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## Tartuffe in the Post-Truth Era

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Tartuffe in the post-truth era

Emilia Wilton-Godberfforde

## Introduction

Theatre returns, it always does. It returns to places where it has already been before and to times in which it has already appeared. And while it does so, it sends us too, the spectators, to those places and times, performance after performance. Theatre also rewrites. It constantly does. It rewrites history, relationships, stories and rules. [...] In so doing, it adapts itself to present contingencies and situations, like an animal species struggling to survive through evolution.<sup>1</sup>

Margherita Laera's astute description of theater's reiterative quality underscores its concomitant return to the past and its rooted position in the present. Laera also notes the transformative and adaptive quality of theater, which she views as an interdependent process whereby the theater adapts its "features to the world and the world to its features" (Laera 1). In this analysis of three recent adaptations of Molière's *Le Tartuffe*, I shall interrogate the way in which the different playwrights and directors return to and rewrite Molière and, in turn, ask audiences to think differently about the times they live in, through the prism of Molière's comedy.

In *Rereading Molière*, Jim Carmody recognizes the intersection of past and present in a contemporary *mise en scène* of a classic play which, he argues "may be seen as an event in which the past is confronted by the present, the already known becomes the unknown, established interpretations are overturned, and familiar cultural and moral values are contested."<sup>3</sup> A further layer of complexity is added to this transformation when the "classic play" in question is translated into another language and transposed to another culture, as is the case in all three of the versions of *Le Tartuffe* under scrutiny. A *mise en scène* is an interpretative act but an adaptation

is even more explicit in its reworking, and can be understood as “an acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works; a creative and an interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging; an extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work.”<sup>4</sup> As a deliberate, announced, and extended re-visitation of a prior work, how exactly do these adaptations refashion or repurpose *Le Tartuffe* for the English stage? Is “the prestige and polemical force of the French version [...] restored paradoxically, through the works which seek to remove the play from its context,” as Noël Peacock, when examining Tartuffe plays in Britain up until 2006, suggests, or is something altogether different presented in the process of transformation?<sup>5</sup> In the concluding remarks, I shall underline how rewriting and transformation are in fact fundamental concepts for understanding the way in which Molière himself changed his original 1664 text. Furthermore, I shall show that beyond the idea of re-writing or refashioning the text, another type of adaptation is powerfully present within the play itself. This can be seen most strikingly in terms of the slippery and vampiric nature of the villain who adapts and transforms to his environment. The parasitic dimension of Tartuffe’s behavior will bring to the fore a wider discussion on whether adaptations and new versions can be explicitly paralleled with the idea of a pathogenic parasitical process. I shall also examine whether the detrimental and exploitative nature of parasitism needs to be reevaluated within the context of artistic reworkings and intertextual borrowing.

### **Recent Adaptations of *Le Tartuffe* in Britain**

If every production or *mise en scène* is a kind of translation in itself,<sup>6</sup> English- language versions can therefore be understood as translated translations. In what follows, I focus on three recent versions: Christopher Hampton’s adaptation, directed by Gérald Garutti (for the West End in 2017), Anil Gupta and Richard Pinto’s version, directed by Iqbal Khan (for the Birmingham

Repertory Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company (hereafter RSC) in 2018), and John Donnelly's new version, directed by Blanche McIntyre (for the National Theatre in 2019). These productions were written and performed for an English-speaking public, with Garutti's bilingual version arguably targeted at a multilingual audience, as will be discussed later.<sup>10</sup> The 2017 and 2018 productions both opted for very free translations of Molière's text whereas Christopher Hampton's text, despite featuring various contemporary references, chose to keep quite close to the original.<sup>11</sup>

All of these versions transport the events of the play from seventeenth-century France into different modern-day settings, and they underline the wealthy/bourgeois household into which Tartuffe inveigles himself. Hampton's version has Orgon as a French billionaire turned movie-producer, living in the Hollywood glitz (and seediness) of contemporary Los Angeles; Gupta and Pinto's adaptation at the RSC presents the audience with the Pervaiz household (a British Pakistani Muslim family) living in an affluent suburb of modern Birmingham into which the father, Imran, has welcomed the charismatic and devout Tahir Taufiq Arsuf; and Donnelly's version situates the characters in Highgate in modern-day London. The Tartuffe character is thus, respectively, presented in the different versions as a barefoot and linen-clothed American Evangelical Christian (Hampton/Garutti), a long-bearded Muslim cleric (Gupta and Pinto/Khan) and a homeless, new-age guru (Donnelly/McIntyre). The Otherness of Tartuffe is transformed into a more relatable context. All three versions have chosen to change the original early modern figure of false piety not into a counterpart figure of the established Christian church but into a more modern cult-like type of spiritual leader or an extreme fundamentalist. This "domesticating strategy," to use Lawrence Venuti's term, does eclipse the specificities of Tartuffe as a lay director (softened in the second 1667 version by Molière from what it is supposed was initially an actual member of the clergy in his original banned version of 1664). However, all versions

attempt to showcase how Tartuffe uses the mantle of religion in order to manipulate his victim and persuade Orgon to relinquish all control. Hampton justifies his choice of relocation to the United States precisely as a way of making the hypnotic effect of a religious leader more apposite since, he notes, “[t]he reason I set it in America is that they do still take religion very seriously. And the idea of someone coming out of the desert, as it were, in California and being charismatic and taken up by rich people is much easier to accommodate.”<sup>12</sup>

Additionally, a present-day setting, and a specifically American one, undoubtedly allows the productions to make more explicit comparisons with contemporary events in this so-called “post-truth” political era, dominated as it has been by “fake news” and “alternative facts,” not just across the Atlantic but also in Britain. Indeed, in such a climate, lying continues to exert a fear and fascination over the public and this goes a great way to explaining the renewed interest in this particular Molière play, appearing three times in the space of three years in major productions in Britain and billed in 2021 as part of the New York theater organization *Molière in the Park*’s free performances. Clearly, the story of an arch-manipulator and a con man resonates more than ever. This has not gone unnoticed by the press, as can be seen in the headlines in *The Guardian* (“Trump is a Tartuffe: Why Molière’s Banned Blockbuster Got an Update” (Lawson) and “Tartuffe: The Imposter Review—A Radical Molière for an Era of Inequality”<sup>14</sup>) and *The Daily Telegraph* (“Virtue Signallers and Fake Holy Men: How Molière Became a Voice for Our Times”<sup>15</sup>).

### **Molière on the British Stage**

Molière’s plays have not always held a prominent place in the repertoire of British theatres. John Fowles’ lament in 1981 that “Molière has been consigned to theatrical limbo in Britain, to the status of a study dramatist: on the whole, we don’t know what to do with him so we leave him

alone”<sup>16</sup> does not ring so true for later decades, as evidenced by recent high-profile updates in the West End including *Don Juan in Soho* (which first ran in 2007 and then again in 2017), *The Misanthrope* by Martin Crimp (2009), and the 2017 version of *The Miser*, followed by the triple appearance of the Tartuffe plays. These kind of modern reworkings (with topical transpositions) are not innovations of the last two decades, since a considerable number of postwar translations did experiment with Molière and presented revamped comedies with updated colloquial dialogue and contemporary references.<sup>17</sup>

The postwar playwrights reacted against prior stilted literary versions and introduced topical humor and jokes not found in Molière. Colloquial ‘speakable’ versions became popular and attention was also drawn to rendering the rhyme to showcase that these were transformations of plays of a different time. This is also borne out in the three Tartuffe plays in which at various points the English is rendered in rhyme as a playful self-conscious reminder of the plays’ origins (in the RSC version as a way of illustrating the young son’s love of rap and verbal jousting; and in the National version to convey a dizzying fast-paced mechanical-like reality to the finale).

### **Hampton and Garutti’s Version: Playing with Translation and Adaptation**

Hampton and Garutti’s version actively engages with the issue of translation. This production proposed a bilingual experience in which different parts of the play were presented either in French or English (and a translation provided via surtitles on a screen above the stage). The rationale for swapping between French and English across scenes is anchored in the fact that the French family live in Los Angeles and can speak both languages. Crucially, Tartuffe speaks only in English and all of the members of the family must converse with him in English, which echoes Tartuffe’s attempt to monopolize/colonize the space with his own way of being, speaking and thinking. Additionally, the last act is dominated more by English. This change between languages

mimics Tartuffe's attempt to control those around him (and, arguably, his ignorance of anything outside of his domain). The triumphant ending in which the President saves the day not only satirizes the idea of the United States of America as 'leader of the free world', able to swoop in and save those in distress, but also suggests that this is a homogenizing power that seeks to root out difference. This exclusionary linguistic tactic is also a comment on the political climate in Britain which, a year before the production, had voted "Leave" in the referendum over EU membership. Hampton noted that the bilingual version was a form of protest against Brexit and that he was excited by "the idea of English and French actors on the same stage, talking two languages," suggesting, he argues, "the direction we ought to be going in, rather than the direction we are going in," (Lawson).

Additionally, the aesthetic dimension of introducing English can be seen as a comment on the adaptation in modern television series of foreign works, repackaged for the American market. Indeed, Garutti conceived of the language switching and the surtitles as a way of echoing the current "Netflix generation" who are familiar with programs on screen with subtitles. Moving away from a restrictive definition of translation as merely replacing one language with another, the play also explores the idea of switching from one artistic genre to another. The glass screen that forms the set of their home on the stage can be seen as a reminder of the habitual way in which audience members consume content via screens. The stage world is thus an eerie echo or restaging of the Hollywood microcosm, normally mediated through film and series. The casting (as Elmire) of Audrey Fleurot, a filmic actress, known in the United Kingdom for her role in the popular television series *Spiral* (or *Engrenages* in the original) broadcast on the BBC, alongside Paul Anderson who played in the popular drama *Peaky Blinders*, reinforces this intertextual reference even further. Garutti is clearly playing with this, as is evident in the scene in which Tartuffe has his way with Elmire and she presses her hand up against the screen which then mists

up. This is a grotesque replaying of an iconic scene in the Hollywood blockbuster *Titanic*, recast not with two young lovers in a passionate embrace but as a scene in which the predatory male attacks his victim. The steaming up of the glass screen is more than a parody of the famous love scene, however; it is a metaphor for the way in which the viewers' access is always mediated by a screen (or a frame of the stage world) and one that can be distorted or toyed with by the director. This reinforces the point Molière also underlines in the play that what we see cannot always be trusted. This is a lesson Orgon himself must learn and is indeed taught, albeit ironically, through his getting to witness with his own eyes Tartuffe's lustful ways through Elmire's painful staging. The screen clouding over is also a reminder that the Hollywood glitz and romance so often presented on screen obscures a murkier, more sexually exploitative world. In foregrounding this violence, Garutti reminds the audience of the #MeToo revelations and allegations against Harvey Weinstein that were dominating the news at the time of the production.

### **Gupta and Pinto's Version: Translation and Multilingualism**

The RSC version is not so centered around explicit metatheatrical techniques or intertextual references designed to underline the play as an artistic construct and interrogate the nature of adaptation. Nonetheless, it does self-consciously engage with questions of translations and multilingualism, used to explore ideas about 'authentic' versions, hegemony, and British identity. The characters' names are transformed so that the French names become distinctly Pakistani.<sup>19</sup> Tartuffe is transformed into the more Islamic-sounding Tahir Taufiq Arsuf (or the more comically endearing "Tartuffesi," used by Imram, which, like the sounds in the changed name, playfully reminds the audience of Molière's original name for the character). These prominent changes underscore how the Gupta and Pinto's version of the play positions itself as distinctly different from the Molière text. Ingeniously, this status of 'Other' is also emphasized as a key



concern within the level of plot. Difference of ethnicity and cultural origins compared to Westerners is essential to Imran's concerns for his family and for asserting his authority. Tahir also exploits this anxiety in order to peddle his message of piety to be an 'authentic' Muslim. Imran, under his spell, laments that before Tahir came along, he was "caught up in the trappings of decadent Western capitalism" and was blind to his own faith (III. 4). He chastises his son Damme, saying "We're Muslim, Damee. Pakistani Muslim. But you're more like some foreign English delinquent!" Imran thus turns the trope of foreigner as Other' and therefore impure, on its head.

The issue of identity and difference is also explicitly raised in the context of translation when, in IV.1, the Cléante character (Khalil) questions the spurious nature of Tahir's teachings. Tahir suggests that Khalil is not using the correct translation of the Qur'an and therefore cannot present scripture accurately, to which Khalil interjects, "I'm pretty sure I'm using the right one." Khalil's utterance provokes the punning and stinging retort by Tahir, "You mean the white one." Tahir thereby dismisses his interlocutor's opinion and knowledge of Islam as a revisionist Western reworking. He, on the other hand, is the original, a 'real' Muslim, "who has been doing things this way for 1400 years," confounded that Khalil is "here to white mansplain" history to him. Tahir's tactic of arguing for fidelity to the holy text, his authenticity and superior standing in terms of his faith and his origins are, of course, deeply ironic. For Tahir is a fake who is not well versed in the religion he touts and who apes the appearance of a traditional cleric, helped in his staging by his assistant Usman who plays a "*haunting qawwali song in Urdu.*" Furthermore, in III. 1, we learn that he decidedly disguises his roots, as pointed out in the stage notes, "*he speaks with a slightly Arabic accent which becomes more pronounced when he is making a religious point or speaking in verse. His accent will wander into Brummie in times of stress*").

The Tartuffe character's parody of a "true Muslim" underscores the nature of trickery and the use of false appropriation for sinister purposes. Yet, it also seems to be encouraging the audience to think more specifically about specious claims to authenticity and the supremacist ideology that can accompany this. These reflections can be extended to the artistic context of the theatrical play as an adaptation/translation. Are the playwrights teasingly suggesting that they are Tartuffe-like trickster figures promising to be faithful (in this instance to Molière's text, as keeping the play's title as *Tartuffe* might well suggest) but are, instead, presenting their own spin on the play with their self-serving agenda? Alternatively, are they questioning the slavish and spurious idea of fidelity to an original and suggesting that claims of ownership or a certain reverence for a story/culture/tradition ought not to limit creative expression or interpretations? These differing questions are provocatively raised but never firmly answered. The diverse readings that are offered up to the audience are complemented by the plurilingual element of the play. With English (including street language and rap spoken by the trendy son, and broken English by the Bosnian maid), snippets of Punjabi and Urdu, we are reminded that along with different ways of interpreting the world come different ways of speaking and conceptualizing it. In this respect, it is significant that Donnelly's version presents the universe the characters inhabit as decidedly monolingual.

### **Donnelly's Version: Brexit Britain and the Figure of the Outsider**

Other languages are noticeably absent, except for the moment in act 4 when, in trying to entrap Tartuffe, Elmire seductively says, "Fermez la porte, monsieur. Il y a des yeux partout," to which Tartuffe replies "I don't speak French." This exchange can be understood as a playful wink to the audience to remind us that the traditional Tartuffe of Molière is no longer French at all.

Interestingly, the Tartuffe character is not presented as British and his status as foreigner/outsider

is given particular emphasis. The actor, Denis O’Hare, interviewed about the role, notes that this version was “an updating for Brexit” and as such, Donnelly and McIntyre wrestled with who they thought Tartuffe was for England today. They “hit upon him being Eastern-European,” his Polish/Lithuanian accent a way of pointing out how “those were [...] the people who were the bogeyman for Brexit [...] who supposedly came over and took away jobs.”<sup>20</sup> Conceptualizing the parasitical figure that is Tartuffe as the feared and much maligned foreign scavenger of popular imagination, radically changes how we view the members of the household and their contempt for him. This xenophobic dimension is underscored even more by the disturbing ending in which Tartuffe is seized by officers and returns to the stage “*bloodied, horribly beaten.*” The officer remarks, “Yes, but when push comes to shove we take care of our own.” Tartuffe, breaking the fourth wall, interpolates the audience, asking them to come to his defense but, met with silence is then forcibly dragged off the stage. Thus, we are also made partly responsible for his brutal treatment. In this version, the hypocrisy and corruption of all the other characters (and arguably the audience) is given much more emphasis so that Tartuffe becomes more ambiguous and somewhat more of a sympathetic character. He is streetwise and is shameless in taking what he wants. However, his poverty is highlighted and, in welcoming more homeless people into the house, he becomes a more radical figure that sits uncomfortably within the bourgeois world. Although Cleante mockingly undermines his purpose, Tartuffe does trouble the status quo, not just by worming his way into the house, upsetting the members of the household and compromising their comfort, but also through the suggested greater socialist agenda he has of redistributing wealth and overturning the markedly unequal society.

This larger commentary on contemporary Britain, on the world the audience will walk out into, “*out into the cold and empty streets of London—city of riches, poverty and all other extremes,*” is a key part of Donnelly’s version. The crux of the play, of Orgon welcoming this

strange outsider into his home, can thus be understood as a desperate way for him to atone for his sins and those of his class. The principal satirical target of Molière's text lies in the portrayal of the *faux-dévo*t and religious hypocrisy, but we should also remember he also ridicules the gullibility of individuals and the deranged lengths to which they will go in the pursuit of their obsessions. This version does present an obviously fraudulent, top-knotted guru who dispenses flowers and clichéd cards. Moreover, Tartuffe's faith, as Cleante rightly identifies, seems to be "more of a mish- mash" of "grabbing anything to hand" (IV). In this way, Donnelly ridicules Tartuffe's claims to spirituality and, like Molière, underlines his acquisitive and lecherous ways, masked with a thin veil of religious language and gesturing. Yet, overall, Donnelly focuses less on the satire of religion, or lack thereof in the main character, and on the gullibility of his victims and the ridiculousness of those so easily taken in by such a contrived performance, and instead turns the play into a satire of more general hypocrisy and bourgeois guilt.

### **Satire Across the Different Versions**

The 2017 and 2018 versions (like the 2019 version) use the charlatan figure as their starting point but then present their own distinctive satirical take on the play. The 2017 version, with its American backdrop and inclusion of Trump (with the exaggerated obsequiousness at the end of the play not to the Sun King but rather to the "Suntan King," with Trump saving the day, and offering Orgon the Presidential pardon) satirizes the corrupt power that runs the land, the hypocritical evangelical inflection given to American politics, and the propensity to believe in and bolster slippery leaders in politics and in the entertainment industry. In the program notes, Garutti states he sees Molière's play as a satire on religious fanaticism which resonates with "the massacre of Rohingya, Islamic State, the Alt Right rallies in the US." These darker realities are never explicitly raised in his version, but this insight into the dangerous threat he sees the

Tartuffe character posing is borne out in his production. The production emphasizes not the ridiculous elements of false piety but rather the disturbing fanatical dimensions of a leader and the nightmarish possibilities for abuse. Tartuffe becomes more a Rasputin or Charles Manson figure.

This is noticeably different from the satirical focus in the RSC version. Their Tartuffe figure is not a terrifying threat to the social order. The punch then comes in underscoring the hysterical fear in the public imagination that any Muslim might be a secret terrorist working for ISIS. Instead, Tahir, who possesses the gift of the gab and has “even been on Newsnight” (V.i), is a parody of the modern media figure, with followers on Twitter and the ability to garner support and fans, even on the flimsiest of premises. Tahir is presented as a sleazy wheeler-dealer, a fact amusingly emphasized in the poster of the play where he is positioned behind the wheel of a car to suggest that, before making his way into Imram’s household and eliciting media attention, he was unremarkable, simply one of the many Indian taxi drivers we see throughout the country. His attention-grabbing, ‘bling’ style is underlined with a dazzling gold tooth and leopard-print steering-wheel cover (echoed in the production when, trying to seduce Amira, he strips to nothing but his leopard-print underpants). This villain is clearly played for laughs but, comic display notwithstanding, the production does offer more biting commentary. It throws light on a variety of problems for modern immigrant households (not just Islamophobia, but also in terms of inter-generational conflict and the tension that can arise with daughters educated and ‘Westernized’ yet still subject to the will of their fathers in terms of arranged marriages and their future). The ending offers a more somber criticism of what it means to be a Muslim outsider by exposing the prejudiced assumption that Tahir’s behavior must be part of a more organized network. It transpires that Uman, his assistant, was actually working undercover for PREVENT, the UK government’s counter-terrorist program, and has discovered that Tahir has “been raising funds

fraudulently” to support criminal Islamic extremists. This is met with the incredulous reaction of Tahir who shouts, “It’s not for bloody ISIS” and adds “I’m faking it.” There is no suggestion whatsoever in the play that Tahir’s chicanery was for anything other than his own greed and self-promotion. Thus, the contrived nature of his arrest offers a disturbing indictment of the powers that be and their profiling of criminals, reinforced by the corrupt behavior of the police who are happy to overlook Imran’s illegal status and shady dealings in exchange for being able to book his luxurious abode at a discount for the “Annual Police Ball.” In this respect, as in the other two versions, the corrupt world of the family and those that come to their rescue is accentuated.

Such a finale is arguably different from that of Molière’s text in which the King, having identified a series of criminal episodes involving Tartuffe, weighs this against Orgon’s minor offense and his long-term fidelity to the monarch. And yet, we are left to wonder whether even this neat resolution by Molière ought to be read at face value. Given that this ending was part of the revised version Molière submitted after censorship, it can be understood as a deliberate attempt to flatter the King and cajole him into endorsing the play’s moral fiber and crush opposition to it. The restoration of order (and the clear-cut division between villain and victims) can therefore be seen as a simplification that allows the King, “enemy of fraud,” to have the limelight and, crucially, supreme power over the narrative. Molière could also be seen to be reminding his audience that the ultimate version of his text lies beyond the control of the playwright and, rather, is put into the hands of the ruling ideological power. Hampton, Gupta and Pinto, and Donnelly certainly take up the suggestion that Molière does not have ultimate control/claim over the text. Yet they also showcase their tighter ownership of the text by not having to pay lip service to the powers that be.

## **Conclusion**

I have highlighted the way in which the three versions have diverged from one another; in terms of their context, their satirical targets, and their overall tone. However, they are united in their creative attempts to do something different with Molière's text. In conclusion, I want to underline the way in which the concept of adaptation does more than just provide a way of grouping these three plays together. Curiously, it also ties them to their source text on a much more fundamental level, since adaptation/transformation is a constituent part of Molière's own text.

It is important to point out that all three modern versions converge in presenting the Tartuffe character as a sponging parasite. Indeed, this is a key characteristic of the character in Molière's text, and as Michel Serres has underscored, even the character's name points to a nutrient-sapping undergrowth since Tartuffe is Italian for 'truffle', a parasitic fungus.<sup>21</sup> Tartuffe is like a biological pathogen that latches onto its host and gains its strength by imitating and then weakening it, until host and parasite become inextricably intertwined in a process of symbiosis. We see Tartuffe becoming like a vampiric double of Orgon. Additionally, Orgon can be seen to replicate Tartuffe's ways through a strange kind of mirroring, desperate to be like his instructor and his guide.

This parasitic mimicry is given further resonance since the Tartuffe character is itself an adaptation of an ancient comedic dramatic tradition.<sup>22</sup> The origins of the character lie in the parasite figure (or hanger-on) popular in Greek and Roman comedy, then imbued with an even more complex heritage since Molière transformed the figure by integrating models from medieval Italian, early modern Spanish narratives of adventure and French satirical anticlerical depictions. Finally, we need to remember that the 1669 version is the result of a series of adaptations Molière had to make on his very own text.

Like a parasitic organism, the text feeds off its host/model and mutates, and this brings us back to Laera's description at the start of this article, in which she argues that theater is "like an

animal species struggling to survive through evolution” (1). Indeed Richard Dawkins has drawn a parallel more generally with genetic evolution and the dissemination of ideas and argued that because ideas propagate themselves by imitation, they can be understood either as malign or benign parasites.<sup>24</sup> I do not want to suggest that adaptations are malign parasites that simply vampirize their sources (or indeed are always unequivocally ‘benign’). Additionally, I am not implying that the adaptive process is always a conscious or explicit reworking or a **borrowing/modifying** of preceding or competing versions (it is unclear how much **Hampton/Gupta and Pinto/Donnelly** were aware of each other’s versions or how familiar they were with other interpretations of the plays in Britain). Yet, we do know that these versions looked to Molière’s text in the creation of their own. There is undoubtedly something particularly suggestive in this notion of organic appropriation, mutation and evolution that can emerge as writers bring new versions to life, energized and nourished by prior work(s) and the tradition that precedes them.

*Open University*

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<sup>1</sup> Magherita Laera, *Theatre and Adaptation: Return, Rewrite, Repeat* (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2014), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Jim Carmody, *Rereading Molière: Mise en Scène from Antoine to Vitez* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 15. The “already known” suggests the audience’s familiarity and, although Molière would certainly be known to audiences in France, the same cannot be assumed for the British public.

<sup>4</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2012), 8.



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<sup>5</sup> Noël Peacock, “Molière nationalised: Tartuffe on the British stage from the Restoration to the present day,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Molière*, David Brady and Andrew Calder, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 186.

<sup>6</sup> As emphasized by Peacock, *Molière sous les feux de la rampe* (Paris: Hermann, 2012), 266. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the *Année Molière* at the *Comédie-Française* launched its season on January 15, 2022 with a production of *Tartuffe*; however, the French version used was Georges Forestier attempted reconstruction of the original three-act version, *Le Tartuffe ou l’hypocrite*, (Arles: Portaparole, 2021). Significantly, this version is essentially an adaptation of the 1669 text, and the performance of it can be understood as a kind of translation.

<sup>10</sup> References use the published versions. Christopher Hampton, *Molière: Tartuffe* (London: Faber and Faber, 2018), which includes new material translated into French by Gérald Garutti that was used for the performances; Richard Pinto, Anil Gupta, *Tartuffe* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018); John Donnelly, *Molière Tartuffe (The Imposter)* (London: Faber and Faber, 2019).

<sup>11</sup> For an interesting analysis of English language translations of Molière’s work for the stage which includes an examination of the creative work of the translator and the changing relationship with source texts in these translations and their reception, see Cédric Ploix, *Translating Molière for the English-speaking Stage: The Role of Verse and Rhyme* (New York: Routledge: 2020). It is worth pointing out that although Hampton worked from the original text, Donnelly stated that he consulted a range of different English translations of the play and also worked from a literal translation provided by Guillaume Pigé. Gupta and Pinto, however, who openly declared that they had “no background in either literature or French” were assisted by the RSC who supplied them with a French Dramaturg. The latter helped them understand the original and, as they stress, gave them “carte blanche to do whatever [they] wanted with the piece.” See their humorous interview about their bold rewriting, <https://www.rsc.org.uk/tartuffe/brain-waves>.

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<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Mark Lawson, *The Guardian*, June 1, 2018,

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/jun/01/trump-tartuffe-moliere-update-audrey-fleurot-christopher-hampton>.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Billington, *The Guardian*, February 22, 2019,

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2019/feb/22-tartuufe-the-imposter-review-national-theatre-lyttelton>.

<sup>15</sup> Eleanor Halls, *The Daily Telegraph*, January 28, 2019.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/theatre/what-to-see/virtue-signallers-fake-holy-men-moliere-became-voice-times/>.

<sup>16</sup> John Fowles, *The Times*, April 6, 1981.

<sup>17</sup> On these adaptations, see Noël Peacock, “Molière” in *Encyclopedia of Literary Translation into English*, volume 2, Olive Classe, ed. (London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2000), 956-61.

<sup>19</sup> The precedent on the British stage for an Asiaticized version of *Le Tartuffe*, (with *Tartuffe* a Muslim) can be found in the National Theatre’s 1990 version by Jatinder Verma, set in Mogul India. In 2004, an Islamist *Tartuffe* also featured in Sedar Bilis’s production at the *Arcola* in London, although this was set in Turkey. Outside of Britain, we can look to Ariane Mnouchkine’s famous 1995 version at Avignon. Interestingly, there is also a much earlier late nineteenth century Egyptian-Arabic theatrical adaptation by Muḥammad ‘Uthmān Jalāl, *al-Shaykh Matluf*. As Julia Prest points out, “numerous productions of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have lifted Molière’s play out of its original Christian context and successfully recast it in a Muslim context,” leading her to ask, “Is Islam the new Christianity of Western satire?” Julia Prest, *Controversy in French Drama: Molière’s Tartuffe and the Struggle for Influence* (New York: Palgrave, 2014), 1.

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<sup>20</sup> *WhatsOnStage*, [whatsonstage.com/london-theatre/news/denis-ohare-tartuffe-brex-national\\_48420.html](http://whatsonstage.com/london-theatre/news/denis-ohare-tartuffe-brex-national_48420.html).

<sup>21</sup> Michel Serres, *Le Parasite* (Paris: Hachette Littératures, 1980), 361.

<sup>22</sup> See my *Mendacity and the Figure of the Liar in Seventeenth-Century French Comedy* (London: Routledge, 2017), 130-53.

<sup>24</sup> Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 192.