GUARDS, standing at attention upstage. The PRINCESS enters, followed by HORTENSIA. Both are lost in thought. The PRINCESS dismisses the GUARDS before she speaks.)

PRINCESS

So, Hortensia, apparently my distraction is contagious.

HORTENSIA

What do you expect, Madam? I see you in another world, and it makes me pensive. I'm just copying you.

PRINCESS

You're copying so well, people may not be able to tell us apart. As for me, I am far from calm. Your report of Lelio bothers me. A man whom you have informed of my love for him, a man in whom I thought I saw desire for me, should manifest some inkling of joy, but you speak only of his profound respect for me. Respect is frigid.

HORTENSIA

Respect in general is neither frigid nor boiling. It's not as though I crudely said to him, "By the way, the Princess loves you." And it's not as though he crudely responded, "Well, that's great!" He didn't start dancing around or anything, but it seemed to me that he was penetrated by a deep respect for you.

PRINCESS

You're a warm-blooded woman...did he show any kind of pleasant surprise?

HORTENSIA

Surprise? Yes, he did show some surprise. I couldn't tell whether it was a pleasant or an unpleasant surprise. You know how men can conceal their feelings. You could spend days trying to guess what they're thinking. But as for Lelio, I'm thoroughly pleased with him.

PRINCESS *(With a forced smile.)*

You're thoroughly pleased with him. What does that mean, Hortensia? Could you be more specific?

HORTENSIA

What does it mean? I'm thoroughly pleased with him. It means... It means I'm pleased with him. How can I explain that? I can only repeat it. What else do you want me to say? I'm satisfied that he responded to your message. Does that sound better?

PRINCESS

It's becoming much clearer.

HORTENSIA

Well, it amounts to the same thing.

PRINCESS

Don't get upset. I am in a very difficult situation, and I need you to indulge me. I am overwhelmed by irrational ideas. I'm afraid of everything. I'm suspicious of everyone. I believe I was jealous even of you, my best friend, whom I trust above all others. You are an attractive woman. Léo is an attractive man. You gave me a report that did not fulfill my hopes. I became upset; suddenly you are my rival! What good is love, Hortensia? Where is the esteem I have for you? Where the justice I owe you? Do you even recognize me? Love is turning me into a child. Don't you think I'm being childish?

HORTENSIA

Yes, but the weaknesses of a child your age are dangerous, and I would rather have nothing to do with them.

PRINCESS

Listen to me. The whole time we were at the play, Léo hardly looked at anything but you.

HORTENSIA

He was looking at me?

PRINCESS

You disagree? Perhaps you don't understand. I seem to recall that every glance he made in your direction embarrassed you and that you refused to meet his gaze, out of consideration for me, perhaps? What do you say to that? (*Pause.*) No answer. Is the question too difficult for you?

HORTENSIA

It's just that I see you drawing conclusions and if I respond, I'm afraid you'll conclude something from my response. But I can't win, because you're also jumping to conclusions about my silence. I don't know what to do. My silence is mysterious to you. My speech is mysterious. I am a mystery from my head to my toes. This love of yours is very strange, Madam. I've never seen anything like it, and I do not relish the idea of seeing it through to its conclusion.

PRINCESS

Once again, I acknowledge my fault. But it is your job as my friend to support me in my time of need. I'm in love. That's the only excuse I can offer.

HORTENSIA

This love has become more mine than yours. The manner in which you are handling it fatigues me more than you. I beg you to relieve me of the weight of your love for Léo. I find a passion in my arms that doesn't belong to me. Is any burden more difficult to bear!

PRINCESS (*In a serious tone.*)

Hortensia, I thought you loved me! I don't know what to think of your...your disgust for me! When I tell you frankly about my fears, my love displeases you. I don't understand. You seem to be afraid of me.

HORTENSIA

Oh, this situation is unbearable! I can't open or close my mouth in safety. What am I to do? Your observations follow me. You're disappointed in me; I torment you. You're angry if I speak; you're angry if I remain silent. I don't know how to conduct myself. Léo looks at me, you don't know what to think, you don't understand me, you esteem me, you think I'm deceiving you. You love me one minute and you think I'm a traitor the next. You mix it all up: hate, love, suspicion, confidence, calm, storm. My head is spinning. I give up. I'm leaving. I'm going home. You'll probably think even that is some sort of plot against you.

PRINCESS (*Caressing her*)

Oh, my darling Hortensia, you mustn't leave me. I don't want to lose you. I want to love you, and I want you to love me. I reject all my weaknesses. You are my friend and I am yours, and that will last forever.

HORTENSIA

Your love for Léo will tear us apart. If you want our friendship to last, I beg you to let me go. It's for the best.

PRINCESS

No, my dear. I'm giving your horses a rest period. You may only use my carriages. And the guards won't let you pass through the gates of the city unless I'm with you. (*By this point, the GUARDS have entered.*) We'll go out for walks together sometimes; those will be your only travels. As for Léo, you will continue to see him, with me or without me, when your friend asks you to.

HORTENSIA

Me, see Léo? What if Léo looks at me? He has eyes. What if I look at him? I have eyes, too. Or what if I don't look at him, since it's all the same in your eyes? What am I supposed to do in the company of a man with whom any ocular function is improper?

HORTENSIA (Cont'd)

Should I close my eyes? Do you want me to wear a blindfold? That's all I can do, and even that won't suit you. And what if he continues to have this profound respect for you? You'll be annoyed with me. You'll say, "That's very cold." As if all I had to say to him was "Sir, be warmer." His respect, his eyes, and my eyes, there are three things for which you will never forgive me. I don't know if I could accommodate you by being blind, deaf, and mute. I might still find some way to upset you.

PRINCESS

Honestly, Hortensia. Why can't you just see things from my point of view? Someday we'll have a good laugh over all this.

HORTENSIA

Please, Madam, give me leave to go away, at least while you're in love. Instead of laughing about my visit we can laugh about my absence. Isn't it the same thing?

PRINCESS

You are not leaving and that is final. Don't look so sad. I have to talk to L  lio about one little thing. When I hear his judgment on this matter I shall know his feelings toward me. The gift of my hand would make him a King, but I must find out whether his heart is available. It's a brilliant test, if I do say so myself.

(L  LIO enters.)

PRINCESS

I have been waiting for you, L  lio. You know why the King of Castile has sent his Ambassador here. Today he shall receive an audience with you. Frederic will be present, but I leave the decision entirely up to you. You must decide whether I shall accept or reject his marriage proposal. I am not going to tell you what my opinion is. I shall content myself with wishing that you will guess correctly. I have things to do. I shall leave you alone with Hortensia; you barely know each other. She is my friend, and I leave the declaration of my esteem for you in her capable hands. *(PRINCESS exits. GUARDS remain.)*

L  LIO

Now, Madam, you must decide my fate. We haven't a moment to lose. You heard the Princess. Refusing the King's proposal would indicate that I love her. Accepting it would imply an indifference that will enrage her. Can you help me resolve this dilemma? I must get out of here, and soon. If you come with me, I can offer you a safe place where you won't have to fear the Princess or anyone else. Dare I hope that you'll consent...?

HORTENSIA

No, Sir, hope for nothing. Do not speak to me of your heart. And leave mine in peace. Love on the right. Love on the left. I'm surrounded. It's all I hear about these days. And yours is the most troublesome to me.

L  LIO

So that's it then? My love tires you and you want no more of it.

HORTENSIA

If you try to persuade me to love you, I shall leave right now.

L  LIO

Cruel lady! You need so little effort to resist my pain.

HORTENSIA

I don't know what I need, Sir, and I won't figure it out in your presence. I can take care of myself. Leave me alone.

LÉLIO

Why? You risk nothing in listening to me.

HORTENSIA

I risk nothing? What are you thinking? Letting you know the real truth would only lead to trouble and pain for both of us.

LÉLIO

If you have tender feelings for me, what have I done to make you fight them?

HORTENSIA

What have you done? Why are you meeting me here? What do you want? You came to this court. You met the Princess. She fell in love with you. Your position depends on her. My position depends on her. You glanced at me during the play. She saw you. She is jealous of me. That is what you have done, Sir. And there is no remedy for it.

LÉLIO (*taken aback*)

The Princess is jealous of you?

HORTENSIA

Yes, very jealous. Someone is spying on us right now. Yet you come to speak to me of your passion. You want me to love you. I'm afraid of what could happen. I practically said it would be impossible, that my heart would be useless to you. You refuse to listen to me. You keep pushing. You don't understand love at all, Lelio. You won't respect my sacrifice. If I am hurting you now, it is only because I want to spare you even more pain in the future. I refuse to love you: what good does that do me? Do you think I take pleasure in denying you? No, Lelio, I find no pleasure there. You should be thanking me for my refusals; you don't deserve them. I am willing to give you up to save you, but you are not willing to do the same for me. Tell me, what keeps me from giving you my love? Is it so hard? Is my heart not free? Don't you love me enough? What's missing? You're unreasonable. I refuse you my love along with the dangers you would encounter if you had it. My love would ruin your life. You're angry with me because I'm trying to save your life. You're upset, and you ask me again and again if I love you. Explain yourself. What do you want from me? What do you need? What do you mean by love? Define the word "love" for me, because I don't understand at all.

LÉLIO (*strongly*)

The only thing that can make my happiness complete is your hand in marriage.

HORTENSIA

Tell that to the Princess, and the day of our wedding will be the day of our execution. No, Lelio, if I were to make you happy in that way, I would want our happiness to last.

LÉLIO (*animated*)

My heart is not enough to hold the passion I feel for you. Please listen to me, Madam. I have something to say.

HORTENSIA

Stop, Lelio. Your obstinacy is so cruel! With every amorous word you say, I envision your death. I have asked you to leave my heart in peace, and you won't. At first I said that I could not love you. That didn't scare you off. But I know stronger, clearer ways of speaking that will cure you of your impossible hopes. This is what I think, and what I will always think: I don't love you. I will never love you. I won't change my mind. I don't love you. If I could think of a harsher way of speaking, I would speak more harshly, to punish you for the pain this speech is causing me. I don't love you. I don't love you. I don't love you. Let's change the subject.

LÉLIO

So you've made up your mind. You don't love me. I thought you did. The only thing keeping me here was the desire to be joined together with you forever. Very well. I shall never forget you, my Lady. Farewell. (*Turns to go.*)

HORTENSIA

(*Calling.*) Lelio! (*He turns back.*) I didn't expect you to go.

LÉLIO (*Returning.*)

What do you want from me, Madam?

HORTENSIA

I have no idea. You are in despair. You're making me feel the same. I don't know any more than that.

LÉLIO

You'll hate me if I don't leave you.

HORTENSIA

I stop hating you the minute you walk away.

LÉLIO

Listen to your heart.

HORTENSIA

You've heard the advice my heart gives me. You leave, and I call you back. If you leave again, I'll call you back again.

LÉLIO

Don't send me away again. We can easily escape from the dangers you fear.

HORTENSIA (*strongly*)

Escape from the dangers? We would have to get out of here. How are we going to pull that off? Can we even risk trying? You'll be arrested. Good-bye. I owe you my life. If you refuse to save yours I shall owe you nothing. You say you love me. I won't believe it unless you go. Leave, or become my mortal enemy.

LÉLIO (*Resentfully*)

I shall leave, then, since that's what you want. But you claim you want to save my life, and I'll die if you save my life this way.

HORTENSIA (*Returning*)

What do you mean?

LÉLIO

I would rather die than never see you again.

(*HORTENSIA stand in stunned silence. LÉLIO kisses her.*)

HORTENSIA

(*Pause*) Tell me about our escape.

LÉLIO (*Joyfully*)

Oh, my dearest! How can I ever thank you?

HORTENSIA (*Nonchalant*)

I know. You love me. We can talk about that later. Now, tell me about your plan.

LÉLIO

I wish I could offer you more than just my crown and dominion over the Kingdom that awaits me.

HORTENSIA (*With Modest Surprise.*)

You're a prince? Really? But all I want from you is your heart all to myself. Now, how are we going to get out of here?

LÉLIO

I'm expecting a secret courier tomorrow from my father, the King of Léon.

(*FREDERIC's voice is heard, off.*)

HORTENSIA

Wait, your highness. Frederic is coming. I'm sure the Ambassador is right behind him. Tell me about your plans later.

LÉLIO

I'm afraid you'll be worrying too much.

HORTENSIA

And I'm not afraid of anything anymore. You've given me the gift of recklessness. Now it's up to you to protect me. Do your best.

LÉLIO

Everything will be fine, Madam. I can stall the Ambassador for now. See you soon. I'll miss you.

(*As HORTENSIA exits, FREDERIC enters with the AMBASSADOR.*)

FREDERIC (*Aside to the Ambassador*)

You will notice the audacity of his hopes, I am sure.

AMBASSADOR (*To Lélío*)

Sir, you know what brings me here; the success of my mission depends on your skill. I am to advocate for a marriage between the Princess and my master, the King of Castile. Perhaps no union has ever been more necessary. You must be familiar with the just rights Castile has on portions of this State...

LÉLIO

I have no interest in Castile's historic claims on this land, Sir. The Princess can make similar claims on parts of your land, if she so desires. You don't have to look very hard at the past treaties to find our claims on some of your provinces.

FREDERIC

Gentlemen, these rights have no bearing on the marriage in question.

AMBASSADOR

I consent to leave that alone for the present. But what of the geographical proximity of our two States? Twenty years of war have ended, sure to resume when the interests of our two countries are at odds again, as they most certainly will be. Your people are tired. We have greater resources. The peace we recently negotiated arose from unusual circumstances. Had Castile not been otherwise occupied, the outcome would have been vastly different.

LÉLIO

Not at all. This war would have been like any other. For as many centuries as this State has been defending itself against yours, how much progress have you made? I fail to see any great inequality of resources.

AMBASSADOR

You have had foreign aid.

LÉLIO

As have you, on many occasions. That's how States work. One uses political influence to quash the ambitions of another.

FREDERIC

Come, gentlemen. We have no need of lessons in politics. Let us be more practical. This marriage would create a lasting peace. Think of how convenient it will be to have our two States become one stronger state, ruled by one benevolent master.

LÉLIO

All right. But our people have their own laws. Are you absolutely certain that they will want to submit to foreign domination and to learn the customs of a nation that they have long considered an enemy?

AMBASSADOR

Would they be willing to disobey their ruler?

LÉLIO

They would, for love of her and of their country.

FREDERIC

In that case, it won't be hard to force them into submission.

LÉLIO

Do you think so, Sir? If the people must be oppressed in order to keep peace, as you suggest, such a peace would not come from the Princess. Only an enemy would give them such a dubious gift.

FREDERIC (*To Ambassador*)

Do you see? Just as I told you.

AMBASSADOR (*to Lelio*)

You are disposed then to reject the marriage I propose?

LÉLIO

I did not say that. It merits reflection. We will take the matter under consideration. After that time, I will advise the Princess as to what I judge best for her glory and for the good of her people. Frederic will give his reasons and I will give mine.

FREDERIC

The Princess will decide based on yours.

AMBASSADOR

Would you permit me to speak freely?

LÉLIO

Of course, my good Sir.

AMBASSADOR

You have found yourself in an excellent position here. I believe you are afraid you may lose it should the Princess marry another. Allow me to assure you that the King my master will find a place for you in the new government.

LÉLIO (*Coldly*)

Sir, do not bring up the name of the King your master. Suspect me as much as you wish, but do not associate him with your mistrust. When we speak for Princes, Sir, it should be always in a noble and dignified manner. We owe them that respect, and you make me blush on behalf of the King of Castile.

AMBASSADOR

I have only one thing left to say to you, and it is no longer as the King of Castile, but as myself that I speak. I was warned that I would find you against any marriage, no matter how agreeable and necessary it is, as long as the Princess wants to marry a Prince. I was told that you had reasons for this, reasons that I could not believe, which are apparently founded on the confidence the Princess has in you.

LÉLIO

Your freedom of speech is not becoming, Sir. Frankness suits neither you nor the King your master, and you have me worried on behalf of the Princess.

AMBASSADOR

You have nothing to fear. I understand what I owe the Princess; I only wanted to teach those who have forgotten their duty to her.

LÉLIO

I may be able to correct your lessons for you. What have you heard about me that causes you concern?

AMBASSADOR

Things beyond belief.

FREDERIC

No need to explain them. I have heard the same things, and I laughed and laughed.

LÉLIO (*looking at Frederic*)

I would like to find out just how cowardly my enemies at court might be. I know who they are, and I could have easily done them harm, but they're not worth the time and effort it would take a well-bred man to avenge himself on them. What have you heard?

AMBASSADOR

No matter. Frederic is correct. The accusations are ridiculous. Someone as intelligent and agile as yourself would know his place in the world and would be incapable of having the thoughts that are ascribed to you. The Princess must be no more than the object of your respect, but the rumors at court say otherwise. To crush those rumors, I would suggest that you conclude an appropriate marriage for the Princes as soon as possible.

LÉLIO

I thank you for your advice, Sir. But I am sorry that you have taken the pains to mention it to me. Visiting ambassadors rarely provide tutelage to ministers. I don't care to break with that tradition. When I see that your new method has caught on, I will be happy to follow it.

AMBASSADOR

I had not quite finished. The King of Castile fell in love with the Princess when he saw her portrait. He desires this marriage not only because it is reasonable, equitable, and politically expedient, but more importantly because he loves the Princess. If the marriage does not take place, take care that the King of Castile does not learn of your real reasons for doing so. The vengeance of a Prince can reach to the ends of the earth. Remember that.

LÉLIO

Once again, I have not rejected your proposal. We will examine it carefully. But if the "real reasons" you mention were true, it might be more difficult for the King to avenge himself on me than you think.

AMBASSADOR (*Shocked*)

On you?

LÉLIO (*Coldly*)

Yes. On me.

AMBASSADOR

Take heed. I am the eyes and ears of the King of Castile.

LÉLIO

I know who I am. And that's enough.

AMBASSADOR

No matter who you are, I can assure you that you owe me respect.

LÉLIO

So be it. I may have nothing more than my heart, but the respect owed to virtue is just as legitimate as the respect owed to Kings. Even if you were the King of Castile himself, as a generous man you could not think otherwise. I have shown you no disrespect, supposing you do merit my esteem. However, I continue to respect you, because you say I must, without any less rigorous examination of whether the marriage you suggest is a worthwhile venture at this time. *(He exits proudly.)*

FREDERIC

Well, then. What do you think of him?

AMBASSADOR

I've begun to esteem him greatly.

FREDERIC

Really? Your manner of speaking did not convey that.

AMBASSADOR

I simply felt that I could take such a tone with a journeyman who was raised by the wind.

FREDERIC

But if we don't ruin him, you can never succeed. Shouldn't we be allies in this?

AMBASSADOR

I consent, on condition that we do nothing that would be beneath us. I want to fight him generously, according to his merit.

FREDERIC

All actions are generous, when they contribute to the general well-being.

AMBASSADOR

Don't be so sure of yourself. You hate Lelio, and hate is not a good inspiration for maxims of honor. I shall try to gain an audience with the Princess today. I must leave you. We shall see one another later.

FREDERIC *(Alone.)*

That ambassador is awfully scrupulous.

(HARLEQUIN enters, out of breath and slightly drunk.)

HARLEQUIN

Wow, are you ever hard to find! I've been gallivanting after you forever! It's like trying to find a haystack in a needle.

FREDERIC

I haven't gone anywhere. Do you have anything to tell me?

HARLEQUIN

Wait a minute. I think I left my lungs back there somewhere.

FREDERIC

Catch your breath.

HARLEQUIN

Well, I can't catch it with my hand.

FREDERIC

Do you know anything? You're trying my patience.

HARLEQUIN

A hundred thousand gold coins wouldn't be enough to repay me. But that would be a good start.

FREDERIC

I don't have any money on me. But I promise I'll get it for you.

HARLEQUIN

This "promise" of money makes me feel reticent. Could you give me a deposit? Say, the diamond ring on your finger? I could keep that as collateral.

FREDERIC

Take it. Just tell me what you heard!

HARLEQUIN

Well, Léo, he doesn't trust you.

FREDERIC

Is that all?

HARLEQUIN

No. He was talking to himself...

FREDERIC

Good!

HARLEQUIN

Sure. Good. Oh, here comes the Princess. Should I say it all in front of her?

FREDERIC (*After a moment's thought*)

Interesting idea. Yes, but don't tell her you're working for me. I'll speak first. Follow my lead.

*(He motions for HARLEQUIN to exit. HARLEQUIN does.
The PRINCESS and HORTENSIA enter.)*

PRINCESS

Well, Frederic, where did you leave things with the Ambassador?

FREDERIC

It seems as though L lio finds his proposition agreeable.

PRINCESS

His opinion is that I should marry the King of Castile?

FREDERIC

He only asked for time to examine the situation.

PRINCESS

I would not have expected him to think as you say he does.

HARLEQUIN

(Entering, after a signal from FREDERIC)

Oh, you don't know what he's thinking.

PRINCESS

What are you doing here? Frederic, what is he doing here?

FREDERIC

When you arrived, Madam, he was about to tell me of a matter that concerns you. It also involves L lio.

PRINCESS

Well, tell us.

HARLEQUIN

Of course, Madam, I am your faithfulest servant, your Principality.

HORTENSIA

Are you really interested in the gossip of servants, my lady?

PRINCESS

Anything can be amusing, Hortensia. Go on.

HARLEQUIN

I would travel high and low to offer the reverence I owe your Grace.

PRINCESS

Marvelous. But get to the point. No more compliments.

HARLEQUIN

Recently, with your indulgence, I was listening to Mister L  lio, who was having a crazy conversation...he was talking to himself. But he didn't know I was there. He said, "Well, this is a fine mess." I deduced that he was in a fine mess. Once he had said that, he didn't say anything else. He started pacing. Then he shivered.

HORTENSIA

I'm surprised at you, Madam. How can you listen to this drivel?

PRINCESS

What do you mean, shivered?

HARLEQUIN

Yes, he said, "I'm shaking like a leaf." And it wasn't for nothing. Then he paced some more, then had another conversation: "I'm in love with a certain gracious lady—he did not say her name, Your Highness-- and if the Princess finds out, she'll destroy us both." It sounded to me like my master was trying to play the middle against both sides. I couldn't bear to see him hurt a Princess who is as good as gold. So I came here like a good boy to tell you which side your bread is buttered on. I might not have gotten the exact words, but I gave you the general idea. And all gratis, out of the goodness of my heart.

HORTENSIA (*Aside*)

Oh, my God.

FREDERIC (*To the Princess*)

Madam, you have told me in the past that my suspicions of L  lio were wrong. What do you say now?

PRINCESS

Silence, Frederic. When I want your opinion I shall ask for it. (*To Harlequin*) As for you, I'll teach you to eavesdrop on your master, to betray his confidences, and to meddle in my affairs. A stay in prison will teach you to keep your mouth shut!

HARLEQUIN

Oh, my good lady, have pity on me. Rip out my tongue, but leave me the key to open fields. I am only a poor servant. This grand minister of the state has brought all this trouble on me.

FREDERIC

Madam, I have no idea what he is talking about. Remember, he is trying to save his skin.

HORTENSIA

Let him speak, Sir.

HARLEQUIN

See, I said you weren't worth a damn, and you wouldn't believe me. I'm only a simple valet. Is it so wrong for me to want money? But this man, for all his wealth and power, will never have a kind heart.

FREDERIC

Do not listen to his trickery, Madam.

PRINCESS

Did I ask for your opinion?

HARLEQUIN

No!

PRINCESS

Go on.

HARLEQUIN

Thank you, my lady. Here's how it happened. He accosted me one day while I was minding my own business. "Would you do me a favor?" he asked. "Of course, with all my heart, for my nature is goodness and submission." "Here's a gold coin for you." "Thank you very much." "And here's another." "Thank you, my dear man." "Here, take this bag full of money." "Of course, my good Sir, anything you say." "Now please tell me everything you hear your master say in private." "Why would you want to know that?" "No reason. Just curious." "No, I don't think I can do that." "But I know a pretty girl. I can introduce you." "Oh, oh, show her to me!" "You will have her." "No, Sir, no." "What? You don't want a pretty girl?" In truth, Madam, that pretty girl was weighing heavily on my soul. I felt like I could see her, that she was so beautiful, that she liked me. What satisfaction! I fought; I fought like Caesar against my instincts. If you had seen how hard I tried you could have eaten me with a spoon. But I failed. Frederic here still owes me an annual pension. I have received the girl. I can't show her to you, because she isn't here.

PRINCESS

What is the name of this young woman?

HARLEQUIN

Lisette.

FREDERIC

I am amazed at the workings of this servant's imagination.

HARLEQUIN

Look, Madam. Here is the ring he gave me as collateral. I am innocent. What would you do, Princess, if someone offered you money, and rings, and a gorgeous boyfriend? Listen to your conscience. I didn't make any of this up. I only repeated what L  lio said.

PRINCESS

I am going to have to think about what I shall do with you, Frederic. But you are the most ignoble and cowardly man I have ever met.

HARLEQUIN

Don't send me to prison!

PRINCESS

Oh, will you stop?

HORTENSIA (*Disconcerted*)

Would you like me to go with you, Madam?

PRINCESS

No, you stay here. I would rather be alone. But don't go far. (*She exits.*)

HARLEQUIN

Oh, what a mess! I'm a free bird! They can't put me in a cage, they just can't. I'll die there. Oh, I'm going to die there. Alas, alas, alas! Good-bye, joy. So long, happiness. I wish I had never heard of prophecies or pensions or women.

FREDERIC

I am so distressed, Madam. You have never known me to wish ill of anyone. All I wanted was to support the interests of the Princess. Can you intercede with her on my behalf?

HORTENSIA (*Outraged*)

Oh, I'll intercede with her. Shall I intercede for your execution so you won't be forced to live in a society where everyone hates you?

HARLEQUIN

Yes!

HORTENSIA

That's the best service I can give you, and you can count on me to do it.

FREDERIC

What have I done to you, Madam?

(*LÉLIO enters.*)

HARLEQUIN (*Seeing Lelio*)

Ah! My beloved master, come here so I can kiss your feet, I am not worthy to kiss your hands. You remember the privilege you gave me before? Well, it was my downfall. The Princess is going to throw me in jail because of two or three measly little things I told her about you. And I was about to get engaged!

LÉLIO

What is he talking about, Madam? Something strange is going on in the palace. The guards were very cold to me. What happened?

HORTENSIA

Frederic paid your valet to spy on you. He reported something he heard you say when you thought you were alone.

LÉLIO

And what has he reported?

HORTENSIA

That you loved a certain other woman. That you were afraid the Princess saw you looking at her in the theater and that she might take her away from you if she knew you loved her. And it's all courtesy of Frederic, whose gifts corrupted your valet.

HARLEQUIN

Oh, well said, Madam! He corrupted me. Every minute I spend with him makes me value money more than morals.

FREDERIC

Sir, I shall tell you once again, everything I did I did out of patriotism. I thought that getting rid of you would be the best way to serve the State and the Princess. If you look carefully at my conduct, you will see that I am justified. I asked you to make me prime minister, but what could have been my design? Am I of an age to desire so exhausting a position? No, Sir, after thirty years of service I have had my fill of honors and promotions. I am ready to retire. But I wanted to see whether you aspired to the post of prime minister yourself, a post to which you have no legitimate claim. In that case I was going to speak to the Princess, to counsel her not to put so much power in unknown hands. I offered you my daughter; you refused. I expected as much, fearing the plot I knew you had in mind. And you could succeed, for the Princess trusts you. You are young and handsome. You could distract her from the best interests of the State, and it is in the best interest of the State for her to marry the King of Castile. You thought me jealous of you, but my only concern was for the public good. I do not reproach you for your opinion; jealousy and ambition are only too usual among my peers, and, not knowing me, you might confuse me with them, misunderstanding my tremendous love for the State. I take great pride in my patriotism, but now I may fall victim to it. I have tried to thwart you because I think you are dangerous to the State. If I must die after demonstrating all my good intentions, so be it. But know this: you will not have fooled me. I will die the enemy of a man whom I know lacks virtue. If I live, however, my gratitude to you will be boundless.

HARLEQUIN

I'm the only one who's going to get punished. And all because I don't know how to make a fine speech like him.

LÉLIO (*To Frederic*)

I will save you if I can, Frederic. Your opinion of me is wrong, but an honorable man does not hold grudges. I cannot refuse you my pity.

FREDERIC

Your pity? Good-bye Lélio. Remember, you may be in need of my pity someday. (*Exit*)

HARLEQUIN

I guess I should go find the Princess.

LÉLIO

I'll take you to her. I wish I could be more help, but she won't listen to me.

(*Harlequin continues to cry, as all three exit.*)

BLACKOUT

Act II, scene 2.

(HARLEQUIN and LISETTE enter.)

LISETTE

What did the Princess say? *(HARLEQUIN remains silent.)* You don't seem to trust me anymore. What's wrong, darling? Why won't you talk to me? What did the Princess say?

HARLEQUIN

At first she didn't say anything, just stared at me with hard eyes. I was scared. My stomach was doing somersaults. Then she said, "Come here." I took one step, then I took another step, then I took a third step, and step by step I found myself closer to her, holding my hat in my hands.

LISETTE

Then what?

HARLEQUIN

Then we talked. She said, "Do you want me to pardon your actions?" "If it pleases you, my lady," I replied, "I can't ask for anything from you." She responded, "Go bring this note to Hortensia. Tell her it's from your master. Bring her answer back to me." "Madam, rest easy. You've got the right man for the job. There's no one better. I will honestly lie to please you."

LISETTE

So you took the note?

HARLEQUIN

Yes, of course.

LISETTE

And you brought it to Hortensia?

HARLEQUIN

Yes, but I thought it would be better to tell her who really sent it. What if the Princess was testing me, trying to show Hortensia I'm untrustworthy?

LISETTE

So you told Hortensia it was from the Princess and not from L  lio?

HARLEQUIN

You guessed it, my love. On the nose!

LISETTE

And you think Hortensia will inform the Princess of your honesty?

HARLEQUIN

Well, she never said that, but I know she will.

LISETTE

What did she say when you gave her the letter and told her it was from the Princess?

HARLEQUIN

She thanked me for being honest, then scribbled this note to Léo.

LISETTE

And she asked you to deliver it to him?

HARLEQUIN

He won't need his glasses to read it. It's just another test.

LISETTE

So what are you going to do with it?

HARLEQUIN

I don't know. I have to figure that out. My honor is at stake.

LISETTE

You must give it to the Princess, Harlequin. She didn't want you to tell Hortensia the letter was from her. But now Hortensia thinks she can trust you. Give her note to the Princess and the Princess will never know you told Hortensia the truth. And this act will earn your pardon.

HARLEQUIN

Are you sure?

LISETTE

I hear someone. It's the Princess coming to look for you. Good-bye. Tell me what happens.

HARLEQUIN (*to himself*)

An hour ago she wanted to put me in prison for mischief; now she wants to pardon me for it. Honor is gibberish in this country.

(*PRINCESS enters.*)

PRINCESS

Have you seen Hortensia?

HARLEQUIN

Yes, Madam, I lied to her, just the way you told me to.

PRINCESS

And what was her response?

HARLEQUIN

Our tricks are working perfectly. I have a love letter for Léo.

PRINCESS

Give it to me.

(*HARLEQUIN digs through his pockets and finally finds the letter.*)

*He gives it to the PRINCESS and looks at her expectantly.
She motions for him to leave. He does.)*

PRINCESS

Wicked friend, you answered his letter. Now I am convinced of your treachery. (*Reads.*) Dearest Léo...

(*HORTENSIA enters.*)

HORTENSIA

You wanted to see me, Madam?

PRINCESS

You must know that I have need of consolation, Hortensia. You're the only one I can trust.

HORTENSIA

I share your pain, Madam.

PRINCESS

(*Aside*) You share more than that. (*To HORTENSIA*) I have told you all my secrets as my best friend in the world. Léo doesn't love me. Don't you know that?

HORTENSIA

You should investigate further. Maybe he's just shy.

PRINCESS

Shy? Did you or did you not tell him that I love him?

HORTENSIA

Maybe I wasn't clear enough with him. I was speaking for a princess and I wanted to be sure I spoke properly. Perhaps he didn't understand. It's all my fault.

PRINCESS

You told him that I love him? How is that hard to understand? I am outraged. I've been betrayed. Who betrayed me, Hortensia?

HORTENSIA

My presence is upsetting you.

PRINCESS

I think this conversation is upsetting you. Why is that, Hortensia?

HORTENSIA

If you could read the secrets of my heart, you would know.

PRINCESS (*aside*)

I don't doubt that. (*to HORTENSIA*) Forget about my problems. I have been the plaything of ingrates and traitors. Now I must find out who my rival is. You could probably tell me, but you must think she is being eaten up with guilt. I hope she is.

HORTENSIA

Your rival? But do you have one, my dear Princess? You suspected me before. Tell me frankly, you still suspect me, don't you? You condemn me. Such is the judgment of love. Well then, send me away! Put your mind at ease. I can be ready to go in an instant, just tell me where. Take away my liberty, if you must, and give it to L  lio. I beg you not to imprison him.

PRINCESS

I will put L  lio away where he cannot hurt me again. He will escape me if he is allowed to keep his freedom, and his story could ruin my reputation throughout the land.

HORTENSIA

You must speak with L  lio yourself. If he hears of your love directly from you, perhaps he will be warmer.

PRINCESS

Truth itself could not speak with more innocence. Here is a letter that Harlequin has given me.

HORTENSIA

Oh, my God! Remember, my lady, you are a generous person.

PRINCESS (*Reads*)

"Dearest L  lio, As dangerous as it may be to trust Harlequin, he is the only one who can deliver this to you. He just gave me a certain proof of his fidelity. Here is what you must do. Ask to speak with the Princess. Calm her heart and do not discourage her hopes. Free yourself, if you want me to live.

HORTENSIA (*Joining in.*) and PRINCESS

Then go away.

HORTENSIA

Our love can only live on if we're both still alive."

PRINCESS (*Handing her the letter.*)

You disgust me.

HORTENSIA

That day on the road...L  lio is the man who saved my life!

PRINCESS

And today, you have taken my life from me. Good-bye. I must decide what to do with you. (*Exits.*)

HORTENSIA

Wait one moment, Madam, I beg you. I'm not as horrible as you think! She won't listen.

(*L  LIO enters.*)

HORTENSIA (*cont.*)

Sweet Prince, what will happen to you? I want to die! It's my fault; my love has killed you.

LÉLIO

You predicted this, Madam. My love has put you in danger. I hardly dare to look at you.

HORTENSIA

What? We might be separated forever and you don't want to look at me? Or see how much I love you?

LÉLIO (*Kissing her hand*)

I adore you.

HORTENSIA

I'll say the same, if you wish. It doesn't matter. Since I must never see you again, I will no longer steel myself against my feelings.

LÉLIO

We're so close to happiness! And yet so far away. Fear not, Madam, I'm going to tell the Princess who I am, and swear to her...

HORTENSIA

Tell the Princess who you are? I forbid you. She has a violent soul. She loves you and believes that you have trifled with her love. She would have married you, despite what she perceives is your lack of royal birth. You are in her palace with no allies. You have given me your heart. She is already jealous. She will become furious! And she has every right to be. To lose a man like you! You don't understand a woman's love. She'll have you killed! You may be arrested immediately. We have to get out of here! I'm so frightened. I leave you in charge of our fate. I am dying of fear for you, my Prince, for you have given me your love. Good-bye. You must go away. We can't be seen together.

LÉLIO

I'll obey, but if you are in any danger, you must let me reveal who I really am.

(*LÉLIO exits. FREDERIC enters.*)

HORTENSIA

Sir, may I speak with you for a moment?

FREDERIC

I have orders to go and see the Princess, Madam.

HORTENSIA

You detest Lelio. He is an honorable man.

FREDERIC

You cannot tell whether or not people are honorable until they are in great distress.

HORTENSIA

You don't know him. I assure you, he never meant to hurt you.

FREDERIC

I would have to be incredibly gullible to believe that.

HORTENSIA

All right. I understand. Do you believe in my sincerity, Sir?

FREDERIC

Yes, I think you're very sincere. Earlier, you gave me undeniable proof of your candor, when you told me you would intercede for my execution...

HORTENSIA

I thought you were behind a plot to ruin me. The Princess is angry with L  lio. She wants you to have him imprisoned. Change her mind. Ask her to allow L  lio to leave her country.

FREDERIC

You have far too much trust in this man. Arresting him is the wisest decision the Princess has ever made. I would have advised her to do so, if she had asked me. My conscience tells me that he is an enemy of the State. I'm glad the Princess has finally realized this. It will not be too difficult to extract L  lio's secrets from him. Cowards always crack under pressure. It should be easy for you to guess how much I plan to help your precious L  lio.

HORTENSIA

Yes, very easy. You're right. As soon as you mention your conscience, I know where I stand. Frederic, I'm amazed that your perseverance has managed to fool the Princess into thinking that you are an enemy of evil and L  lio is an enemy of good, for your true portraits are precisely the opposite.

FREDERIC

I would not be so unduly emotional if I were you. You are of royal blood. L  lio is a usurper. Your excessive interest in his case might lead to rumors.

HORTENSIA

Go on, Frederic, go see the Princess. A coward such as yourself will never be able to interfere with L  lio's destiny or my own.

FREDERIC

Madam, I am finished with this conversation. The Ambassador is arriving.

(*AMBASSADOR enters.*)

HORTENSIA

He will right the wrongs you have done. Sir, please, I must ask you for a favor. I am confident that the Ambassador of such an esteemed King will help to see that justice is done. The Princess is angry with L  lio. She wants to turn him over to his worst enemy, Frederic. I can vouch for L  lio's innocence. Should I go on? L  lio is dear to me. I probably shouldn't say so, but time will tell. Save him, Sir. Ask the Princess to let you deal with him. You will be pleased to have done him this service, when you know who he is. And even the King of Castile will be grateful to you.

FREDERIC

If he has displeased the Princess and she has judged him guilty, the noble Ambassador will not go to her and plead on his behalf. It would only make her angrier.

AMBASSADOR

I have a higher opinion of the Princess than that. She cannot disapprove of someone who asks clemency for a man who has proven his nobility. Madam, I am honored by your request, and I will do my best to save Léo.

HORTENSIA

Thank you, Sir. I will find some way to repay you. The Princess is coming. I must go away, but I am confident that Léo is in good hands.

PRINCESS

Hortensia, stay. (*to GUARD.*) Bring in Léo and Harlequin. And Lisette. I want to see her, too.

AMBASSADOR

Madam, may I make a request on behalf of the King of Castile? When he gave me this commission, he asked that I be helpful to everyone in order to show his kindness. In his name, then, I ask you to pardon Léo. Although he may have been an obstacle to my master's happiness, I must ask you to treat him justly. I found him quite honorable, and I am pleased to have the opportunity to intercede with you on his behalf.

FREDERIC

As kind as the Ambassador's gesture is, I warn you again that allowing Léo to be free is extremely dangerous.

AMBASSADOR

I believe him incapable of any criminal act.

PRINCESS

Leave us, Frederic.

FREDERIC

Would you like me to come back, Madam?

PRINCESS

That won't be necessary.

(*FREDERIC exits. LÉLIO and HARLEQUIN enter.*)

PRINCESS

Your eloquent request alone would have been enough for me to release Léo. I had already decided to release him on my own, but your plea hastens my desire to do justice, and I have sent for him in order to fulfill your request. Léo, I thought I had reason to be angry with you, but I was wrong. I want to make amends for the pain I've caused you. You love Hortensia. She loves you. Marry her. (*To Ambassador*) As for you, Sir, your generous actions on behalf of Léo have convinced me to marry the King your master. I feel confident that a King who chooses his ministers so carefully would be a fine husband and an excellent ruler...

AMBASSADOR

Madam, I must tell you that I am not exactly a minister of the King of Castile, but the King himself, and I am overjoyed that you wish to accept my proposal.

PRINCESS

You? How surprising! What a clever way to propose! I was hoping the King of Castile would be as attractive as his Ambassador.

LÉLIO

Madam, I must register my eternal gratitude and inform you that I too am a prince in disguise.

HARLEQUIN

I knew it!

LÉLIO

You will find an ally in the realm of Léon. I trust that the King of Castile will accept my thanks, as well.

AMBASSADOR (KING OF CASTILE)

Prince, your rank comes as no surprise to me. You have shown royal comportment to me in all our interactions.

HARLEQUIN

You know what? If it hadn't been for me, we never would have straightened out this mess. Let's all have a glass of wine!

LÉLIO

Come with us, Harlequin. We'll take care of you.

HARLEQUIN

And Lisette?

HORTENSIA

And Lisette.

HARLEQUIN

Then I can love you forever!

LISETTE

We'll see.

PRINCESS

Well, Hortensia, it looks like a happy ending for both of us.

FINAL CURTAIN

Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de **Marivaux** (1688-1763) was a French playwright, poet, essayist, novelist, and (eventually) member of the Académie Française. His career is closely linked with the Italian troupe that relocated to France in 1716 and was known as the Comédie Italienne. He wrote many roles for the vivacious actress Silvia (Giovanna Rosa Benotti), leading biographers to speculate that he was in love with her. Marivaux married in 1721 and never remarried after his wife's untimely death eighteen months later. His only daughter became a nun. Marivaux has often been associated with the rococo: scholars contend that his interest in the minutiae of love parallels the visual art of Boucher and Fragonard. Marivaux's interest in parsing various iterations of love-related feeling has led to the (usually negative) appropriation of his moniker to describe these excessive declarations as marivaudage. The titles of his plays give a sense of this interest in love: *Harlequin Polished by Love* (1720), *Love's Surprise* (1722), *Love's Second Surprise* (1727), *The Game of Love and Chance* (1730), and *The Triumph of Love* (1732). Biographers are frequently drawn to an anecdote from Marivaux's journal in which he claims to have arrived early for a rendezvous with a young coquette only to find her looking in her mirror and practicing how to make alluring faces. This, he says, exposed to him the artifice of love.

Daniel Smith is a dramaturg, translator, and theatre historian with research interests in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French theatre. He is currently Assistant Professor of Theatre Studies at Michigan State University. After studying French Literature at the University of Notre Dame, Dan earned degrees in Theatre from the University of Massachusetts Amherst (MFA) and Northwestern University (PhD). Dan has chaired the Theatre History Focus Group of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) and has previously taught Theatre Studies courses at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Northwestern University, University of Illinois at Chicago, and The Theatre School at DePaul University. As a professional dramaturg, he has worked at numerous theatres in Chicago, and served as Associate Artistic Director/Resident Dramaturg of Caffeine Theatre from 2010-2012. Dan has done annotated literal translations of Molière for playwright Constance Congdon (*The Imaginary Invalid*) and director Zeljko Djukic (*Don Juan*). His translations of short plays by Grandval were produced by Infamous Commonwealth Theatre, and his English-language versions of musical libretti were published in bilingual French/English children's books by Editions Télémaque.

The 1990s and early 2000s saw a resurgence of interest in Marivaux in the U.S. theatre that sadly seems to have receded somewhat, leaving almost half of his oeuvre untranslated into English. Among these untranslated works, *The School for Mothers* seems to me one of the most charming and playable: it has to recommend it a young heroine of uncommon verve; a set of linguistic *marivaudages* upon faces, masks, and faces-as-masks that invite meditations on class, physical attraction, and farce; and an excellently strange climactic scene in which a young man attempts to seduce his father.

I'm a director by profession, so as always my main focus in this translation has been on performability. To that end, when a dramatic beat seems unclear, I occasionally insert a descriptive stage direction that doesn't appear in the original text.

-- Samuel Buggeln

For permission to perform this translation, please contact the author via www.buggeln.net.

The School for Mothers

Comedy in one act
performed for the first time
by the Comédiens Italiens
July 25, 1732

Dramatis Personae

Madame Argante.

Angelique, Madame Argante's daughter.

Lisette, Angelique's lady's maid.

Eraste, in love with Angelique. Using the name La Ramée.

Damis, Eraste's father.

Frontin, Madame Argante's valet.

Champagne, Monsieur Damis' valet.

Setting: Madame Argante's apartment.

Scene I

Eraste (in livery), Lisette

Lisette [impressed in spite of herself]: Yes, you're well disguised. Wear that outfit, tell people you're my cousin, and I think you can be seen around here safely. The only thing is, you don't really act like a servant.

Eraste [ardent, as always.]: There's nothing to fear, when I came in I didn't even mention family. I just said I wanted to speak with you and they said I'd find you here. They didn't ask me a thing.

Lisette: I hope you appreciate just how far I'm going to help you out, I'm risking everything. And none of this is exactly ethical. — But you're a good man. You love my mistress and she loves you— she'd be a far sight happier with you than with the one her mother's picked. That calms my scruples a bit.

Eraste: !!!

...did you say she *loves me*? Lisette! It's more than I deserve! It's *too much happiness*. I've only seen her in passing, walking in the park— I've only been able to prove how much I love her with looks— *glances*— and I've only been able to talk to her twice, while her mother was off with some other ladies! *She loves me*?

Lisette [dry]: Tenderly. [!] But here comes one of the staff.
Frontin. He has feelings for me. Keep your composure.

Scene II

Frontin, Lisette, Eraste

Frontin: Lisette, there you are. Who's this?

Lisette: A relative of mine. La Ramée. His master is usually in the country, but they're here on business— he has a day off and came to see me.

Frontin: A relative?

Lisette: Yes.

Frontin: A cousin?

Lisette: Exactly.

Frontin: Looks like a fairly distant cousin. This kid doesn't carry himself like any relative of yours.

Lisette: What are you talking about, carry himself?

Frontin: I'm talking about it's a wooden nickel. If your "cousin" here went straight to hell, you wouldn't be one relative the worse off.

Eraste: Why would she lie to you?

Frontin: I don't like your face. It's sneaky. Here's a warning, "Ramée," I love Lisette and I plan to be the only one that marries her.

Lisette: Well anyway, I do have to talk to him. It's a family matter, nothing to do with you.

Frontin: Ohhh well your family matters might as well get used to me, 'cause I'm not going anywhere.

Lisette: We have to take him on board. Frontin...

Frontin: So soon?

Lisette: Would you be willing to do something? It's for a good man, and he'll make it worth your while.

Frontin: If he'll make it worth my while, his goodness is beside the point.

Lisette: You know who Madame is marrying off my mistress Angelique to—

Frontin: Sure, looks like sixty marrying seventeen.

Lisette: So clearly the marriage is not ok.

Frontin: It's sterility looming, one way or the other: either no children or redundant ones.

Lisette: And Angelique isn't excited about obeying, especially because, as it happens, she's met a delightful young man, and he has touched her heart.

Frontin: And 'your cousin La Ramée' may have come to see us on behalf of this young man.

Lisette: Precisely the thing.

Eraste: He's *me*!

Frontin: Ahhh, why didn't you *say* so? Well I forgive you for that face you have Monsieur, I'm at your service. What do we have to do?

Eraste: Lisette is arranging a meeting for me this evening, just help us out. You'll be pleased with me.

Frontin: I believe I will. But what are you hoping to accomplish with this meeting? They're signing the marriage contract tonight.

Lisette: Before dinner, while all the company is in Madame's apartment, Monsieur will wait here, the lights will be out so he won't be seen. I'll come with Angelique and we'll figure out what needs to be done.

Frontin: We can make the meeting happen, but what'll it amount to? Monsieur, Angelique is like Saint Agnes, she was brought up with the strictest discipline you can imagine. She may have feelings for you, but all she's going to be able to give you are terror and tears and regrets. — Or were you just planning to take her away?

Eraste: That would be a very extreme course of action.

Frontin: An extreme that you're not ruling out, am I correct?

Lisette: Frontin, our business is just to help the conversation happen. I'll be present, but not involved. Whatever gets decided has nothing to do with us.

Frontin: Well it'd have something to do with us, if it was found out that the little nocturnal conversation in this room was our doing. Especially since one of the doors of this room goes to the garden, and a little door from the garden goes out to the road. And since we know about the doors, and put the conversation in the room, we could find ourselves with two quite difficult little doors to answer for.

—But. The end justifies the means, and if you want to have any self respect, sometimes you have to do the wrong thing. Plus, a young girl is about to be sacrificed, and helping to save her is always good, however the thing gets done. — Not to mention Monsieur will pay well, which will fatten your dowry! [Lisette's.] We can do right *and* do well.

Eraste: Please don't worry. I have no desire to kidnap Angelique. I just have to inspire her: to refuse the man they intend. But it's getting dark. Where should I go, to wait for the moment when I will get to see Angelique?

Lisette: Nobody knows who you are yet, so if anyone asks you anything, be one of Frontin's relatives instead of mine. You can even wait in his room, it's next door. Frontin will bring you back here when it's time.

Frontin: Right-o, Monsieur, my place is yours.

Lisette: Go now. I have to warn Angelique. She'll be overjoyed to see you, but she still doesn't know you're here. All I'm going to tell her is that there's a servant in Frontin's room, who has a message from you. Go! I hear someone coming.

Frontin: Come on, cousin, let's make tracks.

Lisette: No, stay. It's Angelique's mother, she'll see you leaving, better that you stay.

Scene III

Lisette, Frontin, Eraste, Madame Argante

Madame Argante: Lisette, where is my daughter?

Lisette: I imagine she's in her room, Madame.

Madame Argante: Who's this boy?

Frontin: He's a very fine young man, as you can see Madame, who's come to visit me. Our fathers are brothers, and I'd like to help him out. He's not happy with his master, they've had a falling out, and he came to ask if I knew of a house where he might find a place...

Madame Argante: His features are fairly good. Who did you serve with, child?

Eraste: An officer of the King's regiment, Madame.

Madame Argante: Fine. I'll tell Monsieur Damis about you, he may give you to my daughter. Stay to this evening. Leave us please. Lisette, you stay.

Scene IV

Madame Argante, Lisette

Madame Argante: My daughter shares her feelings with you fairly freely, Lisette— what mood is she in, about the marriage? She hasn't expressed any unhappiness, at least to me.

Lisette: Well, Madame, if she were feeling any she wouldn't dare express it to you. She's young, and shy, and up to now her education hasn't taught her anything but obedience.

Madame Argante: Which I believe at her age is the best thing she could learn.

Lisette: I'm not saying that's not so.

Madame Argante: So come then, does she seem happy to you or not?

Lisette: Well how can one tell? She barely dares to lift her eyes, she's afraid she wouldn't be showing the modesty you expect. All I know is that she seems sad.

Madame Argante: Oh! I believe it, it shows what a good heart she has. She's going to be married. She's leaving me, and she loves me. It will be terribly hard for us to be apart.

Lisette: Oh! Well! All the same, normally a girl is excited when she's about to be married.

Madame Argante: Certainly, a degenerate girl. A girl raised in a world of immorality, a girl who's heard more about love than she has about virtue, a girl who's been the object of the vulgar flirtations of a thousand adolescent morons. But a

young lady of reserve, a girl who lives under the eyes of her mother, whose heart and mind have not been stained— a girl like this would have to be distressed by such a change. I know Angelique, I know how pure her values are. She has no love for Society; I'm sure left her to her own devices she would never leave me.

Lisette: That is unusual—

Madame Argante: Oh! I have no doubt it is. And as for the husband I'm giving her, I'm sure she approves of my choice. He's a very wealthy and very sensible man.

Lisette: Well as far as sensible goes, he's had plenty of time to get that way.

Madame Argante: Yes, to tell the truth he is a little older— but so gentle, so obliging, attentive, loveable.

Lisette: Loveable! Think a little, Madame, the man is sixty years old if he's a day.

Madame Argante: As if the age of a husband were an issue, with a daughter raised like mine!

Lisette: Oh! If age isn't an issue with Mademoiselle, she's a prodigy of strength!

Madame Argante: What are you talking about, prodigy?

Lisette: I'm saying that... whenever possible, we shouldn't ask people's virtues to have to *work* too hard. And Angelique's are going to have to work very hard indeed.

Madame Argante: Lisette, you have the ideas of a pea-brain. Are you transmitting them to my daughter?

Lisette: Not at all, Madame. She'll come across them just fine without my getting involved.

Madame Argante: ... Why wouldn't she be happy, the kind of girl that she is?

Lisette: Well she isn't that kind of girl, because that kind of girl doesn't exist.

Madame Argante: She'd have to be a difficult kind of girl, if she couldn't come to appreciate a man who adores her...

Lisette: Girls her age adore poorly...

Madame Argante: ...a man who surpasses all her desires.

Lisette: ...and those would have to be modest desires.

Madame Argante: Shut up Lisette, I don't know why I let myself listen to you.

Lisette: You asked me, and I answered honestly—

Madame Argante: Go tell my daughter to come here.

Lisette: No need, Madame, there she is passing. I'll leave you.

Scene V

Angelique, Madame Argante

Madame Argante: Come, Angelique, I'd like to speak to you.

Angelique [modestly]: What do you wish, mother?

Madame Argante: My girl. You can see what I am doing for you today. I trust you perceive my great care for you, in the very advantageous match I've achieved.

Angelique, [hesitates, curtseys]: I'll do whatever will please you, mother.

Madame Argante: ... I'm asking whether you're thankful for the position I've obtained you. Aren't you thrilled to be marrying a man like Monsieur Damis? He's wealthy, he's stable and thoughtful— you're guaranteed a sweet and peaceful life. A life that complements the values and the emotions I have always developed in you.

Well?

Answer me, child.

Angelique: You're telling me to?

Madame Argante: Certainly I am. What? Are you not satisfied with your situation?

Angelique: ...

But...

Madame Argante: What! 'But!' I'd like a reasonable response. I'm waiting for some appreciation from you, not for 'but.'

Angelique [curtseying]: I won't say anything more about it, mother.

Madame Argante: Don't worry about the formalities. Tell me what you're thinking.

Angelique: What I'm thinking?

Madame Argante: [Is there an echo in here?] Yes what you're thinking! How do you see the marriage in question?

Angelique: ...

But...

Madame Argante: Again with 'but'!

Angelique: I beg your pardon; I wasn't thinking about it, mother.

Madame Argante: Well then think about it, and bear in mind that I don't like it. I am asking you what is the disposition of your heart as regards this union. It's not that I doubt that you're happy, it's just that I would like to hear you say so for yourself.

Angelique: The disposition of my heart! I'm afraid I'll say something you won't like.

Madame Argante: And why would you say something I wouldn't like?

Angelique: It's that what I might say might make you angry.

Madame Argante: If you speak well, it won't make me angry. Do you not share my judgment? Are you wiser than I am?

Angelique: It's... my heart has no disposition.

Madame Argante: Then what does it have, Mademoiselle?

Angelique: Nothing at all.

Madame Argante: Nothing at all! What is nothing at all? This marriage doesn't make you happy?

Angelique: No.

Madame Argante [angry]: What?! It makes you unhappy?

Angelique: No.

Madame Argante [appeased]: Ah! Then speak. I'm beginning to understand you, my dear, are you trying to say that you have no will in this matter?

Angelique: Well, I would have one if you'd like me to.

Madame Argante: That won't be necessary. You'll do much better to be as you are. Let yourself be guided, trust entirely in me. Yes my dear, you are right, this neutral position is the best. And you'll find yourself delightfully recompensed for it. I'm not giving you away to some young reprobate who two weeks down the line would forget you, and fritter away his fortune—and yours—on a thousand depravities. I'm marrying you to a man of wisdom, a man whose heart is stable, a man who will recognize the full value of your own heart's innocence and virtue.

Angelique: As far as innocence goes, I have that.

Madame Argante: So you do. Thanks to my attentions, I can look at you now exactly as I always hoped you would be. You're accustomed to doing your duty, so the virtues required by marriage will be second nature. And here are the most essential virtues: first, you must have love only for your husband.

Angelique: And if I have dear friends, then what do I—

Madame Argante: You won't need other friends than those of Monsieur Damis. For that matter, you will always simply do what he wants you to. That is our position in marriage.

Angelique: What he wants me to do? What about what I want to do?

Madame Argante: I know, my dear, this requirement is slightly... mortifying. But it must be submitted to. It's a kind of law that's been imposed on us, and profoundly it honors us. When two people live together, the more sensible one is able to shoulder the burden of being the more submissive. And submission will be easy for you. You've never been willful with me, you don't know anything but obedience.

Angelique: Yes, but my husband won't be my mother...

Madame Argante: No, you'll owe him even more than you do me, I know you'll be irreproachable. I'll leave you now. Think about what I've said. Above all, keep your wonderful taste for solitude, modesty, decency. Please your husband alone. And stay in this state of simplicity. There is nothing that you don't know—except vice. Adieu, my girl.

Scene VI

Angelique, Lisette

Angelique, [a moment alone]: There's nothing I don't know except vice! What does she know about vice? Has she learned vice? Well I want to learn it too!

Lisette [arriving]: Well Mademoiselle, what are you up to?

Angelique: I'm being miserable, as you can see.

Lisette: What did you say to your mother?

Angelique: Aaah! Everything she wanted me to.

Lisette: Then you'll marry Monsieur Damis?

Angelique: Me marry him! Not on your life. It's enough that he's going to marry me.

Lisette: You'll be just as much his wife.

Angelique: Well then my mother will have to love him for the both of us. Because I'll never love anyone but Eraste.

Lisette: He is worth it.

Angelique: Ohhh! Oh yes, he is. He's the one who's lovable, who's kind, not this Monsieur Damis who my mother picked up I don't know where, who'd do better to be my grandfather than my husband, who makes my blood run cold when he talks, and who always calls me 'my *beautiful* creature,' as if anyone cared about being beautiful or ugly for him! And everything Eraste says to me is so moving! You can see that he's speaking from the absolute depths of his soul. I'd rather be Eraste's wife for one week than be married to that other one for my whole life.

Lisette: I hear Eraste is desperate about it.

Angelique: Aaah! What does he want me to do? Ohh, *sugar!* I know he'll be inconsolable. Wouldn't anyone suffer, to be so much in love and not be together? My mother says it's one's duty to love one's husband. Well give me Eraste! I'll love him as much as anyone could want me to, because I loved him before it was my duty to love him, I won't have to worry about not loving him when I'm supposed to, it'll be so convenient.

Lisette: But if you feel this way, be brave and turn down Damis. There's still time. Around me you're... startlingly dynamic, but in front of your mother you just stand and

quake. You'd have to tell her tonight, That man is too old for me, I don't love him, I hate him, I will always hate him, and I could never marry him.

Angelique: You're right. But as soon as my mother talks to me, my brains go out the window! But at the same time I *know* I have a brain— and I'd have a lot more brain if she had wanted me to! But I never go anywhere except with her, I never hear anything but rules that run me down, I never get anything but lectures that bore me to death, is that the way to have a brain? What does that teach me? There are seven-year-old girls that know more than I do! Isn't it ridiculous? I'm afraid to open my window! I ask you, look at the way I'm dressed! Does anybody dress like this? Look at the way I'm packaged up! My mother calls this a modest outfit: well is our house the only modest one left in Paris? Because I don't see anyone else enveloped like this! And it all means I have so much curiosity I'm like a child! No, I don't wear a single ribbon, but what does my mother get from that? That I get feverish whenever I see one! She doesn't let me meet anyone— and so, before I got to know Eraste, my heart would pound every time a young man so much as glanced my way! You see what's happened to me?!?

Lisette: [laughing] Your naiveté is hilarious.

Angelique: But I'm right, aren't? Would I be like this if I'd been raised honest but *free*? To tell you the truth, if I didn't have a good heart, listen, I think I'd hate my mother! She's made me so I get passionate about things I *know* I wouldn't give the slightest thought to if I *had* them! So

when I'm my own mistress *let me at it!* I want to know everything everyone knows!

Lisette: I have great faith in you.

Angelique: I'm a naturally virtuous person, and do you know that I go to sleep as soon as I hear anyone talk about goodness? Do you know, I'd be very happy to *not* be a party girl, but... well anyway I probably won't be one, but my mother would deserve it if I was.

Lisette: Ha! If she could only hear you and enjoy the fruits of her discipline. But let's talk about something else. You love Eraste?

Angelique: Oh yes, truly, I love him—assuming there's no harm in admitting that, because I'm so ignorant! I don't even know what's allowed and what's not.

Lisette: I won't hold it against you.

Angelique: Oh! In that case I love him like crazy, and I'll never be able to live with losing him.

Lisette: Then make a serious vow: to never belong to anyone else. One of his servants is here with a letter for you.

Angelique: *A letter from him, and you didn't say anything about it!* Where is it? Oh! It's going to be ecstasy to read it! So give it to me! Where's the servant?

Lisette: Gently! Control your enthusiasm. Hide it from Eraste, at least a little bit. — If by chance you were to talk to him, it might be... too much.

Angelique: Oh! Dang! That's my mother's fault too! But I might be able to *talk to him?* You're telling me about him, and about his letter, and I don't see either one of them!

Scene VII

Lisette, Angelique, Frontin, Eraste [who stays in the background]

Lisette [to Angelique]: Wait, here comes the servant with Frontin.

Angelique: Frontin won't say anything to my mother?

Lisette: Don't worry, Frontin is looking out for you. He's pretending that Eraste's man is his cousin.

Frontin [holding a letter]: Monsieur Eraste's valet brings you this letter, Madame.

Angelique [gravely]: Give it to me. [to Lisette.] Am I being serious enough?

Lisette: Excellent.

Angelique [reads]: 'What have I just learned! They say that you're to be married this evening. If you conclude the marriage without allowing me to see you, I no longer care about life.' [interrupting herself] He no longer cares about life, Lisette! [reads] 'Adieu. I await your response, I am dying.' [after having read it] This letter penetrates me. No modesty can hold me back, Lisette, I have to speak to him, *I do not want him to die.* Go get him to come here, we'll get him into the house however we can.

Eraste [throwing himself at her feet]: You don't want me to die
and you're getting married Angelique!

Angelique: Aaaaaah! It's you, Eraste?

Eraste: What have you decided to do?

Angelique: I don't know! I'm too overwhelmed to answer!
Get up!

Eraste [getting up]: Does my despair move you?

Angelique: Did you not hear what I just said?

Eraste: It seemed to me as though... maybe you loved me a
little.

Angelique: No, no, it must have seemed like more than that,
because I said completely frankly that I'm in love with you.
[suddenly cool] But you must excuse me, Eraste, because I
didn't know you were in the room.

Eraste: [suddenly terrified] Are you sorry that you said it?

Angelique: [suddenly thrilled] Me, sorry? On the contrary,
I'm thrilled you got to find out without it being my fault!
Now I don't have to bother to hide it from you.

Frontin: Be careful nobody walks in on us.

Lisette: He's right, I think someone's coming! You should go,
Madame.

Angelique: But I think he hasn't had enough time to tell me
everything he wanted to.

Eraste: Ohh! Madame, I've only just seen you and we need to
have a conversation so I can persuade you to save my life.

Angelique [leaving]: Lisette, won't you just give him enough
time to persuade me to save his life?

Lisette: Yes, Frontin and I will take care of everything, you'll
see each other again soon. But please go.

Scene VIII

Lisette, Frontin, Eraste, Champagne

Lisette: Who's there? Oh, it's Monsieur Damis' valet.

Eraste: Hey! Where do you know him from? That's not
Monsieur Damis's valet, it's my father's, I don't know any
Monsieur Damis.

Lisette: No, you're seeing things, don't get confused.

Champagne: Good evening, gorgeous girl, good evening,
Messieurs. I've come to wait here for my master, he sent
me ahead to announce him, and I am charmed to meet...
[looking at Eraste.] But what's your name, Monsieur?

Eraste: It's La Ramée, if that's any of your business.

Champagne: La Ramée? Then why are you wearing that face?

Eraste: Why am I..? What kind of question is that? Because
it's the only one I have. I'll see you later, Lisette, this
clown is already boring me.

Scene IX

Champagne, Frontin, Lisette

Frontin: I want to know what you're talking about. Isn't my
cousin La Ramée allowed to wear his own face?

Champagne: I have no problem that Monsieur La Ramée should have a face, but he is absolutely not permitted the use of someone else's.

Lisette: Someone else's! What is this claptrap?

Champagne: I repeat, someone else's: in a word, that face does not belong to that man at all, it's not in the ordinary position where many times I've seen the exact same one on somebody else I know.

Frontin [laughing]: Maybe that style of face is in fashion, and La Ramée has simply adopted one.

Lisette [laughing]: There you go, Champagne, the explication of a dumbass such as yourself. Lots of people look alike, don't they?

Champagne [smitten]: Absolutely true. The face can belong to whoever it wants to, I don't give a fig, everyone's got his own, only you Mademoiselle Lisette, you don't have anybody's, nobody else's, because yours is the most beautiful one in the world, nothing is as lovable as you.

Frontin: Halt! Leave the foxy one alone, praise from you is an insult to her.

Champagne: Oh! Monsieur Frontin, I only said what I said in case you did not love Lisette, as that is possible because not everybody has the same taste.

Frontin: Then knock it off I said, because I do love her.

Champagne: And you, Mademoiselle Lisette?

Lisette: Out of luck, I love him too.

Champagne: Love, love, love. Love is all over the place! And what do I get!?

Lisette [leaving]: A curtsy from me.

Frontin [leaving]: And from me a serving of verbal abuse, and if you're interested some of the physical.

Champagne: Oh. Another windfall for M. Champagne...

Scene X

Monsieur Damis, Champagne

Monsieur Damis: Ah! There you are!

Champagne: Yes, Monsieur; I've just learned that again I get nothing!

—and my share doesn't make me feel any better about yours.

Monsieur Damis: What are you talking about?

Champagne: Lisette wants nothing to do with me, and what's more I've seen the physiognomy of Monsieur your son on the face of a valet.

Monsieur Damis: I don't understand a word you just said. Leave us. Here are Madame Argante and Angelique.

Scene XI

Madame Argante, Angelique, Monsieur Damis

Madame Argante: You must have just arrived, Monsieur?

Monsieur Damis: Yes, Madame, just this moment.

Madame Argante: A fine group of people are already here—well, that is, some of my family and our friends, because you didn't want to tell your side about the wedding...

Monsieur Damis: No, Madame. I was afraid my good fortune would be envied, and wanted to guarantee it in complete confidence. Not even my son knows about the plan. That's why I requested you call me M. Damis. The name Orgon will of course be in the contract.

Madame Argante: Monsieur, you are the master. For my part, though it's not the place of a mother to boast about her daughter, I believe that I'm making you a gift worthy of a man of your excellent qualities. It is true that the tremendous advantages you bring her...

Monsieur Damis: Madame, I beg you let's not talk about that. I should be thanking both of you. I wouldn't have hoped this... *beautiful* creature would overlook the little that I'm worth.

Angelique[aside]: *Beautiful* creature!

Monsieur Damis: All the treasures in the world are valueless compared to the beauty and virtue she brings me in marriage.

Madame Argante: Well as far as virtue goes, I must concede you speak the truth. But Monsieur, everyone is waiting for you. You know, I've invited the guests to put on costumes a little later and have a dance: would you care to? It'll be the first ball my daughter's attended.

Monsieur Damis: As you wish, Madame.

Madame Argante: Then let's go join the company.

Monsieur Damis: May I first ask you one thing, Madame? In view of our approaching union, give me a moment to speak with Angelique. It's a satisfaction I haven't yet had.

Madame Argante: I consent, Monsieur, how could one refuse in this situation. But I trust it's not to test my daughter's feelings? She hasn't had time yet for them to completely settle, it should be enough that she obey with complete comfort. And that's what you may say to Monsieur, Angelique; I permit you to, do you understand?

Angelique: I understand, mother.

Scene XII

Angelique, Monsieur Damis

Monsieur Damis: Finally, my sweet Angelique, just between us I can swear to you my everlasting affection. While it is true that my age doesn't parallel your own...

Angelique: Yes, there is a big difference.

Monsieur Damis: At the same time, I've been flattered that you accept my hand comfortably.

Angelique: So my mother says.

Monsieur Damis: ...

...and she has permitted you to confirm it to me yourself.

Angelique: Yes... [figures out with some relief] ...but one is not obliged to *use* the permissions one has.

Monsieur Damis: You decline to say what I'm asking—out of aversion? Or modesty?

Angelique: No, it's not out of modesty.

Monsieur Damis: What! Then it's... aversion? ...

You're not answering me?

Angelique: Because I'm polite.

Monsieur Damis: Then you wouldn't have anything favorable to say?

Angelique: I should continue to not speak.

Monsieur Damis: Still out of politeness?

Angelique: Oh! Still.

Monsieur Damis: Speak to me frankly: do I... *revolt* you?

Angelique: ... You continue to challenge my good manners.
Would you be all right if I said yes?

Monsieur Damis: ...you could say no.

Angelique: Even less, because that would be a lie.

Monsieur Damis: What! I *revolt* you, Angelique?! I'd have thought you could have been contented to not love me.

Angelique: [bright idea!] If you'd be contented to not love *me*, and I was contented in that way too, and it wasn't unacceptable to admit to someone that you don't *even remotely* love them, then I'd be able to say something!

Monsieur Damis: You'd admit that to me!

Angelique: As often as you want!

Monsieur Damis: I'm not anxious to hear it repeated. And it's not what your mother led me to believe.

Angelique: Oh! You can trust me on this, I know more about this than my mother does, she may have made a mistake but I assure you I'm telling the truth.

Monsieur Damis: Which is that you don't love me at all?

Angelique: Oh! Not at *all*, I couldn't possibly. But not out of malice, it's just natural. And you— everyone says you're such a good man— if in consideration of my honesty you wanted to not love me anymore, and to leave me here, as after all I'm not as beautiful as you'd believed, listen, you'll find a hundred people who are worth so much more than me.

Monsieur Damis [aside]: Let's see if she's in love with someone else. [to Angelique] I assure you, I have no intention that you be forced...

Angelique: What you're saying is very very sensible, and if you keep on saying it I'll think *so* very highly of you.

Monsieur Damis: I'm just upset to not have known of it earlier...

Angelique: Ah! If you'd asked me I would have told you.

Monsieur Damis: ...and we must rectify it.

Angelique: Oh, you're so good and obliging! But please don't tell my mother I've admitted I don't love you, she'd go berserk. This would be better: tell her you don't find me bright enough for you, or not as wonderful as you'd thought, because that's the truth, and that in the end you still have to think about it. My mother's so proud she'll be appalled, she'll break it off, our marriage won't happen, and I swear I'll be in your debt forever.

Monsieur Damis: No, Angelique, no, you're too... lovely, she'd suspect it was your doing. Those excuses are no good, there's only one thing that will work. Are you in love with someone else?

Angelique: Me! No. Don't believe that.

Monsieur Damis: In that case I have no excuse. I've promised to marry you, and I have to keep my word.

...whereas if you were in love with someone else, I wouldn't tell your mother you'd admitted it to me. Only that I suspected it.

Angelique: Ah well! Then... suspect it.

Monsieur Damis: But it's not possible for me to suspect it if it isn't true, that would be in bad faith. And as much as I may want to oblige you, I couldn't possibly tell a lie.

Angelique: Oh, go, go, don't worry, you'll be speaking honestly.

Monsieur Damis: Then you are in love.

Angelique: But you won't betray me will you, Monsieur Damis?

Monsieur Damis: I have nothing but your true interests in mind.

Angelique: What a wonderful character! Oh! How I'd love you if you were twenty years old!

Monsieur Damis: Ah really.

Angelique: Yes, truly, there is someone who I'm... fond of...

Frontin [entering]: Monsieur, I'm here on behalf of Madame, they're waiting for you and Mademoiselle.

Monsieur Damis: We're coming. And [to Angelique] where did you meet the one that you're fond of?

Angelique: Ah! Don't ask me any more about it; you only need to suspect I'm in love, and you know more than enough to do that. I'll go announce you upstairs.

Scene XIII

Monsieur Damis, Frontin

Monsieur Damis [aside]: Well this is ...a disappointment. ... But I love her too much to give her up to anyone. [aloud] Frontin! Frontin! Come here, I'd like to have a word with you.

Frontin: Certainly Monsieur, but they're impatient to see you.

Monsieur Damis: It'll only be a moment. I've noticed that you're a young man of some intelligence.

Frontin: I have days where I don't lack it.

Monsieur Damis: Would you do me a favor, if I were to promise that nobody would ever find out?

Frontin: Monsieur, you're underpricing my loyalty, there's nothing to be done, I'm having one of my intelligent days, I feel too clearly how discreet one would have to be.

Monsieur Damis: Alright, I'll pay. Well.

Frontin: Oh please stop, Monsieur, beginning like that only weakens my resolve.

Monsieur Damis: This is my purse.

Frontin: How seductively enormous. It does look winning.

Monsieur Damis: It's yours if you'll tell me what you know about Angelique. I just got her to admit she's in love with someone else. And as closely as her mother watches her, she can only have communicated with him via the staff. You may be involved with this yourself or you may know who is— and I'd like to pull the man in question aside. Who is he? Where did they see each other? I'll be very discreet.

Frontin [taking the purse]: I could resist your words, but your possessions are so compelling that I must surrender.

Monsieur Damis: Talk.

Frontin: You've asked one detail I don't know—Lisette is the only one with perfect knowledge of the affair.

Monsieur Damis: That little traitor!

Frontin: Be careful. You can't condemn her without trying me as well, I happened to give in to an argument [the purse] that would have been just as successful on her. Anyway, I haven't known the young man for more than an hour, he's in my room right now, Lisette made him a relative of mine. In a few minutes she's going to bring him here, I'll put out the candles and then she'll return with Angelique, to look for ways to scuttle your wedding.

Monsieur Damis: Then with your help I can find out everything I need to know.

Frontin: How so?

Monsieur Damis: Let me hide here. You'll have put out the lights, I won't be seen, and I'll hear everything that's said.

Frontin: You're right— wait, Madame's friends upstairs are going to dress up after supper, and some of them brought dominoes— we put them in the cabinet just outside, would you like me to get you one?

Monsieur Damis: Perfect.

Frontin: I'll run get it then, it's almost time.

Monsieur Damis: Go.

Scene XIV

Monsieur Damis, Frontin

Monsieur Damis, [a moment alone]: No better possible way to find out what's going on. If I see that Angelique's love has reached a certain point, marriage can't be in the question. Oh God but I'm so nervous! How awful at my age to be so in love!

Frontin [comes back]: Here Monsieur: all the accessories, including a mask. The face is eighteen at the oldest, so you won't lose anything in the transformation.

Here, adjust this. Quickly. Good! Stow yourself there and don't move. Out go the lights. Goodnight.

Monsieur Damis: Listen. When the young man comes, there's one more thing I want. After Lisette and Angelique are both here, with him, go tell her mother I want her to come here quietly. It won't compromise you, and you'll profit by it.

Frontin [a moment]: You're making that request on credit?

Monsieur Damis: Just go, you don't have to worry.

Frontin, [groping]: Done. I'm going, I'm just having trouble finding the door. Wait, I hear someone...

Scene XV

Lisette, Eraste, Frontin, Monsieur Damis

[Lisette is with Eraste at the door, about to enter].

Frontin: Is that you, Lisette?

Lisette: Yes, who are you talking to in there?

Frontin: To the dark that was preventing me from finding the door. Who are you with?

Lisette: Quiet! With Eraste, I've just brought him into the room.

Monsieur Damis, [aside]: Eraste!

Frontin: Good. Where is he? [aloud] La Ramée!

Eraste: Here I am.

Frontin [taking him by the arm]: Come Monsieur, move around as best as you can while you're waiting.

Lisette: Adieu. I'll be back in a second with my mistress.

Scene XVI

Eraste, Monsieur Damis, [hidden].

Eraste: I could never doubt that Angelique loves me, but I'm worried about how timid she is. Dear God, I hope I can give her the strength to resist her mother.

Monsieur Damis [aside]: Am I hallucinating? That's my son's voice. Listen...

Eraste: I should try not to make any noise.

[He gropes around.]

Monsieur Damis [aside]: I think he's coming over here. I should move.

Eraste: I heard taffeta rustle! Is that you, Angelique, are you here?

[He catches Monsieur Damis by the domino.]

Monsieur Damis, [caught, whispers]: Gently...!

Eraste: Oh! It's you.

Monsieur Damis, [aside]: That's my son.

Eraste: Oh, oh! Angelique, will you condemn me to die of grief? You just now told me you loved me, and your beautiful eyes confirmed your words with the most lovable, tender looks I can imagine—but what good will it do me to be loved, if I lose you? In the name of our love, Angelique, because you've let me flatter myself that you *do* love me, hold yourself in my tenderness. I believe heaven has given me alone the power to truly charm and be charmed by you, and I'm going to entrance you with that power. On this beautiful hand I swear eternal love to you. [Monsieur Damis tries to pull back his hand]. Don't pull back, Angelique, make up for the pleasure I don't have—of seeing

your beautiful eyes—by promising you'll never belong to anyone but me. Speak, Angelique.

Monsieur Damis, [aside]: I hear something. [to Eraste] Shut up, you little moron. [He pulls away from Eraste].

Eraste: *Oh dear God!* What did you say!? You're running away! Aaagh! Lisette, are you there?

Scene XVII

Angelique and Lisette, who enter, Monsieur Damis, Eraste

Lisette: Here we are, Monsieur.

Eraste: I'm in despair, your mistress is running from me.

Angelique: Me, Eraste? I'm not running from you, I'm right here.

Eraste: What what! Didn't you just say to me the cruelest thing possible?

Angelique: What! But I haven't said more than a word!

Eraste: No you haven't, and your contempt has wounded me to the core.

Angelique: You must have heard wrong, Eraste, a person can't have contempt for the one she loves!

Lisette: Of course not. Are you dreaming, Monsieur?

Eraste: Then I'm very confused... But I'm so relieved to hear you say you love me, *please* say it again!

Scene XVIII

Madame Argante, brought in by Frontin, Lisette, Eraste, Angelique, Monsieur Damis

Angelique [with restraint]: Honestly that's not the problem. I'd be happy to say it again, but you know it well enough...

Madame Argante, [aside]: What is this?

Angelique: ...and also, I've been told one should talk to one's love with some restraint.

Eraste: God it's beautiful, you're so honest!

Angelique [giving in]: But I go where my heart leads me, that's all the finesse I have, I love to be near you, and I'm near you, and if it's wrong for me to admit to you so often that I love you, I blame you for that completely, it's not my fault *at all!*

Eraste: You are so wonderful!

Angelique: If my mother had given me more experience, if I'd been out in the world a little bit, maybe I'd love you without telling you so, I'd make you work to find out, I'd hold my heart back, it wouldn't go so fast, and you'd have already told me that I'm an ingrate... but I'd never be able to fake it. Put yourself in my place! I've suffered so much constraint, my mother has made my life *so sad!* I've had so little satisfaction, she's stifled my feelings so much, I'm so tired of hiding everything, that as soon as I'm happy, and I can say I am, I've already said it before I even know I've spoken, it's like breathing! And now just imagine a girl who's always been shy, who's shy with you, who you

love, who doesn't hate you, who loves you, who is honest, who has never had the pleasure of saying what she thinks, who will never ever think anything so beautiful, and just see if I can resist all that!

Eraste: Yes! I think I may be going crazy, hearing you say what you're saying gives me *so much joy*, but we have to take care of business. I'm lucky enough to have a reasonable father, I'm as dear to him as he is to me, and I hope he'll accept our situation happily.

Angelique: Well I'm not lucky enough to have a mother like that, I don't love her any less but...

Madame Argante [exploding]: Ah! That's enough of that, girl, *you do not deserve my love*.

Angelique: Aaah! I'm ruined!

[the three separate themselves].

Madame Argante: Quickly, Frontin, some light, everybody come here. [She advances to Monsieur Damis and seizes him by the domino.] Ingrate! This is how you reward the care I've taken to raise you with some virtue!? You plot behind my back! You complain about an education that occupied my entire life! Well then you little degenerate, a convent will correct your unfaithful heart, and I assure you things there will be far more severe than I could ever have been!

Scene XIX and final

Light arrives, with Frontin and other servants with candles.

Monsieur Damis [unmasking himself, laughing]: Madame, I would be ill-received at the convent.

Madame Argante: Wha...? You, Monsieur? [seeing Eraste in his livery] And that delinquent, what's he doing here?

Monsieur Damis: That delinquent is my son.

To whom, all things well examined, I advise you to offer your daughter.

Madame Argante: Your son?

Monsieur Damis: Himself. Come here, Eraste. What I've heard here has opened my eyes to the... imprudence of my plan. Entrance Madame to be favorable to you. I won't be the one who keeps Angelique from being your wife.

Eraste [throwing himself to the knees of his father]: Father. I owe you so very much.

Will you forgive us, Madame, for everything that's happened?

Angelique [hugging the knees of Madame Argante]: Can I hope you might forgive me?

Monsieur Damis: Your daughter did wrong, but she is virtuous. In your place I would feel obliged to overlook all of this. And consent.

Madame Argante: All right, Monsieur. I will follow your advice, and do what pleases you.

Monsieur Damis: I'd planned quite a festival to amuse you all. I think it will do for my son.

[Angelique embraces Madame Argante with joy.]

~dance~

The End

The *Divertissement* that follows *The School for Mothers* begins with an *Air*, rather saucily summarizing the message of the play. The *Vaudeville* (perhaps what we would think of as the main song's chorus) does much the same thing and is followed by six *Couplets* (verses). In each *Couplet*, the message shifts, to tell a brief story of a (usually young) man who is incompetent in the ways of love. The song thus alternates between merry abuse of the mother who shields her daughter from men, and of the men who, when a daughter is available, fail to use her well.

I haven't attempted to replicate the original rhyme scheme,³ partly because my sense as a director is that in performance today, the most winning *Divertissement* with which to conclude this play will be one either written by a clever songwriter using these themes but not saddled with exact lyrics; or, better still, one worked up by the ensemble to include jokes that will speak directly to the production's audience.

Divertissement

Air

To you who barrage your young girls
With severe speeches—
(repeat)

³ The *Air* takes the rhyme form AB (repeat couplet) AB (repeat couplet) CDDCD (repeat the first ABABABAB segment). The very bouncy *Vaudeville* and *Couplets* take an ABBA/CDDC rhyme scheme, in which all lines are *octosyllables* except for lines 3 and 7 of each stanza, which include the insult lines and which are three-syllable "punches."

Mammas, the god of love is laughing
At your mistake, and will laugh for all time—
(repeat)

Your opinions are careful, your maxims are wise;
But despite all your care, despite all your rigor,
You can never close all the passages to a young heart
So tightly that there won't always be
Somebody to push them open.

To you who barrage, etc.

Vaudeville

The mother who holds a young thing
In profound ignorance,
Far from the world,
Often messes up with her plan.
She believes that love flies away
As soon it sees a watchman.⁴
What a screw-up!
She needs to be sent to school.

Couplet

The beauty who has charmed Damon
Laughs at the torments he endures,

⁴ Literally “an Argus,” the hundred-eyed ever-wakeful giant—the perfect watchman—whom Hera employs to guard over the nymph Io to keep her from assignations with Zeus. On Zeus’ command, Hermes plays Argos to sleep with his flute, and cuts off his head.

He grumbles;
But I think she’s right.
A man who won’t open his wallet [literally “his safe”]
Is telling tales of baloney.
The dummy!
He needs to be sent to school.

One day the gorgeous Sylvandre
Said to me tenderly,
“If my cares could engage you—“
“What would you do [if they could]?” I said to the bumpkin.
He stood like a statue
And didn’t answer a word.
The big dolt!
He needs to be sent to school.

One day Claudine said to Lucas,
This evening I’m going to the meadow—
I beg you,
Don’t follow me there.
He promised her—and kept his word.
Unh! He didn’t understand much,
The fathead!
He needs to be sent to school.

The other day Nicole
Got the vapors next to Blaise;
The poor child fainted
On her chair.
Blaise, to help Nicole,
Ran to find others at once—

The dumbass!
He needs to be sent to school.

The lover of young Phyllis
Was about to go far away,
And sent one of his friends
To the beautiful girl.
“Go ahead,” he said, “and comfort her.”
He trusted his confidant.
The moron!
He needs to be sent to school.

Aminte, with his greybeard’s eyes,
Is picking a fight with his grand-nephew;
The sly gal argues
To throw him out of the house.
Her husband flatters and cajoles her
To keep his nephew there.
The ignoramus!
He needs to be sent to school.

Samuel Buggeln is a theatre director based in New York City. He is an Artistic Associate of the New Ohio Theatre in the West Village (as he was with its Obie-winning predecessor space, the Ohio Theatre, where he directed numerous new plays.) He is also the New York-based Artistic Associate of Portland Stage in Maine, for whom he directs regularly. Among other works in New York City and regional theatres, Buggeln has directed original stage adaptations of work by Marguerite Duras and Raymond Queneau. *Hater*, Buggeln’s translation of Molière’s *Le Misanthrope*, was produced at the Ohio Theatre in summer 2010.