TARTUFFE: A MODERN ADAPTATION

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TARTUFFE: A MODERN ADAPTATION

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Thesis

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
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<td></td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<td>21</td>
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<td>23</td>
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<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It is a fact that must be admitted that, line for line, Molière is not a funny writer. His comedy is almost exclusively either psychological or situational, rather than verbal. It is therefore permissible for, if not incumbent upon, his modern-day translators to tweak and change in an effort to extract extra humour from what would otherwise be, line for line, sometimes rather dreary dialogue.

-Ranjit Bolt, The Art of Translation

It was never my intention to write an adaptation of Molière's Tartuffe. I rediscovered Tartuffe the previous year when assigned to read it for a class on Dramatic Literature. At that time, I read Tartuffe and was immediately reminded of how much Molière agreed with my own sardonic wit and skepticism toward religious hypocrisy. Kornei Chukovsky relates a similar experience in his A High Art. He had seen Tartuffe as a child and recalled seeing the Moscow Art Theater’s production starring Toropkov: “After the first few lines, I was overcome by a distant, familiar memory from my childhood” (Leighton 60) (21).

Long after the completion of the Tartuffe unit for my Dramatic Literature class, the scenes and character-interactions stayed with me for months. I finally came to the conclusion that Tartuffe would make an appropriate introduction to Molière for high school students and hoped that it would also make a suitable fall production for my high school theatre department.

The summer before I was to direct Tartuffe, I ordered a copy from the local library to begin taking notes specific to mounting a production. To my surprise,
there were exchanges between the characters that did not resonate with me as when I had read the play the previous year. The play was clearly Molière's *Tartuffe* but the translator's choice of words were subtly different from the version I read before and I was convinced that the other version was better.

Determined to produce the “better” *Tartuffe*, I ordered another copy of *Tartuffe* from the library, this time by a different translator, with the hopes of finding the version that had moved me just one year prior. When that second version arrived, however, I was once again disappointed to find that while some of the wording was better than the previous edition, it still lacked what I was looking for in a *Tartuffe* for a modern audience.

Determined to mount this as a production for the fall show, I picked up *Tartuffe* again, this time by yet a different translator. Once again, I was struck by how the translation did its job in capturing Molière’s genius and style and yet found myself missing certain verbiage from some of the prior readings.

With the most recent translation on hand, I returned to the other translations and found that while there was some passages that I liked better in each of them; there were other lines from this latest translation that also suited my sense of how a modern, theatre-savvy audience would receive them. All of these translations beautifully captured the wit of Molière and *Tartuffe* and yet all of these translations were slightly different.

It was then that I realized that I should set out to create my own English-language adaptation that had all the lines of *Tartuffe* but each with a fresh “translation” that would be pleasing to the audience of a blue-collar community, yet still captured what I believed was the essence of Molière. I would use these translations (and my reading of other Molière plays) to help guide my artistic sense of what I believed Molière’s style to be despite my inability to read the original material fluently in its native language.
In addition to creating a successful version of *Tartuffe* for my Garfield Heights audience, I needed to develop the play in a way that would be manageable for my high school actors. It is my experience that young actors must overcome working with dialogue that they are unfamiliar with in order to deliver a speech with competence and confidence. In order to achieve this, I decided to use a variety of strategies including writing with my students in mind as I adapted. Just as Shakespeare wrote with Richard Burbage in mind (and Molière wrote with himself in mind), I would write with my cast of students in mind to help them overcome their struggles with what might possibly be their introduction to French drama.

As I write this, I will have been the Director of Theatre Arts for the Garfield Heights City School district for six years. When I adapted *Tartuffe*, I was beginning my fourth year in that position. I came into the position with 40 years and over 60 productions as actor, director and/or producer under my belt.

During my time there, the City of Garfield Heights had gone through some major socio-economic and demographic changes. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the total population of Garfield Heights in 2010 was 28,849 compared to 30,734 in 2000. During that same stretch of time, the population listed as “white” went from 80.72% to 60.2% while the population listed as “black” went from 16.8% to 35.7%. The number of vacant housing units grew from 4.2% in 2000 to 10.9 % in 2010. And the number of single mothers with children under 18-years of age grew from 22.73% in 2000 to 33.60% in 2010.

Despite these changes in demographics, Garfield Heights has been (since I began teaching there in 1997) a blue-collar, church-going community with a significant amount of single parents trying to get their students through the Garfield
Heights City Schools. The fact that they are church-going is significant since I adapted this historically sensitive subject matter ever-cognizant of the fact that Tartuffe is a criticism on religious hypocrisy and not on religion.
CHAPTER II

TRANSLATION AND TRANSLATORS

For a translation comes later than the original, and since the important works of world literature never find their chosen translators at the time of their origin, their translation marks their stage of continued life.

-Walter Benjamin, *The Task of the Translator*

Much has been written about the subject of translation. In my research, I encountered well over a hundred books and articles about the translation of novels, historical documents, bibles, political speeches and poetry. The primary focus of this section, however, is the translation of Molière’s plays and, in particular, *Tartuffe*.

*Tartuffe* History

The play *Tartuffe* as we know it is the version from 1669. Therefore, it might be note-worthy that all translated versions are the re-worked version of 1669 and not the original banned 1664 version or even the 1667 toned down version under the name *Panulphe; ou L’Imposteur*, which had only one performance. This is important because the play *Tartuffe* ended up being a work in progress over the course of its three incarnations. *Tartuffe* itself was part of an even bigger work in
progress over the course of three different plays. Molière was still taking heat for the 1662 The School for Wives due to its perceived irreverence and immorality. Despite the long list of articles and books centering-around the banning of Tartuffe and Molière’s relationship with the king, many fail to mention that Molière may not have even written Tartuffe in the first place if he wasn’t channeling his frustration over the furor over The School for Wives. Just as relevant is that his next play, Don Juan, is thought to be an attack on piety over the banning of Tartuffe.

The fact that there were three versions of Tartuffe fascinates translators and Molière enthusiasts alike. I myself have wondered if doing the piece justice would somehow involve honoring or recognizing the original two productions. What was in those first two lost editions? Thanks to the work of John Cairncross, we can at least piece some facts and logic together to reconstruct the destroyed scripts.

The original Tartuffe was most certainly three acts while Panulphe was undoubtedly five acts. The experts assert that the original three acts ended up being Acts I, III and IV of the 2nd and 3rd versions of Tartuffe. Given Molière’s taste for symmetry, it is believed that the original version ended with the second Madame Pernelle scene in Act IV, which was then moved to the fifth act for the 1667 and 1669 versions. It’s almost common knowledge among Molière scholars that the new ending with Tartuffe’s failure to get away with it due to the brilliance of the king was most certainly added to the final (and current) version. What is less commonly known is that the famous Table Scene was added to the current Act IV. In other words, one of the most beloved scenes of Tartuffe was the result of a re-write on Molière’s part, making excluding it almost impossible if someone wished to translate and put on what they believed to be the true Tartuffe.
Since the version of *Tartuffe* utilized by myself and each of the noted translators discussed herein is the five-act 1669 version, it may prove useful to briefly summarize each of the scenes:

1.1 Mme Pernelle chastises the household
1.2 Dorine informs Cleante of Tartuffe’s influence on Orgon.
1.3 Cleante agrees to speak with Orgon about Valere’s impending marriage to Mariane.
1.4 Orgon returns to hear the news of the household from Dorine.
1.5 Cleante tries to get Orgon to be cautious of his trust in Tartuffe.

2.1 Orgon informs Mariane that he intends to marry her off to Tartuffe.
2.2 Dorine mocks Orgon for marrying his daughter off to an old hypocrite.
2.3 Dorine chastises Mariane for not speaking up for herself.
2.4 Valere and Mariane have a lover’s spat until Dorine steps in to reunite them.

3.1 Damis is angry about the news of Orgon’s plans for his sister. He hides when he hears that Tartuffe is approaching.
3.2 Dorine informs Tartuffe that Elmire would like a word with him.
3.3 Tartuffe declares his love to Elmire.
3.4 Damis comes out of hiding and vows to inform Orgon of Tartuffe’s treachery.
3.5 Damis informs Orgon of Tartuffe’s intentions toward his wife.
3.6 Orgon accuses Damis of lying and disinherits him.
3.7 Orgon informs Tartuffe that he shall be Orgon’s heir.
4.1 Cleante tries to reason with Tartuffe not to interfere with a family matter.

4.2 The family discusses ways to get Mariane out of marrying Tartuffe.

4.3 Mariane pleads with Orgon to call off the marriage. Elmire clears the room to talk to Orgon alone.

4.4 Elmire convinces Orgon to hide under the table to trap Tartuffe.

4.5 The Table Scene – Elmire comes on to Tartuffe in order to reveal his treachery to the hidden Orgon. Tartuffe makes clear advances toward Elmire and openly mocks religion and Orgon.

4.6 Tartuffe leaves the room for a moment. Only then does Orgon come out of hiding now furious at Tartuffe.

4.7 Tartuffe returns and Orgon confronts him. Orgon throws him out. Tartuffe leaves proclaiming that the house now belongs to Tartuffe.

4.8 Elmire demands to know the meaning of that assertion as Orgon runs off to look for some valuable documents that he shared with Tartuffe.

5.1 Orgon vows to Cleante that he will no longer believe anyone claiming to be a pious man. Cleante urges Orgon to not judge all men of faith because of his gullibility with Tartuffe.

5.2 Damis returns having heard of Tartuffe’s treachery and threatens violence against Tartuffe. Cleante comments on youthful over-reactions.

5.3 Mme. Pernelle returns to learn of what has happened and still does not believe that Tartuffe is responsible.

5.4 Monsieur Loyal arrives to serve the family their eviction notice.

5.5 Mme Pernelle is stunned by the eviction. The family discusses their options.

5.6 Valere arrives to warn Orgon that the king’s officers are approaching to arrest him.

5.7 The officers arrive but instead of arresting Orgon, they arrest Tartuffe. They announce that the king was on to Tartuffe from the start and has restored to Orgon everything that was taken from him.
Translation Categories

German philosopher Franz Rosenzweig said that a translator is the servant of two masters. This quotation is adroit but even funnier if it conjures up images of the lead character of Carlo Goldoni’s masterpiece. In A Servant of Two Masters, the servant, Harlequin, in an attempt to be clever, ends up being perpetually beaten by the two masters he tries to serve simultaneously. The two masters, in this analogy are, of course, the original author’s work and the modern audience.

The first question translators must ask themselves before taking on a project is whether or not to translate at all. Why do people translate? If Wood translated Tartuffe in 1957, why did Wilbur translate it in 1963? If Wilbur believed there should be a modern translation with rhyming couplets, why did Frame create a rhyming version just three years later despite his admiration for Wilbur’s work? What were Hampton’s reasons? Or Bolt’s? What is it about translation that makes people continue to bring great works to new life? Ego? Altruism?

The translators listed above actually give their reasons throughout this paper; however, most translators contend that it is to reintroduce some classic piece of drama or literature to a modern audience. Historically, translation has also been used as an instructional tool. The practice arose in France with the translation from Latin into French: “This educational method was intended for teaching the student the elegance of the French as much as for the accuracy of the transposition of thought” (Arrowsmith and Shattuck x) (2)

Once the translator has made the decision to translate, the next important question is whether the translation is intended to be read or performed? Since Molière insisted that his plays were written with the intention of being acted, this could prove to be an important question. I have found that most versions of Tartuffe written for publication only were by scholars and authors (Van Laun, Page, Bishop) with the intended audience as intellectuals and college students. Most translators
with the intention of mounting productions were usually commissioned by a theatre for an intended performance run (Malleson, Hampton, Bolt).

According to Virgil translator Dryden, all translation, whether to be read or performed, falls under one of three categories:

1) **Verbatim** (or **Metaphrase**) - A literal, word-for-word, line-by-line translation transforming one language into another.

2) **Paraphrase** - A translation with latitude where the words are not followed so strictly yet perpetually keeping the author’s intention in mind.

3) **Imitation** - An homage to the original material where the translator takes liberties with the addition and deletion of text and as he sees fit.

(Johnston 47) (19)

My adaptation of *Tartuffe* follows the second category since my intention was to demonstrate Molière's *Tartuffe*, keeping the original time and setting (17th-century France) without taking too many liberties with the characters or conversations associated with this comedy.

Since Dryden, two forms of imitation seem to have emerged:

1) **Modernization** – In which the translator tries to preserve the original script but the action takes place in the setting of a modern or different era, such as with *Tartuffe: Born Again*. With modernization, the author maintains credit as author and the translator maintains the name of translator.

2) **Post-modern versions** – In which the author takes the original material but adapts it into something completely different such as *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (loosely based on Homer’s *Odyssey*) or *10 Things I Hate About You* (based on Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*).

The last consideration when translating *Tartuffe* into English must be whether or not to make it a rhyming version. The form of poetry Molière used for
Tartuffe was alexandrine verse; the form of verse that had become standard in French tragedy at that time. Alexandrines are lines of twelve syllables, six beats, arranged in adjacent rhyming couplets. Most translators, even those opting to rhyme, tend to avoid the alexandrine verse. From what I have seen, only Maya Slater in her 2001 The Misanthrope, Tartuffe and Other Plays boasts a line-for-line alexandrine verse consistent with the French classical theatre.

We will explore in length whether blank verse versions should be considered translations or adaptations in the next section, however, even rhyming translations could be viewed as adaptations since they do not follow the original alexandrine form. Molière wrote in an almost prosaic verse yet has been accused of using unnecessary words to fill out his lines. Did those who kept Molière’s work in verse compound the problem by filling in their own unnecessary words when translating into English? Did these translators fall into the trap of over-emphasizing the importance of these unnecessary words? Are the non-verse translations leaner from editing out the superfluous words from the original writing or could they be inadvertently removing words that made the original a true Molière masterpiece?

Rhyme is discussed throughout this paper both by myself in the Process chapter and by the translator’s themselves. The question I had (and still have to some extent) is whether or not an entire play of rhyming verse becomes tedious when presented in English? Many American and British reviewers contend that the French rhyme itself is untranslatable. It’s as if there is something essential to the French language that makes an evening of rhyming less tedious than when other languages attempt the same thing.

Translation Versus Adaptation

Scholars contend that the second a word is translated from the original language it is automatically invalid. If this is true of the translation of a modern piece into another language, how could the translation of a 350-year old original
from French drama be considered legitimately translated by someone of this era? Peter Meyer points out that “Mon Dieu!” is “the equivalent of ‘Good Heavens’, not ‘My God’ which one must then remember was never used in polite society before 1914.” (Johnston, 133) (19) Only a gifted translator with exceptional historical knowledge could even begin to take on the task of creating what could be considered a legitimate translation of any length.

Then there are the specific 17th-century styles of the speaker to be considered. Is the speaker speaking formal or using the more common language of the day? Were there implied inflections associated with the word choices based on whether someone was bourgeois or not? Is a character using 17th-century slang? How could anything other than a translation by the original author be considered anything but an adaptation when so much can be lost in translation?

Ranjit Bolt, in his preface to The Art of Translation, relates the perfect “lost in translation” story. Playwright Simon Gray was attending a performance of one of his plays by a German theatre company. In the middle of this production, a man comes on stage wearing a body cast from head to toe. Thinking this must be the result of some creative tinkering, the author turns to the director and asks the meaning of the choice. The director, confused by the author’s question, replied, “But it says in the text that the character is ‘completely plastered throughout the scene’.

Hugo Friedrich in his essay “On the Art of Translation” asserts that the translator will always have to cope with the reality of “untranslatability” from one language to another. In his “The Task of the Translator”, Walter Benjamin also asserts the following: “It is plausible that no translation, however good it may be, can have significance as regards the original” (Schulte 72) (36).

Benjamin goes on to say that it is essential that the translator discover the intention when finding the words to translate a piece into another language to produce in it the “echo” of the original. In order to keep the great works of the past
alive, modern translators must try to do the original masterworks justice by finding the essence of what the author was originally going for. Friedrich Schleiermacher in his article “On the Different Methods of Translating” supports this by saying that the translator must comprehend the spirit of the language native to the writer to see his “peculiar way of thinking and feeling.” Even early translators such as Horace and Cicero were unconcerned about the exact, literal translation and more interested in getting across their interpretation of the true meaning of the original text.

The bottom line is that, in order to keep the great works of the past alive, the translator must continue to develop new ways for the modern audience to appreciate what they are reading or seeing. In my research on the art of translation, I believe Walter Benjamin succinctly summed up these notions using detailed descriptions better than anyone:

> What sounded fresh once may sound hackneyed later; what was once current may someday sound quaint. To seek the essence of such changes, as well as the equally constant changes in meaning, in the subjectivity of posterity rather than in the very life of language and its works, would mean – even allowing for the crudest psychologist – to confuse the root cause of a thing with its essence. More pertinently, it would mean denying, by an impotence of thought, one of the most powerful and fruitful historical processes. (Schulte 74-5) (36)

The perfect translation would, of course, be the product of a gifted self-translator: Oscar Wilde translating his *Salome* into French or Samuel Beckett translating his *Waiting for Godot* into English, just to name two. The translator, therefore, has to make decisions that they hope the author would approve of. Since the original author is rarely involved, and given that all other attempts at converting a piece of literature from one language to the another are considered invalid due to being untranslatable, then aren’t all translations really adaptations? And once the label of “translation as adaptation” is applied, doesn’t that give the translator a
certain amount of freedom in their endeavors? From this point forth, I use the words “adaptation”, “translation” and “version” almost synonymously. I do not quite use them interchangeably but use them with consideration for the translator’s respect to the original material and depending on each individual situation.

Taking Liberties

Alexander Pope is renowned for, amongst his original work, the painstaking translation of the work of Homer. His *Iliad* is considered a translation masterpiece unequalled despite the criticism that, due to Pope’s signature use of the heroic couplet, it can truly no longer be considered pure Homer. There’s even a story that Pope gave his newly completed translation to his colleague, the great classicist, Bentley, for his feedback. Upon reading the newly completed *Iliad*, Bentley says to Pope, “Well, it’s very pretty. But is it Homer?” According to Ranjit Bolt, it’s not Homer. It’s better. Bolt feels that while Homer is Homer (and nobody can take that away from him), there is room for improvement and poetry as in Pope’s translation. As we will see, Bolt himself takes this philosophy to the extremes, earning him criticism for his translations of *Tartuffe*. Having said that, what poetic license do writers get when translating the work of, say, Molière?

Nobody, to my knowledge, ever got rich doing translations. I would hazard to guess that few professional translators pay their bills on translation alone. I know from my own experience that the time and effort necessary to translate a play from one language to another, line-by-line and word-for-word, can be tedious and laborious. In other words, it *has* to be a labor of love and not just an appreciation for the original material. In order to devote oneself to such a task, the writer must be able to enjoy some freedom of expression when adapting their play to make the final product rewarding to both the translator as well as the intended audience.
Tartuffe Translation History

Tartuffe has been borrowed and adapted since it was first banned in 1664. Even during Molière’s lifetime (until his death in 1673) theatre producers throughout Europe (including Sweden) tried to get permission or freely borrowed and adapted the storyline (as Molière himself had done for many of his own plays).

Early Tartuffe Translators

Despite being an unauthorized British production, Matthew Medbourne’s Tartuffe; or, the French Puritan from 1670 is accepted as the only true translation from the Restoration period. It might also be considered an adaptation as Laurent is given numerous speeches as he tries to woo Dorine, is the mastermind behind the Table Scene (not Elmire), and is the king’s informant at the end.

Medbourne can be considered the first of many Tartuffe adaptors to have an imaginative fascination with the character of Laurent, Tartuffe’s manservant. In every translation I utilized, Laurent was never seen and only once spoken to as an off-stage character. Some accounts of the original Molière productions list Laurent as one of the performing characters, however, even if this were true he was a walk-on at best. Although I have yet to see a script with as much stage business as Medbourne reportedly gave him, many modern translators, including Christopher Hampton, seem to share an enthralment with this concept of Laurent as manservant-as-protégé. In quite a few of these translations, the King’s Officer at the end reveals that it was Laurent that turned Tartuffe in as if the student learned too well from the master. In true treacherous Tartuffe fashion, this version of Laurent makes a sweet deal with the King to save his own hide and to benefit from the betrayal. One version even has Laurent himself deliver the final deus-ex-machina speech himself.

While there are too many Tartuffe translations (or variations on the theme) throughout the years to document, some credit should be given to the post-
Restoration writers that dedicated years of their lives to keep Molière's work alive through the translation of much of his work. In 1714, John Ozell published The Works of M. De Molière in 6 volumes. Even more extensive was the work of Henry Baker and James Miller who published 10 volumes in 1739 in a series called The Works of Molière. Henri Van Laun translated and published Tartuffe as part of a six-volume series throughout the 1880's entitled The Dramatic Works of Molière. As he was an adaptor that, like myself, was deterred by the literal rhyming verse translation, I included an impressive quote of his take on the subject:

I have come to the conclusion that an imitation of Molière's style in any metre is next to an impossibility, but that a faithful and literal translation in prose, even if it cannot preserve the fire of the original, may still render the ideas, and represent to the English reader as clear a perception of Molière's characters as can be obtained in a foreign tongue. (Molière vi-vii) (24)

Curtis Hidden Page translated and published eight plays by Molière in 1908 including three verse comedies adapted into unrhymed verse. This Dartmouth English professor graduated from Harvard and was the first recipient of the George B. Sohier Prize for literature. Curtis Hidden Page is also note-worthy as an author of a comprehensible free online digital version of his Tartuffe by Project Gutenberg due to public domain.

Furthermore, Page deserves honorable mention here as an early 20th-century Molière translator and is cited as a reference by many Tartuffe translators including Donald Frame. Frame cites Page as one of his influences and refers to his translations as always intelligent and responsible, though sometimes “lacking in sparkle.” Page rejected rhyme as being unnatural to good English dramatic verse. Frame, in his introduction to Tartuffe and Other Plays, countered that with, “While it may not be natural in English, it is certainly necessary for translating Molière.”
Post-World War II *Tartuffe* Translators

There seems to be a significant gap between Page’s translation and the post-World War II era. This could be consistent with the notion that all of the preceding translators did not feel it necessary to introduce Molière to a modern audience until decades (and even a century) had passed before undertaking the challenge of recreating his work. Another development with the post-World War II translators is the acknowledgement of prior translators as inspiration or references for their new work; Wilbur acknowledges Bishop; Frame acknowledges Page, Bishop and Wilbur; and so on.

According to *The Encyclopedia of Literary Translation into English*, a majority of post-war translations were either the result of theatre commissions or have been written with performance in mind. Miles Malleson reintroduced Molière to the stage in a series of adaptations in the 1940’s and 1950’s that, as actor/director, he performed at the Bristol Old Vic. His *Tartuffe* was unrhymed.

After Malleson, a new batch of Molière translators began to emerge including Morris Bishop, John Wood, Richard Wilbur, and Donald Frame. These translators will be discussed in great length in the proceeding sections.

Modern *Tartuffe* Translators

There appears to be a significant gap of both translations and theatrical productions between the preceding translators and the 1980’s. Some critics felt that there was a general confusion as to what to do with *Tartuffe* and, for that matter, all of Molière in general. There is even some assertion, due to poor audience response from modern audiences, that Molière may simply be untranslatable outside of France and perhaps he has been overrated all these years as a genius. John Fowles of *The Times* (April 6, 1981) went so far as to print that Moliere has been consigned to a “theatrical limbo” in Britain, to the status of a study dramatist. He goes on to
assert, “On the whole, we don’t know what to do with him so we leave him alone.”
Years later, John Peters of The Sunday Times (October 18, 1987) remarked on the “disquiet shared by actors, directors, and especially box-office managers, at the lack of performable translations of Moliere in English.” He further stated that France’s best comedy simply “does not travel.”

More translators started popping up, however, leading to a revival of Molière on the English stage. Many of these productions of Tartuffe from the 1980’s to the present are faithful translations in dialogue but are set in the 1800’s. Journalist and theatre critic Joseph Farrel noted his disappointment by what he calls “the easy choice” of setting Tartuffe in the 19th-century because, he contends, to the modern mind, “Victorian” and “hypocritical” are interchangeable.

Some excellent translations of Tartuffe have been written and performed in the modern era by the likes of Hampton, Bolt and Steiner and will be discussed in detail in the sections ahead. There were some other productions of note that are worth mentioning before continuing. These writers appear to be part of a new generation of adaptors who clearly demonstrate considerably more freedom when utilizing their creative liberties. Their work illustrates the modern need for self-expression coupled with the drive to introduce the importance of socio-political statements.

There have been two adaptations written for the Scottish stage that garnered tremendous support. The first was a prose version by Robert Kemp back in the 1940’s. Even more recently, however, was an oft-praised version by Liz Lockhead in 1985. Lockhead’s version is in rhyming couplets using thick Scots for the dialogue with modern vernacular and a lot of swearing thrown in for good measure. This version stresses the Catholic/Protestant divide and the power of the British government to annex Scotland more than religious hypocrisy. It would probably be fun to see or listen to one of these performances. Reading it, however, required the glossary of Scots terms and references in the back of the Lockhead edition.
Jatinda Verma translated and directed an adaptation for a national touring company, which opened at the National Theatre in London in 1990. This was a play within a play about a Hindu poet commissioned to write a version of *Tartuffe* for the Indian court. It is a plea for recognition of minorities and respect for multiculturalism in a post-colonial society.

Verma’s and Lockhead’s versions were ecstatically well-received which might suggest that modern intelligences are willing to allow for adaptation over historical accuracy. There are even recent examples of American theatres learning to adapt in ways that the British audiences have benefited from for decades. The most note-worthy American version comes from Freyda Thomas, who translated and adapted *Tartuffe: Born Again*, which had a very short run on Broadway in 1996. Set in the 1980’s during the age of Jimmy Swaggert and Jim Baker, it takes place in a television evangelist studio. It’s told in modern verse with many poetic liberties. Having said that, it’s a fairly straightforward and faithful adaptation, making the title change (a precedent I had not previously encountered) a bit perplexing.

*Tartuffe* Translators Utilized in My Adaptation

Many of today’s translators will acknowledge previous translations for their inspiration and as reference material for their new translations. My adaptation is no exception. I will explain in great detail in the Process chapter specifically how I went about transposing these translations into my work. For now, however, I wanted to take a closer look at those translators of *Tartuffe* that allowed me to adapt one of Molière’s greatest accomplishments in order to present it on our high school stage. The authors of the translations of *Tartuffe* that I utilized for this project were:

- Richard Wilbur
- Donald Frame
- John Wood
- David Coward (after John Wood)
- Prudence L. Steiner
Richard Wilbur

Richard Wilbur is the rarely-disputed champion of Molière translations and, in particular, his rhyming adaptation (in heroic couplets) of the plays Tartuffe and The Misanthrope. It is his version of Tartuffe, more than anyone else’s in the last quarter-century that directors turned to when mounting a production of that play, particularly in America.

All of Wilbur’s Molière translations are line-by-line translations in iambic pentameter. Many sources refer to Wilbur’s translation of Tartuffe as authentic alexandrine, however, this is not accurate due to his use of ten-syllable lines and without the break every six beats.

Wilbur pleads his case for choosing a rhyming translation for Tartuffe in a number of introductions to his publications. In them he contends that he wished to reproduce both Molière’s words and his poetic form, to allow for clarifying emphasis in the longer speeches, and for aesthetic pleasure. He further contends that his rhyming productions have validated his choice as evidenced by their success: “My convictions being what they are, I am happy to report what a number of productions of the Misanthrope translation have shown: that contemporary audiences are quite willing to put up with rhymed verse on the stage.” (Molière 163) (27)

There are few modern translators or authors of essays on translation that do not mention Wilbur’s Molière translations with the utmost reverence. Even play reviewers that are critical of productions using his translation usually take a sentence or two to absolve Wilbur of being at fault. The year Wilbur’s translation was published, he received the 1963 Bollingen Translation Prize and was regarded as “the nearest thing to Molière that we have.” In the introduction to his own book of Molière Translations, Donald Frame refers to Wilbur’s Tartuffe as “the best Molière we have in English.”
Despite these honors, Wilbur has not always been entirely free from criticism for his *Tartuffe* as evidenced by Samuel Solomon in his essay “Problems and Suggested Solutions in Translating Molière.” In it he recalls Wilbur’s *Tartuffe* when debuting at the National Theatre in England:

Richard Wilbur’s rhymed *Tartuffe*, when performed at the National Theatre, London, in November 1967 was dubbed by W.A. Darlington, the dramatic critic of the *Daily Telegraph*, an ‘uninspired jog-trot translation’ recalling Victorian pantomimic ‘doggerel,’ as though a poet as distinguished as Wilbur could at all descend to doggerel, or the National Theatre be so blind as not to notice it! (Classe 604) (12)

Wilbur himself notes the criticism of Jacques Guicharnaud as legitimate for Wilbur’s claim to accuracy. In the matter of *Tartuffe*, Guicharnaud contends that Wilbur does not capture Madame Pernelle’s way of slipping into old-fashioned and inelegant speech, or Mariane’s of parroting the rhetoric of artificial romances.

In addition to *Tartuffe*, Wilbur’s other works include *Le Misanthrope, L’École des femmes, Les Femmes savants*, and *L’École des maris*. Whether you are a fan of his work or not, there can be no debate that Richard Wilbur, more than anyone else to date, has inspired more translators and educators in exposing Molière’s genius to so many generations of theatre students; not just for his *Tartuffe* but for his entire body of work translating Molière and making him assessable to a modern audience.

**Donald Frame**

Though following on the heels of Richard Wilbur’s *Tartuffe*, Donald Frame’s 1967 translation has earned him quite a bit of respect. Frame, a 40-year professor at Columbia, was one of Molière’s most accomplished adaptors having translated a total of fourteen of Molière’s plays. Other translated works of Molière by Frame include *The Ridiculous Précieuses, The School for Husbands, The School for Wives, The Critique of the School for Wives, The Versailles Impromptu, Don Juan, The*

Despite only four years separating his version from Wilbur’s, Donald Frame’s less renowned translation is completely different and, in many places, surprisingly superior in comprehension and fluidity. Frame acknowledges earlier Tartuffe translators for his work including Wilbur. Frame considers Wilbur’s Tartuffe a “beautiful translation” and personally believes that he shares Wilbur’s “quest for sense and rhyme.”

Frame received much praise during his lifetime for his Molière translations though did not enjoy the revered status of Wilbur. The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation praised Frame’s accuracy but also referred to his work as often “obscure and awkward.” Michael Dirda of The Washington Post considered Wilbur’s Tartuffe superior to Frame’s, which Dirda called “somewhat clumsy.”

My research has shown that most theatrical productions in the past 50 years when opting for a rhyming Tartuffe chose Wilbur’s translation. In the past decade, Ranjit Bolt’s versions are being produced with more regularity. However, Donald Frame’s version comes in a respectable third. Like Wilbur’s reviews, critics tend to praise Frame’s translation, even when they do not care for the production they are reviewing. The following is a typical example of just such respect. This fairly recent review is from LA Weekly published February 26, 2009 about the Boston Court Theatre production in Pasadena:

Donald Frame’s faithful and full-bodied verse translation is completely at odds with Chambers’ staging. The rhyming comes filled with whimsy, yet Chambers is tone deaf to the humor inherent in the text. Molière’s is a humor of behavior; Chambers’ is the humor of despondency. One almost wishes that Chambers would be bolder — staging a meditation on the play rather than the play itself, an opera based on the text rather than the full text itself. What we have instead is bloated austerity — a meringue pie filled with air yet layered with steak and beans and banana cream.
**John Wood**

John Wood was born in 1900 and studied at Manchester University. After some years in teaching and adult education he spent his working life in educational administration. Enthusiasm for the arts in education led to his involvement with the theatre and, in particular, as a producer and translator of the work of Molière.

Wood’s translations do not appear to be selected for mounted productions too often. When they are selected as theatrical productions they tend to be, according to *The Encyclopedia of Literary Translation into English*, “stiff” and “workmanlike.” One reason for his versions not being produced has to do with his translations being in non-rhyming prose, which would disqualify him in the eyes of any rhyming couplet purist looking to mount one of Molière’s plays. Samuel Solomon, in his essay “*Problems and Suggested Solutions in Translating Molière*” believes that to translate Molière’s verse plays into prose is to “castrate them” and singles out John Wood’s translations as “limp.” Wood himself acknowledged that his choice of prose for the verse plays caused considerable loss of Molière’s wit and irony. He, furthermore, identified one of the major weaknesses of the non-rhyming translation and he expressed it better than almost anyone I’ve encountered:

In Tartuffe the transfer to prose may reveal, more than one would wish, a certain overweighting of the rhetoric, some failure in Molière’s usually clear definition of character by speech, and some repetition due no doubt to the reshaping of Act III and IV. (Moliere 20) (25)

Another downside to selecting Wood for a production is that when he translated *Tartuffe*, he removed the scene breaks. This makes reading the acts seem long and working on specific parts of the acts particularly difficult to reference.
Finally, the majority of Wood’s Molière translations were “updated” by David Coward in 2000. This would most likely steer someone interested in a non-rhyming prose *Tartuffe* to investigate the revised Wood/Coward translation over the original Wood version, which is now over half a century old.

In addition to *Tartuffe*, Wood also published Molière’s *The Would-Be Gentleman*, *That Scoundrel Scapin*, *The Miser*, *Love’s the Best Doctor*, *Don Juan*, *The Misanthrope*, *The Sicilien: or Love, the Painter*, *The Doctor in Spite of Himself*, and *The Imaginary Invalid*.

**David Coward after John Wood**

David Coward is a professor of Modern French Literature at the University of Leeds. Coward in his 2000 introduction to *The Misanthrope and other Plays: A New Selection* wrote that he simply felt that Wood’s 50-year old translation required a more modern register and vocabulary. Despite his contention and efforts, the Wood/Coward version of *Tartuffe* is surprisingly lifeless. I personally chose it as one of the translations that I worked off of as it was available to me and differed from the Wood version enough that it proved resourceful in coming up with my own script.

Like the original Wood translation, the Wood/Coward version suffers from lack of scene breaks, making it both difficult to read and reference. The Wood/Coward version has been occasionally performed in the past ten years by those, I imagine, who like the option of a non-rhyming prose *Tartuffe*. Despite my own preference for a non-rhyming version, however, I passed on producing this translation because it lacked a certain charm that, I must confess, I found in the rhyming Frame and Wilbur adaptations.

Prudence Steiner

Harvard instructor Prudence Steiner also published The Misanthrope, which was published two years later. Of all the versions of Tartuffe off of which I worked, Prudence Steiner’s translation was the one that I most identified with. Had I chosen a version to put on without adapting, it would most certainly have been hers. For one thing, Steiner eliminated the rhyming verse. This she justified in the translator’s note of her Tartuffe by stating that translating exact meanings and making them rhyme can take you further from the original by having to add and subtract words. Additionally, audiences of the time were used to their dramas being performed in alexandrine rhyming couplets and she proceeded with the notion that rhyming couplets in modern English would sound forced and distracting to modern audiences.

This brings me to the other reason Steiner’s translation resonated with me: she purposely translated Tartuffe for the modern ear. Her contention was that people of the 17-century talked a certain way that was quite familiar to people of that era and that recreating their exact style would make it difficult for the modern audience to comfortably receive the dialogue. She also succeeds in keeping the style of each character consistent, whether it is the arrogance of Tartuffe, the sassiness of Dorine, or the nagging tone of Madame Pernelle.
Tartuffe Translators Not Utilized Deserving Honorable Mention

Obviously there are a number of other translators that I could have referenced when developing my adaptation. Had I the experience and access to other versions that I currently possess, I might have used any of the following translators. These translators have earned a reputation for either their 20th-century translations of Tartuffe and/or a body of Molière translation-work deserving their expert status and honorable mention here:

a.) Morris Bishop  
b.) Christopher Hampton  
c.) Ranjit Bolt

Morris Bishop


Bishop is considered to be extremely knowledgeable about Molière by many experts and was acknowledged as the influence of a number of Tartuffe translators that followed him including Donald Frame. His Molière work is known for being funny and energetic, although his use of unrhymed pentameters in Tartuffe is considered to be not quite as successful as his livelier rhyming translations. Like John Wood, Bishop removed the scene divisions of his Tartuffe throughout the acts; however, the liberties that he took within the script are considered by critics to be justified.

The Dell’Arte Company in California used the Morris Bishop version of Tartuffe in 2006, which the reviewer from The Marin Independent Journal, Charles Brouse, says is like “listening to Beethoven performed by a salsa band”. Brouse's
statement refers to a very Italian style taking on very French material. Though the clips I’ve seen of this production look brilliant and appear to convey hilarious Commedia dell’Arte conventions, Brousse complains of “sensory overload” and the physical action taking away from Morris’ script, which contains “Molière’s finest satire.”

Christopher Hampton

Christopher Hampton translated and adapted one of the most well regarded non-rhyming versions of Tartuffe of the last quarter century. It is, perhaps, produced more than anyone else’s blank verse versions in theatre since its publication 30 years ago. It was his Tartuffe that was used by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1983 and aired on BBC – Television in 1985 with Anthony Sher in the title role.

Hampton, best known for his plays and screenplays, tends to receive either praise for his Tartuffe by those who appreciate a change from the rhyming couplets or criticism from rhyming-Tartuffe purists with little in between. Typical praise for Hampton’s Tartuffe includes comments on how lively it is coupled with remarks about how it retains much of Molière’s wit. Common criticism mentions his work as being unflashy and notes his use of modern colloquialism (“being on a short fuse” or “taking a dim view”, for example).

I would have appreciated using Hampton’s version with its conversational feel to it for my adaptation had I come in contact with it three years ago. His philosophy of clearly getting the meaning across certainly coincides with my own approach to my adaptation. Hampton gives a historical perspective by stating that, for years, people produced the academic, literal translations for their theatres. But that in time, he asserts, audiences found it more important that writers write witty dialogue than for them to speak the language of the original.
As for his use of blank verse, Hampton concedes that there have been some wonderful rhyming translations of *Tartuffe* over the years but that the rhyming couplets tend to be self-conscious or distracting at “the expense of the line of the play as a whole.” Hampton's explanation of specifically why rhyming French drama does not translate well into English is one of the best I've seen:

> With translations into rhyming verse, the difficulties lie elsewhere. The French language has a much more rigid and defined phonetic structure than English; and when one takes into account, additionally, the inflected endings, the regular participial formations, the silent plurals and the verb forms, whether infinitive or conjugated, it will be clear that the business of finding a rhyme is infinitely simpler and more natural in French than it can ever be in English. (Molière 4) (30)

**Ranjit Bolt**

Although Ranji Bolt has not earned the beyond reproach status of Richard Wilbur with regards to translating *Tartuffe*, he has earned a reputation as a modern expert on Molière. His *Tartuffe* is being chosen over Wilbur’s with greater regularity when mounting productions, regardless of which Bolt *Tartuffe* was being produced. Bolt’s *Tartuffe* has been a work in progress. He first translated *Tartuffe* in 1991. When the National Theatre was ready to mount another production of his *Tartuffe* in 2002, Bolt decided to revisit the material and offer a new translation. Then, in 2006, Bolt developed a Broadway version translated for American diction using octo-syllabic rhyming couplets to produce shorter, faster lines.

Bolt takes great pride in his willingness to revise his own work. This mostly seems to be the result of a growing confidence in his philosophy of taking liberties with the original material. To give a perfect example of Bolt's use of poetic license when translating, here is a line from the Table Scene from his 2002 version. I will give Bolt's literal translation of Elmire’s line first followed by his personal preference.
(French) Can one not satisfy you except by going to the limit of (sexual) favours?

(Bolt) And now you’re rushing to the sweet
Before we’ve had the soup and meat.

Bolt is particularly proud of this last couplet and refers to it specifically in his book, The Art of Translation as well as in a significant number of interviews by Bolt when commenting on his own work:

That last couplet was always greeted with a tremendous laugh. But what really pleased me about this was that although that laugh wasn’t there in the French, in order to achieve it I hadn’t really tampered with the text at all. I had simply translated it in a way that rendered it funnier than it was in the French. (37)

Not everyone was as enamored with Bolt’s liberties as he was of his 2002 translation of Tartuffe for the National Theatre. In his attempt to popularize and modernize the language, he drew harsh criticisms from several London reviewers for his use of coarse expressions including ‘big fat arse’, ‘bugger me sideways’, ‘bugger that’, ‘bugger off’, ‘prat’, ‘git,’ as well as updated references to topical affairs such as the “New Labour.” In addition to his use of modern slang, Bolt’s heaviest criticisms have centered-around his punching the dialogue in a self-conscious way for the sake of the audience. This is true of both his 1991 and his 2002 translations. The Cambridge Companion to Molière was particularly specific on this matter:

In Ranjit Bolt’s Tartuffe, the self-conscious rhyming, quite foreign to Molière’s dramaturgy, created a signifying process on stage, which appealed to Anglophone taste. In Sir Peter Hall’s production at the Playhouse Theatre in London in 1991, the actors, particularly John Sessions, Paul Eddington and Felicity Kendall, were encouraged to end-stop each line, thus calling attention to unconventional juxtapositions:

I must say my [pause]
Erotic tinder isn’t half so dry.
What earthly happiness is equated to [pause]
The happiness of being loved by you.
Look at him he’s totally besotted [pause]
If there’s Tartuffo-mania he’s got it. (Bradby and Calder 183) (6)

What’s interesting about this criticism is that Bolt actually doubled-down on the stilted use of language even further in his “improved” translation updated 11 years later. British theatre critic, Ian Shuttleworth had this to say about the 2002 version of Bolt’s Tartuffe, which opened March 5, 2002 at the National Theatre in London:

This is Bolt’s second stab at Tartuffe, so he’s written it in a different metre from his version of a decade ago (tetrameter couplets rather than pentameter). He’s always immensely imaginative, and usually manages to get away with making a joke of his occasional slanginess. But the endless 4/4 thump can grow wearing, like the sound of a bass drum drifting up through the floorboards; this verse is more end-stopped than his usual, and some of the actors hit the rhythm even more heavily than it calls for.

Bolt prefers turning French rhymes into English rhymes stating that English rhymes are stronger, quirkier and in your face. He feels that gives enormous comic potential when translating into English. Bolt also preaches the importance of taking liberties more than any translator to date based on numerous interviews and in his 2010 book, The Art of Translation. Bolt’s contention is that by making the material funnier and more accessible to modern audiences, the translator is preserving the character of the original rather than making improvements. His belief is that the translation does not do the audience any good unless it “captures the charm” of the original.

Bolt’s liberties with Tartuffe include making cuts to long speeches including the oft-revered speeches of Cleante. In the original French, some of these speeches are said to be beautiful and poetic, taking on a life of their own. Bolt, however, believes that by preserving such speeches, the translator will completely negate their goals of trying to expose their audience to the charms of Molière:
Modern English and American audiences, reared on a faster, wise-cracking brand of verbal comedy, will not stomach these speeches in an un-diluted, or –adapted, form. At some point – be it stage one, during the initial translation process, or stage two, during rehearsals, or even if one is caught napping, stage three, during previews – the scissors will, more often than not, have to come out, and probably the pen too. (32)

Bolt further urges translators to avoid the word-for-word translation in favor of unbridled creativity: “My approach has always been that if poetry, as the famous adage goes, is what is lost in translation, then it is also, or can be, what is added” (39).

While French purists might disregard this kind of rationalizing, some of the leading Molière skeptics in the British press found Bolt’s translations and productions among the best they had seen on the English stage.

Bolt’s other translations of Molière’s work include *The Idiot* (from *L’Étourdi*), *Scapin* (from *Les Fourberies de Scapin*), *The Miser*, *The School for Wives*, *The Grouch* (from *Le Misanthrope*), *George Dadin*, and *The Sisterhood*. 
CHAPTER III
THE PROCESS OF THE ADAPTATION

I suppose what I am saying is that it is necessary almost to direct the play, act the play, and see the play while translating it.

-Robert W. Corrigan, Translating for Actors

Having analyzed how the great translators of Molière approached their material, I would now like to describe how I went about adapting Tartuffe for the high school stage.

I do not speak or read French with any kind of fluency. Though my mother taught French and Spanish at the high school level, I personally never studied French past two years of grade school. I therefore could not literally translate Molière’s Tartuffe into English resembling anything like the final 1669 version, which is the version that eventually saw publication. For this, I had to turn to bilingual experts who had already painstakingly tackled the translation with apparent fondness and respect for the original material.

I also never intended to adapt this play. I merely went seeking a version that I thought was ready to be produced. For this, I was very fortunate to live in an area with such an impressive library system. The Cuyahoga County Public Library system has an amazing inventory of virtually every subject worth investigating. They have a user-friendly yet complex method of searching for and ordering material along with an advanced delivery system allowing for local pick-up. This is
not just high praise for a library system that has provided me with a wealth of resources over the years. In 2010, the Hennen’s American Public Library Ratings Index considered the Cuyahoga County Public Library the number one library in the country. When searching for the play version of Molière’s *Tartuffe*, the county library had five translations available for loaning to the public. I eventually ordered all five scripts and could have ordered dozens more through OhioLink: a material-sharing program that enjoys participation with every major college in the state of Ohio. OhioLink was invaluable to me in writing this thesis, allowing me to obtain even the rarest of manuscripts on the subject of Molière, *Tartuffe* and translation.

At the time, however, I did not utilize OhioLink to find the perfect translation of *Tartuffe* and proceeded with my adaptation using the five aforementioned books. Two books were in rhyming verse (Wilbur and Frame), two were strict non-rhyming adaptations in prose (Wood and Wood/Coward), and on one was the closest to the kind of a modern, non-rhyming prose translation that I myself was going for (Steiner). Despite, it’s accessibility and use of modern language, the Steiner version still did not give me everything that I enjoyed in other translations so I chose not to use it in place of my own efforts.

Having five distinct translations at my disposal, I proceeded to adapt my own version of Molière’s *Tartuffe* in the summer of 2009. In preparing for this thesis, I came across a passage by translator, Justin O’Brien. In his essay, “From French to English”, O’Brien, an experienced professional translator, describes his method of translation which, as it turns out, is very similar to the method I developed through trial and error:

First, I read and re-read the text as a whole to absorb it and, as it were, make it part of myself; this is where some sort of identification with the author takes place. Proceeding, I do this specifically for each chapter, paragraph and sentence as I come to it. Secondly, I write out the best version I can make, after weighing all possible alternatives that come to mind. Thirdly, after putting the first version aside for a time, I come back to it and read it through without reference to the original, making changes wherever necessary. (Brower 88) (9)
Not unlike O’Brien, I too began by reading Molière’s Tartuffe as a whole. In my case, however, I read five different versions of Tartuffe in my search for the perfect adaptation. This process gave me a very unexpected benefit. Since each translator captured Molière’s masterpiece in their own way, I was in the unique position of discerning what was Molière and what was the translators’ subjective spin on the material. When reading Dorine’s speech about aging flirts in five different versions, I knew the words were different from each other’s adaptation, however, each adaptation touched on the same important points and was each biting in their own respective ways. Those important points and those scathing comments by Dorine were, to me, the essence of Molière. Each of their sentences was different and yet each of their sentences said the same thing. Despite the variation in their approaches, Dorine’s (Molière’s) biting commentary felt the same with every reading. This “capturing the essence of Molière” (as Walter Benjamin might put it) is at the heart of my methodology in developing this piece for the high school stage. Perhaps this is what O’Brien refers to when he says, “some sort of identification with the author takes place.”

To better make my point on this and other matters, I will be presenting Act IV, Scene V of Tartuffe. This is the famous Table Scene, which is arguably the most remembered and adored scene in the play. In the previous scene, Elmire has just urged her husband, Orgon, to hide under the table to witness Tartuffe’s treachery first-hand. I shall present all five translations that I worked off of in the order that they were originally published: Wood (1959), Wilbur (1963), Frame (1967), Coward after Wood (2000), and Steiner (2008). Additionally, I shall present a version of Tartuffe published in 1968 in French. We can assume that this is as close to Molière’s original as we can get for this project so we’ll treat this as the 1669 version and present it first. We’ll begin simply with just the first line by Tartuffe:

Tartuffe: **On m’a dit qu’en ce lieu vous me vouliez parler.**
(Molière)

Tartuffe: I was informed that you wished to speak with me here.
(Wood)
Tartuffe: You wish to have a word with me, I’m told.
(Wilbur)

Tartuffe: They told me that you wished to see me here.
(Frame)

Tartuffe: I was informed you wished to speak to me here.
(Coward)

Tartuffe: I was told that you wanted to see me here.
(Steiner)

Tartuffe: I understand that you wished to see me?
(Benjamin)

These examples clearly show why I was conflicted as to which version I should use before deciding to adapt. Here were five translators all, presumably, working off of the same, single line of French and yet each of them wrote a completely unique sentence. There’s an interesting progression in this and all of my samples as each translator made their own version more modern through the years. Not surprisingly, Coward’s version is the closest to Wood’s version and yet it, too, is unique. I therefore read the five translated versions one by one, internalized what I believed the author’s intention was, and came up with a sentence that I thought would be the most comfortable for my high school actors to say and the Garfield Heights audience to hear. This method, I believe, helped me adapt Molière’s Tartuffe in a way that was both fresh and accurate.

Before I proceed, it may be noteworthy that The Table Scene was the last scene that I adapted for my production. This was no accident. This scene was, to me, the most important scene in the play. It’s also the scene I remember the most since childhood and the scene that I felt would be most interesting to my audience. It was crucial that I captured this brilliant scene of Molière’s and did it and him justice. In order to do this, I had to be able to hear my student Elmire and student Tartuffe in my head with every line.
I did not have this luxury for the entire rehearsal process, however. I began adapting the play during the summer before the school year began and before the fall production held auditions. I also had to write as much as I could in order for my actors to start memorizing their lines as soon as they were cast. For this there was something of a natural progression. My first adapted scenes were scenes that I felt captured as many characters as possible in order to be able to hold auditions. I then wrote the scenes that I felt that I could best use for callbacks to be held two days after the final audition. Despite my best-laid plans, I still had much to write in those two days between auditions and callbacks. If I was torn between two actresses up for the role of Dorine, for example, then I wanted another Dorine scene to be available for the callback in order for the two students to compete. When I had some doubts about my Monsieur Loyal, then I at least wrote part of the eviction speech to see if he could convey affability despite giving a cruel speech about putting Orgon’s family out onto the street. After the cast list had been posted, I was then a slave to the rehearsal schedule.

There was not a readthrough for this production as there was not a complete script for the students to use. My script-writing agenda was determined by the next scene to be rehearsed (based on a rehearsal schedule respecting the students' availability and conflicts). I would therefore show up with new pages of script printed out for the actors scheduled to rehearse. These pages of script included beats, pauses and blocking suggestions to help the students internalize the material. After several readthroughs of the new scenes and after words were either clarified or changed for actor preference, we would rehearse as much as time would allow. This continued throughout the rehearsal period until the script was finally completed.

Let us return to the adaptation to illustrate more examples of my methodology. Here we have Elmire’s response to Tartuffe’s first line:
Elmire: Yes, I have a secret to tell you – but shut the door before I begin and have a good look round in case we should be overheard. We don't want another business like this morning's. I was never so surprised in my life. Damis made me terribly frightened on your account. You must have seen what efforts I made to check him and quieten him down. The truth is I was so taken aback that it never entered my head to deny his accusations, but there – thank Heaven it turned out for the best! We are much more secure now in consequence. Your reputation saved us. My husband is incapable of thinking ill of you. He insists on our being together to show his contempt for idle rumour. So now I can be in here with you without fear of reproach and can reveal to you that I'm perhaps only too ready to welcome your love.

Elmire: Yes, I've a little secret to unfold.

(Molière)

Oui. L'on a des secrets à vous y révéler.

Mais tirez cette porte avant qu'on vous les dise,

Et regardez partout de crainte de surprise:

Une affaire pareille à celle de tantôt

N'est pas assurément ici ce qu'il nous faut.

Jamais il ne s'est vu de surprise de même;

Damis m'a fait pour vous une frayeur extrême,

Et vous avez bien vu que j'ai fait mes efforts

Pour rompre son dessein et calmer ses transports.

De mon trouble, il est vrai, j'étais si possédée,

Que de le démentir je n'ai point eu l'idée;

Mais par là, grâce au Ciel, tout a bien mieux été,

Et les choses en sont en plus de sûreté.

L'estime où l'on vous tient a dissipé l'orage,

Et mon mari de vous ne peut prendre d'ombrage.

Pour mieux braver l'éclat des mauvais jugements,

Il veut que nous soyons ensemble à tous

moments;

d'être blâmée,

vous enfermée,

à vous ouvrir un cœur

prompt peut-être à souffrir votre ardeur.

(Wood) Before I speak, however, it would be wise

to close that door, and look about for spies.

(Tartuffe goes to the door, closes it, and returns.)

The very thing that must happen now

Is a repetition of this morning’s row.

I've never been so badly caught off guard.

Oh, how I feared for you! You saw how hard

I tried to make that troublesome Damis
Control his dreadful temper, and hold his peace.
In my confusion, I didn’t have the sense
Simply to contradict his evidence;
But as it happened, that was for the best,
And all has worked out in our interest.
This storm has only bettered your position;
My husband doesn’t have the least suspicion,
And now, in mockery of those who do,
He bids me be continually with you.
And that is why, quite fearless of reproof,
I now can be alone with my Tartuffe,
And why my heart – perhaps too quick to yield -
Feels free to let its passion be revealed.

Elmire: Yes, I have secrets for your private ear.
(Frame) But shut that door, before I say a word,
And look and see that we’re not overheard.
(Tartuffe closes the door, looks in the closet, and comes back.)
A mishap like that one just now, indeed,
is certainly the last thing that we need.
I really can’t remember such a fright;
Damis had me in terror at your plight,
And you could see I did my very best
To calm his fury, in your interest.
True, I was so confused I never thought
To contradict his story as I ought;
But even that, thank Heaven, worked out well,
And things are that much safer, I can tell.
Your reputation makes it all auspicious;
My husband simply cannot be suspicious.
So as to show the gossips they are wrong,
He wants us two together all day long;
And that’s what makes it possible for me
To see you freely in such privacy
And to lay bare to you, in such a fashion,
A heart perhaps too heedful of your passion.

Elmire: Yes, I have something to say to you in confidence – but shut the door
before I begin and take a good look round in case anyone’s listening.
We don’t want another business like this morning’s. I was never so
taken aback in all my life. Damis made me terribly afraid for you. You
must have seen what efforts I made to stop him and calm his anger.
The truth is I was so disconcerted that it never entered my head to
deny his accusations. But thank Heaven it all turned out for the best
and we are much more secure now as a result. The high regard
people have for you deflected the storm and my husband won’t be
suspicious of you now. He insists on our being seen together as often as possible to show what he thinks of idle talk. Which means I can be alone with you here in this room, and not be afraid of being criticized for it. It also means I can reveal the feelings of my heart which is perhaps only too ready to acknowledge your love.

Elmire: Yes, I have something a bit private to tell you. But close that door before I say more, and look everywhere to be sure no one can overhear us. We don’t need more incidents like the one that just happened. I’ve never been so startled in all my life; what Damis did terrified me on your behalf. You saw how I tried to disrupt his scheme and clam him down. I must say that I was so dismayed that I couldn’t think of how to contradict him. But happily all ended well, and the situation is much better now. Everyone so respects you that the storm has blown over. My husband cannot possible take offense: indeed, to put a stop to any malicious gossip, he wants us to be together as much as possible. That’s why I’m able to be here alone with you without fear of scandal and to reveal, perhaps a bit too quickly, a heart that’s receptive to your passion.

Elmire: Yes, I had something private I wanted to share with you. But please. Do me a favor. Make sure the doors are shut this time. I don’t want a repeat of this morning’s incident.

(Tartuffe returns from checking the door)

Oh my God, I was so scared. I mean, you saw, I did everything I could to keep Damis from telling my husband but.... well... (beat) It turned out for the best in the end.

In fact, my husband is so unconcerned about any gossip that the incident might cause that he insists we be alone together as much as possible (beat) to show everyone that he doesn’t care what they think.

Do you understand what that means? (pause) It means I can be alone with you without fear of scandal. It means that I can now return the passion which I... (Turning away, trying to be coy) But perhaps I’ve said too much...

This last line perfectly illustrates why it was best for me to wait until I knew the actors better before writing this classic scene. Here I took the liberty to have Elmire be overly dramatic in order to get Tartuffe to take the bait. Having rehearsed with my Elmire for a month before writing this scene, I knew that this was a moment that she would execute perfectly. This was particularly true considering
that I wrote it based on similar mannerisms I observed of her when interacting with her friends and fellow actors.

Notice, too, my use of beats and pauses in this speech. Most of the leading actors in my Tartuffe have to give at least one speech of significant length. I have learned through experience that these speeches are very difficult for the average high school student to tackle. By adapting my own script, I had a golden opportunity to get the actors to better understand the lengthier material with their very first reading of a speech by getting them to think about possible inflections and identifying important moments of the scene.

In addition to developing the interpretation of the dialogue through beats and pauses, the adaptation also gave me the opportunity to write in some of the basic blocking into the scenes as well. Although much of the blocking for my productions is worked out through scenework with the actors, until they get off-book I find that it is crucial to give high school students some basic blocking to begin with. Blocking rehearsals would generally take place after the readthrough of a newly adapted scene. I have found blocking rehearsals to be time-consuming and tedious as the actors stop with every direction to write in the blocking that I give them. With some of the stage direction already in place, the actors can continue the scene without writing in their blocking or simply underline what is already there, which takes considerably less time than writing down every word that I give them in rehearsal.

Here is the next speech of The Table Scene by Elmire to continue to demonstrate the word choices that I made and to further illustrate my use of beats and pauses:

Tartuffe: Ce langage à comprendre est assez difficile,
(Molière) Madame, et vous pariez tantôt d'un autre style.

Elmire: Ah! si d'un tel refus vous êtes en courroux,
Que le cœur d'une femme est mal connu de vous!
Et que vous savez peu ce qu'il veut faire entendre
Lorsque si faiblement on le voit se défendre!
Toujours notre pudeur combat dans ces moments

Ce qu'on peut nous donner de tendres sentiments.

Quelque raison qu'on trouve à l'amour qui nous dompte,
On trouve à l'avouer toujours un peu de honte;
On s'en défend d'abord; mais de l'air qu'on s'y prend,
On fait connaître assez que notre cœur se rend,
Qu'à nos veux par honneur notre bouche s'oppose,
Et que de tels refus promettent toute chose.

C'est vous faire sans doute un assez libre aveu,
Et sur notre pudeur me ménager bien peu;

Mais puisque la parole enfin en est lâchée,
À retenir Damis me serais-je attachée,
Aurais-je, je vous prie, avec tant de douceur
Écouté tout au long l'offre de votre cœur,
Aurais-je pris la chose ainsi qu'on m'a vu faire,
Si l'offre de ce cœur n'eût eu de quoi me plaire?

Et lorsque j'ai voulu moi-même vous forcer
À refuser l'hymen que l'on venait d'annoncer,
Qu'est-ce que cette instance a dû vous faire entendre,
Que l'intérêt qu'en vous on s'avise de prendre,
Et l'ennui qu'on aurait que ce nœud qu'on résout
Vînt partager du moins un cœur que l'on veut tout?

douceur
coeur,
qu'on m'a vu faire,
de quoi me plaire?
même vous forcer
qu'on venait d'annoncer,
cette instance a dû vous faire entendre,
qu'en vous on s'avise de prendre,
qu'on aurait que ce nœud qu'on résout
partager du moins un cœur que l'on veut tout?

Tartuffe: I find it difficult to follow your meaning, madam. Only a while
ago you spoke very differently.

Elmire: How little you know the heart of a woman if such a rebuff has
offended you! How little you understand what we mean to convey
when we defend ourselves so feebly! At such moments our modesty
and the tender sentiments you arouse in us are still in conflict.
However compelling the arguments of passion may be we are still too
diffident to confess it: we shrink from an immediate avowal but our
manner sufficiently reveals that in our heart of hearts we surrender:
though our lips must in honour deny our true feelings, such refusals in
fact promise everything. I realize that I am making a very frank
admission: it shows little regard for womanly modestly but since I am
speaking – should I have been so anxious to restrain Damis, should I
have listened so indulgently, do you think, to your declaration of love,
should I have taken it as I did if I had not welcomed it? Moreover,
when I sought to make you renounce the marriage which had just
been announced what was that intended to convey to you, if not that I
took an interest in you and regretted the conclusion of a marriage
which would force me to share an affection I wanted entirely to myself?

Tartuffe: Madam, your words confuse me. Not long ago,
(Wilbur) You spoke in quite a different style, you know.

Elmire: Ah, Sir, if that refusal made you smart,
It’s little that you know of woman’s heart,
Or what that heart is trying to convey
When it resists in such a feeble way!
Always, at first, our modesty prevents
The frank avowal of tender sentiments;
However high the passion which inflames us.
Still, to confess its power somehow shames us.
Thus we relunct, at first, yet in a tone
Which tells you that our heart is overthrown.
That what our lips deny, our pulse confesses,
And that, in time, all noes will turn to yesses
I fear my words are all too frank and free,
And a poor proof of woman’s modesty;
But since I’m started, tell me, if you will -
Would I have tried to make Damis be still,
Would I have listened, calm and unoffended,
Until your lengthy offer of love was ended,
And been so very mild in my reaction,
Had your sweet words not given me satisfaction?
And when I tried to force you to undo
The marriage-plans my husband has in view,
What did my urgent pleading signify
If not that I admired you, and that I
Deplored the thought that someone else might own
Part of a heart I wished for mine alone?

Tartuffe: I do not understand. A little while
(Frame) Ago, Madame, you used a different style.

Elmire: Oh! If such a refusal makes you smart,
How little do you know a woman’s heart,
And what it is endeavoring to convey
When it resists in such a feeble way!
Our modesty combats the stimulus
Of the sweet feelings you arouse in us.
However strong and justified our flame,
We never can admit it without shame.
Even our first resistance is too tender
Not to give notice of our heart’s surrender.
Though honor makes our lips combat temptation,
Such a refusal is an invitation.
I know that this avowal is too free
And too unsparing of my modesty;
But since I have resolved to speak my piece,
Would I have struggled to restrain Damis,
Would I have sat so long, composed and mute,
I ask you, while I listened to your suit?
Would I have taken things in such a fashion
If I’d been unresponsive to your passion?
And when I urged you not to carry through
The marriage that my husband planned for you,
What could such great insistency suggest,
If not my overwhelming interest,
And feat that soon I could not call my own
A heart I want to have as mine alone?

Tartuffe: I find it difficult to follow your drift, Madame. Only a little while ago
you spoke very differently.

(Coward) Elmire: How little you know about a woman’s heart if such a rebuff has
offended you! How little you understand what we mean to convey
when we put up such weak defences! In such moments our modesty
does battle with the tender sentiments you start in us. However
compelling the arguments in favour of the love which subdues us, we
are still too diffident to admit it. At first we resist, but soon our
manner of resisting sufficiently reveals that in our heart of hearts we
have surrendered, that though our lips are honour bound to deny our
feelings, our resistance in fact promises everything. I realize that I am
being very frank in admitting all this and that I show scant regard for
womanly modesty. But since I am speaking so freely, should I have
been so anxious to restrain Damis, should I have heard you out so
indulgently, do you think, when you declared you loved me, should I
have reacted as I did, if the offer had not been entirely unwelcome to
me? Moreover, when I tried to force you to say no to the marriage
which had just been announced, what was that intended to convey to
you if not that I was attracted to you and regretted the tying of a knot
which would leave me to share an affection which I wanted entirely to
myself?
Tartuffe: Such words are difficult to understand, given the way you spoke just a few moments ago.

Elmire: Oh, did what I said then trouble you? How little you know of a woman’s heart if you didn’t understand why my reaction was so lukewarm! Modesty is always fighting with desire. No matter how much love persuades us, we always feel a tiny bit of shame. So we start by pushing our lover away, but anyone can see that our hearts have yielded. We say one thing and mean another; rejecting is really a promise of something else. I’m admitting all this because my modesty has given up the fight. But since I’ve begun to speak freely – would I have tried to restrain Damis, would I have listened so carefully to your offer of love, would I have behaved as I did if your proposition hadn’t pleased me? And when I pushed you to reject that marriage, shouldn’t that have hinted at my own interests, my distress that this wedding would force me to share a heart that I wanted for my own?

Tartuffe: (Pause) I’m a little confused. (beat) Earlier you sang a much different tune.

Elmire: (Pause. Then, recovering) Oh, did that bother you? (pause) How little you know a woman’s heart. (pause) And what it means when we resist in such a feeble way.

Of course I had to object. It’s what’s expected of us. But I knew. (beat) I knew you could see through my protestations. I knew you could see, plain as day, what my heart was really trying to say.

You know we women say one thing when we really mean another. (beat. Approaching him) Rejection is simply a promise for something else. (pause) What I’m trying to tell you is, I’ve given up the fight.

(Touching the material on his shirt) Would I have reacted the way I did with Damis if your declaration of love wasn’t entirely unwelcome on my part? Why do you think I objected to the marriage? I couldn’t bear the thought of your affections going elsewhere.

The year after my production of Tartuffe, I adapted Charles Dickens’ A Christmas Carol. I adapted it in a similar manner as Tartuffe only that time I used only the original unabridged novel by Dickens when developing the dialogue. I mention it here, however, because in both adaptations, I incorporated similar stage directions. Sometimes, those stage directions were intentionally designed to help
the actor get a sense of what their character might be trying to do and, subsequently, how to deliver their lines. When, I suggested in the script that Elmire coyly turn away from Tartuffe when saying the lines “but perhaps I’ve said too much,” it forces the actress to play the line in a way that might key her into what Elmire is trying to do at that particular moment.

I call this method of helping the student actor internalize their lines motivational blocking. While it may sound like a term from psychoanalysis, I have found it to be a rather effective strategy during the early stages of rehearsal. For example, in the passage above, by having Elmire slink up to Tartuffe and deliver a line while fondling material on his shirt, it suggests to the actress that Elmire is trying to use her feminine wiles to get Tartuffe to come on to her again. This movement would affect her delivery on this line and allow her to consider other methods of flirtation on subsequent lines. This move of touching his shirt is actually consistent with an earlier move in Act III, Scene III when Tartuffe touches her knee and then comments that he is admiring the material of her dress when she calls him on the bold behavior. Motivational blocking is a strategy I swear by when working with amateur actors and examples of it can be found throughout my adaptation of Tartuffe.

While motivational blocking is clearly a subjective move on my part as both adaptor and director, I take solace in the knowledge that I am internalizing Molière’s material through the painstaking process of analyzing each sentence word-for-word. In the passage above, for example, I took the liberty of having Elmire placate Tartuffe’s ego by saying that he really knew what her heart was saying despite the fact that the original versions merely had Elmire stating the nature of a woman’s heart:

“But I knew. I knew you could see through my protestations. I knew you could see, plain as day, what my heart was really trying to say.”
I also find it interesting (three years later) that I inadvertently made the last sentence rhyme even though those words did not come from any of the translated adaptations including the rhyming versions.

Throughout this discussion of my methodology, I write with the actors that I worked with in mind. This became even more prevalent the further we progressed into rehearsals but began even in the early stages of writing. Whether or not I cast the girl that played Elmire in this production, I spent the summer before production writing Elmire with her in mind. As my most talented senior actress, I was almost certain that she would secure the role of Elmire. If for some reason another actress came out of the woodwork and landed the role, it doesn’t change the fact that I had a living, breathing person in mind to make Elmire real to the audience.

Regardless of my historically strong working-relationship with my Elmire, The Table Scene, again, the last scene I adapted, could not be written until I had established absolute trust between myself, my Elmire and my Tartuffe. This is particularly important considering how physical and intimate this next passage of script would become. Time was not the only factor in establishing trust for this next section. During Act III, Scene III, Tartuffe openly declares his love for Elmire. Throughout that scene, I have Tartuffe invade Elmire’s personal space in a number of ways including touching her knee, taking her hand, predatorily circling her, and leaning in behind her to whisper in her ear. Though these two actors had not worked with each other in previous productions, they learned through the process of rehearsing this declaration of love scene to trust each other. More importantly, they learned to trust that I, as director, would listen to their suggestions during scene work and would never ask them to do anything that compromised their comfort level.

Throughout my adaptation, my actors’ input is reflected in both word and deed. Through the entire rehearsal process, I made changes in the lines (and occasionally in the blocking) to reflect their suggestions. This situation usually came up during the early rehearsal of a new scene in which the actors made suggestions
to switch out my chosen words with words of their own that they felt more comfortable with. As time allowed, I even made changes to my master script and printed out new versions of the script that reflected their recommendations.

In his essay, “Translating for Actors,” Robert W. Corrigan talks of incorporating actor input into his translations. While there is no short supply of books that discuss in great detail the importance of and the methods to using actor input in the rehearsal process, I found Corrigan’s remarks particularly interesting as they came from the perspective of a professional translator. Here he makes reference to the importance of actor-input when translating Chekov’s *Uncle Vanya* into more modern, understandable language:

> It is only when the sense of speakability is achieved that we have theater. I am sure that this is one of the things Hamlet meant when he advised the players: ‘Speak the speech, I pray you...trippingly on the tongue.’ To achieve this I think translators fail to use an important source – namely, the actors themselves. I have directed all of my translations of Chekhov and time and time again the actors have made or suggested changes that have improved the translation a great deal. (Arrowsmith and Shattuck 142) (2)

In order to achieve a comfort-level in the following passage of The Table Scene, it was very important that I knew my actors extremely well and that they knew they could trust me and each other with the intimacy involved with it:

Tartuffe:  
(Molière)  
*C'est sans doute, Madame, une douceur extrême*  
Que d'entendre ces mots d'une bouche qu'on aime.  
Leur miel dans tous mes sens fait couler à longs traits  
Une suavité qu'on ne goûta jamais.  
*Le bonheur de vous plaire est ma suprême étude,*  
*Et mon cœur de vos vœux fait sa béatitude;*  
*Mais ce cœur vous demande ici la liberté*  
*D'oser douter un peu de sa félicité.*  
*Je puis croire ces mots un artifice honnête*  
*Pour m’obliger à rompre un hymen qui s’apprête;*  
*Et s’il faut librement m'expliquer avec vous,*  
*Je ne me fierai point à des propos si doux,*  
*Qu’un peu de vos faveurs, après quoi je soupire,*
Ne vienne m’assurer tout ce qu’ils m’ont pu dire,
Et planter dans mon âme une constante foi
Des charmantes bontés que vous avez pour moi.

Elmire: (elle tousse pour avertir son mari).
Quoi? vous voulez aller avec cette vitesse,
Et d’un cœur tout d’abord épuiser la tendresse?
On se tue à vous faire un aveu des plus doux;
Cependant ce n’est pas encore assez pour vous,
Et l’on ne peut aller jusqu’à vous satisfaire,
   Qu’aux dernières faveurs on ne pousse l’affaire?

Tartuffe: Moins on mérite un bien, moins on l’ose espérer.
Nos vœux sur des discours ont peine à s’assurer.
On soupçonne aisément un sort tout plein de gloire,
Et l’on veut en jouir avant que de le croire.
   Pour moi, qui crois si peu mériter vos bontés,
   Je doute du bonheur de mes témérités;
   Et je ne croirai rien, que vous n’ayez, Madame,
   Par des réalités su convaincre ma flamme.

Elmire: Mon Dieu! Que votre amour en vrai tyran agit,
Et qu’en un trouble étrange il me jette l’esprit!
Que sur les cours il prend un furieux empire,
Et qu’avec violence il veut ce qu’il désire!
Quoi? de votre poursuite on ne peut se parer,
Et vous ne donnez pas le temps de respirer?
Sied-il bien de tenir une rigueur si grande,
   De vouloir sans quartier les choses qu’on demande,
   Et d’abuser ainsi par vos efforts pressants
   Du faible que pour vous vous voyez qu’ont les gens?

Tartuffe: Mais si d’un œil bénin vous voyez mes hommages,
   Pourquoi m’en refuser d’assurés témoignages?

Elmire: Mais comment consentir à ce que vous voulez
   Sans offenser le Ciel, dont toujours vous parlez?

Tartuffe: Si ce n’est que le Ciel qu’à mes vœux on oppose,
   Lever un tel obstacle est à moi peu de chose,
   Et cela ne doit pas retenir votre cœur.

Elmire: Mais des arrêts du Ciel on nous fait tant de peur!

Tartuffe: Je puis vous dissiper ces craintes ridicules,
   Madame, et je sais l’art de lever les scrupules.
   Le Ciel défend, de vrai, certains contentements,
(C’est un scélérat qui parle.)
Mai on trouve avec lui des accommodements.
Selon divers besoins, il est une science
D’étendre les liens de notre conscience,
Et de rectifier le mal de l’action
Avec la pureté de notre intention.
De ces secrets, Madame, on saura vous instruire;
Vous n’avez seulement qu’à vous laisser conduire.
Contentez mon désir, et n’ayez point d’effroi.
Je vous réponds de tout, et prends le mal sur moi.
(Elmire tousse plus fort.)
Vous-toussez fort, Madame.

Elmire: Oui, je suis au supplice.
Tartuffe: (présentant à Elmire un cornet de papier)
Vous plaît-il un morceau de ce jus de réglisse?

Elmire: C’est un rhume obstiné, sans doute, et je vois bien
Que tous les jus du monde ici ne feront rien.

Tartuffe: Cela, certe, est fâcheux.
Elmire: Oui, plus qu’on ne peut dire.

Tartuffe: Enfin votre scrupule est facile à détruire:
Vous êtes assurée ici d’un plein secret,
Et le mal n’est jamais que dans l’éclat qu’on fait;
Le scandale du monde est ce qui fait l’offense,
Et ce n’est pas pécher que pécher en silence.

Tartuffe: Ah, Madam, it is indeed delightful to hear such words from the lips of
one I love! The honey of your words sets coursing through my whole
being sensations more delicious than I have ever known before. My
supreme concern is to find favour in your eyes. My hopes of bliss lie
in love. Yet you must forgive me if my heart still dares to entertain
some doubt of its own felicity. Suppose what you are saying proved to
be no more than a virtuous stratagem to induce me to abandon this
impending marriage. If I may be allowed to put the matter frankly, I’ll
never trust these promises until I have been vouchsafed some small
foretaste of the favours for which I yearn – that alone will reassure me
and give me absolute confidence in your intentions towards me.

Elmire: [coughing to attract her husband’s attention]. Why must you go so
fast? Would you have me reveal at once all that I feel for you? I have
overstepped the bounds of modesty in confessing my feelings and yet
it isn't enough for you! Can there be no satisfying you without to ultimate lengths?

Tartuffe: The less one deserves the less one dares to hope, and words are poor assurances of love. One cannot but mistrust a prospect of felicity: one must enjoy it before one can believe in it. Knowing how little I deserve your favours I doubt the outcome of my own temerity. I'll believe nothing until you give me proofs tangible enough to satisfy my passion.

Elmire: Heavens! What an importunate lover you are! I just don't know where I am. You quite overwhelm me – is there no denying you? Is there no evading your demands? Won’t you even allow me a breathing space? How can you be so insistent, so peremptory, so merciless? How can you take such advantage of one’s fondness for you?

Tartuffe: But if you look upon my advances with a favourable eye, why refuse me convincing proof?

Elmire: How can I consent to what you ask without offending Him whose name is ever on your lips?

Tartuffe: If fear of Heaven is the only obstacle to my passion that is a barrier I can easily remove. That need not restrain you.

Elmire: But they threaten us with the wrath of Heaven.

Tartuffe: I can dissipate these foolish fears for you. I know the way to remove such scruples. It is true that certain forms of indulgence are forbidden but there are ways and means of coming to terms with Heaven, of easing the restraints of conscience according to the exigencies of the intention. I can instruct you in these secrets, Madam. Only allow yourself to be led by me. Satisfy my desire and have not the slightest fear. I will answer for everything and take the sin upon myself. You have a bad cough, Madam.

Elmire: Yes! I’m in great distress.

Tartuffe: Would you care for a little of this liquorice?

Elmire: It’s a most obstinate cold. I fear that all the liquorice in the world won’t help me now.

Tartuffe: It is certainly very trying.

Elmire: More than I can say.
Tartuffe: As I was saying then, your scruples can easily be removed. You are assured of absolute secrecy with me and the harm of any action lies only in its being known. The public scandal is what constitutes the offence: sins sinned in secret are no sins at all!

Tartuffe: Madam, no happiness is so complete
(Wilbur) As when, from lips we love, come words so sweet;
Their nectar floods my every sense, and drains
In honeyed rivulets through all my veins.
To please you is my joy, my only goal;
Your love is the restorer of my soul;
And yet I must beg leave, now, to confess
Some lingering doubts as to my happiness.
Might this not be a trick? Might not the catch
Be that you wish me to break off the match
With Mariane, and so have feigned to love me?
I shan’t quite trust your fond opinion of me
Until the feelings you’ve expressed so sweetly
Are demonstrated somewhat more concretely,
And you have shown, by certain kinds of concessions,
that I may put my faith in your professions.

Elmire: (She coughs, to warn her husband)

Why be in such a hurry? Must my heart
Exhaust its bounty at the very start?
To make that sweet admission cost me dear,
But you’ll not be content, it would appear,
Unless my store of favors is disbursed
To the last farthing, and at the very first.

Tartuffe: The less we merit, the less we dare to hope,
And with our doubts, mere words can never cope.
We trust no promised bliss till we receive it;
Not till a joy is ours can we believe it.
I, who so little merit your esteem,
Can’t credit this fulfillment of my dream,
And shan’t believe it, Madam, until I savor
Some palpable assurance of your favor.

Elmire: My, how tyrannical your love can be,
And how it flusters and perplexes me!
How furiously you take one’s heart in hand,
And make your every wish a fierce command!
Come, must you hound and harry me to death?
Will you not give me time to catch my breath?
Can it be right to press me with such force,
Give me no quarter, show me no remorse,
And take advantage, by your stern insistence,
Of the fond feelings which weaken my resistance?

Tartuffe: Well, if you look with favor upon my love,
Why, then, begrudge me some clear proof thereof?

Elmire: But how can I consent without offense
To Heaven, toward which you feel such reverence?

Tartuffe: If Heaven is all that holds you back, don't worry
I can remove that hindrance in a hurry.
Nothing of that sort need obstruct our path.

Elmire: Must one not be afraid of Heaven's wrath?

Tartuffe: Madam, forget such fears, and be my pupil,
And I shall teach you how to conquer scruple
Some joys, it's true, are wrong in Heaven's eyes;
Yet Heaven is not averse to compromise;
There is a science, lately formulated,
Whereby one's conscience may be liberated,
And any wrongful act you care to mention
May be redeemed by purity of intention.
I'll teach you, Madam, the secrets of that science;
Meanwhile, just place on me your full reliance.
Assuage my keen desires, and feel no dread:
The sin, if any, shall be on my head.

(Elmire coughs, this time more loudly.)

You've a bad cough.

Elmire: Yes, yes. It's bad indeed.

Tartuffe: (Producing a little paper bag:) A bit of licorice may be what you need.

Elmire: No, I've a stubborn cold, it seems. I'm sure it
Will take much more than licorice to cure it.

Tartuffe: How aggravating.

Elmire: Oh, more than I can say

Tartuffe: If you're still troubled, think of things this way:
No one shall know our joys, save us alone,
And there’s no evil till the act is known;
It’s scandal, Madam, which makes it an offense,
And it’s no sin to sin in confidence.

Tartuffe: Of course, Madam, it’s very sweet to hear
(Frame) Such words as these spoken by lips so dear:
Their honeyed flavor floods my every sense.
Such bliss I never did experience.
To please you is my one solicitude,
And your love is my heart’s beatitude;
But please allow that heart the liberty
To dare to doubt its own felicity.

These words might be a scheme, and nothing more,
To have me break a marriage that’s in store;
To be quite candid, as I fear I must,
Sweet words are not enough to win my trust,
Unless some of your favors, which I burn for,
Should give the reassurance that I yearn for,
And fill my soul with lasting confidence
In all the charming bounties you dispense.

Elmire: (coughs to warn her husband).
How fast you move against a woman’s heart!
Must you exhaust our kindness from the start?
She immolates herself to offer you
A sweet avowal, but that will not do,
And you will not be satisfied unless
At once she grants her utmost tenderness.

Tartuffe: The less we merit, the less we dare expect,
and words alone don’t have enough effect.
Such perfect bliss arouses our suspicion,
And our belief awaits its full fruition.
I’m so aware of my indignity,
I cannot credit my felicity,
And shall not – that is, Madame, until
Your acts attest your genuine good will.

Elmire: My, but your love is the despotic kind,
And puts me in a troubled state of mind!
It presses for a dictatorial sway,
And violently wants to have its way!
Must you pursue at such a frantic pace?
And am I not allowed a breathing space?
It is becoming to employ such rigor,
To urge your points with such relentless vigor,  
And, when our weakness puts us in your hands,  
Press your advantage with such strong demands?

Tartuffe: But if you countenance this suit of mine,  
Why do you then refuse me such a sign?

Elmire: But thus I would offend, beyond a doubt,  
That Heaven that you love to talk about.

Tartuffe: If Heaven is all that leads you to resist,  
Such obstacles are easily dismissed;  
Do as I ask, and set your mind at ease.

Elmire: But they frighten us so with Heaven’s decrees!

Tartuffe: These foolish fears, Madame, I can dispel,  
And all your scruples won’t be hard to quell.  
It’s true, there are some pleasures Heaven denies;  
But there are ways to reach a compromise.  
Yes, now there is a science that succeeds  
In stretching consciences to meet our needs,  
And can correct, by a sublime invention,  
An evil deed just by a pure intention.  
To all this there are keys I can provide you;  
All you need do, Madame, is let me guide you.  
Content my longings, free yourself of dread:  
If there is sin, I’ll take it on my head.  
You’ve a bad cough, Madame.

Elmire: I’m tortured by it.

Tartuffe: I have a bit of licorice; won’t you try it?

Elmire: It’s a persistent cold, and I can tell  
That all your licorice won’t make it well.

Tartuffe: That’s a shame.

Elmire: Yes, more than words can say.

Tartuffe: Your scruple, then, is easy to allay:  
Our secret will be safe with us alone,  
And there’s no evil if the thing’s not known.  
The one offense lies in the public shame,  
And secret sin is sin only in name.
Tartuffe: Ah, Madame! It is delightful indeed to hear such words from the lips of the woman one loves! Their honey sets coursing through my whole being sensations sweeter than any I have ever know before. To find favour in your eyes is my principal care and all my hope of paradise lies in your love. Yet forgive this heart of mine if it dares to doubt of its own felicity. I might interpret what you say as a virtuous stratagem to induce me to give up my impending marriage. And if I may put the matter to you frankly, I shall place no faith in your sweet words unless I am first vouchsafed some small foretaste of the favours for which I yearn – that alone will reassure me that what they say is true and plant in my heart an unshakeable belief in the delectable affection you express for me.

Elmire: (coughing to attract her husband’s attention): Why must you go so fast? Would you have me reveal everything I feel for you all at once? It has cost me dear to confess my tenderest regard for you and it’s still not enough! Is there no way of satisfying you except by taking matters to ultimate lengths?

Tartuffe: The less deserving we are, the less we dare to hope. Our dearest wishes take little comfort in words and we place little faith in the prospect of felicity: we must enjoy it before we can believe in it. Knowing myself how little I deserve your favours, I doubt the outcome of my boldness. I shall not believe it, Madame, until you give me proofs strong enough to satisfy my passion.

Elmire: Heavens! How masterful you are when passion speaks! I’m left not knowing where I am! Your love has a power over other people which is quite irresistible: how imperiously it insists on having what it wants! Gracious! Is there no way of escaping your attentions? Won’t you even allow me a moment to catch my breath? Is it decent to be quite so peremptory and give no quarter in demanding to have what you have asked for? How can you press a person so hard and take advantage of the fondness she has for you?

Tartuffe: But if you look upon my advances with a favourable eye, why refuse me convincing proof?

Elmire: How can I consent to what you ask without offending Him whose name is ever on your lips?

Tartuffe: If fear of Heaven is the only barrier to my passion, that is an obstacle I can easily remove. It is not something that should hold you back.

Elmire: But are we not told to fear the wrath of Heaven?

Tartuffe: I can dispel these foolish fears for you Madame. I know the art of removing such scruples. It is true that Heaven forbids certain forms of
self-indulgence but one can reach accommodations with Heaven. According to the circumstance of the case, there is a method of easing the constraints of conscience, of rectifying the evil we have done by point to the purity of our intentions. I can instruct you in these secret matters Madame. All you need do is allow yourself to be led by me. Satisfy my desire and have no fear. I shall be answerable for everything and will take the sin upon myself. That's a nasty cough you have.

Elmire: Yes, I feel as though I am on the rack.

Tartuffe: Would you care for a little of this liquorice water?

Elmire: It's a most obstinate cold, really, and I fear that all the liquorice water in the world won't help me now.

Tartuffe: It's obviously a trial for you.

Elmire: Yes, more than I can say.

Tartuffe: As I was saying then, your scruples can be overcome easily. You can be sure that all this will remain absolutely secret. The harm of an action lies only its being known. The public scandal is what constitutes the offence: sins committed in private are not sins at all.

Tartuffe: It is, dear Madame, a delight to hear such words from someone whom one loves. The honey that trickles through me is one that the mouth has never tasted. My only concern is the joy of pleasing you; my heart is blessed by your confessions. But I hope you will allow that heart to feel a bit uncertain of its happiness. You might simply be trying – honorably – to break off the proposed marriage. Let me be frank: I cannot trust those delicious words you have spoken unless you give me some evidence that you really mean them: your behavior must assure me of your feelings.

Elmire: [She coughs to warn her husband.] What? Do you want to move so quickly, to have me reveal all my affection at once? I have tortured myself by making this confession; isn't that enough for you? Will you only be satisfied by my complete surrender?

Tartuffe: The less merit one has, the less one dares to hope. Words alone, in these matters are little reassurance. We may imagine all sorts of good fortune; we must enjoy it before we believe in it. Since I do not believe I deserve your kindness. I cannot believe the happiness I dare to dream of. Indeed, I cannot believe anything, dear Madame, until actions themselves convinces me.
Elmire: Lord! Your love is tyrannical; it insists on what it wants so violently! I feel overwhelmed! Come on – can’t I prepare properly? Couldn’t you give me a moment to breathe? Is it right to push me like this, to demand what you want the moment you want it? You risk jeopardizing your good reputation when you take advantage of it.

Tartuffe: But if you welcome my advances, why refuse more direct proofs?

Elmire: How could I consent without offending Heaven, of which you speak so often?

Tartuffe: If it’s only Heaven that stands between us, that’s easy for me to deal with; that should certainly not make you hold back.

Elmire: But Heaven’s laws are so frightening!

Tartuffe: Let me chase away your foolish fears, Madame; I know how to dismiss such scruples. It’s true that Heaven forbids certain pleasures, but it’s possible to make bargains. Depending on what’s needed, there are ways to accommodate our consciences and to justify bad acts by the purity of our intentions. I can be your teacher, Madame; you have only to let me be your guide. Satisfy my desire; never fear, I’ll answer for it all and take your sin on my shoulders. You have a bad cough, Madame.

Elmire: Yes, it’s torturing me.

Tartuffe: May I offer you a bit of licorice?

Elmire: It’s a stubborn cold; I fear there’s no remedy for it.

Tartuffe: That’s certainly a shame.

Elmire: Yes, more than I can say.

Tartuffe: In the end, I assure you, it’s easy to dismiss your scruples. I promise complete secrecy; only when others make a fuss can there be any harm. Something is scandalous only when it is known; sin that no one knows is no sin.

Tartuffe: (Long pause. Then...) Oh my. (long pause) Wow (beat), Madame. (beat) It’s such a delight to hear such words from the lips of someone one loves. (beat) The honey that trickles through me is one that the mouth has never tasted.

My only concern at this very moment (beat) is the joy of pleasing you; (pause) My heart is blessed by your confessions. (pause) (He takes a
few steps away from her) Yet please forgive this heart of mine if it
dares to doubt its own happiness.

You might simply be trying – honorably – to prevent the proposed
marriage. (He looks at her for a long pause like a poker player
contemplating a call).

(Then, as he returns to his position in front of her) Let me be frank; I
cannot trust those delicious words you have just spoken unless you
give me some (he leans in gently towards her) evidence that you really
mean them; (she leans back slightly at the waist but otherwise doesn’t
move)

Your behavior must assure me of your feelings.

Elmire: (Pause. She smiles at him and then pretends to not be trying to lean
away from him but to be merely stretching. She then turns her head
and gives three, deliberate coughs into her hands as she looks to the
table. When it’s clear he’s not coming out, she makes a deliberate look
of consternation to the pit, pauses, then faces Tartuffe again who at
that moment moves in for a kiss).

Whoa. (She retreats but laughs afterwards as not to alarm him). Why
move so fast? (She retreats to the other side of the table). It was
torturous for me making that confession. Isn’t that enough for you?
(To Tartuffe but also to beneath the table) Will-you-only-be-satisfied-
with-my-complete-surrender?

Tartuffe: (He begins to move but she counters him and they play cat and mouse
on their respective side of the table.) The less deserving we are, the
less we dare to hope. Since I do not believe I deserve your kindness,
then I can’t believe the happiness I dare to dream of. (beat as they
both stop) And after all, (beat) actions do speak louder than words.

Elmire: I’m starting to think they’ll have to.

Tartuffe: (Laughs like she just told a joke.)

Elmire: (Returns the laughter and bangs on the table three deliberate times)

Tartuffe: (Pauses a moment and then lunges for her downstage of the table).

Elmire: (Jumps away and escapes toward the bench trying to look casual
about it) Hey! Whoa. Give a girl a chance to catch her breath. (She
sits. He continues to approach her slowly). My, you’re merciless. Slow
down a little. I mean, you don’t want to take advantage of my
fondness for you, do you?
Tartuffe: But if you look upon my advances with a favorable eye, why refuse me convincing proof?

Elmire: Well, how could I consent without offending Heaven, of which you speak so often?

Tartuffe: If fear of Heaven is all that stands between me and my passion, well, that is an obstacle I can easily remove. (*beat*) It’s not something that should hold you back. (*On “something” he joins her on the bench trying to put his arm around her*).

Elmire: (*As soon as he does so, she hops up*) You seems so certain. (*She turns around to look at the table and sets herself for walking backwards*). I mean, taking on Heaven… That sounds pretty scary.

Tartuffe: (*Once she turns to face him, he stands straight up. Throughout the next speech, he slowly backs her across the room until she bumps into the table. She works her way around the table without turning her back to him as he continues to approach. They should end up opposite each other across the table*)

Let me dispel any fears you might have, Madame. It’s true that Heaven forbids certain indulgences but (*beat*), trust me on this (*beat*), I know how to handle Heaven. Heaven can be negotiated with. I can teach you how things work Madame. All you have to do is allow yourself to be led by me, (*beat*) satisfy my desire, and you’ll have nothing to worry about. I’ll take ALL the sin upon myself.

Elmire: (*Pause. Then three deliberate coughs, this time much bigger*).

Tartuffe: Wow, That’s one nasty cough you have there. (*On this he begins to walk around the table*).

Elmire: (*She continues to move to keep him opposite her*). It’s driving me crazy.

Tartuffe: Want a cough drop?

Elmire: Trust me, it won’t help.

Tartuffe: That must be aggravating.

Elmire: You have no idea.

Tartuffe: Madame!

(*Rhyming*) No one will know our joys, save us alone, And there’s no evil until the act is known. It’s scandal, Madame, that makes it an offense. And it’s not sin to sin (*beat*) in confidence.
The last rhyming couplet is a liberty I took throughout the adaptation and will be discussed in great detail in the next section. One more technique that I use that is most prevalent in this previous passage is my use of beats and pauses to control the tempo of the scene. This last excerpt contains the most physical staging of the play. When Tartuffe begins to assert pressure on Elmire, he becomes relentless, which is supported by the dialogue. In order to build to this tempo and to differentiate the beginning of this unit with the rest of the scene, I have included deliberate beats and pauses as acting speed bumps:

Tartuffe: (Long pause. Then...) Oh my. (long pause) Wow (beat), Madame. (beat) It's such a delight to hear such words from the lips of someone one loves. (beat) The honey that trickles through me is one that the mouth has never tasted.

My only concern at this very moment (beat) is the joy of pleasing you; (pause) My heart is blessed by your confessions. (pause) (He takes a few steps away from her) Yet please forgive this heart of mine if it dares to doubt its own happiness.

Trained actors should be able to ignore these suggestions and discover the tempos and rhythms of the play for themselves during the rehearsal process. High school actors, on the other hand, I have found truly benefit from these delivery directions. Although the students may not remember each and every beat and pause I feed them as they work to get off book, they at least remember the tempo, which I have established for them for each particular scene.

I believe we were particularly successful with this scene. It demonstrates, sadly late in the process, my ability and willingness to take liberties with the material in order to solve "problems" with the script. For example, with this previous passage, all of the scripts indicate only two specific coughs but leaves it up to the reader to fill in the other coughs. The translations do not even suggest a cough right before Tartuffe comments on Elmire’s bad cough before offering her some sort of licorice (which I changed to a cough drop). I have added additional
coughs to help justify his observation of them. Furthermore, in hindsight, I am pleased with my decision to adapt the line “Actions do speak louder than words” and then adding the line from Elmire, “I’m beginning to think they’ll have to.” This sets up a moment for Elmire to follow up his laughter with an opportunity to break up the coughs with table banging, as if the coughs alone were not doing the job to remind Orgon to come out of hiding.

Since developing this adaptation, I have been exposed to some extremely informative coursework and readings, which certainly would have given me the courage to take even more liberties with my material. A perfect example relative to Tartuffe is in Tim McDonough’s book Acting for Narrative Speeches, which demonstrates the precise kind of problem-solving I hope to utilize in further adaptations:

“Orgon raises his cane in the air to strike the maid only to find that she has gone to her knees in prayer (playing to his recent tendency toward piousness). Orgon decides to make it look like he grabbed his cane to go for a walk not to hit his maid. He then proceeds to transition to the walk.” (240)

This is brilliant as, I discovered in rehearsal, the Orgon-trying-to-hit-Dorine-and-missing moment never quite worked despite our attempts to try it in a variety of ways.

There is one other choice I made with regards to this scene that I feel worked despite the adaptation pre-dating the completion of my university training. In the following (and final) passage of The Table Scene, Elmire gives her brilliant speech where she is addressing both Tartuffe and Orgon at the same time before succumbing to Tartuffe’s desires. When I directed this speech (with the help of my two actors and the trust we had established), I had Elmire take complete control of how this would take place. Throughout the speech, she was both getting herself into a position of submission while grabbing the actor playing Tartuffe and literally manhandling him around and into the position she allowed him to be.
This worked well for both actor and audience comfort-level and is perfectly consistent with Elmire’s nature, which is composed and in control throughout the entire play. Additionally, it allowed Tartuffe to stalk her mercilessly throughout the scene before her speech, which is crucial in order for the action to mirror the dialogue. After her speech I had him “move in for the kill” which amounted to nothing more than him kissing her neck. Though this was his only action before she halted the proceedings, much cat-and-mouse business took place during the lines leading up to that kiss to show a progression of Tartuffe’s predatory nature. The aforementioned cat-and-mouse business is carefully detailed in the previous passage.

The remainder of The Table Scene demonstrates many of the principles that I have discussed throughout this unit with regards to my methodology including suggestions for inflection, scripting the tempo, motivational blocking, and other examples of my subjective interpretation of the script to try and keep the material fresh for the high school actor and audience:

Elmire: (après avoir encore toussé)  
(Molière)  
Enfin je vois qu’il faut se résoudre à céder,  
Qu’il faut que je consente à vous tout accorder,  
Et qu’à moins de cela je ne dois point prétendre  
Qu’on puisse être content, et qu’on veuille se rendre.  
Sans doute il est fâcheux d’en venir jusque-là,  
Et c’est bien malgré moi que je franchis cela;  
Mais puisque l’on s’obstine à m’y vouloir réduire,  
Puisqu’on ne veut point croire à tout ce qu’on peut dire,  
Et qu’on veut des témoins qui soient plus convaincants,  
Il faut bien s’y résoudre, et contenter les gens.  
Si ce consentement porte en soi quelque offense,  
Tant pis pour qui me force à cette violence;  
La faute assurément n’en doit pas être à moi.

Tartuffe:  
Oui, Madame, on s’en charge, et la chose de soi.

Elmire:  
Ouvrez un peu la porte et voyez, je vous prie,  
Si mon mari n’est point dans cette galerie.
Tartuffe: \textit{Qu’est-il besoin pour lui du soin que vous prenez?}
\textit{C’est un homme, entre nous, à mener par le nez.}
\textit{De tous nos entretiens il est pour faire gloire}
\textit{Et je l’ai mis au point de voir tout sans rien croire.}

Elmire: \textit{Il n’importe. Sortez, je vous prie, un moment,}
\textit{Et partout, là dehors, voyez exactement.}

Elmire: \textit{[After coughing again].} Very well then, I see that I must make up my
mind to yield and consent to accord you everything you wish. It’s no
use hoping that anything less will satisfy or convey conviction. It’s
hard indeed to go to such lengths: it’s very much against my will that I
do so but since, it seems, I have to do it, since I’m not believed in spite
of all I’ve said, since proofs still more convincing are required – I must
resign myself to doing what’s required of me. But if in consenting I
offend, so much the worse for him who forces me to such extremity.
The fault can surely not be accounted mine.

Tartuffe: Yes, Madam, upon me be it and...

Elmire: Just open the door a moment and make sure that my husband isn’t in
the gallery.

Tartuffe: Why worry about him? Between ourselves – he’s a fellow one can
lead by the nose. He glories in our association. I’ve got him to the
stage where though he saw everything with his own eyes he wouldn’t
believe it.

Elmire: All the same, do go out a moment, please, and have a good look round.

Elmire: \textit{(Having coughed once more:)}
\textit{Well, clearly I must do as you require,}
\textit{And yield to your importunate desire.}
\textit{It is apparent, now, that nothing less}
\textit{Will satisfy you, and so I acquiesce.}
\textit{To go so far is much against my will;}
\textit{I’m vexed that it should come to this; but still,}
\textit{Since you are so determined on it, since you}
\textit{Will not allow mere language to convince you,}
\textit{And since you ask for concrete evidence, I}
\textit{See nothing for it, now, but to comply.}
\textit{If this is sinful, if I’m wrong to do it,}
\textit{So much the worse for him who drove me to it.}
\textit{The fault can surely not be charged to me.}
Tartuffe: Madam, the fault is mine, if fault there be,
And...

Elmire: Open the door a little, and peek out;
I wouldn’t want my husband poking about.

Tartuffe: Why worry about the man? Each day he grows
More gullible; one can lead him by the nose.
To find us here would fill him with delight,
And if he saw the worst, he’d doubt his sight.

Elmire: Nevertheless, do step out for a minute
Into the hall, and see that no one’s in it.

Elmire: (coughs again). I see I’ll have to yield to your behest.
(Frame) And grant you everything that you request.
Since nothing else will do, I guess I must,
To make you happy and to win your trust.
I wish you were not so demanding, though;
You press me further than I want to go;
But since you so insist on nothing less,
And doubt my word unless I acquiesce,
Since full conviction is what you require,
I must give in, and do as you desire.
If this is bad, if I am wrong to do it,
So much the worse for you, who drive me to it;
And I am not to blame, assuredly.

Tartuffe: I’ll take full responsibility.

Elmire: Open the door, will you, and take a glance;
See if my husband’s there by any chance.

Tartuffe: Why bother with precautions such as those?
He is a man to lead round by the nose;
And he’s so glad I have these talks with you,
He’d see the worst and swear it wasn’t true.

Elmire: No matter; for a moment, please go out
And have a very careful look about.

Elmire: (coughs again): Very well, I see that I must make up my mind to
submit and agree to give you everything you want. It’s no use hoping
that anything less will satisfy you or that just saying I surrender will
do. Obviously, it is hard that things should come to such a pass and it
is vey much against my will that I should take such a step. But since
you insist on leaving me no choice, since you refuse to believe all I've
been saying and since you require more convincing proofs, I must
agree to do what will give satisfaction. But if in consenting I offend,
then so much the worse for the man who forces me to such extreme.
The fault can surely not be accounted mine.

Tartuffe: Yes Madame, on my head be it, and –

Elmire: Open the door a moment and please look and make sure if my
husband isn't in the gallery.

Tartuffe: Why are you so worried about him? Between ourselves, he's the sort
of man who's easily led by the nose. He takes immense pride in our
little talks together, and I've got him to the stage where he could see
anything with his own eyes and not believe it.

Elmire: All the same, please step outside a moment and take a good look
round.

Elmire: [Having coughed again.] Well, I see I must surrender, and let you have
your way. I can't expect you to be content with less. I give in. I'm
sorry that things have gone so far, that I must yield despite myself.
But since you insist on it, since you won't believe what I have said, and
require more convincing proof, I'm forced to make you happy. If
doing so carries with it some guilt, so much the worse for the one who
forces me; surely I am blameless.

Tartuffe: Yes indeed, Madame; I am responsible, and the act in itself...

Elmire: Please open that door, and look to be sure that my husband isn't in the
hall.

Tartuffe: What need to be so careful? He is, between us, a man you can lead by
the nose; he's proud of our relationship, and I've persuaded him to see
everything and to believe nothing.

Elmire: Never mind that; please take a good look.

Elmire: (Desperately coughs AND hits the table one last time)
(Steiner) (Pause. Then, exasperated) Alright. Alright! I SEE NOW that I'll
simply HAVE to come to terms with the fact that I must give you
everything you want.

(To Orgon) It's no use hoping that anything less will satisfy you.
But since you CLEARLY insist on leaving me NO CHOICE. Since you OBVIOUSLY require more PROOF, (beat) I RESIGN MYSELF to do what is required of me.

(beat) I hope you’re happy! (beat) Remember, you’re making me do this. If consenting carries with it some guilt, SO MUCH THE WORSE FOR THE ONE WHO FORCES ME. (beat). **It’s not MY fault.**

Tartuffe: Yes, Yes! Madame, I’ll take ALL the blame. *(He moves in for the kill).*

Elmire: *(After awhile)* Wait. Wait-wait-wait-wait-wait. *(Takes a deep breath and exhales quick).* Could you go into the hallway and just make sure my husband’s not there?

Tartuffe: What are you worried about him for? Hey, between you and me, the guy’s a maroon. He likes seeing us together. And, trust me, by now I’ve got him seeing everything and believing nothing.

Elmire: *(Pulling him by the arm up the steps)* I know, sweetie, but just do it for me. Okay? It will help me relax. *(sweetly)* P-l-e-a-s-e.

*(He goes to the top of the steps, turns and, blows her a kiss. She pretends to be smitten from his gesture. She freezes until Orgon gets out from under the table.)*

**Rhyming Verse**

I made my decision very early in the play selection process of presenting a non-rhyming *Tartuffe*. The first version I read was Richard Wilbur’s translation with iambic pentameter rhyming verse. This version beautifully brought Molière impressively to life using rhyming English. Read how perfectly Wilbur captures Molière’s clear characterizations of Orgon and Elmire, while advancing the plot in rhyming verse:

Elmire: I am amazed, and don’t know what to say;
Your blindness simply takes my breath away.
You are indeed bewitched, to take no warning
From our account of what occurred this morning.

Orgon: Madame, I know a few plain facts, and one
Is that you’re partial to my rascal son;
Hence, when he sought to make Tartuffe the victim
Of a base lie, you dared not contradict him.  
Ah, but you underplayed your part, my pet;  
You should have looked more angry, more upset.  

Elmire: When men make overtures, must we reply  
with righteous anger and a battle-cry?  
Must we turn back their amorous advances  
With sharp reproaches and with fiery glances?  
Myself, I find such offers merely amusing,  
And make no scenes and fusses in refusing;  
My taste is for good-natured rectitude,  
And I dislike the savage sort of prude  
Who guards her virtue with her teeth and claws,  
And tears men’s eyes out for the slightest cause:  
The Lord preserve me from such honor as that,  
Which bites and scratches like an alley-cat!  
I’ve found that polite and cool rebuff  
Discourages a lover quite enough.

As impressive as these lines appear, for hours long after I continue to hear  
rhyming verse inside my head, finishing each sentence before it’s said. If this is the  
effect reading has on me, ... Well, you get idea.

This is what happens to me personally after reading just a short passage. My  
fear was that rhymes performed for an entire evening would multiply that effect. Perhaps with gifted actors or the play performed in the original French, this could  
succeed without sounding like an evening of Dr. Seuss. But with my high school  
students and a modern audience, I made the decision, as other translators had made  
before me, to do my adaptation in non-rhyming prose. I am not, as it turns out, the  
only Molière adaptor to feel this way. In his introduction to School for Wives,  
Richard Wilbur concurs with regards to the dangers of trying to perform  
mechanically unvarying rhymes during a performance: “This translation has aimed  
at a thought for thought fidelity, and has sought in its verse to avoid the  
metronomic, which is particularly fatal on the stage” (Molière xiii) (31).

Many reviews of rhyme-translated productions take umbrage with the  
monotonous tendency of actors to overplay the rhyme. In the May 27, 1999 edition
of The New York Times, the reviewer of Tartuffe asserts: “Mr. Ax has used Richard Wilbur’s familiar translation, but many of the actors frequently fall into a sing-song pattern of delivery for the rhymed couplets.”

Some reviews are even more scathing. Here is a review of a professional company’s Tartuffe (with professional actors) validating my biggest fear of mounting a rhyming adaptation with high school students. The following is from the September 16, 1991 review by The New York Times of the Pearl Theatre Company in New York:

What is welcome here is the new translation by Donald M. Frame, best known for his English rendition of Montaigne. It is fresh and racy but not without a certain appropriate formality. Now, if someone could convince most members of this cast that the rhymes in Mr. Frame’s couplets will be heard clearly without any effort by the speaker to produce a monotonous clangor . . . but that might be demanding too much.

My adaptation, however, is not strictly non-rhyming prose. Despite my aversion to a whole evening of rhyme, I felt it was important for both the students and the audience to recall that Molière wrote most of his work in rhyme. I therefore decided to keep the rhyming verse in poignant or poetic places. Just as musicals take the liberty with their musical numbers when actors break out into song, I chose to include rhyming in my version when someone is trying to express a philosophy in a nuanced way.

In the first scene of the show, Dorine contradicts Madame Pernelle’s opinion of her friend, whom Pernelle claims is virtuous and chaste. I have Dorine go from prose to verse when giving her lengthy philosophy about flirtatious women who are past their prime:

Mme. Pern: My neighbor Daphne, isn’t a gossip. She’s a good Christian woman. And I have heard that she disapproves of the things that go on here in this house.
Dorine: Oh Daphne’s a perfect example. She’s just a prude, now that she’s an old lady.

Mme. Pern: What?!!

Dorine: Sure, when she was attractive she made the most of it. Now she turns her back on a world that’s left her behind. Listen:

(Rhyming) It’s true! She’s strict, devout, and has no taint. To all the world, she seems a saint. But it was time which taught her that disguise; She’s thus because she can’t be otherwise.

As long as men were at her beck and call, She took advantage, and enjoyed it all; But now, her charms not being what they were, She quits a world which is fast quitting her.

And puts on virtue as a proud disguise To hide her faded beauty from our eyes. That’s what becomes of old flirts today: Distressed when all their lovers fall away.

They see no recourse but to play the prude, Uneasy in their dreary solitude. Thereafter, they’re severe with everyone, Condemning all our actions, pardoning none.

And claiming to be pure, austere, and zealous When, if the truth were known, they’re merely jealous, Determined for all others to destroy, The pleasures she no longer can enjoy.

After this poem, I had Dorine give a curtsey and then sit in a chair to put a period on her poem before returning to the regular prose of the play. While this transition back to prose may resemble the suspension of belief that the audience endures at the end of a song when the dialogue continues, I believe the resemblance stops there. In a musical, the break from reality includes the inclusion of music, singing and dancing. But my inclusion of rhyme is not out of the realm of possibility for how people might behave in real life. In a musical version of Tartuffe, this would have certainly been Dorine’s song. In the hands of a Sondheim, it would be a real crowd-pleaser. But in this production, Dorine recites something that she could
easily have memorized because of how passionate she feels about the subject. Because Dorine’s rhyming poem is relatively short compared to the lines of non-rhyming prose, the problem of lingering rhymes in the audience’s head is diminished.

The rhyming also acts as a highlighter for those meaningful phrases or moments of poignancy. In Cleante’s scene with Orgon, I had him rhyme to end one of his speeches to sum up everything that came before it:

Cleante: We’re not saying there aren’t truly religious people out there. We’ve had the good fortune of meeting up with them as well. People who dedicate their lives to helping the poor without recognition. People who show true kindness to their fellow man in Christian ways without making a show of their Christianity.

(Rhyming) These are the men that win my admiration, These are the men who are worthy of emulation. Your man is not that sort at all, I fear; Though I do believe your praise for him to be completely sincere.

In his introduction to *The Misanthrope & Tartuffe*, Richard Wilbur warns directors not give in to the temptation to cut the long speeches (specifically of Cleante with Orgon or Tartuffe when he is declaring his love to Elmire) fearing that the rhyming verse will make the speeches redundant and pointlessly nuanced. Wilbur insists that these plays are thoroughly “written” and that the actor and directors need to find a way to make the speeches work. While it’s true that Cleante’s speeches were worrisome for me as a high school director, I tackled that problem in a unique way, as you will see later in this chapter. Tartuffe’s long speech to Elmire, on the other hand, seemed like a perfect opportunity to keep one of the longest rhyming passages intact. It struck me that the whole speech was clearly memorized after long, obsessive hours of Tartuffe lustfully thinking about Orgon’s wife. I decided, therefore, to make his declaration of love to Elmire a beautiful rhyming poem that he wrote specifically for her.
The result is one of my fondest moments of the production, though one of the least adapted with originality by myself for the modern ear. Because this passage is specifically kept in rhyming verse, I pretty much used only Richard Wilbur and Donald Frame’s translations to help me put them together. I essentially took the rhyming couplets from each of these masters that I felt best suited my adaptation and, subsequently, would lend themselves to be the most accessible for the actor playing Tartuffe and the audience. More importantly, however, because this is a poetic tribute of love, there was significantly less need to adapt these “original” translations into the vernacular. Keeping the language flowery and extraordinary is absolutely appropriate here, and a treat that the audience most definitely deserves:

Wilbur:  
A love of heavenly beauty does not preclude
A proper love for earthly pulchritude;
Our senses are quite rightly captivated
By perfect works our Maker has created.
Some glory clings to all that Heaven has made;
In you, all Heaven’s marvels are displayed.
On that fair face, such beauties have been lavished,
The eyes are dazzled and the heart is ravished;
How could I look on you, O flawless creature,
And not adore the Author of all Nature.
Feeling a love both passionate and pure
For you, his triumph of self-portraiture?

Frame:  
To love eternal beauties far above
Is not to be immune to other love;
Our senses may be easily fascinated
By perfect works that Heaven has created.
It shows itself in others by reflection,
But you alone display its true perfection.
The beauties that upon your face it’s lavished
Dazzle men’s eyes and leave their feelings ravished.
I could not look at you O perfect creature,
And not admire the Author of all nature.
Feeling my heart most fervently impassioned
For this lovely self-portrait he has fashioned.

Benjamin:  
To love eternal beauties far above
Is not to be immune to other love;
Our senses are quite rightly captivated
By perfect works our Maker has created.
It shows itself in others by reflection,
But you alone display its true perfection:
I could not look at you, O flawless creature,
And not admire the Author of all nature.

In this first section, you can see that I cut out a total of four lines of verse. I cut out the two lines about how beauty on Elmire’s face is lavished in a way that dazzles men’s eyes and leaves their hearts ravished. It seemed just redundant enough and perhaps more than the audience could take in with such a long poem. The other two lines were at the end. I tried to make those last two lines about Elmire being created in Gods’ image work, however, in the end, I felt that Tartuffe, stating in the previous two lines, that Elmire’s beauty made him better appreciate God, said it beautifully enough.

Wilbur: At first, I trembled lest that love should be
A subtle snare that Hell had laid for me;
I vowed to flee the sight of you, eschewing
A rapture that might prove my soul’s undoing.
But soon, fair being, I became aware
That my deep passion could be made to square
With rectitude, and with my bounded duty
I thereupon surrendered to your beauty.

Frame: My first reaction was to be afraid
This ardor was a snare the Devil had laid;
And I avoided you as a temptation
That might stand in the way of my salvation.
But finally I knew, O gracious beauty,
That passion need not be at odds with duty,
That I can reconcile it with propriety;
And so I yield to it without anxiety.

Benjamin: My first reaction was to be afraid
This passion must be a trap that the devil had laid;
And so I avoided you as a temptation
That might stand in the way of my salvation.
But finally I knew, O gracious beauty,
That passion need not be at odds with duty.
This time around, only the last two lines were cut. Tartuffe stating that he knows that “passion need not be at odds with duty” already infers that he has resigned himself to the idea of surrender. Trying to make those lines work, then, seemed unnecessarily rhetorical.

Wilbur: It is, I know, presumptuous on my part
To bring you this poor offering of my heart,
And it is not my merit, Heaven knows,
But your compassion on which my hopes repose
You are my peace, my solace, my salvation;
On you depends my bliss – or desolation;
I bide your judgment and, as you think best,
I shall be either miserable or blest.

Frame: I know it audacious on my part
To make you this poor offering of my heart;
But though my efforts are infirm and vain,
I know that you are gracious and humane;
On you depends my hope and quietude,
My wretchedness or my beatitude;
You must decide what lies ahead of me:
Celestial bliss or utter misery.

Benjamin: I know it’s audacious on my part
To make you this poor offering of my heart;
And though my efforts are infirm and vain,
I know that you are gracious and humane.
You are my peace, my solace, my salvation;
On you depends my bliss – or desolation.

You must decide what lies ahead of me:
Celestial bliss or utter misery.

Unlike The Table Scene, this was the first scene I transposed after casting the play. Like The Table Scene, however, it was put together with my Tartuffe in mind. The actor who played the title role was not at the initial auditions. As I have done on a couple of occasions, I could not settle for the male students who initially auditioned for this play. Not one of them was able to show me the intelligence or wit to pull the role off. So I discussed possible candidates with some of my theatre officers, mostly female, who auditioned and were already considered for callbacks.
This particular boy’s name came up and, though I had never met the lad, I approached him with the offer of reading for me to see if he qualified for callbacks. Although reluctant as a senior without a single theatrical experience, he agreed to read for my stage managers and me. I had him read the Richard Wilbur version of this particular poem and, with his keen intelligence and his unbelievably impressive speaking voice, he showed me exactly what I was looking for in a leading man. He read against other actors at callbacks and was cast that same day.

Still hearing this student’s voice in my head, I developed Tartuffe’s love poem and had it ready for the young actor at the first rehearsal. Because of its length and importance, I asked him to memorize it first when learning his lines. He and the speech were both wonderfully mesmerizing for every performance.

Splitting Up Cleante

Cleante is an essential part of Tartuffe. Molière usually employed a voice of reason in each of his plays. Based on a typical Molière full-length play sub-plot, a strong, wealthy father-of-the-house figure makes a choice or succumbs to some obsession, which results in disastrous circumstances for his friends and family. Molière gave a voice to those that wish to see the protagonist’s folly pointed out to him by having other characters comment on his foolishness. This usually manifested itself as criticisms from aggravated wives or, following Commedia dell’Arte tradition, mocking servants. But every so often, Molière would write the role of a wizened middle-aged relative or friend of the deluded narcissist to try and get him to see the light of day. In Tartuffe, that role of l’honnête homme belongs to Cleante.

In Tartuffe, Orgon certainly gets his fair share of back talk from the sassy Dorine, however, Molière chose to restrict most of her criticism to the affairs of Mariane’s heart in addition to the lechery and deceitfulness of Tartuffe. But the play Tartuffe faced severe criticism and condemnation before it’s two rewrites and may
have required a more somber voice to take on the subject matter of religious hypocrisy. In Michael Hawcroft’s *Molière: Reasoning with Fools*, the author asserts with regards to Cleante: “Some of his speeches have been so framed by Molière as to provide an answer to the play’s critics who thought the existence of true piety was not adequately acknowledged.” (113)

Much has been written about these *raisonneurs* of Molière. The aforementioned book by Hawcroft discusses nothing but that singular topic and goes into great detail, in particular, about the essential relationship and discussions between Cleante and Orgon and later Cleante and Tartuffe in chapter four: “*Tartuffe: the raisonneur as brother-in-law and polemicist*”. In his masterful book *Stanislavsky in Rehearsal*, Toporkov dedicates over 12 pages entirely on the importance of making the Orgon and Cleante scene work. While the section concentrates on the countless physical actions required by the actors to make the performances real for the actors (and therefore real for the audience), Stanislavsky is quoted throughout these pages stressing how essential this particular scene is.

These frank discussions between Cleante and Orgon and then later between Cleante and Tartuffe gave way to some very wordy and, at times, lengthy speeches. The speeches of Cleante would be a challenge for an experienced actor to pull off with clarity and in a manner that would hold the audience’s attention. Sadly, I am usually short on experienced male actors at the high school level. Furthermore, the ear of the Garfield Heights High School audience does not tend to be so sophisticated as to fully appreciate how many concise arguments Molière packed into each of Cleante’s speeches. Many translators have used various tactics in how to deal with this problem. Some, of course, just left the speeches as intact as possible and simply attempted to translate them word-for-word. Others, I noticed while adapting my version, took the liberty of cutting out a sentence or two where they felt the point was made. More modern translators such as Ranjit Bolt went so far as to markedly shorten the Cleante speeches to assuage the modern attention span. Bolt also adapted his *Tartuffe* translation in rhyming couplets which, I would imagine, could
get tedious with Cleante, page-after-page, trying to plead his case with Orgon and Tartuffe.

But just as Ranjit Bolt made a choice to simply reduce these speeches significantly in his translation, I decided to shorten them in addition to splitting the role of Cleante into two separate characters. The decision to write the second Cleante was not an immediate one. After reading the play numerous times in the months and then weeks leading to auditions, I found the idea appealing but not absolutely essential. It was my intention, after all, to do this play justice and to try and be as faithful to the original as possible.

At auditions, there were two male actors that came the closest to what I was looking for in Cleante. Neither actor had any experience on stage, which is an extremely common phenomenon when trying to cast a high school play in my district. This is particularly true with male actors. There is a community theatre youth group in Garfield Heights that works with students from 3rd to 8th grade. Every year, the organization attracts around 25-30 students across the district to learn how to sing, dance and act every Saturday morning throughout the year. At the end of the school year, the students put on a performance in the Garfield Heights Center for Performing Arts; the same facility we use for our high school productions. I have seen every one of these performances for the past five years and the ratio of girls to boys is almost always around 8-1. This, coupled with the fact that the only community theater in town (The Garfield Players) rarely mounts productions with kids in them results in very few young men having the exposure and training necessary to arrive to a high school theatre audition with anything resembling experience. If I’m lucky, they’ve been involved in a church skit or two where they at least know the concept of rehearsing and performing for an audience, although usually from simple scripts and without any meaningful direction to speak of.

My two front-runners for Cleante happened to be best friends. The better of the two, we’ll call him David, was a tall, mild-mannered young man that in my mind perfectly captured the calm, “voice of reason” that was essential for Cleante. His
best friend, let’s call him Nick, was significantly rougher around the edges and came off as abrasive when reciting lines, particularly compared to David’s more matter-of-fact delivery. Although David was the clear choice for Cleante with regards to competition, I still needed to be convinced that he could handle the lengthy and, at times, tedious speeches that are essential in successfully presenting the challenging role that is Orgon’s brother-in-law. I therefore called-back Nick for the role of Cleante in addition to David for two important reasons: The first reason was, quite frankly, as a courtesy to the boys who were such good friends and enjoyed doing everything together. The second reason was to give David a feeling of competitiveness to try and get him to work harder at making his Cleante audition speeches as convincing and natural as possible.

Long after the Tartuffe callback auditions had ended and all of the actors had seemingly vacated the performing arts center, I was sitting with my student producer and student stage manager on stage, which is somewhat of a tradition of mine at the end of a long week of auditions, to solicit their opinions before making final casting decisions. One of the things that both my stage manager and producer had agreed on was that, while David was easily the better choice for Cleante, it was a shame that there was clearly no other role for Nick since he just wasn’t right for any of the other roles. Nick was gregarious and well-liked and would be particularly missed by David as they clearly were hoping to do the fall show together. As this particular discussion about the role of Cleante was taking place, David and Nick walked back into the auditorium together. While the other actors were content to wait until the cast list was posted, these two students were eager to learn which direction I was heading with regards to Cleante. I decided to share with them both my preference for David as well as my regret that there may not be a place in Tartuffe for Nick. The boys suspected this to be the case and had returned before I left with the hopes that I would consider the possibility of them sharing the role.

I don’t double cast. I find that it takes the entire rehearsal process for a single amateur actor to learn the lines, internalize the material, develop the
blocking, come to realize their role in the big picture of the production, and still be ready for a polished performance by opening night. By double casting, the actors would each have half the rehearsal time to be at performance level, I would need the time and energy to do scenework with each of them to get them discover the material in a way that touches them personally, and it would interfere with the connection they would need to make with the other actors in their scenes. They clearly wanted to be in the show together, however, and I understood their desire. Furthermore, I was experienced enough at directing high school productions to know that by sticking to a directorial decision (to only cast the stronger and more adroit actor for the role) that I faced the possibility of losing them both without another Cleante in sight.

I shared with them my thoughts of splitting up the long speeches by casting two Cleantes in order to try to get their scene partners (Orgon and Tartuffe) to see reason. I explained that these two brothers-in-law would act as Good Cop/Bad Cop in Orgon and Tartuffe’s ears. They would always be together and would serve the same purpose as a singular Cleante. The boys were instantly elated by the idea and I dismissed them with the promise of considering the modification.

It was not entirely pressure from the student’s enthusiasm that allowed me to come to this decision. When I toyed with the idea of two Cleantes during my summer reading and pre-audition translating, it struck me how his speeches with Orgon and Tartuffe had two distinct voices: One using reason and pleading to a sense of decency and the other using warnings and coercion. David and Nick separately exuded these characteristics. Even the conversation we had after callbacks was very akin to how I pictured the role of Cleante being split up. David was soft-spoken and tried to make me see the benefits of them both being in the production and Nick was almost trying to infer that whichever one I cast would not be as happy or good as they could be if the other was not involved. This encounter with the boys was truly life imitating art and is what, more than anything, led to the
creation of two distinct characters, each with their own personalities, but with a singular purpose and determination. David and Nick’s friendship also made the decision a natural one, as they were clearly like brothers off stage already in their personal lives.

In deciding to move forward with this decision, the first thing I needed to do before adapting the role into two separate parts was to find a name for the second Cleante. I was determined to take my inspiration for this name from Molière himself. Molière reused stock characters in many of his plays. In play after play, Molière’s *Commedia dell’Arte* influenced comedies were populated by a dominating father figure, a lady of the house or mother figure, two young lovers, at least one older person (in the form of an incompetent professional or lecherous manipulator), and, of course, comedic and cheeky servants.

So free was Molière in reusing these characters that he oftentimes simply reused their names for different plays. A daughter/female lover in *The Miser* was named Mariane just as it was in *Tartuffe*. The young lover in *Tartuffe*, Valere, is also the same name as a young lover in *School for Husbands*, a young lover in *The Flying Doctor*, a young lover in *The Miser*, and a young servant in *The Doctor in Spite of Himself*. Molière used the now-evocative name Clitandre as the name of a young lover in not one but four of his full-length plays (*Les Femmes savants, The Misanthrope, L’Amour médecin, and George Dandin or The Abashed Husband*).

The name Cleante has also been used numerous times by Molière but usually as an alternate young hero rather than the older, wiser confidant as he is in *Tartuffe*. Cleante was the name of a young male lover in *The Imaginary Invalid* and in *The Miser* he is actually the young lover to Mariane. There’s even a young suitor named Cleonte in *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*.

So there was some historical precedent with regards to Molière and the naming of his characters. I was short on time and in my haste made a decision based on coincidence rather than hard research. When I went looking for examples of oft-used Molière names, I came across *The Miser*. There in the list of characters
were the names Valere, Mariane and Cleante. It felt like providence to me. So struck was I by number of Tartuffe names in The Miser that I took it as a sign that I was in the right place. I went ahead and gave my Tartuffe-Cleante’s brother the name of Harpagon, a decision I now regret.

It seemed reasonable to me at the time. The batch of similar names from Tartuffe had resonated with me (a sense that had served me well in forty years of rehearsing) and Harpagon was a grown-up male figure in The Miser. But as I now know from further research and hindsight, Harpagon was not just a male figure in The Miser but also the key master-of-the-house figure (and a tyrannical one at that). His name being similar to Orgon’s name should have been a clue for me as Orgon is, of course, the master-of-the-house in Tartuffe. And the similarly named Argan from The Imaginary Invalid is yet another example of a Molière-created head-of-household leading father who, like Orgon, tries to wed his daughter to someone she does not love. Like many of these similar Molière situations, the daughter not only does not love the selected fiancée (usually a much older man) but is also secretly in love with another.

More importantly than what the brother-in-law is not when seeking stock-character inspiration for a name should have been to find more of a Molière raisonneur like Cleante himself. Someone who, as David Coward puts it in his introduction to The Miser and Other Plays, can “put a comprehensive case for moderation and le juste milieu.” If I ever go back and remount this production, I think I would choose a more appropriate name such as Philinte (the raisonneur in The Misanthrope, Beralde (the raisonneur in The Imaginary Invalid), or my first choice, Chrysalde. Chrysalde is a friend of Arnolphe’s in L’École des Femmes, a play I had not read until after mounting Tartuffe. Chrysalde is very much the same Molière agent-of-reason character as Cleante. He desperately tries to dissuade Arnolphe from following through with his disastrous plans and is ignored in a similar way as Cleante is ignored by Orgon in Tartuffe. Chrysalde is also a more suitable name since Cleante and Chrysalde rolls off the tongue and seems consistent with the way some parents tend to name their children in a similar fashion.
Chrysalde is also another Molière brother-in-law character as he is brother-in-law to Agnes’ father, Enrique.

Having settled for the unfortunate name of Harpagon for the second brother-in-law, I proceeded to adapt my Tartuffe script even further. The first major scene of theirs that I worked on involved Cleante and Harpagon trying to convince Orgon the error of his ways. What I remember fondly about writing this scene was that the actor that was cast as Orgon (an affable and loyal actor with whom I had worked with before) was the person that talked David and Nick (two non-actors) into auditioning in the first place. Like many new actors, I could tell that my Cleante and Harpagon were frustrated with some of the unfortunate characteristics of being in a play, such as having to wait while others rehearsed their scenes or having to endure the process (and sometimes tediousness) of blocking. But I knew as I wrote this scene that they would enjoy working with their friend playing Orgon. Not only would they have the lion’s share of the lines for these rehearsals, they would also get to experience the sensation of double-teaming their friend. Knowing this helped energize my enthusiasm for adapting this scene and the rehearsals with the three of them did not disappoint.

The scene with Orgon and Cleante is Act I, Scene V. Here for the benefit of a comparison with an original (professional) translation with my adaptation is the end of Act I, Scene V of John Wood’s 1959 Tartuffe reprinted in The Misanthrope and Other Plays:

Orgon: You wouldn’t believe the lengths to which his piety extends: the most trivial failing on his own part he accounts a sin: the slightest thing may suffice to shock his conscience – so much so that the other day he was full of self-reproach for having caught a flea while at his prayers and killed it with too much vindictiveness.

Cleante: Gad! You are crazy, brother, that’s what I think – or are you trying to pull my leg with a tale like this? What do you intend all this foolery...

Orgon: Brother, what you are saying savours of atheism. You are somewhat tainted with it at heart. As I have warned you a dozen times you’ll bring some serious trouble upon yourself.
Cleante: That's the way your sort of people usually talk. You would have everyone pureblind as yourselves. If one sees things clearly one's an atheist: whoever doesn't bow the knee to pious flummery is lacking in faith and respect for sacred things: No, No! Your threats don't frighten me! I know what I'm talking about and Heaven sees what's in my heart. We are not all duped by humbugs. Devotion, like courage, may be counterfeit. Just as, when honour puts men to test, the truly brave are not those who make the biggest noise, so the truly pious, whose example we should ever follow, are not those who make the greatest show. What! Would you make not distinction between hypocrisy and true religion? Would you class both together, describe them in the same terms, respect the mask as you would the true face itself, treat artifice and sincerity alike, confound appearance and reality, accept the shadow for the substance, base coin for true? Men, in the main, are strangely made. They can never strike the happy mean; the bounds of reason seem too narrow for them: they must needs overact whatever part they play and often ruin the noblest things because they will go to extremes and push them too far. This, brother, is all by the way –

Orgon: Yes, yes, there's no doubt you are a most reverend doctor. You have a monopoly of knowledge, you are unique in wisdom and enlightenment, Sir Oracle, the Cato of our age. In comparison the rest of us are fools –

Cleante: No, brother. I'm no reverend doctor; I've no monopoly of knowledge. I merely claim to be able to discriminate between false and true. Just as I know no kind of man more estimable than those who are genuinely religious, nothing in the whole world nobler or finer than the holy fervour of true piety, so I know nothing more odious than those whitened sepulchers of specious zeal, those charlatans, those professional zealots, who with sacrilegious and deceitful posturings abuse and mock to their heart's content everything which men hold most sacred and holy; men who put self-interest first, who trade and traffic in devotion, seek to acquire credit and dignities by turning up their eyes in transports of simulated zeal. I mean the people who tread with such extraordinary ardour the godly road to fortune, burning with devotion but seeking material advantage, preaching daily the virtues of solitude and retirement while following the life of courts, shaping their zeal to their vices, quick, revengeful, faithless, scheming, who when they wish to destroy, hide their vindictive pride under the cloak of religion. They are the most dangerous in that they turn against us in their bitter rage the very weapons which men revere and use the passion for which they are respected to destroy us with a consecrated blade. One sees all too much of falsehood such as this. Yet the truly devout are easy to recognize. Our own age offers us
many a glorious example, brother. Look at Ariston, Periander, Oronte, Alcidamus, Polydore, Clitander! Their claims no one can deny: their religion is gentle and humane: they don't censure our actions: they would consider such strictures arrogant: leaving pride of eloquence to others they rebuke our conduct by their own: they don't assume from appearances that others are in fault: they are always ready to think well of people. No 'cabales' for them, no intrigues! Their whole concern is to live virtuously: they show no anger against sinners: they reserve their hate for sin itself: nor do they take upon themselves the interests of Heaven with a zeal beyond anything that Heaven itself displays. These are my sort of men: this is how one should conduct oneself: this is the example one should follow! Your man, however, is of another kind. You vaunt his zeal in all good faith but I think you are deceived by false appearances.

Orgon: My dear brother-in-law, have you finished?
Cleante: Yes
Orgon: [going] I'm much obliged to you.
Cleante: One word, brother, please. Let us leave this topic. You remember that you promised Valere your daughter a hand?
Orgon: Yes.
Cleante: And you named a day for the happy event.
Orgon: True.
Cleante: Why then defer the ceremony?
Orgon: I don't know.
Cleante: Have you something else in mind?
Orgon: Maybe.
Cleante: Do you intend to break your word?
Orgon: I never said so.
Cleante: There is nothing, I believe, to prevent your keeping your promise.
Orgon: That's as may be.
Cleante: Why such circumspection in giving an answer. Valere has asked me to come and see you.
Orgon: God be praised.
Cleante: What am I to tell him?
Orgon: Whatever you please.
Cleante: But I need to know your intentions. What do you mean to do?
Orgon: The will of Heaven.
Cleante: But, speaking seriously, Valere has your promise – are you standing to it or not?

In writing this in 2012, I regret cutting the beginning of Orgon’s speech at the top of this excerpt. When I adapted it in 2009, I may have been overly sensitive about the discussion on atheism. Years later, after developing some political maturity, however, I am struck in wonder by Molière’s prophetic assertions. Just as Molière (speaking through Cleante) claims that anyone that “sees things clearly one’s an atheist” is no different than the way that aspersions are cast in our current political climate. For example, an extremely corporate-friendly congress has been, for over a decade, making legislation that transfers the wealth of our country to the top 1% of the population and yet anyone that dares question this notion is branded a “socialist” or accused of waging class warfare by the corporate-owned news media. Just as Molière follows that jewel of wisdom with “whoever doesn’t bow to the knee to pious flummery is lacking in faith and respect for sacred things” is no different than a politician questioning congressional saber rattling (during a build up to an unnecessary war) being called “unpatriotic” or “treasonous” by the aforementioned media.

It’s no wonder that Molière would be so inclined to raise these issues after his original version of Tartuffe was banned in 1664 (and again in 1667) as a result of overt political tactics from religious leaders who had influence with the king. It’s no wonder that you can hear Molière’s rage when he has Cleante go on and on about religious hypocrites and manipulative parasites preying on the people who genuinely have a passion for their faith and beliefs.
While there is no doubt that Molière was able to pack so many eloquent words and expressions together beautifully to make his arguments in Cleante's speeches as illustrated in the excerpt above, I knew that they would be more than an amateur, teenage actor could muster believably and would be too wordy for my audiences, who were already suspending their impatience for classical theatre. Here is how I chose to adapt the above scene for the modern high school actor and audience:

**Orgon:** And oh, he's so hard on himself. He confessed to me tearfully the other day that he had caught a fly that was irritating him while he was praying and accidentally killed it in a fit of anger.

**Harpagon:** (Pause. Cleante and Harpagon look at each other) Give me a break.

**Cleante:** (Pause) Brother. Are you playing a trick on us? (Orgon looks confused by the question.)

**Harpagon:** C'mon, people pretend to be religious the way others pretend to be brave. The truly brave display their courage when the chips are down but the truly pious man never shows off. I mean it's as though you can't tell the difference between the mask and the true face.

**Orgon:** So I'm just an idiot being taken for a chump, is that it? You two geniuses just show up here and, without ever having met the man, get to tell me the way things are.

**Cleante:** Orgon, please. We don't mean to come off as presumptuous. But you have to understand that in our travels we've had some experience dealing with these charlatans. People who dedicate their souls to their own self-interest.

**Harpagon:** The sad truth is, there are people out there that treat religion as though it were a business.

**Cleante:** We're not saying there aren't truly religious people out there. We've had the good fortune of meeting up with them as well. People who dedicate their lives to helping the poor without recognition. People who show true kindness to their fellow man in Christian ways without making a show of their Christianity.

(Rhymining) These are the men who win my admiration, These are the men who are worthy of emulation. Your man is not that sort at all, I fear; Though I do believe your praise for him to be completely sincere.
Orgon:  (Long Pause. Then...) Are you through?  (Cleante: pauses but then just walks away disappointed).

Harpagon:  (Notices his brother giving up and picks up the reins). No, brother, there is actually one other matter we wish to discuss with you. (beat) Did you agree to give your daughter’s hand in marriage to Valere?

Orgon:  I did.

Harpagon:  And you’ve even set a date.

Orgon:  I have.

Harpagon:  Then why do we now hear that you have postponed the wedding?

Orgon:  (pause) I don’t know.

Harpagon:  Have you something else in mind?

Orgon:  Maybe.

Harpagon:  So you are going back on your word?

Orgon:  I didn’t say that.

Harpagon:  Can you think of any reason that would prevent you from keeping your promise?

Orgon:  (Pause. He clearly doesn’t feel comfortable sharing this decision with them. Finally...) Perhaps.

Cleante:  We only ask because Valere was concerned and asked us to inquire about it.

Orgon:  Uh-huh.

Cleante:  (Pause) So, what should we tell him?

Orgon:  I don’t care.

Harpagon:  So what are your plans?

Orgon:  (Standing up. Quoting Tartuffe) “To do as Heaven commands.” (He heads out through the French doors)

Cleante:  Brother, just to be clear... (Orgon stops) You have given your word to Valere. Do you intend to keep it? (beat) Yes or No?
Like professional translators before me, the process of taking the material and making it my own sparked my creative juices. For example, I found that when translating the scenes with Cleante and Harpagon that I began (both consciously and unconsciously) to make Cleante’s words more placating and pacifying while Harpoon’s words started to become more biting and to the point. This creation of a second character also allows one brother-in-law to back off of a discussion (about religious hypocrites) while the other brother-in-law is not deterred by Orgon’s dismissal and throws a dead cat on the table in order to speak up for the absent and wronged Valere.

The other important scene relevant to this discussion is Act IV, Scene I. It involves Cleante trying to convince Tartuffe to act as Christian as he proclaims and to relinquish his claims on Damis’ inheritance, which Orgon gave to Tartuffe in a fit of anger. Here again, I will reprint the scene (this time in its entirety) using David Coward’s revisions from John Woods’ original translation:

Cleante: Yes, everyone’s talking about it and, take it from me, the scandal this news has caused has done your reputation no good. Meeting you like this gives me a timely opportunity to tell you bluntly what I think. I won’t go into details about what people are saying. Talking all that as read and assuming the worst, let’s suppose that Damis did behave badly and you’ve been wrongly accused. Now shouldn’t it be your duty as a Christian man to turn the other cheek and forget any thought of revenge? How can you stand by and see a son turned out of his father’s house, just because you’ve fallen out with him? I repeat, and I’ll make no bones about it, there is no one, high or low, who is not thoroughly shocked. And if you want my opinion, you should calm the situation and not take matters to extremes. Sacrifice your anger to God and reconcile the son with his father.

Tartuffe: Alas, if there were only myself to consider, I would willingly do so. I feel no bitterness toward him. I forgive him completely, I have absolutely nothing against him and would be glad to help him in whatever way I could. But Heaven has an interest in this and Heaven could never agree to it: if he returns to this house, then I must go. After what he’s done, which is quite unheard of, any further contact between us would be a scandal: God knows what people would think! It would be put down to clever manoeuvring on my part. People
everywhere would say that I felt guilty and was putting on a display of charity towards my accuser, that in my heart I was afraid of him and was being nice to him to persuade him in secret to keep his mouth shut.

Cleante: Don’t try to fool me with spurious excuses. All your arguments are far too convoluted. Why do you take it on yourself to defend the interest of Heaven? Does God need our help to punish sinners? Just leave it to Him to take care of divine vengeance. Keep your mind on the forgiveness which He would have us show to those who trespass against us, and forget human justice when you try to follow God’s supreme commandments. Surely silly fears of what people might think cannot dull the brightness of doing a good deed? Of course not. So let us just do what Heaven bids and not allow any other consideration to cloud your judgment.

Tartuffe: I’ve already told you I’ve forgiven him in my heart, which is precisely what Heaven commands. But after this scandal and his insulting behaviour today, Heaven does not require me to live in the same house as him.

Cleante: And does Heaven command you to pay any heed to his father’s silly whims and accept as a gift property to which you have no legal claim?

Tartuffe: People who know me will not think that my actions are those of a self-interested man. Worldly possessions hold few attractions for me. I am not dazzled by their false glitter. If I decide to accept the benefaction which the father is kind enough to offer, it is only because I honestly fear that otherwise the property will fall into the wrong hands and end up being left to people who will put it to sinful use rather than employ it, as I plan to, for the greater glory of God and the good of my fellow men.

Cleante: Come sir, forget your fine scruples. They could give the rightful heir grounds for legal action. Allow him to have what is his, let him take the risk and don’t give it another thought. Think how much better it would be for him to squander the money than for you to be accused of trying to cheat him out of his inheritance. I’m only surprised that you could entertain such an offer without being highly embarrassed. Does true piety lay down any dogma which states that rightful heirs should be deprived of their inheritance? And, assuming Heaven has indeed given you this irresistible aversion to living under the same roof as Damis, wouldn’t it be better to do the decent thing and leave quietly rather than allow the son of the house to be turned out on your
account against all reason? Believe me, it would show you to be a fair-minded and -

Tartuffe: It is now half past three and a requirement of religious observance calls me upstairs. You will forgive me for leaving you so soon.

One of the things I really enjoyed in my adapting of this scene was giving Cleante the lines that appeal to Tartuffe’s sense of virtue and decency with Harpagon chiming in with the lines that accuse Tartuffe of not acting Christian:

Cleante: Yes, everyone is talking about it. Trust me when I tell you that what people are saying doesn’t reflect well upon you. I’m glad we met you, Monsieur, so that we might have this opportunity to talk.

Harpagon: Now we’d like to think that the accusations about you are false and clearly Damis behaved very badly. However, (beat) wouldn’t a true Christian forgive Damis and give up all thoughts of revenge? That’s the Christian thing to do, isn’t it? Turn the other cheek?

Cleante: Is this incident really a reason to allow a father to drive away his own son? Really? How could you live with yourself? (beat) Why not let the matter drop and be known as the good man that patched things up between a father and a son.

Tartuffe: I would love to. I feel no bitterness toward Damis. I’ve forgiven him. I would do anything I can for him but, well, you see, (beat) the interests of Heaven forbids it. (beat)

See, if he returns, I would have to leave. The two of us remaining in this house would be... Why it would be scandalous. I mean, what would people think? They would assume that I was being deceptive in some way. That I was indeed guilty and was living under the same roof as Damis only after striking a bargain with the boy to keep the whole matter between us.

Harpagon: (Pause) Please don’t try and dazzle us with your palaver, Sir. Your arguments are much too convoluted. Does Heaven really need your help in punishing sinners? Leave vengeance to God. That’s His job. Your job is to forgive. (beat) And to follow the Lord’s commandments every once in awhile.
Cleante: Surely the silliness of what people think cannot keep you from dulling the glory of your noble act. (pause) C’mon. (beat) Do the right thing. (long pause) What would Jesus do?

Tartuffe: (Laughing to himself at Cleante’s play) I already told you, I have forgiven the boy in my heart (he looks at Cleante), which is precisely what Heaven has told me to do. (pause) But after today’s scandal and barrage of insults... (pause) Heaven does not wish that I live in the same house with him.

Harpagon: And does Heaven wish you to encourage a silly father’s actions and accept a home and a fortune, of which you have no legal claim to?

Tartuffe: Those who truly know me will know that I would never act out of self-interest. Worldly possessions hold no interest for me.

If I decide to accept this generous gift that his father wishes to give me, it would only be, believe me, to make sure that they did not fall into the wrong hands. To make sure that this property was not being used for sinful purposes but instead to use it, as I intend to, for the greater Glory of God and the welfare of my fellow man.

Cleante: (pause) Sir, (pause) Please (pause) Don’t let excessive scruples allow you to defraud this young man. Even if he did misuse his inheritance, it would look better that you allowed him to make the mistake than you taking everything from him.

Harpagon: (pause) I’m surprised you have no misgivings about this. Doesn’t it bother you that you would be depriving the rightful heir of what he has coming to him?

Cleante: (pause) And if Heaven does tell you that there is an invincible obstacle to living in the same house as Damis, shouldn’t you, as a virtuous man, withdraw rather than allow the family’s son to be driven out on account of you? Believe me, Sir, it would show you to be the fair-minded person that you...

Tartuffe: I’m sorry, but it’s 3:30 and that means I have to go upstairs to my room and perform my religious duties. If you’ll excuse me, gentlemen...

Another advantage of creating the second brother-in-law was the formation of more dramatic blocking opportunities. In the scene above, I had Tartuffe seated center stage in Orgon’s chair. While Cleante passively sat in an adjacent chair and
gave Tartuffe space, I blocked my Harpagon to lean over Tartuffe, in addition to other methods of invading Tartuffe’s physical space. This strategy helped display the differences in the two brothers’ characters and illustrated the Good Cop/Bad Cop approach I was going for in this particular scene.

The King’s Men

From the start, it was my intention to split up the role of “An Officer of the Court” into two actors whom I nicknamed, “The King’s Men.” The reason The King’s Men stuck in my mind for these two officers was after discovering that The Officer and his long monarchy-pleasing, rex ex machina speech at the end was added to the 1669 version, which is the version that was finally accepted by the French monarchy. In this speech, an officer of the court shows up and essentially wraps the play up in a neat little package by asserting that the king (Louis XIV) was much too clever to be fooled by this imposter and was on to Tartuffe from the start. Furthermore, because he is a wise and fair king, he has gone ahead and restored everything that Tartuffe had manipulated from Orgon and has sent the officer to arrest him. Although it is clear that the play was censored twice before this version due to pressure on the king from the clergy, it did not hurt that Molière made the choice to have the play end with the wicked getting what’s coming to him considering Louis XIV’s edict that French plays conform to Neoclassical ideals.

The King’s Men as two actors versus having just a single officer works on a number of levels beyond simply giving another student an acting opportunity. First, in keeping consistent with the goal of making the long speeches more digestible for the amateur actor, there was now half the speech to memorize and perfect. Additionally, a second officer makes more of a physical presence. It seems more reasonable that two officials would take a guilty man away to jail than just one. It also makes it look less likely that Tartuffe would try to make a break for it during or after the long speech. In fact, I blocked the scene so that when one officer was
moving around during the speech, the other officer would stand next to or behind Tartuffe with a hand on his shoulder. Both actors, garbed in the same green uniform, also made them stand out from the rest of the costumes so that there was a royal presence in the room. Only one representative of the king in the same garb would have looked less official. Finally, since I liked the idea of this long speech being one of my selections to be kept in rhyming verse, the two actors trading sections gave the speech more variety and became less tedious as the lines of the speech glided beautifully from one officer to the other.

As mentioned in the introduction, Garfield Heights had gone through a dramatic demographic change over the past ten years. This change, however, had yet to see the same demographic ratio in the theatre as it had throughout the rest of the school. In the interest of building the African-American population in the Garfield Heights theatre community, I am always looking for opportunities to cast black actors in as many roles as possible in my productions. Only three African-American actors auditioned for *Tartuffe.* One of these actors was a transfer student from Bedford Heights and had already obtained some stage experience. I cast him as Monsieur Loyal and he went on to give one of the most important and memorable performances in the show. The other two actors were juniors from Garfield Heights and had not had any prior theatrical experience. While the two, sadly, lacked the ability to handle any of the major roles for this production, I thought it an excellent opportunity to proceed with my original plan to split up the Officer at the end into the King's Men, as the students would have the entire rehearsal period to memorize and impressively execute this final speech together.

Because both actors were accomplished singers and were in the swing choir at our school, I approached them early on in the rehearsal process with the opportunity of doing something musical with the final speech. Although the production was a strict period piece with 17th-century inspired costumes, furniture and scenery, I was willing to end the show with a creative liberty and allow for a modern rap/hip-hop version of the officer's speech if these two actors felt so moved.
to make this modification a reality. Unfortunately, despite their enthusiasm for the idea, the actors eventually chose not to (or were unable to) develop the speech further. I was equally relieved by their choice not to tamper with the speech and was extremely pleased with the traditional ending for Tartuffe and the part they played in an impressive finale.

Since my version of The King’s Men’s speech is in rhyming verse, the best translation to present as the original adaptation is Richard Wilbur’s 1963 translation. The speech, at the end of the play, takes place in Act V, Scene VII:

Officer: Sir, all is well; rest easy, and be grateful.  
We serve a Prince to whom all sham is hateful,  
A Prince who sees into our inmost hearts,  
And can’t be fooled by any trickster’s arts.  
His royal soul, though generous and human,  
Views all things with discernment and acumen;  
His sovereign reason is not lightly swayed,  
And all his judgments are discreetly weighed.  
He honors righteous men of every kind,  
And yet his zeal for virtue is not blind,  
Nor does his love of piety numb his wits  
And make him tolerant of hypocrites.  
Twas hardly likely that this man could cozen,  
A King who’s foiled such liars by the dozen.  
With one keen glance, the King perceived the whole  
Perverseness and corruption of his soul,  
And thus high Heaven’s justice was displayed:  
Betraying you, the rogue stood self-betrayed.  
The King soon recognized Tartuffe as one  
Notorious by another name, who’d done  
So many vicious crimes that one could fill  
Ten volumes with them, and be writing still.  
But to be brief: our sovereign was appalled  
By this man’s treachery toward you, which he called  
The last, worst villainy of a vile career,  
And bade me follow the imposter here  
To see how gross his impudence could be,  
And force him to restore your property.  
Your private papers, by the King’s command,  
I hereby seize and give into your hand.  
The King, by royal order, invalidates  
The deed which gave this rascal your estates,
And pardons, furthermore, your grave offense
In harboring an exile’s documents.

By these decrees, our Prince rewards you for
Your loyal deeds in the late civil war,
And shows how heartfelt is his satisfaction
In recompensing any worthy action,
How much he prizes merit, and how he makes
More of men’s virtues than of their mistakes.

While I only had two rhyming versions of *Tartuffe* to help recreate this eloquent speech, notice that there are still very few lines that I was able to keep exactly the same. Despite the lion’s share of this speech emulating from the Wilbur version, which has been considered the definitive rhyming version of *Tartuffe* for the past 50 years, I still felt the need to alter phrases throughout to make the final and climactic speech of this five-act play more comprehensible. Again, by allowing the audience to stop and refocus onto the next actor, I believe we accomplished this goal rather successfully and saved it from sing-songy tedium:

Officer 1: (To Orgon) Sir, all is well; rest easy, and be grateful.
We serve a King to whom all sham is hateful,
A King who sees into every heart
And can’t be fooled by an imposter’s art.

Officer 2: He honors all the best of humankind;
But zeal for virtue never makes him blind:
Nor does the love of piety numb his wits
And make him tolerant of hypocrites.

Officer 1: His insight penetrated from the start
The twisted treason of that scoundrel’s heart.
Accusing you, Tartuffe revealed his state,
And by an equitable stroke of fate
Led the King to recall his shady fame
For crimes committed under a different name.
His record is a long and ugly one
That would fill ten volumes and still not be done.

Officer 2: But to be brief: Our sovereign was appalled
By this man's treachery towards you, which he called
The last, worst villainy of a vile career,
And bade me follow the imposter here

To see how gross his impudence could be
And force him to restore your property.
Your private papers by the King’s command,
I hereby seize and give into your hand.

Officer 1: The King, by royal order, invalidates
The deed which gave this rascal your estates.

Officer 2: And finally he pardons your offense
In harboring an exile’s documents.
And thus the courage that you once displayed
Against his enemies shall be repaid.

Officer 1: And shows how heartfelt is his satisfaction
In recompensing any worthy action,
How much he prizes merit, and how he makes
More of men’s virtues than of their mistakes.

Cuts and Transitions

_Tartuffe_ was originally presented in three acts (1664) and then five acts (1667 and 1669). The 1669 five-act version is the one that has survived over the centuries and is the version that everybody bases their translations on. Act One has five scenes, Act Two has four scenes, Act Three has seven scenes, Act Four has eight scenes, and Act Five has seven scenes. Each act is supposed to be a self-contained time and place with the scenes, as Molière wrote in the French classical style, representing whenever a character has entered the stage. This style of Molière’s worked very well with my own style as the first thing I do after making the decision to direct a play is to break each scene into units.

Similar to Molière’s method, my units represent a new mini-scene whenever an actor enters or exits the stage. I tell my students that in most cases, the dynamic that is created by the presence or absence of each character changes the mood and dynamics between the people still on stage. That in most cases, each of these mini-scenes has a beginning, middle and end with the people in them behaving in a new
way just as people change their behaviors around certain people in real life depending on who's in the room.

Since I couldn’t have four intermissions, I needed to determine when our single intermission would take place. I decided that it should take place after Act Three. For one thing, Tartuffe doesn’t even appear until Act Three, which is of course one of the beautiful things about this play: the fact that Tartuffe is only talked about for two acts. Also, by the end of the third act, Tartuffe’s villainy has apparently begun to show itself as Damis is thrown out of the house with Tartuffe standing to inherit the boy’s wealth.

I successfully managed to blend the first three acts of the play into a single scene before the intermission. If I were to ever revisit my adaptation and make changes, I would most certainly keep these transitions and strongly recommend that anyone else taking on the directorial chores of this play do likewise as it keeps up the momentum of the act. At the end of Act One, Orgon has had enough of Cleante’s lecturing. Orgon, feeling that his brother-in-law has been condescending and presumptuous walks out leaving Cleante alone. At the top of Act Two, we find Orgon beginning an important conversation with his daughter, Mariane. I decided, instead, to have the ruffled Orgon, dismiss Cleante as Mariane enters at the end of their scene together. Here, for contrast, is the original transition of those acts starting with the end of Act One, Scene Five of John Wood’s translation:

Cleante: But I need to know your intentions. What do you mean to do?
Orgon: The will of Heaven.
Cleante: But, speaking seriously, Valere has your promise – are you standing to it or not?
Orgon: Good-bye. [Exits]
Cleante: I fear he is going to be disappointed in his love. I must warn him of the way things are going.

Act Two, Scene 1

Orgon: Mariane.
Mariane: Yes, father.

Orgon: Come here. I want a word with you in private.

Here, now, is the same section from my version. Keep in mind, for reasons explained in great detail earlier in this chapter, Cleante is joined by a second brother-in-law, Harpagon:

Harpagon: So, what are your plans?

Orgon: To do as Heaven commands. [He heads out through the French doors]

Cleante: Brother, just to be clear... [Orgon stops] You have given your word to Valere. Do you intend to keep it? Yes or no?

[Long pause as Mariane enters at the top of the stairs]

Orgon: Ah, Mariane. Gentlemen, I wish to speak with my daughter. Will you excuse us, please? [He gestures through the French doors]

[They exit]

Orgon: Mariane.

Mariane: Father. [As she descends the steps]

Orgon: Come in, sweetheart, I wish to speak with you.

While Cleante’s line about alerting Valere has been lost, there is nothing confusing to the audience when Valere shows up in Act Two, Scene Four stating, “I just heard some interesting news.” The scene just goes on and it is easily assumed that it is Cleante that alerted the young man to the situation.

The other transition in Act One was a tad trickier, but just as rewarding and effective in keeping the action going. At the end of Act Two, the two lovers have been reconciled thanks to the intervention of Dorine. They are belaboring their goodbyes when Dorine finally takes to chasing them out. The next act (Act Three)
begins with Damis declaring his outrage over the proposed marriage to Dorine. What I have done is have Damis enter from the French doors shouting his vow to the Heavens as Dorine returns from chasing out Valere. As Damis uses some rhyming verse in my version, I shall take the opportunity to use Donald Frame’s rhyming adaptation for the purposes of comparison. Here is Frame’s end of Act Two, Scene Four:

Dorine: Lovers never run out of things to say! Come on, be off.
Valere: (takes one step and comes back) In short...
Dorine: No time for chat. You go out this way, and you go out that.

(Pushes them by the shoulder toward opposite exits.)

Act Three, Scene 1

Damis: Let lightning right this moment strike me down, Let me be called a villain and a clown, If reverence or power holds me back When everything within me cries: Attack!

Dorine: Please moderate your anger if you can: Your father’s only talked about this plan. Not all that men propose becomes a fact, Nor does intention always lead to act.

Now here’s my version without stopping for a scene change. Once again, there’s absolutely nothing lost by eliminating the passage of time.

Dorine: Oh for crying out loud. Okay, time to go. (She pulls him to the steps and shoves him upwards. She then pushes Mariane through the open French doors.)

Valere: You fill me with Joy! And though the Heavens themselves may stand in my way...

Dorine: (After “Joy”) Blah blah blah, (She goes back to pushing him up the steps) I know. I know. Get our here.
(Damis enters through the French doors)

Damis: (Spouting in rhyme) May lightning strike me even as I speak. May all men call me cowardly and weak!

Don't try and stop me! Nothing can keep me from taking matters into my own hands.

Dorine: Take it easy. Your father only talked about it. That's all. People never do everything they say they are going to do. There's a big difference between starting a plan and finishing it.

These transitions make for one continuous, real-time scene from the top of the play to the intermission. This method I have employed is not feasible for the transition between Act Four and Act Five as Tartuffe leaves to do some dirty work and there is a clear passage of time before the arrival of Monsieur Loyal in Act Five.

Of the 31 scenes of Tartuffe, I found it necessary to only cut two. Partly for convenience and partly due to the fact that my Dorine was struggling to learn her lines, I cut this short speech by Dorine, which is the entire contents of Act Four, Scene Two. Richard Wilbur's version went as follows:

Dorine: Stay, Sir, and help Mariane, for heaven's sake! She's suffering so, I fear her heart will break. Her father's plan to marry her off tonight Has put the poor child in a desperate plight. I hear him coming. Let's stand together, now, And see if we can't change his mind, somehow, About this match we all deplore and fear.

Act Four, Scene 3

[Orgon enters]

Orgon: Ah! Glad to find you all assembled here.

The transition from Act Four Scene 1 and Act Four Scene 2 is the exception to Molière's rule of each scene (within an act) being merely an actor entering a scene
as Act Four, Scene 1 ends with Cleante (blown off by Tartuffe) all by himself. The next scene suddenly finds Elmire, Cleante, Dorine, and Mariane with Dorine pleading Mariane’s case to Cleante as seen above. Orgon then enters and Act Four, Scene Three proceeds with Mariane falling to her knees and pleading her own case. So once again, rather than stopping the action for the actors to get into place, I had Cleante and Harpagon all alone for a moment when the French doors open as Orgon is walking away from Mariane who (instead of falling to her knees) is pleading her case by chasing after him (along with Dorine and Elmire):

Mariane: Father, please. I’m begging you. In the name of Heaven, please waive your rights as a father and release me from my obligation to obey you in this manner...

We don’t need Dorine to ask that Cleante plead Mariane’s case since she is pleading her own case from the start. Therefore, Act Four, Scene Two doesn’t even work as exposition. We already know which side of the issue Cleante is on because he spends a great deal of Act Two, Scene One pleading Valere’s case. Furthermore, Cleante’s only line to assist Mariane in Act Four, Scene Three is “If I may offer a word of counsel here...” before getting cut off by Orgon who promises to not follow any advice Cleante has to offer.

To sum up, the cutting of Act Four, Scene Three eliminated unnecessary dialogue, helped move the play along, solved a huge problem of getting Dorine, Mariane, and Elmire on stage by simply chasing after Orgon, and reduced the number of lines that an overwhelmed Dorine had to learn. I simply didn’t have the heart to give her a single additional line over and above what she had already been given. For the record, our Dorine did a delightful job, never dropped a line, and ended up being the most praised and talked about performance immediately following every performance and for weeks after the closing of the production.
The final cut of my adaptation was Act One, Scene Three. After following Madame Pernelle off at the end of Act One, Scene One (leaving Cleante and Dorine for Act One, Scene Two), Elmire and Damis return only to leave after one page of dialogue before Orgon enters at the top of Act One, Scene Four for a scene with Cleante and Dorine (already in the room). All of the dialogue I found to be redundant enough for elimination. Elmire has one line to tell Cleante and Dorine that they should be glad they didn’t follow Madame Pernelle out to receive more of her tongue lashing and that she was going to go lie down before facing her husband upon his return.

Damis has only one line urging Cleante to plead Valere’s case. This line tells the audience that if Valere marries Mariane, he is then free to wed Valere’s sister. While this sort of marital arrangement may have been a common subplot in the French comedies of the 17th-century, it is literally the only time in the entire play that Damis’ stake in the Valere/Mariane wedding is established. Furthermore, Damis’ contention against Tartuffe throughout the remainder of the play is displayed as genuine outrage for Tartuffe’s manipulation of his father, Tartuffe’s strict house rules, the marriage of Tartuffe and Mariane, and Tartuffe’s overt advances toward Elmire.

So, Act One, Scene Two has essential exposition between Dorine and Cleante, and Act One, Scene Four has Orgon entering to have a scene with Dorine and Cleante. Virtually nothing is lost by the elimination of Act One, Scene Three except perhaps precious minutes off of one of the three acts before the audience gets an intermission.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

For a few words or phrases I am indebted to earlier English versions in blank verse or prose.

-Richard Wilbur, Introduction to School for Wives

My investigation has taught me that there are purists and poets when it comes to the art of translation. While my original intention was to do Molière justice, I proceeded to adapt based on my observation that, regardless of the translation utilized, a consistent wit managed to come through. Is Molière’s Tartuffe, then, translate-proof? Perhaps Molière’s intention still comes through no matter who tries their hand at one of his masterpieces. This has apparently been the case with most Tartuffe translations of the past two hundred years.

That theory might hold more weight if I didn’t have this nagging suspicion that Molière may be simply untranslatable. Perhaps none of our translations capture what made Molière so revered both during and after his time. After all, Molière did not write plays to be read but to be performed. His plays were not published until, sometimes, years after their initial production run. Molière’s plays were a template for his theatre company’s particular brand of humor and stage business. This performance style was not quite the slapstick of Commedia dell’Arte but it certainly had evolved and was influenced by that art form. This is what
pleased the audiences of his day and Molière was certainly, at least in part, motivated by the goal of pleasing his audiences. Aren't all translations, then, a compromise between accuracy and accessibility to their intended audience?

Perhaps any translated production of Tartuffe is an invalid production. We know from previous analysis that there are those that believe that the second a word is translated from the original language it is automatically invalid. We also know that the original manuscripts of the 1664 version (as well as the one-performance 1667 version) are lost to us. With the original manuscripts destroyed, even French adaptations of the 1669 version are suspect to the scrutiny of authenticity. Without the 1669 rewrite, however, we would not have the famous and beloved Table Scene, which was not in the original two versions. Those who enjoy the alliteration of the king’s officer’s speech at the end of Act V, would be deprived of Molière’s re-worked 1669 ending as it does not appear in either the original 1664 or 1667 version. The first two versions also have the villain getting away with the crime versus Molière’s re-worked 1669 version. In other words, what is the “original” version of Tartuffe? Even by Molière’s hands there are contradictions.

I believe we succeeded in presenting Moliere’s Tartuffe. The Garfield Heights audiences were engaged and laughed when I expected them to, particularly during The Table Scene. The comments from the public after the performances were genuinely positive and many people stated to me personally their appreciation for being able to enjoy what they considered to be “a classic”. As stated in the body of this paper, however, my one regret is that I was not bolder with my own creativity and subjectivity of my adaptation. It was not until my final scene, The Table Scene, that I truly allowed myself to take whatever steps were necessary to entertain the audience. I am very pleased with the liberties I have taken and almost wished I had taken more, now that I see that translation and adaptation lends themselves to so much interpretation.
I may not have the poetic wit of Ranjit Bolt, however, he above all other Tartuffe translators reinforced my philosophy of always keeping the audience in mind when adapting. Bolt has revised his Tartuffe twice so far, each time keeping what made audiences laugh and tinkering with the rest for opportunities to entertain them further. My concern about such poetic license would be taking what I have adapted too far from the original material, thereby misrepresenting a classic of French drama. Having said that, I respect Bolt’s belief that Molière sought to entertain and if the modern audience needs modern humor and references then so be it.

There is one area that I have always wondered about with regards to my ability to make a bold change to Tartuffe. Ever since I’ve learned that Molière’s original 1664 version had the hypocrite getting away with his crime, I’ve wondered if I could come up with an ending that would have better reflected Molière’s original intention. It is my opinion that we live in a world where gullible masses allow themselves to be manipulated by people in power. Therefore, just as Molière wrote of imposters who took advantage of people who were foolish enough to be taken in by them, I would be tempted to change the ending to reflect that perspective. David Coward, in his introduction to The Miser and Other Plays, intimates a similar belief: “If Don Juan and Tartuffe are stopped in their tracks, it is by means of stagy denouements contrived to please the public, and he leaves us with the uneasy feeling that in real life they would succeed” (Molière xx) (29).

Finally, the process of writing this thesis has forever changed the way that I adapt plays. I will never be able to skip the first page of a play whose origins are in another language without noting who the translator is. Knowing what I know now, before I adapt, I would find it necessary to investigate the body of work of each translator of that particular play. I will carefully read the introductions and translator’s notes to determine if the translator made choices that I agree with before even reading their adaptation. After reading their version, I would investigate past productions by that translator and pursue the critical reaction to those productions.
I have always had a great fondness for Rostand’s *Cyrano de Bergerac*. It is my hope that if my theatre program at Garfield Heights ever draws stronger actors than actresses to the auditions, I would adapt *Cyrano* to the Garfield Heights stage as I did with *Tartuffe*. However, unlike before when I was essentially borrowing blindly from the translations that I had at my immediate disposal, the next time I will proceed only after carefully researching who were considered the most notable experts on the material. Who is considered the Christopher Hampton of *Cyrano de Bergerac*? Who are the Richard Wilburs and Ranjit Bolts of Rostand? Actually, Ranjit Bolt did do a translation of *Cyrano*. Perhaps I’ll start there.


APPENDIX

TARTUFFE: A MODERN ADAPTATION - SCRIPT
TARTUFFE

by

Jean-Baptiste Poquelin
(Moliere)

Translated by Stephen Benjamin
TARTUFFE

Act I, Scene 1

Mme. Pern: Come along, Flipote, I'll not stay in this house another minute.

Elmire: You're walking so fast we can hardly keep up.

Mme. Pern: Then don't bother daughter-in-law, I could do without everyone fussing over me.

Elmire: We're merely showing you the respect you deserve, mother, why must you be in such a hurry to go?

Mme. Pern: Because nobody listens to me around here anymore. All my advice has been for nothing. You have no respect for anything. Meanwhile, everybody just voices their opinion around here. It's a madhouse.

Dorine: But...

Mme. Pern.: For a servant girl, you have much too much to say for yourself, young lady. You don't know your place. You are rude and far too free with your opinions.

Damis: But...

Mme. Pern.: You, my grand-son, are an idiot. If your grandmother can't say so then who can? I've told your father a hundred times, you're a good-for nothing brat and you'll cause him nothing but trouble.

Mariane: I think...

Mme. Pern. Oh, yes. His sister. You may be all sweetness and light when everyone else is around, but you can't fool me, granddaughter... Still-Waters Run Deep. I hate to think of what you're doing when your parents aren't watching.

Elmire: Hey!

Mme. Pern.: Daughter-in-law, your conduct, if you don't mind me saying, so, has been perfectly shocking. You should be setting a good example for these children. You're much too extravagant. A woman should be attired to please her husband's eyes only, and NOT be dressed up like a... like a... (beat) like a princess.

Cleante: Madame Pernelle, if I may...
Mme. Pern: And as for you, her brothers. I truly respect and admire you two gentlemen. I truly do. However if I were my son and you were my brothers-in-law, I would never allow you to set foot in this house again. You're full of worldly advice that, quite frankly, no decent person should hear.

Damis: And Monsieur Tartuffe is perfect, I suppose.

Mme. Pern. [without looking at him] He’s a good man. And, yes, many people would do well to listen to him. It sickens me to hear him criticized by a dim wit like you.

Damis: He never let's us have any fun.

Dorine: (Rhyming) To hear him talk – and he talks all the time - There's nothing we could do that wasn't a crime.

Mme. Pern.: Whatever he forbids deserves to be forbidden. The man is trying to set you on the path to salvation. My son is right to try and make you all love Tartuffe.

Damis: I'd rather die. Nothing on earth could make me love that sanctimonious show off. There's trouble coming alright. I can tell you now, it's going to come down to me or him.

Dorine: It's a scandal to see a nobody assume a position of authority around here. That stranger arrived barefoot, his clothes in tatters, and now he forgets himself, contradicts everyone, and tells everybody else what to do.

Mme, Pern.: This place would be run better if he were in charge around here.

Dorine: You think he's a saint but, believe me, he's nothing but a hypocrite.

Mme. Pern.: Watch your tongue, young lady!

Dorine: I wouldn't turn my back on him OR his servant, Laurent.

Mme. Pern.: I don't know anything about the servant, but the Master, I can assure you, is a man of virtue. You dislike him because he tells you the truth about yourselves. The one thing he hates the most more than anything else is sin. It's only the wishes of Heaven that drives him.

Dorine: Oh really? Then how come he doesn't allow any visitors here anymore? Do innocent guests really offend Heaven so much for him to make such a fuss? (She moves close to Mme. Pernelle) But I'll tell you what I think, just between us girls, I think he's in love with the mistress and is jealous of anybody who visits her.

(Dorine walks past Elmire who says nothing)
Mme. Pern.: What a mouth on that girl! (beat) And as far as too many visitors are concerned, he's not the only one who's worried about all your guests. People do talk, you know.

Harpagaon: But Madame Pernelle, there isn't a wall high enough against slander. It would be pretty silly for us to give up our best friends out of fear of what people might say.

Cleante: Besides, there is no defense against gossip. All you can do is try and lead a virtuous life and let the gossipers say what they please.

Mme. Pern.: My neighbor, Daphne, isn't a gossip. She's a good Christian woman. And I have heard that she disapproves of the things that go on here in this house.

Dorine: Oh Daphne's a perfect example. She's just a prude, now that she's an old lady.

Mme. Pern.: What?!!

Dorine: Sure, when she was attractive she made the most of it. Now she turns her back on a world that's left her behind. Listen:

It's true! She's strict, devout, and has no taint
To all the world, she seems a saint.
But it was time which taught her that disguise;
She's thus because she can't be otherwise.

As long as men were at her beck and call,
She took advantage, and enjoyed it all;
But now, her charms not being what they were,
She quits a world which is fast quitting her.

And puts on virtue as a proud disguise
To hide her faded beauty from our eyes.
That's what becomes of old flirts today:
Distressed when all their lovers fall away,

They see no recourse but to play the prude,
Uneasy in their dreary solitude,
Thereafter, they're severe with everyone,
Condemning all our actions, pardoning none,

And claiming to be pure, austere, and zealous
When, if the truth were known, they're merely jealous,
Determined for all others to destroy,
The pleasures she no longer can enjoy.
Mme. Pern:  (Long Pause. Then...) Whatever. (pause) You keep telling yourself what you need to do to get to sleep at night. But I won’t stand around listening to another minute of this nonsense. Daughter-in-law, that speech was a perfect example of why God has brought Tartuffe into this house. (She starts to head up the steps) Now more than ever you need a virtuous voice to lead you lost souls back onto the right path. Meanwhile, tell my son it will be long time before I set foot in this house again.

(She climbs to where Flipote has fallen asleep)

Hey! (Flipote awakes immediately) Quit sleeping on the job! C’mon! Get moving. (beat) Get moving you lazy slut.

(They both exit at the top of the steps).

(All follow her out except Cleante, Harpagon and Dorine)
TARTUFFE

Act I, Scene 2

Harpagon: I'd walk her out but she scares me.

Cleante: She certainly seemed absolutely taken with this Tartuffe of hers.

Dorine: Ho-o-o. You should see her son. He's much worse. Ever since the Master has become infatuated with Monsieur Tartuffe, he's gone from the shrewd tactician who's earned the King's thanks and respect for his past service to a complete blockhead.

He calls Tartuffe his brother and holds him dearer than his own wife, mother, son and daughter. He tells him all his secrets and treats him like a prudent advisor.

Orgon is crazy about him. He sits next to Tartuffe at dinner and watches him eat enough for two people and he always insists that Tartuffe gets the best pieces. He hangs on Tartuffe's every word and repeats everything he says as though it were gospel.

Meanwhile, Tartuffe knows a sucker when he sees one and is playing him for everything he's worth. He's constantly finding new ways to get money off the Master and, worse, Orgon lets him criticize us and tell us how to run our lives.

Cleante: (subtly after "how to") He's coming.
TARTUFFE

Act I, Scene 4

Orgon: Hello Brothers!

Cleante: Good to have you home, brother.

Harpagon: Though, sadly, we must be leaving...

Orgon: (After “Though, sadly”) Dorine! Uh, just a moment, brothers, I want to see how things are here at home. Dorine. Has all gone well these past two days? How is everyone?

(Cleante takes a seat at the bench, Harpagon sits up on the steps)

Dorine: I’m afraid for the past two days, your wife has taken ill with fever and an incapacitating headache.

Orgon: Oh my. (beat) And Tartuffe?

Dorine: (pause) Tartuffe? (beat) Couldn’t be better. Well-fed, happy, his complexion is good, his cheeks are rosy.

Orgon: Poor Fellow!

Dorine: The previous evening, your wife was so nauseous that she couldn’t touch her dinner and nearly fainted from the migraines.

Orgon: (Looking at her quietly nodding) Uh huh. Uh huh. (Pause) And Tartuffe?

Dorine: Oh he hungrily devoured two partridges and half a leg of mutton while the Madame could do nothing but helplessly watch him eat.

Orgon: Poor Fellow!

Dorine: She didn’t sleep a wink that night. She was too feverish. We stayed up with her all night worrying until morning.

Orgon: Hm

(Pause as he is looking at the floor thinking. Then, slowly looking up at Dorine and smiling as though she were teasing him with what she knows that he really wants to hear. Finally...)

And.... (beat) Tartuffe?

Dorine: Oh he grew pleasantly drowsy as soon as he left the table, went up to his room, hopped into his nice warm bed where he slept like a baby until the morning
Orgon: Poor Fellow!

Dorine: Shocked and irritated by now at his lack of concern) We finally had to call a doctor who came and insisted that she be bled in order to feel better!

Orgon: (beat) And Tartuffe?

Dorine: (Long Pause as she stares at him stunned) Oh he’s managed to keep his spirits up. In fact this morning he had three glasses of wine with breakfast to make up for all the blood the mistress had lost.

Orgon: Poor Fellow!

Dorine: They are both now fully recovered. (Leaving) I’ll go tell Madame how relieved you are that she’s feeling better.
Harpagon: She was laughing in your face, brother.

Cleante: And I hate to say it but she has every right to. Can this man who you rescued from poverty have really cast such a spell on you that you would put everything second to him?

Orgon: I understand your concern, brothers, but you don’t know him.

Cleante: Yes, I’ll confess we don’t know him. But can you honestly say that you do?

Orgon: You have to meet him. Once you meet him you’ll understand why I am so charmed by him. He’s such a spiritual guy! He makes you forget about the necessity for worldly attachments, (beat) including family. Why my wife and children could perish tomorrow and I’m convinced that it wouldn’t bother me in the least.

Harpagon: (pause) Nice.

Orgon: (beat) (to Harpagon) If you were there when I met him you’d be his friend too. He used to come to our church every day and kneel down near me in such a gentle manner. And, oh, the way he prayed. So passionate. Then when I would go out, he would run ahead of me to offer me holy water at the door.

Because of his poverty, I would offer him donations and he would try to give half of it back to me. And when I would insist that he take it, he would give it to the poor. I saw him! He would do it right in front of me. I just had to take this man into my house.

And ever since he arrived, my whole household has gotten better. He censures everything. He’s even taken a strong interest in my wife. He tells me when people are looking too kindly at her. Why, you would think he’s more jealous of her than I am. (Orgon chuckles at the thought).

(The brothers give each other a glance).

And oh, he’s so hard on himself. He confessed to me tearfully the other day that he had caught a fly that was irritating him while he was praying and accidentally killed it in a fit of anger.

Harpagon: (Pause. Cleante and Harpagon look at each other.) Give me a break.
Cleante: (pause) Brother. Are you playing a trick on us? (Orgon looks confused by the question.

Harpagon: C'mon, people pretend to be religious the way others pretend to be brave. The truly brave display their courage when the chips are down but the truly pious man never shows off. I mean, it's as though you can't tell the difference between the mask and the true face.

Orgon: So I'm just an idiot being taken for a chump, is that it? You two geniuses just show up here and, without ever having met the man, get to tell me the way things are.

Cleante: Orgon, please. We don't mean to come off as presumptuous. But you have to understand that in our travels we've had some experience dealing with these charlatans. People who dedicate their souls to their own self-interest.

Harpagon: The sad truth is, there are people out there that treat religion as though it were a business.

Cleante: We're not saying there aren't truly religious people out there. We've had the good fortune of meeting up with them as well. People who dedicate their lives to helping the poor without recognition. People who show true kindness to their fellow man in Christian ways without making a show of their Christianity.

[Rhyming] These are the men that win my admiration, These are the men who are worthy of emulation. Your man is not that sort of all, I fear; Though I do believe your praise for him to be completely sincere.

Orgon: (Long Pause. Then...) Are you through? (Cleante: pauses but then just walks away disappointed).

Harpagon: (Notices his brother giving up and picks up the reins). No, brother, there is actually one other matter we wish to discuss with you. (beat). Did you agree to give your daughter's hand in marriage to Valere?

Orgon: I did.

Harpagon: And you've even set a date.

Orgon: I have.

Harpagon: Then why do we now hear that you have postponed the wedding?

Orgon: (pause) I don't know.

Harpagon: Have you something else in mind.
Orgon: Maybe.

Harpagon: So you are going back on your word?

Orgon: I didn’t say that.

Harpagon: Can you think of any reason that would prevent you from keeping your promise?

Orgon: (Pause. He clearly doesn’t feel comfortable sharing this decision with them. Finally). Perhaps.

Cleante: We only ask because Valere was concerned and asked us to inquire about it.

Orgon: Uh huh.

Cleante: (pause) So, what should we tell him?

Orgon: I don’t care.

Harpagon: So what are your plans?

Orgon: (Standing up. Quoting Tartuffe) “To do as Heaven commands.” (he heads out through the French doors).

Cleante: Brother just to be clear... (Orgon stops) You have given your word to Valere. Do you intend to keep it? (beat) Yes or No.

(Long Pause as Mariane enters above)

Orgon: Ah Mariane. Gentlemen, I wish to speak with my daughter. Will you excuse us, please? (He gestures through the French doors).

(They exit).
TARTUFFE

Act II, Scene 1

(Mariane has just entered above).

Orgon: Mariane.

Mariane: Father.

Orgon: Come in, sweetheart, I wish to speak with you. (He is still by the bottom of the steps (R) and meets her Down Center). Now... (pause) Mariane...

Mariane: Yes, Father.

Orgon: Mariane... (finding the right words) (beat) I have always known you to be a sweet-natured girl, and you have always been very close to my heart.

Mariane: I have always been so deeply grateful for your love, Father.

Orgon: (Rhyming) Well said, daughter, and you can repay me 
If, in all things, you’ll cheerfully obey me.

Mariane: It is my pleasure to please you (Giddy from his clever rhyme)

Orgon: Excellent! Now... (beat) What do you think of Tartuffe?

Mariane: What do I think.?

Orgon: ...of Tartuffe, yes. Now think carefully before you answer.

Mariane: Ah. (knowing she can’t speak her mind on this subject) Well, then I’ll say whatever you want me to say about him.

(Dorine enters above unnoticed)

Orgon: Well said. Now daughter, say this: Say... That his good works shine through him everywhere. That he touches your heart. And that you would be delighted if I chose him for your husband. (Pause) Say that.

Mariane: (Looks at her fatherly silently for several moments as though he just spoke Martian).

Orgon: Well?

Mariane: (Still frozen) Well what?

Orgon: What’s the matter?

Mariane: (Still stunned) I beg your pardon?
Orgon: What?

Mariane: Did I misunderstand?

Orgon: Misunderstand?

Mariane: (Coming out of it) Wait. What? I'm sorry. What did you want me to say, Father? Who has touched my heart? That I would be pleased if you chose whom as my husband?

Orgon: Tartuffe

Mariane: Oh no no no no no (5 times) (beat). No. (beat) No no. (beat) No. (Pause) That's impossible. (beat) Why do you want me to say something that isn't true?

Orgon: But I want it to be true. And all you need to know is that my mind's made up.

Mariane: But father. You can't seriously expect me... What you're asking of me is impossible.

Orgon: (After "You can't") Yes, daughter. My mind is made up. I intend to make Tartuffe a member of this family by making him your husband. And since it's your pleasure to please me... (notices Dorine)...
TARTUFFE

Act II, Scene 2

Orgon: What are you doing here? Eavesdropping?

Dorine: (Coming down the stairs) There's a rumor going around that you intend to marry Mariane to Tartuffe. I laughed because I knew it was a joke.

Orgon: (Turning back to Mariane) Well its true.

Dorine: I don't believe you.

Orgon: You will before I'm done.

Dorine: Bullshit!

Orgon: (To Mariane) Honey, I'm serious.

Dorine: Don't believe your father, he's joking.

Orgon: (to Mariane) I'm telling you...

Dorine: (Coming around and putting her arm around Mariane) Nope, sorry. It's no use, we just don't believe you.

Orgon: Don't irritate me, Dorine.

Dorine: Fine. We believe you. But how a man who looks intelligent enough can behave like such a jackass is beyond me.

Orgon: (Approaching Dorine.) Young lady, you have been much too familiar lately. I'm warning you.

Dorine: (Backing up) Take it easy. Take it easy. I'm only trying to keep you from looking like an idiot. Why, a “religious” man such as Tartuffe surely must have less “earthly pursuits” than marriage. Besides, what's the point of marrying your daughter to a beggar?

Orgon: His poverty is unquestionably honest poverty and we should respect him for it. Sure, he lost all his money but that means he was focused on the eternal and not material things. And with my wealth I shall help him regain his fortune. Besides, poor or not, you only have to look at him to realize that he is a gentleman.
Dorine: Sure, just ask him. And that vanity does not sit well with his piety. Let me ask you: When you take up an innocent, Holy life, should you really boast about your name and family connections? What is the point of this pride?

Okay, I see this line of questioning upsets you. Alright, so let’s talk about him as a person not as nobleman.

Do you think it's a good idea to give a young woman like your daughter to a man like that? Is it really appropriate? Think of the consequences of such a marriage?

Be careful: (rhyming)

A young girl's virtue is imperiled, Sir, when such a marriage is imposed on her; For if one's bridegroom isn't to one's taste, it's hardly an inducement to be chaste,

And many a man with horns upon his brow Has made his wife the thing that she is now, It's hard to be a faithful wife, in short, To certain husbands of a certain sort,

And he who gives his daughter to a man she hates Must answer for her sins at Heaven's gates.

Think, Sir, of what dangers this plan of yours could expose you to.

Orgen: (To Mariane) Now I'm taking advice from the maid on how to behave.

Dorine: You should take my advice.

Orgen: (To Mariane) Honey, I'm your father and I know what's best for you. Now I know I promised you to Valere but people say he gambles and I also suspect he's something of a free-thinker. I hardly ever see him at church.

Dorine: Do you want him to go only when you do like some people who only go to be seen?

Orgen: Nobody asked you, Dorine! (To Mariane) Tartuffe is in good with God, which is better than any earthly pleasures. You too will never fight. You can make of him whatever you want him to be.

Dorine: She'll make a fool of him, just wait and see

Orgon: How dare you!
Dorine: The man was born to be cheated on.

Orgon: (Rhyming) Don’t interrupt me. Why can’t you learn? That certain things are none of your concern?

Dorine: It’s for your own sake that I interfere.

(She repeatedly interrupts him as he turns to Mariane)

Orgon: Very nice, now please be quiet. Do you hear?

Dorine: If I didn’t love you...

Orgon: Spare me your affection...

Dorine: I’ll love you, Sir, in spite of your objection.

Orgon: Dammit!

Dorine: I couldn’t bear it, Sir, for your sake. To let you make such a ludicrous mistake.

Orgon: Are you through?

Dorine: My conscience will not let me rest if I allow this marriage and not protest

Orgon: If you don’t hold your tongue, you little shrew...

Dorine: What? Lose your temper? A man of God like you?

Orgon: Yes! Yes! I’m maddened by it. (Big) Now once and for all, will you please be quiet!

Dorine: (Long pause) I’ll be quiet. (another long pause as she pulls up a chair. Orgon turns to Mariane) But I’ll be thinking hard.

Orgon: (Pause) Now, (beat) Mariane. I have given this a lot of thought.

Dorine: Oh, it’s infuriating not being allowed to speak!

Orgon: Now, I know Tartuffe is no pretty boy.

Dorine: You can say that again!

Orgon: But there are more things in life, sweetheart, than looks...

Dorine: (on “sweetheart”) No man would marry me against my will and hope to get away with it. (Orgon turns to Dorine with his hands on his hips) Why, he would know before the ceremony was over that a woman has ways of getting her revenge.
Orgon: (pause) Clearly you have no intention of obeying my orders.

Dorine: What’s wrong? I wasn’t talking to you.

Orgon: Then what were you doing?

Dorine: (pause) Talking to myself.

Orgon: (aside to the audience) Apparently the only thing I can do is to give her a slap if she interrupts me again. (beat) What? It’s 1664. (He looks at Mariane, gives a glance over his shoulder at Dorine. Get’s his hand ready to strike and proceeds...)

Now, Mariane, You must obey me on this. (beat) And believe that the husband... (beat) I’ve selected for you (beat, preparing to strike)... Your wedding day (waiting for it, waiting for it)... (Finally, to Dorine) Why aren’t you talking to yourself?

Dorine: I have nothing to tell myself.

Orgon: Just say one little word.

Dorine: No thank you.

Orgon: C’mon. I dare you.

Dorine: How stupid do I look?

Orgon: (pause) Now, honey, you must show me your obedience and marry Tartuffe.

Dorine: You couldn’t get me to marry him.

(Orgon tries to backhand Dorine. She ducks his slap and runs up the stairs)

Orgon: OW! That servant of yours is worse than the plague! I’m in no condition to go on. Her insolence infuriates me. I need to go for a walk to calm down.

(Orgon Exits through the French doors.)
TARTUFFE

Act II, Scene 3

Dorine: (Long pause. Then, Dorine slowly turns to Mariane and says playfully...) Cat got your tongue? (pause) Are you mute? (growing more frustrated) Have you lost (beat) the ability (beat) to speak? Were you really going to let me do all the talking? How could you just stand there throughout all that idiotic nonsense without saying a word?

Mariane: He’s my father. What can I do?

Dorine: You can do whatever you CAN do to prevent this disaster.

Mariane: Like what?

Dorine: I don’t know. Tell him hearts don’t just fall in love at someone else’s command. Tell him your husband must be someone of your own choosing and no one else. Tell him if HE loves Tartuffe so much, why doesn’t HE marry him. (Sitting) Tell him something!

Mariane: I know its silly but I’ve never had the strength to stand up to my daddy.

Dorine: You’re going to have to get over that. I mean, Valere’s offered his hand in marriage. Do you love him or don’t you?

Mariane: Dorine, how can you even ask me that question? How many times have I poured my heart out to you? (kneeling next to Dorine’s chair) You know how madly in love with him I am.

Dorine: Well I don’t know. Sometimes I wonder about you.


Dorine: And Valere. Does he love you too?

Mariane: I think so.

Dorine: And you both wanted to get married?

Mariane: Oh my, yes. Yes!

Dorine: Good. And what do you plan on doing about this other proposal?

Mariane: (Helplessly, immaturity) I don’t know. (Pause. Then pouting...) I’ll kill myself if they make me marry somebody else.
Dorine: (beat) There’s a thought. Why didn’t I think of it? It’s brilliant (Mariane looks at her like she’s serious). To get out of this, all you have to do is die. It’s perfect. (Long pause as Mariane stares at her. Then, quietly). I hate that kind of talk. It pisses me off.

Mariane: Dorine, you’re being mean. You don’t care about my troubles at all.

Dorine: Well I’m sorry but I have no sympathy for people who talk bull crap and give up in a crisis as you are doing now.

Mariane: (standing up) Well I can’t help it. I’m easily afraid.

Dorine: Lovers have to be strong.

Mariane: My love for Valere IS strong. Besides, shouldn’t it be up to Valere to deal with my father?

Dorine: Wait. So, your fathers this fantastic creature, who drools over Tartuffe even though he’s already promised you to Valere but you’re just going to leave it to your boyfriend to do all the hard work?

Mariane: (Thinks for a moment. Then slowly, childishly...) Yeah...

Dorine: (pause) Really?

Mariane: But. But... But... Dorine, I can’t just, what, go up to my father? And he’ll be all like...

Dorine: (After “father”) No. You know what? (beat.. putting chair back into place) I want nothing at all. (beat, coming back to her) CLEARLY you wish to be Madame Tartuffe. And now that I think about it, (beat) I was crazy to try and talk you out of it. I mean, Monsieur Tartuffe? There’s a real catch there. Let me see: Mrs. Tartuffe. (beat) Mariane Tartuffe. (beat) Mrs. Mariane Tartuffe.

Mariane: Oh God.

Dorine: Oh the joy you’ll feel when married to such a fine man.

Mariane: No. Please stop talking that way and tell me what I can do to get out of this wedding. I give up. I surrender! I’ll do anything you say.

Dorine: Nope. Sorry. A daughter must obey her father, even if he wants her to marry a monkey.

Mariane: Dorine.

Dorine: You’re a lucky girl.

Mariane: Please, Dorine. I’m begging you.
Dorine: Nope.
Mariane: Please.
Dorine: Nope.
Mariane: Please.
Dorine: (Long pause. Then...) Nope.
Mariane: Dorine...
Dorine: Hey, I'm just the maid.
Mariane: C'mon Dorine. You're my most trusted friend in the world.
Dorine: Sorry, I promise you. You shall be thoroughly... (pause)... Tartuffed! (Dorine turns to go and heads up the steps).
Mariane: (Watching her go) But... Well... Okay fine. (pause) You leave me no choice. (She makes a play at taking her own life. Dorine watches her amused until finally...)
Dorine: You're pathetic. (beat) Alright. Alright, I'll help you. (going to her) don't worry, we'll find some way out of this mess.

(Valere enters)
Dorine: Oh look, here's your Valere now.
TARTUFFE

Act II, Scene 4

Valere: Well I just heard some happy news. News that, I must say, came as quite a surprise to me.

Mariane: What’s that?

Valere: That you are to marry Tartuffe.

Mariane: That is my father’s intention.

Valere: Your father...

Mariane: Has, yes, changed his mind. He just told me so himself.

Valere: Seriously?

Mariane: Yes, seriously

Valere: And, uh... (beat) What do you have to say about all this, Madame?

Mariane: I don’t know.

Valere: You don’t know?

Mariane: No.

Valere: You don’t?

Mariane: No. (pause) What do *you* think I should do?

Valere: (Pause) I think you should marry him.

Mariane: Really. That’s your advice?

Valere: Yup.

Mariane: Really.

Valere: (Beat) Yeah, you should jump at it. It sounds like quite an honor.

Mariane: (Hesitating) Well, then I’ll take your advice, thank you.

Valere: No problem. I’m sure that advice shouldn’t be too hard for you to follow.

Mariane: No harder, I’m sure, than it was for you to offer.

Valere: I only offered it to please you.

Mariane: Well then I’ll follow your advice just to please you.
Dorine: (Sitting down) Let's see how far these two are willing to take this

Valere: So is that all my love means to you?

Mariane: Please don't speak to me of love? You made your feelings clear when advising me to marry Tartuffe. And that's precisely what I'll do.

Valere: Clearly your mind was already made up. You're just using your father as a feeble excuse to break your promise.

Mariane: Whatever.

Valere: You never loved me.

Mariane: If you say so.

Valere: I do say so. And I've got news for you. There's someone out there I know who I can turn to console me after being spurned by you.

Mariane: I have no doubt someone of your noble qualities will have any trouble inspiring the affections of another.

Valere: Please. Spare me my noble qualities. I see they did no good inspiring you.

Mariane: I'm no great loss. You should have no problem transferring your heart from me to her.

Valere: Only a fool continues to profess his love after he's been cast aside for another.

Mariane: My, what a noble sentiment.

Valere: What, you expect me to just go on and love you forever? Am I to just stick around while you marry someone else and not offer to someone else the heart you've rejected?

Mariane: On the contrary, that's just what I want. I wish it were done already.

Valere: That's what you want?

Mariane: Yup.

Valere: (beat) Fine. (beat) I know when I'm not wanted. I'll just leave if it will make you happy.

Mariane: Fine.

Valere: Just remember your forcing me to do this.

Mariane: Okay.
Valere: I'm just doing what you want.
Mariane: (Imitating him) I'm just doing what you want.
Valere: I'm going. (He slowly moves up the steps)
Mariane: Good.
Mariane: See ya.

(Valere heads up the stairs and stops midway)
Valere: I'm sorry?
Mariane: What?
Valere: Did you say something?
Mariane: No.
Valere: Oh, I thought you said something.
Mariane: You must be dreaming.
Valere: Yes. Well, Goodbye, Madame.
Mariane: Goodbye, Sir.

(Valere hesitates and then heads up.)
Dorine: Wait a minute, Valere. (She heads up the steps) Are you both crazy? (She takes Valere's hand and leads him downstairs)
Valere: Wait, what are you doing?
Dorine: Come here.
Valere: No, don't, Dorine. I'm too angry. She's making me do this.
Dorine: Bullshit.
Valere: No, I've made up my mind.
Dorine: Whatever.
Mariane: No. I don't want to see him. I'm leaving. (She heads for the French Doors)
Dorine: Oh great. There goes the other one (She runs over and grabs Mariane by the hand leading her back to center where Valere waits.) Come on.
Mariane: Leave me alone.

Dorine: Shut up.

Mariane: Dorine, please, I don’t want to see him.

Valere: If she doesn’t want to see me, I’m not staying. (Valere heads back upstairs again).

Dorine: Not again. (She leaves Mariane and grabs Valere’s hand at the bottom of the steps)

Valere: No, if she can’t stand the sight of me.

Dorine: Stop it.

Valere: What are you doing? (Allowing himself to be dragged back)

Dorine: Shut up.

Mariane: What are you trying to do?

Dorine: Trying to put the two of you back together. You must be insane squabbling like this.

Valere: Didn’t you hear the way she spoke to me?

Dorine: (To Mariane) You must be nuts losing your temper like that.

Mariane: But didn’t you see how he treated me?

Dorine: You’re both crazy. (To Valere) You’re the only one she wants to marry. Trust me on this. (To Mariante) And you. He loves you only and wants nothing more than to be your husband. I’d bet my life on it.

Mariane: (To Valere) Then why did you give me that horrible advice you gave me.

Valere: Well why would you even ask me my advice on something like that?

Dorine: C’mere you idiots. Give me your hands. (To Valere) Come on.

Valere: (Valere gives her his hand) What good will that do?

Dorine: (To Mariane) Now you.

Mariane: (Giving her hand) I don’t see the point.

Dorine: You don’t, huh? You two imbeciles are more in love with each other than you realize. Here.
(Dorine puts their hands together. Mariane and Valere hold hands without looking at each other. Very long pause as Dorine waits off to the side. They both slowly try to sneak a glance at one another and then look away when their eyes met. After a pause, they do this once more. Valere gives in and looks over at Mariane.)

Valere: Aw, come on. Give a poor guy a friendly look, can’t you?

(Mariane sheepishly looks over and attempts a feeble smile.)

Dorine: It’s a plain and simple fact. Lovers are crazy.

(They swing arms casually for a moment and inch a little closer as they do until they seem comfortable with each other again.)

Valere: There now. But you have to admit you were being unkind hurting my feelings like that.

Mariane: Me? You were the one who...

Dorine: (After “You”) Alright, Alright. Let’s table this discussion for another time. We have to come up with a plan.

Mariane: Tell us what we should do, Dorine.

Dorine: Alright, your father’s plan is insane but I think it’s best that we play along with it for now. That way, Mariane, you can delay this proposed marriage if you have to. In the meantime, you two shouldn’t be seen together. Valere, start telling your friends of this broken promise. In the meantime we’ll alert Cleante and try and enlist Elmire’s help.

Valere: Whatever happens, you are my sole source of hope.

Mariane: I may not change my father’s mind but I promise never to give myself to anyone but you.

(They give each other a long, soft, dry kiss while Dorine waits)

Dorine: (Finally) Oh for crying out loud. Okay, time to go. (She pulls him to the steps and shoves him upwards. She then pushes Mariane through the open French Doors.)

Valere: You fill me with Joy! And though the Heavens themselves may stand in my way...

Dorine: (After “Joy”) Blah blah blah. (She goes back to pushing him up the steps) I know. I know. Get out of here.
TARTUFFE

Act III, Scene 1

Damis: (Spouting in rhyme) May lightning strike me even as I speak. May all men call me cowardly and weak!

Don't try and stop me! Nothing can keep me from taking matter into my own hands.

Dorine: Take it easy. Your father only talked about it. That's all. People never do everything they say they are going to do. There's a big difference between starting a plan and finishing it.

Damis: No. I must stop that scoundrel's machinations (heading for the steps); I'm going to tell that scoundrel off, I'm seriously out of patience.

Dorine: (Stopping him) Will you relax?

Let your step-mother handle him as she does your father. She has some influence over Tartuffe. He agrees with everything she says and may even be in love with her. I hope to God he is. That can only help our cause.

Elmire is on your side on this. That's why she sent for Tartuffe. She wants to know where he stands on this whole wedding nonsense and to let him know how many people would be hurt by it.

Laurent said he's almost done with his prayers. Go now, I'll arrange things when he comes downstairs.

Damis: No, I want to stay.

Dorine: Absolutely not, they have to be alone together.

Damis: I'll be quiet.

Dorine: [pushing him toward the French doors] Bullshit. We all know what a hothead you are. You'll ruin everything. Just go.

Damis: No, please. I just want to watch. I'll behave.

Dorine: Quit being a brat. (The upper doors begin to open) He's coming. Will you just get out of here? (shoving him through the French doors)

(Tartuffe enters)
TARTUFFE

Act III, Scene 2

(Tartuffe notices Dorine)

Tartuffe: Laurent, please put away my bible and my flagellator and continue to pray for Heaven's instruction. If anyone comes looking for me, just tell them that I'll be at the local prison giving to the poor prisoners there the last few coins I have left.

Dorine: (As Tartuffe descends,) (Aside) What a faker!

Tartuffe: You wished to see me

Dorine: No, actually it was the Madame who...

Tartuffe: (After "Actually") Good God! Take my handkerchief before you say another word! (Turning away but holding the handkerchief out)

Dorine: (pause) (confused) What for?

Tartuffe: Cover your bosom, I can't bear to see it. Such sights as that are harmful to the spirit and give rise to sinful thoughts.

Dorine: Wow. You must be awfully susceptible to temptation if a little glimpse of flesh has that much effect on you. I'm not so easily aroused. You could be standing there butt naked and your sorry carcass wouldn't tempt me in the least.

Tartuffe: (Walking away, Gathering himself) You will please temper your speech with a degree of modesty or I shall be forced to take my leave of you.

Dorine: (As if to say "Relax") Get over yourself. Besides, I'm leaving you. (Heading up the steps) Madame is on her way and would like to have a word with you.

Tartuffe: Gladly. (beat) Will she be long?

(Elmire enters at top of the steps as Dorine gets to it)

Dorine: No, in fact... (Silently indicates "Here she is now")
(Dorine acknowledges the Madame and exits)

TARTUFFE

Act III, Scene 3

(Elmire is standing at the top of the stairs, Dorine has just left)

Tartuffe: (Rhyming) May Heaven, whose infinite goodness we adore,
Preserve your body and soul forevermore,
And bless your days, according to the love
I humbly offer to the Lord above.

Elmire: Thank you. (As she descends the stair case) Shall we sit down?

(Tartuffe eagerly sets up two chairs)

Tartuffe: Are you feeling better after your illness?

Elmire: Much better, thank you. The fever has broken.

Tartuffe: My prayers are not significant enough to have secured this blessing from on high. But of all the devout petitions I have made to Heaven, there was not one in which your speedy recovery was not mentioned.

Elmire: Such zeal was unnecessary.

Tartuffe: No one can pray too much when it comes to your well-being. I would gladly have sacrificed my own health for yours.

Elmire: That's taking Christian charity a bit too far, I think, but I thank you for your kindness.

Tartuffe: Oh, I do far less for you than you deserve.

Elmire: I wanted to talk to you in private about a certain matter.

Tartuffe: I am delighted to be alone with you. Such a moment is something I have beseeched Heaven to grant me, though my prayers have not been answered until now.

Elmire: Well, I won't keep you long. I just hope you'll be perfectly frank with me and hold nothing back.
Tartuffe: And I hope you will accord me the singular favor of allowing me to express all that is in my heart and assure you that my objections to all of your admiring visitors was not out of malice but merely out of an overwhelming passion to...

Elmire: (After “but merely”) Well, that’s precisely how I took it for I know you were prompted merely out of concern for the good of my soul.

Tartuffe: (Overeagerly grasping her fingertips) Quite so. And such great fervor do I feel...

Elmire: (after fervor) Ow! You’re hurting me.

Tartuffe: (He quickly pulls his hand away) Oh, I’m sorry, (beat) it’s simply from over exuberance. (He puts his hand on her knee) I merely wished to...

Elmire: What are you doing?

Tartuffe: (long pause) I was feeling your dress. My, what soft material...

Elmire: (Moving chair back) Well, please don’t, I’m very ticklish.

Tartuffe: (moving his chair forward after hers) That’s such marvelous lacework. Wow, the things they can do these days. Things are so much better than they used to be.

Elmire: Yes they are but let us return to our business. (beat) (She takes a deep breath) Now, they tell me that my husband intends to break his promise to Valere and give his daughter to you. Is this true?

Tartuffe: Yes, I believe he mentioned something about it, but to tell you the truth, Madame, that is not where my happiness lies. All of my hopes and dreams are pointed in another direction.

Elmire: (moving her arms around then pointing up) Because you are not attracted to worldly things.

Tartuffe: Ah, well, (beat) my heart’s not made of stone, you know.

Elmire: I’m sure your thoughts are all turned toward Heaven. Your desires are not concerned with anything here below

Tartuffe: (Rhyming) To love eternal beauties far above Is not to be immune to other love; (beat) Our senses are quite rightly captivated By perfect works our Maker has created. It shows itself in others by reflection, But you alone display its true perfection:
I could not look at you, O flawless creature,
And not admire the Author of all nature.
My first reaction was to be afraid
This passion must be a trap that the devil had laid;
And so I avoided you as a temptation
That might stand in the way of my salvation.
But finally I knew, O gracious beauty,
That passion need not be at odds with duty,
I know it's audacious on my part
To make you this poor offering of my heart;
And though my efforts are infirm and vain,
I know that you are gracious and humane.
You are my peace, my solace, my salvation;
On you depends my bliss – or desolation;
You must decide what lies ahead of me:
Celestial bliss or utter misery.

Elmire: (Long pensive pause. Then, quietly) Oh my.
(Pause as Tartuffe waits anxiously for more. Then...) Well, that was a very gallant declaration. (beat) I must confess, of course, to being a little surprised. So out of character. After all, a pious man like you should restrain his passion...

Tartuffe: (After "a pious man like you") I may be a pious man but I am, after all, only human. (beat) And when a man is confronted with a beauty as divine as yours, his heart will have its way and does not stop to think. (beat) When all is said and done, I am no angel and if I have offended you with this declaration of mine, then you must blame it on your own enchanting loveliness.

(She turns her gaze downwards) (He sits down next to her again).

Since I first laid eyes on you, you have been the mistress of my being. (beat) Your inexpressibly sweet glances have conquered fasting, prayer, and tears. Your beauty has become the object of all my former vows. (beat)

And, of course, damn it all, we both know that you've always known it. (beat) (She meets his gaze).

(rhyming) My eyes, my sighs have told you in the past
What now my lips make bold to say at last.
And if you were to condescend and notice my insignificance, O Marvel of Delight, I would reward you with unparalleled worship and devotion. (pause)

(Tenderly taking her hand from her lap) Your reputation is not at risk, you need fear no disgrace because of me. Other men may boast their conquests and brag about their affairs. (beat) But men like me burn with hidden passion, and we keep our secrets safe. We take good care of our reputations and we know how to be discreet. (kisses her hand) Those who accept our hearts find love without scandal, pleasure without fear.

Elmire:

(Another long pause) (Not retrieving her hand) Alright, you’ve made your intentions known. You couldn’t have expressed it clearer. But, pray, let me ask you. Aren’t you the least bit concerned about whether or not I am of the mood to share your passion for me with my husband? (beat) And that after hearing of the love you describe that he might want to rethink his affection for you?

Tartuffe:

(Very Long Pause) (He then smiles and says) Whoops. (pause) (He cutely puts her hand back where he found it and gets up and starts to walk away)

(He stops) I know you Madame. You are much too charitable to do that. Besides, when you look in the mirror and see the beauty that has transformed me so, I know that you will forgive my audacity and accept the fact that I am not blind and, like all men, (beat) simply flesh and blood.

Elmire:

Well, other women may react differently but I choose to use discretion whenever possible. I will say nothing of this whatsoever to my husband. (Tartuffe is noticeably relieved). However, I have to ask one thing of you. I would ask that you give your approval and support, openly and freely, to the marriage of Marianne to Valere and renounce all intentions of furthering your happiness at the expense of two people who clearly love and deserve one another.
TARTUFFE

Act III, Scene 4

Damis: No! Madame, No! I heard everything! And the Truth MUST come out!

(Rhyming) Now I finally have my chance
To punish his deceit and arrogance!
And give my father clear and shocking proof
Of the black character of his dear Tartuffe!

Elmire: No, Damis. He's going to rectify things. I gave my word. Don't make me break it.

Good wives laugh off such trifles and forgets them;
Why should they tell their husband and upset them?

Damis: You may have your reasons for keeping quiet, but I have my reasons too. Spare him? Please! His hypocrisy has made enough trouble for this family and he continues to take advantage of father. Father must be made to see what a two-faced swine he is...

Elmire: Damis!

Damis: No! My mind's made up! (Orgon enters) Oh look, here comes father now!

TARTUFFE

Act III, Scene 5

Damis: (Rhyming) Father, here's a development that's new
That may well come as a surprise to you.

This gentleman has just tried to repay your kindness by dishonoring you. I just caught him making a scandalous proposition to Madame, whose generosity and desire for discretion was so strong that she wanted to keep this from you. But I could not allow such injustice to go unrecognized by keeping it a secret from you.

Elmire: Well, I don't believe a wife should trouble her husband's piece of mind by repeating such nonsense to him. Honor doesn't depend on reporting silliness like this. All that's important is that we women know how to defend ourselves against it. (beat) Damis! The decision to tell your father was mine to make. You had NO right interfering.

(Elmire exits)
TARTUFFE

Act III, Scene 6

Orgon: By God. Can what they say be true?

Tartuffe: Yes! Yes, dear brother. (dropping to his knees) It is true! I-am-guilty! I am a miserable sinner filled with inadequacy. I am the greatest villain that ever lived! My whole life has been nothing but a progression of one wicked deed of corruption after another. I see now that Heaven is taking the opportunity to punish me for all of my past sins.

Whatever crimes I am now accused of, I wouldn’t dream of denying. Please, I’m praying to you. Please believe everything he says of me and don’t hold back your anger in any way, shape or form. Treat me as if I were a guilty criminal and drive me from your home. Whatever shame is heaped on me, I shall deserve it. And much, much more.

Orgon: (Long pause) (slowly) You-Son-Of-a-Bitch. (Pause) You TRAITOR! How dare you tarnish this man’s purity with your lies!

Damis: (beat) Wait, (pause) what? Wait a minute; you’re not going to fall for this hypocrite’s false confession, are you?

Orgon: (After “confession”) Quiet! Be quiet you ungrateful wretch!

Tartuffe: No, brother, let him speak. (getting up) It would be better for you to believe him. I want you to. After all, how can you be so certain that he not telling the truth. I mean, you don’t really know me. Not really. You can’t judge people by their appearances. I might very well be everything he says I am. Don’t be fooled by how I look. I know everyone says I’m a virtuous, righteous man but the truth is... (beat) I’m worthless.

(to Damis) Yes, dear boy, call me a sinner, traitor, murderer, thief, a monster. Accuse me of even worse. I will not contradict you. I have earned every one of those titles. And I am willing, (falling to his knees again) here and now, to suffer the shame I deserve for my unworthy life.

Orgon: My brother, this is too much. (To Damis) Now don’t you feel bad, you reptile? (pause as Damis stands speechless. Then, big) HUH?!?

Damis: (startled) But Dad... He... He...

Orgon: Shut up, you little snot! (To Tartuffe) Please, rise up my brother. (To Damis, glaring, dragging out the word “you”). Y-o-u punk!
Damis: (beat) Oh, okay. So, like he gets to...

Orgon: (Slowly moving toward Damis, fuming, through clenched teeth) I said, Shut up. If you say another word, I'll break every bone in your body.

Tartuffe: For the love of God, brother. (stopping him) Don't let your anger get the best of you. I would rather you punish ME than to stand by and let Damis endure the slightest harm on my account.

Orgon: (To Damis) Punk!

Tartuffe: Leave him in peace. If I must, I will get down on my knees and beg you to forgive him.

Orgon: You shall do no such thing. Do you see how good he is to you, you little pig?

Damis: So...

Orgon: Quiet!

Damis: Wait, so I can't even...

Orgon: No! I know why you hate him. Everyone hates him. Wife, children and servant! You're all trying to drive this decent, Holy person from my company. But the more determined you are to drive him out, the more determined I am to keep him here. In fact, I'm going to hurry up the marriage between him and your sister just to confound the pride of this entire family.

Damis: So you're really going to make Marianne marry this guy?

Orgon: Yes, you little brat, In fact, I'll do it tonight just to spite you. Now apologize.

Damis: What?

Orgon: Get down on your knees and beg forgiveness from this man.

Damis: I'm not going to apologize to this imposter. The guy's a swindler...

Orgon: (a beat After "imposter") What? You dare defy me? That's it! (To Tartuffe) Don't try and hold me back. (Damis has started to escape up the steps). That's right, leave! And don't you dare come back! (Heading up the steps after him) I hereby disinherit you! Do you hear me? You're dis-inherited!
TARTUFFE

Act III, Scene 7

Orgon: Can you believe that?

Tartuffe: Oh Merciful Heaven! Please forgive him for the pain he has caused me. (To Orgon) You have no idea how much it saddens me to know that people are intent on blackening my good name to you my brother.

The very thought of such ingratitude is like a dagger in my heart. (He clutches his chest) My heart... Oh God. Oh God. (He collapses). My heart is so heavy. I... I fear... (beat) It may kill me.

Orgon: (Cradling Tartuffe in his arms. Tearfully shaking his fist toward the door) You ungrateful bastard! I should have killed you when I had the chance. (To Tartuffe) Please, brother. Don’t upset yourself.

Tartuffe: (getting up, over-doing it) I’m okay. I’m okay. (pause). I see now that I have brought nothing but great trouble upon you and your whole house. (pause) I think... I think it would be best for everyone (beat) if I just leave.


Tartuffe: Everyone hates me here. And it’s obvious now that they won’t rest until they’ve turned you against me.

Orgon: Who cares? You think I listen to them?

Tartuffe: Not today. But they’ll keep at it. And the same stories that seem so ridiculous today may not sound so fantastic down the road.

Orgon: Never, brother. Never!

Tartuffe: Oh brother, I know how a wife can influence her husband’s mind.

Orgon: No. No!

Tartuffe: Let me leave and thereby remove all reason for them to attack me further.

Orgon: No. You must stay! I’ll die without you.

Tartuffe: Well, (Long pause) We can’t have that. (pause) (He chuckles to himself) Alright. I’ll sacrifice myself and stay.

Orgon: Splendid!
Tartuffe: (beat) Although...

Orgon: Yes?

Tartuffe: Well, (beat) you know how it is. (beat) People talk. One’s reputation is a delicate matter. So, to prevent anyone from gossiping, I shall avoid your wife and you will never see me.

Orgon: No, you shall see her ALL the time and people can say what they like. Nothing will give me greater pleasure than to annoy them. In fact, to REALLY defy them... (pause as he ponders) Yes... Yes! I shall make you... (pause) MY HEIR!

I shall go this very moment to change my will making you the SOLE recipient of ALL my worldly possessions. Why a true and honest friend, chosen by me to be my son-in-law, is dearer to me than any son, wife or family. (beat) Do you accept my offer?

Tartuffe: (Pause. To the Heavens) May His will be done in ALL things!

Orgon: (beat, heading up the stairs)

Come, We’ll go and draw up the deed.
Then let them burst with disappointed greed.

(Orgon stops)

Are you coming my friend?

Tartuffe: In a moment, my friend. (Getting down on his knees) I wish to pray for strength and guidance.

Orgon: (pause) Poor Fellow!

(Orgon Exits)

(Tartuffe rises and begins to ascend the stairs. When he gets to the top, he makes sure the door is shut and then walks over to the railing. He then proceeds to let out his most evil cackle as the lights fade and Bach’s Toccata and Fugue plays throughout the auditorium.)
TARTUFFE

Act IV, Scene 1

Cleante: Yes, everyone is talking about it. Trust me when I tell you that what people are saying doesn’t reflect well upon you. I’m glad we met you, Monsieur so that we might have this opportunity to talk.

Harpagon: Now we’d like to think that the accusations about you are false and clearly Damis behaved very badly. However, (beat) wouldn’t a true Christian forgive Damis and give up all thoughts of revenge? That’s the Christian thing to do, isn’t it? Turn the other cheek?

Cleante: Is this incident really a reason to allow a father to drive away his own son? Really? How could you live with yourself? (beat) Why not let the matter drop and be known as the good man that patched things up between a father and a son.

Tartuffe: I would love to. I feel no bitterness toward Damis. I’ve forgiven him. I would do anything I can for him but, well, you see, (beat) the interests of Heaven forbids it. (beat)

See, if he returns, I would have to leave. The two of us remaining in this house would be... Why it would be scandalous. I mean, what would people think? They would assume that I was being deceptive in some way. That I was indeed guilty and was living under the same roof as Damis only after striking a bargain with the boy to keep the whole matter between us.

Harpagon: (Pause) Please don’t try and dazzle us with your palaver, Sir. Your arguments are much too convoluted. Does Heaven really need your help in punishing sinners? Leave vengeance to God. That’s His job. Your job is to forgive. (beat) And to follow the Lord’s commandments every once in awhile.

Cleante: Surely the silliness of what people think cannot keep you from dulling the glory of your noble act. (pause) C’mon. (beat) Do the right thing. (long pause) What would Jesus do?

Tartuffe: (laughing to himself at Cleante’s play) I already told you, I have forgiven the boy in my heart (He looks at Cleante), Which is precisely what Heaven has told me to do. (Pause) But after today’s scandal and barrage of insults... (Pause) Heaven does not wish that I live in the same house with him.

Harpagon: And does Heaven wish you to encourage a silly father’s actions and accept a home and a fortune, of which you have no legal claim to?
Tartuffe: Those who truly know me will know that I would never act out of self-interest. Worldly possessions hold no interest to me.

If I decide to accept this generous gift that his father wishes to give me, it would only be, believe me, to make sure that they did not fall into the wrong hands. To make sure that this property was not being used for sinful purposes but instead to use it, as I intend to, for the greater Glory of God and the welfare of my fellow man.

Cleante: (pause) Sir, (pause) Please (pause). Don't let excessive scruples allow you to defraud this young man. Even if he did misuse his inheritance, it would look better that you allowed him to make the mistake than you taking everything from him.

Harpagon: (pause) I'm surprised you have no misgivings about this. Doesn't it bother you that you would be depriving the rightful heir of what he has coming to him?

Cleante: (pause) And if Heaven does tell you that there is an invincible obstacle to living in the same house as Damis, shouldn't you, as a virtuous man, withdraw rather than allow the family's son be driven out on account of you? Believe me, Sir, it would show you to be the fair-minded person that you...

Tartuffe jumps up from his seat after "Believe me, Sir"

Tartuffe: I'm sorry, but it's 3:30 and that means I have to go upstairs to my room and perform my religious duties. If you'll excuse me, gentlemen.

(Tartuffe exits upstairs. They just watch him go)
TARTUFFE

Act IV, Scene 3

(Orgon enters through the French Doors. Mariane follows noticeably upset. Elmire slows follows and shuts the French doors behind her.

Mariane: Father, please. I'm begging you. In the name of Heaven, please waive your rights as a father and release me from my obligation to obey you in this manner. Please don't make this life you gave me a misery, father. If you must take away my hopes and forbid me to marry the man I love, then please, I'm begging you, on my knees, please don't make me marry a man I detest. Please don't force me to take some desperate measure we'll both regret.

Orgon: C'mon Mariane. You're really over-reacting.

Mariane: Your affection for him doesn't bother me. Let him have it. Let him have all your money and mine as well. I don't want it. Just don't let him have me too. I beg of you. Let me enter a convent, instead. Let me enter a convent and live there for the rest of my unhappy days.

Orgon: Young women become very religious when their fathers challenge their romantic ideas. C'mon sweetie, get up (he helps her up). You're being silly.

Harpagon: If I might offer a word of advice.

Orgon: Brother, I always value your advice, however, on this matter I'm going to do without it.

Elmire: (beat) Sometimes, I swear, I don't even know you. Your blindness on this matter simply astonishes me. You must really be infatuated with this man to doubt all of our word, despite what took place today.

Orgon: With all due respect, Madame, I know what I have seen and that's what I go by. As for that no-good son of mine, you have always spoiled him much too much. I know you were afraid to condemn him for trying to play a trick on Tartuffe, but, c'mon, (beat) Really. (beat) if his accusations had been true, you would have been MUCH more upset than you were..

Elmire: Does a foolish declaration of love really harm a woman's honor? Is there really no other way to react other than glaring eyes and a raging tongue when they say such things to us? Personally, I find advances such as his hilarious. What's the point of making a fuss? Should I have screamed bloody murder and try to scratch his eyes out? Please. Cool rejection is more than enough to handle unwanted affection.
Orgon: Well, I know what happened and I'm not changing my mind.
Elmire: Wow, (beat) I gotta tell you, honey, I'm really impressed with your stubbornness on this matter. (pause) Okay. (beat) Would you change your mind if I showed you that we're all telling the truth?
Orgon: Showed?
Elmire: Yes.
Orgon: (beat) Nonsense.
Elmire: Really? Even if I could prove it without a doubt?
Orgon: Never happen.
Elmire: You're such a guy. (beat) Listen, I'm not asking you to trust us. I'm saying what if you were in a place where you could see and hear everything. What would you say about your precious Tartuffe then?
Orgon: I would say... (beat) I would say... (beat, thinking. Then snapping out of it). I wouldn't say anything because there's nothing to prove.
Elmire: Alright, that's it. I'm tired of your insistence that I'm lying to you. Will you all excuse us, please? And tell Monsieur Tartuffe that I wish to speak with him.
Cleante: He's very clever. You may not be able to trick him.
Elmire: No. It's easy to be fooled by what we want. (urging him upstairs) Our vanity is always ready to betray us.
Elmire: Get under the table.

Orgon: What?

Elmire: Get under the table.

Orgon: (He approaches the table) Wait. Why? What's under there?

Elmire: For God's sake, will you just get under the table? I know what I'm doing.

Orgon: (pause. Then very slowly...) O-kaaaaaaay. (He kneels behind the table getting ready to get underneath).

Elmire: (beat) You'll be glad you did. Now be fore-warned. You are going to hear me say things that you may find shocking. You're going to hear me being very sweet with him and playing up to his lecherous advances. Since you have left me no choice, I am forced now to coax this hypocrite into dropping his mask and revealing his true face.

(She prods him beneath the table) C'mon get under there and make good and sure he can't see you.

(Once he is hidden)

(pause) Now, (beat) I'm going to pretend to give in to his advances (beat) BUT (beat) I'll stop as soon as you are convinced. Remember, I'm doing this for you. I'm doing this to trap him.

But listen to me, I will let things continue UNTIL-YOU-ARE-CONVINCED. Do you understand? Things WILL-ONLY-GO-SO-FAR as you wish them to. Got it? IT WILL BE UP TO YOU to come out and bring his crazy passion to a halt AS SOON AS YOU ARE CONVINCED HE HAS GONE FAR ENOUGH.

OKAY? Please DO NOT SUBJECT Your wife TO ANY MORE humiliation THAN NECESSARY TO CONVINCE you of his treachery.

(Tartuffe enters)

Alright, Here he comes. Shhhh...
TARTUFFE

Act IV, Scene 5

Tartuffe: I understand you wished to see me?

Elmire: Yes, I had something private I wanted to share with you. But please. Do me a favor, make sure the doors are shut this time. I don't want a repeat of this morning's incident. (Tartuffe returns from checking the door) Oh my God, I was so scared. I mean, you saw, I did everything I could to keep Damis from telling my husband but... well... (beat) It turned out for the best in the end.

In fact, my husband is so unconcerned about any gossip that the incident might cause that he insists we be alone together as much as possible (beat) to show everyone that he doesn't care what they think.

Do you understand what that means? (pause) It means I can be alone with you without fear of scandal. It means that I can now return the passion which I... (Turning away, trying to be coy) But perhaps I've said too much...

Tartuffe: (Pause) I'm a little confused. (beat) Earlier you sang a much different tune.

Elmire: (Pause. Then, recovering) Oh did that bother you? (pause) How little you know a woman's heart. (pause) And what it means when we resist in such a feeble way.

Of course I had to object. It's what's expected of us. But I knew. (beat) I knew you could see through my protestations. I knew you could see, plain as day, what my heart was really trying to say.

You know we women say one thing when we really mean another. (beat. Approaching him) Rejecting is simply a promise for something else. (Pause) What I'm trying to tell you is, I've given up the fight.

(Touching the material on his shirt) Would I have reacted the way I did with Damis if your declaration of love wasn't entirely unwelcome on my part? Why do you think I objected to the marriage? I couldn't bear the thought of your affections going elsewhere.
Tartuffe: (Long pause. Then...) Oh my. (long pause) Wow (beat), Madame. 
(beat) It’s such a delight to hear such words from the lips of someone 
one loves. (beat) The honey that trickles through me is one that the 
mouth has never tasted.

My only concern at this very moment (beat) is the joy of pleasing you; 
(pause) My heart is blessed by your confessions. (pause) (He takes a 
few steps away from her) Yet please forgive this heart of mine if it 
dares to doubt its own happiness.

You might simply be trying – honorably – to prevent the proposed 
marriage. (He looks at her for a long pause like a poker player 
contemplating a call).

(Then, as he returns to his position in front of her) Let me be frank; I 
cannot trust those delicious words you have just spoken unless you 
give me some (he leans in gently towards her) evidence that you 
really mean them; (she leans back slightly at the waist but otherwise 
doesn’t move)

Your behavior must assure me of your feelings.

Elmire: (Pause. She smiles at him and then pretends to not be trying to lean 
away from him but to be merely stretching. She then turns her head 
and gives three, deliberate coughs into her hand as she looks to the 
table. When it’s clear he’s not coming out, she makes a deliberate look 
of consternation to the pit, pauses, then faces Tartuffe again who at 
that moment moves in for a kiss).

Whoa. (She retreats but laughs afterwards as not to alarm him). Why 
move so fast? (She retreats to the other side of the table). It was 
torturous for me making that confession. Isn’t that enough for you? 
(To Tartuffe but also to beneath the table). Will-you-only-be-satisfied-
with-my-complete-surrender?

Tartuffe: (He begins to move but she counters him and they play cat and mouse 
on their respect side of the table) The less deserving we are, the less we 
dare to hope. Since I do not believe I deserve your kindness, then I can’t 
believe the happiness I dare to dream of. (beat as they both stop) And 
after all, (beat) actions do speak louder than words.

Elmire: I’m starting to think they’ll have to.

Tartuffe: (Laughs like she just told a joke)

Elmire: (returns the laughter and bangs on the table three deliberate times)
Tartuffe: (pauses a moment and then lunges for her downstage of the table.)

Elmire: (jumping away and escapes toward the bench trying to look casual about it.) Hey! Whoa. Give a girl a chance to catch her breath. (She sits. He continues to approach her slowly) My, you're merciless. Slow down a little. I mean, you don't want to take advantage of my fondness for you, do you?

Tartuffe: But if you look upon my advances with a favorable eye, why refuse me convincing proof?

Elmire: Well, how could I consent without offending Heaven, of which you speak so often?

Tartuffe: If fear of Heaven is all that stands between me and my passion, well, that is an obstacle I can easily remove. (beat) It's not something that should hold you back. (On "something" he joins her on the bench trying to put his arm around her).

Elmire: (As soon as he does so, she hops up) You seem so certain. (she turns around to look at the table and set herself for walking backwards). I mean, taking on Heaven... That sounds pretty scary.

Tartuffe: (Once she turns to face him, he stands straight up. Throughout the next speech, he slowly backs her across the room until she bumps into the table. She works her way around the table without turning her back to him as he continues to approach. They should end opposite each other across the table.)

Let me dispel any fears you might have, Madame. It's true that Heaven forbids certain indulgences but (beat), trust me on this, (beat) I know how to handle Heaven. Heaven can be negotiated with. I can teach you how things work Madame. All you have to do is allow yourself to be led by me, (beat) satisfy my desire, and you'll have nothing to worry about. I'll take ALL the sin upon myself.

Elmire: (Pause. Then 3 deliberate coughs, this time much bigger)

Tartuffe: Wow, That's one nasty cough you have there. (On this he begins to walk around the table).

Elmire: (She continues to move to keep him opposite her) It's driving me insane.

Tartuffe: Want a cough drop?

Elmire: Trust me, it won't help.

Tartuffe: That must be aggravating.

Elmire: You have no idea.
Tartuffe: Madame:

No one will know our joys, save us alone,
And there’s no evil until the act is known.
It’s scandal, Madame, that makes it an offense.
And it’s no sin to sin (beat) in confidence.

Elmire: (Desperately Coughs AND hits the table one last time)

(pause. Then, exasperated) Alright. Alright! I SEE NOW that I’ll simply
HAVE to come to terms with the fact that I must give you everything you
want.

(To Orgon) It’s no use hoping that anything less will satisfy you.

But since you CLEARLY insist on leaving me NO CHOICE. Since you
OBVIOUSLY require more PROOF, (beat) I RESIGN MYSELF to do what
is required of me.

(beat) I hope you’re happy! (beat) Remember, you’re making me do
this. If consenting carries with it some guilty, SO MUCH THE WORSE
FOR THE ONE WHO FORCES ME. (beat). It’s not MY fault.

Tartuffe: Yes, Yes! Madame, I’ll take ALL the blame. (He moves in for the kill).

and exhales quick). Could you go into the hallway and just make sure
my husband’s not there?

Tartuffe: What are you worried about him for? Hey, between you and me, the
guy’s a maroon. He likes seeing us together. And, trust me, by now I’ve
got him seeing everything and believing nothing.

Elmire: (She is pulling him by the arm up the steps) I know, sweetie, but just do
it for me. Okay? It will help me relax. (sweetly) P-l-e-a-s-e.

(He goes to the top of the steps, turns, blows her a kiss. She pretends to
be smitten from his gesture. She freezes until Orgon gets out from
under the table.)
TARTUFFE

Act IV, Scene 6

(Orgon comes out from his hiding)

Orgon: I'm starting to believe that man has not been completely straight with me.

Elmire: (beat) Ya think!

Orgon: No, seriously. I can't get over it. It's all too much for me.

Elmire: (Coming down the stairs) What coming out so soon? (beat) You can't possibly be convinced yet. Get back under the table. You should be absolutely convinced.

Orgon: My God. Hell itself has never produced anything more wicked!

Elmire: Why jump to conclusions? You ought to be good and sure. No, really. Get back under the table. You might be making a mistake. (long pause) (She grabs him by the shirt and starts shaking him.). You imbecile!

(Tartuffe re-enters).

(Elmire quickly turns around.)

(Orgon ducks down behind Elmire and is concealed by her dress as Tartuffe descends.)
TARTUFFE

Act IV, Scene 7

Tartuffe: (Coming down the stairs) Well, everything is as I hoped. Madame. I checked all the rooms. There's no one to be found. And now, on to my rapture...

(Elmire turns and walks away and Orgon rises in her place)

Orgon: Easy boy. You're letting your feelings run away from you. (beat) So... My good, saintly man. Going behind my back and making a fool of me, huh? You were going to marry my daughter and all the while lust after my wife, is that it? (beat) Ohhhhh, I've suspected you from the start. (beat) But now I've seen quite enough. I'm satisfied. I don't need to see any more.

Tartuffe: (Opens his mouth to speak but is at a loss for words. He Looks to Madame for help). Uhhhh...

Elmire: (Pause. Then, quietly and with regret) I'm sorry it had to come to this.

Tartuffe: (pause) What, you think...

Orgon: Enough! Not another word. I want you out of here immediately.

Tartuffe: (Playing the innocent) But I was only trying to...

Orgon: That sort of talk won't HELP you anymore. Now get out of this House. (beat) NOW!

Tartuffe: I-don't-think so! (beat) No. (beat) No, I don't believe I shall be going anywhere. Aren't you forgetting something? This house belongs to ME now. It's YOU that shall be leaving, NOT me, Sir.

Oh, you picked the wrong guy to pick a fight with. I have the means of pushing back, of exposing and punishing your hypocrisy (beat) of Avenging this affront to Heaven, (Slowly and deliberately) and to make you sorry you dared try and throw me out of this house.

(Tartuffe exits)
TARTUFFE
Act IV, Scene 8

Elmire: (beat) Wait. What?
Orgon: (pause) Uh-oh.
Elmire: Uh-oh? What do you mean uh-oh?
Orgon: Uhhh... (pause as he stares into space)
Elmire: Honey?
Orgon: (Not quite snapping out of it) Uhhh... huh? I... Uh.... (pause) I think... (staring into space again)
Elmire: (pause) WHAT?
Orgon: (snapping out of it) Yeah, no. (beat) uh.... (beat) I think I might have made a huge mistake.
Elmire: What are you talking about.
Orgon: Oh God. Oh God. (he starts heading upstairs) I'll explain everything but first I have to see if there's still a certain box upstairs.
Elmire: Box, what box?
Orgon: C'mon! (Orgon exits)

(Elmire begins to follow as the lights fade)

Elmire: What box?
TARTUFFE

Act V, Scene 1

(Orgon is sitting on the bench, with his head in his hands. Cleante is sitting next to him. Harpagon is pacing as the lights come up)

Harpagon: Alright, The first thing we have to do is figure out what we're going to do.

Orgon: It's that box. The Box! That box is what worries me more than anything else.

Cleante: (Stops pacing) Alright What's so important about this box?

(Harpagon stops pacing and stands above listening intently)

Orgon: My poor friend, Argas, left it with me for safe-keeping before he left the country. He trusted me with it! He said his life and property depended on the documents in that box. He gave it to me with great secrecy.

Cleante: Then why would you trust someone else with it.

Orgon: It was weighing on my conscience. I worried about what might be in that box so I confessed my concerns to that scoundrel. Tartuffe convinced me to let him keep it for me. That way, if anyone asked about it, I could say, without lying, that I did not have it.

Cleante: Huh. (pause)

(They look over at Harpagon)

Harpagon: I think you're in trouble.

Cleante: (pause) Maybe you shouldn't have provoked him there at the end.

Orgon: Ohhh, but he made me so mad! To think I trusted that hypocrite. Well that's it! From now on, I will never trust a religious man ever again. I'll avoid all men of God like the plague and treat them like the devils that they are.

Cleante: (going over to him at the bench) Orgon, Orgon, Orgon. Why do you always have to go to such extremes? (long pause).

Alright, so you've discovered your error now. You can see how you've been taken in by false piety. Good!

(Slow and Deliberate) Learn from your mistake.
Harpagon: Right, Don't turn around and fix your mistake by making an even bigger one. What good is correcting your error by refusing to differentiate between a scum bag like Tartuffe and genuinely good men?

Cleante: (Pause) (Then Gently) There are truly devout people in this world, Orgon. (Long pause) Just learn to distinguish between virtue and the outward appearance of it. (Long pause).

Keep a sense of proportion and don't be so quick to give your trust to people. (pause) And, if you do happen to make another error in judgment, (beat) I would err on the same side you did last time.

(Orgon looks at Cleante looking for reassurance then looks to Harpagon for his opinion. Harpagon simply smiles and gently nods in agreement.)
TARTUFFE
Act V, Scene 2

Damis: Is it true father? Is that rogue really using all the gifts you've given him against you?

Orgon: Yes, my boy. It's a bitter pill your father is forced to swallow.

Damis: You say the word father and I'll fix this scoundrel so he never bothers you again.

Harpagon: Typical young man's talk.

Cleannte: Take it easy, Damis. It is the age of Enlightenment. We do not solve our problems with violence anymore.
TARTUFFE

Act V, Scene 3

Mme. Pern: What the Hell is going on around here?

Orgon: I've been stabbed in the back. I rescue a man out of poverty, give him my home, treat him like my own brother, give him my daughter and everything I have. And not only does this scoundrel try and seduce my wife but is trying to ruin me and throw into the street by that which I have given him out of my own kindness.

Dorine: Poor fellow!

Mme. Pern: My son, I cannot believe he could do such an evil thing.

Orgon: What?

Mme. Pern: Men of principle are always envied. I know how much everyone hates him around here. When you were a boy I told you a thousand times:

(Rhyming) That virtue in this world is hated ever;
Malicious men may die, but malice never.

Orgon: What has that got to do with anything?

Mme. Pern: Clearly, people have made up stories about him.

Orgon: I'm telling you, Mother, I saw it with my own eyes.

Mme. Pern: (rhyming) The tongues of spite are busy night and noon,
And to their venom no man is immune.

Orgon: I saw him. (beat) With my own eyes. (beat) I saw him! Do you understand what I'm saying? I... Saw.... Him...

Mme. Pern: (beat) Appearances can be deceiving. You cannot always judge by what you see.

Orgon: I may lose my mind.

Mme. Pern: Everyone's a victim of false suspicion. And good deeds are oftentimes misinterpreted.

Orgon: Am I to believe he tried to seduce my wife out of Christian charity.

Mme. Pern: If you are to accuse someone you have to have a very good reason and wait until you are absolutely sure of things.

Orgon: So you're saying I should have waited. Is that right? I should have just waited until he...
Mme. Pern: (After "Is that right?") No. No. He's far too good a man. I just cannot believe he meant to do what you are saying he did.

Orgon: Oh God! If you weren't my mother I'd... I'd.... I don't know what I'd do. I'm that angry.

Dorine: (Rhyming) It's your turn now, Sir, not to be listened to, You wouldn't trust us, now she won't trust you.

Cleante: My friends, we are wasting precious time when we should be figuring out what to do. We can't afford to go to sleep in the face of this villain's threats.

Damis: Do you really think he'd have the nerve to carry them out?

Elmire: I have trouble believing he'd have a case. The ingratitude is much too obvious.

Harpagon: I wouldn't bet on it. He'll find some way of justifying the actions he takes against you. He's in a strong position.

Cleante: I really wish you hadn't pushed him so far.

Orgon: What could I do? The bastard had such colossal nerve that I simply lost control of myself.

Cleante: It might have cost you everything. (Pause) If only there was some way of patching things up between the two of you.

(Enter M. Loyal)

Orgon: Oh What does this fellow want? (To Dorine) Find out, will you, Dorine. I'm in no mood for visitors right now.
TARTUFFE
Act V, Scene 4

M. Loyal: Good morning, my dear sister. May I please speak with Monsieur Orgon?

Dorine: The master has company at the moment and does not wish to be disturbed.

M. Loyal: I do not wish to intrude. In fact, my mission, rather than cause him discomfort, will please him.

Dorine: Your name?

M. Loyal: Just tell him I come on behalf of Monsieur Tartuffe, on a matter that, he says, will be very satisfying.

Dorine: There's a soft-spoken gentleman who comes on behalf of Monsieur Tartuffe with business, he says, that you will be pleased to hear.

(Orgon looks to Cleante)

Cleante: Let's hear what the man has to say.

M. Loyal: (rhyming) Good Health to you, Sir, My Heaven confound Your enemies, and may your joys abound.

Orgon: (To Cleante) That was a pleasant greeting. Perhaps a reconciliation can be made.

M. Loyal: I have always been extremely fond of your family. In fact, I used to work for your father.

Orgon: Forgive me for not recognizing you. What's your name again?

M. Loyal: My name is Loyal. And I have been for forty years, Heaven be praised, fortunate enough to be a court bailiff. And with your kind permission, I am hear to serve you (beat) a notice of eviction.

Orgon: What!

M. Loyal: Now please don't be alarmed, it's only an order to leave the premises, you and your family, and to take all of your furniture and belongings to make room for the next tenant, without fail and without delay.

Orgon: (pause) What!
M. Loyal: If you please, Sir. (Moving to the other side of the room speaking louder) The house, as everyone knows, now belongs to our Good Monsieur Tartuffe. He is the owner of all your holdings according to this contract I have here. It is properly executed and cannot be disputed.

(Cleante silently asks to look at the contract. Loyal hands it over. Harpagon joins Cleante and reads it over his shoulder.)

Damis: This is bullshit! I've never heard anything more ridiculous in my life!

M. Loyal: Please, Monsieur. I have no business with you. I am here only to address this gentleman who is reasonable and calm and knows the way a respectable man should behave. I know he will not oppose the law.

Orgon: Uhhhhhh..... (Dumbfounded)

M. Loyal: Monsieur, I know that you would not obstruct justice for any reason in the world and that, being an honorable gentleman, will allow me to carry out my duty, Sir.

Damis: Why don't you and your duty get the Hell out of our house.

M. Loyal: Please advise your son to hold his tongue, Monsieur, I'd hate to have to put it in my report and later testify as to his conduct.

Dorine: This Monsieur Loyal seems like a pretty disloyal fellow to me.

M. Loyal: I am always civil to the well to-do. I was only willing to do this to please you and save you from someone who might have less affection for you and would treat you less gently.

Orgon: And what could be worse than telling honest people that they have to get out of their home?

M. Loyal: But I am giving you time. (beat) Why I'll grant you a stay of execution until tomorrow. I'll just spend the night with ten of my men and, for the sake of form, ask you for the keys to the house before you go to bed. We'll be sure not to trouble you in the least.

Then, early tomorrow morning you will remove your personal possessions from the house down to the last spoon. My men will help you. I picked ten strong men who will help you in every way to clear your things out in timely fashion.

No one, I think, could act more fairly with you than I could and, to repay me for treating you so kindly, I hope you will return the favor and cooperate with me fully.
Orgon: I'm going to punch this fellow in the nose. So help me God, I'm going to punch this fellow in the nose.

Cleante: No, no, Now, let's not make matters worse.

Damis: Do it father!

Dorine: Here, let me do it for you.

Harpagon: Enough! Please, Sir, give us the document and leave us alone.

M. Loyal: Until tomorrow. May the Lord Bless you and Let the Sun Shine on you all! (Loyal leaves)

Orgon: Go fu... (hesitates) May the Devil take you and he that sent you!
TARTUFFE
Act V, Scene 5

Orgon: Well mother, are you convinced now?

Mme. Pern.: I don’t know what to say. I’m stunned.

Dorine: I don’t see what you’re complaining about. It’s simply Tartuffe’s ultimate expression of his love for you. See he knows that material possessions will corrupt you so he’s robbing you of everything that might stand in the way of your salvation.

(Silence as they all look at her)

Orgon: (Quietly). Dorine? (beat) Okay?

Cleante: We better see what we can do. (Harpagon and Cleante head upstairs)

Elmire: (Stopping them) Go to the authorities and expose that ungrateful imposter. Behavior like that must surely void any contract. His treachery must appear too obvious to allow him to succeed.
TARTUFFE

Act V, Scene 6

Valere: I'm very sorry to be bringing you bad news, Sir, but I must for you are in grave danger. A relative of mine who works for the state has informed me that Tartuffe has given the king a certain casket, which belongs to a political agitator who happens to be a friend of yours. He has made accusations to the king and accuses you of treason. Listen:

I do not know what charges may be pressed, But there's a warrant out for your arrest; Tartuffe has been instructed, furthermore, To guide the arresting officer to your door.

Cleante: So that's his game.

Orgon: The man is a monster!

Valere: Please, Sir, my carriage is outside. The slightest delay may be fatal to you.

Please let me guide you to a safer site
And keep you company throughout your flight.

Orgon: Alas, dear boy, I wish that I could show you My gratitude for everything I owe you.

Harpagon: Go at once, my brother, we will take care of everything here.
TARTUFFE

Act V, Scene 7

Tartuffe: Not. So. Fast, Monsieur. You won’t have to travel far to find lodgings for the night. You are under arrest by order of the King himself!

Orgon: So this is your final betrayal, you bastard? The culmination of all your treachery?

Tartuffe: Your insults cannot annoy me, Sir. Heaven has taught me to endure all for its sake.

Damis: Listen to him shamelessly taking the name of Heaven in vain!

Tartuffe: (To Damis) Spare me your outrage, young man. (To Mariane) I am simply here to do my duty.

Mariane: How very proud you must be.

Orgon: I saved you from poverty you ungrateful wretch.

Tartuffe: True, True. But my first obligation must be to my king. Why my sense of patriotism is so strong that I would eagerly sacrifice my friendships, my family and, by God, even my own life for this great country of ours.

Elmire: You phony!

Harpagon: If your sense of duty was so strong, why did you wait to turn him in until after he caught you making advances on his wife and threw you out? You’ve had that box for some time now, why were you sticking around to accept the wealth and daughter of someone you knew to be a traitor?

Tartuffe: I don’t have to explain myself to you. Officers, do your duty!

Officer 1: Yes, it is high time I did my duty, thank you for reminding me. I have let this go on long enough.

(The two officers approach and get on both sides of Tartuffe instead of Orgon:

(To Tartuffe) Sir, I am here to arrest you by order of the king and escort you directly to prison.

Tartuffe: Prison? Me? But... But why?

Officer 1: Yes, explanations are in order (beat) but not to you.
Officer 1: (To Orgon) Sir, all is well; rest easy, and be grateful. We serve a King to whom all sham is hateful, A King who sees into every heart And can't be fooled by an imposter's art.

Officer 2: He honors all the best of humankind; But zeal for virtue never makes him blind: Nor does the love of piety numb his wits And make him tolerant of hypocrites.

Officer 1: His insight penetrated from the start The twisted treason of that scoundrel’s heart. Accusing you, Tartuffe revealed his state, And by an equitable stroke of fate

    Led the King to recall his shady fame
    For crimes committed under a different name.
    His record is a long and ugly one
    That would fill ten volumes and still not be done.

Officer 2: But to be brief: Out sovereign was appalled By this man's treachery towards you, which he called The last, worst villainy of a vile career, And bade me follow the imposter here

    To see how gross his impudence could be
    And force him to restore your property.
    Your private papers by the King's command,
    I hereby seize and give into your hand.

Officer 1: The King, by royal order, invalidates The deed which gave this rascal your estates,

Officer 2: And finally he pardons your offense In harboring an exile's documents. And thus the courage that you once displayed Against his enemies shall be repaid.

Officer 1: And shows how heartfelt is his satisfaction In recompensing any worthy action, How much he prizes merit, and how he makes More of men's virtues that of their mistakes.
Dorine: Thank God!

Mme. Pern: Finally, I can breathe again.

Elmire: Well that turned out better than I expected.

Mariane: Then it’s finally over.

Orgon: Yes. (to Tartuffe) And as for you, you fiend.

Cleante: Now brother. Don’t stoop to his level. Leave the unhappy creature to his fate.

Orgon: You’re right!

(Rhyming) Let’s go and kneel before the thrown
And thank him for the wisdom he has shown.
And when that first great duty has been done,
We’ll turn with pleasure to a second one.

(He brings Valere over to his daughter)

And give Valere, whose love has proven true,
The wedded happiness which is his due.