

LA DISPUTE

by Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux
translated by Timberlake Wertenbaker

Egle (18) - Azor (18)

The Play: Marivaux has long been considered the fourth most popular playwright at the *Comédie-Française* (after Moliere, Corneille, and Racine). In a recent volume, playwright Timberlake Wertenbaker has made available an exciting English translation of Marivaux's enchanting *La Dispute*. The "dispute" is over whether it was man or woman who was the first to be unfaithful in love. Some eighteen years ago this dispute took place at the court of the King, a man of science who decided to recreate an environment that would be like the beginning of the world when man and woman first encountered each other. The experiment consisted of selecting four new born babies (two girls and two boys), placing them in four separate homes in the forest, with each raised by guardians Mesrou and his sister Carise (both black, unlike the four babies). This very day is the first opportunity each of the four children, now eighteen, are permitted out of their respective environments thus allowing the FIRST meeting to take place between man and woman. The play first introduces each boy to each girl, provides encounters between the two girls, then the two boys, and ultimately all four together. What begins as a delightful discovery, soon turns to selfishness and jealousy. In the end, *La Dispute* remains unresolved.

The Scene: Egle is thrilled to be out to discover the wonders beyond the confines of the estate she's lived on for eighteen years. She has been left here alone by Carise. Azor, experiencing similar reactions to this new world, has been left here alone by Mesrou. Here is the very first boy-girl encounter in the play. Step one of the experiment begins with this scene, the fourth scene of twenty that make up the play.

Special Note: The editors have selected this scene for advanced students and encourage in-depth examination into period and style.

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(Egle is alone for a moment, then Azor appears, facing her.)

EGLE: I'm so beautiful I'll never tire of looking at myself. *(She sees Azor.) (Frightened)* Oh. What's this? Another person just like me. No, no, don't come any closer. *(To herself.)* The person laughs. The person seems to be admiring me. *(To Azor.)* Wait, please. Don't move. *(To herself.)* And yet, the person looks at me with such a gentle expression. *(To Azor.)* Can you speak?

AZOR: Yes. It was the pleasure of seeing you that had made me speechless.

EGLE: The person hears me and answers me in a very pleasant manner.

AZOR: You enchant me.

EGLE: Good.

AZOR: You delight me.

EGLE: I like you too.

AZOR: Why then do you forbid me to come any closer?

EGLE: I'm no longer forbidding you with as much conviction as before.

AZOR: Then I'll come closer.

EGLE: Yes, I would enjoy that. No, wait. I'm so agitated.

AZOR: I obey you because I'm yours.

EGLE: The person obeys me! Well then, come a little closer. You can't really be mine if you stay so far away. Ah, yes. It's you. *(To herself.)* The person's very well put together. Do you know, you're almost as beautiful as I am.

AZOR: Being so close to you is making me die of happiness. I want to give myself to you. I don't know what I feel, I don't know how to say it.

EGLE: That's how I feel.

AZOR: I'm happy. I'm fainting.

EGLE: I'm sighing.

AZOR: It doesn't matter how close I am to you, I still can't see enough of you.

EGLE: That's what I think too. But I don't know how we can see more of each other. It's impossible for us to be any closer.

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AZOR: My heart wants your hands.
EGLE: Here: take my hands. My heart gives them to you. Are you any happier now?
AZOR: Yes, but not more at peace.
EGLE: Nor am I, we're alike in all things.
AZOR: Oh, no, there's such a difference between us. The whole of me can't even compare with your eyes. They're so soft.
EGLE: But yours are lively.
AZOR: You're so pretty, so delicate.
EGLE: Yes, but I assure you it wouldn't suit you to be as pretty as I am. I wouldn't want you to be any different from the way you are. It's another kind of perfection. I don't deny mine, but you must keep yours.
AZOR: I won't change then.
EGLE: Ah, tell me, where were you before I knew you?
AZOR: In a world of my own. But I won't ever go back there since you don't live there and I want to have your hands with me forever. I can no longer manage without them, nor can my mouth deprive itself of kissing them.
EGLE: And my hands can no longer be deprived of the kisses of your mouth. Shh. I hear a noise. These must be the people from my world. Hide behind this tree or they'll be frightened. I'll call you.
AZOR: But I can't see you from behind that tree.
EGLE: All you need do is look into that water. My face is there, you'll see it.

DOES A TIGER WEAR A NECKTIE?

by Don Petersen
Linda (18) - Conrad (20)

The Play: Set in a rehabilitation center for juvenile narcotic addicts, *Does a Tiger Wear a Necktie?* presents a powerful, compassionate, and sometimes humorous slice of the lives of a group of troubled young people and the teachers who attempt to help them. Among the many characters at the center are Mr. Winters, a patient English teacher; Dr. Werner, a gentle but persistent psychiatrist; Bickham, a cocky, pugnacious youth who has little chance of being released (he tracked down his wayward father and beat him bloody); Linda, a young black prostitute; and Conrad, a shy but earnest young black man who appears to be the only one in the group who has any hope of rehabilitation and release. Numerous excellent supporting and smaller roles add texture and depth to this absorbing, dramatic work, which featured Hal Holbrook as Winters and Al Pacino as Bickham (Tony Award) in the original Broadway production.

The Scene: Linda and Conrad have just made love in Mr. Winter's classroom, where they put together a makeshift bed of newspapers, a blanket, and a pillow. Linda has been telling Conrad how he reminds her of a trick she once turned—a trick who liked to talk afterwards.