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The Country Wife.
Between Pragmatic Analysis and Translation

Edited by Alba Graziano

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Alba Graziano*

Introduction. *The Country Wife* in Italy: Reception and Translation

The history of *The Country Wife* (1675) in Italy is one of long neglect followed by an irregular rise in interest culminating in the 1990s thanks to the publication of its first successful translation. The discredit the play met with in England, beginning in the eighteenth century with Garrick's bowdlerised version *The Country Girl* (1766), partly explains this. Apart from sporadic discussions in the nineteenth century, there was no sustained critical attention to Wycherley's play until the 1920s, the decade which saw the publication of the playwright's first Complete Works (Summers 1924).[1] During the past century English-speaking scholarship on Restoration drama has grown steadily, producing a succession of major articles and book-length studies. Not so in Italy, however, where discussions of early modern English theatre have mainly devoted themselves to Shakespeare and his contemporaries (Marlowe, Jonson, Middleton, Webster and Ford). The stage has followed suit. This preface reviews the attention *The Country Wife* has received in the Italian cultural polysystem from the 1950s onwards, including its (scanty) critical interpretation and (not so irrelevant) editorial dissemination through translations, including a brief coda on the Italian *mises-en-scène*. It also serves as an introduction to our research group's aim of promoting interest in this still neglected form of theatre. To this end, IRGORD (Italian Research Group on Restoration Drama) seeks to identify new approaches, even in an international context.[2]

[1] There are several discussions of the Restoration comedy in criticism and in the theatre, but I have found Shepherd and Womack's cultural-political approach particularly useful (1996, 158-87).

[2] A team of scholars from Seville University, later joined by others from Cadiz and Vigo, have been carrying out a Restoration Comedy Project since 1995 (http://institucional.us.es/restoration/) with the general aim of providing a better knowledge of this neglected form of drama, which they are developing through critical editions

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1. The Early Reception in the Fifties and the Sixties

> . . . il compilatore della presente [raccolta], e a titolo del tutto personale, . . . pur ammirandone il genio e riconoscendone l'importanza storica, non sa nascondere il suo fastidio per l'eccessiva goffaggine delle strutture del Wycherley, ragione prima della stentata vita scenica dei suoi drammi, e quindi della sua attenuata temperie comica. (Baldini 1955, xii)

> . . . if a play is to be judged for its effectiveness on stage, through its integration of character, theme, and plot, *The Country Wife* is indeed a superior comedy. (Fujimura 1966, xi)

A survey of the response to Wycherley and *The Country Wife* in Italy must begin with Gabriele Baldini's collection *Teatro inglese della Restaurazione e del Settecento* (1955, English theatre of the Restoration and the eighteenth century). It was the first anthology to include Restoration and eighteenth-century drama in Italian accounts of the literature of England joining the two periods together; it gathered the foremost editors and translators of the second generation of English scholars in Italy, most of whom had studied under Mario Praz; it identified for Italian readers the canon of Restoration plays they should turn to first; and lastly, it inaugurated a modality of academic reception which mainly avails itself of translation.

As declared in its "Avvertenza" (Foreword), Baldini's collection follows the Florentine publisher Sansoni's plan to make available English drama in Italian, a plan Mario Praz himself had initiated with three volumes of plays by Shakespeare in 1943-1947 and a one-volume *Teatro Elisabettiano* (Elizabethan theatre) in 1948.[3] The idea of combining Restoration and eighteenth century texts was certainly not new; it was probably inspired by Nettleton (1914), whom Baldini describes as having achieved "una ammirevole sintesi" (xiii, "an admirable synthesis").[4] However, Anglo-American editions tended to separate the two periods, treating plays of the late seventeenth century as a

of significant comedies and the creation of a catalogue of all the comedies written during the Restoration. In the Czech Republic, on the other hand, the Department of Theatre Studies and the Department of English and American Studies at Masaryk University (Brno) launched the project "English Theatre Culture 1660-1737" in 2019 to foster international research and exchange through conferences and to produce a three-volume anthology of English Restoration theatre in Czech by adopting the innovative method of "dramaturgical translation" (Krajníc et al. 2019). IRGORD shares similar objectives, including translation, with the distinction of a predominantly linguistic approach to the comedies' verbal texts in view of their *performativity* and *performability*, as will be explained infra in this introduction. See also IRGORD site: https://sites.google.com/uniroma1.it/irgord/home.

[3] Baldini's collection is explicitly dedicated to Praz (1955, xiv).

[4] All translations, unless stated otherwise, are mine.

distinct group, as evidenced by the editions of Palmer (1913), Nicoll (1923-1928), Dobrée (1924), and Perry (1925), all listed in Baldini's bibliography. We can only conjecture that the choice was due to editorial constraints and to a 'reader-oriented' selection of texts to be presented in an Italian version: it obviously meant a drastic sacrifice. Baldini himself laments having to limit the representation of all the dramatic genres in the span of more than a century to just ten plays, less than half the twenty-four included in Nettleton and Case's 1939 anthology. What is of interest here is his confessing to a long indecision between Wycherley's *The Plain Dealer*, which had been privileged among his four plays by Nettleton and Case, and Otway's *The Orphan*, finally opting for Otway, the only playwright to be represented twice. The total exclusion of Wycherley is motivated, as mentioned in the above epigraph, by a wholly subjective dislike of the "clumsiness" of Wycherley's dramatic structures, which is taken to explain his plays' lack of success in the theatre. This illustrates how *The Country Wife* was never even considered as an option and indirectly indicates how at least until the late 1950s it was banished even from Anglo-American anthologies, in which Wycherley is represented, if at all, by *The Plain Dealer*.[5] When, in 1958, following in Baldini's footsteps, Elio Chinol published an Italian edition of three Restoration comedies in English, the same choice recurred, somehow aligning Italian scholarship to the by-then established canon of the 'Big Three', i.e. Etherege, Wycherley and Congreve,[6] but collecting together *The Man of Mode*, *The Way of the World* and *The Plain Dealer*, once again to the exclusion of *The Country Wife*.

Baldini's pioneer collection of Restoration comedies included *The Way of the World* (1700; translated by Giorgio Melchiori, who established its Italian title, *Così va il mondo*), George Farquhar's *The Beaux' Stratagem* (1707; translated by Agostino Lombardo as *Lo stratagemma dei bellimbusti*), and John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728; translated by Carlo Izzo as *L'opera dello straccione*). Thus, we have three specimens identifiable as Restoration comedies only thanks to the longest periodisation (1660-1737), years and decades after the Glorious Revolution when the climate around the theatre had radically changed due to the famous antitheatrical controversy sparked by Jeremy Collier's *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698) and later by the 'purges' carried out in *The Spectator*'s theatre essays (e.g. no. 16, 15 May 1711). At least Baldini's one-hundred-page "Introduzione" (Introduction) makes amends by acknowledging the missing comic playwrights: George Etherege, noted as

[5] Besides Nettleton and Case, see also MacMillan and Jones 1931, where not even Aphra Behn is represented.

[6] The seminal works by Fujimura (1952) and Norman N. Holland (1959) certainly contributed to sanctioning these three authors as the 'canon' of at least the so-called *comedy of manners* or, in Fujimura's terms, "comedy of wit".

being chronologically "the first" (xxxv), William Wycherley, Thomas Shadwell, and John Vanbrugh.[7] In short, Baldini's interpretation of Restoration comedy is based on the identification of an ideological and emotional dichotomy pervading the entire century, best epitomized by figures such as the Puritan preacher John Bunyan and the libertine John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester: whereas the *heroic tragedy* reflects aspirations to ideal sentiments and a resignation in the face of the dormant political crisis which makes them unrealistic and naive, the *comedy of manners* describes through disillusioned eyes the cynicism and the immorality of the same aristocratic elite it addresses. Wycherley is considered to have produced the most ruthless and crudest of these pictures, whereas Etherege exhibits a more jocular and morally indifferent face.

It would be unfair to place the blame for a lack of wider knowledge of the vast corpus of Restoration drama, and of comedy in particular, on Baldini merely two decades after Praz himself, in the '30s, complained about not being able to find Dryden's works in Florence libraries (Praz 1937b, 219). Only the much later monumental work by Robert Hume (1976), calling attention to all 500 "new" plays of the late seventeenth century, would have suggested a much richer taxonomy than merely the tag *comedy of manners*, completely reorienting the hermeneutic perspectives on every single play. Nor can we suspect Baldini of the same moralistic prejudice against Wycherley, and against *The Country Wife*, that pervaded Victorian scholarship after Macaulay's and Thackeray's harsh verdicts, partially reproduced by Nettleton (1914), some of whose critical judgements Baldini himself considers "superati" (xiii, "out-dated"). Baldini explicitly ascribes his dislike of Wycherley's drama to a question of comic ineffectiveness: his personal passion for the performing arts would have sided him more with L. C. Knights's cutting remark, "not that the [Restoration] comedies are 'immoral', but they are trivial, gross, and dull" (1946, 149), than with the 'moralists' – Congreve excepted, of course, since he remains Baldini's favourite precisely for stylistic reasons:

> . . . le prestigiose variazioni dello strumento segreto di Congreve: il dialogo. Il dialogo di Congreve è divenuto, nella tradizione del teatro inglese, addirittura una misura, e per sincerarsene e coglierne non soltanto tutta la scioltezza e freschezza, tutta l'ironia e il libero divertimento, ma anche la capacità insita di ritrarre al vivo personaggi e situazioni basterebbe rileggere la mirabile scena quinta – tra Mirabell e Millamant – nel quarto atto di *The Way of the World*, nella quale i due amanti pongono rispettivamente le condizioni del loro matrimonio. (xliii)

[7] Among the women playwrights, a few lines are dedicated to Mrs Centlivre (ci), but nothing is made of Aphra Behn, even though Praz mentions her, with the stock label of "licenziosa" (licentious), in the first edition of his *Storia della letteratura inglese* (1937a, 177).

> [. . . the impressive variations of Congreve's secret instrument: the dialogue. Congreve's dialogue has become standard in the tradition of English theatre, and to ensure and capture not only all its ease and freshness, all its irony and free entertainment, but also the inherent ability to vividly portray characters and situations, one would simply need to reread the marvellous fifth scene in the fourth act of *The Way of the World*, in which the two lovers, Mirabell and Millamant, each set the conditions of their marriage.]

Yet, one might have expected one of Praz's favourite disciples to have built on the maestro's insights, expressed as early as 1933.[8] Even to this day they sound more perceptive than other contemporary Anglophone criticism invariably vitiated by moralistic biases: although surprisingly Praz is not mentioned once among Baldini's critical references – nor is he by anthology compilers Chinol (1958) and Obertello (1961). Praz (1937b) framed Restoration drama, with a specific focus on Dryden, Otway, and Lee, in the context of the baroque taste for passionate love on the one hand and a delight in perversion and monstrosity on the other – what became "The Beauty of the Medusa" in *The Romantic Agony* – in which he denied a substantial difference between heroic tragedies and comedies in terms of content, reducing it to a question of genre and linguistic decorum. "In Dryden's heroic tragedies love, or rather a night of love, is presented as an ultimate end" (228, trans. in Praz 1951, 49). The aesthetic intensity and platonic exaltation are the same we expect from lovers in Romantic literature, tinged with elements of decadence in their attraction to all sorts of unnatural relations. All these features are to Praz completely reconcilable with the "intemperata grossolanità" (229, "immoderate grossness") of the comedies, mainly to be attributed to the Court, with their libertinism and their "mixture of exhibitionism and a *voyeur*'s indulgence" which go beyond the satirical representation of vice on the stage. Praz's growing interest in the Marquis de Sade certainly played a role in the several stages of elaboration of his ideas – an interest he shared with Montague Summers, incidentally. Lastly, in later editions of Praz's *Storia della letteratura inglese* (History of English literature), Wycherley appears as a rather saturnine specimen, devoted to deforming characters into caricatures, inventing coarse language, and scourging vices – all with morbid complacency.

Praz's reading of the entire corpus of English literature prior to Romanticism as anticipating Romantic themes may have been slanted but still sounds more

[8] As usual with Praz, this essay has a complex editorial history. First published as "Restoration Drama" in *Essays in Criticism* (1933), it was later included as "Il dramma inglese della Restaurazione e i suoi aspetti preromantici" in *Studi e svaghi inglesi* (1937b), then incorporated into *La carne, la morte, il diavolo* (*The Romantic Agony*) in the 1950 edition and finally expanded in the chapter "La Restaurazione" in subsequent editions of *Storia della letteratura inglese*.

secular than many of the moral questions affecting the contemporary debate, which instead intrude into Baldini's pages dedicated to singling out Congreve from the other comic playwrights. There, he seems to oscillate between the 'hamletic', realistic, view of theatre as "the mirror [held] up to nature" and Charles Lamb's idea of an "artificial" comedy (1823). The first view, revived by Meredith's *Essay on the Idea of Comedy* (1877), supports the image of a theatre reflecting society's immorality and transgressions, which in Restoration times would mean deviations from the codes typical of "una società cinica e corrotta, che ha perso ogni fede e idealità e che riconosce un culto supremo soltanto al cerimoniale, alle belle manière" (xliv, "a cynical and corrupt society that has lost all faith and ideals and acknowledges only a supreme worship of ceremonial and good manners"). Thus, a theatre showing either a complicit attitude or a satirical vocation. Meredith famously only exempts Congreve from the emptiness of Restoration laughter, exalting his plays to the heights of Molière himself.[9] Lamb, on the other hand, while fighting against sentimental comedy or, better yet, the sentimental fruition of comedy in his day, advocates the inapplicability of ethical value judgements to fictive worlds, and in a quite provocative, paradoxical way seems to excuse Restoration comedies' lack of moral values, given their emotional ineffectiveness and moral indifference.[10] Yet, in his definitely caustic essay, quoted at length by Baldini, Lamb always couples Wycherley and Congreve as creators of "Utopias", semi fantasies and fairy tales, whereas Baldini, in his anxiety to justify Congreve's superiority over any other comic playwright, patently misreads Lamb: ". . . è costretto a distinguere nettamente Whycherley [*sic*] dai suoi contemporanei . . . per questo carattere di spietatezza e crudezza" (xxxvii, "he is compelled to clearly distinguish Wycherley from his contemporaries . . . for this character of ruthlessness and cruelty"). Baldini's preference, finally resorting to a moral argument, will influence the history of *The Country Wife*'s reception in Italy for a long time.

Both critical approaches tend to impose a 'moral' standard – possibly masking some hidden prudishness – on literature, albeit with different responses, either passing ethical rather than aesthetic judgement on an artistic product or even apologetically denying it any content relevance. They inspire with different nuances and possible mingling all the critics who happen to be Baldini's references, the same grouped by Fujimura (1952) under the label "manners critics".[11] Thomas Fujimura was the first to shift

[9] For Molière's much studied influences see the most recent Knutson 1988; for Jonson's and Fletcher's influences see Corman 1993.

[10] Cf. Houghton 1943 for a reassessment of Lamb's *Essay* in the light of other essays he wrote on the state of theatrical life and performance in his own time.

[11] Fujimura points out that the term *comedy of manners* derives from the modern sense of *manners*, with its suggestion of social conduct, whereas in the seventeenth century its use was psychological, i.e. those inclinations which are the matrix of

the viewpoint towards the ever-mentioned but at the time never really tackled literary quality of Restoration wit, and in so doing replaced "comedy of manners" with "comedy of wit", whose main features are witty dialogue/repartee, brisk writing, sexual and sceptical wit, and libertine characters. In sum, "the egoistic, non-utilitarian laughter of Hobbes' theory" (5). Fujimura uses the revitalisation of the Addisonian distinction between "true" and "false" wit devoid of any moralistic connotation to distinguish between a "natural elegance of thought and conduct, based on respect of sound judgement, fidelity to nature, and a due regard for beauty" (27), typical of the protagonists, and thus reinstates the cognitive impact of this kind of laughter as well as elements of sheer bawdry and figurative excesses that make up the farcical dimension which is also an integral part of most of these comedies.[12] The famous "china scene" in *The Country Wife*, for example, is interpreted as an extended *double entendre*, a quibbling, with an undoubtedly farcical effect, thus judged neither as giving in to some alleged immorality on the side of the author nor as a satirical scourge. To Fujimura, Wycherley is almost the embodiment of Truewit himself, "libertine, sceptical and naturalistic", and *The Country Wife*'s ethos is irony rather than the Swiftian *saeva indignatio* evoked by Dobrée. As one can see from the second motto of this section, Fujimura comes to express an evaluation of the play's comic effect impressively opposite to Baldini's, albeit based on almost the same parameters.

Unfortunately, not only Baldini but also Chinol (1958) ignore Fujimura's seminal work. In his "Introduzione" he explicitly draws the traditional genre typology of the *comedy of manners* from Nicoll (1955) and espouses Dobrée's ultimate argument of defence: in the context of an age given to inquiry and experiments of all kinds, "Restoration comedy expressed, not licentiousness, but a deep curiosity, and a desire to try new ways of living" (1924, 22, qtd in Italian by Chinol 1958, 12), and this is said to save most of the comedies from the gravest and coarsest blunders of immorality. Yet, Wycherley's personality remains something of a puzzle to Dobrée, who finally assigns him the usual role of satirist of social mores. This might represent an implicit explanation for Chinol's choice as to which text to publish in his anthology, since *The Plain Dealer*, containing the famous self-criticism of *The Country*

individual character (1952, 5-7). Thompson observes that *conversation* is a more appropriate term to indicate an entire manner of living rather than just talking (1984, 1-2). A survey of the 'moralistic' critics with a particular focus on the aporias they have incurred in discussing *The Country Wife* is provided by Harwood 1982, ch. 5.

[12] Leo Hughes had already dedicated a volume to farce in 1956. Hume (1976) also notes the presence of farce everywhere in Restoration comedies, even in the more 'serious' ones, and claims that it exempts *The Country Wife* from a moral or moralistic judgement (104). See how farce is discussed by Harwood 1982 and Styan 1986 with respect to Wycherley, too.

Wife's recklessness, appears to be the more steadily satiric, i.e. moralistic, of the two. Lastly, almost echoing Benedetto Croce's distinction between poetry and non-poetry, Chinol confines the study of those comedic texts which "degrade" art in their representation of degenerated customs to social historiography:

> Come storici della letteratura noi possiamo disinteressarcene, per rivolgere invece la nostra attenzione a quelle opere o quelle parti di opera che, riscattandosi da questo *avvilimento*, hanno raggiunto la compiutezza dell'espressione artistica. (13; emphasis mine)
>
> [As literary historians, instead, we can overlook them to direct our attention to those works or parts of works that, by redeeming themselves from this *degradation*, have achieved the completeness of artistic expression.]

During the same years, springing precisely from studies of Restoration culture and society, as well as from the development of studies on satire and wit,[13] a much more fruitful interdisciplinary approach was gaining momentum in English-speaking criticism. Combining history, literature, theatre, and gender, this approach recognised how much women on stage and audience reception influenced the Court and impacted on the dramatic conventions (Soper 2017). Still holding sway today, this combination of critical lines had found forerunners in John Harrington Smith's and John Harold Wilson's books published in 1948. Wilson, in particular, produced all through the 1950s to the '70s seminal books on the libertine and on actresses, the first collection to include *The Country Wife* in an English-speaking context (*Six Restoration Plays*, 1959), as well as other works on Restoration drama and Restoration satire. These critical studies start being mentioned in Italian bibliographies only from the late 1970s, both in editions of single-comedy translations and in the handbooks on English theatre of the '80s and '90s, when critical interest in Restoration was at last revived (see Section 2).

One wonders how this course of events would have changed had the famous novelist and scriptwriter Raffaele La Capria managed to carry out his translation of *The Country Wife* for Einaudi in 1957. In a period when the great Turin publishing house hosted the best of the Italian left-wing intelligentsia, it was Claudio Gorlier, at the time Einaudi editor and later professor of English literature (also at Turin University), who commissioned La Capria this translation. La Capria had planned to do it in collaboration with his usual translation partner, William Weaver. Unfortunately, their work never saw daylight.[14] When in 1961 the first translation of *The Country*

[13] On satire specifically for Restoration see Craik 1960 and Zimbardo 1965. For more on wit in this age see Milburn 1966.

[14] As we read in a letter to Gorlier dated 5 February 1957 (qtd in Federico 2022, 96-

Wife finally appeared in Italy in Alfredo Obertello's anthology, its inclusion did fill the gap left by the former two collections, yet the editor's critical attitude was even more unashamedly contemptuous in addition to being quite contradictory. The editor of this new collection of *Teatro inglese* in three volumes, Alfredo Obertello, was a scholar of about the same generation as Baldini and Chinol, whereas the translator, Cesare Foligno, a Neapolitan scholar celebrated in Federico II University's website "I nostri antenati" ("our ancestors") was more than twenty years older than Praz and just as entitled to be considered one of the fathers of English Studies in Italy. As Sebellin (2023) discusses in her contribution to this journal, the authorship of the few pages prefacing *The Country Wife*'s translation is a matter of conjecture. However, the responsibility cannot but be shared and the tone of the attack, echoing Lamb with a most literal interpretation, is really nasty in its florid Italian rhetoric:

> Lo specchio rimandava fin troppo chiara l'immagine di uomini affondati nella melma. Guai a cascarvi! *La moglie di campagna* è commedia d'inesauribile vena in questa precisa direzione . . . in tutti, una estrema superficialità di sensi, nessun pensiero, nessuna responsabilità. Sfacciati sono, sboccati, luridi . . . uomini che non sono nulla. Certo le fanno grosse e grosse le dicono. E ci vorrebbe tutto un discorso sull'eloquenza, cioè sul turpiloquio, di questi signori e signore . . . non possiamo dar peso assoluto alle loro parole. Sono un vento che non rischiara, in realtà, nessuna cupa lussuria, essendo essa pure più pastura di bocca che ardore di lombi. (282)
>
> [The mirror reflected all too clearly the image of men sunk in the mire. Woe to those who fall into it! *The Country Wife* is a comedy with an inexhaustible vein in this precise direction . . . in all of them, an extreme shallowness of the senses, no thoughts, no responsibility. They are impudent, foul-mouthed, filthy . . . men who are nothing. Certainly, they pull off all kinds of tricks and more, they boast. One should speak at length about these gentlemen's and gentlewomen's eloquence, that is, their foul language . . . we cannot consider their words so seriously. They are a wind that does not fan any dark lust, being more fodder for the mouth than a fire in their loins.]

7) the translation due in September was not even begun in February since Bill Weaver was abroad. La Capria indicated Isabella Quarantotti as a substitute whose name he suggested should be included in the contract with the publisher, yet something in this new arrangement must have gone wrong. Before this episode and as a steady RAI (the Italian radio broadcasting company) author, La Capria had produced radio adaptations of George Farquhar's *The Beaux' Stratagem* and *The Recruiting Officer* in 1955 still cooperating with Weaver (see Federico 2022, 134-5): an interesting chapter in the general history of translation practice in Italy. Incidentally, Ms Quarantotti in the quality of Eduardo De Filippo's future wife will be the one to prepare the draft of the famous Neapolitan version of *The Tempest* thirty years later.

And so on for two pages before concluding with the usual recognition of a satiric ethos and, possibly for the first time in Italy, a perfunctory (and erroneous) celebration of *The Country Wife*'s representativeness of an entire genre:

> . . . il male quanto più si cela tanto più dilaga, mutila gli uomini e li fa inutili. La satira è vivace, spesso violenta, in una lingua inconfondibile, personalissima. *La moglie di campagna* merita la fama che gode di primaria commedia della Restaurazione. (283)
>
> [The more evil hides, the more it spreads, mutilating men and rendering them useless. The satire is lively, often violent, in an unmistakable, highly personal language. *The Country Wife* deserves the fame it enjoys as a leading comedy of the Restoration era.]

Our times may be as corrupt as the Restoration's – it would be easy to find analogies – and we twenty-first-century critics may be as perverse as the 'hollow men' described by the duo Obertello-Foligno. Yet it is exactly that foul language and those verbal expressions based on conflict and excess, both as a common code and as an individual style, which interest us nowadays, even more when activated for performance purposes or when adapted to different historical and geographical lingua-cultures (see Graziano 2021a and, in this issue, Ciambella 2023). In this direction, unfortunately, our noble predecessors, even those who did practise drama translation, provide little guidance. When observing their editorial endeavours, for example, it is difficult to imagine the scope and the audience they had in mind (general public? academic colleagues or neophytes? theatre people?), and consequently to derive any substantial indication of the translation 'policies' they adopted. Baldini describes the translations in his collection as "literal", stylistically loftier for the tragedies and livelier and more fluent for the comedies, in the hope, expressed twice in his Foreword, of future performances (xiii, xv).[15] Obertello, having to collect medieval to contemporary plays, underlines the impossibility of a harmonisation and, for example, goes so far as to mention one of the classic translation cruxes between English and T/V languages, i.e. the rendering of address pronouns in standard and not yet standardised linguistic phases (xii). In any case, when the time for a second translation of *The Country Wife* was finally ripe in 1993, the memory of Foligno's

[15] A vain hope! The mainstream preference for *The Way of the World* did produce a few performances, but only the 1958 radio adaptation by Mario Ferrero availed itself of Melchiori's translation. Three later stagings on TV and in the theatre conferred the translation to a professional such as Raoul Soderini (for Sandro Sequi's direction, 1975), when it was not undertaken by the directors themselves (Stelio Fiorenza for Teatro in Trastevere, 1991 and Alessandro Riccio for Produzioni TEDAVI '98, 1998).

translation is totally lost to Masolino d'Amico, who – declaring surprise – boasts precedence (29), and Loretta Innocenti, who produced the fourth translation in 2009, concurs (272).

The rest of the decade witnessed a wave of translations of Restoration playtexts still in academic contexts and others which enjoyed wide dissemination thanks to the glorious BUR-Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli series, which included some classic Restoration comedies: *The Man of Mode* (translated for the first time by the English scholar Mariantonietta Cerutti, 1964), *The Way of the World* (translated by Vincenzo Brizi, 1965), and *The Beggar's Opera* (translated by Ginetta Pignolo in 1968 and republished with Claudio Gorlier's introduction many times since 1974 till today). Although there were no English/Italian parallel texts, only a brief "Nota" (Note) by the translator, and no bibliographical references, at least the dissemination to a wider public had begun. Nevertheless, even this little burst of translations in the 1960s was a flash in the pan: all activity – both academic and editorial – ceased for the next ten years.

2. Literary Criticism and Translation from the Seventies to the Nineties

> It is self-evident that a play must communicate or it is not a play at all . . .
> The task with plays great or trivial is to examine the line of communication,
> the transmission of signals between stage and audience and back again . . .
> (Styan 1975, 1)

> The dramatic text, unlike other "literary genres," is multidimensional and
> pluricodified; it is not complete on the written page,
> but requires realization through staging.
> (Serpieri et al. 1981, 163)

The year 1977 marks a turning point in our survey. It would be tempting to infer that the troubled period of student and working class protest, which started in 1968-69 and was followed by the "anni di piombo", the years of terrorism specific to the Italian 1970s, once more diverted intellectual research from the forms of Restoration drama towards Shakespeare, considered a far better representative of an age of profound doubt and change. Or, at the other end, the age of Enlightenment may have been considered more comparable, especially for its philosophical and political theorisations on State and revolution. We shun such mechanical associations and yet observe an inexplicable gap that is just as inexplicably interrupted in 1977 – were *Saturday Night Fever* (1977) and the swinging '80s already in the air? – with the arrival of two personalities who played a relevant role in Italian studies on theatre and on Restoration drama in particular, together with a few

others belonging to the third generation of Anglicists: Viola Papetti, with her book on *Arlecchino a Londra. La pantomima inglese, 1700-1728* (Harlequin in London. The English pantomime, 1700-1728), and Romana Zacchi, with her literature review, "La commedia della Restaurazione: per una storia delle approssimazioni critiche" (Restoration comedy: towards a history of critical approximations). It is worth noting that these scholars' individual contribution to English theatre/drama studies and Restoration drama in particular is to be appreciated in the context of their co-founding and participating in collective research projects, at the time a rare phenomenon in the Italian Humanities.

A pupil of Baldini's, who died too early (in 1969), and Melchiori's, and together with Masolino d'Amico (the youngest of Praz's direct disciples), Viola Papetti belongs to the Roman school of Sapienza Faculty of Magistero (that in 1992 was to become the new University of Roma Tre). She can be considered a bridge to the former era of Restoration drama reception in Italy. She inherited the research field of late Baroque and Neoclassical studies, dear to Praz, while cooperating with Melchiori and the "Gruppo di ricerca sulla comunicazione teatrale in Inghilterra" (Research group on theatre communication in England). Between 1979 and 1994 it produced seven collections of essays titled *Le forme del teatro* (The forms of theatre), spanning English drama from the Elizabethan age to the eighteenth century.[16]

Romana Zacchi, based in Bologna University, soon joined the group of Italian scholars gathered around Alessandro Serpieri, Paola Pugliatti, and Keir Elam, who, following in Eco's, Segre's, and Pagnini's footsteps, adopted the semiotic approach to distinguish the structures of dramatic literature from narrative literature. They carried out Serpieri's methodological idea of segmenting the dramatic text according to its deictic qualities and performative functions.[17] This approach gathered scholars from various institutions, who all through the 1980s applied it to other projects, such as

[16] Of the seven volumes, 1 (1979), 2 (1981), and 3 (1984) were edited by Melchiori (2 reissued by Isenberg and Papetti in 2003), 4 (1989) by Papetti, 5 and 6 (1997) by Papetti and Visconti, all of them for Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura; in 1994 a further volume was issued by Faini and Papetti as a publication of the Department of Comparative Literatures, Roma Tre.

[17] "Ipotesi teorica di segmentazione del testo teatrale" ("Towards a Segmentation of the Dramatic Text") (published in 1977 in *Strumenti critici*), soon expanded to a book by the same title for Einaudi, was republished the following year in a groundbreaking collection together with Keir Elam, Paola Pugliatti, Tomaso Kemeny, and Romana Rutelli, who also appeared on an international forum, i.e. a special issue of *Poetics Today* (1981) on "Drama, Theater, Performance: a Semiotic Perspective". Also of international renown is Elam 1980. The approach to theatre and drama embodied by the Italian semiotic school is mentioned by both Milhous and Hume (1985) and Markley (1988) as an exceptional theoretical effort to elaborate a poetics of text and performance.

the one on theatrical conventions at the University of Bologna, resulting in the so called 'blue book' (Aston et al. 1983), where Zacchi figures as one of the contributors. In addition, the two geographically distant schools combined their approaches, as attested by Melchiori's edition of Shakespeare's works for "I Meridiani" Mondadori, where each playtext is segmented in meaningful and functional sequences beyond the ahistorical divisions into acts and scenes, and by the contribution of some of the representatives of the semiotic approach to the volumes *Le forme del teatro* (see Zacchi 1997).

Needless to say, the primary field of study for all these research groups and editorial outputs remains the Shakespearean text. Yet, they have in common something more relevant to us: the revival of drama studies under new auspices and with new perspectives, at last giving a chance to Restoration comedies as theatrical literature. Although producing independent analyses, they also happen to run parallel to analogous new interests in the Anglo-American critical arena and definitely set the stage for our own contemporary approaches to the comedic text. The two main driving forces to critical innovation are a focus on theatre structures and cultural history, which adopts a performance-oriented interpretation of the dramatic text, and another on the sociology of theatre, including the inevitable gender approach.

Anticipated by an article by Malekin (1969) on "Wycherley's dramatic skills", which underlines the presence both of skilful plot devices and of elements of the actor's consciousness in *The Country Wife*, the entire decade is dominated by the foundational works of Styan (1975), Hume (1976), and Peter Holland (1979). All contribute to finally abandoning the moralistic/realistic approach in favour of a cultural-historical one, which interprets dramatic texts within a dynamic comprising their material production, performance conditions, and the sociology of the audience. Hume's monumental work in particular, with its rediscovery of 500 "new" plays, introduces a much wider range of texts than only *comedies of manners* or *sex comedies*, doing away once and for all with the idea that there is such a thing as a particularly representative specimen or fixed genres, and helping to measure the value of 'canonical' authors/plays against others.[18] Styan and Holland concentrate on the mechanics of staging and on actors/actresses and audiences, for example dispelling the myth of a homogenous aristocratic public,[19] and paving the way for a production-oriented dramatic criticism which will generate more

[18] The fundamental work on the repertoires was begun by van Lennep 1965, followed by Loftis 1976, and continued by Langhans 1981 and Rothstein and Kavenik 1988. In the next decade the possibility of tackling such a huge number of plays opened the way for Hughes 1996 and Canfield 1997 and 2000, in my opinion the best general overviews and the most insightful interpretations of the bulk of Restoration drama thus far.

[19] About the Restoration theatre audience, see also Love 1980; Scouten and Hume 1980.

fruitful work (Powell 1984; Milhous and Hume 1985; Styan 1986 down to Callow 1991 and Corman 1993) and which no interpretation of the verbal texts can overlook any longer.

In her first contribution to Italian studies on Restoration comedy, Romana Zacchi (1977) did not deal with any of the just-mentioned English speaking critics of the 1970s. Yet her frustration with traditional critical approaches and their representatives (both anglophone and Italian) is palpable, and her appreciation of Fujimura and Norman Holland clearly evident, as they were the only ones who in the 1950s had considered studying the comic dimension through "l'individuazione dei tratti formali, linguistici e retorici, i parallelismi negli intrecci, la ripetizione di metafore, la *imagery*" (196, "the identification of formal, linguistic, and rhetorical traits, the parallels in plots, the repetition of metaphors, and the use of imagery"). Her frames of reference are declared to be Russian Formalism, structuralism, and Jurij Lotman, evidence of her adherence to the structuralist/semiotic approach to guide a close reading of the comedic texts evaluated in their quality as dramatic texts. Zacchi's next article (1982) dealt specifically with *The Country Wife* and contributed to its interpretation in an original way by applying Greimas's actantial model to the play's three plots (Chadwick 1975) and in particular by demonstrating the unconventional use of disguise in the function of 'helper' in all the three plots. In perfect accordance with contemporary critical trends, her concluding remarks about how Wycherley used this quite traditional device emphasise the active, cooperative role of the Restoration audience and express her hopes for a systematic study of asides to confirm this special relationship.[20] No wonder Zacchi's next important contribution to Restoration drama studies was a 1984 monograph titled *La società del teatro nell'Inghilterra della Restaurazione* (The theatre society in Restoration England), which concentrates on the modes of audience reception through documents such as reviews, daily catalogues, and censorship reports, but even more through printed materials both textual, such as the scripts, and paratextual, such as "epistles dedicatory" or addresses "To the Reader", all conveying a discourse 'about' the theatre and its social fruition. In the framework of non-illusionistic theatre discussed by Styan (1975) and building on the by-now firmly established studies of modes of theatre production, Zacchi highlights how all these extra dramatic pieces serve to direct the audience's attention towards drama itself, as in the wholly metatheatrical play *The Rehearsal* (1671) by George Villiers Buckingham. This

[20] Zacchi dedicates a few lines to asides in a much later essay indicating it as a microphenomenon of an ambiguous, partly mimetic and partly non-mimetic, theatre (1994, 90-1). Roberta Mullini, also one of the Bologna group of the semioticians, discusses asides in Shakespeare (2018). The topic remains largely underexplored in criticism of Restoration theatre: see a lengthier treatment in Powell 1984 and Callow 1991.

comedy can be read as a staging of the same critical reflections contained in prologues, epilogues, and paratexts of all kinds, and as exemplifying paradigmatically the transition from an audio-visual to a literary-reading consumption of drama.[21] In a volume coauthored with Roberta Mullini (1992), later updated and republished, Zacchi edits the chapter on Restoration and eighteenth century and offers an informative treatment of theatre in terms of material culture, including theatre design, repertoires, and all relevant documents and bibliographies. Unfortunately, this enterprise prevented her from producing any further critical analyses of Wycherley's comedies.

Preceded by books on early eighteenth-century English theatre, one on John Gay and the heroicomic and the study of Harlequin and pantomime (an innovative contribution to research on Italian influences), Viola Papetti arrived on the scene of Restoration drama studies with a substantial essay on London theatrical spaces and their impact on playtexts (1979). In it she carried out a comparative analysis of stage directions and spatial lexicon of the three versions of *The Tempest* – the Shakespearian one of 1623 and the two 'restored' ones: Davenant-Dryden's of 1667, published in 1670, and the one with Shadwell's and Betterton's 'operatic' additions in 1674 – for three different theatrical venues: Blackfriars, Lisle's Tennis Court, and Dorset Garden, respectively.[22] Her theoretical toolbox includes the French and Italian semiotic studies on space, urban topology, and theatre (Greimas, Garroni, Gullì-Pugliatti, Serperi, Ruffini, Ubersfeld) but also specific sources dealing with scenes and scenery, repertoires, and acting and reciting on the English stage. The result is an exemplary interpretation of the radical linguistic and ideological shift from a metaphorical to a metonymical axis which occurred between *The Tempest* and *The Enchanted Island*/s as theatre changed from *spherical* and baroque to *cubic* and neoclassical.

Although she never wrote specifically on *The Country Wife* or other plays by Wycherley, Papetti features in this survey because her writing on Restoration theatre is extensive and exceptional in the field of Italian literary criticism.[23] Her translation of Aphra Behn's *The Rover* as *Il giramondo: commedia in cinque atti* (1981, La Tartaruga) precedes by more than ten years a second wave of

[21] Dryden's role in this debate has been widely studied, in Italy mainly by Marisa Sestito. *The Rehearsal* was translated into Italian by Romana Rutelli in 1994 (*La prova teatrale*, Liguori), with two introductory essays.

[22] For the story of these remakes see among others Sestito 1999. Shakespeare's 'neoclassical' adaptations have also had some fortune in Italy, culminating in the by-now standard study by Loretta Innocenti (1985), and later developed into the very generative line of Remediation Studies.

[23] Papetti is also the editor of *Il Neoclassicismo* (Neoclassicism) in the series "I contesti culturali della letteratura inglese" (1989, il Mulino). Her most significant writings on English comedy from Shakespeare to Sheridan were later collected in Papetti 2007.

translations after those in the 1960s.[24] It also received an immediate *mise-en-scène* in 1982 with the title *Cavalieri senza patria* ("The Banish'd Cavaliers") under the direction of Ugo Gregoretti, one of the leading figures of Italian cinema and television specialising in the comic genre. Papetti's "Introduzione" is clearly meant to present Behn to an Italian context, one that had until then ostracised her. It also reveals the critic's alertness to the rediscovery of the 'first' professional woman playwright of Anglophone background, following Woolf and as part of the feminist re-discussion of the literary 'canon' (sparked by the works of Moers, Showalter, and Gilbert and Gubar in the '70s).[25]

In the 1980s and '90s Papetti shifted her focus from the semiotic approach to one more concerned with the male libertine and the status of women – both as characters and playwrights – while continuing the trend inaugurated by Baldini of editing translations supplied with scholarly introductions addressing both an academic and a wider public. The libertine had always been a favourite topic of Restoration criticism, as had the presence of actresses on stage and the combination of both elements in the "gay couple". In the same years, in fact, gender and sexuality were becoming central not only in research on actors and actresses or as a challenge to the traditional canon, but in particular in terms of the representation of women and the misogynistic or homosocial veins on which the plays are quite outspoken.[26] While taking contemporary Anglo-American criticism into account, Papetti remains autonomous in the use of her critical sources. She finds inspiration in Freud and Jacqueline Rousset for her discussion of Dorimant, Etherege's libertine protagonist, when prefacing her translation of *The Man of Mode* (*L'uomo alla moda*, 1993).[27] She turns directly to Hobbes's and Locke's ideas of 'contract' when analysing the altered relationships in Congreve's gay couple, Mirabel and Millamant, in her "Introduzione" to *Così va il mondo* (1995). Her brilliant interpretation of Millamant as a "rococò Cleopatra" doomed to "dwindle into a wife", in addition to being very persuasive as to who is going to lose by an allegedly egalitarian marriage proviso, remains unsurpassed in its iconic efficacy.[28]

[24] *Il giramondo* was reissued by Rizzoli in 1998 and 2002; it was retranslated by Raffaella Bianchi (2012, Dalla Costa).

[25] The great wave of interest in Aphra Behn came in the '90s and included studies by Heidi Hutner, Catherine Gallagher, Janet Todd and Derek Hughes.

[26] Major studies are Hume 1983; Sedgwick 1985 (fundamental on Horner's homosocial desire); Weber 1986; Pearson 1988; Gill 1994; Tippets 1994; and later Turner 2002 and Webster 2012.

[27] Papetti also contributes an essay on the language of libertinism, which is partly reprinted in her Introduction to *L'uomo alla moda*. It contains a few interesting observations on the difficult process of translating Restoration comedies into Italian (1989, 170).

[28] For a recent, pragmatic reading of the contract scenes, see Rossi 2022.

In 1993 a second translation of *The Country Wife* appeared under the supervision of Masolino d'Amico for the 'new' BUR. This was a joint venture with Papetti's *L'uomo alla moda* in the same series, now equipped with English parallel texts. A detailed analysis of this translation is undertaken by Michela Marroni (2023) in the present volume: one of her focuses is the choice of title, *La sposa* (bride) *di campagna* instead of one more faithful to the plot, *La moglie* (wife) *di campagna*, which was preferred by the other three translators (Foligno in Obertello 1961; Bajma Griga in Bertinetti 2005 and Innocenti 2009). My sketch relates to its reception in Italy in highlighting, on the one hand, the link between d'Amico's Italian edition of *The Country Wife* and his former academic work, and, on the other, his experience and influential position in Italian 'show business'.[29] In 1981, d'Amico had published the first Italian survey of the history of English theatre (Mondadori), long before those of Mullini and Zacchi, the two volumes by Anzi and Bertinetti (1997, Einaudi), and the series of separate volumes under the general editorship of Agostino Lombardo, in which Marisa Sestito edited the volume devoted to the Restoration and the eighteenth century (2002, Carocci). When introducing his *Sposa di campagna*, d'Amico addresses a non-specialist readership for the first time, at once treating Wycherley's play as a "classic" of English comedy (1993, 29) and discussing the theatrical genres and conventions of the entire period. Although his survey is not indebted to the chapter on Restoration theatre and Wycherley in *Dieci secoli di teatro inglese* (Ten centuries of English theatre), where *The Country Wife* is given the provisional Italian title of "La moglie campagnola", the two projects appear to have been conceived concurrently.[30] Their shared objectives are clear: a reassessment of *The Country Wife* from the viewpoint of its dramatic rather than literary value and an assertion of its superiority to plays by Etherege and Congreve, traditionally considered more refined or at least less coarse than Wycherley's:

[29] Masolino's family is one of the most influential families of the Italian *intelligentsia*: his mother Suso Cecchi was a scriptwriter married to the musicologist Fedele d'Amico. His grandfathers from both sides, Emilio Cecchi and Silvio d'Amico, were major figures in Italian literary and visual arts journalism and theatre criticism in the first half of the twentieth century.

[30] The edition chosen for the Italian translation is Peter Holland's modernised 1981 text for Cambridge University Press, when at least two New Mermaids Series editions (John Dixon Hunt in 1983; James Ogden in 1991) and a Penguin (Gāmini Salgādo in 1986) had appeared in the '80s. The bibliographical references also seem to derive from Holland's edition, since they are no later than the 1970s, except for Styan 1986. This impression was confirmed by Masolino d'Amico's recollections during our short conversation in September 2022.

> Alla prova dell'esecuzione La moglie campagnola, che è oggi probabilmente la commedia della Restaurazione ripresa più spesso, esalta la perizia degli intrecci, la magnifica resa delle situazioni comiche e la funzionalità delle battute, e insomma si presta a fornire un ennesimo esempio di quanto perdano i veri scrittori di teatro ad essere studiati come letteratura. (d'Amico 1981, 210)
>
> [The test of performance will exalt the skill in plot development, the magnificent portrayal of comedic situations, and the functionality of the lines of The Country Wife, which is probably the Restoration comedy revived most frequently today. In short, it lends itself to providing yet another example of how much true playwrights lose when studied merely as literature.]
>
> . . . Wycherley . . . può sembrare sulla pagina rozzo e inelegante, un po' come capita a Pirandello, la cui lingua (non meno di quella di O'Neill . . .) si anima miracolosamente quando viene parlata. Analogamente, l'intreccio che nel riassunto può apparire macchinoso, dato anche l'elevato numero dei personaggi, diventa alla prova del palcoscenico non solo chiarissimo, ma privo del minimo momento di stanchezza. (d'Amico 1993, 14)
>
> [. . . Wycherley . . . may seem rough and inelegant on the page, much like Pirandello, whose language (not unlike that of O'Neill . . .) miraculously comes to life when spoken. Similarly, the plot, which may appear convoluted in summary, especially due to the numerous characters, becomes on the stage not only very clear but also devoid of the slightest trace of weariness.

D'Amico's pronouncements are all the more authoritative because of his involvement with theatre and cinema activities not only as an academic critic and translator but also as a reviewer, a script/screenwriter, and a dialogue adaptor. It was not by chance that his *La sposa di campagna* was chosen as a reference for the only two documented staging events in Italy and that this title, despite some philological imprecision, has indeed become mainstream among theatre practitioners (see Section 4).

The role played by the Histories, both in revealing a lesser-known period of English theatre and in revolutionising the critical appreciation of Restoration drama, cannot be overestimated. By the end of the millennium, we finally join contemporary Anglo-American critical trends. In comparison with d'Amico – who, however, had obvious space limitations, having to cover ten centuries – both Bertinetti and Sestito have considerably departed from Baldini's first enterprise. Sestito (2002) dedicates a whole chapter to "Le donne" (The women), with their own specialised bibliography.[31] Bertinetti (1997), surveying English

[31] Marisa Sestito, formerly at Sapienza University of Rome and later posted to Udine University, is a scholar of Milton, Dryden, and Dickens, an experienced literary translator, and engaged in initiatives with local theatres. I am indebted to her in many ways,

theatre from 1660 to 1895, devotes six out of ten chapters to the seventeenth century, four of these to comedy, finally introducing Italian readers to a considerable amount of major and minor Restoration authors and plots and making the most of the enormous wealth of information and interpretation accumulated by English scholars of drama production and cultural historians of the theatre during the past twenty years.[32]

The choice to deal with an entire literary or theatrical period comprehensively rather than focus on few works intertwines with one of the most studied aspects of Restoration drama and comedy in particular – aside from theatre production history and gender – that is the question of genre (Rosenthal 2008). In English-language criticism, different approaches to genre were taken by Norman Holland, Laura Brown (1981), and Brian Corman on the one hand, and Robert Hume, Derek Hughes, and Douglas Canfield on the other. Bertinetti attempts to reconcile the two approaches in the arrangement of his survey. He revives Allardyce Nicoll's (1955) list of comic subgenres (political and satirical comedy, Spanish comedy, London comedy, farce, sex comedy, comedy of manners), treating them in the chronological order of the three traditional historical blocks, i.e. Restoration proper (1660-1688), French Revolution (1689-1714), Early Georgian (1715-1737). However, he notes that Nicoll himself claimed the coexistence of all the genres, and he cites Hume's work as offering powerful grounds for taking a flexible view of the generic affiliations of Restoration comedy, rather than defining every comedy as a version of the comedy of manners (Bertinetti 1997, 27, 57). Although sharing the same historical sources and reaching similar conclusions as to the economic-political ideology of Restoration comedies (Bertinetti 1984, 216-24; 1997, 128-30), Bertinetti could not consider the more daring general surveys by Douglas Canfield (1997; 2000) or the latter's organisation of the *Broadview Anthology of Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Drama* (2001).

The genre typology Canfield proposes, which identifies a major category of *social comedies* plus a few unclassifiable plays or single characters defined as *subversive*, has the advantage of cutting across chronology, since examples

including for her thorough bibliography on Restoration studies covering the past century.

[32] Paolo Bertinetti, who studied with Claudio Gorlier, is an expert of English theatre studies at Turin University. He also received a commitment as President of *Circuito Teatrale del Piemonte*. His earliest contribution to our topic dates to a volume published in 1984, which already shows a profound knowledge of both repertoires and contemporary English criticism quite ahead of its time. It remains the first and only monograph in Italy thus far to focus on Restoration comedy; however, having been out of print for some time, we prefer to consider the chapters in the 1997 Einaudi volume, given its greater impact on Italian readership. Bertinetti also commissioned the third translation of *The Country Wife* to Stefano Bajma Griga, himself affiliated with Turin University (2005); it is examined by Sebellin in this issue.

of both categories appear all along and shed light on the high degree of conflict in the Restoration age (between genders, social classes, political factions, and even races) and on how these conflicts are represented through plot and dramatic dialogue. Social comedies stage, albeit through infinite nuances, the classical skirmishes between the young heiress (beautiful, witty, and coy) and her gallants (handsome, careless, and penniless), a contrast that normally results in a happy ending, thus celebrating the harmonisation of economic interests and hereditary genealogy around the institution of marriage (typical examples are *The Man of Mode* or *The Way of the World*). This in turn strengthens the self-image of the pro-tempore winning party, the Royalist, as opposed to the Parliamentary, Puritan, and City middle class, and sanctions its supremacy while at the same time exorcising the endemic danger of plots and coups d'état with satire, deception, and trickery. The other point of view, a minority one, is radically antithetical to the ideological naturalisation of aristocracy as the ruling class, legitimised by divine and hereditary right. Subversion is effected through a direct attack on hereditary genealogy, which takes the form of a threat to take both male and female libertinism to extremes. Citing Christopher Hill's work on social history, Raymond Williams's cultural study of rural and urban England, Mikhail Bakhtin's interpretation of the comic spirit, and Michel Foucault's critique of ideology, Canfield offers a key to understanding the simultaneously *political* and *linguistic* operation of Restoration comedy, which makes human relationships, feelings, and above all communication revolve around the two socio-economic and legal axes of matrimony and patrimony. In this taxonomy, *The Country Wife* figures among the few examples of *subversive comedy* – exalting the "scrambled eggs" of adultery – as does Edward Ravenscroft's *The Careless Lovers* (1673) – celebrating in turn the "jumbled genealogy" of mixed progeny, to borrow Canfield's phrases. Both texts have been selected as study objects by IRGORD, the first one for the updated analysis we present in this special issue, and the second for an experiment in collaborative translation. In terms of a general interpretation of *The Country Wife*, we tend to privilege those readings which enhance the high instability and undecidability of its text and particularly of its protagonist, Horner, giving priority to ironic rather than satirical/moralistic readings (see Rossi 2023 and Virdis 2023 in this issue).

3. The Linguistic Turn of the Millennium

> And this leads me to the last and greatest advantage of our writing,
> which proceeds from conversation.
> (John Dryden, *Defence of the Epilogue*, 1672)

> Thus, translation involves two equivalent messages in two different codes.
> Equivalence in difference is the cardinal problem of language
> and the pivotal concern of linguistics.
> (Jakobson 1959, 233)

Robert Markley, the most insightful, non-linguistics-based commentator on the language of the 'Big Three', captures Wycherley's style accurately when he notes that,

> stylistically, Wycherley's plays describe a complex and profoundly ironic attempt to accommodate a radical practice to a conservative ideology; they exhibit an insistent, embattled anti-authoritarianism that questions the ability of any discourse – including the playwright's one – to stabilize moral, social and ideological values . . . Wycherley relentlessly sets words against actions to undermine comforting notions of linguistic stability . . . his interest lies in the dialogical interplay of competing voices, in the ironic contexts and qualifications engendered by social discourse . . . His language is more aphoristic and epigrammatic than his contemporaries': it is packed with jagged antithetical phrasings and negative constructions as well as images of warfare, disease, and animalistic appetites. (1988, 138-9)

He brilliantly defines Horner as "a most disturbing verbal paradox" whose name is a phonetic pun on the antithetical keyword *honour* (159). Horner is a "wit, Machiavel, parasite, satirist, and butt" (160), a "Restoration Hamlet" (164), or, one might add, a Restoration Gulliver. Markley pairs *The Country Wife* and *The Plain Dealer* as both presenting "a series of speech acts whose illocutionary and perlocutionary force can never be reduced to stable reconstructions of intention or meaning" (160), so that the audience gets caught somewhere between amoral laughter and satiric recognition. *The Plain Dealer* ends up exacerbating these tensions since the playwright himself is involved in disguise and irony. Sestito (2002), profiting from work on the metatheatrical elements of Restoration drama, provides a chronologically reversed reading of Wycherley's last two plays which, however, confirms Markley's idea of an involvement of the figure of the playwright in a semantically and morally destabilising game. Even though Horner and Manly embody exactly the opposite clichés, i.e. the double dealer and the plain dealer, it would be quite difficult to unmask the author and pin him down to a truthful position in the public's mind: not only did the same actor, Mr. Hart, play both Horner and

Manly, but it is indeed Manly, the character, who signs the Letter Dedicatory "To my Lady B—" (not Wycherley) and who speaks the Prologue in *The Plain Dealer* (not the actor, as it was customary).

I have linked these two scholars not only because they provide some of the most perceptive interpretations of Wycherley's complex intellectual and cultural strategies, but also because they typify the best work on Restoration theatre on which future scholars can build. This work rests on the following:
1. the idea of theatre as communication, which has increased an awareness of the linguistic quality of dramatic dialogue and of its performative power *per se*, allows the adoption of linguistically based approaches for a better understanding of the cultural and pragmatic dynamics underlying the texts.
2. the idea of theatre as a codified system of signs, which has generated research in metatheatre and the metadramatic function as pivotal stylistic features, has foregrounded all the phenomena of adaptation, translation, and remediation a dramatic text is liable to.

As for the first issue, we do not at all imply that the formidable linguistic texture of the Restoration comic genre in general and the playwrights' stylistic characteristics have escaped the 'traditional' critic's eye. Linguistic elements start being mentioned as early as 1957 by Dale Underwood, who, focusing on Etherege, describes his style as rich in comparisons and similitudes and characterised by balance and parallelism. Norman Holland (1959) identifies a few of these comparisons (for example: love as money, food, disease) in *The Country Wife*, while Vernon (1965) notices that the play starts with a simile and that there are twenty-one more in Act 1 alone. The extensive use of *double entendre*, a Gallicism only recently imported into English, as metaphorical language and semantic ambiguity in the context of a plot that makes extensive use of disguise, is underlined by Fujimura (1952), discussing the "china scene"; by Bateson (1957), opposing Knight's censorious reading; by Morris (1972), the first to study the ambivalence of the keyword *honour*, followed by Thompson (1984) and later by Knapp with more amphibious words (2000); by Shepherd and Womack (1996), together with *euphemisms*, as devices of "eroticization" of the theatre as a whole. Thompson's book (1984) is the first entirely devoted to Wycherley's language, including his supposed position in the contemporary disputes on language in the context of modern sciences, empiricist philosophy, and the Royal Society.[33] The chapter on *The Country Wife* is entitled to its

[33] Before Markley, Thompson's assumptions on this specific issue were opposed very convincingly by Deborah Payne, who concludes: "As we see signs used throughout this play, they have little to do with fixed referents or isomorphic relationships; rather, discourse and characters, both 'artificial' signs, are constituted solely by usage" (1986, 411). Even more philosophically grounded are Hughes's views, who challenges the idea that Restoration drama was influenced by the contemporary movements towards linguistic purism and reform and analyses the unstable status of

"figurative language" and examines the characters' different attitudes towards figurative discourse (Pinchwife more metaphorical, Horner more metonymic, Margery literalising). More interestingly, Thompson echoes Dryden's *Defence of the Epilogue* when sanctioning the nature of "conversation" in Wycherley's four plays and insisting that "talk provides the action and also the subject, for characters gather together to anatomize the substance and style of each other's discourse" (1). The metatheatrical dimension surfaces again, as noted by Markley (1988) and in Italy by Loretta Innocenti in her scholarly "Introduzione" to the fourth and latest translation of *The Country Wife* (2009; discussed by Marroni in this issue). And it does so in and through the very *witty repartee*, which constitutes the stylized conversation, the 'written to be spoken' discourse, of this comedy.

Based on the French fencing term *repartire*, "an answering thrust with a sword", *repartee* is itself figurative language, a semantic extension of the French specialised lexical item: this kind of oral interaction does with words what duelling often does in physical action (see, for example, the many attempts at "drawing" in *The Country Wife* signalled by Leicht 2007). Duelling, just like other 'aggressive' specialised textual domains such as war, hunting, play, animal breeding or trading, etc., also supplies more words, similes, and imageries to the verbal confrontations taking place among the characters. The general effect is of a more or less sharp comic warfare to establish power roles and winning positions often inscribed in the very process of characterization. Other linguistic levels besides the figurative (metaphors, similes, specialised lexicon, etc.) are indeed functional to comic strategies and contribute to forming the very special *wit* of the characters' idiolects. To mention only the most relevant: regional variation and/or foreignisms; phatic elements such as interjections, swearing, and cursing; forms of address – from the often-repetitive use of courtesy and honorific titles to the exploitation of the non-standardized second-person pronouns (the famous *thou/you* alternance); historical toponomastics, proverbs, and idioms; conversational turn taking; and general phenomena of intertextuality both extra-Restoration corpus (e.g. Molière) and intra-corpus (e.g. recurring character names sometimes used to comment on other characters). Following Underwood's and Markley's intuitions, an analysis of the syntactic level might prove enlightening in terms of the stylistic differences among playwrights, if it were proven true that Etherege's is characterized by parallelism and balance and Wycherley's by antithetical phrasings and epigrammatic sentences.

naming in *The Country Wife* as part of the tensions between sociability and anarchic individualism (1987, 264-6). Thompson's conservative reading of Wycherley's linguistic ideas is also criticized from a feminist perspective in Burke 1988.

Surprisingly, the objective of analysing the much-praised Restoration *witty repartee* has been pursued in the past millennium only by Wilkinson (1987), who identifies a pattern in Etherege's comic strategies of *railing*, *dissembling*, and *inverting*, and who provides many examples but no linguistic details. A few, slightly more technical remarks on Restoration syntax and Wycherley's in particular – both at the level of the single cue and of the transition between cues – come from the section "Style" in the "Introduction" to the Revels edition of *The Country Wife* (Cook and Swannel 1975, liv-lvii).[34] Only very recently have scholars begun tackling aspects of Restoration textuality more comprehensively and/or by adopting contemporary linguistics methodologies, including at times computational linguistics. Two articles by German critics focus on Wycherley's paradoxes (Niederhoff 2003) and *double entendres*, with a specific focus on the impact on the hearer (Goth 2015). Knapp (2000) examines the "bifurcated" keywords in *The Country Wife* via a historical-linguistic approach, while Busse (2002), relying on four corpora of Early Modern English, two of which collect specifically British drama from the Renaissance to the eighteenth century and two that also include other literary and non-literary text typologies, manages to trace the seventeenth-century evolution of non-standardized uses of second-person address pronouns. Similarly, Jucker (2020) investigates the vocabulary of manners by comparing several historical corpora and measuring the frequency of some of its keywords. Most recently, Evans (2023) concentrates on the apparently marginal phenomenon of interjections using a corpus linguistics approach to uncover stylistic distinctions among playwrights. No one has yet expressed their intention of proceeding systematically to a complete analysis of Restoration dramatic dialogue using linguistic approaches. Nonetheless, the time is ripe, even more so since, predictably, the work has been done on the Shakespearean corpus.

Around the mid-1990s, Historical Pragmatics, the most relevant discipline for this kind of research, emerged from a debate over the legitimacy of using written texts as sources of data for the study of language use and development in earlier periods. Literary texts in particular had always been considered the most artificial on a virtual scale of 'linguistic naturalness' (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2010). Jucker (1995; 2006) legitimized written materials by observing that texts based on verbal events can be considered close enough to orality to be counted as legitimate subjects of a historical pragmatic

[34] At the level of the single cue, short, "complete clause-structures" are observed, often in object or subject position, thus depending on main clauses such as "I find, it seems, they say" or connected to just one subordinate; while at the level of the transition between cues "the significant catching up and repetition of words" is indicated as being carried out by Wycherley much further than anyone else. Both syntactical organizations contribute to conveying the rhythm of colloquialism as in "natural speech" and argumentative fluidity in conversational interaction.

approach. A classification of "speech-related genres" was later advanced by Culpeper and Kytö (2010) based on a scale of communicative immediacy *vs.* communicative distance (rather than oral *vs.* written), where plays figure as a "speech-purposed genre". Dramatic dialogue shares with conversation the nature of human interaction, but it is also the product of literary and aesthetic choices, in the sense that what in conversation is perceived as 'natural' on stage is perceived "as having a *meaningful* function precisely because we know that a dramatist must have included them *on purpose*" (Short 2013, 177, his emphases). Fictional language in general, including theatre, is admitted as a pragmatically interesting variety of its own – alongside conversation, news, and academic writing (Biber et al. 1999) – providing a rich source of data with specific features to be investigated accordingly (Locher and Jucker 2021). This opens the way to combining Pragmatics with Stylistics, the branch of linguistics traditionally devoted to exploring fictional data, in order "to answer questions about how (literary) language is used in context, and how it contributes to the characterization of the protagonists in a literary piece of art or how power structures are created and so on" (Nørgaard et al. 2010, 39). This methodological combination avails itself of pragmatic theories – such as speech acts, conversation analysis, Grice's cooperation rules, (im)politeness – to analyse the dramatic text and has nowadays proliferated both in further theoretical subdivisions (such as theories of irony, taboo language, dramatic storytelling, cognitive stylistics) and in a plethora of Shakespearean studies favoured by the digitalization of early modern literature.[35]

IRGORD scholars mean to extend this kind of linguistic analysis to the highly praised yet scarcely studied Restoration *witty repartee*. Our methodological framework is historical-linguistic, since we feel that the rhetorical efficacy and comic effect, of this form of dramatic dialogue is better understood when projected onto the diachronic dimension of Late Early Modern English. It is also pragma-stylistic, since we want to shed light on its generic and individual features and on its inherent vocation to affect a theatrical audience, even when generating a playtext to be read and not to be performed, or an interlingual translation for the page rather than the stage. As to the second legacy inherited from the tradition of Italian Restoration studies in its double aspect, namely the relevance of translation practice and the identification of a marked metatheatrical dimension intrinsic to the very language of Restoration comedy, the IRGORD group would like to adopt a similarly linguistic and pragma-stylistic approach to both the analysis of extant translations and to our own experiments in collaborative translation.

[35] See among others Culpeper 2011; Ravassat and Culpeper 2011; Taavitsainen et al. 2014; Del Villano 2018; Drabek 2019 and for a useful survey of Stylistics Montini 2020.

The experience of interlingual translation marks both the critical reception and wider dissemination in Italy of at least some of the 'canonical' comedies such as *The Country Wife*, which has been translated at least four times – as many as *The Way of the World*. However, except the case of my own experience in translating Aphra Behn's *Sir Patient Fancy* (Graziano 2003; 2008; 2021b), reflections on translation, drama translation, and translatability issues in connection with the admittedly complex linguistic texture of the source texts are circumscribed to an apparatus of foot/endnotes explaining the odd culture-bound reference or untranslatable pun. The sensibility of each translator or the success of their translation are not questioned here, but the fact that their interpretation strategies remain mysterious, their translating guidelines and options unspoken. Even the long-debated choice between translating for a philologically correct reading or in view of stage performance is unquestioned and thus unanswered.[36] Although aware that *performability* pertains to the professional figures involved in the theatre industry, we are also convinced that even a so-called 'literal/literary' translation, most of the time despised by theatre practitioners, cannot avoid the *performativity* "inscribed in the word of drama, in its close network of aural, visual, kinesic suggestions" (Soncini 2007, 276). A thorough pragma-stylistic investigation of the linguistic aspects in the source text can indeed be passed along to practitioners to enhance the performability of the same text both in its mother tongue and in a second language.

Moreover, the analogies inherent in the processes of 1. adapting a playtext for the stage in its own language, 2. transferring it into another language/culture, and 3. transforming it into a new, similar but different, rewriting have been obscured by taking them as separate phenomena subject to separate approaches and disciplinary competences. Massimiliano Morini's recent contribution to Theatre Translation Studies (2022) offers a conceptual framework useful to bridging this gap. After surveying the vast scholarship on the topic, Morini laments that it has often remained trapped in the polarization between supposedly opposite dimensions such as text and performance, page and stage, readability and performability, even theatre and performance, adaptation and translation proper. Revamping Jakobson's (1959) famous tripartition, Morini endeavours to build a more stable and profitable terminology to indicate the various stages of theatre production and proposes to extend the term translation to any theatre production, with the suspension of the term adaptation. He suggests widening the sense of translation to make it a hypernym, an umbrella term that includes all the ideas (and practices)

[36] For complete and balanced surveys of this ongoing debate, albeit both inscribed in the "performative turn" characterising the new millennium, see Bigliazzi et al. 2013 and Morini 2022.

involved in theatre production. Adaptation is actually an "intralingual translation" preparing a theatrical script, which then gives way to an "inter-semiotic translation", that is, the script turned into actual performance. When stage and audience belong to a non-native language/culture, "interlingual translation" produces what others used to call "tradaptation" (Bastin 1998) to underline the inevitable further degree of transformation implied by the use of a different linguistic code. Lastly, all the phenomena of rewriting and remediation are also grouped as one more variant of a translation process, either "intra-semiotic", meaning the dependence of a performance on previous performances, or "inter-semiotic", implying change of media.

In addition to sounding like a liberating conceptual simplification, this taxonomy seems more efficient because it comprises events which are related in principle and only differentiated by degrees. It also includes the metatheatrical element, pivotal as a "strategy of appropriation" for all the contemporary kinds of restaging and refashioning of Restoration drama (Soncini 1999), in all the phases of theatre production, including the 'simple' intralingual adaptation through the ages. Especially when, as with *The Country Wife*, one is confronted by a play that demands meaning making cooperation so strongly, and thus is dependent on its situational performative efficacy, a play that crosses the border between fiction and reality effortlessly while constantly pointing at its own words as if they were theatrical gestures, tools, and devices. This quality of *The Country Wife* will emerge from the trajectory in time and space of the "china scene" effectively described in this issue by Soncini (2023), one of the few representatives of the current generation of Italian Restoration scholars.

As for the other, and more innovative, of Morini's theoretical assumptions – his treatment of any theatre translation as a theatre act – an idea which, though very consistent with his radically performance-centric bias, brought to its extremes would suddenly make the infinite number of 'academic' translations produced since the Renaissance vanish into thin air – this is indeed an object of daily and lively debate among IRGORD members. How it will influence our own translation practice has yet to be ascertained. It could not inform the analyses of our predecessors' commendable efforts to interpret and disseminate Restoration comedies, given they had no opportunity of seeing them performed in Italy and, with reason, no hope of doing so. Nevertheless, even on this issue *The Country Wife* has surprises in store: as academic and text-centric as it may be, d'Amico's *La sposa di campagna* has generated two recorded *mises-en-scène*, which deserve some discussion as a means of concluding this survey of Wycherley's reception and translation in Italy thus far.

4. *La sposa di campagna*: Two Italian Theatre Translations

> Style is knowing what kind of play you are in.
> (Sir John Gielgud)

After the historical staging of *The Country Wife*'s restored playtext edited and directed by Montague Summers in 1924 (with a "splendid" Isabel Jean as Margery), Wycherley's comedy met steady success on the British stage in its original and integral version, thanks also to the ability of its female interpreters, such as Joan Plowright (1956), Judy Dench (1966), and Maggie Smith (1969). Then at last, in the 1980s and '90s, came the age of reappropriation and refashioning of the general Restoration repertoire by the National Theatre as well as by the Royal Shakespeare Company and by such leaders of the contemporary British scene as Timberlake Wertenbaker, Stephen Jeffreys, Max Stafford-Clark, and Tanika Gupta.[37] In Italy, one can trace twenty-one performances of Restoration comedies after World War II thanks to arduous research involving cross-checking data from the online archives of the SIAE (Italian Authors' and Publishers' Association), the catalogues of the Turin Teatro Stabile, RAI Teche (the radio and TV online archives), the OPAC SBN (national book catalogue), and translators' profiles available on the Internet. These sources are regularly consulted to update the two lists of editorial translations of Restoration comedies and of their performance 'adaptations', which represent the very first step by IRGORD to set up a corpus based on Canfield's *Broadview Anthology*. Provisional results suggest an interesting quantitative comparison between the twenty-seven book translations detected and the twenty-one performances. Whereas the comedies which have been translated more than once are *The Way of the World* (4x), *The Country Wife* (4x), *The Man of Mode* (3x), *The Beaux' Stratagem* (2x), *Love for Love* (2x), *The Rover* (2x), and *The Beggar's Opera* (2x), those scoring more performances are *The Beggar's Opera* and *The Beaux' Stratagem*, and, only in third place, *The Way of the World*. Less canonical plays with as yet no academic translation have been staged (e.g. Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer* and *The Twin Rivals*) and, a real surprise, a handful of both radio and TV adaptations were produced by RAI as early as the 1950s well into the '80s.

Aside from the three exceptions already mentioned (Melchiori, Papetti, and d'Amico), all the other performances use – or at least claim to use – non-academic translations, even when an academic one exists. Italian stage directors prefer to provide the interlingual script themselves or to commit it to translators professionally involved in the process of theatre/screen/radio

[37] See Taney 1985 and Kachur 2004. For contemporary re-elaborations see Soncini 1999 and 2022, the latter specifically focused on *The Country Wife*.

adaptation and adjustment at different levels.[38] Despite well-known instances of cooperation between some of the most relevant Italian stage directors and scholars of the Shakespearean text (notably Strehler and Lombardo, Lavia and Serpieri), close collaboration between a philological translator and a dramaturg (Meldolesi and Molinari 2007) – either proper or embodied by the *régisseur* – is absent from Restoration comedies. Thus, the case of the only two extant Italian *mises-en-scène* of *The Country Wife* is quite exceptional since both are based on Masolino d'Amico's 1993 translation, albeit in a different way worth examining. They are:

1. *La sposa di campagna*, translated by Masolino d'Amico, directed by Sandro Sequi for Centro Teatrale Bresciano, Brescia, 1994; encore performance at Teatro Carignano, Turin, 1995; and
2. *La sposa di campagna*, free adaptation by Vito Boffoli, directed by Vito Boffoli for Teatrogruppo, Teatro Euclide, Roma, 2000, 2004.

Data about the printed scripts of these two performances are easily available through the sources mentioned. In the first case the script was published by Centro Teatrale Bresciano in the form of a 'grey' publication, which was easy to obtain from the Queriniana Library. In the second case Boffoli's script was requested from SIAE and obtained after a small payment for the copyright. The analysis of these two scripts puts Morini's umbrella term 'translation' to the test. Firstly, taken together, they both extend the process of intralingual and intersemiotic translation from the source to the target language, with d'Amico's interlingually translated *La sposa di campagna* in the same position as the 'original' *Country Wife*, liable to be transformed intralingually into two different 'scripts to be spoken', which can only hint at the final theatrical events but do not coincide with them. It has been impossible to obtain any audio and/or visual recorded material of the actual performances, which in any case would still provide only a partial idea: theatre ephemerality combined with the atavistic Italian difficulty to resist it by keeping documents and archives win the day. And yet, reading Milhous and Hume's brilliant chapter (1985, 73-106) on the plausible "producible interpretations" of *The Country Wife* would convince anyone of how much is left to a director or a dramaturg to decide beyond what is in the script; how just changing a tone of voice or a posture, just stressing Horner's physical prowess or Pinchwife's victimization, just making Harcourt and Alithea sound more romantic, Margery wink more,

[38] Particularly active in relation to our corpus of comedies is Anna Laura Messeri, both as English translator and director, especially for the Genua Theatre School, and translators such as Raffaele La Capria, Mario Roberto Cimnaghi, Raoul Soderini, and Luigi Bonino, employed by directors such as Mario Missiroli, Sandro Sequi, and Gianfranco De Bosio. Most notable is a re-elaboration of *The Beggar's Opera* as *L'opera dello sghignazzo* by Dario and Jacopo Fo (Torino, 1981-82) and a version directed by Lucio Dalla (Reggio Emilia, 2008), translated and adapted by Giuseppe Di Leva.

Sparkish behave less as a fool, all of which is completely allowed by such a controversial and open dramatic text, would crucially change its meaning and its genre, e.g. from libertine comedy, to farce, to satire (103).

Secondly, taken separately, the two scripts represent two of the most common acts of theatre translation: on the one hand, Sequi cuts many of the characters' cues but keeps to the five acts and changes d'Amico's words as little as possible, even when re-joining the cues; on the other, Boffoli not only drastically cuts (to two acts) but transforms the setting and the social environment, if not the epoch, with consequences also for the variety of Italian used. In the first case, the translation is credited to Masolino d'Amico, while in the second case, Boffoli figures as a SIAE author and on the first page of the script as the compiler of a "free adaptation" from Wycherley. Yet, in addition to adopting d'Amico's title, Boffoli's text can hardly be said to have been retranslated from English; rather, it looks like a condensed, modernised, and performable version of d'Amico's, more precisely a "free adaptation" from d'Amico![39] Thus, Sequi's faithfulness to d'Amico's interlingual translation makes us expect equal faithfulness to the 'original' *Country Wife*, whereas Boffoli raises the expectation of quite a different rewriting. In fact, a more detailed analysis reveals a slightly more complex picture.

Sequi's cuts involve primarily the character of the Old Lady Squeamish, erased from the dramatis personae along with all her cues, a few longer stretches of dialogue, the paratext (prologue and epilogue), and all the asides. The erasure of Old Lady Squeamish, together with a Boy and the possibility of adding waiters, servants and attendants, is understandable, since she appears on stage mainly in Acts 4 and 5, always chasing her granddaughter Mrs Squeamish, who is part of the 'virtuous gang': she somehow duplicates Sir Jaspar Fidget, echoing his false moral anxieties but also his being duped and, particularly in Act 4, she adds a further element of farce as one more 'blind' spectator to the 'china scene'. If the farce effect is reduced, so is the impact of the libertine element, with its homosocial and misogynistic implications. A downsizing of the Quack, often – quite incongruously – called upon to replace the Boy as messenger, and a shortening of his confrontations with Horner mean reducing his role as Horner's sparring partner, privy to his secret, in the discussion about his stratagem, his amoral motivation, and objectives. The same effect derives from the fact that some very relevant exchanges between Horner and his mates about women, male friendship, which should be

[39] In my conversation with Masolino d'Amico mentioned above, he recalled having been contacted by one of the company's members, a friend of his mother's, Suso, to authorize the use of his translation for this staging of *The Country Wife* at the Euclide Theatre, which he granted. Having been invited to the performance, he recalled that the performed text sounded very much like his own.

preferred, are drastically cut (Wycherley 2014, 1.1.154-207; d'Amico 1993, 55-58) or simply eliminated (Wycherley 2014, 3.2.1-60; d'Amico 1993, 135-9). Also abridged is the ladies' discussion of how birth and blood impact quality and honour (2.1.333-50), a passage which would be crucial to Canfield's insight into the transgression represented by interclass adultery for the Restoration social establishment (1997, 128).

Many shorter ellipses replace culture-bound elements, almost all of which are avoided: mostly toponyms (Smithfield, Cheapside, Covent Garden, etc., the pub names), institutions (Privy Council, Whitehall, Crown, etc.), and intertextual references (e.g. ballad collection titles, *L'École des Filles*, Sir Martin Mar-all). All metatheatrical hints are also sacrificed (e.g. the vizards and the ladies in the boxes or cues such as ". . . we hate the silly rogues [the poets], so much that we find fault even with their bawdy upon the stage, whilst we talk nothing else in the pit and as loud", 3.2.84-6, and "'Tis but being on the stage, instead of standing on a bench in the pit", 3.2.113-14), as are most of the images and similitudes involving specialised discourses (hunting, gambling, horse breeding, birds), which characterize Wycherley's wit and play a relevant role in the comparative studies of the four Italian book translations in this volume. Also dropped are convoluted syntactical sentences employing paradox, litote, or chiasmus, which make Wycherley's style aphoristic and epigrammatic: e.g. ". . . a silly wise rogue would make one laugh more than a stark fool" (2.1.195-6); "Marrying you is no more sign of his love than bribing your woman, that he may marry you, is a sign of his generosity" (2.1.210-11); "'Tis a greater shame amongst lewd fellows to be seen in virtuous women's company than for the women to be seen with them" (2.1.411-13). Nevertheless, Sequi's cuts are so skilful that the argumentative logic of the characters' repartee is preserved as well as the rhythm set through the reprise of key words from the preceding cue to the following one (as pointed out by Cook and Swannel 1975), a kind of transition successfully reproduced by the Italian translator, at least most of the times (for example, in the three-voice dialogue among Sparkish, Alithea, and Harcourt, still harping on the keyword *honour*, 3.2.181-304).

Cutting the paratext, as much as this might shock unrepentant text-centric critics, is common practice and, even during the Restoration, prologues and epilogues were regarded as dispensable. Sometimes they were written by fellow playwrights and added after the first night.[40] Sequi's choice for his *Sposa di campagna* deserves attention because it is connected to his parallel choice to abolish all but a few asides. Prologues and epilogues can be considered elements located at the external level of Mick Short's *prototypical discourse structure of drama* (1996, 169), a space outside the world of dramatic fiction

[40] Boffoli abolishes them, too, of course. A complete collection is found in Danchin 1981. See also Floreale Marangolo 1994.

inhabited by the characters where playwrights address audiences or readers directly, often for *captatio benevolentiae* or to argue with colleagues or to give voice to their own position in the critical debate. Thus, it is a privileged space for metatheatrical or metadramatic reflection, both when recited by characters as it had been in the Elizabethan and Shakespearean scene (e.g. Puck or Prospero) or by actors as on the Restoration stage. The Prologue to *The Country Wife* is a masterpiece of irony and an adequate prelude indeed to the ambiguities of the author's stance in the play proper. It is recited by the actor Mr. Hart, to whom the author is said to have entrusted his own defence, but with arrogance. Mr. Hart instead seeks to ingratiate himself with asking for sympathy for his own category and creating a strong complicity between actors and public against the author, since, as he affirms – without catching how irony turns the tables on him – ". . . often we anticipate your rage / And murder poets for you on our stage" (23-4). As soon as the Prologue is over, Mr Hart re-enters and walks downstage where now, in his role as Horner, he again addresses the audience directly with an aside containing a well-known, yet shocking, epigrammatic comparison, that sets the tone of the entire play:

> (*Enter* Horner*, and a* Quack *following him at a distance*)
> Horner (*Aside*) A quack is as fit for a pimp as a midwife for a bawd; they are still but in their way both helpers of nature.
> (1.1.1-4)

In the words of one of the best representatives of the production-oriented line of criticism, "It is an arresting device to open a play with an aside" (Powell 1984, 127). The effect is to establish a sort of ironical thread in the minds of the spectators between Mr Hart, the actor and "pimp" speaking in favour of the play, and Mr Hart as Horner presenting himself cinically as the "pimp" of his own pleasure: the audience's attention is immediately focussed on the plot to be enacted. After the first aside, a further 144 throughout *The Country Wife* confirm the idea of an anti-illusionistic theatre which calls for the audience's proximity, flexibility of thought, and active complicity (Callow 1991). Most of the asides are Pinchwife's and are normally used to express his secret anxieties or aggressive intentions or to comment, always disparagingly, on others. At times they become obsessive, thus definitely "arresting" the dramatic dialogue in the anti-naturalistic way which audiences nowadays find irritating. Sequi must have imagined such a mainstream audience for his theatre translation.[41]

[41] The only other more remarkable changes to d'Amico's text are linked to Sequi's decision to cast Anita Laurenzi as Alithea: although twenty years earlier she had been a very plausible Lady Wishfort in Sequi's TV adaptation of *The Way of the World* (mentioned above), in 1994 she was definitely too old for Alithea. Thus, she figures as Pinchwife's widowed sister and, as a result, some of the appellatives or terms of endearment had to be adjusted.

La sposa di campagna by Vito Boffoli shows remarkable differences beginning with the dramatis personae: first, not only is Old Lady Squeamish eliminated but also Sparkish and Dorilant, replaced by a minor female character who joins the "virtuous gang". A general plan to reduce the length of the performance and the choice of removing Sparkish, one of many Restoration fops who are difficult to incorporate in any other historical-cultural context, entail the drastic abridging of *The Country Wife*'s third plot, the one which involves Sparkish, Alithea and Harcourt, that is, the 'romantic' plot, representing the "right way" as opposed to Horner's and Pinchwife's "wrong ways" (Holland 1959). Even abridged, the other two plots retain the most relevant narrative nodes and scenes intact, foregrounding them even more by comparison.

The second immediately evident change is the characters' names, all of them translated into Italian. This is connected to the altered setting: from London we move to Papal Rome, with no epoch specification, where the society is Papal aristocracy. The result is that the English social stratification looks much more varied, presenting a City knight, Sir Jaspar Fidget, with interests in Court business, a Country squire, Mr. Pinchwife, a Sparkish endowed with just a "cracked title" (1.1.322) in need of a dowry, and quite an independent Horner with an estate "equal to Sparkish's, [but an] extraction as much better than his as his parts are" (5.1.73-4). In Boffoli's *Country Wife* society, on the other hand, the variation is only in rank among a Prince, a Count, and a Viscount, with Pinchwife called by his first name, Gianni. As for the characters' names, untranslated by d'Amico, Boffoli surprisingly seems to have resorted, at least in part, to the dramatis personae in Obertello's collection (1961, 286):

Mr Henry Horner (messer Enrico Cornificio)	Il Conte Enrico
Mr. Frank Harcourt [in the text: Franco]	Il Visconte Francesco
Mr. Dick Dorilant	----------
Mr John Pinchwife (messer Giovanni Pizzicamoglie)	Gianni
Mr Sparkish (messer Favilla)	----------
Sir Jasper Fidget (don Gaspare Nervi)	Principe Gaspare Nervi
Un ragazzo	----------
Un ciarlatano	Il dottore
Mrs Margery Pinchwife (signora Margherita Pizzicamoglie), *moglie di Giovanni*	Margherita
Miss Alithea (signorina Alithea), *sorella di Pizzicamoglie*	Eleonora
Lady Fidget (donna Nervi), *moglie di don Gaspare*	Donna Livia Nervi

Miss Dainty Fidget (signorina Delicata Nervi), *sorella di don Gaspare*	Dorotea, Ippolita
Miss Biddy Squeamish (signorina Brigida Smorfie)	Brigida
Lady Squeamish (donna Smorfie), *nonna di Brigida*	----------
Lucia, *cameriera di Alithea*	Lucia

The change of setting brings about the 'localisation' of unavoidable toponyms (piazza Navona, via dei Coronari, etc.) and institutions (Governatore, vice Camerlengo, il Consiglio, Sua Santità, i Cardinali, etc.), but also a further innovation, the use of Roman dialect with a frequency we are accustomed to hearing in period pieces, such as Luigi Magni's film trilogy set in a Risorgimento Papal Rome. This is the 'dramaturgical' vision guiding the transformations which Boffoli imposes on a Restoration comedy to make it into a "commedia brillante" with the scope of poking fun at the immorality, hypocrisy, and grossness of Roman Papal aristocracy. Roman regional speech is used by all the characters, both lower and upper class: Lucia, the maid, uses it constantly, but all the other characters, both men and women, use it at one time or another, even if most of their cues are expressed in standard Italian. This variation is marked by phonetic transliteration (e.g. Conte Enrico: "Puro a lì ce so' le donne bone e le bone donne"; Brigida: "Quanno incontro a loro mè se fa nuvolo, me fo' a croce e dico 'Ecco èr diavolo!'"; Gianni: "A Sor Principe, er conte si è fatto prima mi moje e poi pure la vostra, se lo volete sapè!"), although it is unclear if actors are invited to speak with a Roman accent all of the time or not. The dialectal variation appears to be either totally random, outlining a sort of casual code-switching, or, on the contrary, finalised to emphasise greater emotionality or proximity among characters: a pragmatic functionalisation analogous to the alternance of *thou/you* on the Early Modern English stage, including Restoration comedies.

Even more striking is the use of traditional sayings. Often these are added to the hypotext just to enhance the comic effect, such as the first occurrence in Boffoli's script: when Horner is trying to explain his strategy to win the doctor's perplexity (1.1.31-3), Enrico adds: "Er gallo che canta male è quello che canta de più"; or later, when the doctor reflects on the difficulty of procuring new friendships passing for a eunuch (1.1.133-4), he adds: "Botta sparata e lepre scappata nun s'aricchappeno più"; or when Pinchwife discusses Town life with Margery (2.1), Gianni comments: "Donna che se smove tutta come 'na quaja, se mozzica li labbri e svorta l'occhi, si puttana nun è poco la sbaja!" At other times, they simply replace the cues in the source text (both English and Italian) to achieve an effective abridgment: when revealing Pinchwife's age of forty-nine, Francesco caustically comments: "Passero vecchio nun c'entra in gabbia!" and Enrico retorts: "Tutti l'uccelletti se pensano de cantà bene!", which provokes

Gianni to reply with a low, vulgar register equivalent of his English maxim: "Io rimango del parere che chi pija moje è un gran cazzaccio, ma lo è ancora di più chi non sposa una sciocca" ("'Tis my maxim, he's a fool that marries, but he's a greater that does not marry a fool", 1.1.373-4). Without broaching the vast topic of how to translate diatopic variation or, alternatively, how dialect can be used as a strategy to recategorise other linguistic phenomena, Boffoli's introduction of Roman popular sayings renders Wycherley's epigrammatic style successfully. The use of animal imagery (especially concerning birds) and from hunting reproduces the sexual innuendos in the dialogue of the original. Despite the drastic reduction of Boffoli's script compared to Sequi's and his very intrusive manipulation of d'Amico's translated text, the former appears to have at least better interpreted, in fact 'translated', Wycherley's figurative style and its pragmatics. Contextualising his theatre translation in a Roman 'fringe' stage and choosing to address a local audience has helped to reproduce the Restoration comic spirit more effectively.

In concluding this survey, a question arises which we hope will find a reply in the discussions which follow. Why should interest be revived in this neglected period of English drama? From a cultural perspective it would be impossible to underestimate its impact on the development of the British national character in terms both of contrast and sporadic parallels. The embarrassments of that sinful period had to be washed away at all levels to establish the foundations on different premises of the new, gentlemanly and gentlewomanly, Britons. Yet, the period's libertine vein persisted throughout the following 'agelastic' centuries of Puritan reform of the manners resurfacing in epochs such as the Regency. If the English novel was part of these cultural-political transitions, changing literary conventions, transforming public opinion, and promoting the democratisation of learning, yet many of the novel's stock characters can be traced to Restoration types, however modified. Likewise, Restoration wit continued to inspire few, yet significant authors such as the Scriblerians, Sheridan, Byron, Peacock, Disraeli, Meredith, and Wilde against the prevailing tradition of humourists until the final "triumph of wit" in the works and theorisations of the second half of the Victorian age (Martin 1974). It is with a view to identifying the characteristics of the Restoration comic spirit more systematically than has been done thus far that we deem the linguistic and performative texture of its dramatic dialogue worth exploring, using the multidisciplinary tools offered by modern historical pragmalinguistics and stylistics, theatre translation theories and practices, contemporary theories of humour and the comic, and drama performance studies. Our hope is not so very dissimilar from the one expressed by Baldini in 1955: that our efforts might spark renewed interest on the part of Italian (and not only Italian) directors, theatregoers, readers, and critics.

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