



# Writ in the Margins Podcast

Created by the students in REN670: Dramaturgy in the Shakespeare and Performance graduate program at Mary Baldwin University

Produced by Prof. Molly E. Seremet (she/her/hers)

## Episode Guide

Season 3, Episode 9

*Tartuffe* (Dorine's Version)

Hosts: Jovita Roselene and John Williams

NOTE: This resource was created for *Writ in the Margins* by students in the Shakespeare and Performance graduate program at Mary Baldwin University as a final project for graduate students in Prof. Molly E. Seremet's REN670: Dramaturgy class. All recordings and accompanying materials are available for use for educational and entertainment purposes. Please do not duplicate or distribute these materials without permission, however. All opinions stated in episodes are those of the hosts and special guests and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the institutions presenters represent.

*A note on content: This episode includes one instance of the f-word right at the very beginning!*

## Episode Resources

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### Episode Transcript

**John:** Fuck!

**Jovita:** What? What's wrong?

**John:** Women are just so mistreated.

**Jovita:** Wow John, that's a great observation. You're 6 foot and single, right?

**John:** Hehe. Welllllcoooooome to the *Writ In the Margins* podcast. My name is John Williams

**Jovita:** And I'm Jovita Roselene

**John:** and for this episode, which we're calling *Tartuffe (Dorine's Version)*

**Jovita:** we'll be discussing Dorine's agency in *Tartuffe*, and how she subverts the patriarchal norms of early modern France

**John:** Jovita, why are we calling this Dorine's version again?

**Jovita:** Isn't it because it's like... Taylor's version?

**John:** Jovita, that's exactly the point! Just like Taylor Swift took initiative to deal with some problematic patriarchy within the music industry, Dorine is basically the only character to really take initiative in *Tartuffe*. Hence the name: *Tartuffe (Dorine's Version)*

**Jovita :** Right! Taylor's version album shook the entire grounds of the music industry! She is one of the most popular feminist icons in pop culture. Did you know that she has a record extending 87th week at No. 1 on the Billboard Artist 100?

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**John:** Insane. For a while now, Taylor Swift has been massively popular. However, she's recently begun re-recording and re-releasing already published songs with an added parenthetical at the end: (Taylor's Version). What's the story there? Let's start at the beginning. Taylor Swift signed a record deal in 2005 with Big Machine Records. As part of this deal, Big Machine Records owned the original recordings of Swift's performances and songs. Fast forward a few years to when Kanye West stole the mic out of Swift's hand at the 2009 MTV Music Video Awards and claimed that Beyonce should have won the award Taylor received. A long feud ensued, wherein Swift had both musical and social media run-ins with West and Canadian singer Justin Bieber. At the time, Scott Braun was the manager for both West and Bieber. Swift accused Braun of having collaborated with his two clients to bully her. Later on, Braun would end up purchasing Big Machine Records, which greatly displeased Swift. Swift responded with:

**Jovita:** "For years I asked, pleaded for a chance to own my work. Instead I was given an opportunity to sign back up to Big Machine Records and 'earn' one album back at a time, one for every new one I turned in. I walked away because I knew once I signed that contract, Scott Borchetta" (owner of Big Machine Records before Scott Braun) would sell the label, thereby selling me and my future. I had to make the excruciating choice to leave behind my past. Music I wrote on my bedroom floor and videos I dreamed up and paid for from the money I earned playing in bars, then clubs, then arenas, then stadiums."

"All I could think about was the incessant, manipulative bullying I've received at his hands for years," she said. "Like when Kim Kardashian orchestrated an illegally recorded snippet of a phone call to be leaked and then Scooter got his two clients together to bully me online about it. Or when his client, Kanye West, organized a revenge porn music video which strips my body naked. Now Scooter has stripped me of my life's work, that I wasn't given an opportunity to buy. Essentially, my musical legacy is about to lie in the hands of someone who tried to dismantle it."

**John:** However, hope emerged when singer Kelly Clarkson suggested that Swift simply re-record her music. It took several years, but eventually, Swift did just that. Swift continues to re-record her music – while refining it and updating it – always with the additional, triumphant parenthetical: Taylor's version.

**Jovita :** So.... like how Molière made new versions of his play?

**John:** He did what now?

**Jovita:** Did you know that *Tartuffe* has been borrowed and adapted since it was first banned in 1664 by the Archbishop of Paris for its explicit attack on religion? Even during Molière's lifetime theater producers throughout Europe tried to get permission to freely borrow and adapt the storyline of *Tartuffe* as Molière himself had done for many of his own plays. Don't you see ? Molière is a reverse Swiftie!!

**John:** How?

**Jovita:** The version of *Tartuffe* that we read today is from 1669, because all translated versions are reworked from this edition and not the original version of 1664 because that was banned, burned or lost in history, or the second

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toned-down version of 1667 that was published under the name "*Panulphe; ou L'Imposteur*," which had only one performance. This is significant as *Tartuffe* evolved as a work in progress across its three versions.

**John:** Kinda like Taylor Swift re-recording old songs, occasionally with updates!

**Jovita:** Exactly! Although the songs she released claim to have minor differences, such as acoustic and vocal changes, they are essentially the same. I think that same goes for *Tartuffe*... Molière wrote adaptations of his original script and aligned his rewritten versions with the tastes and preferences of the society for financial gain and popularity. Molière in this case is a reverse swiftie because unlike Taylor's original albums that became popular right after it was released, His original manuscript of the play was censored and banned.

**John :** Wait so how does this become Dorine's version then?

**Jovita:** I would love to explain that but before we dive into that whole tangent, we need to know the play first! Hey John you go to the gym don't you? Let's see how fast you can explain the story of *Tartuffe* in under 1 minute.

**John:** Challenge accepted!

**Jovita:** And Go!

**John:** The patriarchal head of a French household, Orgon, is taken under the spell of the religious hypocrite Tartuffe. Everyone in Orgon's family except his mother, Madame Pernelle, sees right through Tartuffe's hypocrisy. Tartuffe, while preaching holiness, blatantly pursues Orgon's wife, Elmire, while Orgon attempts to secure a marriage between his daughter, Mariane, and Tartuffe. No one wants this marriage to happen. Mariane is in love with a young man named Valere, and Mariane's brother, Damis, really wants that marriage to work out because he's in love with Valere's sister. The only person to really try to do anything about this situation, however, is Dorine – Mariane's maid. Dorine encourages Mariane to stand up to her father, attempts to make Madame Pernelle understand that Tartuffe is a hypocrite, and stands up to Orgon *for* Mariane when Mariane won't do it herself. Not only does she do these things, but she always manages to do it in a hilarious way! Eventually Orgon witnesses Tartuffe flirting with Elmire and finally cuts ties. Tartuffe goes to court and almost manages to get Orgon and his family kicked out of his own house when the king pulls a deus ex machina and swoops in to save the day. Apparently he saw through Tartuffe the whole time. Tartuffe is hauled off to jail and the family lives happily ever after, supposedly.

**Jovita:** That was ..... seconds. Take that *Tartuffe!* So now that we're making our own take on this play, we are going to specifically focus on Dorine and highlight her role in the play. It might seem like Tartuffe is the main deal, given the title and all, but guess what? Dude doesn't show up until Act III. Meanwhile, Dorine is the one running the show, holding more agency over everyone. Now this gives us an opportunity to recognize her significance and impact on the unfolding events, and align our findings with feminist theory that underscores the need to accord Dorine the spotlight she rightfully deserves. Let's dive into Dorine's version of *Tartuffe!*

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**John:** Nice! Could you sum up feminist theory for me real quick?

**Jovita:** No.

**John:** What? Why not? – wait. *Whispers* – is this not part of the podcast? What’s happening?

**Jovita:** Well, the reason it’s hard to sum up feminist theory is because it covers a lot of material. Jessica McCall addresses this issue. After acknowledging the difficulties of summing up such a large field of study, she says “feminism is about *how* we think as much as it’s about *what* we think.”

**John:** Uhhh... what?

**Jovita:** Okay so feminist theory is extremely intersectional, and really addresses pre-existing ways of thinking and questions why we think those things. For instance, why do so many early modern plays end with marriages? Are marriages always a good thing? Do marriages insist upon a happy ending? McCall clarifies that feminist studies contains two parts: “criticism and theory. Criticism studies the effects of sexism, but theory answers *what* sexism is and *why* it exists.” If you *really* need a short, succinct definition, Lois Tyson defines feminist theory as “..the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforce or undermine the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women.”

**John:** Whoa. And one might say, perhaps – like McCall also says – that “Every individual’s entry into feminist awareness is shaped by lived experience.”

**Jovita:** Yup. To quote McCall one final time, “Feminism demands more than a repression and dismissal of the subjective – feminism demands we do the hard work of understanding ourselves so that we do not continue to misunderstand others.”

**John:** Okay great! – I mean, not the misogyny – your summary of feminist theory is uh, great. Anyways, what are some ways that feminist theory can be applied to *Tartuffe*?

**Jovita:** According to Tyson, one of the biggest emphases of feminism is recognizing programming resultant of the patriarchal system and resisting that programming, which she admits is easier said than done.

**John:** AND THAT’S EXACTLY WHAT DORINE DOES. THAT’S WHY IT’S DORINE’S VERSION. Like the whole Dorine thing.

**Jovita:** Exactly! Let’s look at some ways that Dorine and other female characters in *Tartuffe* resist the pillars of a patriarchal society.

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**John:** The first instance, I think, is when Dorine stands up to Orgon when he tells Mariane that she has to marry Tartuffe. I think another important point to bring up here is the male gaze. Tyson says of the male gaze that “The one looked at—the woman—is merely an object to be seen. Thus, in a patriarchy, women are merely tokens, markers, commodities in a male economy.” A perfect and unfortunate example of this is Orgon using his own daughter as a commodity in order to solidify his friendship with Tartuffe. Dorine resists this idea in act 3, scene 2. Dorine resists Orgon’s decision by questioning his reasoning, challenging his sanity, and even telling Orgon that because Dorine and Mariane are such a bad match, he’s basically setting up Tartuffe to be a cuckold. The following text is the end of a long monologue where she warns Orgon of the mistake he’s making. Jovita?

**Jovita:** Of course!

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, before you play so risky a role.

**John:** Whooooo. She’s scary. Ya don’t wanna be on her bad side!

**Jovita :** I know right! It is quite interesting to note that this play not only serves as a satirical exploration of religious hypocrisy but also functions as a social commentary on women and the prevailing patriarchal hierarchy that deems their existence as essential yet restricts them to limited roles. The playwright underscores these themes, notably, through the portrayal of various female characters endowed with considerable capacities for reason, cleverness, and rationality. Their characterization serves as a vehicle to critique the societal structures that unjustly constrain them, thereby highlighting the untapped potential of women.

**John:** Right, the female characters who employ logic and cunning to unveil Tartuffe’s true nature succeeded where the men failed to do so. Without them, Orgon’s entire family would have been in jeopardy because of his foolishness.

**Jovita:** This is exactly why you need women in your life

**John:** Okay that hurt my feelings.

**Jovita:** Anywayyyys... let’s talk about your girl problems later.

If you haven’t noticed, Taylor’s songs are highly feminist. She’s one of the most popular female artists that inspire and empower many women out there, and I love that for her. Oh oh ! we should play a game! Let’s come up with Taylor swift songs that directly relate to the women in Tartuffe and talk about how it reveals their agency in the play. The one who gets the most wins!

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**John:** Ooh games. I like games.

**Jovita:** How'd you get into Grad school ?

**John:** Uhhhh..

**Jovita:** Anywayyys, I'll go First!! So let's see... we have Elmire, Orgon's wife, who despite occupying a traditional role as the lady of the house, displays resilience and cleverness in her actions. I can't think of a better song than "Look what you made me do" from the reputation album. I can totally imagine Elmire saying "I don't like your perfect crimes, how you laugh when you lie, you said the gun was mine, isn't cool No, I don't like you" In Act IV, Elmire confronts Tartuffe, using her wit to expose his deceit. Elmire's agency lies not only in her position as Orgon's spouse but also in her ability to navigate and challenge the unfolding chaos and brings the true nature of Tartuffe to light. In short, Elmire got smarter and got harder in the nick of time.

**John:** Hey that's actually pretty good! My turn! Okay so Mariane, Orgon's daughter is in love with Valere to whom she is engaged, but her agency is restricted initially – constrained by her father's plans for her union with Tartuffe. However, as events unfold, Mariane's strength emerges as she stands up for her love – defying societal expectations and asserting her right to choose her own path, like what Juliet did from Romeo and Juliet. \*breaks into a song?\* "Romeo take me, somewhere we could be alone"

**Jovita:** Okay alright alright! This is a perfect song for Mariane, also Love story was the first ever Taylor swift song I listened to!

**John:** Love that for you.

**Jovita:** Uhh Okay.. now me.. Aha! You know who should actually calm down? Madame Pernelle, Orgon's mother! She is probably the most contrasting female figure in this play. Like its Seven AM in the morning Madame Pernelle why are you praising and standing up for someone whom you absolutely don't know anything about. Yes you know what song Im taking about. "You need to calm down" from the Lover album. While Madame Pernelle doesn't wield direct agency in the conventional sense, her opinions hold sway over Orgon's decisions, influencing the family dynamics. Come on Madame Pernelle, stop stepping on people's gowns and ruining their lives. Her very presence highlights the societal expectations placed on women and their roles within the family structure. Yeah no, we don't like her. She actually needs to calm the heck down.

**John:** Damn right! And last but not the least - Dorine! Mariane's maid defies societal norms by boldly expressing her opinions despite her humble role. She confronts Orgon *fearlessly* and with *style* because she knows *All too well* about Tartuffe—in fact, she *knew he was trouble when he walked in*—and she asserts that he is a *hoax*, with a logic and understanding that seems to elude him. Not even in his *Wildest Dreams*, would Orgon have imagined that this *delicate* little maid would be the reason why his whole family is *out of the woods* of Tartuffe's lies. Through Dorine, Molière puts forth a compelling argument – that women, regardless of their position in the social hierarchy, possess the

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capability for logical reasoning and sound decision-making, perhaps even surpassing men. Dorine, with her sharp tongue and ability to *speake now*, embodies significant agency. She not only challenges the patriarchy and absurdities surrounding her but emerges as a beacon of reason in the chaos. For Dorine, agency isn't confined by her maid status; she *shakes it off* and emerges as an intelligent, bold woman challenging the conventional expectations placed on women in her time.

**Jovita:** Oh my Gosh! John, you are a genius, I am *Enchanted* by that. It is indeed amazing how Dorine holds more agency in this play than anyone else, not even Madame Pernelle's *Reputation* can stand a chance against her. Now *Back to December* I mean, Back to the podcast, Molière remains relevant today because of the strong female characters – especially Dorine. Despite four hundred years of societal evolution, we continue to repeat age-old narratives like the ones present in *Tartuffe*.

**John:** Taylor Swift has faced patriarchal oppression in the music industry and her triumphal re-recording and re-release of old songs shows a stark resemblance to Dorine resisting patriarchal oppression in *Tartuffe*. Thank you for listening to this episode of the *Writ In the Margins Podcast, Tartuffe (Dorine's Version)*. Signing off: this is John Williams

**Jovita:** And Jovita Roselene.

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