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The Country Wife.

Between Pragmatic Analysis and Translation

Edited by Alba Graziano

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MICHELA MARRONI*

William Wycherley for Italian Readers: a Comparative Analysis of Two Translations of *The Country Wife*

Abstract

This article takes into consideration two Italian translations of William Wycherley's *The Country Wife*, respectively by Masolino d'Amico (1993) and Loretta Innocenti (2009). Bearing in mind Lawrence Venuti's theorisation based on the culturally dynamic relationship between domestication and foreignisation, my analysis focuses on some significant textual segments of the source text in order to verify their transcodification into Italian. On first reflection, both versions would not seem to be different in their effort to construe a target text at once equivalent and enjoyable. A closer look at the selected textual segments reveals that d'Amico's method is tendentially faithful to the peculiar cultural framework of the comedy, whereas Innocenti's translational leaning is for a modernisation which does its best to be as close as possible to the play's puns, double entendres, racy humour as well as its rhetorical codes. In some cases, she introduces a few anachronistic words that are intended to be functional to an immediate comprehension on the part of the Italian reader. In this sense, the notion of the translator's invisible hand is closer to Innocenti's method, even though both versions are enjoyable and immediately understandable to an Italian reader.

KEYWORDS: *The Country Wife*; Masolino d'Amico; Loretta Innocenti; comparative translation; translation strategies

1. Preliminary Remarks

My paper will focus on two translations of *The Country Wife* whose methods and strategies appear particularly stimulating, especially if we consider them from the point of view of the notion of the translator's invisible hand proposed by Venuti. Chronologically, the first translation is by Masolino d'Amico who published the book, *La sposa di campagna*, in the prestigious series "I Classici della BUR" in 1993. The volume, with an introduction and notes by the translator, features a parallel text which seems to imply a reader with a certain level of culture and well-defined interests. The second book, *La moglie di campagna*, is by Loretta Innocenti whose translation appeared

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in “Elsinore: Collana di classici inglesi”, edited by Giovanna Mochi for the publisher Marsilio which has just discontinued the series. This edition, published in 2009, also presents a parallel text as well as a lengthy introduction and many detailed and instructive endnotes written by the translator.

Both translators are academic with an ample experience in the field of translation, even though Masolino d’Amico has a much longer and more continuous experience on his side. In fact, he has edited and translated Byron, Richardson, Stevenson, Lewis Carroll, D.H. Lawrence and Hemingway as well as Shakespeare, Eugene O’Neill, Tennessee Williams and Alan Ayckbourn. Besides publishing the monograph *Scena e parola in Shakespeare* (Einaudi, 1974) and the outstanding volume *Dieci secoli di teatro inglese 1970-1980* (Mondadori, 1981), d’Amico also worked in the movie field as translator and script writer. As regards Loretta Innocenti, she has written extensively on English drama (*La scena trasformata: Adattamenti neoclassici di Shakespeare*, Sansoni 1985; rpt. Pacini 2010) and has gained a good amount of experience as a translator: she translated, for instance, *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (*Pene d’amor perdute*) for Salerno Edizioni in 2014.

With respect to the methodological approach adopted in my analysis of both translations, it may be fitting to clarify that the focus will be on translation as a cross cultural phenomenon which involves the issue of how to render culture-specific words, phrases, and idiomatic forms. In this connection, my treatment will be based on what has been defined as “the cultural turn in translation studies” (Yablonsky 2017, 1691ff.) which, starting from the idea that “language is . . . the heart within the body of culture” (Bassnett 2005, 23), suggests translation procedures capable of reaching a satisfying level of equivalence without losing the specific cultural connotations of the source text. Indeed, Bassnett further claims that “[t]o attempt to impose the value system of SL culture onto the TL culture is a dangerous ground . . . The translator cannot *be* the author of the SL text, but as the author of the SL text has a clear moral responsibility to the TL readers” (23, emphasis in the original).¹ This way of dealing with the complexity of the relationship between translation and cultural phenomena is in line with those studies of culturology which consider translation as an integral part of the

¹ Susan Bassnett’s debt to Juri M. Lotman’s theory may be easily identified in her book. In particular, in the first chapter (“Central Issues: Language and Culture”), she observes: “Edward Sapir claims that ‘language is a guide to social reality’ and that human beings are at the mercy of the language that has become the medium of expression for their society. . . Sapir’s thesis, endorsed later by Benjamin Lee Whorf, is related to the more recent view advanced by the Soviet semiotician, Juri Lotman, that language is a *modelling system*. Lotman describes literature and art in general as *secondary modelling systems*, as an indication of the fact that they are derived from the primary modelling system of language” (2005, 22-3, emphasis in the original).

making and unmaking of the literary system. This dynamic process means, in Lotman's words, that "[a] text and its readership are in a relationship of mutual activation: a text strives to make its readers conform to itself, to force on them its own system of codes, and the readers respond in the same way" (Lotman, 1990, 63). As for the notion of foreignisation and domestication proposed by Venuti (2008, 13-19), it is by now well known that these terms are valid only in theory, given that every translation is a combination of both and never entirely based on one method or another: "Only when translators properly choose *foreignisation* and *domestication* and combine them appropriately, can they bring satisfactory translations to readers, and at the same time fulfil the duty of intercultural communication" (Wang 2014, 2427). Admittedly, Venuti is fully aware that a simplistic interpretation of the proposed strategies (namely, *foreignisation* and *domestication*) would subscribe to a dichotomy that, in fact, does not exist from a translator's point of view. Considering that the practice of translation often implies "patterns of unequal cultural exchange" (Venuti 1998, 10), in his opinion it is extremely important to postulate "an ethics that recognizes and seeks to remedy the asymmetries in translating, a theory of good and bad methods for practicing and studying translation . . . The ethical stance I advocate urges that translations be written, read, and evaluated with greater respect for linguistic and cultural differences" (6).

With regard to the implications of such expression as "the translator's invisible hand" for the translation theory, these must be seen in the context of a long debate that dates back to the first decades of the nineteenth century, when "Friedrich Schleiermacher advocated word-for-word literalism in elevated language ('not colloquial') to produce an effect of foreignness in the translation" (Venuti 2004, "Introduction", 4).² In a way, Schleiermacher regarded the procedures of *Verfremdung* (foreignising) as if the translator's task was that of taking the reader to the original text. On the other hand, in 1986 Norman Shapiro gave the following definition regarding his goals as a translator: "I see translation as the attempt to produce a text so transparent that it does not seem to be a translation. A good translation is like a pane of glass. You only notice that it's there when there are little imperfections

² Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) presented the lecture "Über die verschiedenen Methoden des Übersetzens" ("On the Different Methods of Translating") to the Prussian academic community on 24 June 1813. His paper may be regarded as an early definition of the opposition domestication and foreignisation, considering that he postulates two possibilities for a translator: "Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him" (Schleiermacher 1977, 77). According to Venuti, who devoted an entire essay to him, "Schleiermacher privileges the first method, making the target-language reader travel abroad" (Venuti 1991, 129).

– scratches, bubbles. Ideally, there shouldn't be any. It should never call attention to itself" (qtd in Kratz 1986, 27). Unsurprisingly, these words appear at the beginning of the first chapter of Lawrence Venuti's *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (1995), which develops the concept of transparency by presenting the idea of a translator who is capable of being invisible. How is it possible for a translator not to leave his mark on a text that is to be translated? This is Venuti's reply:

The illusion of transparency is an effect of a fluent translation strategy, of the translator's effort to ensure easy readability by adhering to current usage, maintaining continuous syntax, fixing a precise meaning . . . The more fluent the translation, the more invisible the translator, and, presumably, the more visible the writer or meaning of the foreign text. (2008, 1)

Of course, the notion of invisibility is all the more crucial in those literary works that can be regarded as authentic classics of world literature because of their sociocultural and meaning-generating impact on the collective imaginary. In this respect, *The Country Wife* can be rightly considered a cultural text. As is always the case with classical works of literature, Wycherley's comedy presents a picture of a world – which is both distant to us and familiar to us – with a powerful sociocultural impact. The two translators taken into consideration – Masolino d'Amico and Loretta Innocenti – endeavoured to recodify this world for the benefit of the Italian reader by making their respective invisibility a key element not only in their approach to the source text but also in their interpretation of the source culture. Additionally, since *The Country Wife* is a dramatic text, the concept of transparency is also linked to the degree of performability on an Italian stage, which is a sort of litmus test for a translated play.

2. Translation as a Matter of Strategies

On a first reading, the said translations seem to present two different strategies, even though they are by no means diametrically opposed. It may be more accurate to say that d'Amico and Innocenti take two different paths to reach the same objective. In other words, their approaches to the original text seem different on a morphosyntactic level as well as in terms of their specific lexical choices.

Considering the two versions in detail, what sets apart Masolino d'Amico's translation, *La sposa di campagna*,³ is his scrupulous respect for the original

³ For practical reasons of readability, page references will appear in the text, preceded by the translators' initials, respectively MD for Masolino d'Amico and LI for Loretta Innocenti. All quotations from *The Country Wife* are from Wycherley 2014.

text which he interprets as closely as possible, without ever omitting its culture-specific terms. This pursuit of fidelity, however, minimally affects the fluency of d'Amico's translation whose general tone is not far from a natural reading. Even though a minimum degree of 'visibility' of the original may be detected, it only interferes marginally with the expressive power of the source text. On the other hand, the ambiguity of the language, with its double meanings and private codes, is rendered through solutions which seem to me to almost always hit the mark, although the translator sometimes opts for terminological choices which, under the spur of his enthusiasm, deviate from Italian culture. Yet, in light of Venuti's theorisation, this lexical deviation in the translating practice is in line with an attitude founded on a cultural and axiological respect for the source text.

From a paratextual angle, the title of a literary work is, according to Genette's definition, "a rather complex whole – and the complexity is not exactly due to length" (2001, 55). By translating *La sposa di campagna*, evidently d'Amico aimed to place emphasis on a more transitory element because *sposa* means "donna nel giorno nuziale" ("woman on her wedding day"). In this sense, *La moglie di campagna* adopted by Innocenti is a more appropriate title in terms of semantic equivalence to the original. In light of Genette's taxonomy, *The Country Wife* may be regarded as a "thematic title" because it alludes to "what one talks about" (Genette 2001, 78). Given that the translators' lexical choices are rather different, the Italian reader's response to the title may be relevant to the interpretation of the play, especially in terms of immediate impact with the paratext. At any rate, the semantic variation between *sposa* and *moglie* is more a question of lexical nuance than a substantial orientation of the reader's interpretive approach to the translated text. Another example of d'Amico's adoption of a noun that deviates from Italian culture occurs in 4.1, where Lucy, Alithea's maid, uses an image to explain that life in the country is a sort of prison for young women: "The country is as terrible, I find, to our young English ladies as a monastery to those abroad" (4.1.74-5). D'Amico's translation of this passage is the following: "Io trovo che la campagna risulta altrettanto terribile, per le nostre dame inglesi, del monastero per quelle straniere" (MD, 187). There is obviously not much difference between *monastero* and *convento*. D'Amico's choice of *monastero* seems simply a consequence of his reluctance to deviate from the original "monastery". Still, from the point of view of Catholic culture, nuns are naturally associated with *convento* and, in this respect, the term *convento* has a more authentic connotation. Fittingly, Loretta Innocenti's translation does adopt this lexeme: "Trovo che la campagna sia terribile per le giovani signore inglesi come il convento per quelle di altri paesi" (LI, 213). Not only do we note the term *convento* here, but also the phrase "le giovani signore inglesi" which is more faithful than the phrase "le nostre

dame inglesi”, whose meaning excludes the idea of youth. Surprisingly, d’Amico seems to overlook the aristocratic connotation attached to *dame*, a lexeme which actually distorts the meaning of the syntagm. At the same time, in keeping with his attentiveness to the cultural valency of the source text, d’Amico seems to find the Italian noun *dame* a more suitable lexeme to render the general atmosphere of the comedy.

3. A Reader-Oriented Translation?

Overall, Loretta Innocenti’s version of *The Country Wife* may be defined as a *reader-oriented translation*, because, right from the prologue, the translator tries to provide an enjoyable text that is appealing to the mind and the ear. Yet, by choosing to translate the prologue in the same rhyme scheme as the original she tends to stretch meanings and omit terms which, despite their precise function within the economy of the original text, have no cultural relevance for an Italian reader. In this sense it may be useful to consider the following four lines of the prologue in the original:

What we before most plays are used to do,
 For poets out of fear first draw on you;
 In a fierce prologue the still pit defy,
 And, ere you speak, like Castril give the lie.
 (7-10)

Here is Innocenti’s translation: “Quel che diciamo prima di iniziare, / Ché per paura i poeti son i primi ad attaccare; / In un prologo ardito sfidan la platea silente / E se uno fa per parlar gli dicono che mente” (“Prologo”, LI, 45). As is immediately apparent, the name Castril, a minor character in Ben Jonson’s *The Alchemist* (1610), has disappeared.⁴ Only a few readers would understand that Castril’s quotation is an indirect homage to Jonson’s comedy. It stands to reason that Wycherley aims to give a sort of genealogical indication in his prologue, given that *The Country Wife* undoubtedly owes its inspiration to

⁴ Although Loretta Innocenti does not include Castril in her translation, she explains in a note the origin and meaning of that name, underlining that this indirect references to rival playwrights was part of that dramaturgical tradition. Still, she does not explain in clear terms why she opted for the omission, even if it possibly depended on her adoption of rhyming couplets. In the following line of the same “Prologue” she omits also the name Bayes which is used by George Villiers, second Duke of Buckingham (1628-1687), in *The Rehearsal* (1672) with the intent of making a satiric allusion to John Dryden and, in particular, to his play *The Conquest of Granada*, first performed in December 1670 (cf. Wheatley 2005, 75-6). Apart from rhyming problems, probably Innocenti decided to leave out names which would not speak to an Italian audience.

Jonson's well-known play *Volpone* (1606).⁵ On the other hand, this allusion does not escape d'Amico who translates literally without worrying about trying to render the rhythm or the rhymes of the lines: "Quel che sempre diciamo prima di tante commedie, / Perché i poeti, pavidì, sono i primi a snudare la spada: / In un fiero prologo sfidano la silenziosa platea, / E come Castril, vi danno la smentita prima che abbiate aperto bocca" (MD, 33). Evidently, besides using more words for the four quoted lines, d'Amico follows the original word for word in his effort to convey the same semantic tension of the prologue.

Innocenti's strategy is substantially different from d'Amico's and, thereby, her translating method is quite distant from the said notion of foreignisation. Indeed, in her attempt to make the text immediately comprehensible, she sometimes seems to be excessively keen in trying to make it sound modern. A case in point occurs in 2.1, when Pinchwife, after greeting Sparkish, exclaims: "Well, go thy ways, for the flower of the true town fops, such as spend their estates before they come to 'em, and are cuckolds before they're married" (2.1.285-7). In her linguistic modernisation, Innocenti translates these words as follows: "Bene, va' per la tua strada, a cercare il fior fiore dei veri gagà cittadini, quelli che spendono patrimoni prima di averli ereditati e sono cornuti prima di sposarsi" (LI, 119). Apart from being symptomatic of an underlying process of domestication, the term *gagà* does not seem a very appropriate rendition from a cultural and historical point of view. All the Italian dictionaries trace the lexeme *gagà* to 1932, when, during the Fascist period, it was used to indicate a young man who showed off his elegance and acted like an aristocrat. In order to avoid this dissonant anachronism, it would have been simpler to translate it with the noun *damerino*, or even *bellimbusto*, placing an emphasis on the fatuity and excesses of refined dress. In any case, while the lexeme *gagà* confirms the translator's will to always keep the target culture in mind, it certainly does not contribute to create an effect of historical and philological verisimilitude. On this point it is impossible to make a lexical comparison with d'Amico's translation. Probably due to an oversight, the three lines quoted above (2.1.321-3) were not translated by him, even though they appear in the parallel text of the book.

This textual omission may not detract anything from the plot, but it does so from the character Pinchwife, whose jealous temperament harbours the spirit of "un instancabile voyeur" ("a tireless voyeur"; Alonge 2012, 42). It is

⁵ Regarding the genealogical aspect of the main theme of *The Country Wife*, Northrop Frye indicated its matrix in the classical comedy: "A theme which would be recognised in real life as a form of infantile regression, the hero pretending to be impotent in order to gain admission to the women's quarters, is employed in Wycherley's *Country Wife*, where it is taken from Terence's *Eunuchus*" (1973, 181).

no accident that in 4.2, Pinchwife takes pleasure in using words as a form of arousal: “But you told me he did some beastliness to you, as you called it. What was’t? . . . The devil! You were satisfied with it then, and would do it again?” (4.2.28-9 and 37-8). Here is d’Amico’s translation: “Però mi hai detto che ti ha fatto una porcheria, come l’hai chiamata. Di che si trattava? . . . Quel diavolo – Allora ti ha fatto piacere, saresti pronta a ricominciare daccapo” (MD, 199). And here is Innocenti’s translation: “Ma mi hai detto che ti ha fatto delle porcherie, come le hai chiamate. Che cos’erano? . . . Demonio! Ti è piaciuto allora e lo rifaresti di nuovo” (LI, 225). Naturally, “beastliness” and “satisfied” are the hypogrammes which obsess the character: both translators avoid dealing with the concept of *soddisfazione* giving their stylistic preference to such lexemes as *piacere* and *piaciuto*, which seem less appropriate, if not less incisive. In addition, *porcheria* – both in singular and plural forms (*porcherie*) – has a prevalent moral connotation which, at least in part, attenuates the sexually strong impact of “beastliness”.

4. “I am a Machiavel in love, madam” (4.3.63-4)

Besides the ability to manipulate others through the cunning use of words, *The Country Wife* illustrates the power of words to forge reality and determine actions that actively affect the diegetic context. Conversation almost always becomes a series of speech acts in which nuances, ambiguities, double entendres, and even double meanings of single words come into play. Indeed, David B. Morris has noted that “*The Country Wife* presents a world of corrupted language in which fraud, perjury, and breach of trust have become the normative condition of mankind” (Morris 1972, 6). In this connection, it is easy to detect an air of self-exaltation for his art of verbal dissimulation in the following emphatically spoken words by Horner: “I am a Machiavel in love, madam” (4.3.63-4). This textual segment is indeed a declaration of “a sort of amorous Machiavellism, the translation of *Realpolitik* into terms of the erotic intrigues in the Restoration salon” which perfectly captures “the spirit that animates *The Country Wife*” (Beauchamp 1977, 317). With regard to the translation of the segment, Innocenti follows its morphosyntactic structure (“Sono un Machiavelli in amore, signora”, LI, 245), whereas d’Amico opts for a more emphatic rendering by moving the syntagm “in amore” to the beginning: “In amore sono un Machiavelli, signora” (MD, 217). This solution, by reversing the position of the word *amore*, aims to highlight the primacy of hedonism over morality, in line with the spirit of this comedy. Still, Machiavelli is mentioned by Wycherley not so much to present the spectacle of a corrupted language as to evoke the power of language as a formidable action-generating catalyst. In fact, in his comedy, the playwright simply

aims to show us how a single phrase or word can affect events and leave its mark on actions. This goes beyond the question of a moral evaluation of the discursive level. For this reason, the translator must reflect very carefully before deciding on the linguistic rendering of a specific segment of the original text.

As far as ornithological nomenclature is concerned, both d'Amico and Innocenti fail to deal adequately with a phrase whose allusions have precise implications. In 4.3, Horner continues to brilliantly act out the part of a eunuch and, in this fake guise, complains to Sir Jasper that he has been reduced to the function of a scarecrow, while in reality he made love to Lady Fidget Jasper only a few moments earlier. From the viewpoint of translational linguistics, it may be interesting to see the words uttered by Horner who tells the cuckold Sir Jasper of being tired "to squire your wife about and be your man of straw, or scarecrow, only to *pies and jays* that would be nibbling at your forbidden fruit" (4.3.84-6, emphasis mine). Let us consider Masolino d'Amico's translation first: "portando a spasso vostra moglie e facendovi da spaventapasseri, contro *le gazze e i corvi* che altrimenti sbecchetterebbero il vostro frutto proibito" (MD, 219). And this is Innocenti's translation: "scortare vostra moglie in giro e fare l'uomo di paglia, o lo spaventapasseri, solo per *le gazze e gli uccelli* che vorrebbero beccare il vostro frutto proibito" (LI, 247). In line with their respective strategies, both translators opt for a reader-oriented rendition of the lexeme "jay" which in Italian is *ghiandaia* (*garrulus glandarius*), a bird with beautifully colourful feathers that go from pale pink to bright blue on its wings. This bird, which is a member of the *corvidae* family, is often defined by local names, while its ornithological name is barely known in Italy. In English it can refer metaphorically to "a person who talks at length in a foolish or impertinent way". Thus, it is not "le gazze e i corvi" as d'Amico writes but *le gazze e le ghiandaie*, two birds associated in English with constant chattering, pomp and waste of words, not to mention a natural leaning for imitation.⁶ But, considering the specific scenic context, the translator thought it right to make a slight semantic deviation from the original in terms of expressive effectiveness.

On the other hand, Innocenti's decision to create an incongruous combination between a hyponym (*gazze*) and a hypernym (*uccelli*) appears even less convincing in terms of fidelity. Indeed, with respect to the ironic tone of the phrase directed at Sir Jasper, the choice of translating the two

⁶ See Cattabiani (2001, 309-11) who observes that magpies and jays are constantly associated with one another due to certain common behaviours concerning garrulousness and cunning. Symbolically, the black and white plumage of the magpie refers to a contradictory temperament in which good and evil coexist. As regards the livery of the jay, the blue colour of its flight feathers is positively associated with the sky.

words with “le gazze e gli uccelli” completely overlooks the allusion. To reinforce the question of the ornithological metaphor I would also like to add that at the beginning of Act 3 Mrs Pinchwife confesses to Alithea her deeply ingrained melancholy in the following way: “. . . I must stay at home like a poor lonely sullen bird in a cage” (3.1.3-4). This is translated by d’Amico as “come un povero, solitario, triste uccellino in gabbia” (MD, 127), while Innocenti translates it as follows: “come un povero uccellino in gabbia, triste e solo” (LI, 143), a rendering which is more expressive and semantically effective thanks to an astute disjunction of the three adjectives – “poor lonely sullen” – whose sequence intends to connote the woman’s baffling condition.

5. Conclusion

From the point of view of the linguistic register used by Innocenti, some choices seem debatable because they convey a semantic valence which is too far removed from the original. For example, the translation of “bud” with the pet names *micio*, *micione* sounds too sickeningly sweet. When, in 2.1 Mrs Pinchwife addresses her husband, she uses these expressions: “Oh, my dear, dear bud” (2.1.32) > “Oh, caro, caro micio” (LI, 93). Again in Act 3: “O dear bud” (3.2.485) > “Oh caro micione” (LI, 201); “Presently, bud” (3.2.518) > “Subito, micio” (LI, 205). Again, in the same scene: “dear bud” (3.2.598) > “caro micione” (LI, 205). As for d’Amico, he translates these terms of endearment respectively: “Oh tesorino mio” (MD, 83), “Oh tesoruccio” (MD, 175), “Subito, tesoruccio” (MD, 177), “caro tesoruccio” (MD, 177). The solutions adopted by Masolino d’Amico are more in line with the language code of the couple, whereas, on a cultural level, Innocenti opts for lexemes which are in keeping with her modernising translational strategy. In truth, *micio/micione* do not correspond to the various pragmatic contexts of the comedy since, unlike *tesorino/tesoruccio*, they sound vaguely anachronistic to an Italian ear. However, considered that the term “bud” applied to Pinchwife sounds intensely comic in its incongruity, it cannot be entirely excluded that Innocenti intended to convey the same effect by her modernised rendition.

Lastly, it may be useful to point out that a recurrent rhetorical figure in *The Country Wife* is chiasmus, on which its linguistic brilliance and wordplay in part depend. This figure is often used not only to stage the paradoxical nature of certain situations, but also to express the main characters’ tautological attitude before each new situation they must face. At the same time, on a discursive level, the chiastic circularity is intended to thematise, along with the playfulness of language, the speaker’s confident dominance and awareness over the conversation taking place. To put it briefly, sexual pleasure in *The*

Country Wife goes hand in hand with the pleasure of language. Thus, it is through a chiasmic structure that Sir Jaspar Fidget conveys the ambiguity of his role in the triangular relationship involving Horner and Lady Fidget: “go, go, to your business, I say, pleasure, whilst I go to my pleasure, business” (2.1.544-5). Sir Jaspar ambiguously exploits the perfect coincidence between “pleasure” and “business”, having clearly in mind the fact that business also means sex. Apparently, d’Amico’s translation does not pick up on the subtle ambiguity of this chiasmus, for he translates it as: “Andate, andate alle vostre faccende, dico, al piacere, mentre io vado al mio piacere, gli affari” (MD, 123). Whereas Loretta Innocenti’s rendition hits the mark: “Andate, andate, ai vostri affari, cioè il piacere, mentre io vado al mio piacere, gli affari” (LI, 141). Furthermore, Lady Fidget closes Act 2 with a rhyming couplet which insists on the ambiguity of the lexeme “business”, thus reinforcing the pattern of double meanings: “Who for his business, from his wife will run, / Takes the best care, to have her business done” (2.1.607-8). In this case, Innocenti decides not to abandon rhyme and thus provides a translation in which the term *affari* only appears once and not at the beginning or the end of the aphorism: “Lascia la moglie sola per far gli affari tuoi / Quelli di lei farai anche se non lo vuoi” (LI, 143). The solution proposed by d’Amico is actually a more effective rendering of the original: “Chi per gli affari suoi lascia la moglie, / Gli affari anche di lei spesso risolve” (MD, 123). The fact remains that the couplet that closes Act 2, with its peculiar use of the double meaning of “business”, may be read as a culminating moment of the comedy in which the importance of words is affirmed in terms of ambiguity. Not only, but this double valence as well as the many nuances and oscillations of the play’s private and public codes are an active part in the organisation and acting out of the betrayal.

Despite some “scratches” and “bubbles”, to quote again from Shapiro’s interview, both translations should be regarded as relevant contributions not only to *The Country Wife*’s reception with whom Italian readers are already familiar, but also to the complex and multifaceted sociocultural phenomena staged by the Restoration comedy. In connection to the macrostrategies detected in the two translations examined, a good combination of domestication and foreignisation was certainly reached by Masolino d’Amico who aimed at *claritas* and fidelity without deviating much from the original. Even though he incurred in some semantic distortions, the peculiar atmosphere of the comedy is rendered in a very convincing way. Unsurprisingly, a few months after its publication, d’Amico’s version was used for a theatrical production by Centro Teatrale Bresciano directed by Sandro Sequi (1994). Undoubtedly, this production helped to ensure that d’Amico’s *La sposa di campagna* became the canonical translation of *The Country Wife*. It would be interesting to check to what extent this translation was accepted by Sequi in its entirety or, as it seems probable, adapted for the scene with a view to maximum effectiveness in the

practical recitation on stage before the spectators.⁷ Unlike d'Amico, Innocenti was more on the side of domestication but, in doing this, she omitted some discursive culture-specific elements and sometimes opted for a modernisation that, in some textual segments, resulted evidently anachronistic for a linguistically sensitive reader. As for the trope of the invisible hand, d'Amico's version is partly on the side of visibility, albeit to a minimum extent and without compromising the overall tone of the play. Still, his method always reveals a certain reluctance when a semantic distortion of the original text appears necessary in order to attain an effect of transparency and thereby facilitate its understanding by the reader.

As regards Innocenti's method, she is concerned about conveying a text at once clear, expressive and enjoyable; her approach is definitely on the side of fluency. Significantly, starting from the prologue, she deliberately opts for the omission a culture-specific term (Castril) whose meaning and literary allusion would escape the Italian reader. Undoubtedly, when we are dealing with a classic of literature, the number of its translations into a given language is a cultural indicator not only of the popularity of this or that author, but also of its impact on the target literary system. In Wycherley's case, the process of translating and retranslating *The Country Wife* seems to be a phenomenon which, as always happens for the classics, corresponds to the dynamics of culture whose fundamental law is its metamorphosis with the passing of time, always oscillating between continuities and discontinuities. From the point of view of the literary system, each new translation implies a response to change and, at the same time, a contribution to the removal of cultural barriers. In the case of such a major comedy as *The Country Wife*, it is to be hoped that new translations into Italian will follow those made and published up to now. At this point, to conclude by implicitly evoking Wycherley's play and its translators, it may be worthwhile recalling what Shapiro affirms about the deep meaning to be attributed to literary translation: "Translation is a very satisfying compromise between two extremes – complete restraint on the one hand and complete freedom on the other. In that regard, the act of translation serves as a microcosm of the human condition" (qtd in Kratz 1986, 28).

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⁷ For a short discussion of the Italian staging of *The Country Wife* see Graziano 2023 in this volume (32-9).

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