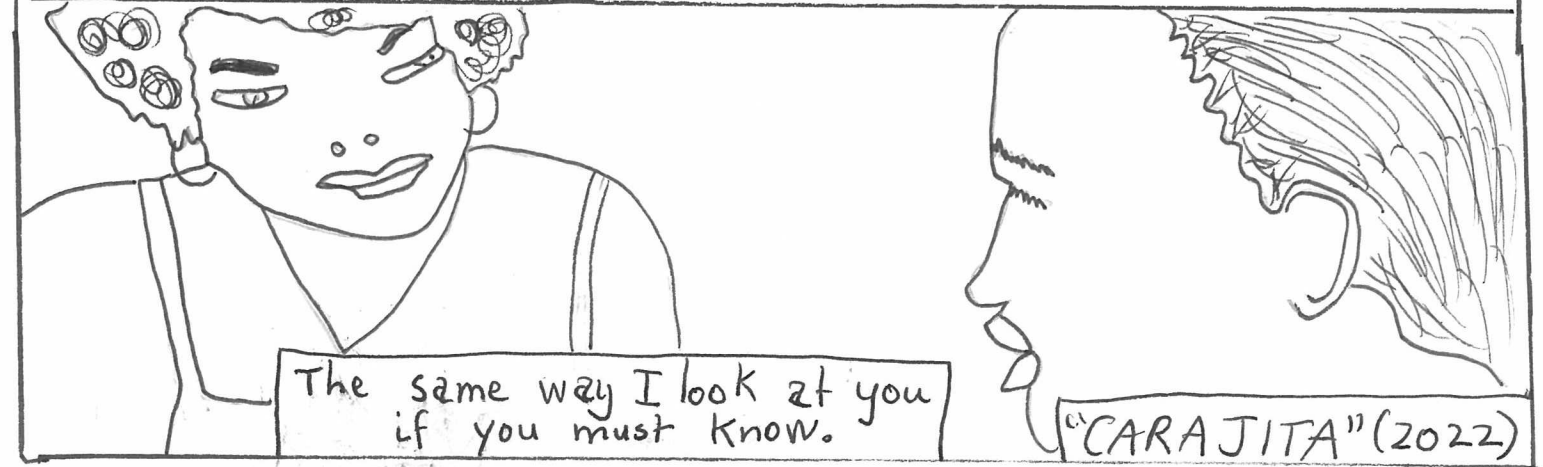




The way you look at him?

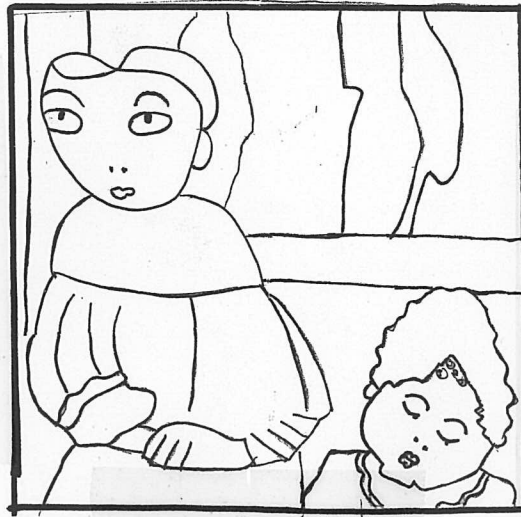


What ?



The same way I look at you  
if you must know.

"CARAJITA" (2022)

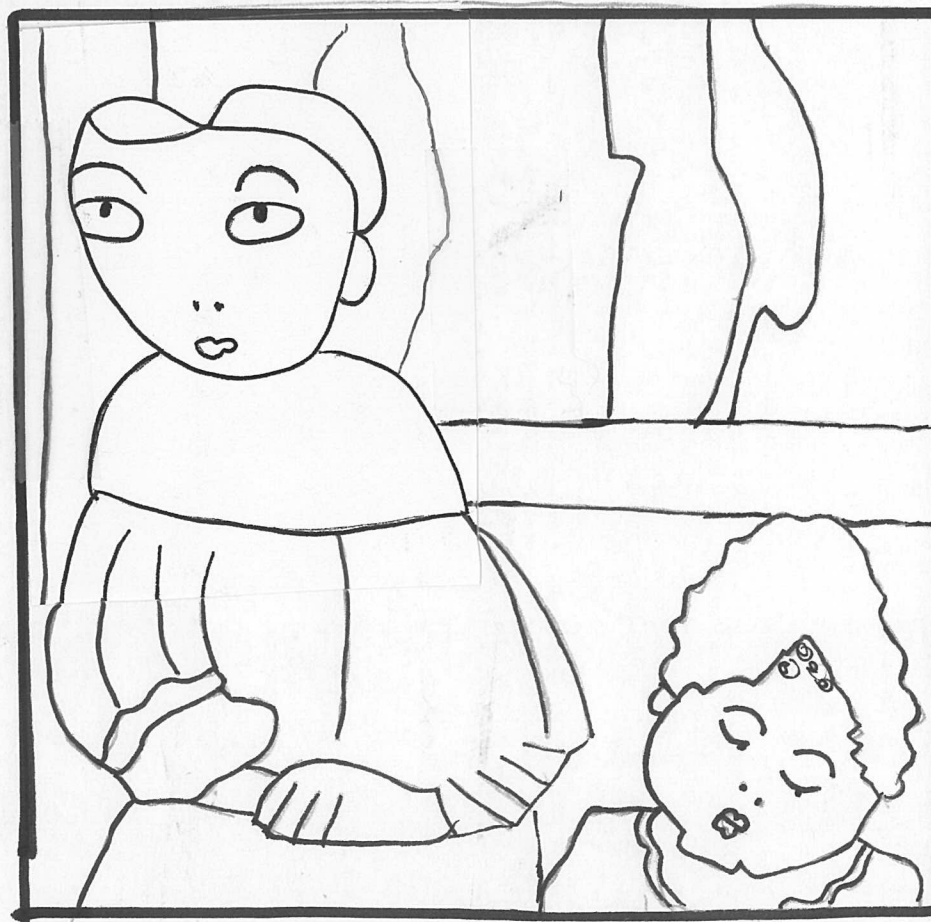
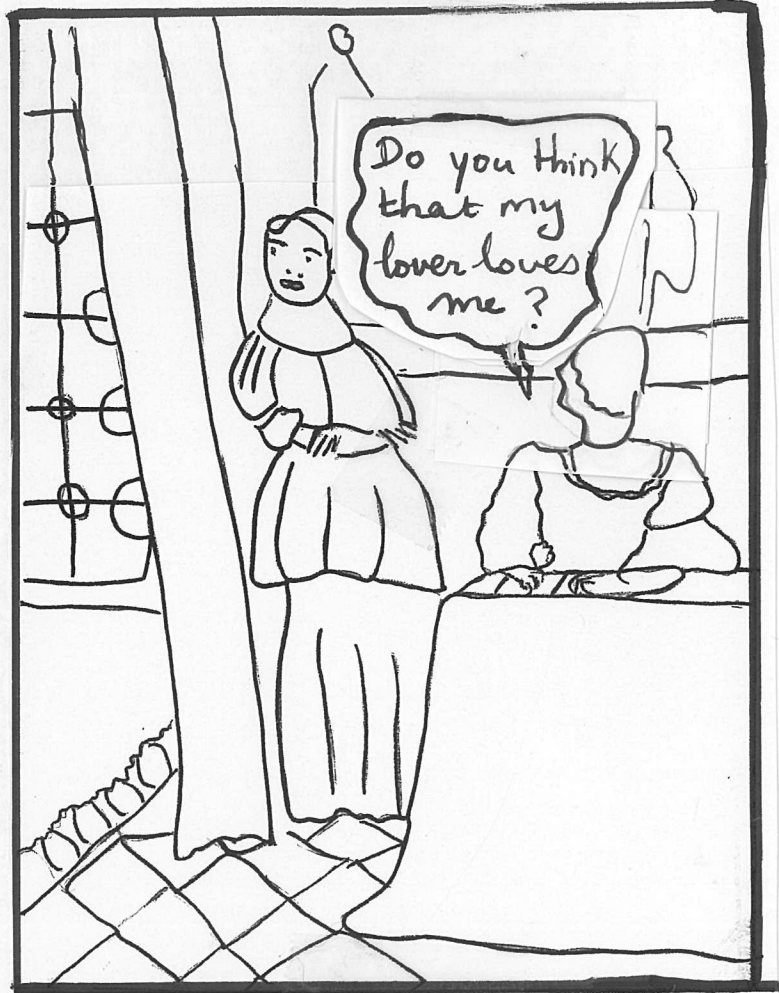
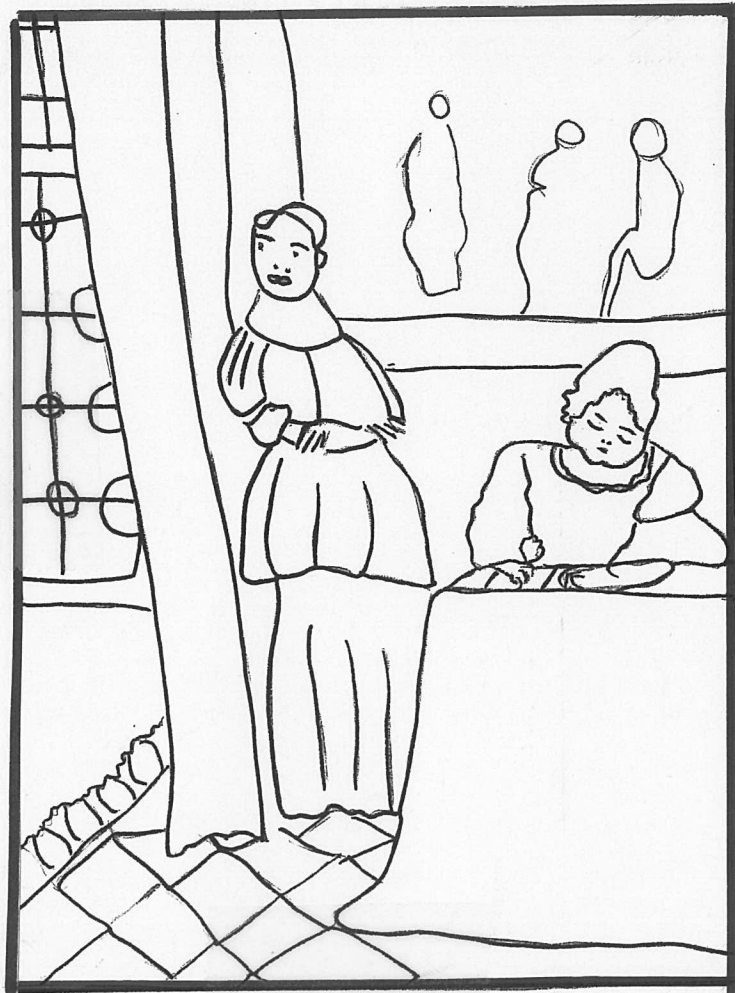


3: CONFIDE

SO FAR WE'VE SEEN DOMESTIC  
WORKERS - MAIDS, CARE GIVERS,  
NANNIES - GO ABOVE AND BE-  
YOND THE FUNCTIONS OR DUTIES  
FOR WHICH THEY WERE HIRED.

ONE OF THOSE "ABOVE AND BE-  
YOND" ROLES IS LISTENING,  
A LOT OF LISTENING, TO THE  
MASTERS COMPLAINING ABOUT  
THEIR LOT IN LIFE.

REMEMBER THE VERMEER PAINTING?

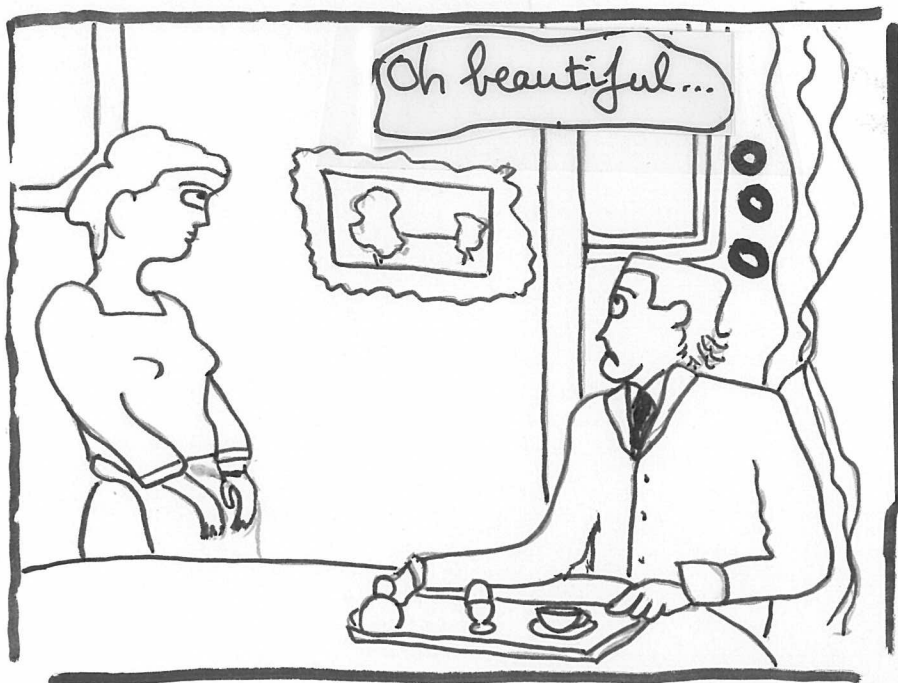






IN THE FRENCH MOVIE, "THE WOMEN OF THE SIXTH FLOOR," CONFIDING FROM "MASTER" TO SERVANT TAKES A DIFFERENT TWIST. THE MASTER "MOVES IN" WITH THE MAIDS IN THEIR MODEST TOP FLOOR QUARTERS AND HANGS OUT WITH THEM AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO HIS STALE BOURGEOIS LIFESTYLE DOWN BELOW.

HE ABANDONS HIS BANKER LIFE AND HIS FAMILY (SPOILER ALERT) AS HE NOT ONLY FALLS IN LOVE WITH A MORE MODEST LIFESTYLE BUT WITH ONE OF THE MAIDS AS WELL.



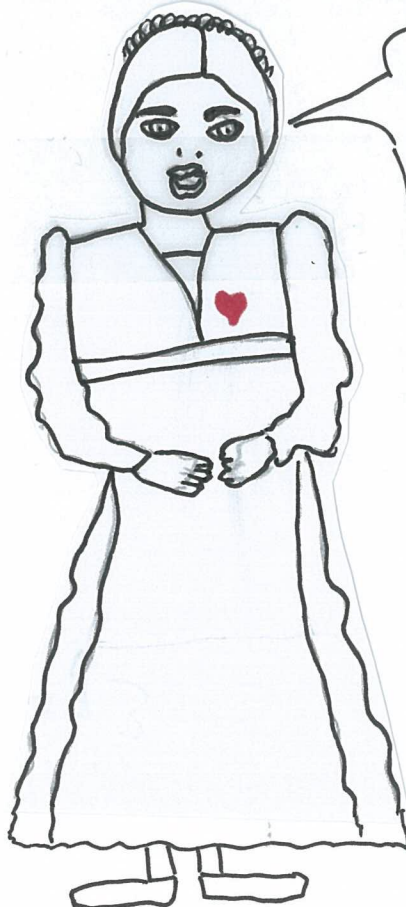


THE VOYEURISM IN THIS MOVIE, NOT TO MENTION ITS POLITICS, ARE EXTREMELY PROBLEMATIC.

BACK TO CONFIDING.

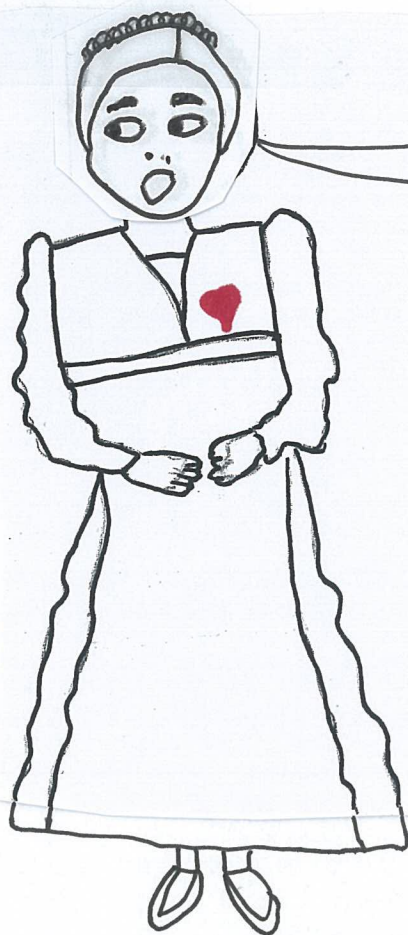
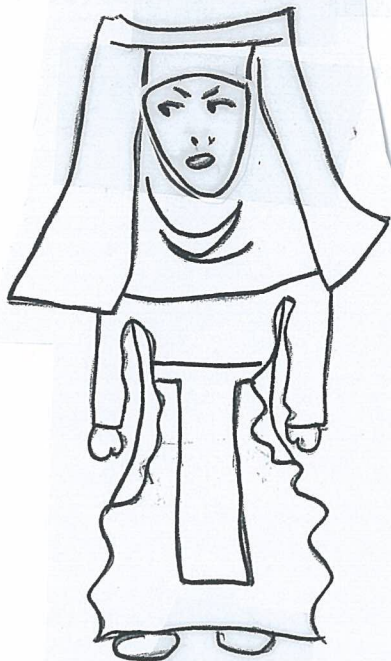
COUNTLESS TIMES IN CLASSICAL THEATER, YOUNG MASTERS AND MISTRESSES HAVE BEEN ORDERED BY THEIR FATHER TO MARRY SOMEBODY THEY DON'T LOVE, OR ARE NOT ALLOWED TO MARRY SOMEONE THAT THEY DO LOVE. «ROMEO AND JULIET» FAMOUSLY STAGES THE IMPOSSIBLE LOVE BETWEEN TWO YOUNG PEOPLE WHOSE FAMILIES HATE EACH OTHER.

IN ACT III, SCENE 5, JULIET CONFIDES HER LOVE FOR ROMÉO TO HER NURSE...

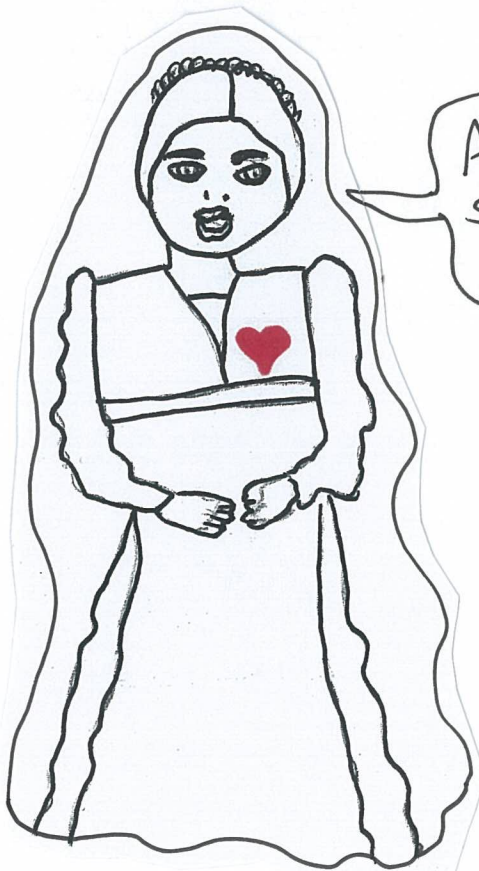


O God! - - O nurse, how shall this be prevented? My husband is on earth, my faith in heaven; How shall that faith return again to earth, unless that husband send it to me from heaven by leaving earth?





Comfort me,  
Counsel me.



Alack, alack, that heaven should practise  
stratagems upon so soft a subject  
as myself! What say'st thou?



Hast thou not  
a word of joy?  
Some comfort,  
nurse.

JULIET'S NURSE IS ACTUALLY QUITE CHATTY, THE "CHATTY CONFIDANTE" WHO LISTENS BUT ALSO BABBLES FOR COMIC EFFECT.

IT'S THANKS TO THE NURSE THAT WE LEARN THAT JULIET IS NOT YET FOURTEEN YEARS OLD.

IN AN EARLIER SCENE, NURSE CHATS WITH ROMEO TO CHECK HIM OUT AND MAKE SURE THAT HIS FEELINGS ARE GENUINE.





Pray you, sir,  
a word: and as  
I told you, my  
young lady  
bade me inquire  
you out; what  
she bade me  
say, I will keep  
to myself: but  
first let me tell  
ye, if ye should  
lead her into a  
fool's paradise,  
as they say...



... it were a  
very gross  
kind of behaviour,  
as they say:  
for the gentle-  
woman is  
young; and  
therefore, if you  
should deal  
double with her,  
truly it were  
an ill thing  
to be offered  
to any gentle-  
woman, and  
very weak  
dealing.



ACT II, SCENE 4

A SERVANT AS CONFIDANTE  
CHECKING THE SERIOUSNESS OF  
A YOUNG MALE LOVER'S INTENTIONS  
IS TYPICAL OF CLASSICAL THEATRE.

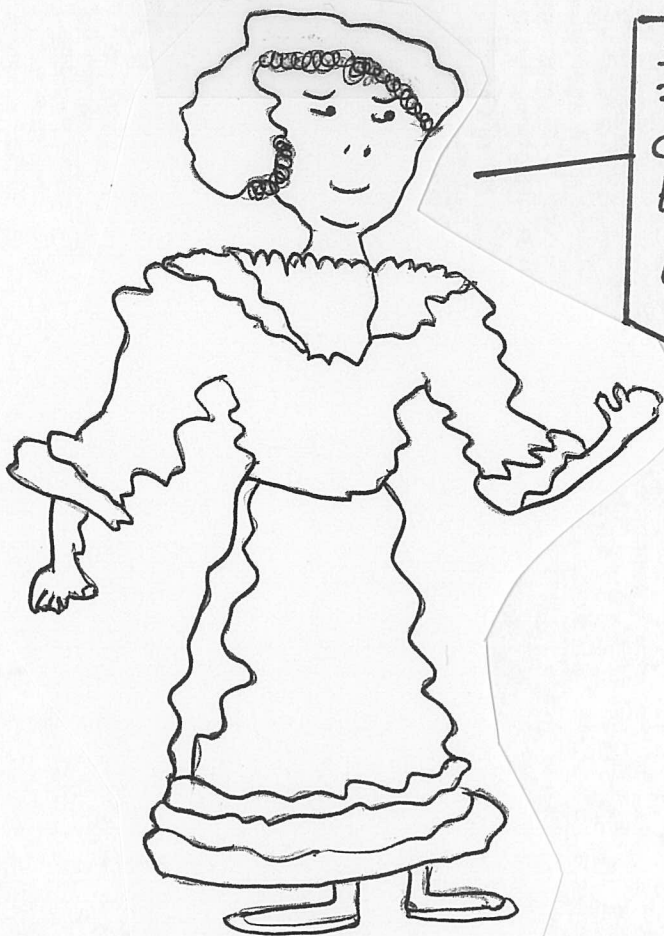
YOUNG WOMEN FROM "GOOD" FAMILIES  
OFTEN HAD JUST ONE SHOT AT A  
GOOD MARRIAGE.

WE KNOW HOW "ROMEO AND JULIET"  
ENDS, SO NURSE WAS NOT A VERY HELP-  
FUL CHARACTER IN TERMS OF PLOT.  
SHE ENTERTAINED, PROVIDED VALUABLE  
INFORMATION TO THE AUDIENCE AND  
LISTENED TO HER MISTRESS, BUT WAS  
COMPLETELY POWERLESS TO PREVENT  
THE TRAGIC ENDING.

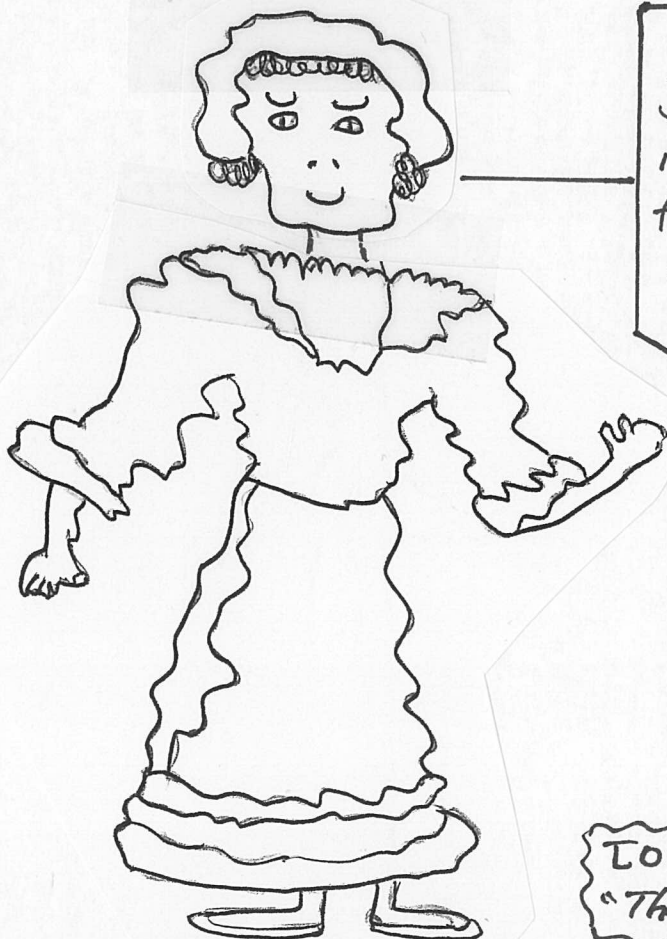


Argan





In the Seventeenth-Century, French playwrights made the Confidante role a lot more important in terms of advancing the plot. For instance, thanks to me, Toinette, the maid in the "Imaginary Invalid," the master of the house stops consulting doctor quacks. But that happens only after I dress up as one.



Similarly to "Romeo and Juliet," a young mistress is in love with a man whom her father has not selected for marriage. In this play, Angélique's father, Argan, the "Imaginary Invalid," wants his daughter to marry a quack doctor. All doctors are quacks according to Molière.

TOINETTE from  
"The Imaginary Invalid"

The following exchange  
between my young  
mistress and myself  
reveals once again  
a young woman's  
need to open up  
to someone about  
her forbidden love.



TOINETTE!

Well!  
What?!

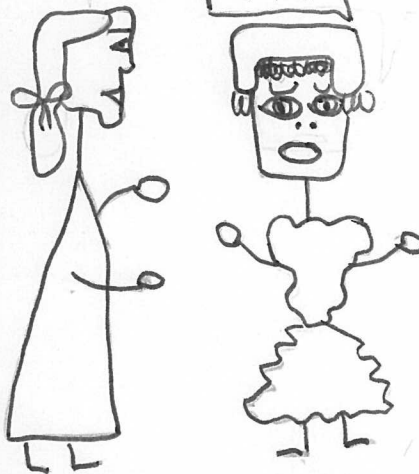
Look at me  
a little.

Well, I am  
looking  
at you.



...

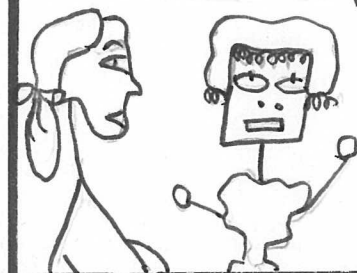
???



Don't you guess what  
I want to speak to  
you about?

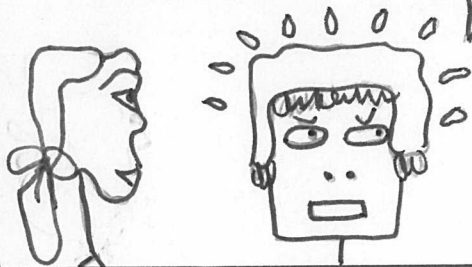


Oh yes, I have some slight  
idea that you want to speak  
of our young lover, for it is of  
him we have been speaking for  
the last six days, and you  
are not well unless you  
mention him at every turn.



Since you know what it is I  
want, why are you not the first  
to speak to me of him? And why  
do you not spare me the trouble  
of being the one to start the  
conversation?

You don't give me time,  
and you are **SO** eager  
that it is difficult to be  
beforehand with you on  
the subject.



I acknowledge that I am never  
weary of speaking of him, and  
that my heart takes eager ad-  
vantage of every moment I  
have to open my heart to you.  
But tell me, Toinette, do you blame  
the feelings I have towards him?

I am far from doing so.



Am I wrong in giving  
way to these sweet  
impressions?

I don't say that  
you are...

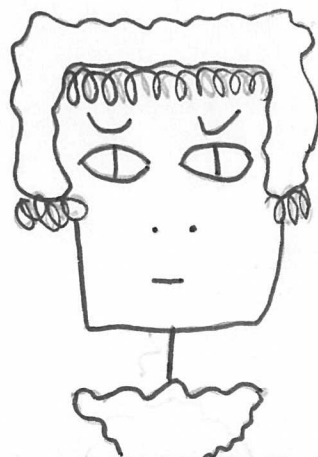


... And would you have  
me insensible to the tender  
protestations of ardent love  
which he shows me?



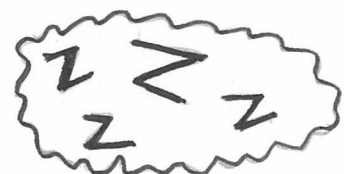
Heaven!  
forbid!

Not too "ardent"  
I hope!



That it is im-pos-sible  
to act more generously?

Agreed.





Do you not think, ToINETTE, that he is very handsome?

VERY?

Certainly.

That he has the best manners in the world?

No doubt about it.

... That there is always something noble in what he says and does?

HOW MUCH LONGER WILL SHE GO ON?

true.

... And that there can be nothing more sweet than the intercourse which I am kept? For it prevents all end to that inspired love which Heaven has provided us with...  
under which I am kept? For it prevents all end to that inspired love which Heaven has provided us with...  
what sort of "intercourse" did she say?

YOU ARE RIGHT.

But, dear ToINETTE, tell me, do you think that he loves me as much as he says he does?

Hum! That's a thing hardly to be trusted at any time. A show of love is sadly like the real thing...

... and I have met very good actors in that line

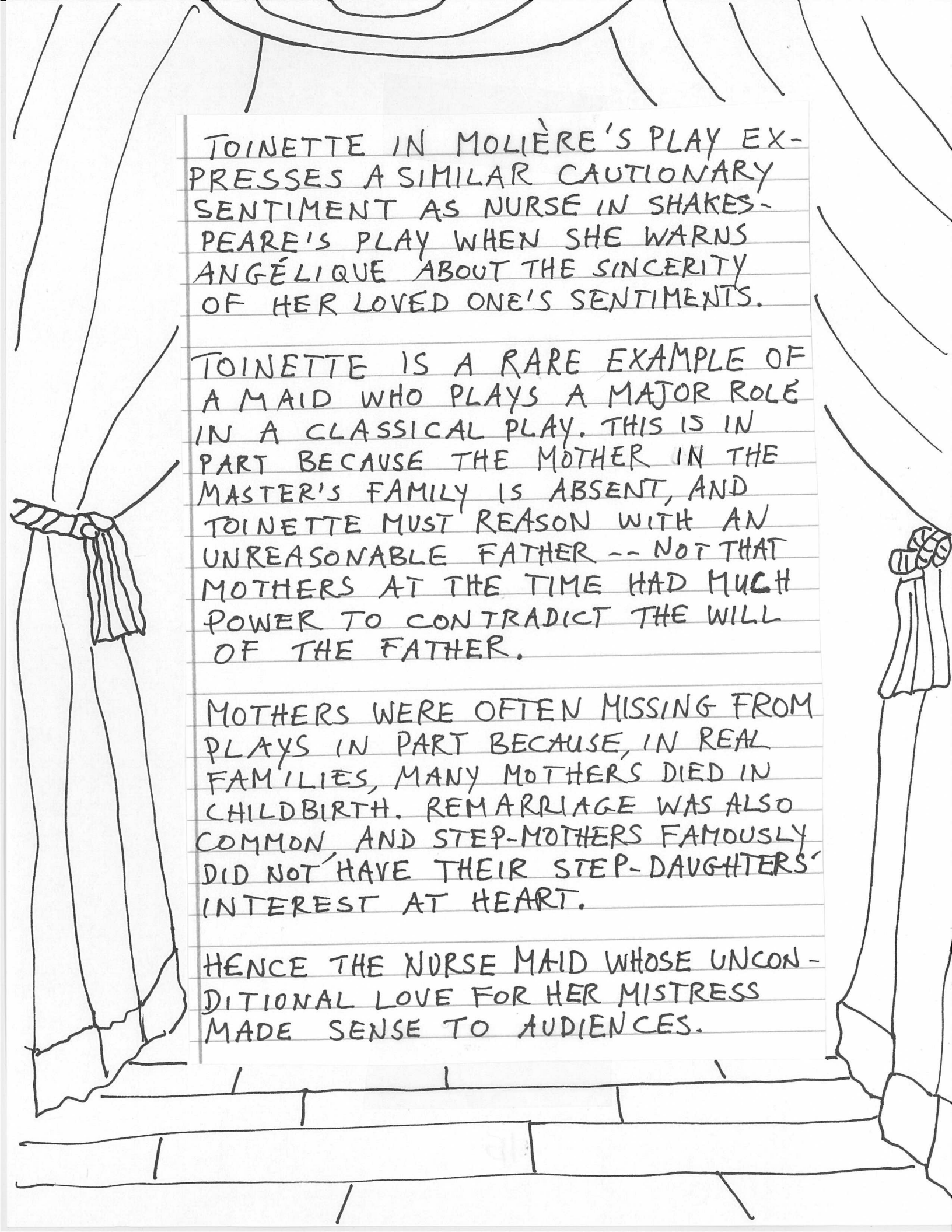
Ah! ToINETTE, what are you saying there? Alas! Judging by the manner in which he speaks, is it possible that he is not telling the TRUTH?

At any rate, you will soon be satisfied on this point, and the resolution which he says he has taken of asking you in marriage, is a sure and ready way of showing you if what he says is true or not. That is the all-sufficient proof.

If he doesn't, I'll bash his face in.

Ah! ToINETTE, if he deceives me, I shall never in my life believe in any man.

Alas, all this doesn't matter. Here comes her father.



TOINETTE IN MOLIERE'S PLAY EXPRESSES A SIMILAR CAUTIONARY SENTIMENT AS NURSE IN SHAKESPEARE'S PLAY WHEN SHE WARNS ANGÉLIQUE ABOUT THE SINCERITY OF HER LOVED ONE'S SENTIMENTS.

TOINETTE IS A RARE EXAMPLE OF A MAID WHO PLAYS A MAJOR ROLE IN A CLASSICAL PLAY. THIS IS IN PART BECAUSE THE MOTHER IN THE MASTER'S FAMILY IS ABSENT, AND TOINETTE MUST REASON WITH AN UNREASONABLE FATHER -- NOT THAT MOTHERS AT THE TIME HAD MUCH POWER TO CONTRADICT THE WILL OF THE FATHER.

MOTHERS WERE OFTEN MISSING FROM PLAYS IN PART BECAUSE, IN REAL FAMILIES, MANY MOTHERS DIED IN CHILDBIRTH. REMARRIAGE WAS ALSO COMMON, AND STEP-MOTHERS FAMOUSLY DID NOT HAVE THEIR STEP-DAUGHTERS' INTEREST AT HEART.

HENCE THE NURSE MAID WHOSE UNCONDITIONAL LOVE FOR HER MISTRESS MADE SENSE TO AUDIENCES.

ACCORDING TO LITERARY CRITIC  
VALERIE WORTH-STYLIANOU...

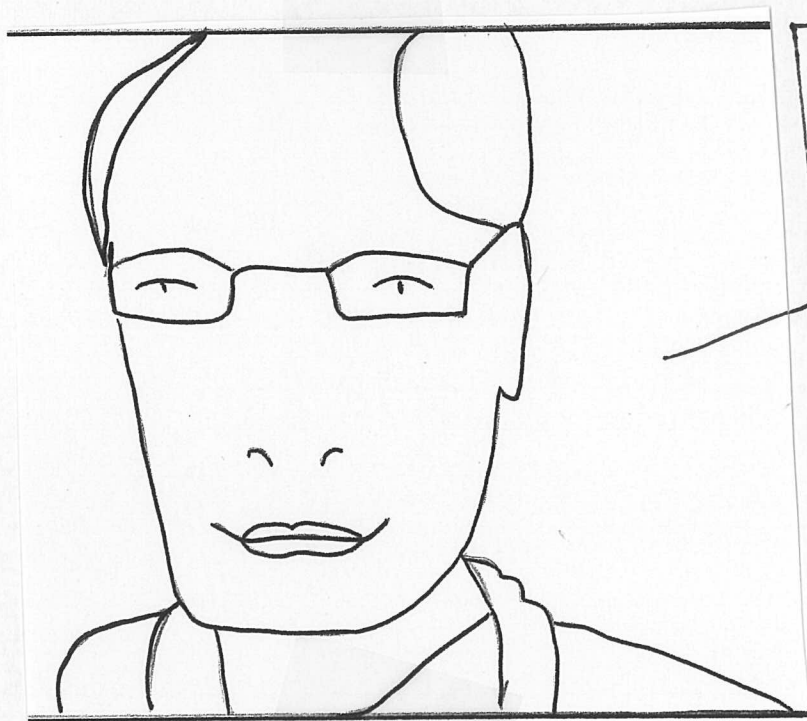


... The introduction of the confidante in plays coincides with the demise of the Greek chorus. Her role is to exteriorize the interior debate.

In that protagonists face dilemmas, confidantes must on occasion necessarily support a

particular case corresponding to one side of the protagonist's own arguments.

SIMILARLY WITH THE NOVEL, A  
GENRE THAT BECAME POPULAR  
IN THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH  
CENTURIES, BRUCE ROBBINS POINTS  
OUT THAT THE MAID HAS THE TENDENCY  
TO BE DEAF (CANNOT HEAR) AND TO  
LISTEN IN ON CONVERSATIONS (HEARS  
TOO MUCH)...



... The two conventions,  
indiscreet listening and  
impaired hearing, are  
in fact parts of a single  
whole. They give private  
dialogues a public  
hearing.



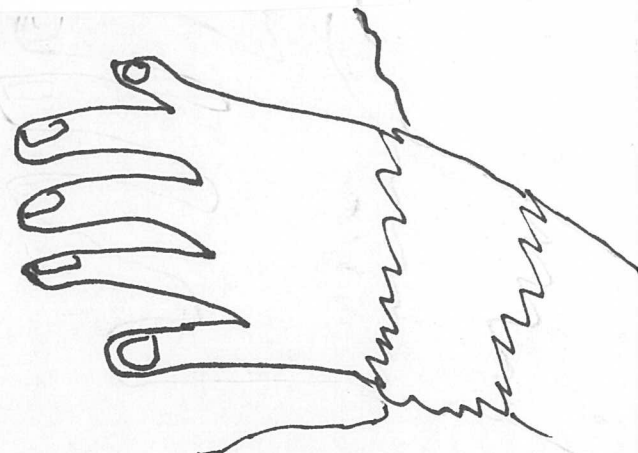
CONFIDING AND COMPLICITY GO HAND  
IN HAND.

THE CONFIDENCES OF HER MISTRESS TO  
HER MAID (IT'S USUALLY A ONE-WAY  
STREET) ESTABLISH A RELATION OF  
COMPLICITY BETWEEN THE TWO. THEY  
BOTH HAVE THE SECRET. BUT, ULTIMATELY,  
NEITHER COMPLICITY NOR CONFIDENCE  
LEAD TO ANY POWER FOR EITHER OF THEM.  
(REMEMBER, AT THE END OF "THE FAVOURITE,"  
EMMA STONE'S CHARACTER STILL HAS TO RUB  
THE QUEEN'S FUCKING LEGS).

AT THE END OF THE IMAGINARY IN-  
VALID, THE SOCIAL ORDER IS MAINTAINED  
THANKS TO A "HEALTHY" MARRIAGE THAT WILL  
LIKELY BREED HEIRS TO ARGAN'S FORTUNE.

IN THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY, THANKS IN  
PART TO ENLIGHTENMENT IDEAS, SERVANTS  
BEGAN QUESTIONING THEIR INFERIOR STATUS.

WE SEE THIS IN THE THEATER OF  
MARIVAUX AND LATER BEAUMARCHAIS.





you don't like the way I look ?

No, Bourguignon ; let's set  
aside the topic of love and  
just be friends.

↑ ↑  
masters dressed as servants

Marivaux, The Game of Love and Chance

↑ ↑  
servants dressed as masters

IN MOLIÈRE, THE MAID DONNED THE COSTUME OF A DOCTOR. SIXTY YEARS LATER, SHE DONS THE COSTUME OF HER MISTRESS, THEREBY SWITCHING PLACES WITH HER AND CREATING TEMPORARY CONFUSION BEFORE EVERYONE SWITCHES PLACES AGAIN.

IN THE GAME OF LOVE AND CHANCE (LE JEU DE L'AMOUR ET DU HASARD), SIMILAR CONCERNS ARISE FOR THE MISTRESS (SILVIA) REGARDING DORANTE, THE MAN SHE LOVES. AFTER SILVIA HAS CONFIDED THESE CONCERNS TO HER MAID LISETTE, THE WOMEN DECIDE TO SWITCH PLACES SO THAT LISETTE CAN TRY TO SEDUCE SILVIA'S FIANCÉ TO TEST HIS LOYALTY AND CONSTANCY.

MEANWHILE, GUESS WHAT? DORANTE AND HIS VALET DO THE EXACT SAME THING...



WHILE MARIVAUX'S PLAY DOES NOT DISTURB THE SOCIAL ORDER WITH ITS RESOLUTION, BEAUMARCHAIS'S PLAY, *THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO*, MADE FAMOUS BY MOZART WHO WROTE THE MUSIC FOR THE OPERA, MARKS A DEPARTURE FROM THE STANDARD PLOTLINE.

MASTERS AND SERVANTS RECYCLE ALREADY EXISTING TROPEs. HOWEVER, WHAT'S NEW THIS TIME IS THE "OUTING" OF THE NAUGHTY MASTER, COUNT ALMAVIVA, WHO WANTS THE SERVANT, SUSANNA, TO SLEEP WITH HIM WHEN SHE IS ABOUT TO MARRY HIS BARBER FIGARO.

THE PLAY ACTUALLY OPENS WITH AN ACT OF CONFIDING, AS SUSANNA CONFESSES TO FIGARO, THE TRUTH ABOUT THE COUNT...

Thou knowest how our generous  
Count when he by thy help ob-  
tained Rosina's hand, and  
made her countess of Alma-  
viva,



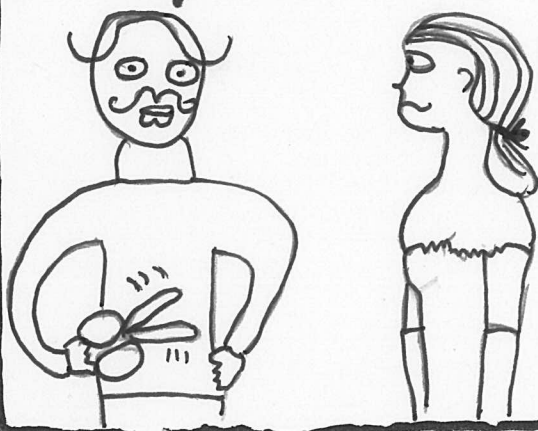
Which as Lord of the Manor  
he could claim

Know it! To be sure I do,  
or I would not have  
married even



Tired of prowling among  
the rustic beauties of the  
neighborhood, he returned  
to the Castle...

And his wife..



And thy wife ... Dost  
thou understand me?

Perfectly!





STILL TODAY MARRIAGE REMAINS AN INSTITUTION TO BE DESIRED BUT ALSO TO BE DREADED  
"MISTRESSES" OR EMPLOYERS OF MAIDS STILL CONFIDE IN THEIR HOUSEKEEPERS ABOUT THEIR UNHAPPINESS OR WEARINESS REGARDING THEIR LOVE MATCH, MISGUIDED OR OTHERWISE.

Does she know that I'm wearing her cashmere sweater? Can she

smell the wine on my breath?  
Oh my God, can I please go now?



My marriage is miserable. I'm going to have a very expensive baby and I'm not even sure I want it. My husband is leaving me (pour, pour). (drink). He wants a divorce (pour, pour). (drink).

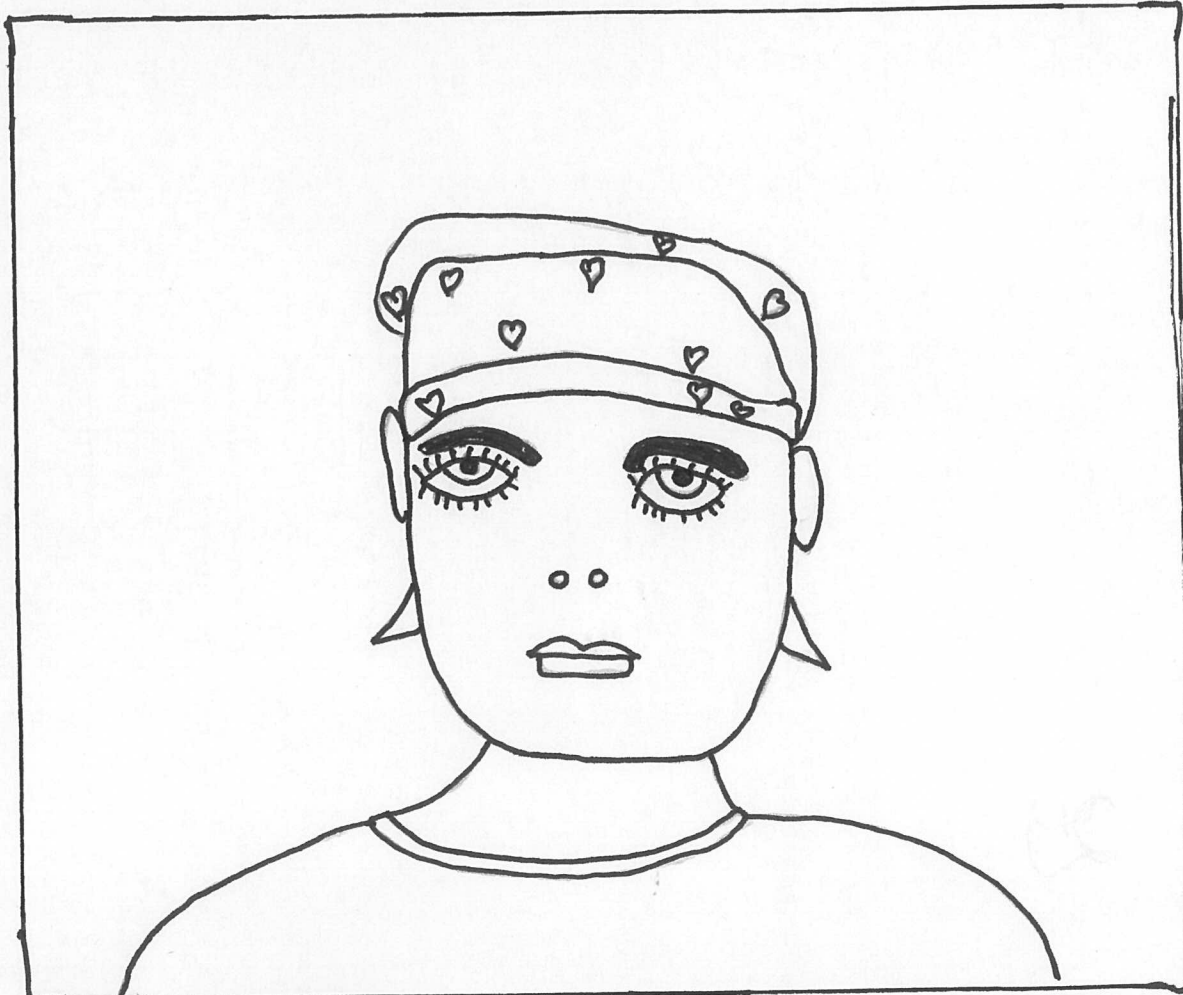
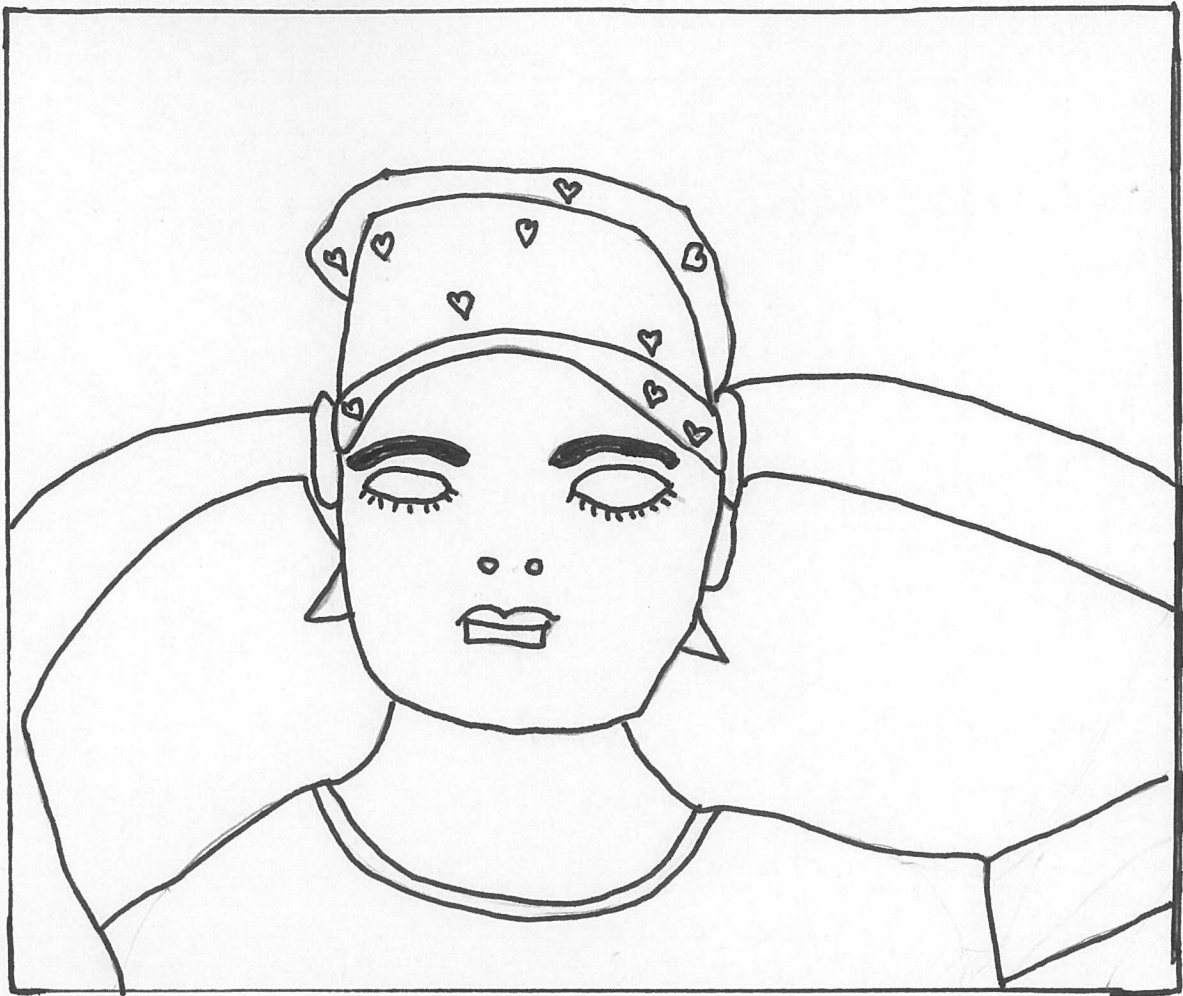


IN THE TV SERIES "MAID" THE WEALTHY EMPLOYER LAWYER, REGINA, OWNS A HUGE WATERFRONT HOUSE WHICH THE MAIN CHARACTER CLEANS ON THANKSGIVING DAY.

REGINA RETURNS EARLY FROM HER IN-LAWS AND PROCEEDS TO "DUMP ON" ALEX WHO, MEANWHILE, HAS HELPED HERSELF TO SOME OF THE "HOUSE WINE" AND ALSO HAS SWITCHED "COSTUMES." (THE CASHMERE SWEATER.)

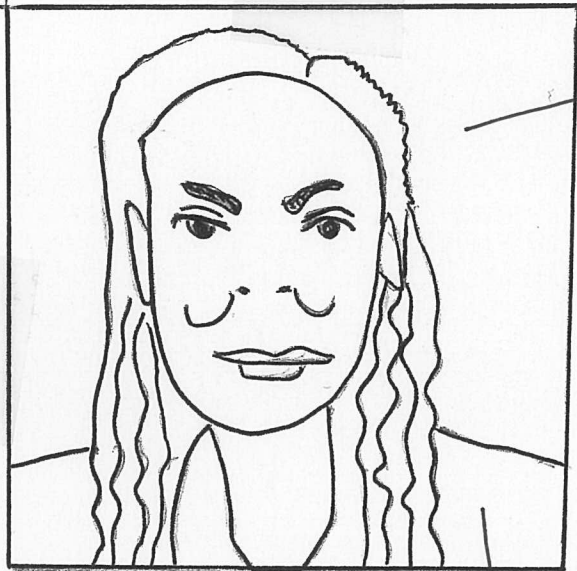
ALEX, THE PEARL OF A MAID, MUST LISTEN PATIENTLY AND MAINTAIN SERVILE COMPOSURE.

THERE IS NO POSSIBILITY FOR COMIC RELIEF AS VIEWERS KNOW THAT ALEX COULD LOSE HER JOB AND BECOME COMPLETELY DESTITUTE ONCE AGAIN.





IN BETWEEN WOMEN, SOCIOLOGIST JUDITH ROLLINS WRITES THAT, PARADOXICALLY, THE MAID AS CONFIDANTE CREATES A DISTANCE BETWEEN EMPLOYER AND EMPLOYEE RATHER THAN CLOSENESS...



Using a domestic as a confidante may, in fact be evidence of the distance in even the closest of these relationships. Employers can feel free to tell domestics secrets they would not share with their friends or family precisely because their domestic is so far from being socially and psychologically significant to the employer.

[T]he employer does not care what the domestic thinks of her for, as [Frantz] Fanon suggested, a person cannot be hurt or insulted by the judgments of those she genuinely believes to be inferior.

YET THERE ARE EXCEPTIONS TO  
THE TROPE OF "PERCEIVED INSIGNIFICANCE."

IN THE AFOREMENTIONED CASE OF REGINA  
AND ALEX, REGINA DOES HELP ALEX GET  
BACK INTO COLLEGE TO FINISH HER UNDER-  
GRADUATE DEGREE.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ALEX AND  
REGINA OFFERS A RARE EXAMPLE OF A  
COMPLICITY AND CLOSENESS BETWEEN EM-  
PLOYER AND EMPLOYEE THAT NARROWS THE  
GAP RATHER THAN MAINTAIN THE TROPE.  
IN TERMS OF STEREOTYPES AROUND RACE  
RELATIONS, MENTORING, AND THE "WHITE  
SAVIOR," INTERESTING REVERSALS ARE ALSO  
AT PLAY.

\* \* \*

CAROLINE OR CHANGE, A PLAY BY TONY KUSHNER (2002), ALSO BREAKS FROM THE IDEA OF "DOMESTIC INSIGNIFICANCE" BY GIVING THE EMPLOYEE AGENCY.

THE TEENAGE WHITE SON IN THE PLAY PERCEIVES WRONGLY A COMPLICITY AND CLOSENESS WITH CAROLINE, THE BLACK MAID. SHE IS THE ONLY PERSON HE CAN TALK TO (HE SUSPECTS THAT HE MIGHT BE GAY). HE TELLS HER THAT HE WISHES THEY COULD BE FRIENDS. SHE REJECTS THAT NOTION WHEN SHE TELLS HIM...

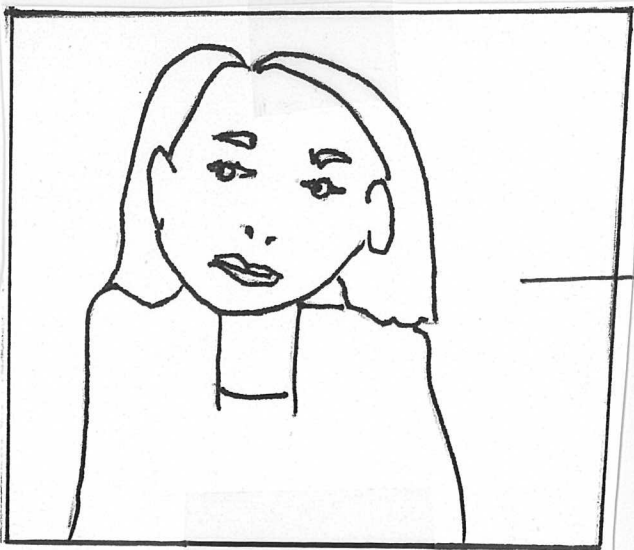




WITH THAT ASSERTION, THE SERVANT BEGINS TO EXERCISE SOME CONTROL OVER THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MASTER OR EMPLOYER.

FICTITIONAL CAROLINE COMES CLOSEST TO A REAL MAID IN A REAL SOUTHERN FAMILY IN THE 1960s, WHOSE PERSONAL CONCERNS - SHE HAS A FAMILY OF HER OWN - GO BEYOND THOSE OF THE EMPLOYER'S FAMILY.

CULTURAL HISTORIAN PATRICIA TURNER EXPLAINS THAT THE CIVIL RIGHTS PROTESTS OF THE 1960s LIBERATED BLACK WOMEN FROM THE BACKS OF BUSES BUT ALSO...



... From white Kitchens.

IS IT TIME FOR THE CAROLINES  
OF THE WORLD TO PUT DOWN THEIR  
APRONS AND... CHANGE JOBS? AT THE  
VERY LEAST, THOSE WORDS, "WEREN'T  
NEVER FRIENDS," ARE THE BEGINNING  
OF A RENEGOTIATION OF IDENTITY  
WITHIN THE SPACE OF THE HOME.

\* \* \*

JANET MOMSEN REFERENCING HOMI  
BHABHA REMINDS US THAT DOMESTIC  
SPACE IS "HYBRID," WHERE MAID AND  
MISTRESS SHARE...



... Similarities of femininity  
and motherhood sometimes  
overcoming differences of  
race and class.

[...] Spaces need to be  
renegotiated.

THE NEED TO RENEGOTIATE  
THE SPACE OCCUPIED BY  
THE DOMESTIC WORKER  
COULDN'T BE MORE REAL AND  
NECESSARY WHEN THE EM-  
PLOYER TRANSGRESSES THE  
CONFIDENCE, CLOSENESS AND  
UNCOMFORTABLE INTIMACY  
THAT CAN DEVELOP BET-  
WEEN EMPLOYER AND  
EMPLOYEE.





From "The Favourite"  
(Boundaries in serious need of  
renegotiation)