The Country Wife.
Between Pragmatic Analysis and Translation

Edited by Alba Graziano

Miscellany

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Contents

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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]

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[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

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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)

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[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

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[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

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[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*

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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*

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[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

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[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

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[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

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[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

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[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

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[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 'neo-classical' 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]

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[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

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[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

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[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

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[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)

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[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

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[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,

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[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

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[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]

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[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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Valentina Rossi*

The Function of Horner's Irony in Wycherley's *The Country Wife*

Abstract

The present contribution investigates irony in William Wycherley's masterpiece, *The Country Wife* (1675), from a pragmatic perspective. The qualitative analysis focuses on the utterances spoken by Horner, the main character of the comedy. By using a methodological framework based on the main studies published by Grice (1975), Sperber and Wilson (1981), Clark and Gerrig (1984), Kumon-Nakamura, Glucksberg and Brown (1995), and Dynel (2014; 2018), I intend to demonstrate that irony is determinant for both the development of the plot and the achievement of the protagonist's purpose. Furthermore, the linguistic phenomenon mentioned above can be considered an ingenious device that Wycherley employs to expose the hypocrisy of Restoration society.

Keywords: Restoration comedy; William Wycherley; *The Country Wife*; pragmatics; irony

The present study explores the function of irony[1] as performed by Horner, the main character of William Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675), in order

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[1] The *OED* defines irony as follows: "irony, n . . . 1. Originally *Rhetoric*. a. As a mass noun. The expression of one's meaning by using language that normally signifies the opposite, typically for humorous or emphatic effect; esp. (in earlier use) the use of approbatory language to imply condemnation or contempt (cf. Sarcasm n.). In later use also more generally: a manner, style, or attitude suggestive of the use of this kind of expression. Cf. Ironia n . . . b. As a count noun. An instance of this; an ironic utterance or expression . . . 2. Dissimulation, pretence . . . 3. A state of affairs or an event that seems deliberately contrary to what was or might be expected; an outcome cruelly, humorously, or strangely at odds with assumptions or expectations" (last consulted: June 2023). With regard to the origins, Aristophanes used the term εἰρωνεία (*eirōneia*) for the first time between the third and the second century BCE, to refer to lying (see, among others, Lane 2006, 58). In due time, Socrates' maieutic method – as illustrated in Plato's *Symposium* – contributed to modifying the meaning of the term ineluctably: "*Eirōneia* [was] no longer lying or deceit but a complex rhetorical practice whereby one can say one thing but mean quite another" (Colebrook 2004, 2). The idea of dissembling associated with this linguistic device was furthered expanded in Aristotle's writings (see, among others, Barbe 1995, 62).

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to demonstrate that such a linguistic device is essential to both activate the plot and help the protagonist be recognised by the others as impotent, so to exploit such a pretext and have affairs without risking his (and his lovers') public reputation.

The essay is structured as follows: Section 1 illustrates the methodology, which has its roots in the pragmatic domain and spans theories by Grice (1975; 1978), Sperber and Wilson (1981), Clark and Gerrig (1984), Kumon-Nakamura, Glucksberg and Brown (1995), and Dynel (2014; 2018); Section 2 analyses selected excerpts of the sex comedy in-depth to determine the linguistic peculiarities as wells as the functions of Horner's irony throughout the play. Lastly, in the Conclusion, I remark on the importance of the trope concerning the rake's characterisation, the fortunes of the play as well as the criticism towards Restoration sociability as contained in it.

1. Methodological Framework

Pragmatics proves to be a suitable arena to investigate irony (see Colebrook 2004, 11-12), in consideration of its context-dependency.[2] In this domain, the initiator of the line of studies about this linguistic device was Paul Grice. In *Logic and Conversation* (1975), he indicated it as a potential device to flout the first maxim of Quality – "Do not say what you believe to be false" (1975, 46) – by providing the following definition: "the most obvious related proposition [that] is the contradictory of the one he [the speaker] purports to be putting forward" (1975, 53). Afterwards, he expanded on the topic in *Further Notes on Logic and Conversation* (1978), concluding that

> irony is intimately connected with the expression of a feeling, attitude, or evaluation. I cannot say something ironically unless what I say is intended to reflect a hostile or derogatory judgment or a feeling such as indignation or contempt . . . To be ironical is, among other things, to pretend (as the etymology suggests), and while one wants the pretence to be recognised as such, to announce it as a pretence would spoil the effect. (1978, 125)

In time, critics judged his arguments lacking and inadequate (see, for instance, Holdcroft 1983, 125). From the 1980s onwards, several scholars tried to

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[2] Following the so-called Direct Access View, a supporting context suffices to comprehend the ironic meaning of an utterance (see Gibbs 1984; 1994; 2002). Such position was partially shared by Rachel Giora's Graded Salient Hypothesis, as it "deflates the traditional distinction between literal and nonliteral language. However, instead of assigning context an exclusive role in comprehension, it posits the familiarity continuum as a crucial factor in language comprehension (alongside contextual mechanisms)" (2003, 71). On this matter, particularly pertinent is Colston and Gibbs (2007, 7-11).

overcome his widened breach with alternative theories. In this respect, Sperber and Wilson (1981), Clark and Gerrig (1984), Kumon-Nakamura, Glucksberg and Brown (1995) and Dynel's studies (2014; 2018) are determinant.

Arguing against the traditional account that irony is a deviation from the norm, Deirdre Wilson and Dan Sperber introduced two binomials: "use" *vs.* "mention" and "reporting" *vs.* "echoing".[3] By formulating the Mention Theory of Irony in 1981, they defined the rhetorical figure as "a variety of echoic utterance, used to express the speaker's attitude to the opinion echoed" (Wilson and Sperber 1992, 59). The primary goal of the ironist was not to communicate the opposite of what he/she expressed; instead, "an ironical utterance [had] to *remind* the hearer of the thought it echoes" (Wilson and Sperber 2012, 125; emphasis in the original). Furthermore, they recognised attitude, normative bias and a characteristic tone of voice as three necessary features to echo some prior utterances or sentiments. Finally, they indicated the Relevance Theory[4] as the most suitable approach to "[set] an upper limit to what the ironist can rationally expect to achieve" (Wilson and Sperber 1992, 55).

Overwhelmingly, the Mention Theory of Irony received a positive appraisal,[5] although it did not convince Clark and Gerrig, who proposed the Pretense Theory of Irony in 1984, inspired by Grice and Fowler's research. By remarking on its superiority compared to that of Sperber and Wilson's, they argued that neither mentioning nor echoing was enough to decode irony:

[3] The scholars recur to the term "use" when a word is employed "to refer to a word", while "the self-referential use of words or other linguistic expressions is known in the philosophical literature as 'mention'" (Wilson and Sperber 1992, 57). Concerning the second binomial, they offer the following definition: "[a] report of speech or thought merely gives information about the content of the original . . . An echoic utterance simultaneously expresses the speaker's attitude or reaction to what said or thought" (Wilson and Sperber 1992, 59).

[4] "Relevance theory claims that humans do have an automatic tendency to maximise relevance, not because we have a choice in the matter – we rarely do – but because of the way our cognitive systems have evolved. As a result of constant selection pressures toward increasing efficiency, the human cognitive system has developed in such a way that our perceptual mechanisms tend automatically to pick out potentially relevant stimuli, our memory retrieval mechanisms tend automatically to activate potentially relevant assumptions, and our inferential mechanisms tend spontaneously to process them in the most productive way. This universal tendency is described in the First, or Cognitive, Principle of Relevance . . . Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximisation of relevance" (Wilson and Sperber 2004, 610).

[5] For instance, Jorgensen et al. (1984, 117-20) supported the validity of the theory and corroborated it with a test. The outcome was published in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* in 1984. Not only did it confirm the thesis mentioned above, but it also underlined the importance of background information and shared knowledge when deciphering irony.

> In being ironic, the theory goes, a speaker is pretending to be an injudicious
> person speaking to an uninitiated audience; the speaker intends the addressees
> of the irony to discover the pretence and thereby see his or her attitude toward
> the speaker, the audience, and the utterance . . . Suppose S is speaking to
> A, the primary addressee, and to A', who may be present or absent, real or
> imaginary. In speaking ironically, S is pretending to be S' speaking to A'. What
> S' is saying is, in one way or another, patently uniformed or injudicious . . . A'
> in ignorance, is intended to miss this pretence, to take S as speaking sincerely.
> But A, as part of the "inner circle" (to use Fowler's phrase), is intended to see
> everything – the pretence, S''s injudiciousness, A''s ignorance, and hence S's
> attitude toward S', A', and what S' said. (Clark and Gerrig 1984, 122)

Hence, pretence qualified as a powerful weapon to disclose the peculiar
features of irony, namely its asymmetry of affect, its victims and the typical
tone of voice (122-3).[6]

Sperber and Wilson's method was also criticised by Kumon-Nakamura,
Glucksberg and Brown (1995). These scholars argued that an "echoic
interpretation is not a necessary property of discourse irony. Instead, the
more general claim is that an allusion to some prior prediction, expectation,
preference, or norm is a necessary property of discourse irony" (5). They
presented a general and more inclusive approach:[7] the Allusional Pretense

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[6] Although Clark and Gerrig asserted the superiority of the Pretense Theory to the
Mention Theory, it is worth mentioning that the methods share a common ground, as
Winner (1988) and Barbe (1995, 50) point out. For instance, both display a derogatory
attitude, rely on shared background knowledge, require a change of voice, and are
finalised at criticising.

[7] The Allusional Pretense Theory offered some further critical considerations about
politeness, claiming that "[s]peaking ironically in such situations would be a face-
saving way to express one's feeling about what has gone awry" (Kumon-Nakamura,
Glucksberg and Brown 1995, 21). Such position recalls that of Brown and Levison. In their
pivotal book, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (1978), they qualified irony
as an off-record politeness strategy, namely "[a] communicative act [that] is done . . .
in such a way that it is not possible to attribute only one clear communicative intention
to the act. In other words, the actor leaves himself an 'out' by providing himself with a
number of defensible interpretations; he cannot be held to have committed himself to
just one particular interpretation of his act. Thus if a speaker wants to do an FTA [Face
Threatening Act], but wants to avoid the responsibility for doing it, he can do it off record
and leave it up to the addressee to decide how to interpret it. Such off-record utterances
are essentially indirect uses of language . . . Essentially, though, what is involved is a two-
stage process: (i) A *trigger* serves notice to the addressee that some inference must be
made. (ii) Some mode of *inference* derives what is meant (intended) from what is actually
said, this last providing a sufficient *clue* for the inference" (Brown and Levinson 1978, 211;
emphasis in the original). In performing irony, the speaker S breeches Grice's Maxim of
Quality to indirectly convey his/her intended meaning by saying the opposite, saving his/
her face at the same time. See Brown and Levinson 1978, 121-2.

Theory of Discourse Irony, in the conviction that the key to detecting irony in conversation was focussing on allusions to a failed expectation and insincerity – this latter referred to the violation of the Gricean Cooperative Principle and Austin's or Searle's Felicity Condition.[8]

In any event, the concept of pretence also found space in Marta Dynel's contemporary studies about irony. Drawing from the Gricean theories illustrated above, she introduced the notion of "overt untruthfulness": an essential feature deployed when "the speaker does not subscribe to the meaning of his/her utterance and wants the hearer to appreciate this fact" (Dynel 2014, 621). Such element was then combined with "a particular negative *evaluation* of a *referent* (an action or an utterance, for instance)" (2014, 621; emphasis in the original), emerging as an implicature. On these premises, she identified four types of irony:

> 1) propositional negation irony, when "the central evaluative implicature recruits a proposition opposite to the one expressed literally";
> 2) ideational reversal irony, in which "the intended meaning arises as a result of negation of a chosen element of the literally expressed meaning or the pragmatic import of the entire utterance";
> 3) surrealistic irony refers to utterances which are "blatantly absurd, and which no type of meaning negation can render truthful";
> 4) and verisimilar irony, when "the utterance conveys (truthful) *what is said* or implicature … and thus it gives rise to an untruthful implicature involving propositional or ideational meaning reversal for the sake of obtaining the focal evaluative implicature". (2014, 624; emphasis in the original)

Echo, pretence, allusion, overt untruthfulness, (negative) evaluation of a referent: the pragmatic elements laid bare from the 1970s onwards qualify as appropriate instruments to shed light on irony as detected in *The Country Wife*; moreover, they dovetail with Horner's ironic speeches, whose meticulous genesis and deployment deserve to be explored in-depth in the following section.

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[8] Until the 1990s, scholars agreed in considering Speech Act Theory inefficient to study irony, as this latter reluctantly falls within the categories theorised by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). On this matter, see Holdcroft 1983 and Haverkate 1990. However, Kumon-Nakamura, Glucksberg and Brown (1995, 19-20) demonstrated that the linguistic device can be detected in Searle's five macro-classes: declarations, demonstratives, representatives, commissives and expressives.

2. Pragmatic Analysis

2.1 "A Machiavel in Love": the Ironic Functions of Horner's Utterances

Irony has a crucial function in *The Country Wife*: it ignites the plot, building the premises for specific situations to happen. Horner – the rake of the play – is the sole performer of this rhetorical figure (Thompson 1984, 39) and he employs it as a privileged linguistic strategy to achieve a peculiar goal: fake impotence[9] – a condition due to a disease he said to have contracted during a journey in France –, build up an alibi and seduce his female acquaintances undisturbed by their otherwise jealous husbands.

The comedy begins in *medias res*, with the main character being busy cooperating with a fellow doctor, working on a cover story to approach women while pretending to be other than his Self or his opposite:

> HORNER . . . Well, my dear doctor, hast thou done what I desired?
> QUACK I have undone you for ever with the women, and reported you throughout the whole town as bad as an eunuch, with as much trouble as if I had made you one in earnest.
> HORNER But have you told all the midwives you know, the orange wenches at the playhouses, the city husbands, and old fumbling keepers of this end of the town? for they'll be the readiest to report it.
> QUACK I have told all the chambermaids, waiting-women, tire-women, and old women of my acquaintance; nay, and whispered it as a secret to 'em, and to the whisperers of Whitehall; so that you need not doubt 'twill spread, and you will be as odious to the handsome young women, as —
> HORNER As the small-pox.
> (1.1.2-15)[10]

The rumours about his legitimised diversity spread fast throughout London and, when people inquire about his health, he delivers ambiguous answers that may be interpreted as ironic. This is significantly evident in Horner's first dialogue with Sir Jaspar, Lady Fidget and her friends, namely the

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[9] In showing less than he actually is/has to reveal the truth about the social class mentioned above, Horner resembles Aristotle's *eirōn* – this latter's characterisation being inspired by Socrates (see, among others, Pavlovskis 1968, 25; Gooch 1987, 104). Indeed, the correlation between the protagonist of *The Country Wife* and the "mock-modest man" described in *Nicomachean Ethics* (4.7, 69) has already been validated by the critics (see, for instance, Frye 1957, 40, 173). However, no further analogies can be detected between Wycherley's "eunuch" and Aristotle's character, since the philosopher praises this latter as ultimately trustworthy; furthermore, he recognises a pedagogical aim and even a sort of appeal to him. Horner's characterisation does not feature such elements.

[10] All quotes from the play are drawn from Wycherley 2014. The line numbers are provided between parentheses after quotes in the text.

representatives of Restoration upper society, the guardians of the moral code typical of the late seventeenth-century London, aimed at preventing people (especially, women) from losing decorum:

> SIR JASPAR (*Aside*) So, the report is true, I find, by his coldness or aversion to the sex; but I'll play the wag with him. – Pray salute my wife, my lady, sir.
> HORNER I will kiss no man's wife, sir, for him, sir; I have taken my eternal leave, sir, of the sex already, sir.
> SIR JASPAR (*Aside*) Ha! ha! ha! I'll plague him yet. – Not know my wife, sir?
> HORNER I do know your wife, sir; she's a woman, sir, and consequently a monster, sir, a greater monster than a husband, sir.
> SIR JASPAR A husband! how, sir?
> HORNER So, sir; but I make no more cuckolds, sir. (*Makes horns*)
> . . .
> SIR JASPAR Business must be preferred always before love and ceremony with the wise, Master Horner.
> HORNER And the impotent, Sir Jaspar.
> (1.1.61-70; 99-101)

In playing the "eunuch", Horner's words serve for a double interpretation: the former indicates the actual state of affairs, that is, it presents a rake faking erectile dysfunction to lure women and satisfy his sexual appetite without running the risk of destroying his and his lovers' public images; the latter features a disabled man who despises women, being deprived of his masculine equipment. Because of this bidimensionality, "[w]ords shift meaning from character to character and from moment to moment" (Thompson 1984, 75).

By recurring to both propositional negation ("I will kiss no man's wife") and ideational reversal irony ("I have taken my eternal leave . . . of the sex already"; "but I make no more cuckolds"; "And the impotent"), Horner strives to persuade Sir Jaspar to consider the report about his physical non-normativity confirmed. Determined to convince the man of his unfortunate condition, the "false Rogue" (5.4.140) says the opposite of what he means, even corroborating his contempt for women with hyperboles (". . . a monster . . . a greater monster than a husband"). On the one hand, the Quack and the audience promptly detect the ironic tone and understand the real meaning of the utterances mentioned above, since the opening dialogue – the one illustrating Horner's plan – still echoes in their mind; on the other one, Sir Jaspar falls prey to the pretender, as he can only interpret words based on his background and situational context.

Thus, following Clark and Gerrig's Pretense Theory of Irony, the Quack and the audience are Horner's inner circle[11] or, A: the informed addressees.

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[11] As we will see in Section 2.2, the Fidgets too will access Horner's inner circle in

Conversely, the remaining characters on stage are A': the ignorant addressees, to whom S' (the "eunuch") speaks; they depend on Horner's deviant version of the facts and act accordingly. As a matter of fact, the plan succeeds and, by the end of Act 1, Sir Jaspar not only believes that the rumour is true, but he is also convinced that, as Horner is unable to have sexual intercourses, he is no threat to his reputation or his marriage. As a further proof of such conviction, in Act 2 he even invites Horner to spend some time with his wife in their lodgings:

> Sir Jaspar (*Aside*) So, so; now to mollify, wheedle him. (*Aside to* Horner) Master Horner, will you never keep civil company? methinks 'tis time now, since you are only fit for them. Come, come, man, you must e'en fall to visiting our wives, eating at our tables, drinking tea with our virtuous relations after dinner, dealing cards to 'em, reading plays and gazettes to 'em, picking fleas out of their smocks for 'em, collecting receipts, new songs, women, pages, and footmen for 'em.
>
> Horner I hope they'll afford me better employment, sir.
>
> Sir Jaspar He! he! he! 'tis fit you know your work before you come into your place. And since you are unprovided of a lady to flatter, and a good house to eat at, pray frequent mine, and call my wife mistress, and she shall call you gallant, according to the custom.
>
> (2.1.460-72)

When invited to "keep civil company" and "[visit] our wives", Horner provides an answer that serves again for a double interpretation: "I hope they'll afford me better employment, sir". The informed addressee (A or, the audience) easily recognises the ironic tone of the words; on the contrary, the ignorant addressee (A' or, Sir Jaspar) cannot decipher the message. Unaware of Horner's real intentions, the future cuckold just laughs in return and paves the way for a speech exchange between him and Lady Fidget:

> Sir Jaspar Come, come, here's a gamester for you; let him be a little familiar sometimes; nay, what if a little rude? Gamesters may be rude with ladies, you know.
>
> Lady Fidget Yes; losing gamesters have a privilege with women.
>
> Horner I always thought the contrary, that the winning gamester had most privilege with women; for when you have lost your money to a man, you'll lose anything you have, all you have, they say, and he may use you as he pleases.
>
> Sir Jaspar He! he! he! well, win or lose, you shall have your liberty with her.
>
> Lady Fidget As he behaves himself; and for your sake I'll give him admittance and freedom.

Act 2, as he discloses his secret to them.

> HORNER All sorts of freedom, madam?
> SIR JASPAR Ay, ay, ay, all sorts of freedom thou canst take. And so go to her, begin thy new employment; wheedle her, jest with her, and be better acquainted one with another.
> HORNER (*Aside*) I think I know her already; therefore may venture with her my secret for hers.
> (2.1.476-93)

Here, Lady Fidget and Horner participate in a banter that mostly revolves around the gambling metaphor – as the term "gamester" (2.1.476, 477, 479) and the emphasis on verbs such as "win" (2.1.480, 484) and "lose" (2.1.479, 481, 482, 484) indicate. The atmosphere seems to intrigue the lady, as she suspects the rake's words "the winning gamester had most privilege with women; for when you have lost your money to a man, you'll lose anything you have, all you have, they say, and he may use you as he pleases" (2.1.480-4) may have some sort of hidden meaning. Hence, she sends a signal to Horner by providing her boastful husband a provocative answer: "I'll give him admittance and freedom" (2.1.486-7). It is in this moment that Horner strikes the attack, whispering aside[12] to Lady Fidget and informing her of his pretended impotence: "I think I know her already; therefore may venture with her my secret for hers" (2.1.492-3).

2.2 "Let us throw our masks over our heads": the Women's Response to Irony

The confession marks a major turning point in the comedy and, more importantly, its linguistic pattern. With Sir Jaspar offside, the dissimulation proper of the "eunuch" helps narrow distances between the rake and his victim; he gradually penetrates Lady Fidget's space and strips her of the discretion that forges her characterisation as well as her public image (see Weber 1982, 113): as a result, he makes an accomplice out of Lady Fidget.[13] Above all, from Act 2 onwards Horner becomes the main referent of a new linguistic code that is grounded in sexual allusions, and it is exclusively accessible to him and his lover. Sheltered by mutual understanding, they deliberately employ a vague language to commit to each other to the same intent, to be their real Self and satisfy their libido:

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[12] *The Country Wife* abounds in asides, addressed either to the audience (98) or to other characters on-stage (40). Mora (2019, 556) claims that "both types of asides make up 40% of all references".

[13] In this respect, scholars consider Lady Fidget the female version of Horner (see, for instance, Stern 2014, xv).

Lady Fidget But, poor gentleman, could you be so generous, so truly a man
    of honour, as for the sakes of us women of honour, to cause yourself to
    be reported no man? No man! and to suffer yourself the greatest shame
    that could fall upon a man, that none might fall upon us women by your
    conversation? but, indeed, sir, as perfectly, perfectly the same man as before
    your going into France, sir? as perfectly, perfectly, sir?
Horner As perfectly, perfectly, madam. Nay, I scorn you should take my word;
    I desire to be tried only, madam.
    (2.1.503-11)

Furthermore, as the comedy unravels, Horner, the archplotter designer of
both the storyline and the discourse, is gradually eclipsed by Lady Fidget who,
eventually, ends up dominating the floor together with her friends, leaving
the protagonist with barely a few lines to speak. Irony, which qualified as the
rake's privileged linguistic device so far, is replaced by the Fidgets' double
entendre. Indeed, this latter becomes the predominant trait of the fornicators'
utterances, and it grows more and more explicit throughout the comedy,
reaching a climax in the hilarious – not to say orgasmic – "china scene" (4.3),[14]
where Horner pleasures Lady Fidget in a locked room with Sir Jaspar next
door, unaware of the betrayal:

Sir Jaspar Wife! my Lady Fidget! wife! he is coming in to you the back way.
Lady Fidget Let him come, and welcome, which way he will.
Sir Jaspar He'll catch you, and use you roughly, and be too strong for you.
Lady Fidget Don't you trouble yourself, let him if he can.
    (4.3.120-4)

Sexual innuendo is also the distinguishing feature of the following dispute
between Lady Fidget and her dear friend Mrs Squeamish, another secret lover
of Horner's,[15] vying for his attention:

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[14] On the peculiarities of the 'china scene', see Soncini and Virdis' contributions,
both in this volume.

[15] It is only in the final act and, more precisely, during the so-called 'dinner party'
that Lady Fidget, Dainty and Mrs Squeamish find themselves to be not only dear friends
but also "sister sharers" (5.4.153). Indeed, in a state of inebriation or, as Chadwick
(1975, 102) defines it, in an "orgy of confessions", the women disclose their intimate
relationship with Horner, a relationship they thought to be consummating unbeknownst
to the others: "Lady Fidget . . . Come, here's to our gallants in waiting, whom we must
name, and I'll begin. This is my false rogue. (*Claps him on the back*) / Mrs Squeamish
How! / Horner (*Aside*) So, all will out now. / Mrs Squeamish (*Aside to* Horner) Did
you not tell me, 'twas for my sake only you reported yourself no man? / Dainty (*Aside
to* Horner) Oh, wretch! did you not swear to me, 'twas for my love and honour you
passed for that thing you do? / Horner So, so. / Lady Fidget Come, speak, ladies: this
is my false villain. / Mrs Squeamish And mine too. / Dainty And mine. / Horner Well
then, you are all three my false rogues too, and there's an end on't . . . Come, faith,

> Lady Fidget And I have been toiling and moiling for the prettiest piece of
>   china, my dear.
> Horner Nay, she has been too hard for me, do what I could.
> Mrs Squeamish Oh, lord, I'll have some china too. Good Master Horner, don't
>   think to give other people china, and me none; come in with me too.
> Horner Upon my honour, I have none left now.
> Mrs Squeamish Nay, nay, I have known you deny your china before now, but
>   you shan't put me off so. Come.
> Horner This lady had the last there.
> Lady Fidget Yes indeed, madam, to my certain knowledge, he has no more
>   left.
> Mrs Squeamish Oh, but it may be he may have some you could not find.
> Lady Fidget What, d'ye think if he had had any left, I would not have had it
>   too? for we women of quality never think we have china enough.
> Horner Do not take it ill, I cannot make china for you all, but I will have a
>   roll-waggon for you too, another time.
> (4.3.169-86)

2.3 "Poor Master Horner": Irony Regained to Cover up Treachery

In any event, Horner regains momentum when Lady Squeamish abruptly
interrupts the fight. The attention required by another representative of London
respectability sounds like a *rappel à l'ordre* for the rake. Thus, he engages in a
polite conversation with the old woman and repeats the linguistic strategy he
had successfully employed in the initial part of the play, that is, emphasising
his hatred for women by means of an ironic tone, in the guise of a "eunuch":

> Old Lady Squeamish Poor Mr. Horner, he has enough to do to please you all,
>   I see.
> Horner Ay, madam, you see how they use me.
> Old Lady Squeamish Poor gentleman, I pity you.

madam, let us e'en pardon one another; for all the difference I find betwixt we men
and you women, we forswear ourselves at the beginning of an amour, you as long as it
lasts" (5.4.139-52, 164-6). Despite the strongly-worded exchange, not only does Horner
manage to preserve his sexual circle, but it would be also fair to assume that such
perverted partnership is meant to stand firm for a long time, given that at the "dinner
party" the women out-Horner the rake, who is eventually subjugated and reduced to
a sexual puppet. That is the reason why Zimbardo (1965, 150-2) associates Wycherley's
"dinner party" with Juvenal's sixth *Satire*, this latter displaying women's shamelessness
while performing the rites of Bona Dea. In addition, the debauchery typical of the
scene recalls Kermode's *topos*: the Banquet of Sense (1971, 84-115), which has its roots in
both mythology – Hercules' temptation, for instance – and biblical references – Paul's
allusion to "the table of devils" (1 Cor. 10.21).

> Horner I thank you, madam: I could never find pity, but from such reverend
> ladies as you are; the young ones will never spare a man.
> Mrs Squeamish Come, come, beast, and go dine with us; for we shall want a
> man at ombre after dinner.
> Horner That's all their use of me, madam, you see.
> Mrs Squeamish Come, sloven, I'll lead you, to be sure of you. (*Pulls him by
> the cravat*)
> Old Lady Squeamish Alas, poor man, how she tugs him! Kiss, kiss her; that's
> the way to make such nice women quiet.
> Horner No, madam, that remedy is worse than the torment; they know I dare
> suffer anything rather than do it.
> Old Lady Squeamish Prithee kiss her, and I'll give you her picture in little,
> that you admired so last night. Prithee do.
> Horner Well, nothing but that could bribe m! I love a woman only in effigy,
> and good painting as much as I hate them. – I'll do't, for I could adore the
> devil well painted. (*Kisses* Mrs. Squeamish)
> (4.3.190-209)

As in Act 1, the propositional negation ("No, madam, that remedy is worse than the torment"; "nothing but that could bribe me") and the ideational reversal irony ("That's all their use of me, madam, you see"; "they know I dare suffer anything rather than do it"; "I love a woman only in effigy, and good painting as much as I hate them") detectable in Horner's words permit a double interpretation: like Sir Jaspar, Old Lady Squeamish (A') ignores the rake's most hidden intentions, as she cannot decode the real meaning of his utterances, being outside the protagonist's inner circle; on the contrary, the filthy ladies and the audience (A) read the room effortlessly, thus recognising the ironic tone as well as the real purpose of said affirmations. Nevertheless, although the recurring strategies are the same as Act 1, it is worth remarking that irony serves for a different scope in Act 4 .

While at the beginning of the play the rake employs the trope to lay the foundations of his Machiavellian plan aimed at gaining the husbands' trust by force of his unfortunate condition (impotence) to enjoy their wives' company away from prying eyes, in the second half of the comedy he deploys such a weapon as a containment measure in order to preserve his cover from blowing up. The stratagem proves successful, and he can finally reap the benefits of his work: he can both kiss married women in public and consummate relationships in private without raising suspicion or suffering scandal.[16]

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[16] Considering that the *incognito* sexual predators never feel the urgency to redeem themselves or confess, it does not surprise that Jeremy Collier severely criticised the impudence and the moral corruption typical of *The Country Wife* in his famous *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage: Together with The Sense of Antiquity Upon this Argument* (1698). Indeed, the play is the first to be mentioned in

2.4 Conclusive Remarks

The present study has investigated the function of irony in William Wycherley's *The Country Wife* from a pragmatic perspective, following a methodology that encompasses the main theories that have been published about the linguistic device from the 1970s to the present day. The results of the qualitative analysis here offered allow us to draw the following concluding remarks.

First and foremost, irony is a *conditio sine qua non* for Horner, that is, it is an essential weapon he must deploy if he wants to be identified by the others as a "mere eunuch" (1.1.92) and have affairs with married high-society women, unbeknownst to their husbands. Moreover, considering that the protagonist is the sole ironist of the whole comedy, the rhetorical figure intervenes in emphasising his characterisation and his un-conventionalised seductive praxis, thus remarking on the uniqueness of both. Indeed, in courting the ladies, Horner neither emulates his most dear friend Dorilant, the stereotypical rake of the comedy – and, broadly speaking, of early Restoration England – who treats women as objects and despises matrimony, nor does he follow in Harcourt's footsteps, that is, to reject libertinage, fall in love with a woman (Alithea)[17] and spend the rest of his life with her, in

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Chapter 1, *The Immodesty of the Stage*, where the Reverend is determined to "kill the Root rather than Transplant": ". . . I shall point to the Infection at a Distance, and refer in General to *Play* and *Person*. Now among the Curiosities of this kind we may reckon *Mrs. Pinchwife*, *Horner*, and *Lady Fidget* in *The Country Wife*" (1698, 3). In Chapter 4, *Immorality encouraged by the Stage*, special attention is devoted to the female characters' attitude: "And as I have observ'd already, the Toping Ladies in . . . *Country Wife* . . . are Smutty, and sometimes Profane. And was Licentiousness and Irreligion, always a Mark of Honour? No" (146). Nevertheless, unlike Congreve and other eminent Restoration playwrights, Wycherley did not react to such provocation (see Phelps 1900, 509).

[17] The speaking name of Pinchwife's sister qualifies Alithea as a dichotomic character, if compared to Horner. Indeed, besides advising Margery ("Mrs Pinchwife Indeed I was a-weary of the play, but I liked hugeously the actors! They are the goodliest, properest men, sister. / Alithea Oh, but you must not like the actors, sister"; 2.1.20-3), supporting the "poor tender creature" (2.1.35) when she suffers from her husband's jealous rage, and remarking her own irreprehensible behavior ("Brother, you are my only censurer; and the honour of your family shall sooner suffer in your wife there than in me, though I take the innocent liberty of the town . . . who boasts of any intrigue with me? What lampoon has made my name notorious? What ill women frequent my lodgings? I keep no company with any women of scandalous reputations"; 2.1.39-41, 44-7), Alithea proves to be a strenuous defender of truth, honesty and morality. This is particularly evident when she politely refuses Harcourt's courtship in force of an engagement with Sparkish, and she promptly informs her fiancé of it ("Harcourt . . . I see, madam, you can guess my meaning. I do confess heartily and openly, I wish it were in my power to break the match. By heavens I do! . . . / Alithea The writings are drawn, sir, settlements made; 'tis too late, sir, and past all revocation . . . I must marry him; my reputation would suffer in the world

matrimony.[18]

Moreover, the linguistic pattern employed by Wycherley contributed to the achievement of a dramatic and ethic purpose. As far as the former is concerned, it is renowned that *The Country Wife* marked a turning point in the history of English drama. The innovation fostered by the playwright was already disclosed by a quotation drawn from Horace's *Epistulæ* (2.1.76-9) that we read on the title page of the play – "Indignor quicquam reprehendi, non quia crasse / Compositum illepideve putetur, sed quia nuper: / Nec veniam antiquis, sed honorem et praemia posci" [I am impatient that any work is censured, not because it is thought to be coarse or inelegant in style, but because it is modern, and that what is claimed for the ancients should be, not indulgence, but honour and rewards]. Nevertheless, the *double entendre*, which has its roots in the explicitness achieved only by using irony – as we have seen – allowed the performance of a risqué scene that brought "the cuckolding play at once such perfection as to establish its vogue on the Restoration stage" (Smith 1948, 86). Concerning the latter, in a century where "the satirist's public grew more sceptical and literate" (Duncan 1981, 300), Wycherley exposes the viciousness as well as the hypocrisy of his times through a polysemic and corrupted language significantly indebted to irony which reflected the (un)civilised values typical of Restoration upperclass society.

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else . . . Master Sparkish, pray come hither, your friend here is very troublesome, and very loving . . . He spoke so scurrilously of you, I had no patience to hear him; besides, he has been making love to me"; 2.1.163-5, 198-9, 216-17, 221-2, 242-3). Stern (2014, xvi) points out that, in due time, Alithea to will learn the art of lying and betraying but, overwhelmingly, it is fair to assume that, for most of the time, she plays Horner's opposite game, and that may be the reason why they seldomly meet on-stage.

[18] Dorilant and Harcourt's position about weddings is exemplified in the final act of the comedy: "Alithea There's doctrine for all husbands, Mr. Harcourt. / Harcourt I edify, madam, so much, that I am impatient till I am one. / Dorilant And I edify so much by example, I will never be one" (5.4.349-51).

for S. Keble at the Turk's Head in Fleetstreet, and R. Sare at Grays-Inn-Gate in Holborn.

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Fabio Ciambella*

Insulting (in) *The Country Wife*:
a Pragmatic Analysis of Insults and Swearwords

Abstract

This article focuses on taboo language (esp. insults and curses) adopted by characters in William Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675), aimed at explicitly/implicitly, directly/indirectly offending other characters. To this purpose, I will first combine Alan and Burridge's socio-cultural model on taboo language (2006) with pragmatic frameworks of impoliteness (Culpeper 1996 and following revisions/integrations) and with Jucker and Taavitsainen's diachronic model of space pragmatics of insults (2000), and then examine pragmatic interfaces with semantics and morpho-syntax in the comedy. In fact, *The Country Wife* presents a rich and varied panorama well suited to a pragmastylistic analysis of taboo language, i.e. insults, offences, swearwords, etc. The offensive discourse, albeit primarily concerning pragmatics, has numerous interfaces with various levels of linguistic analysis, from phonetics/phonology to syntax and lexical semantics, with the main purpose, I will argue, of threatening and undermining the honour of the characters in the play, understood as virtue and reputation, and ultimately, in pragmatic terms, as facework. I believe that power relations among characters are explained in terms of (im)polite conversational exchanges that also highlight social and gender boundaries at a time in the late seventeenth century when such issues were pivotal. Therefore, adopting Wycherley's best-known comedy as case study for a pragmastylistic analysis of insults I want to offer an in-depth, yet limited, exploration of the conscious exploitation of linguistic strategies by Restoration playwrights.

Keywords: *The Country Wife*; honour; facework; (im)politeness strategies; pragmatic interfaces

1. Introduction

"Restoration drama sparkles by comparison with the virtual nullity which followed it . . . The plays which followed, though informed by higher moral intentions, were dull, un-lifelike, fundamentally insincere" (Collins 1957, 156, 171). As excessive and severe as it might seem, Collins' comment about eighteenth-century drama highlights at least one fundamental aspect of Restoration comedies, i.e., their frankness and straight talking. However, when commenting on Collins' statement, Jucker affirms: "[i]t seems that

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excessively polite drama does not make for good entertainment" (2016, 111).[1] Therefore, Collins highlights that Restoration drama is not dull, un-lifelike, and insincere; similarly, Jucker implicitly states that it is enjoyable, lifelike, and sincere, despite not being unavoidably polite (as other scholars have noticed before him; see, among others, Thompson 1984, 71-91; Knapp 2000).

Moving from these premises, one of the main assumptions of this article is that, at least in the case study analysed here, i.e. William Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675), being sincere does not necessarily imply politeness, understood as a pragmatic strategy, just as being locutionarily polite can hide illocutionary insincere speech acts (which hence become indirect speech acts where locution and illocution do not correspond), whose perlocutionary force changes according to the characters involved in or excluded from the conversational context. An immediate example is, according to Knapp, the equivocal use of the adjective "kind", which is "used between men in the story claiming to be beneficent to one another, when the audience knows they are actually plotting elaborate competitions" (2000, 458).

Taking this into account, this paper focuses on taboo language (esp. insults and curses) adopted by characters in the play, aimed at explicitly/implicitly, directly/indirectly offending other characters. To this purpose, I will first combine Alan and Burridge's socio-cultural model on taboo language (2006) with pragmatic frameworks of impoliteness (Culpeper 1996 and following revisions/integrations) and with Jucker and Taavitsainen's diachronic model of pragmatic space of insults (2000), and then examine pragmatic interfaces with semantics and morpho-syntax in the comedy.

Before dealing with methodological issues, however, one must first understand why taboo language is important in *The Country Wife*, at the same time contextualising this comedy of "generic instability, equivocation about moral norms, and linguistic slippage" (Knapp 2000, 452) within its historical and cultural background. In his recent study of manners and politeness in Restoration and eighteenth-century drama, Jucker considers a series of corpora about late-seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literary and non-literary texts, then zooms in on Restoration drama, creating a sample corpus of all the plays by Behn, Wycherley, and *The Man of Mode* by Etherege. By simply extracting four politeness terms, i.e. "manners", "civil", "polite", and "courteous", Jucker notices that in the Restoration period "the civil set stands out as far more frequent than the others" (Jucker 2020, 107; emphasis in the original), as reported in a histogram (Fig. 1):

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[1] Jucker writes this as a comment to his analysis of post-Restoration comedies.
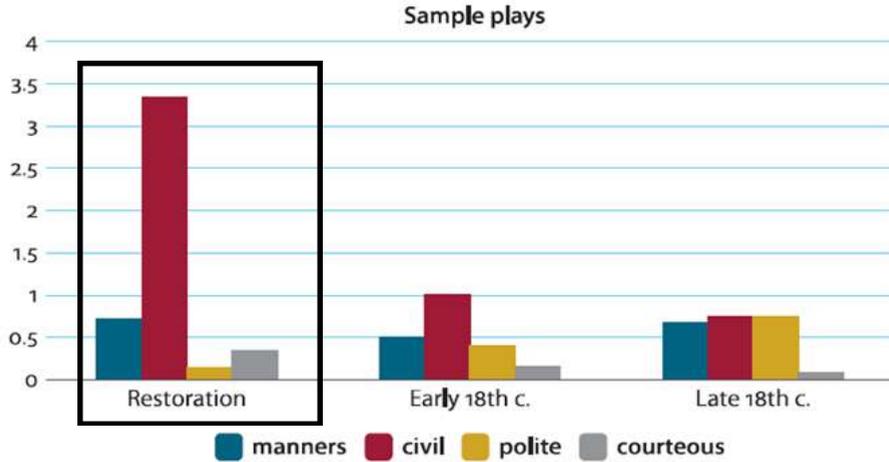
Fig. 1: Relative frequency (normalised per 10k tokens) of four politeness terms in
the three different time periods considered by Jucker (2020, 107)

The list of keywords considered is improved by analysing Aphra Behn's
The Town Fop (1676) where "the discourse of proper behaviour is mainly
concerned with such features of character, and, in fact . . . the terms *honour*
and *reputation* . . . stand out with frequent occurrences" (Jucker 2020, 110;
emphasis in the original).

Taking the four politeness key terms listed above and the two extra key
terms Jucker found in Behn's *The Town Fop*, a comedy which shares common
traits with *The Country Wife* that was published only one year earlier
(see Heilman 1982; Williams 1999), I have created a similar bar chart for
Wycherley's comedy (see Fig. 2 below):
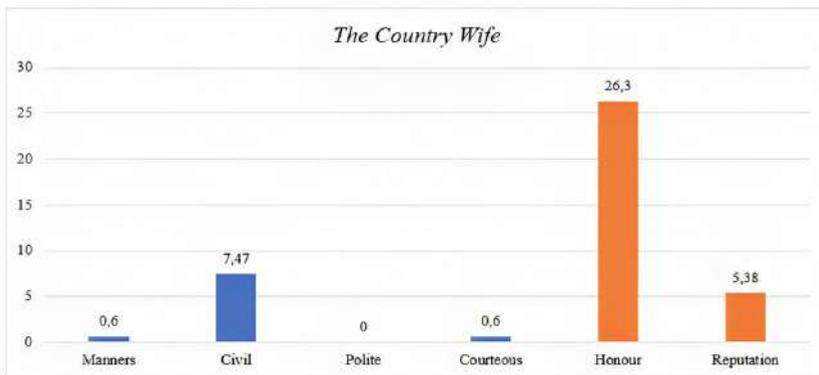
Fig. 2: Relative frequency (normalised per 10k tokens) of politeness key terms in
The Country Wife

Table 1 below provides additional details about the absolute frequency of the lexical families sought and the forms found for each family:

Key term	Lexical form(s)	Absolute frequency
Manners	Unmannerly	2
Civil	Civil (19)	25
	Civilest (1)	
	Civility (3)	
	Civilly (2)	
Polite	-	0
Courteous	Courteous (1)	2
	Uncourteous (1)	
Honour	Honour (87)	88
	Dishonour (1)	
Reputation	Reputation	18

Table 1: Absolute frequency of key terms and lexical forms belonging to their families in *The Country Wife* (total number of tokens: 33,465)

Figure 2 and Table 1 confirm the trend highlighted by Jucker for *The Town Fop*, with *honour* being the most important key term in *The Country Wife*. My replication of Jucker's preliminary quantitative analysis[2] seems to confirm, at least from an exclusively quantitative standpoint by now, Morris' assertion that "The Country Wife is a play about honor" (1972, 3).[3]

I would argue that taboo language in the comedy is strictly connected to the late-seventeenth-century notion of honour, understood essentially as virtue and reputation (Morris 1972, 4; Knapp 2000, 461-4). According to Keller (1982), the idea of honour, typical of Restoration comedies such as *The Country Wife*, has ancient roots in history and anthropology (e.g. the Roman and the Medieval codes of honour). She calls "shame sanction culture[s]" those societies "governed by shame rather than guilt" (64), and includes

[2] Another noteworthy quantitative analysis about Restoration comedies has been attempted by Evans (2023), focusing on interjections.

[3] Discussing honour in *The Country Wife* and Restoration drama in general is a rather farfetched and slippery endeavour for this article. Nevertheless, some issues concerning the idea of honour, connected with taboo language in the comedy, will be tackled. For further details about honour in *The Country Wife* and Restoration drama in general, see, besides Morris 1972, also Brown Watson 1960, esp. 1-162; Thompson 1984, 75-80; Markley 1988, 138-94; Knapp 2000, 461-4.

Restoration comedy within this group, as she considers it to be a culture-specific manifestation of the English shame sanction society at the end of the seventeenth century. Knapp talks about shame and guilt connected to honour in terms of a bifurcation:

> The bifurcation of the word *honor* in Renaissance usage is a sign of the vacillation in seventeenth-century thought and feeling between a shame culture in which one's moral identity rests on public esteem or disgrace and a guilt culture which stresses inward awareness. (2000, 461; emphasis in the original)

Such characters as Pinchwife, for instance, embody the Puritan ethics of the Restoration era, more concerned about public shame and reputation than actual guilt for committing sins. The so-called 'virtuous gang' (Matalene 1982, 404, 407-9; Thompson 1984, passim), i.e. Lady Fidget, her sister-in-law Lady Dainty Fidget, and their friend Mrs Squeamish, is another group of characters deeply rooted in Puritan values and matters concerning honour. Similarly to Pinchwife,

> [t]he ironies produced by when the 'virtuous gang' speak of *honor* in its public, social sense, as 'reputation', but expect to be understood as meaning a more personal and intimate ethical probity are deliberately exposed by Horner in his role of satirist. (Knapp 2000, 461; emphasis in the original)

Focusing on this connotation of honour, *The Country Wife*, affirms Keller, is dominated by instances of "social controls" (1982, 64) and face[4] preservation that regulate the relationships between characters. On a linguistic level, this social control, aimed at damaging or preserving one's honour and facework, results in a complex system of "corrupted language" (Morris 1972, 6), where explicit/implicit insults and offences serve essentially two main pragmatic functions: 1) attacking a character who is not considered honourable or who is thought to behave dishonourably, and 2) preserving one's positive face (see Section 2) when somebody feels his/her honour is threatened.

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[4] The most famous and scholarly accepted notion of face was given by Erving Goffman (1955, 213; 1967). It is "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes". This connotation of face and its preservation are in close connection with the notion of honour, understood as rank and reputation, in Restoration comedies.

2. Methodology

Given that "both taboo language and impolite language . . . [are] sensitive to local contexts" (Culpeper 2018, 28), as far as methodological issues are concerned, in the analysis carried out in the next section, I first draw on Culpeper's face-based impoliteness theory (1996 and later revisions), then integrate it with Allan and Burridge's socio-cultural framework of *X-phemisms* (2006), and lastly with Jucker and Taavitsainen's diachronic taxonomy of the pragmatic space of insults (2000). This latter theory offers a more detailed framework of insults based on their micro-linguistic characteristics, and effects on interlocutors (considering the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary force of tabooed speech acts).

Resorting to Brown and Levinson's face-based view of politeness, it was Culpeper who first listed taboo words within a model of impoliteness (1996 and ff.), in particular as one of the ten output strategies of positive impoliteness,[5] defined as "the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's positive face wants" (1996, 356), that is, a series of speech acts by the speaker (hereafter S) aimed at hindering the hearer's (hereafter H) "perennial desire that his wants (or the actions/acquisitions/values resulting from them) should be thought of as desirable" (Brown and Levinson 1987, 101). This belonging of taboo language to the macro-category of positive impoliteness is reinforced by Culpeper in 2018, when he states that tabooed expressions are "a subgroup within impoliteness", hence "impoliteness covers much more than taboo language" (29). Paraphrasing Brown and Levinson's definition of positive face wants, in *The Country Wife* the characters' positive face can be interpreted as their desire for their honour, understood as the main value deriving and resulting from their actions, to be preserved and admired.

Although not overtly resorting either to Brown and Levinson's or Culpeper's (im)politeness theories, Allan and Burridge's analysis of taboo expressions begins by "examin[ing] politeness and impoliteness as they interact with orthophemism (straight talking), euphemism (sweet talking) and dysphemism (speaking offensively)" (2006, 1). When defining orthophemism, euphemism, and dysphemism, the scholars identify taboo words mainly with dysphemism, defined as "a word or phrase with connotations that are offensive either about the denotatum and/or to people addressed or overhearing the utterance" (31). For this reason, there appears to be a close correspondence between Culpeper's definition of positive impoliteness output strategies and Allan and Burridge's dysphemism.

This almost one-to-one association between taboo words (hence positive impoliteness output strategies) and dysphemism can also be easily applied

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[5] "[S]wear[ing], or use of abusive profane language" (1996, 358).

to orthophemism, which "is typically more formal and more direct (or literal) than the corresponding euphemism" (Alan and Burridge 2006, 33), or to euphemism, "more colloquial and figurative (or indirect) than the corresponding orthophemism" (ibid.), as reported in Figure 3 below. As defined by Allan and Burridge, euphemisms and orthophemisms

> avoid possible loss of face by the speaker, and also the hearer [and] arise from the conscious or unconscious self-censoring; they are used to avoid the speaker being embarrassed and/or ill thought of and, at the same time, to avoid embarrassing and/or offending the hearer or some third party. This coincides with the speaker being polite. (2006, 32-3)

Therefore, Allan and Burridge insert both orthophemism and euphemism within politeness theory[6] (albeit not mentioning Brown and Levinson's politeness theory explicitly).
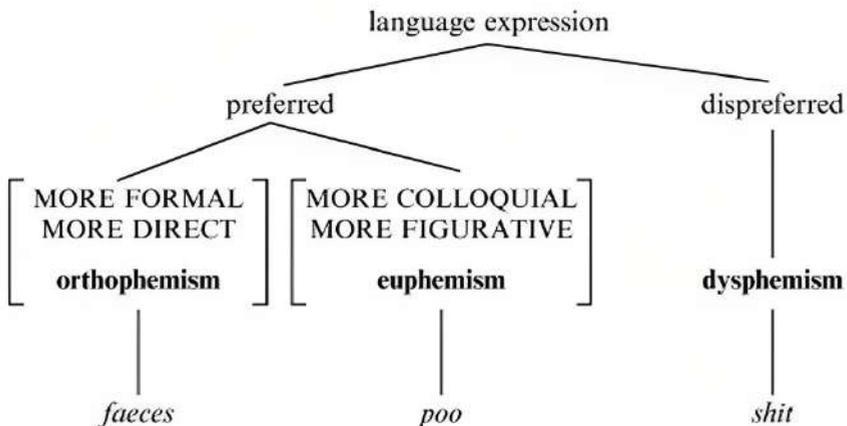
Fig. 3: X-phemism model by Allan and Burridge (2006, 34)

The definition of orthophemism and euphemism and their adherence to face-based models of (im)politeness is not central to this article, although some insults in *The Country Wife* can be understood as euphemistic, as seen briefly in the analytic sections below. What is important to explore in this theoretical framework of taboo language applied to Wycherley's comedy is the complex use of dysphemism by the characters.

The character's preference for dispreferred taboo expressions continuously endangers their mutual relationships in the play. But why?

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[6] This somehow contradicts Culpeper's assertion that "euphemisms are virtually absent from politeness theory" (2018, 39), if one considers Allan and Burridge's a politeness theory of taboo language. See also Crespo-Fernández 2005 for another face-based attempt to contextualise euphemisms within a politeness framework.

Why should characters bother threatening others' honour and positive face wants? I believe the answer lies in their complex power relations: the more powerful a character is (or thinks s/he is), the more frequent s/he insults others. As noticed by Culpeper (1996, 355), Brown and Levinson's politeness framework states that each time S wants to damage H's face work through a face threatening act (hereafter FTA), "but wishes to maintain the face of those involved, one will undertake politeness work appropriate to the face threat of the act". In other words, in Brown and Levinson's theory, politeness strategies are adopted to avoid insulting or offending H directly, with a pretence to "enhancing or supporting face" (356). On the contrary, in Culpeper's impoliteness framework, "impoliteness strategies are a means to attack face" (ibid.). To measure the extent of an FTA, Brown and Levinson hypothesise that "the seriousness or weightiness of a particular FTA x is compounded of both risk to S's face and risk to H's face" (1987, 76). Choosing politeness or impoliteness strategies is a matter of calculation: S decides whether to be polite or impolite according to three dimensions: "relative power (P) of H over S, the social distance (D) between S and H, and the ranking of the imposition (R) involved in doing the face-threatening act" (Brown and Levinson 1987, 12). These three factors combined result in the weight (W) of any given FTA x:

$$\boxed{W_x = P\,(S, H) + D\,(S, H) + R_x} \quad (76)$$

This equation perfectly explains why the characters who are insulted more than others in Wycherley's comedy are the fop Sparkish and such women as Margery and Alithea, as seen in the next section. In fact, both the relative power exerted over them and the social distance (not only understood in terms of social status, but also homosocial relations) which separate them from the other characters contribute to increasing the weight of the insults against them.

The analysis carried out below will benefit also from Jucker and Taavitsainen pragmatic framework of insults (2000), which enriches Culpeper's and Alan and Burridge's investigations of taboo language with a consideration of micro-linguistic aspects and interactional issues. The scholars' list of five parameters, each characterised by sub-characteristics disposed on continua, is given below (Fig. 4).
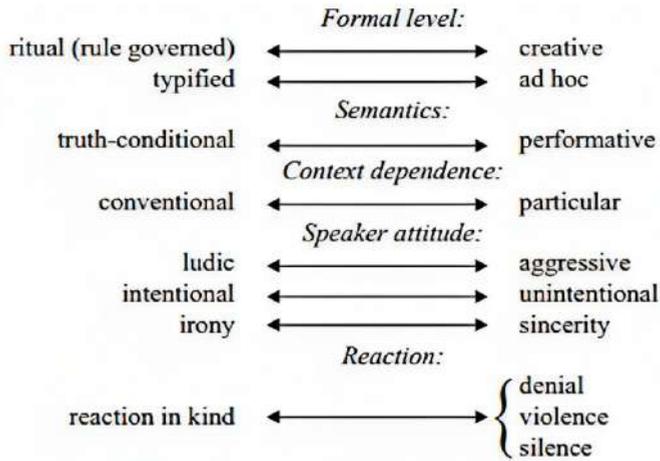
Fig. 4: Jucker and Taavitsainen's pragmatic space of insults (2000, 74)

This scheme is explained by the two scholars as follows:

> The first two dimensions concern the formal level of the insults. In the literature on insults there is usually a distinction between ritual and personal insults. However, the ritual should not be seen in direct opposition to the personal. There are two dimensions involved: the ritual as rule-governed versus the creative as not following conventionalised patterns, and the ludic versus aggressive . . . On the same formal level we distinguish between typified and *ad hoc* insults . . . On the semantic level, we distinguish between truth-conditional and performative insults. This distinction is useful in order to distinguish between slanders and slurs, on the one hand, and name-calling and expletives, on the other. This distinction is important for various forms of verbal dueling. The insults that the contestants hurl at each other must be perceived to be blatantly untrue. Abuse which has some basis in truth is likely to turn the verbal dueling from playful to serious . . . Oaths and swearing are not in themselves insults since they do not encode a predication about a target, but they may be perceived as insults if the addressee perceives them as disrespectful. This may be an intrusion into the addressee's personal territory to the extent that swearing in the presence of the addressee suggests that the speaker deems this to be appropriate in the presence of the addressee. The dimensions on the next level are concerned with the attitude of the speaker . . . Insults may also be unintentional. As we have outlined above, insults are primarily perlocutionary. An utterance may have the effect of wounding the addressee even if the speaker did not mean to offend him/her . . . Furthermore, we distinguish between conventionalised insults and particularised insults . . . Conventionalised insults are those which in normal circumstances are understood as insults by all members of a speech community, e.g. slanderous remarks, contemptuous remarks, name calling, and demeaning expletives. In

this area the analyst is on fairly safe ground since the illocutionary force of the utterance encodes the intention to have a particular perlocutionary effect . . . Particularized insults, on the other hand, are those which do not have this conventional force. They are more difficult to identify for the analyst because they depend on the reaction of the target to an utterance that does not have this conventional force. And it is in this category that unintentional insults may occur. The target (who was not targeted by the speaker) perceives a predication about himself/herself as face-threatening and as having been made with the intention to demean, wound or outrage him/her. The last dimension concerns the reaction of the target. A personal insult requires a denial or an excuse, while a ritual insult requires a response in kind . . . Flytings may either end in actual violence or in silence, with which one of the contenders admits his inferiority. (74-6)

In the case of *The Country Wife*, Jucker and Taavitsainen's framework will be of particular interest when dealing with interfaces between pragmatics and other levels of linguistic analysis. In fact, as will be shown later, such interfaces contribute, for instance, to the great level of creativity and 'ad hocness' of some syntactically complex insults (on a formal plan), which also result in some ludic, intentional and ironic use of taboo expressions (by S's side).

3. Analysis and Discussion

Bearing in mind the methodological framework outlined above, as well as the main reason why taboo language is so important in *The Country Wife*, i.e. attacking or defending one's honour, a close reading of the play helped me gauge the analysis of taboo language and divide it into three sections, from the macro- to the micro-textual level. First, I will analyse two emblematic scenes, i.e. 1.1 and 2.1, which show similarities and differences between insults towards 'weak', unwitty men and women; then, I will focus on interfaces between pragmatics, phonetics/phonology, rhetoric, and syntax, examining the effects of the many insults built around syntactical structures such as long pre-modification and *tri/tetracola*. Lastly, I will focus on the lexical and semantic level, exploring the most recurrent insults represented by single lexical units and the most common semantic fields they belong to.

3.1 Insulting the Fop and the Women

Insulting fops and women either explicitly or implicitly is one of the main characteristics shared by most comedies of manners of the Restoration period, probably because such characters "spend their time" together, and "have interests in common" (Staves 1982, 414) such as fashion. In particular,

in the case of female characters, matters of power (im)balance between men and women are highlighted by the use of taboo language and impoliteness, which will be explored in this paragraph.

Such fops as Sparkish are described as effeminate men concerned with physical appearance and fashion, and who enjoy being with women, not for any sexual motive (they are actually almost considered asexual) but simply because they enjoy their company. In *The Country Wife*, they are victims of the insults of rakes, libertines, and bullies such as Horner, Harcourt, Dorilant, and Pinchwife, for a variety of reasons.

Sparkish is introduced in the middle of 1.1 by a servant of Horner's. The landlord and his friends Dorilant and Harcourt share a witty repartee describing Sparkish with sharp similes and comparisons before he comes on stage. The reader and audience are thus introduced to Sparkish by concocted insults that amuse them and create a horizon of expectation that they are more inclined to confirm when he appears onstage than if he were introduced with blunter insults. As observed by Knapp, "[t]he gallants in *The Country Wife* place a high priority on witty conversation and object to the witless Sparkish's interference to it" (2000, 454). In particular, Horner is often praised by the critics for his "stylistically significant" use of language, which distinguishes him from his fellows. As noted by Markley,

> Horner's language marks him as a creature of his age, although a more complex and ambiguous one than audiences had encountered before 1674. His speech is epigrammatic, almost gnomic; in contrast, Dorilant's and Harcourt's language is less tightly structured and more dependent on conventional images of town life. (1988, 161)

Horner and his friends' witty repartee begins with the intentionally ironic expression "my dear friend" (1.1.209),[7] and then abruptly shifts into a series of dysphemisms astutely built on similes and comparisons, which "damage the addressee's positive face wants" (Culpeper 1996, 356); i.e. they attack Sparkish's honour, understood as his reputation and his good opinion of himself, as Dorilant notices. Sparkish is compared to "the worst fiddlers [who] run themselves into all companies" (1.1.216-17), or to "a false jewel amongst true ones" (1.1.220-1). Moreover, his company is "as troublesome to us as a cuckold's when you have a mind to his wife's" (1.1.221-2), or "like rooks to the gamesters, who . . . are so far from contributing to the play that only serve to spoil the fancy of those that do" (1.1.229-32). Lastly, "[h]e signifies no more to't than Sir Martin Mar-all's gaping and awakening thrumming upon

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[7] All quotations from *The Country Wife* are from the New Mermaids edition (Wycherley 2014). Act, scene, and line number(s) from this edition are given in parentheses. See *infra* for bibliographical reference.

the lute does his man's voice and music" (1.1.224-6). Sparkish's obsession with honour and his thinking highly of himself are undermined even before his entrance by others describing him as an annoying, false, and useless nobleman with a great self-esteem, but who, like fake jewels, has a "cracked title" (1.1.323) and is broke, as affirmed by Horner later in the scene.

It must be noted that at this stage in the comedy, offenses towards Sparkish are not directly addressed to him, not because Horner, Harcourt, and Dorilant are afraid of him, but simply because he would not understand their repartee, which is a privilege, an advantage only readers and audience enjoy. About the insults towards Sparkish, Martínez García has observed that "he is a classic foolish fop, so obsessed with being perceived as witty that although a cascade of insults is thrown at him, he only takes offense when his intelligence is put into question" (2017, 6). As a matter of fact, in 2.1, after a long series of insults by the libertine Harcourt, reported to Sparkish by Alithea, the fop gets angry only when he understands that the libertine "disparage[d] [his] parts" and so his "honour's concerned" (2.1.289-90). This scene is certainly one of the most interesting to analyse using the pragmatic framework of taboo language outlined in the previous section, since offences towards women succeed one another at great speed, thus establishing a clear power (im)balance between men and women in the play.

In 2.1, Pinchwife, the foolish jealous husband of Margery, the country wife of the title, enters the stage and begins insulting his wife and his sister Alithea. Unlike Horner and his friends' witty repartee, Pinchwife's offences draw on taboo words and are much more direct and aggressive. In fact, as Thompson affirmed, Pinchwife's language is always characterised by "brutality and violence" (1984, 71), unlike "Horner's complex and clever language" (89). His insults are not intended to amuse the readers/audience or to create any kind of sympathetic relationship between character and spectators, but to show him as the prototypical jealous fool who, in the end, inevitably becomes a cuckold. His first line, "You're a fool!" (2.1.36), used against his wife, definitely belongs to positive impoliteness output strategies, i.e. "use taboo words" (Culpeper 1996, 358). When Alithea tries to defend her sister-in-law, her brother insults her as well: "You would have her as impudent as yourself, as arrant a jill-flirt, a gadder, a magpie, and – to say all – a mere notorious town-woman?" (2.1.39-41). By insulting his sister, Pinchwife highlights one of the main themes of this comedy, but also of Restoration comedies of manners in general: the well-known contrast between such concepts as Town and Country. Pinchwife insults his sister because he thinks she is trying to corrupt the genuine but also naïve Country values of his wife with the dangerous standards of fashion, manners, etc., associated with the Town. He wants his wife to remain docile and submissive, ignorant of the emancipation of such "impudent . . . town-wom[e]n" (2.1.39-41) as Alithea. Far from voicing presentist feminist views,

Alithea defends Margery, who goes off crying, not because she deserves that as a woman, but again in terms of honour, since otherwise "the honour of [Pinchwife's] family shall sooner suffer" (2.1.42-3), says Alithea. Margery, at Alithea's side, does not reply to her husband's insults (silence being one of the addressee's reactions, according to Jucker and Taavitsainen's framework), but addresses him with markers of endearment such as "bud", "dear", and "love", clearly exhibiting a strong conversational power imbalance in favour of Pinchwife, who will continue to offend her virtue and reputation later on, when he locks her up in her room, ordering her with "In, baggage, in!" (2.1.133). The man reinforces his powerful position not only with taboo words but also through directive speech acts such as the just-mentioned order, or such commands as "[h]ark you, mistress", "do not talk so", "[h]old, hold!", "I bid you keep her in ignorance" (2.1.58), etc. Moreover, he is also inclined to "call the other names – use derogatory nominations" (Culpeper 1996, 358), e.g. "Mistress Minx" (2.1.97) or, later in the play, "Mistress Flippant" (3.1.22), another positive impoliteness output strategy identified by Culpeper. Yet, as often happens in the "highly encoded gendered practices" (Martínez García 2017, 4) of Restoration drama, foolish jealous husbands become cuckholds: Margery sleeps with Horner and the power balance changes. For instance, in the last scene, Margery no longer obeys orders, thus passing from silence to denial and violence: "Horner Peace, dear idiot! / Mrs Pinchwife Nay, I will not peace" (5.4.345-6); "Pinchwife . . . a country wife, with a country murrain to me. / Mrs Pinchwife . . . my musty husband" (5.4.409-12). A vocal reaction by the target of his insults makes Pinchwife stop offending her, because it is now useless; too late does he realise that "[h]is honour is least safe" (5.4.428).

3.2 Pre-modification and Tri/Tetracola: Pragmatic Interfaces with Phonetics, Rhetoric, Rhythm, and Syntax

Another interesting aspect of taboo language in *The Country Wife*, which foregrounds the great creativity of Wycherley's offensive discourse, is connected to the interface between pragmatics and other branches of linguistics. In this section I will deal with phonetics, rhetoric, rhythm, and syntax together, because the examples scrutinised share a focus on noun phrases (hereafter NPs) following the structure '(determiner)+(adjective[s])+noun'. In particular, I will examine syntactically complex insults formed by 1) NPs comprising 3+ pre-modifiers and a noun, and 2) tricola and tetracola. To facilitate this analysis, a comprehensive list of this kind of insults is provided in Table 2 below:

NPs (3+ pre-modifiers)	Tricola and Tetracola
• HARCOURT True, damned, tell-tale woman. (2.1.275) • HARCOURT Damned, senseless, impudent, virtuous jade! (2.1.281) • HORNER Raw, peevish, out-of-humoured, affected, dull, tea-drinking, arithmetical fop (2.1.439-40) • LADY FIDGET Stinking, mortified, rotten French wether (2.1.488) • DORILANT Old, beetle-headed, lickerish drones (3.2.14-5) • SQUEAMISH This ugly, greasy, dirty sloven? (4.3.140-1)	• PINCHWIFE A jill-flirt, a gadder, a magpie, and . . . a notorious town-woman? (2.1.40-1) • HARCOURT A bubble, a coward, a senseless idiot, a wretch (2.1.259-60) • ALITHEA A wretch . . . A common bubble . . . A coward . . . A senseless, drivelling idiot (2.1.279-88) • PINCHWIFE You infamous wretch, eternal shame of your family . . . thou legion of bawds (3.2.546-59) • SQUEAMISH This woman-hater, this toad, this ugly, greasy, dirty sloven (4.3.140-1) • OLD LADY SQUEAMISH This harlotry, this impudent baggage, this rambling tomrig? (4.3.159-60) • SPARKISH I'll . . . call her as many crocodiles, sirens, harpies, and other heathenish names as a poet would do a mistress who had refused to hear his suit (5.3.18-20)

Table 2: List of insults comprising NPs preceded by 3+ pre-modifiers, and tri/tetracola

As Mandon-Hunter noticed when dealing with Congreve's comedies, "the offensive discourse found in the comedies [is] characterised by . . . great inventiveness" (2013, 95), thus mirroring Jucker and Taavitsainen's creativity and 'ad hocness' parameters of formality of insults (see Section 2 above). The examples in Table 2 confirm that also Wycherley shows great inventiveness with regards to taboo language, at least in *The Country Wife*, as such interfaces between pragmatics and other levels of linguistic analysis demonstrate. From a phonetic standpoint, for example, it can be observed that the majority of consonant sounds in the examples above – both columns – are plosives, which phonetically reproduce the strength of the insults uttered by the characters in the play.

Another feature that connects NPs with long pre-modification and the *tri/tetracola* analysed here is rhythm and the rhythmic effects they can produce on the audience. On the one hand, the long strings of adjectives in the left-hand column above create a horizon of expectation in the reader/audience who wait for the phrase to end and discover which is its head, i.e. the noun which functions as the head of the noun phrase that in English is normally on the right, so it is the last element of the phrase to be read/heard. Waiting to read/hear the head of the NP may accelerate the speed of reading and utterance in long phrases, as stated by phonologists (see, among others, Fónagy and Magdics 1960, who affirm that the shorter the phrase, the slower its speed of utterance), especially in such stress-timed languages as English, where the sentence stress is usually on the last content/lexical word of a string, which in the cases reported above correspond to the right-positioned head of the NP. Moreover, if uttered at a certain speed and in a single breath, the NPs analysed can create comic effects, giving the impression that characters are literally 'vomiting' insults at each other. Similarly, the tri/tetracola listed in the right-hand column of Table 2 accelerate the utterance speed of the entire sentence. In fact, tri/tetracola are anaphora-like asyndetic patterns which, by their nature, speed both reading and utterance (see Quinn 2010, 7-10; Kolln and Gray 2017, 199).

At a rhetorical level, on the other hand, the insistence on and repetition of terms belonging to the same grammatical class – i.e. adjectives, on the one hand, and on the other, similar syntactic structures such as tri/tetracola – amplify the importance and derogatory effect of the insults uttered by the characters in the play and channel the reader's/audience's attention.

Therefore, reading/uttering both NPs with 3+ pre-modifiers and tri/tetracola magnifies the impolite dysphemistic effect of the insults and offences they represent, also through the alliteration of hard consonant sounds such as plosives, and accelerates the speed of utterance, as if the characters were goading one another along with insults.

3.3 Tabooed Lexical Units and Semantic Fields

In dealing with interfaces between pragmatics and lexical semantics, this last analytical section focuses on the most recurring lexical items used as or within taboo expressions, and then on frequent semantic fields to which insults in *The Country Wife* belong. The following examples show lesser levels of inventiveness and creativity, the insults and curses being more typified and, on a contextual level, more conventional.

Among the most frequent dysphemisms in the play, the lexeme *fool* occupies a prominent position. It occurs 47 times in four different forms, i.e.

"fool" (29), "fools"(8), "fooling" (5), and "foolish" (5), and it is used almost by anyone. A glance at the contexts where the lexeme appears is provided in Table 3, which shows the co-textual neighbourhood of the string 'fool*', with a span of 5 words to the left and 5 to the right, obtained by uploading the text of *The Country Wife* on the Voyant Tools, a user-friendly online freeware for basic corpus-informed searches.

the report. No—this formal	fool	and women! Enter Sir Jasper
in town shows himself a	fool	every night to us, that
Tis my maxim, he's a	fool	that marries; but he's a
that does not marry a	fool	. What is wit in a
from his knowledge. Pinch. A	fool	cannot contrive to make her
box in their hands to	fool	with only, and hinder other
nangered thee? Pinch. You're a	fool	. [Mrs. Pinchwife goes aside, and
must hate London. Alith. The	fool	has forbid me discovering to
laugh more than a stark	fool	, ha! ha! I shall burst
I am, I am a	fool	, that is, no wit, out
cards, blindman's-buff, or the	fool	with, sometimes! Mrs. Squeam. Foh
known thee sup with a	fool	for his drinking; if he
man drinks often with a	fool	, as he tosses with a
man in the world, a	fool	upon the stage you know
you shall hardly see a	fool	upon the stage but he's
a play, and dubbed a	fool	. Dor. Blame 'em not, they
must leave you.—[Aside.] The	fool	her gallant and she will
should you do with a	fool	to your husband? You intend
you think I am a	fool	? Pinch. [Aside.] She's afraid I
Lord, what d'ye make a	fool	of me for? Don't I
think me so arrant a	fool	, I cannot seal a letter
here to do? Pinch. This	fool	here now! Spark. What! drawn
is a cuckold, that every	fool	can make him ridiculous!—[Aloud
sir. Horn. What means the	fool	? if she and I agree
find out no easy country	fool	to abuse? none but me
Lucy. You'll believe then a	fool	may be made jealous now
like me, would marry a	fool	for fortune, liberty, or title
ay. Dor. Why, thou jealous	fool	, dost thou doubt it? he's
trusting your secret to a	fool	. [Aside to Horner. Horn. Peace

neither. Spark. Pshaw! with your	fooling	we shall lose the new	
him go, I cannot stay	fooling	any longer; I tell you	
make an end of this	fooling	. Har. With all my soul	
short, I am for no	fooling	. Horn. Nor I neither: therefore	
Pinch. An eunuch! Pray, no	fooling	with me. Quack. I'll bring	
my love. Horn. No; a	foolish	rival and a jealous husband	
that make men do all	foolish	things, make 'em write songs	
story. Alith. So, so; very	foolish	. Spark. Lord, if you won't	
64 Spark. Pshaw! upon a	foolish	scruple, that our parson was	
Who trusts it with a	foolish	wife or friend. A Dance	
as you do with rich	fools	, to laugh at 'em and	
the better for you; for	fools	are most easily cheated when	
serving-men only their stage-	fools	: but these rogues must have	
Thou art one of those	fools	that think their attendance at	
than women titles, or fortune	fools	. [Points at Sparkish. [Pg 298	
like Fortune, only true to	fools	? Dor. Thou sha't not stir	
Formerly women of wit married	fools	for a great estate, a	
But men in love are	fools	; women may well be so	

Table 3: Co-textual neighbourhood of the node 'fool*' (5L-5R) obtained by the Voyant Tools

The results provided by the software show that "fool" is used as a derogatory term mainly signifying "[a] person whose behaviour suggests a lack of intelligence, common sense, or good judgement; a silly person, an idiot" (*OED*, n.A.1.1), or "[a] person who is made to appear ridiculous by, or is in the control of, another; spec. a person who is tricked or duped; a gullible person" (*OED*, n.A.1.3). What is interesting is the continuous, intended ambiguity connected to the two connotations of "fool", sometimes indicating a character who deserves to be insulted for being such a silly person and an idiot, sometimes one to be pitied because s/he was tricked, and sometimes both. For instance, when Harcourt is courting Alithea right under the nose of her fiancé Sparkish, and pretending to encourage her to be with him, he ambiguously affirms that she deserves a man "[w]ho loves you more than women titles, or fortune fools" (3.2.329), pointing at Sparkish. The idea of the link between fate, destiny, and fools is clearly Shakespearean. In *Romeo and Juliet* 3.1.316, Romeo affirms "I am Fortune's fool", indicating that he is being tricked by Fate. He has just married Juliet, so he hopes the feud between the two families is over; yet on the contrary, he kills Juliet's cousin Tybalt to avenge the death of his best friend Mercutio. By stating that he is

the "fortune's fool", Romeo anticipates his exile to Mantua and laments that destiny does not want him and Juliet to be together, not even after they are officially wife and husband. This connotation of "fool" is clearly contained in the second definition of the lemma given above, and it seems that Harcourt is using this connotation to advise Alithea to marry Sparkish because he loves her more than fortune loves fools, i.e. more than destiny, which always rages against the most gullible and vulnerable. The stage direction indicates that at this precise moment Harcourt points at Sparkish. On the surface this means that Harcourt points at the man who loves Alithea more than fortune loves fools, but he is actually insulting him, pointing at a fool. This intended ambiguity between the first and second connotation of the lemma "fool" surely provokes reader/audience laughter and also reveals Harcourt's true intention: he is not saying that Sparkish loves Alithea more than anything, hence she deserves him, but rather that Sparkish is a fool, hence she deserves better – i.e. Harcourt himself.

Another recurring lexeme sometimes indicating an insult is "rogue". It occurs 32 times in the play, and, like "fool", has at least two different connotations: "[a] dishonest, unprincipled person; a rascal, a scoundrel" (*OED*, n.A.2) or "[f]requently as a playful term of reproof or reproach or as a term of endearment" (*OED*, n.A.3). The co-occurrences of the keyword 'rogue*' (rogue and rogues) are reported in the Voyant Tools table below (Table 4):

What, my dear friend! a	rogue	that is fond of me
his wife's. Har. No, the	rogue	will not let us enjoy
Dor. The usurer, a poor	rogue	, possessed of mouldy bonds and
atheist; and your noisy pert	rogue	of a wit, the greatest
I warrant you. Har. The	rogue	is as jealous as if
sight; for he's a cunning	rogue	, and understands the town. Har
not: I'll treat thee, dear	rogue	; thou sha't spend none of
in't.—[Aloud.] Come, my poor	rogue	, but thou likest none better
choice?—[To Alithea.] Dear little	rogue	, I told you I'd bring
one of those, my pretty	rogue	, that are to dance at
shalt enjoy me sometimes, dear	rogue	. By my honour, we men
ha! ha! a silly wise	rogue	would make one laugh more
what?—[To Harcourt.] Now, dear	rogue	, has not she wit? Har
it were so, my dear	rogue	, I ask thee pardon; but
see a lovelier creature? The	rogue	has reason to be jealous
let us torment this jealous	rogue	a little. [Pg 302] Har

Come, prithee kiss me, dear	rogue	: gad I was always, I
veal. Horn. O thou damned	rogue	! thou hast set my teeth
more civil and obliging, dear	rogue	. [Pg 342] Pinch. Who desired
Then she is obliging, dear	rogue	. Pinch. You'll make her welcome
begin. This is my false	rogue	. [Claps him on the back
art thou a dissembler, a	rogue	? hast thou— Horn. Sol 82
Dear Mr. Doctor, let vain	rogues	be contented only to be
love makes us beggars, poor	rogues	, egad—and wine— Horn. So
checked, and abused; yet the	rogues	will hang on. Horn. A
go, sir. Spark. Why, dear	rogues	— Dor. No, no. [They all
290] Spark. Come, you bubbling	rogues	you, where do we sup
truth, we hate the silly	rogues	; nay, so much, that we
their stage-fools: but these	rogues	must have gentlemen, with a
and count money before poor	rogues	. Pinch. He that shows his
on't; for the poor virtuous	rogues	would not have it known
are all three my false	rogues	too, and there's an end

Table 4: Co-textual neighbourhood of the node 'rogue*' (5L-5R) obtained by the Voyant Tools

First of all, "rogue(s)" is used only by men, except on a single occasion when it is uttered by Lady Fidget who, wanting to unmask Horner, insults him by using a typically male term: "a false rogue". In this case, the dysphemism she uses belongs to Culpeper's positive impoliteness output strategy "use inappropriate identity markers" (1996, 357), this time inappropriate not for H, but for S.

Even more so than with "fool", the connotations of "rogue" are extremely difficult to distinguish. The term is sometimes used to indicate apparent or true homosocial intimacy (e.g. "Horner What! My dear friend! a rogue that is fond of me", 1.1.209), sometimes as a term of endearment towards women (especially by Pinchwife and Sparkish when addressing Margery and Alithea with "(my) dear/pretty rogue"), and sometimes as an out-and-out insult (e.g. "Horner . . . your noisy pert rogue of a wit", 1.1.245). Given its polysemy and consequent need of a meaningful context, rogue is often preceded by adjectives that help the reader/audience understand whether it is a marker of intimacy or an insult by connoting it positively (e.g. dear, little, pretty, wise, poor, etc.) or negatively (e.g. jealous, damned, false, vain, etc.).

Lastly, it is worth examining the semantic fields to which most insults in *The Country Wife* belong. We can distinguish at least three of them:

1) Insults belonging to medical jargon (esp. infectious diseases);
2) Offences connected to animal imagery;
3) Tabooed expressions pertaining to religion.

The first semantic field is characterised by offences and swearwords borrowed from the jargon of infectious diseases, i.e. pox, small-pox, plague, ulcer(s), canker, etc., while such insults and taboo expressions as "damn", "damned", "hell and damnation", "the devil", or "rakehell" belong to the semantic field of religion. Moreover, a series of dysphemisms concerns ferocious or slimy animals, e.g. crocodiles, dogs, drones, toads, and zoomorphic mythological creatures negatively connoted, i.e. sirens and harpies. In all the examples quoted above, as in contemporary English, we witness a process of semantic bleaching, or de-semanticisation, where single expressions are partially or completely deprived of the literal meaning pertaining to their semantic field, and only their pragmatic function of insults remains, based primarily on the metaphorical, less specific meaning associated with them. For instance, the late-sixteenth-century multiword expression "a pox on" somebody or something does not literally mean that someone is wishing someone else to literally fall ill with the pox; instead, the expression is used as a generic insult, almost a filler expression used to swear, to hurl general curses upon somebody. In this case, as in the majority of the others, the denotative meaning of "pox" vanishes and the metaphorical, less specific connotation of "something really bad" remains, resulting in generic curses, insults, and offenses. Nevertheless, in *The Country Wife*, this kind of insult generally also implies an attack on someone's honour and reputation. For example, by comparing Alithea to sirens and harpies, Sparkish is accusing her of being a charmer of dubious reputation who lures men. Similarly, when Horner is called a toad by the so-called 'virtuous gang', they are saying that he is as smarmy as a toad, attacking his brand-new reputation as a respectable man (which he is actually faking) and making all other characters believe he is now impotent.

4. Conclusion

Wycherley's *The Country Wife* presents a rich and varied panorama well suited to a pragmastylistic analysis of taboo language, i.e. insults, offences, swearwords, etc. The offensive discourse, albeit primarily concerning pragmatics, has numerous interfaces with various levels of linguistic analysis, from phonetics/phonology to syntax and lexical semantics, with the main purpose, I have argued, of threatening and undermining the honour of the characters in the play, understood as rank and reputation, and ultimately, in pragmatic terms, as facework.

Power relations among characters are explained in terms of (im)polite conversational exchanges that also highlight social and gender boundaries at a time in the late seventeenth century when such issues were pivotal. We have seen that within the complex social framework of *The Country Wife,* incisive insults – that is, those offences that make both readers and audience laugh, and other characters react – are uttered by witty characters such as the rake-hero Horner and his friends, and are aimed at foolish stereotyped personae, such as the fop Sparkish, or women. Other insults, on the contrary, such as those thrown by Pinchwife, are not incisive, are semantically and pragmatically empty, and the result is that, by the end of the play, the apparent power exerted by the character who insults is annihilated. In the case of Pinchwife, the many unjustified offences he directs to his wife and sister completely vanish in the last scene of the play when he must accept that he is a cuckold – the worst-ever humiliation his honour can receive.

Adopting Wycherley's best-known comedy as case study for a pragmastylistic analysis of insults I wanted to offer an in-depth, yet quantitatively limited, exploration of the conscious exploitation of linguistic strategies by Restoration playwrights. Further research may expand on this topic, on any other branch of pragmatics (see Evans 2023, quoted above), and broaden the corpus of Restoration plays analysed, given that there are few territories so unexplored from a linguistic and stylistic point of view as 1660-1737 drama (comedies in particular). Broadening the corpus would also mean increasing the need for tools (e.g. software, online platforms, websites, etc.) that can manage big data, such as those employed by corpus linguists (e.g. the Voyant Tools used in this article), to carry out more elaborate corpus-based or corpus-driven analysis of Restoration drama.

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China Metaphors: an Investigation of the Metaphorical Strategies in *The Country Wife*'s China Scene

Abstract

Underlying the china scene in William Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (4.3.76-233) are the conceptual metaphor SEX IS CHINA and its linguistic realisations. By applying Conceptual Metaphor Theory to a historical dramatic text, this article has the main research purpose of supplying and analysing linguistic data on the role of these metaphorical devices in this Restoration comedy, and of examining how they concur in the unfolding of its plot in a comic direction. After presenting the research literature on the china scene and the practice of double entendre, the article outlines the theoretical framework to study literary metaphor and figurative techniques from a historical perspective, that is, scholarly work on literary and historical metaphor analysis. The data analysis considers the general metaphor SEX IS CHINA, its several target subcases and their linguistic realisations in the turns uttered by the characters in the china scene. The possible contributions of this investigation to the research literature reviewed in the theoretical section are that it linguistically demonstrates how Wycherley masters refined figurative language and strategies, and how articulate the china scene is from a cognitive standpoint.

Keywords: china scene; Conceptual Metaphor Theory; literary and historical metaphor analysis; Restoration comedy; *The Country Wife*; William Wycherley

1. Introduction

Among the most renowned scenes in the Restoration comedy *The Country Wife* (first performed in 1675) by William Wycherley (1641-1716) is scene 4.3.76-233, known as "the china scene".[1] It consists of a dialogue partly acted offstage and based on the dramatic strategy of double entendre, which is maintained continuously over a fair number of turns. The main characters of the scene actively engaged in the double entendre are Mr Horner and Lady Fidget: the former, the aptly-named rake and cynical and immoral libertine of the comedy, pretends impotence to freely keep company with and seduce alleged "women of honour" causing no concern in their jealous husbands;

[1] All quotations from the text are drawn from Wycherley 2014.

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the latter, to whom he revealed his trick in 2.1.542-86, is visiting him in his lodgings to have sex. Just when Lady Fidget embraces Horner, her husband Sir Jaspar enters and exclaims: "But is this your buying china? I thought you had been at the china house?" (4.3.84-5). Lady Fidget is prompt to move from linguistic action to physical action by feigning to search Horner's lodgings for his china collection. From then onwards, in a scenically and spatially complex scene, the two protagonists, offstage in Horner's bedroom, ostensibly talk about china while actually talking about and having sex. Meanwhile, onstage, Sir Jaspar has been joined by Mrs Squeamish and her grandmother Lady Squeamish. Along with the audience, the younger woman immediately understands the double entendre and realises that "china" stands for "sex", whereas the man and the older woman fail to do so and comment on Horner's purported impotence.

As defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (*OED* Online 2023), the dramatic device of the double entendre is constituted by a double meaning or an ambiguous expression, namely by a noun or phrase with two meanings, one usually indecent. Therefore, in the china scene, on the one hand, Horner and Lady Fidget employ the noun "china" to denote "porcelain, white ceramic material" to Sir Jaspar and Lady Squeamish; on the other hand, the two adulterers utilise the same noun to denote "sex" to each other, thereby relaying their sexual desire and, finally, indulging it. Through this double entendre as deployed and understood by Horner and Lady Fidget, the entity "sex" is unpredictably ascribed the surprising features, characteristics and traits of the entity "china"; this contributes to comic lines and to an amusing scene which has stood the test of time, as demonstrated by Soncini (2023). In order to fully describe and appreciate these lines and the entire scene, this article studies the china scene by applying Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff and Johnson 2003) to the double entendre as employed by Horner and Lady Fidget. That is to say, the article scrutinises the notion SEX as the target domain and the notion CHINA as the source domain in the conceptual metaphor SEX IS CHINA, which represents the target domain SEX in terms of the source domain CHINA.[2]

Against this background, and in accordance with the aims and scope of this Monographic Issue, the main research purpose of this article is threefold: 1. To identify and explore the linguistic realisations of the conceptual metaphor SEX IS CHINA underlying the china scene, thus analysing, from a linguistic perspective, a text which, to date, has mostly been examined from a literary perspective only; 2. To study a scene from a Restoration comedy via Conceptual Metaphor Theory, which has so far been utilised

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[2] In accordance with common typographical conventions, metaphors, targets and sources are in SMALL CAPITALS.

to investigate the use of metaphorical and figurative language in non-Restoration texts; 3. To provide and discuss new evidence on the function of metaphor in a historical dramatic text and on the impact of metaphor on the comic development of that text; to be more specific, to detect the background conventional metaphorical concepts the china scene draws from to create an unconventional figurative texture with dramatic effects which are both comic and entertaining, and rich and complex.

To achieve these research purposes, this article has the following structure. In the theoretical Section 2, the article firstly reviews the research literature on the china scene and the strategy of double entendre (Section 2.1); secondly, it reviews the research on literary and historical metaphor analysis, namely the theoretical framework to scrutinise literary metaphor and metaphorical practices from a historical standpoint (Section 2.2); in this section, the analysis undertaken is also situated within the wider context of that literature. The analytical Section 3 firstly describes the methodology adopted to explore the china scene as a case study in literary and historical metaphor analysis (Section 3.1). Subsequently, this section presents the data analysis: it investigates the conceptual metaphor SEX IS CHINA in general terms and pinpoints and explores its target subcases and linguistic realisations in the scene under examination (Section 3.2). Lastly, the concluding Section 4 discusses the data analysis and assesses the possible contributions of this scrutiny to the research literature introduced in the theoretical Section 2.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The China Scene and the Strategy of Double Entendre

According to Corman (2000, 59), each of the three comic intrigues *The Country Wife* is structured around "follows the Jonsonian pattern of clever rogues gulling deserving victims, though the objects of the rogues' attention here are exclusively women". In her introduction to one of the recent Italian editions and translations of *The Country Wife* (see Marroni 2023 and Sebellin 2023), Innocenti (2009, 14-6) states that, in the comedy, what present and future husbands (Corman's "deserving victims") do not understand is not actions, but words and gestures, which are essential elements in conversation and social life. These arts and their complexities are, instead, mastered by the wits and the libertine figures (Corman's "clever rogues"): their power over the other dramatis personae (whether to trick them or to seduce them) is wielded via their linguistic skills, which make them independent and self-interested humourists superior to the other characters and allowed to expose and ridicule social, moral and economic norms, with their hypocrisies and affectations. In

The Country Wife, Innocenti continues, winning out over others means acting linguistically and manipulating words; as a result, behavioural categories are created, and the speakers engaged in conversation are distinguished and, in case, distanced based on their inferential abilities and interpretational talents. Words and gestures are utilised ambiguously by the wits, whose linguistic techniques are founded on double entendres. The 'uninitiated' husbands only grasp the literal meaning, whilst their 'initiated' wives also grasp the unstated, seemingly hidden, licentious meaning and readily play the wits' game; or, as Degenhardt puts it, in this comedy "china constitutes a social code that divides those in the know from those who remain in the dark and are the butt of laughter" (2013, 166). Consequently, for the libertine Horner, underpinning every action are words, so much so that to lie with a woman implies to lie to her husband.

A case in point of these interactional mechanisms is *The Country Wife*'s china scene: here, "china" figuratively hints at "sex" and generates a large part of the action. More precisely, "One set of signs yields two entirely different messages: one to husband and another to wife. Such a splitting of the code is often accomplished by metaphor: husband interprets 'china' literally, wife metaphorically, such that 'buying china' simultaneously means domestic acquisition and sexual intercourse" (Thompson 1984, 73). In Holland's words, "The word 'china' is used six times in the scene and much of the sardonic, Swift-like force of the episode . . . derives from these insistent repetitions" (1959, 77). Furthermore, as stated by Markley (1988, 173), "The double – or multiple – meanings of 'China' reflect satirically the corruption of language in fashionable society and comically the dialogically undermining of social discourse".

This was first acknowledged by Wycherley himself in his following comedy *The Plain Dealer* (1676), in a metatheatrical satirical scene (2.1.379-465) proving how popular the china scene was in those years. In this play, Olivia criticises the china scene for overmanipulating the conversation, changing reality and assigning objects or their names (here, china) new meanings they did not have before (here, sex). Objects and names are so contaminated and communicate so obscene allusions that the woman now regards china as "the lewdest, filthiest thing", cannot consider china pieces as "the most innocent and pretty furniture of a lady's chamber" any longer, and has broken all the "defiled vessels" she used to keep in her bedroom. An innovative language with a special vocabulary is thereby shaped and deployed with intent to deceive. It is for these reasons that the china scene, together with Horner and his lovers, was edited out of such eighteenth-century reformed, edifying and sentimental adaptations as John Lee's comedy of the same title (1765) and David Garrick's *The Country Girl* (1766) (Innocenti 2009, 20-2).

As anticipated in the introductory Section 1, underpinning the china scene is the dramatic device of double entendre. Double entendres are a useful tool to hint at the indecorous subject matter of sexuality. Historically, they are already employed in a number of the riddles collected in the Exeter Book to rather openly allude to sex, female and male genitalia, women and men actively involved in sexual intercourse, and even masturbation. Erotic double entendres figure more frequently in Middle English texts, occasionally in somewhat coarse terms, as is the case with Chaucer's "The Miller's Tale" and *The House of Fame*. Early Modern English texts abound in not only explicitly licentious episodes, but also an extensive variety of indecent jokes and puns (Pons-Sanz 2014, 39-44). It may be no coincidence that the term "double entendre" entered the English language in the late seventeenth century (*OED* Online 2023): in those decades, the Restoration "comedy of manners" or "comedy of wit" simplified the verbal ambiguity characterising the Shakespearean and Elizabethan drama by making it more ironic and by contrasting a socially appropriate literal sense with an erotic non-literal sense conveyed by a linguistically and conversationally clever libertine (Innocenti 2009, 20).

Double entendre is defined by Goth (2018, 71) as "a play on the two related senses of a word or phrase"; as a result, it is an interaction between the speaker and the hearer consisting of speaker-induced and hearer-induced wordplay. This researcher also discusses the theory of double entendre and puts forward a taxonomy pinpointing four basic types. Moreover, when studying bawdy and satirical double entendre in Restoration and early eighteenth-century comedy, he contends that it is a complex theatrical event where innocent terms are employed to talk about social taboos; in particular, in the china scene, the inoffensive term "china" is utilised to talk about the social taboo of illicit and lecherous sex.

More precisely, Goth's taxonomy of double entendre is composed of two sets of types: 1. Four basic types of structural double entendre, founded on the rhetorical properties of wordplay; and 2. Four basic types of interactional double entendre, depending on speaker-hearer interaction. Of the four structural types, type 2, or metaphor, is figurative and "add[s] a metaphorical to a literal meaning . . . the second, figurative sense only arises in the context of an utterance" (Goth 2018, 75). In addition, of the four interactional types, type 4 is the one where "The speaker does not utter a *double entendre*, but the hearer deliberately reinterprets it as such" (79). The china scene opens with and is triggered by an instance of structural type 2 combined with interactional type 4. Here, the double entendre is constituted by an exchange between the witless fool Sir Jaspar and his wife Lady Fidget: in Goth's model, the former is the speaker uttering a literal meaning, the latter is the hearer adding and intentionally activating a metaphorical meaning:

> Sir Jaspar But is this your buying china? I thought you had been at the china house?
>
> . . .
>
> Lady Fidget [Horner] knows China very well, and has himself very good, but will not let me see it lest I should beg some. But I will find it out, and have what I came for yet.
>
> (4.3.84-5, 109-12)

Goth (2018, 82) comments on this exchange as follows:

> What sounds uncompromising to Sir Jaspar is in fact an example of improvised, hearer-induced *double entendre*: Lady Fidget quick-wittedly converts the term china into a metaphor of sex (and, particularly, the phallus) in order to communicate her desires to Horner and to lead him to the adjacent room where they can consummate sex.

Consequently , it is the hearer Lady Fidget who creates a successful wordplay: she cloaks her turns in ambiguity and assigns the noun "china" its second, metaphorical meaning of "sex", thus forming an intellectual and, immediately afterwards, sexual alliance with Horner. Through her manipulative double entendre, a dynamic relation is established between the literal meaning and the figurative meaning of the double entendre. According to Soncini (2023), "Chinese porcelain shows a remarkable semantic mobility" in *The Country Wife*: "Wycherley places at the centre of his play a comically unstable signifier that is transformed by the various minds that encounter it". In fact, the term "china" is first deployed literally by Sir Jaspar; subsequently, it retains its literal meaning, but is elaborated into a metaphor of sex by Lady Fidget; finally, in the farcical climax, when Lady Fidget and Mrs Squeamish fight over Horner, the licentious figurative meaning of "sex", to be more specific of "penis" and "sexual potency", takes precedence over and obliterates the innocent literal meaning of "china". This use of language hence turns the china scene into a prototypical "epic *double entendre*", that is, a scene "in which some key word is repeated so insistently that it becomes invested with an extra-literal significance" (Chadwick 1975, 45).

As can be inferred, this research literature only investigates the china scene from a literary and cultural perspective, not from a linguistic perspective. Furthermore, the metaphor of china as sex is not explored from a linguistic and cognitive standpoint or by complying with a linguistic and cognitive paradigm, such as Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Accordingly, this scrutiny occupies this research niche and analyses the china scene and the china metaphor by applying Conceptual Metaphor Theory. As *The Country Wife* is not a contemporary text, but a Restoration text, Section 2.2 below reviews the research literature on the examination of literary metaphor from a historical viewpoint.

2.2. Literary and Historical Metaphor Analysis

In cognitive linguistics, metaphor has been investigated as the basis for conceptualisation in language and thought. As noted in the introductory Section 1, in the china scene, by means of a double entendre, the idea sex is utilised as the target domain and the idea china as the source domain in the conceptual metaphor sex is china. In other words, in line with Conceptual Metaphor Theory, a notion from one field of reference (here, the target domain sex) is substituted by and represented in terms of a notion from another field of reference (here, the source domain china) taking account of some perceived analogy, resemblance or semantic link between the two fields (Lakoff and Johnson 2003).

Since sex is china is present in a literary text, it should be scrutinised as a literary metaphor. Kövecses describes literary metaphors as follows: "Literary metaphors are found in literary works and are especially prevalent in poetry. As conceptual metaphors, they are commonly conventional; as linguistic expressions, they are commonly unconventional" (2010, 326; but see the analytical Section 3 for the literary metaphor sex is china in *The Country Wife*). As further asserted by Lakoff and Turner:

> It is commonly thought that poetic language is beyond ordinary language – that it is something essentially different, special, higher, with extraordinary tools and techniques like metaphor and metonymy, instruments beyond the reach of someone who just talks. But great poets, as master craftsmen [sic], use basically the same tools we use; what makes them different is their talent for using these tools, and their skill in using them, which they acquire from sustained attention, study, and practice. (1989, xi)

That is to say, writers create unconventional literary metaphors to depict entities in the world from a novel and unusual standpoint. Generally, creative and original literary metaphors are less immediately intelligible and less readily understood than those employed in, for example, ordinary language and thought or scientific discourse, because they are loaded with more meaning. However, as discovered by cognitive linguists exploring literary language, epitomised by poetic language, underlying most literary metaphors is our everyday conceptual system and the materials of our everyday conventional thought. In other words, a large number of literary metaphors are creative reworkings of ordinary conceptual metaphors; most literary metaphors appearing original can be related back to, depend on and are creative linguistic realisations of conventional conceptual metaphors already occurring in the lexicon and recorded in dictionaries and metaphor databases (Kövecses 2010, Chapter 4).

As a result, to understand original literary metaphor, conventional conceptual metaphor must be understood. This is why, moving from Lakoff and Turner's (1989) model, literary metaphors must be studied in light of the conceptual metaphors they are based on. This line of research is exemplified by Lakoff and Turner's own work, which adopts this methodology to investigate literary texts from antiquity to the present day belonging to the Western canon, and by the work of various scholars in literature and cognitive linguistics (to name just one, see Gibbs 1994; for an essential literature review, see Csábi 2014).

Hence, Conceptual Metaphor Theory provides a suitable and fully-equipped model to identify and classify the conventional properties of metaphors. Nevertheless, this model is less apt to describe and account for the unconventional and original aspects of metaphors, especially of those found in creative discourses. This theoretical and methodological issue has been key to such recent developments in metaphor studies as Steen's Deliberate Metaphor Theory (2017) and Prandi's notion of conceptual conflict (2017).

In Deliberate Metaphor Theory, "deliberate metaphor concerns the intentional use of metaphors *as* metaphors between sender and addressee . . . This definition minimally implies that language users, in production or reception, pay distinct attention to the source domain as a separate domain of reference" (Steen 2017, 1-2). This model gives prominence to the role of intentionality in the use of deliberate metaphors (as opposed to conventional metaphors, which are employed unintentionally) and to the communicative context in which they are utilised. With regard to conceptual conflict theory, a conflictual meaning is "a network of conceptual relations that does not match an independent and consistent conceptual model . . . Sentences whose meanings are torn by a conflict among their conceptual constituents are the same as those that are interpreted in texts as living figures and above all as living metaphors" (Prandi 2017, xi). This theory highlights the importance of conflictual concepts as contingent meanings arising from living or creative metaphors, whilst conventional or non-creative metaphors arise from non-conflictual concepts.

Further challenges present themselves when scrutinising metaphor from a historical viewpoint, namely when exploring metaphor in non-contemporary text and discourse. Two points must be borne in mind: the sociohistorical, geographical, and cultural situatedness of metaphor, and the philosophical and ideological frameworks developed to analyse it. From a philosophical and epistemological perspective, metaphor has long been conceived as a phenomenon contextualised in social intercourse, pragmatic situation and cultural knowledge and understanding. Actually, metaphor is a social, contextual, historical and communicative mechanism founded on interactional ability and on the pragmatic process of making and interpreting

inferences in a given context. As Nerlich (2010, 198) puts it, "metaphors are historically and culturally situated. They may be conceptually and even neurally grounded but without sociopolitical and historical knowledge metaphors would not be created and understood, or change over time".

Historically, the links between metaphor and figures of speech, on the one hand, and human cognition and action, on the other hand, were first examined in ancient times. This study of metaphor culminated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries throughout Europe, with a first peak in the 1830s and a second in the 1880s and 1890s (Nerlich 2010, 194-7). In what follows, for the sake of relevance to *The Country Wife* and the china scene, I only treat theories of metaphor evolved in England or in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

With regard to the use of metaphor and the part it played in the language, literature and culture of the English Renaissance, in Adamson's words,

> [m]ost renaissance commentators agree with Quintilian (*Institutio* 8.vi.4-18) that metaphor is both "the commonest and by far the most beautiful of tropes". It is the commonest because of its occurrence in the metaphors of everyday speech, where I '*boil* with rage' or '*see* your point'; in its literary form, it is 'the most beautiful' not only because it evokes creative activity in the reader but because that activity results, as in the case of the heuristic pun and some forms of paradox, in a changed understanding of the world, in this case by causing us to reanalyse one phenomenon in terms of another. (2008, 566)

Indeed, the familiar expressions "boil with rage" and "see your point" are linguistic realisations of the frequently occurring conceptual metaphors ANGER IS THE HEAT OF FLUID IN A CONTAINER and UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING, respectively (David et al. 2016-2018). Moreover, creative literary metaphors subvert the literal sense and divert the meaning of words: as illustrated by the china scene and by the metaphor SEX IS CHINA, they have the functions of discovering and understanding the unknown qualities of the target domain SEX, and of prompting us to re-examine the target domain by contrasting it with the source domain CHINA.

From the end of the seventeenth century onwards, inspired by the work of the Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico, several authors tried to develop a comprehensive philosophy of metaphor, and dedicated serious consideration to the interaction of metaphor with truth. In these scholars' view, metaphor was not a mere figure of speech or a simple poetic decoration, ornamentation, or fiction. Metaphor was believed to be a necessary (and fascinating) strategy underpinning the emergence and configuration of human language and thought and driving their evolution, entrenched as it was in human action and communication. Therefore, metaphor was investigated in the broader context

of everyday life, and the social dimension of language use was considered (Nerlich 2010, 194-5).

As for English neo-classical poetic diction and poetic practice, Adamson (2008, 620-1) maintains that metaphor was the most evident technique for creating defamiliarisation and elevating the language of poetry. Throughout the seventeenth century, a pictorial conception of metaphor arose; this tendency reached its peak in the eighteenth century, when the terms "image" and "imagery" were deployed as synonyms of metaphor. According to this conception, metaphor consisted of a comparison between visual images: it was no longer thought to be a lexical or semantic figure of speech, but an imaginative act via which one entity was figured to be another. The pictorial conception is successfully exemplified in *The Country Wife* and the china scene by a number of linguistic realisations of the china metaphor. Among other features, this is shown in the analytical Section 3 below, which covers the scrutiny of the scene, as well as the data from it under examination and the methodology to study them.

3. Data, Methodology and Analysis

3.1. Data and Methodology

The china scene, namely scene 4.3.76-233 from *The Country Wife*, is set at Horner's lodgings. Constituted by 157 lines, it opens with Sir Jaspar Fidget joining Horner, Lady Fidget and the Quack (hiding behind a screen for the entire scene to witness the results of Horner's pretended impotence); during the scene, at 4.3.140 and 4.3.159, Mrs Squeamish and Lady Squeamish also join them; it closes with Pinchwife coming onstage. As mentioned in the sections above, this article investigates the china scene as a case study in literary and historical metaphor analysis, that is, it explores the conceptual metaphor SEX IS CHINA and its linguistic realisations in the scene. Consequently, the scene was read carefully and the turns including these linguistic realisations were identified and manually selected. The data analysis below accomplishes the research purpose outlined in the introductory Section 1; the methodological approach best suited to doing this is to examine qualitatively the conceptual metaphor SEX IS CHINA in general terms, and its linguistic realisations and the linguistic devices eliciting it in detail.

Whenever possible, the metaphorical data from the china scene are compared with the data from three authoritative metaphor databases, namely Master Metaphor List (Lakoff and Cognitive Linguistics Group 1991), Metalude (Goatly and LLE Project 2002-2005) and MetaNet (David et al. 2016-2018). These provide important evidence for Wycherley's reliance

on and, above all, manipulation of underlying conceptual metaphors and metaphorical patterns in the language of the china scene.[3]

3.2. Analysis

3.2.1. Metaphorical China

Why did Wycherley opt for china for his metaphorical devices and double entendre, and what are the new, various, and complex meanings the china scene attaches to this material? Or, in terms of conceptual metaphor, what are the new target domains depicted by the source domain CHINA? And what are the aspects of the source domain conceptually mapping to the target domain? Several target domains and conceptual mappings with erotic allusions are possible and have been pinpointed by the research literature on the china scene. With a view to introducing the detailed analysis of the metaphorical data in the scene given in the following sections, the previous examinations of the scene are here rephrased in conceptual metaphor terms. Therefore, according to that research literature and those examinations, the following are the various target domains represented by the source domain CHINA, together with their conceptual mappings:

- APPETITE, since china is a vessel for food (Holland 1959, 77) (APPETITE IS CHINA);
- SUPERFICIALITY/ARTIFICIALITY, because china is so finely worked, decorated and fancy that its original appearance of mere earth or clay is concealed (Holland 1959, 77) (SUPERFICIALITY/ARTIFICIALITY IS CHINA);
- CHASTITY, due to china being fragile, precious and easily broken (Williams 1962, 412-18) (CHASTITY IS CHINA);
- DESIRE, given that pieces of china were luxury commodities and, as such, collectables especially coveted by female consumers (DESIRE IS CHINA). To be more specific, when the comedy was written and staged, collecting china was very fashionable, and china houses, the shops selling china pieces, provided a meeting place, perhaps devoted to amorous encounters (Innocenti 2009, 367). This clearly shows that, as mentioned in Section 2.2, metaphors are historically and culturally contextualised, and must be investigated as such. That is to say, the metaphor DESIRE IS CHINA is culture-based and exemplifies the role of cultural history in conceptual mappings (Trim 2011, 86-7).

[3] See Goatly 2008, Chapter 8 for a conceptual metaphor stylistic study of John Donne's poetry based on the root analogies listed in Metalude.

As anticipated in Sections 1 and 2, underlying the china scene is the conceptual metaphor SEX IS CHINA, which portrays the target domain SEX in terms of the source domain CHINA. Hence, the four metaphors above can be considered as target subcases of the general metaphor SEX IS CHINA.[4] Several metaphorical entailments logically follow from these conceptual relations. For instance,

- The target domain APPETITE triggers the metaphor SEXUAL APPETITE IS PHYSICAL APPETITE;
- The metaphor SEX IS LACK OF EMOTIONAL COMMITMENT AND BIOLOGICAL PURPOSE is activated by the target domain SUPERFICIALITY/ARTIFICIALITY;
- The target domain CHASTITY prompts the metaphor HAVING SEX IS BREAKING CHINA;
- The metaphors SEXUAL DESIRE IS DESIRE FOR CHINA and HAVING MANY LOVERS IS COLLECTING CHINA are elicited by the target domain DESIRE.

Neither the general metaphor SEX IS CHINA nor its four target subcases APPETITE IS CHINA, SUPERFICIALITY/ARTIFICIALITY IS CHINA, CHASTITY IS CHINA and DESIRE IS CHINA, as well as almost all their metaphorical entailments, are recorded in the three metaphor databases Master Metaphor List, Metalude and MetaNet (the only exception is SEXUAL APPETITE IS PHYSICAL APPETITE, which is nearly synonymous with DESIRE IS APPETITE from Metalude, and with DESIRE IS HUNGER from Metanet and Master Metaphor List, with its special case LUST IS HUNGER from Master Metaphor List). Therefore, contrary to Kövecses' (2010, 326) definition of literary metaphors (see Section 2.2), it can be safely asserted that both the conceptual metaphor SEX IS CHINA and its linguistic expressions or realisations in the china scene are unconventional. The original and creative nature of the SEX IS CHINA metaphor fully emerges when it is profitably scrutinised, in Steen's (2017) terms, as a deliberate metaphor deployed intentionally by the author, taking the addressee and the reception process into account, and emphasising the source domain CHINA as well as the target domain SEX; or when it is explored, in Prandi's (2017) words, as a conflictual metaphor arising from the opposite domains SEX and CHINA, and going beyond common, ordinary and familiar conceptual models and relations (see Section 2.2).

3.2.2. From Non-Metaphorical China to Metaphorical China

Nevertheless, as shown in Section 2.1, the first two occurrences of the noun "china", uttered by Sir Jaspar, are still non-metaphorical:

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[4] For a definition and illustration of the terms "target subcase" and "general metaphor", see the introduction to the metaphor database MetaNet.

Sᴏ Jᴀsᴘᴀʀ But is this your buying china? I thought you had been at the china
  house?
(4.3.84-5)

The two occurrences (the first a nominal head, the second a premodifier in
the noun phrase "china house") have the literal meaning of "porcelain, white
ceramic material" or "items made of this". In an aside, by employing the
echoic structure "China house!", Horner is prompt to respond:

Hᴏʀɴᴇʀ (*Aside*) China house! That's my cue, I must take it.
(4.3.86)

Through the metatheatrical term "cue", the rake indicates to the audience
(the addressees of his aside) that he intends to utilise the noun "china" as a
signal to begin a speech; however, it is not clear yet what specific use he will
make of it and that a double entendre will ensue.
    It falls to Lady Fidget to trigger the double entendre and, along with it,
the metaphorical meaning of "china". She deceptively confirms that she was,
in fact, going to the china house to buy china, claims that she had asked
Horner to join her, and explains why:

Lᴀᴅʏ Fɪᴅɢᴇᴛ . . . for he knows china very well, and has himself very good,
  but will not let me see it lest I should beg some. But I will find it out, and
  have what I came for yet.
(4.3.109-12)

If sᴇx ɪs ᴄʜɪɴᴀ, Lady Fidget's turn attributes several characteristics of
the source domain ᴄʜɪɴᴀ to the target domain sᴇx by means of cognitive
practices like conceptual mappings, inferences, and further conceptual
metaphors. More precisely,

- The finite clause "he knows china very well" activates the conceptual
  mapping "Sex is an activity Horner knows very well" and the
  inference "Sex is an activity few people know very well";
- The conceptual mapping "Very good sex is an activity Horner can
  engage in" and the inference "Very good sex is an activity few
  people can engage in" are prompted by the finite clause "[Horner]
  has himself very good [china]";
- The finite clause "[Horner] will not let me see it [china]" elicits the
  conceptual mapping "Sex is an activity which is private/not to be
  openly revealed" (also "personal/not associated with company");
- The conceptual mapping "Very good sex is a rare commodity people
  must beg" is triggered by the finite clause "I should beg some [very
  good china]". Underlying this conceptual mapping is the metaphor

SEX IS A COMMODITY, which is a general metaphor for the source subcase SEX IS CHINA;

- The finite clause "I will find it [very good china] out" activates the conceptual mapping "Very good sex is a rare commodity to be looked for and found out". This conceptual mapping is also based on the general metaphor SEX IS A COMMODITY just referred to.

After uttering this turn, Lady Fidget exits, enters Horner's chamber offstage, and locks the door behind her. Pretending to be angry at her, the rake utters a new double entendre adding a second, metaphorical meaning to the main, literal meaning of the noun phrase "the back way". Witlessly, not only does Sir Jaspar fail to understand the metaphorical meaning of the new double entendre, but he also comically elaborates on the double entendre itself:

> HORNER Now is she throwing my things about, and rifling all I have, but I'll get into her the back way, and so rifle her for it . . .
> SIR JASPAR Wife! My Lady Fidget! Wife! He is coming into you the back way!
> LADY FIDGET Let him come, and welcome, which way he will.
> (4.3.125-35)

The metaphorical meaning of the new double entendre is not founded on the conceptual metaphor SEX IS CHINA. Nevertheless, underpinning it is another conceptual metaphor deployed erotically; its linguistic realisations are employed by three different characters in three different turns, thereby making it salient. For these reasons, the new double entendre is also studied in this article on the sexual figurative techniques in the china scene.

Such an erotic conceptual metaphor is THE BODY IS A BUILDING and, in particular, its metaphorical entailment A BODILY ORIFICE IS A WAY IN/DOOR. It is prompted by the noun phrases "the back way" and "which way he will", the verbs of movement collocating with these phrases, and the clauses they appear in, namely "I'll get into her the back way", "He is coming into you the back way!", and "Let him come, and welcome, which way he will". The primary trait of the source domain BUILDING conceptually mapping to the target domain BODY is the fact that a building has at least a door or a way in to it; when it has at least two, one is normally at the front, another at the back (see the set noun phrases "the front door" and "the back door").

Both the conceptual metaphor THE BODY IS A BUILDING and its metaphorical entailment A BODILY ORIFICE IS A WAY IN/DOOR can be connected with those reported in the metaphor databases. To be more specific, the conceptual metaphor PEOPLE/BODIES ARE BUILDINGS is listed in Master Metaphor List, and the root analogy HUMAN IS BUILDING in Metalude.[5] No further information

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[5] A root analogy is a conventionalised and lexicalised metaphor in Metalude's terminology.

on the conceptual metaphor is offered in Master Metaphor List. Conversely, Metalude notes that the root analogy is elicited by the lexical item "orifice", with the literal meaning of "opening in a building e.g. door, window", and the metaphorical meaning "one of the 6 or 7 openings in the body"; this is illustrated by the example sentence "drugs can be administered through the anal orifice". Hence, in Kövecses' terms, those in the china scene are conventional as conceptual metaphors, but are unconventional as linguistic expressions; this linguistic unconventionality produces comic effects on the audience, here and when other unconventional linguistic expressions are utilised.

3.2.3. Pictorial China

As the scene develops, additional conceptual metaphors emerge. Because they can be linked to those set down in the metaphor databases, they are more conventional than the general metaphor SEX IS CHINA, but equally comic. This is what happens after Sir Jaspar has been joined by Mrs Squeamish and Lady Squeamish:

> (*Enter* LADY FIDGET *with a piece of china in her hand, and* HORNER *following.*)
> LADY FIDGET And I have been toiling and moiling for the prettiest piece of
>   china, my dear.
> (4.3.187-8)

As shown in Section 2.2, the pictorial conception of metaphor dates back to the same period as *The Country Wife*; consequently, the audience of the comedy might perhaps have adopted it to interpret the china scene and the general metaphor SEX IS CHINA. This pictorial reading requires visual images to draw comparisons between them and to express one image by means of another. In fact, Holland (1959, 77) argues that Horner's virility and sexual energy are likened to china to cover up his relationship with Lady Fidget; Kowaleski-Wallace (1997, 56) contends that the hardness of china makes it a suitable phallic image; and Goth (2018, 83) maintains that Lady Fidget returns onstage "carrying a piece of china as a trophy and visual representation of consummated sex". Accordingly, another target subcase of the general metaphor SEX IS CHINA is triggered, that is, THE PENIS IS CHINA; this is related to HUMAN IS VALUABLE OBJECT/COMMODITY, a root analogy listed in Metalude. A quality of the source domains CHINA and VALUABLE OBJECT/COMMODITY is ascribed by Lady Fidget's turn to the target domains THE PENIS and HUMAN: the finite clause "I have been toiling and moiling for the prettiest piece of china" activates the conceptual mapping "The penis/human is an object/commodity other humans drudge and work hard to get".

The dialogue continues with Mrs Squeamish actively joining Horner and Lady Fidget and asking for some "china" for herself:

> MRS SQUEAMISH O Lord, I'll have some china too. Good Master Horner, don't think to give other people china, and me none. Come in with me too.
> (4.3.190-2)

Given that THE PENIS IS CHINA, Mrs Squeamish's turn credits the target domain THE PENIS with a number of properties of the source domain CHINA, that is:

- The finite clause "I'll have some china too" prompts the conceptual mapping "The penis is an object other humans get" and the inference "The penis is an object other humans enjoy getting";
- The conceptual mapping "The penis is an object other humans must get equitably and in equal shares or amounts" is elicited by the imperative clause "don't think to give other people china, and me none".

Via these cognitive strategies, Mrs Squeamish's utterance turns the rake into "a universal donor of china" and "a Grotesque or mere mechanism" (Holland 1959, 77). Another metaphor therefore emerges, which expresses the women's viewpoint on and use of Horner, namely MALE LOVER IS MACHINE. This further metaphor is related to four conceptual metaphors: the two metaphors LUSTFUL PERSON IS AN ACTIVATED MACHINE and PEOPLE ARE MACHINES catalogued in Master Metaphor List, and the two Metalude root analogies HUMAN IS MACHINE/APPLIANCE and HUMAN IS IMPLEMENT/UTENSIL. *The Country Wife*'s metaphors THE PENIS IS CHINA and MALE LOVER IS MACHINE, owing to the metaphors and the root analogies they are associated with, represent Horner and his body as and reduce him to a material thing of use and value, an object of trade, an apparatus moving mechanically and not exercising free will, whose only aim is to perform properly. In sum, the role of these figurative strategies is to dehumanise the rake.

3.2.4. More Metaphorical China

What happens to Horner when he must confess to Lady Fidget and Mrs Squeamish that he has no "china" left?

> HORNER Upon my honour I have none left now.
> MRS SQUEAMISH Nay, nay, I have known you deny your china before now, but you shan't put me off so. Come.
> HORNER This lady had the last there.

LADY FIDGET Yes indeed, madam, to my certain knowledge he has no more left.

MRS SQUEAMISH Oh, but it may be he may have some you could not find.

LADY FIDGET What, d'ye think if he had had any left, I would not have had it too? For we women of quality never think we have china enough.

HORNER Do not take it ill, I cannot make china for you all, but I will have a roll-wagon for you too, another time.

(4.3.193-204)

How are Horner and his body now conceptualised? If THE PENIS IS CHINA, and if the penis metonymically stands for sexual potency, another target subcase of the general metaphor SEX IS CHINA emerges, that is, SEXUAL POTENCY IS CHINA (or, as is the case in the turns cited above, LACK OF SEXUAL POTENCY IS LACK OF CHINA). More precisely, in these turns, the attributes of the source domain CHINA conceptually map to the target domain SEXUAL POTENCY as follows:

- The finite clauses "I have none [china] left now", "he has no more [china] left", and "if he had had any [china] left" trigger the conceptual mapping "Sexual potency is a commodity a human can be left without";
- The conceptual mapping "Sexual potency is a commodity a human can refuse to grant" is activated by the finite clause "I have known you deny your china before now";
- The finite clauses "This lady had the last [china] there" and "I would not have had it [any china left] too" prompt the conceptual mapping "Sexual potency is a commodity other humans make use of until there is none left";
- The conceptual mapping "Sexual potency is a commodity to be looked for and found out" is elicited by the finite clause "it may be he may have some [china] you could not find";
- The finite clause "we women of quality never think we have china enough" triggers the conceptual mapping "Sexual potency is a commodity other humans are never satiated with or tired of";
- The conceptual mapping "Sexual potency is a commodity which cannot be produced as soon as or whenever requested" is activated by the finite clause "I cannot make china for you all".

As a result of this interaction among the three dramatis personae and of the cognitive devices they trigger, the conceptual metaphor MALE LOVER IS MACHINE must be adapted as SEXUALLY EXERTED MALE LOVER IS DEACTIVATED/ INOPERABLE/BROKEN MACHINE. Consequently, as the dehumanised rake is unable to accomplish his goal of performing properly, Horner is turned

into a useless, valueless, and untradable object. In addition, he is even more dispensable to the two women, since, for them, sex is china and superficiality/artificiality is china, namely, sex is lack of emotional commitment and biological purpose; accordingly, any other man would serve his purpose, provided that he is sexually potent. What is more, ironically and paradoxically, Horner has changed, albeit temporarily, into the impotent man he has feigned to be since the beginning of the comedy. Hence, in Markley's (1988, 175) words, he "has become a victim of his machinations".

After the conceptual mappings on Horner's (lack of) sexual potency are prompted by the three protagonists, the rake cannot but promise Mrs Squeamish that "I will have a roll-wagon for you too, another time". As observed by Innocenti (2009, 367), "roll-wagon" is the anglicised form of the Dutch term "rolwagen", which indicates a cylindrical K'ang Hsi Chinese vase. Accordingly, Horner deliberately deploys a clear visual image eliciting, once again, the conceptual metaphor the penis is china and the pictorial conception of metaphor: he thus finishes off the china scene with a prominent phallic image.[6]

4. Conclusion

This article on the metaphorical practices in *The Country Wife*'s china scene has linguistically scrutinised a sequence from a comedy which, so far, has principally been explored from a literary standpoint, as proven by the literature review in Section 2.1 and by the various references in the analysis. More precisely, the article has detected and thoroughly examined the linguistic realisations of the conceptual metaphor sex is china the china scene is founded on, together with additional conceptual metaphors connected with it which also structure the text. In other words, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, which has, to date, been applied to the study of metaphorical language in non-Restoration texts, has here been employed to investigate a scene from a Restoration comedy. The primary contribution of the article to the research on *The Country Wife* on the one hand and on Conceptual Metaphor Theory on the other hand, outlined in the theoretical Section 2, is twofold: 1. To have offered and scrutinised linguistic data on the role of the figurative techniques in a historical dramatic text; and 2. To have shown how those techniques influence the comic unfolding of the plot of that text and the conversation among its protagonists.

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[6] See Rossi 2023 for an interpretation of the figure of Horner in light of the linguistic phenomenon of irony and of the ironic mechanisms he makes use of.

To be more specific, the examination in the analytical Section 3 has demonstrated that the general metaphor SEX IS CHINA, as utilised in the china scene, includes a number of target subcases, like APPETITE IS CHINA, SUPERFICIALITY/ARTIFICIALITY IS CHINA, CHASTITY IS CHINA, and DESIRE IS CHINA. Furthermore, the comic and even farcical development of the scene and of the interaction is signalled by the general metaphor SEX IS CHINA evolving into its target subcases THE PENIS IS CHINA and SEXUAL POTENCY IS CHINA or, rather, LACK OF SEXUAL POTENCY IS LACK OF CHINA. SEX IS CHINA and its diverse subcases are underlain or closely related to several conceptual metaphors and root analogies catalogued in the three metaphor databases Master Metaphor List, Metalude and MetaNet, for example DESIRE IS APPETITE, HUMAN IS VALUABLE OBJECT/COMMODITY, and LUSTFUL PERSON IS AN ACTIVATED MACHINE.

Their being recorded in the databases means that these cognitive patterns are in current use nowadays; this may come as no surprise, for conceptual metaphors are, by definition, persistent and pervasive configurations in thought, language and culture. The fact that contemporary audiences share these cognitive patterns with the Restoration audience may be one of the reasons why the text in general and the china scene in particular are still found comic and entertaining these days. It is the various and diverse linguistic realisations and unpredictable elaborations of the conceptual metaphor SEX IS CHINA, along with the surprising outcomes determined by their use in the dramatic context of the china scene, that still have wide appeal today. As a result, this study and the linguistic evidence it supplies testify to the cognitive complexity of the china scene and to the sophistication of the metaphorical language and mechanisms deployed by *The Country Wife*'s author.

Acknowledgments

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China Travels: Figurations, Revisions, and Transformations from Wycherley's Time to the Present Day

Abstract

This article revisits the performance history of *The Country Wife* by looking at changing configurations of its celebrated china scene across a centuries-long journey that begins with Wycherley's own reprise of the same trope in his next comedy, *The Plain Dealer*, and reaches up to the present day. Unlike the vast majority of Restoration plays, which virtually disappeared from the stage from the mid-eighteenth until well into the twentieth century, *The Country Wife* has remained a fixture within the English repertoire; the afterlife of its iconic scene, however, is a different story, a bumpy map with its highs and lows, emergences and suppressions and, sometimes, metamorphoses. By focusing on some paradigmatic stages in the history of the play's reception and reproduction, this paper evidences at once the frailty and the resilience of Wycherley's archetypal comic scene and of the object it contributed to install as a prominent theatrical and cultural signifier.

KEYWORDS: Restoration comedy; *The Country Wife*; William Wycherley; china scene; reception; translatability; cultural relocation

To London theatregoers who, in 1675, gathered at Drury Lane to watch William Wycherley's new comedy, there was no question that Lady Fidget's hard-won trophy from her trafficking in the libertine's bedroom had travelled a long way before landing in her greedy hands. As they enjoyed Wycherley's archetypal comic scene in *The Country Wife*, Restoration audiences immediately identified the stage prop that substantiates the fiction of "buying china" as a cover for illicit sex as a luxury commodity imported from the remote Eastern country whence porcelain derived its popular name. This awareness conceivably added to their amusement, as they worried about the fate of the costly artefact once it has been dislodged from the safety of Horner's cabinet to become an object of contention between his sexually voracious female visitors: will the fragile roll wagon survive unscathed this final, brief but tumultuous trait of its journey from faraway China to fashionable London? Or is the

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phallic-shaped vase doomed to suffer irreparable damage through its final exposure to uncontrolled (and uncontrollable) female desire? In the play, the precious commodity brandished by Lady Fidget as evidence of her success exits the stage still miraculously intact; but a quick glance at the afterlife of *The Country Wife* and the broader cultural reverberations of its central scene reveals that it does not take long before Wycherley's porcelain begins to suffer serious injury. This already happens in the dramatist's own reprise of the infamous scene in *The Plain Dealer,* and the breakage – both literal and metaphorical – continues as Wycherley's china proceeds to migrate to ever-new texts and contexts, reaching up to the present day. In its subsequent incarnations across a centuries-long history of reception and reproduction, china's liability to incur damage appears closely associated with its wanton sexualisation in Wycherley's play but also, as I illustrate below, to an inborn propensity to travel, both literally and figuratively. By focusing on some paradigmatic stages in the literary and theatrical afterlife of *The Country Wife,* this paper evidences at once the frailty and the resilience of Wycherley's iconic scene and of the prop it contributed to install as a prominent theatrical and cultural signifier. As befits a prized commodity, china changes hands and becomes remoulded with each new appropriation; it is displaced or outright excised, revisited, transposed or transmuted, yet retains its recognisability and singular vitality all along the way.

1. Enter China

From the very beginning of its stage life as a prop,[1] upon its entrance in Act 4, Scene 3 of *The Country Wife*, Chinese porcelain shows a remarkable semantic mobility. The ribald humour of Wycherley's celebrated scene rests on the fact that each of the characters has a slightly different understanding of what is happening, depending on what they take to be the meaning of china: sexual intercourse, a male body part, Horner's sexual stamina as well as a 'normal' porcelain vase for the cuckolded husband. Wycherley places at the centre of his play a comically unstable signifier that is transformed by the various minds that encounter it, thereby revealing the characters' respective mastery of the complex code demarcating witty cosmopolites from unpolished outsiders in Restoration society. On one level, the impudent colonisation of an apparently innocent word by improper sexual content is traceable to the "libertine offensive" (Novak 1977) whereby

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[1] Verbal references to chinaware, and especially to china-houses as places of sexual promiscuity, were of course already current in pre-Restoration drama: see Williams 1994, 1, 236-8.

1670s Restoration comedies sought to blot out the memory of civil war and Puritanism. At the same time, however, the scene's emphasis on words as social artefacts alerts us to china's special suitability to generate multiple and multiplying meanings for its characters and audiences alike. Chinese porcelain entered the Restoration stage loaded with a cultural and ideological baggage that Wycherley was quick to leverage for satirical purposes. By increasing and extending the metaphorical range of the china motif, these connotations have significantly contributed to its lasting vitality and viability along its protracted stage life.

As both literary critics and cultural historians have not failed to point out, the sexualisation of china in *The Country Wife* resonates with contemporary concerns about the dawning consumer culture and the opportunities it created for "a new and disturbingly public role for women" (Porter 2002, 407; see also Degenhardt 2013; Kowaleski-Wallace 1995; Porter 1999; Rosenthal 2020; Zuroski Jenkins 2013). The Restoration period, an age of rapidly expanding overseas trade and budding imperial expansion, saw the emergence of a whole new breed of "voracious urban collectors of luxury commodities, usually gendered female" (Tait 2020). Chinese porcelain, an exotic import made popular by Charles II's Portuguese queen, Catherine of Braganza, took pride of place among the new luxury goods associated with the female consumer and her growing agency in the economic and social sphere. In his comedy, Wycherley paradigmatically captures the transition from woman as an object of desire to woman as a desiring subject which was effected by the consumer revolution, and spotlights the cultural anxieties surrounding this conspicuous breach of gender prerogatives. In the hands of his fashionable Town ladies, china sheds its traditional metaphorical attributes as a trope for feminine fragility, an emblem of the valuable but easily breakable asset of maidenhood, to become instead a figure of robust and seemingly unquenchable female appetite.

Wycherley's china scene insists on the fundamental kinship between female consumption and sexual transgression. To all appearances, London's "women of reputation" (CW, 4.3.36) routinely pass off their sexual escapades as shopping expeditions; when Mrs Squeamish arrives at Horner's lodgings, determined to obtain her own share of china, Lady Fidget corroborates the libertine's claim that he has no more in stock by reminding her impatient associate of women's consumerist voracity: "What, d'ye think if he had any left, I would not have had it too? For we women of quality never think we have china enough" (4.3.200-2). This reversal of gender attributions is of crucial import for the play's sexual politics. The dramatist pointedly relies on china's status as a fashionable commodity to turn the tables on the rake hero of libertine comedy. Initially a figure of Horner's "irrepressible phallicism" (Kowaleski-Wallace 1997, 56), the much-coveted porcelain vase that Lady

Fidget exhibits as a reward for her unseen dealings with its male owner forcefully proclaims the libertine's figurative unmanning as a result of the overwhelming, incontrollable appetites unleashed in women by chinaware. Lady Fidget's "boldly emasculating gesture" (Porter 1999, 50) in the china scene marks Horner's definitive subjection to an economy of consumption that turns him into a vulnerable object of female desire: by the end of the play, we see him permanently trapped in his eunuch mask in order to meet the ladies' soaring demand for his "china". In the act of possessing women, Horner has become their valued, secret possession; Wycherley's arch-libertine is remoulded as a porcelain sex toy and barred from reaching a rake's chief and statutory goal, namely, public acknowledgement of his superior manhood.

Wycherley returns to the china scene and the menacing implications of the consumer revolution in his next play, *The Plain Dealer* (1676). Presented at a short distance from *The Country Wife*, on the same London stage and with a largely overlapping cast, the play revisits the dramatist's own sexualised construction of china through a metatheatrical lens, enlarging the frame to also include women as consumers of entertainment. A bitter satire loosely based on Molière's *Misanthrope*, Wycherley's last play stages an extended debate between two female spectators who hold opposed views about *The Country Wife* and its supposed obscenities. As they rehash the china trope, the playwright emphasises collecting and theatregoing as twin and potentially harmful activities, signalising the continuities between china house and playhouse as sites of unprecedented, formidable female agency. Symptomatically, the precious porcelain that in *The Country Wife* still manages to emerge singularly unscathed from the "toiling and moiling" (CW, 4.3.187) in Horner's bedroom meets a dismal fate when it ends up in the hands of the untutored, unscrupulous female spectator of *The Plain Dealer*.

In a prolonged scene that exposes her manifold forms of hypocrisy, Olivia, the cheating mistress of the titular plain dealer, confronts her cousin Eliza over the latter's unpardonable failure to publicly proclaim her "detestation" of "the hideous Country Wife" (PD, 2.1.395-7). To Eliza's suggestion that there are no obscenities in the text itself but only in the minds of the audience, for which the playwright can hardly be held accountable, Olivia opposes her unforgiving verdict on *The Country Wife* as a "filthy play" (416-17) and on china as the "lewdest, filthiest thing" (443) in it:

> I will never forgive the beastly author his china. He has quite taken away the reputation of poor china itself, and sullied the most innocent and pretty furniture of a lady's chamber, insomuch that I was fain to break all my defiled vessels. You see I have none left . . . (444-8)

In Olivia's absurdly fetishistic reading, the figured meanings of china in Wycherley's scene take on a life of their own as their perceived obscenity travels from the world of signs to that of material objects, prompting the actual destruction of her irreparably tainted collection. To her eyes, every piece of china has become a double entendre and, as such, is deserving of capital punishment. Yet rising to the defence of his work, the dramatist makes sure that the plaintiff is betrayed by the very words she (ab)uses: Olivia's closing statement unwittingly repeats, to self-incriminating effect, Horner's confession to Mrs Squeamish that Lady Fidget has drained him of his china and he has "none left now" (CW, 4.3.193). In a crudely retaliatory form of poetic justice, moreover, Olivia's feigned prudishness brings about an equally literalising form of physical punishment. Wycherley's female critic, who has equated her exposure to the sexualised language of *The Country Wife* to a kind of "mental rape" (Airey 2007, 8-9), becomes in turn a rape victim; in a cruel actualisation of her specious sexual fantasies, the ravisher of china is herself ravished.[2]

While undoubtedly fuelled by Wycherley's resentment at the damaging charges of obscenity levelled against *The Country Wife* by its influential female patrons,[3] the harshness of Olivia's retribution throws light on a widespread anxiety, in Restoration England, about the operations of the female gaze and its newly-achieved prominence in the cultural and aesthetic sphere. Even Eliza, the author's mouthpiece and ostensibly a discerning female theatregoer, is not wholly immune from suspicions of fraudulent judgement. To many members of the Drury Lane audience, her defence of china and other 'innocent' signifiers ("I can think of a goat, a bull, or satyr, without any hurt", 426-7) must have smacked of an in-house joke, considering that the actress who delivered it, Elizabeth Knepp, had appeared in the role of Lady Fidget on that very same stage only the year before. In this respect, *The Plain Dealer* can be considered an early and seminal instantiation of the discourse of taste that drives the refiguring of Wycherley's china scene across the eighteenth century and beyond. As the taint of corruption – aesthetic as well as moral – began to transfer onto china itself, rather than its sexual allusiveness, the female china lover took centre stage and the art and literature of the period are awash with broken porcelains that testify to the perils of an unbridled, extravagant female gaze.

[2] Airey (2007) provides an insightful discussion of rape language in *The Plain Dealer* and coeval antitheatrical writings.

[3] In his prefatory epistle, Wycherley dedicates the play to Mother Bennet, a notorious procuress, explaining that "this play claims naturally your protection, since it has lost its reputation with the ladies of stricter lives in the playhouse" (14-16).

2. China Broken

After the turn of the century, as exotic commodities were quickly losing their elitist associations amidst an escalating consumer revolution, the discourse of taste rose to a "reactionary new regime of social demarcation" (Porter 2002, 400) which, in the case of Chinese porcelain, continued to specifically target violations of gender boundaries. A clear indication of china's centrality to the budding discourse of taste can already be found in Susanna Centlivre's highly popular comedy, *The Busie Body* (1709). Embedded in Centlivre's play is a reworking of Wycherley's scene in which the topos of broken china appears in conjunction with a satire of the aesthetic and moral vagaries of the female collector. Miranda, an orphaned heiress, is about to elope with her handsome suitor, Sir George Airy, in order to escape the clutches of the highly undesirable Sir Francis Gripe, her controlling guardian and husband-to-be. Upon the latter's unexpected arrival, Miranda hides her lover behind the chimney board; to prevent discovery, she pretends that the door conceals a pet monkey and insists that

> if you open it before the Man comes that is to tame it, 'tis so wild 'twill break all my China, or get away, and that wou'd break my Heart; for I am fond on't to distraction . . . (Centlivre 1709, 54)

Miranda's ruse is successful, but her precious porcelain ends up in pieces nonetheless. Once he is left alone in the room, Marplot, the titular busy body, opens the door and discovers Sir George who inadvertently throws down the costly trinkets as he dashes off, thereby ironically enacting Miranda's 'wild monkey' scenario.

On one level, Centlivre stages a far more innocent brand of china than the one paraded in *The Country Wife*. There is almost no trace in her scene of Wycherley's licentiousness: Miranda's transgression is of a romantic, rather than sexual, nature, and the role of stand-in for it is filled by the inexistent monkey behind the screen, with chinaware seemingly demoted to a mere decorative appendage. The very use of the monkey as a proxy for the male human partner is indicative of Centlivre's mitigating strategy: in *The Country Wife*, the wild animal was instead associated with Lady Fidget, the oversexed woman.[4]

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[4] When Lady Fidget locks herself in Horner's chamber, purportedly to plunder his hidden china, the libertine reacts with "Oh women, more impertinent, more cunning and more mischievous than their monkeys, and to me almost as ugly! Now she is throwing my things about, and rifling all I have, but I'll get into her the back way, and so rifle her for it" (CW, 4.3.124-8).

It is only in the second part of the scene that Miranda's apparently inconsequential reference to her concomitant monkey keeping and china collecting reveals its full implications. Summoned by the commotion, Sir Francis and the other characters re-enter the room. The following exchange ensues:

> MIRANDA Oh you Toad! what have you done?
> MARPLOT No great harm, I beg of you to forgive me: Longing to see the Monkey, I did but just ràise up the Board, and it flew over my Shoulders, scratch'd all my Face, broke yon' China, and whisk'd out of the Window.
> SIR FRANCIS Was ever such an unlucky Rogue! Sirrah, I forbid you my House. Call the Servants to get the Monkey again; I wou'd stay my self to look it, but that you know my earnest Business.
> SCENTWELL Oh my Lady will be the best to lure it back; all them Creatures love my Lady extremely.
> (Centlivre 1709, 55-6)

Together with lapdogs and parrots, pet monkeys are a typical accoutrement of the woman of quality in satirical writings of the period.[5] Here, at end of a scene that pivots on the comical surrogation of Miranda's paramount by her imaginary monkey, the young lady is pronounced by her maid to be "extremely" loved by "all them Creatures", with the ambiguously inclusive plural collapsing the distinction between Sir George and her nonhuman admirer(s). By her own admission earlier in the dialogue, Miranda is "fond . . . to distraction" of her fashionable commodities; in light of the worrying lack of discrimination highlighted by Scentwell's closing remark, one is led to infer that her collection includes her human gallant alongside her pet monkey and china.

As we move into the following decade, the unsettling promiscuity generated by the levelling gaze of the female consumer typically takes the shape of a list, by now a common device for satirising women's impaired aesthetic and ethical judgement. The best-known example is undoubtedly Pope's anti-female satire in *The Rape of the Lock*, where enumeration is elevated to a prime satirical method. In his heroicomic masterpiece, Pope famously resurrects the trope of broken china in connection with the double entendre surrounding the "rape" of Belinda's curl. The description of the protagonist's hyperbolic reaction to the outrageous violation constructs the young woman as, at once, a fragile porcelain object and a collector of bizarrely assorted fashionable commodities:

[5] For a comprehensive discussion of the monkey trope in Restoration and eighteenth-century drama, and its frequent intersections with the china motif, see Brown 2010.

Then flash'd the living lightning from her eyes,
And screams of horror rend th' affrighted skies.
Not louder shrieks to pitying Heav'n are cast,
When husbands or when lap-dogs breathe their last,
Or when rich China vessels, fall'n from high,
In glitt'ring dust and painted fragments lie!
(Canto 3, 153-60)

Commenting on the irreverent deflation of a husband's standing through his listing among other "objects of vanity and sources of fleeting and superficial pleasures" – the usual catalogue of animate and inanimate collectables – Porter (1999, 48) indicates Belinda as Lady Fidget's direct descendant. Beyond the evident continuities between the two women's subversive conversion of phallic authority into a fashionable bagatelle, however, some crucial differences stand out. As a result of its association with female vacuity, rather than sexual depravity, in Pope's satire china acquires a new kind of frailty that is typical of eighteenth-century refigurations. The very physical qualities that are foregrounded about porcelain as an object are token to this shift. In *The Country Wife*, the china vase shows a striking resistance to Lady Fidget's rough handling and to the unruly appetites of her "virtuous gang" (5.2.96). It is principally china's hardness that Wycherley foregrounds in order to signify, at once, Horner's mighty phallus, its objectification as a female sex toy, and the remarkable durability of London's women of quality who, we must assume, have been visiting china houses for ages with no apparent damage to their reputations. In Pope, by contrast, the accent falls on china's material as well as aesthetic thinness, a liability that makes it an eminently breakable commodity. Porcelain is recast as an object of shallow, ephemeral visual pleasure, a glossy, insubstantial surface with no depth or content that easily dissolves into "glitt'ring dust and painted fragments" (160).

A clear attempt at containing the challenge that Belinda and her likes posed to established authority, cultural and otherwise, the trope of aesthetic and moral vacuity and 'broken' female taste continues to pervade literary and artistic figurations of china through to the mid-eighteenth century, a point in time when the booming taste for Chinese porcelain, by then disdainfully branded a "craze", reached its peak. It was at this stage that the "classicist backlash" (Porter 1999, 32) against the mania for china found a theatrical counterpart in the damage inflicted on *The Country Wife* by its first adaptors, John Lee and David Garrick.

Lee's *The Country Wife* (1765) came first, but it was Garrick's *The Country Girl* (1766) that became the new 'authorised version' of Wycherley's comedy, ousting the Restoration original from the English

stage until well into the twentieth century. While differing in tone and form – Lee remodelled the play as a reform comedy and squeezed it into a two-act afterpiece, whereas Garrick gave it a romantic makeover – both adaptations remorselessly excised Horner's eunuch plot and its climactic scene. The pungent wit and unashamed bawdy of Restoration comedy were clearly deemed unfit for the more refined palates of eighteenth-century audiences, reared at the social school of taste provided by periodicals, coffee houses and other spaces of informed debate. Indeed, if *The Country Wife* was able, unlike the vast majority of Restoration plays,[6] to hold the stage uninterruptedly, this was in no small measure owing to Garrick's judicious removal of its lewd china for the sake of decorum. Wycherley himself, as we have seen, had anticipated this potential vulnerability in his comedy's reception through the image of the broken porcelains in *The Plain Dealer*. Akin to Wycherley's female critic, Garrick was quick to pinpoint the filth in *The Country Wife* and, in an uncanny actualisation of Olivia's bowdlerising zeal, proceeded at once to destroy the play's hapless china scene. While Wycherley's porcelain vase had to wait until 1924 to be again displayed on a theatre stage,[7] however, the iconic scene that contained it went on to enjoy a clandestine, but glorious, afterlife thanks to the prompt intervention of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Garrick's putative heir as the new manager of Drury Lane. Through a process of displacement and strategic camouflage, Sheridan managed to smuggle Wycherley's china into *The School for Scandal* (1777), the greatest theatrical hit of the age and an uncontested pillar of the English comic tradition until this very day.

3. China Displaced

Sheridan's entire career as a writer and theatrical impresario was driven by a sustained dialogue with the witty, 'laughing' tradition of the Restoration period, a cultural capital that, by the time he took over the management of Drury Lane in 1776, had fallen into almost complete disrepute. The venturous newcomer made his intentions clear from his very first season at the helm of the distinguished institution, by programming a sequence of Congreve plays and other Restoration comedies, which were soon to be followed by his own homage to the Restoration dramatic tradition with *The School for Scandal*. These revivals were a bold and risky move:

[6] *The Country Wife* is one of the very few exceptions to the general disappearance of Restoration drama from the theatrical repertoire after the mid-eighteenth century.

[7] This was in Montague Summer's production at the Phoenix Society, the first revival of the play in its original form since the 1760s.

by general consensus, Restoration comedies were deemed unfit for the stage, and Sheridan's eminent predecessor at Drury Lane, David Garrick, had brought a storm around his ears with his production of Congreve's *Love for Love* in 1771. Consequently, in *The School for Scandal* the dramatist is very careful to take the sting out of his extensive borrowings from Congreve, Vanbrugh and, especially, Wycherley, diluting their barbed social satire with an adequate dose of sentiment, and steering clear of any form of licentiousness in word or deed. Lady Teazle, the 'country wife' struggling with an older, grumpy husband, is a far more genteel version of her Restoration antecedent. For the female protagonist of *The School for Scandal*, Margery's "London disease" (CW, 4.4.1) manifests itself as an extravagant appetite for luxury commodities, rather than sex; even her decision to betray her husband, Sir Peter Teazle, is presented as a homage to the customs of fashionable society rather than a pursuit of carnal pleasure. In this late-Georgian beau monde, the irrepressible sexual urge that drove the female characters in *The Country Wife* has given way to the tamer, though equally addictive, vices of conspicuous consumption, the card table and, as the title indicates, gossip.

While clearly informed by a similar mitigating strategy, Sheridan's revamping of *The Country Wife* reverses Garrick's excision of the china scene, choosing to mend what his mentor had just broken. Wycherley's censored china hovers as a phantasmal presence over the pivotal reveal scene of *The School for Scandal*, when Lady Teazle is compromisingly caught hiding behind a screen in the private lodgings of her suitor, the double-dealing Joseph Surface, with whom she was about to commit adultery. Their tryst is interrupted by the sudden arrival of Sir Peter, her husband, followed a little later by Charles, Joseph's rakish younger brother. On the play's opening night, when the latter knocked down the screen on a mischievous impulse to see the "little French milliner" (4.3.355) allegedly hidden there by his faultless sibling, only to discover Lady Teazle instead, the Drury Lane audience almost brought down the house with roaring laughter and applause.

In its impeccable comic construction, Sheridan's screen scene shows patent analogies with Wycherley's china scene, beginning with its purposeful location in Act Four, Scene Three. The china stratagem is echoed in Surface's conventional use of his book collection as cover for his rendezvous with Sir Peter's wife ("Lady Teazle, when are you to give me your judgement on my library as you promised?", 2.2.225), a better matched alternative to his feigned depth of soul. The screen is an amplified version of the same prop in *The Country Wife*, where it provided a secret

space of observation for Quack, Horner's accomplice in the eunuch ruse;[8] at the same time, it demarcates for Lady Teazle an off-scene space akin to Horner's private chamber. In its newly achieved centrality the screen stands out as a physical equivalent to the rhetorical operations of the double entendre, where words serve as "fronts for invisible eruptions of meaning" (Zuroski Jenkins 2013, 83). But it is especially in their revelatory power that the two scenes show deep affinities. In *The Country Wife*, as we have seen, the china scene lays bare not so much the women's hypocrisy as Horner's paradoxical condition as a rake hero who is unmanned by his own sexual potency. Similarly, in Sheridan's screen scene the more momentous revelation in terms of plot development concerns the true nature of the "Man of Sentiment" for whom Lady Teazle was prepared to risk her marriage. As a silent, unseen witness to the conversation between her lover and her husband, Lady Teazle becomes privy to the latter's generosity and genuine affection for her and, by contrast, to Joseph's grotesque worthlessness as a compulsive liar trapped, Horner-like, in his own feigned persona. Even before the screen falls down, Sheridan discloses the vulnerability of Joseph's sentimental mask, a fragile "surface" that cracks and crumbles under the pressure of keeping up pretences with each new visitor who enters the room.

When it becomes Lady Teazle's turn to be publicly exposed, the continuities between china and screen find further, visual support in the image of the (potential) adulteress who emerges from her shielded retreat clutching, instead of Lady Fidget's roll wagon vase, a no less suggestive fan. The prop is not mentioned in Sheridan's stage directions but it invariably appears in extant visual records of this incredibly popular scene. An anonymous engraving published in 1778[9] shows Lady Teazle after the discovery instinctively covering her face with her fan, a poor replacement for the protection offered by the folding screen that has tumbled at her feet, and an ironically self-incriminating one given the fan's stage history as an unmistakable "sexual semaphore" (Sofer 2003, 118). The double function, as shield and flirtation device, of this distinctly feminine,

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[8] In the china scene, Horner enjoins the obliging doctor to hide behind the screen so he can witness the success of his plot: "Step behind the screen there, and but observe if I have not particular privileges with the women of reputation already" (CW, 4.3.35-7).

[9] Anon., "Scene from School for Scandal being performed in Drury Lane Theatre, London" (British Museum).

sexualised prop would hardly have gone lost on Sheridan's audience.[10] Just like Lady Fidget's porcelain vase, moreover, the fan was not only an essential complement for the woman of fashion, but also, crucially, an import from China; as such, it created a powerful visual bridge between Wycherley's outlawed porcelain vase and Sheridan's screen. The fact that the latter is "hung . . . with maps" (SFS, 4.3.112) leaves no doubt about the exotic, imperial connotations that Sheridan's prop shares with the suppressed china by which it is "ghosted"[11].

China's phantasmal presence in the screen scene is framed by its seemingly casual appearance in the opening and closing moments of *The School for Scandal*. Sheridan's initial stage direction is tactically silent about it, but Chinese porcelain inhabits the characters' upper-class setting from the very start, as the curtain rises on Lady Sneerwell and her right-hand man Snake intent on scandalmongering while they enjoy their morning chocolate, a fashionable drink associated with luxury tableware. Notably, Garrick's prologue has already alerted the audience to this "presumed prop"[12] through its description of a parallel tea-drinking and gossip-reading scene in which china cups are likewise implied by way of repeated references to the act of "sipping" (ll. 7-20). The china trope is then resurrected in the fifth act, in connection with the other reveal scene that hands Joseph his final defeat. Sir Oliver, the young Surfaces' uncle and long-time benefactor from faraway India, decides to put the elder brother's generosity to the test by pretending to be an indebted relative seeking financial assistance. Much to his surprise, Joseph cries poor and scornfully dismisses his uncle's generous outpour of imperial riches as a bagful of worthless exotic trifles:

[10] Frances Abington, the star performer who played the first Lady Teazle on the Drury Lane stage, was famous for her expert command of the fan and its eloquent gestural lexicon (Sofer 2003, 126). In another visual record of the same tableau, James Roberts's painting "Frances Abington, Thomas King, John Palmer, William Smith" (1779; London, Garrick Club), Abington holds an open fan with both hands over her crinoline dress at the site corresponding to the genital area, thereby drawing attention to the prop's sexual associations.

[11] I use the term with specific reference to the mechanism of surrogation described in Sofer's comprehensive study of the life and afterlife of stage props (2003). Sofer focuses on props' ability to carry the memory of previous meanings that can no longer be directly expressed in a new context. Here I extend the notion to also include the reverse process, whereby the same signified becomes attached to a new signifier that evokes the original, silenced one.

[12] In Sofer's definition, a prop that is "not explicitly mentioned in the stage directions but must nonetheless be present on stage" (2007, vi).

> SIR OLIVER . . . But I imagined his bounty had enabled you to become the agent of his charity.
>
> JOSEPH SURFACE My dear sir, you were strangely misinformed. Sir Oliver is a worthy man. But avarice, Mr Stanley, is the vice of age. I will tell you, my good sir, in confidence, what he has done for me has been a mere nothing, though people, I know, have thought otherwise; and for my part I never chose to contradict the report.
>
> SIR OLIVER What, has he never transmitted you bullion, rupees, pagodas?
>
> JOSEPH SURFACE O, dear Sir, nothing of the kind. No, no, a few presents now and then. China, shawls, congou tea, avadavats, and Indian crackers. Little more, believe me.
>
> SIR OLIVER (*aside*) Here's gratitude for twelve thousand pounds!
>
> (5.1.64-77)

In order to continue to peddle his "sentimental French plate" instead of the genuine, but far more expensive, "silver ore of pure charity" (5.1.105), Joseph turns to the usual listing rhetoric, but his attempt at manipulating the discourse of value that had developed around china and similar luxury commodities backfires spectacularly. Ironically, moreover, Joseph's moral and economic debacle is rhetorically sealed by Sir Oliver's appropriation of the china motif in the closing scene when he publicly rehabilitates Charles, the prodigal nephew, over his scheming brother. Sir Oliver has obtained definitive proof of Charles's good-heartedness in the famous auction scene, when he confronts him under the assumed identity of a moneylender, and the heavily indebted rogue refuses to sell his uncle's picture along with the rest of the Surface family portraits. Having decided to make him his sole heir, Sir Oliver proceeds to demote his nephew's past "follies" to mere bagatelles, recalling how, in the auction scene, "the rogue bargained with me for all his ancestors, sold me judges and generals by the foot and maiden aunts as cheap as broken china!" (5.3.143-5).

Beside its more direct reference to the discounted Surface aunts, the comparison with "broken china" has evident applicability to Joseph, twice unmasked as a cheap, flawed imitation of the Man of Sentiment in his dealings with Lady Teazle, first, and with Sir Oliver/Stanley, later. In this respect, Sheridan's use of the china trope to expose Joseph as a deceitful "Surface" marks a significant departure from the common eighteenth-century association with female superficiality. In yet another significant form of displacement, the dramatist is careful to avoid any mention of Chinese porcelain where one would most expect to find it, namely, in the hands of the play's frivolous woman of taste. Lady Teazle's lavish spending on luxury commodities is a bone of contention in her frequent bickering with her husband, but strangely enough china never seems to be on the radar of Sheridan's inveterate fashionista. The only character in the

play who claims, albeit falsely, to own some is Joseph. By having him pose as a connoisseur of Chinese porcelain and other exotic commodities for the purpose of depreciating his uncle's generosity, *The School for Scandal* effectively reframes bad or 'broken' taste as a male, rather than female, attribute. Conversely Lady Teazle, who remains strikingly indifferent to china, is presented as capable of expert judgement in the screen scene when, as a silent witness to the conversation between her husband and her gallant, she quickly learns to distinguish real sentiment from its cheap replica[13].

4. China Restored?

After almost two hundred years of blackout, the early twentieth century saw the restoration of the china scene, as *The Country Wife* was again presented to the public in its original form, rather than Garrick's sanitised version. Like a number of other Restoration classics, Wycherley's comedy made its first, tentative reappearance in a semi-private staging at the Phoenix Society in 1924, and soon afterwards reached the commercial stage. This early season of revivals had the all-important effect of reinstating the core plays in the English repertoire; but it was eclipsed, in magnitude and scope, by the massive 'Restoration boom' in the later

[13] Due to limited space and the specifically theatrical focus of this essay, I am unable to include a discussion of George Meredith's *The Egoist* (1879), though this "comedy in narrative", as the subtitle has it, would undoubtedly deserve a space in the genealogy I have traced. Effecting a similar reversal of gender identifications, Meredith presents a female protagonist whose refusal to be moulded according to her fiancé's wishes finds a symbolical correlation in her ill-concealed antipathy for china. In parallel, Clara's controlling, self-absorbed husband-to-be, Sir Willoughby Patterne, is mercilessly exposed as "a brittle model of upper-class petrified prejudice", a version of the British-made, mass-produced and therefore inherently fake 'Chinese' porcelain to which his name alludes (Lanone 2012, 3; for an insightful discussion of the central role of the willow pattern in Meredith's critique of gender stereotypes, as well as the novel's links with Restoration culture, see also Graziano 1999, 49-68). Interestingly for my line of argument here, in Meredith's iteration of the trope china gets broken while literally travelling to Patterne Hall, the patrician mansion that becomes Clara's place of confinement during her betrothal. The porcelain vase that Colonel De Craye, who is to serve as Willoughby's best man, has brought as a wedding present is shattered when his carriage is overturned on the way to his friend's estate. This is a foreboding of broken vows to come – Meredith's independent, spirited protagonist eventually succeeds in freeing herself from the stifling engagement – but also an indication of unconventional female behaviour, given that the incident occurs when the slightly drunk coachman swerves to avoid Clara who is out on the high-road on an unsupervised walk.

part of the century. The 1980s saw a steady rise of Restoration titles on theatrical playbills, hitting an impressive peak by the end of the decade; for the first time ever, moreover, this steady stream of restagings was paralleled by a considerable output of new work that engaged with the Restoration period and its theatre culture, very often with a view to establishing politically-relevant parallels with the present day (see Soncini 1999 for a full-ranging survey).

In approaching Restoration plays as a valid metaphor for Thatcherite Britain, these new productions strove to bring to the fore the socio-political subtext of what, in the earlier wave of revivals, had been largely understood as artificial and distinctly lightweight comedies of manners. When it came to *The Country Wife*, the theatremakers' sustained focus on class, gender and sexual politics led to the recovery, and indeed heightening, of Wycherley's scorching satire of social and sexual mores. This resulted, first and foremost, in the reconveyance of Horner's cuckolding intrigue. China returned, sometimes with a vengeance: in Andrew Manley's 1993 production of *The Country Wife* at the Harrowgate Festival, the romantic plot involving Harcourt and Alithea was cut altogether, in what effectively amounted to a complete reversal of Garrick's earlier move. In the parallel corpus of adaptations and spin-offs, Wycherley's comedy similarly tended to be reduced to its libertine scenario, with Lady Fidget and her "virtuous gang" often taking precedence over Margery and her marital vicissitudes. The full enfranchisement of the china scene, however, did not automatically entail a parallel comeback of the actual china within it. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Wycherley's symbolic object of desire is usually replaced by latter-day equivalents in modernising adaptations; but even 'regular' productions appear at pains to accommodate this culture-specific prop. A telling case in point is the 1993 Royal Shakespeare Company production directed by Max Stafford-Clark, the unrivalled champion of the social-realist approach to Restoration drama[14]. This highly representative production aimed to rip apart the shiny surface of seventeenth-century manners in order to show the brutal, ugly face of Charles II's 'merry Restoration'. Horner's exquisite chinaware sat uneasily in a version of libertine comedy "with its vizard off and its breeches down", as Michael Billington (1993) famously put it in his authoritative review of the RSC performance. Accordingly, the phallic-shaped vase was updated to a more mundane, but culturally inert, coffee pot, a move that further contributed to deplete the scene of its mutinous farcical humour in favour of a chilling, bleak portrayal of predatory manhood.

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[14] For more details on Stafford-Clark's work in this area, see Soncini 1999.

Even when retained in its original form, Wycherley's china continues to show a symptomatic vulnerability to cultural relocation. While Stafford-Clark's *Country Wife* played in Stratford, London audiences were being treated by the Haymarket theatre to *Lust*, a far more upbeat musical adaptation with text and music by the Heather Brothers featuring a much expanded china scene. The production's almost exclusive focus on the play's rampant promiscuity is announced from the very start, through a prologue in which Quack pre-dates Wycherley's comedy to 1661, the heyday of the libertine offensive, while the whole company join him in the theme song celebrating "The glorious restoration / of the noblest urge bestowed on us. / Wholesome and healthy, / Frolicsome and carefree, / Good old-fashioned, / Earthy and robust / Lust!" (Heather Brothers 1994, 1-2). Eschewing all subtlety, the china scene is relocated straight into Horner's bedroom, and opens on a post-coital conversation with a "breathless, dishevelled" (50) Dainty Fidget who has preceded her sister-in-law in the libertine's large four-poster bed that dominates the room. True to his status as a serial womaniser, this Horner keeps a stock of identical phallic-shaped vases conveniently stored in a chest at the foot of the bed; before she is briskly dismissed to make room for the next lucky lady, a still ecstatic Dainty is routinely given her china souvenir and instructed to produce it as evidence "if anyone asks" (50) about the purpose of her visit. In addition to Horner's sexual acrobatics, then, in this version of *The Country Wife* the audience is also admitted to his famed china cabinet, only however to find the rake's collection consisting of quite unimpressive mass-produced copies.

This disappointing depletion of value finds a match in china's supervened irrelevance by the time the china scene 'proper' begins. Lady Fidget is caught *flagrante delicto* in Horner's bed while she is about to fellate him. Clearly unable to resort to the worn-out china excuse, the lovers are rescued by Quack's prompt intervention. Before a stunned Sir Jaspar, the resourceful aide-de-camp coaches Lady Fidget into "keep[ing] a tight grip" of Horner's "tackle" (53-4), under pretense that she is assisting him in dressing the eunuch's wound. Even before the couple retire to the adjacent room to consummate, Wycherley's allusive vase has already given way to the actual piece of flesh it was originally meant to allude to. In its crudely literalising approach, the Heather Brothers' adaptation has no space left for double entendre: porcelain is drained of its sophisticated lustre, and the scene of its savage bite and subversive comic brilliance.

The arrant cheapening of Wycherley's prop is repeated, in amplified form, by the scene's choric ending, a collective celebration of the libertine sex craze. As all the characters sing the praise of "China" and rejoice in its ubiquity ("We have it everywhere. / On the banquet table, / Half-way up

the stairs / . . . Hanging on the Wall!"), a stage direction informs us that *"The Lights come up on various locations revealing Ladies fondling pieces of china identical to the piece Horner gave Dainty and Lady Fidget"* (57). The latter's superior expertise[15] turns out to be a joke, given that every other lady on stage is now clutching the same "truly unique" (56) vase that the inveterate rake has just palmed off on her.

Unlike what happens in *Lust*, in modern-day adaptations of *The Country Wife* it is far more common for the Restoration vase to travel under an assumed identity. The frequent iterations of the china scene without its china on the contemporary stage find a direct precedent in Sheridan's cautious recycling of Wycherley's comedy in *The School for Scandal*. For the latest generation of adaptors, however, china's vulnerability is no longer linked, as during the eighteenth century, to the pressures of censorship and decorum but, rather, to the acquired opacity of Wycherley's cultural signifier and its attendant inability to act as a vessel for new, contemporary meanings.

Hal Ashby's classic comedy film, *Shampoo* (1975) contains an early instance of china's replacement with a functional equivalent in our present. Co-written by Warren Beatty and Robert Towne, and reportedly inspired by the 1969 stage production of *The Country Wife* in Chichester, the film relocates Wycherley's libertine plot to Los Angeles and reframes it as a witty satire of late-1960s (sexual) politics. Beatty lends his gentle charm to George Roundy, a Beverly Hills hairdresser who is particularly popular with his upmarket female clientele due to his indefatigable devotion to his calling as a Don Juan. Hardly a match for Wycherley's "Machiavel in love" (CW, 4.3.68), this soft-hearted and largely clueless Horner meets his sad, final defeat when his paramours ditch him for financial and emotional security while, from a TV set in the background, Richard Nixon declares war on the "permissive society" during his successful 1968 presidential campaign. In modern-day America, Horner's feigned impotence is easily converted into George's statutory homosexuality as a star hairdresser – the stereotype is so powerful that he has no need for a Quack figure to spread the word – and the porcelain vase finds a 'natural' replacement in the phallic-shaped hairdryer that Beatty stacks into his denims before he hops on his motorcycle and heads towards Lester/Sir Jaspar's villa to service the lady of the house.

Horner's fragile, fine porcelain likewise vanishes from Tanika Gupta's 2004 adaptation of *The Country Wife*, the most sustained attempt thus far

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[15] "Your wife is a true connoisseur, sir. And as such a most difficult woman to satisfy" (56), Horner informs Sir Jaspar during a brief pause in his sexual romp with Lady Fidget.

to relocate the comedy to a contemporary setting. A leading figure within the British-Asian theatre scene, Gupta revisits the play from a distinctly multicultural angle, transporting its characters from the courtly Town of Stuart times to Southall, an ethnically-mixed suburban district of West London, in a conscious attempt to open up this quintessentially English comedy to the representation of today's cultural diversity.[16]

Already from the indication given in the title that this is a "new version" of *The Country Wife*, the dramatist emphasises transposition as the play's governing principle, a move geared to convey an impression of transmutations resulting from the comedy's journey to a different historical and cultural milieu. With very few exceptions, every aspect of Wycherley's original finds an equivalent in this new environment. As inevitably happens, however, during the long crossing from Stuart times to the present day some items travel comfortably, whereas others arrive slightly bruised. In contemporary Southall, Pinchwife becomes reincarnated as Alok, a Punjabi husband who has got himself a naive, inexperienced wife from "the country" – meaning India, not the countryside – based on the mistaken assumption that she will be easier to control. While the typically 'Asian' theme of arranged marriages enlivens with new topicality the Restoration discourse of contractualism and the clash between individual aspirations and social conventions, Horner's eunuch ruse is inevitably harder to accommodate within post-millennial London and, specifically, the group of rowdy, streetwise twentysomethings who supplant Wycherley's aristocratic coterie in Gupta's version. For the same reason, the china scene proves one of the production's chief untranslatables. The Fidget ladies, here recast as Daisy and Dolly, the sexy babes of the local gangster Jazzy, visit the libertine under pretense of craving his X-box; when they emerge from Hardeep/Horner's flat after a merry threesome, a stage direction describes them "*clutching bits of a Playstation, joysticks, games etc.*" (Gupta 2004, 76).

While in some respects repeating the Heather Brothers' trivialisation of Wycherley's exotic, exclusive commodity, Gupta's twenty-first-century equivalent for china has some strong points. Although the conversation about the rake's reputedly infinite, yet regrettably depleted, collection can only revolve around the girls' insatiable craving for ever new games, to rather dull effect,[17] the joysticks nevertheless manage to retain the phallic suggestiveness of Lady Fidget's roll wagon, and to effectively convey

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[16] For an extended discussion of Gupta's adaptation and its role in promoting a more inclusive approach to Restoration drama, see Soncini 2022.

[17] "Dolly What about Vice City—you got that one? / Hardeep There's nothing left. You took it all. / Daisy I reckon there's more hidden away . . ." (77).

the notion that Horner/Hardeep has become a sex toy for his ladies. At the same time, by turning to a typically *male* object of desire, Gupta insinuates the idea of gaming as a surrogate for sex for her modern-day libertines, a move which at once ties in with Wycherley's deflation of stereotypical virility and strengthens the dramatist's sustained critique of toxic masculinity and patriarchal oppression in this distinctly 'woke' refashioning of Restoration comedy.

Where Gupta's functional equivalent proves insetad irredeemably weak is in its lack of social allure: this cheapened, somewhat dumbed down version of Restoration china inevitably robs the scene of the riotously funny contrast between the obscene subtext and the polished surface of upper-class manners. An even more conspicuous damage incurred in the transposition from porcelain vase to X-box regards the silencing of china's wider cultural and ideological resonances. This historically accrued capital might arguably have brought added weight to Gupta's exploration of the complexities of our multicultural, global society through the lens of a Restoration play. As Rosenthal observes, *The Country Wife* is fully conversant with the new form of cosmopolitanism that emerged during the Restoration as a result of the Stuarts' empire-building ambitions. To its original Drury Lane audience, too, the titular "country" would have suggested the English nation, in addition or in parallel to the countryside: in the 1670s, the trope of the naive rustic girl graduating into metropolitan refinement found immediate applicability to "a backwater nation working its way into the sophistication of global networks" (Rosenthal 2020, 80). Similarly, with its twin associations with exoticism and eroticism, imperial expansion and cultural contamination, the china scene shone a light onto the ambivalence surrounding the Restoration discourse of cosmopolitanism. These connotations might have provided valuable conceptual firepower for an adaptation that celebrates multiculturalism while warning about its potential vulnerabilities; Gupta's modernising translation, however, precludes access to the rich but time-sensitive repertoire of cultural meanings baked into Restoration china.

I end my account of the final stretch of china's travels with what must count as the most mainstream attempt to date at refunctioning Wycherley's play for a present-day audience. This is John Guare's *A Free Man of Color*, an ambitious epic drama originally commissioned by New York's Public Theatre in 2004, and eventually presented on the Lincoln Center's stage in 2010 after substantial revisions. For his first Broadway production after more than twenty years, the distinguished American writer worked on the brief of producing a play that would tackle issues of "race and class in New Orleans around 1801, on the eve of the Louisiana purchase" (Healy 2010) using the frame of English Restoration comedy.

Tasked with exploring this seminal moment in America's long history of racial strife and social inequality, Guare mobilises Wycherley's comedy to defamiliarise the discourse of race and invite the audience to imagine alternatives to long-ingrained polarisations. Horner's avatar is Jacques Cornet, the son of a wealthy white father and an African American slave. The play opens on Mardi Gras in 1801, with Cornet and his associates hailing New Orleans as the "free-est" city in the world, a place of fertile self-invention where "race is a celebration" and "you can be whatever you declare yourself to be" (Guare 2011, 5). As he states his intention to create his own character and write his own play, Guare's "free man of colour" asserts his right to identify as neither a black man or a slave but a true aristocrat in taste and appearance.

The full social import of Cornet's new brand of libertinism is revealed in the china scene, where we watch him using his sexual prowess to procure vital intelligence at a time of seismic geopolitical shifts. In Guare's version, Wycherley's original signifier is first supplanted by its signified, and then restored to the scene, but in different shape. Upon realising that the city husbands are withholding political information from him, the libertine gives them to believe that he is 'only' doling out sex to their ladies, meanwhile using his confederacy of loyal wives to find out about the fate of Louisiana. An equivalent of the porcelain vase eventually materialises in the second part of the scene, in the form of a cylindrical cipher machine that Doña Smeralda's husband, Morales, unexpectedly returns home to look for while she is enjoying Cornet's company. On finding the bedroom door locked, he asks his wife, who tactically feigns a contagious fever, whether his "Imperial code breaker" might be there, describing the object as an unwittingly allusive "long black tube with a red ribbon on it" ("It looks familiar. I'll keep my eyes open", is the lady's amused reply, 31). The machine is eventually found by Cornet among the bedsheets and duly passed out to its owner who proceeds to decipher the fateful cartogram announcing that Spain has given Louisiana to France.

Guare's variation on the 'china scene without its china' has some evident advantages over Gupta's familiarising translation. In addition to the sexual suggestions, the cipher machine retains the foreignness – historical, if not geographical – of Wycherley's roll wagon vase as well as its handcrafted and somewhat bizarre uniqueness. Conceptually, it builds on the notion of china as code in *The Country Wife*, merging the scene's central concern with the sophisticated systems of interpretation used to penetrate social lexicon with Horner's self-description as a "passe-partout of the town" (CW, 1.1.149) when he first illustrates his stratagem for obtaining free access to London's upper-class ladies. For Guare's rake, the "skeleton key that once fit all the locks of Louisiana" (48), as he describes his phallus

upon donning the eunuch mask, operates to all effects as a code-breaker, a tool for acquiring the information he needs in order to "play a role in this Hobbesian juggernaut called history" (44). Some of the white characters in the play, including Cornet's half-brother Pincepousse (Pinchwife's alias), look with favour on Napoleon's prospective restoration of harsh slavery laws in multiracial, multicultural New Orleans. In the second act, the libertine's hopes that France's infamous *Code noir* will be cracked for good when Louisiana is finally sold to the young, freedom-loving American nation are brutally shattered by Thomas Jefferson's decision to open the newly acquired territory to slavery. The play ends with Cornet shackled, stripped of any authority over his play and sold at auction with the rest of his property, of which he is now just one more item.

Cornet's literal commodification in the play's bleak ending creates one final, powerful connection with the china motif in *The Country Wife*. Though not a china collector, this Horner is nonetheless an avid consumer of luxury commodities from the Far East – hence his obsession with maps that will hopefully reveal the Northwest Passage or, as he puts it, "the magic route to deliver me the treasures that I need like bread and water" (3). These treasures are the Shanghai silks and other expensive textiles that go to make his flamboyant wardrobe and enable his self-fashioning as a Restoration rake. As we learn in the opening scene, Cornet's utopian, undying belief in the power and possibility of self-invention is entirely predicated on the social power inhering "the sanctity of surfaces. The value of veneer" (2). To his servant Murmur, who wonders how, as a former slave, he could ever feel entitled to write a play, the free man of colour readily replies: "Brocade gave me confidence" (2). These highly treasured imports are key assets in Cornet's empowering play of surface; as such, they show an unmistakable kinship with Restoration china and its embedded theatricality: just like the fine porcelain vase that Lady Fidget once held in her hands, they open up an imaginary space of perpetual invention and reinvention, unquenchable desire, and seemingly endless travel.

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Two Country Wives, Forty Years Apart.
Considerations on Retranslating Comedy in Italy

Abstract

English Restoration drama in general is a relatively neglected field of studies and, as a consequence, is not a particularly widely read literary genre in Italy, but Wycherley's *The Country Wife* is a notable exception: there are four translations published between 1961 and 2009, thus making it one of the most persistent presences in the literary market. It is interesting to compare the different editions, and the translations, as part of a disseminating process carrying English drama into the Italian editorial and cultural environment. This paper deals with the first of these translations (by Cesare Foligno, 1961) and the third one (by Stefano Bajma Griga, 2005). The choice of these two specific texts is based on paratextual similarities such as the fact that they are both part of a wider collection of texts as opposed to single volume editions, and there are no parallel texts. The first one is a pioneering translation and the third is, obviously, a retranslation: this difference is taken into account when tools from descriptive translation studies are employed to carry out the comparative analysis.

Keywords: drama translation; retranslation; William Wycherley; *The Country Wife;* Cesare Foligno; Stefano Bajma Griga

1. Translation and Retranslation

The two translations considered here are the one by Cesare Foligno, published in 1961 in a three volume collection, *Teatro inglese*, edited by Alfredo Obertello, the first to appear in Italy for Nuova Accademia Editrice based in Milan, and the one by Stefano Bajma Griga in the collection *La commedia inglese della Restaurazione e del Settecento*, edited in 2005 by Paolo Bertinetti, for Liguori, based in Naples. This is the third translation of *The Country Wife* to be published in Italy. Both editions do not include the English text. But, as will be more widely explained below, the source text for Foligno's translation was edited by Ursula Todd-Naylor in 1931, while Bajma Griga's translation does not declare the source text.[1]

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[1] For a discussion of the second and fourth Italian translations of *The Country Wife* see Marroni 2023 in this volume.

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Translation and retranslation are two similar, connected, yet different phenomena, and are therefore to be approached in two different ways. In the 1970s "Itamar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury . . . pursued the idea of the literary polysystem in which . . . different literatures and genres, including translated and nontranslated works, compete for dominance" (Munday 2008, 13). According to Munday, Even-Zohar "sees translated literature as part of the cultural, literary and historical system of the TL [Target Language]" (2008, 107). Even-Zohar writes that translated literature is

> not only . . . an integral system within any literary polysystem, but . . . a most active system within it. But what is its position within the polysystem, and how is this position connected with the nature of its overall repertoire? One would be tempted to deduce from the peripheral position of translated literature in the study of literature that it also permanently occupies a peripheral position in the literary polysystem, but this is by no means the case. Whether translated literature becomes central or peripheral, and whether this position is connected with innovatory ("primary") or conservatory ("secondary") repertoires, depends on the specific constellation of the polysystem under study. (Even-Zohar 1990, 46)

A first translation, therefore, brings into a literary system a new text which, from that moment onward, will fight for recognition within the canon and for a place in the editorial market. And this is the case of the first translation of *The Country Wife* which reaches both the Italian literary system and its publishing environment. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Italy was not yet an Anglophone context, not to the extent it is today. The *lingua franca* was still very much French, as it had been for centuries: it was studied as a second language at school, it was the language of diplomacy and international business. But after the Second World War things had started to change and English was gradually but steadily supplanting French in all fields. In Italy, English became more and more widespread as the language studied in schools. This is the reason why 1961 and 2005 represent two very different cultural *milieus* when it comes to translating English drama into Italian.

Both versions are academic, as they are clearly not aimed at the general public or intended for the stage, yet – to some extent – they are also disseminating enterprises as they make available for Italian readers a collection of dramatic texts less widely circulated in comparison to the ever-present Shakespeare: Restoration comedies, in particular, have been relatively neglected as a field of study in Italy. Alfredo Obertello's is a three volume, hard cover, illustrated[2] edition, probably quite costly; Paolo

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[2] There are three images in Foligno's translation, between the pages 288 and 289, 320 and 321, and 336-7. The images are not specifically relevant to the text, but are

Bertinetti's is a 600 pages volume issued by an academic publisher, also quite costly. Obertello's collection of 1961 is very rich: the second volume, where the translation of *The Country Wife* appears, contains twelve texts from Jonson to Robertson. The volume edited by Bertinetti, issued in 2005, contains six texts (see notes 2 and 3 for details), spanning from Restoration Drama to Sheridan. They are both targeted at an educated public, possibly university students or scholars, yet with an obvious difference due to the forty years apart: in the first case a public with often no knowledge of English drama except – maybe – Shakespeare, and very little knowledge of the English language. In the second case, the absence of the parallel English text suggests a more varied audience ranging from a general readership motivated by cultural curiosity to students of foreign language courses with not enough competence of historical English.

Retranslation is a yet different specific case, and theoretically speaking, a very different matter. As Frank and Schultze state:

> Retranslation may be addressed in terms of its internal and external history . . . The internal history of translation is defined as the analysis of textual-linguistic profiles of translated texts in terms of their successive reformulations through retranslation, and of the broad and specific contextual motivations behind such translation profiles. The external history of translation is defined as focusing on identifying the works that have been translated, and on establishing the frequency of retranslation, among other relevant contextual issues. The Göttingen project has stressed the importance of identifying source texts that have been made subject to multiple retranslation. They are called "comets" and their successive retranslations form the comet's "tail" . . . and such comet's tails or retranslation series are central for the purpose of analysing voice in retranslation. (qtd in Alvstad and Assis Rosa 2015, 8)

There are several different reasons for the practice of retranslation, among which the case of canonical texts which are constantly subjected to retranslations (e.g. the *Bible*, Shakespeare, and so on). There can be political reasons: a revival or a reissue of a certain author; aesthetic reasons, in case a translation is deemed obsolete; linguistic reasons when the language is outdated or considered old-fashioned, and historical reasons, when, for example, geopolitical issues make a certain language and its literature more appealing. According to Lawrence Venuti, the practice of retranslation, on the other hand, contributes to the creation of value. In particular, the main difference is in the area of the translator's agency: in the specific case of

about Restoration drama in general: the first one depicts the Duke's Theatre in Dorset Garden (1673), the second and the third show famous actresses of the time, Anne Bracegirdle (1663?-1743) and Margaret Hughes (1643-1719).

retranslation, the role of the translator is distinguished by a significant increase of self-consciousness. Moreover, since the case of retranslation creates a situation of competing translations, they tend to be more densely intertextual. Whether a translation is obviously linked to the moment when it is produced, "retranslations deliberately mark the passage of time by aiming to distinguish themselves from a previous version through differences in discursive strategies and interpretations" (Venuti 2004, 35).

Therefore, Bajma Griga's is a case of retranslation where at least one previous translation has circulated widely (I mean Masolino d'Amico's). The two translations have consequently a different target audience, with a remarkable difference in the familiarity and knowledge of the source language and culture: Foligno was the pioneer, as he brought Wycherley's comedy to Italy for the first time, Bajma Griga could rely on at least two previous translations and a reader more familiar with the English-speaking world. Moreover, given the status of the translator and the widespread circulation of Rizzoli BUR editions, the 1993 translation by Masolino d'Amico had, since its appearance, become the established one everybody knows. As a consequence, the two translations have very different functions and different aims: the first one cannot take anything for granted, conveying the play into a context which has little or no knowledge of the Restoration drama. The second can more freely move into a cultural environment not completely devoid of notions regarding English literature and can therefore take many concepts for granted.

There is also the more general issue of theatre translation, a neglected field until quite recently according to Bassnett and many others, at least if we compare the amount of scholarly production in translation studies around prose and poetry. But in more recent years the topic has started to soar, and many studies have been published, with various approaches: performativity, theatre as text, style, and so on. Our comparison will be carried out according to descriptive translation studies, product-oriented and function-oriented (Toury 1995; Munday 2008).

2. Introducing Translators, Translations and Editions

The monumental edition by Obertello contains texts from the Middle Ages to Pinter and is divided in three volumes: the first volume, from the origins to Shakespeare, in which Foligno translated two miracle plays, *Secunda Pastorum* and *Erode il grande* (*Secunda Pastorum* and *Herod the Great*); three morality plays, *Il castello della perseveranza*, *La chiamata di Ogn'Omo* and *Fulgenzio e Lucrezia* by Henry Medwall (*The Castle of Perseverance*, *Everyman* and *Fulgence and Lucrece*); the second volume, from Ben Jonson

to Robertson, in which Foligno translated three texts, *Il cuore spezzato* by John Ford, *La moglie di campagna* by William Wycherley, and *Don Carlo* by Thomas Otway (*The Broken Heart*, *The Country Wife* and *Don Carlos*). The third volume, from Wilde to Pinter, contains no translations by Foligno.[3] The shorter volume edited by Bertinetti has only one text translated by Bajma Griga.[4] The position of the texts in the collection follows a chronological order in Obertello: Foligno's Wycherley comes in fourth after plays by Jonson, Ford and Shirley, and before Otway, Dryden and so on. Bertinetti's collection follows a chronological order of authors, too.

Cesare Foligno (1878-1963) was a scholar who worked in the United Kingdom first at the British Museum and later, from 1909, at the University of Oxford teaching Italian Literature. In the UK he is considered the founder of scientific Italian Studies. A convinced upholder of the Fascist regime and of Mussolini, he decided to move back to Italy days before Italy entered the Second World War and, from 1940, he was professor of English literature at the University of Naples, where he was particularly involved in teaching English drama. He was also a mediator and translator of literary texts from English into Italian.[5] Stefano Bajma Griga (1942-2011), the second translator to be considered here, was a scholar in English drama which he taught at

[3] Here is a full list of texts and translators in volume 2 of Obertello's collection: Ben Jonson, *L'Alchimista* (*The Alchemist*), by Antonio Alessio; John Ford, *Il cuore spezzato* (*The Broken Heart*), by Cesare Foligno; James Shirley, *La dama degli spassi* (*The Lady of Pleasure*), by Maria Bellotti; William Wycherley, *La moglie di campagna* (*The Country Wife*), by Cesare Foligno; Thomas Otway, *Don Carlo* (*Don Carlos*), by Cesare Foligno; John Dryden, *Tutto per l'amore* (*All for Love*), by Silvano Gerevini; Joseph Addison, *Catone* (*Cato*), by Spartaco Gamberini; Richard Steele, *Gli amanti coscienziosi* (*The Conscious Lovers*), by Angela Matricardi; Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *La scuola della maldicenza* (*The School for Scandal*), by Giorgio Spina; Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Beatrice Cenci* (*The Cenci*), by Pietro Spinucci; Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *Denaro* (*Money*), by Pietro Spinucci; Thomas William Robertson, *Casta* (*Caste*), by Pietro Spinucci.

[4] Here is a full list of texts and translators in Bertinetti's volume: George Etherege, *L'uomo alla moda* (*The Man of Mode*), by Toni Cerutti; William Wycherley, *La moglie di campagna* (*The Country Wife*), by Stefano Bajma Griga; William Congreve, *Amore per amore* (*Love for Love*), by Paolo Bertinetti; George Farquhar, *Lo stratagemma dei bellimbusti* (*The Beaux' Stratagem*), by Anna Anzi; Oliver Goldsmith, *Si finge umile per conquistarlo* (*She Stoops to Conquer*), by Mirella Billi; Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *La scuola della maldicenza* (*The School for Scandal*), by Mirella Billi.

[5] "Foligno, considered the founder of scholarly Italian studies by British Italianists, is perceived in Italy as a founding father of English studies (the Chair of English Literature in Rome, held between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century by Garlanda, had been restored by Giovanni Gentile only a decade before, in 1932, and given to the younger Mario Praz) or at least one of the scholars who contributed to the renovation of English studies in Italy to the utmost degree". (Di Girolamo 2016, translation mine). For other details, see Piscopo 1997.

the University of Turin (DAMS, *Discipline delle arti, della musica e dello spettacolo*, a degree in Arts, Music and Drama Studies): a man of the theatre, he also collaborated with the Teatro Stabile in Turin. His publications deal with English and American drama, Beckett, Shakespeare, and the political theatre of the 1960s. Both translators are therefore scholars who had a vast teaching experience and who approached the dramatic texts as researchers as well as translators. Both collections are also edited by two scholars, Alfredo Obertello,[6] a collaborator of the more renowned Mario Praz, and Paolo Bertinetti, Emeritus at the University of Turin, and one of the few Italian experts of Restoration comedy.

The two translations were published more than forty years apart. As said, the one by Foligno appeared in 1961, but possibly it had been carried out earlier, as Cesare Foligno was eighty-three when the volume was issued, and died two years later. It is difficult to imagine him embarking in the effort of translating so many texts when he was so advanced in years. It is possible he had already translated some texts and gave them to Obertello when the occasion of this collection arose. This first translation of *The Country Wife* to appear in Italy had the chosen title of *La moglie di campagna*. The one by Bajma Griga was published in 2005, so the translator could have seen the first translation by Foligno as well as the one by Masolino d'Amico, mentioned above.

Both the translations compared here have common paratextual elements: as already hinted, there are no parallel texts, so no source text on the left page, making it more difficult to establish which one of the many available was employed unless stated in the paratext of the translation. The source text is mentioned, for example, in the brief introduction to the play translated by Foligno (this introduction is not attributed nor signed, so its author is a mere hypothesis; as a rule, I will therefore attribute the introductions to the editor of the collection, therefore Obertello), where it is stated that "l'edizione curata da U. Todd-Naylor (Northampton, Massachussets, 1931) . . . ha fornito il testo base alla presente edizione" (Obertello 1961, 284); "the volume edited by U. Todd-Naylor [Northampton, Massachussets, 1931] . . . is the source text employed in this edition".[7] For what concerns the source text employed by Bajma Griga, it is entirely a matter of speculation: the translator died in 2011, so it has not been possible to obtain direct information. The editor, Paolo Bertinetti, refers to have proposed the New Mermaids edition as possible source: a 1973 New Mermaids had in fact been issued, edited by James Ogden, even though many

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[6] A translator in his own right, as well as a scholar, Obertello (1904-1997) edited and translated several works in his long career, which had begun as a lecturer in Cardiff between 1933 and 1940 (see Colacicco 2016, 4).

[7] All translations into English, unless stated otherwise, are mine.

more editions were available between 1973 and 2005.[8] The use of this text as a source may be confirmed by the fact that explanatory notes in Ogden's edition seem to have guided Bajma Griga in some of his lexical choices, as will be shown hereafter.

Both editors and translators opt for *La moglie di campagna* as a title. This same title is chosen by Innocenti in her 2009 edition, whereas d'Amico, in 1993, decided to translate it as *La sposa di campagna*, with an evident shift in meaning. This is a rather important element as the well-known version by d'Amico had become canonical when Bajma Griga worked on *The Country Wife* and its title was the most readily available model. Bajma Griga's decision to part with this authoritative translation and to either pursue his own path or go back to Foligno's text — a fact that cannot be proven nor disproven at this stage — is in any case a very significant detail. When Bajma Griga translated the play, the Italian titles were equally distributed between the use of *moglie* or *sposa*, even though d'Amico's version was by far the more widely circulated. After Bajma Griga's and Innocenti's translations, the more common title is firmly established as the one employing *moglie*.

3. Comparing the Two Italian Country Wives

On a paratextual level, in both editions the play is preceded by a short introduction, of about two-three pages. Bertinetti, who signs his "Introduzione" (Bertinetti 2005, 105-7), briefly presents the life and works of William Wycherley and then proceeds to illustrate the sources, the themes and the characters in the play. In Obertello's edition, there is no indication of the author of the prefatory material. The tone is openly moralistic: there is a clear invitation to judge characters which are defined as "[s]facciati . . . sboccati, luridi" (Obertello 1961, 282; "impudent, foul-mouthed, filthy"), and their behaviours: "Si gode di vedere, s'impara a riprovare. La lezione morale nasce dalla stessa esemplata impudenza" (281; "One can enjoy watching and learn reproaching. The lesson arises from the same exemplary impudence") and later "[l]o specchio rimanda fin troppo chiara l'immagine d'uomini affondati nella melma. Guai a cascarvi!" (282; "the mirror reflects all too clearly the image of men sunk in the mud. Woe betide the one who falls!").

For what concerns the text, the quote from Horace visible in the first page of the 1675 edition (reproduced in the New Mermaids edition in 2014) is positioned before the prologue in Foligno, where the editor/translator also specifies the source of the quotation: "Orazio, *Epistole II*, 1, 76-8" (Obertello

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[8] See Wycherley 1975; 1978; 1979; 1981; 1986; 1996; 1998. There is also one more text edited by James Ogden (Wycherley 1991). This last one was used by Loretta Innocenti in Wycherley 2009.

1961, 285).[9] This piece of information is omitted in the original, where the only indication is "Hor." to mention the source. Foligno does not translate this quote but leaves it in the original Latin. The quotation does not appear in Bajma Griga's version: part of the paratext is therefore omitted in his translation.

The Prologue is present in both versions, but with some differences. In the first place, Foligno does not mention Mr Hart, the first actor who in the Restoration staging played Mr Horner, and who is mentioned as the one who delivers it in front of the audience. In Bajma Griga he is there as Mr Hart, with a note specifying that "Charles Hart era l'attore che impersonò Horner" (Bajma Griga 2005, 215; "Charles Hart was the actor who played Horner"). Bajma Griga introduces two more notes in the prologue to clarify two names: Castril and Bayes. The same names appear as such also in Foligno but are neither explained nor disambiguated. The main difference in the two Prologues is that the one by Foligno is entirely transformed from verse to prose, is slightly abridged and simplified ("our Bayeses' battles", Wycherley 2014, 5, becomes "le nostre battaglie", Foligno 1961, 285). Bajma Griga preserves the verse layout but not the metric nor the rhyme. There are a couple of lexical inconsistencies, too: the term "bully" (London Street ruffians, according to the editors of the New Mermaids edition) is translated as "prepotenti" by Foligno (285) and as "bravacci" by Bajma Griga (111), thus preferring the modern meaning of "bully" to a more philologically correct one. "Bruised knuckles" (line 12 of the Prologue) is rendered as "polsi contusi" by Bajma Griga, and "nocche contuse", more appropriately, by Foligno. The general tone is quite old-fashioned and elevated in Foligno, for obvious reasons, and more colloquial and informal in Bajma Griga. Here are a few examples for comparison from the Prologue (the first quote is always from Foligno, the second from Bajma Griga): "menar colpi" *vs* "picchiare" ("laying on", line 4); "vi dànno la smentita" *vs* "vi mandano al diavolo" ("give the lie", line 10); "né mai temuto d'affrontar nemici in condizione d'inferiorità sul palcoscenico" *vs* "[n]é mai abbia temuto circostanze avverse sulla scena" ("never yet feared odds upon the stage", line 13); "vano e temerario zerbinotto" *vs* "vanesio bellimbusto" ("vain rash fop") and so on.

The Epilogue is present only in Foligno and is again in prose. It is absent in Bajma Griga. There is a limited use of endnotes in Bajma Griga (eleven all in all); only one in Foligno: "sir Martino Guastatutto" has a footnote which says "Martin Mar-all" (293) without any other reference. Bajma Griga has also a note on the same name, which he keeps in the original; the note explains that Sir Martin Mar-all is the name of the main character in Dryden's comedy by the same title.

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[9] From now on, the translations will be quoted by the names of the translators, followed by page number. As there is no indication regarding the notes, they will be attributed to the translators.

The main difference in the two translations is to be found in the attitude of the two translators: somewhat more domesticating in Foligno, more foreignising in Bajma Griga, even taking into consideration the context and when the translations were written. This difference is immediately perceptible in the list of *dramatis personae*, which are kept as in the original in Bajma Griga (he translates only in case the character has a specific function, such as servants and the like: the "Quack" is rendered as "medicastro"). The situation in Foligno is more complicated. The list of *dramatis personae* is in English, but a translation is provided in brackets as follows (286):

> Mr Henry Horner (messer Enrico Cornificio)
> Mr John Pinchwife (messer Giovanni Pizzicamoglie)
> Mr Sparkish (messer Favilla)
> Sir Jasper Fidget (don Gaspare Nervi)
> A boy (Un ragazzo)
> A barker (Un ciarlatano)
> Mrs Margery Pinchwife (signora Margherita Pizzicamoglie), Giovanni's wife (moglie di Giovanni)
> Miss Alithea (signorina Alithea), Pizzicamoglie's sister (sorella di Pizzicamoglie)
> Lady Fidget (donna Nervi), don Gaspare's wife (moglie di don Gaspare)
> Miss Dainty Fidget (signorina Delicata Nervi), don Gaspare's sister (sorella di don Gaspare)
> Miss Biddy Squeamish (signorina Brigida Smorfie)
> Lady Squeamish (donna Smorfie), Brigida's grandmother (nonna di Brigida)
> Lucia, Alithea's maid (cameriera di Alithea)

The translation of the *dramatis personae* involves both speaking names and first names. The speech prefixes, however, are in English throughout the text, whereas the characters address each other with the translated names in the dramatic dialogue, thus generating a somewhat confusing situation. Here is the first occurrence of the issue:

Wycherley	Foligno	Bajma Griga
QUACK . . . they will frighten their children with your name, especially their females.	IL CIARLATANO . . . e col vostro nome spaventeranno la loro figliolanza, specialmente le femmine.	MEDICASTRO . . . spaventeranno i loro marmocchi con il vostro nome, soprattutto le femminucce.
HORNER And cry 'Horner's here to carry you away!' (8)	HORNER Grideranno, ecco vien Cornificio a portarvi via; (287)	HORNER Gridando: 'Ecco che viene Horner e ti porta via.' (113)

The same happens with all speaking names: speech prefix in English, translation throughout the dialogue. This peculiar occurrence can be found in two more texts in the second volume of Obertello's collection, the ones translated by Maria Bellotti and Giorgio Spina. A possible explanation is that the translators provided the translated names as in the dialogue, but the general editor preferred to indicate them in the original both in the list of characters and as speech prefixes.

Appellatives are generally translated by Foligno (*mastro, messere, signore, don, madonna, donna* and so on); to a certain extent also in Bajma Griga (*messere, signore, signora*); "Sir" is retained as an appellative when it is near a name (Sir Jasper is not translated in the 2005 edition), but it becomes *signore* when used as a vocative, as in Sir Jasper's first speech: "My coach breaking just now before your door sir, I look upon as an occasional reprimand to me sir, for not kissing your hand sir, since your coming out of France sir" (Wycherley 2014, 9). In this linguistic area, the issue of repetitions is also an interesting one to be addressed: the obsessive and comical use of "sir" in Sir Jasper's first speech, parodically echoed by Horner, is slightly amended in Foligno, almost entirely preserved in Bajma Griga. The total amount of occurrences of the term "sir" in the exchange between lines 52 and 70 of Act 1 is twenty-five in the original (9-10), twenty in Foligno (288-9) and twenty-three in Bajma Griga (115). Stylistic considerations may have induced Foligno to omit some of the recurrences of the same words in close proximity: this was and is still considered a bad writing habit in Italian, to be avoided as much as possible. Bajma Griga's effort to retain the repetitions as a stylistic feature of the text, on the contrary, is evident and it is clearly a way to make the most of the comic effect of the original text.

For what concerns toponyms and *realia* the attitude of the two translators is generally similar: place names are kept in the original, but there are exceptions when a toponym is also expressive of a more general concept. In this case Foligno tends to translate the name with an explanatory term, Bajma Griga keeps the original: Whitehall is translated as "a Corte" by Foligno (domesticating attitude), not translated by Bajma Griga (foreignising attitude). The New Exchange again remains unaltered in Bajma Griga; it becomes "la Banca Nuova" in Foligno (300) and "la Borsa" (318), thus acquiring different names in different parts of the text. In the following example, it clearly appears that Bajma Griga is not interested in translating place names, nor in explaining them, while Foligno opts for a more reader-oriented, explicative mode: "Thou art as shy of my kindness as a Lombard Street alderman of a courtier's civility at Locket's" (109) is rendered as "Ti schernisci della mia bontà come un notabile di Lombard Street dalle proposte di un cortigiano incontrato da Locket" by Bajma Griga (184), and as "Via, siete ombroso per le mie gentilezze come un assessore

del quartiere della Banca per quelle d'un cortigiano al ristorante" by Foligno (352). Foligno explains, disambiguates and translates; Bajma Griga does not. Restaurants or taverns are all translated when the name has a meaning by both translators: Chateline remains as such in both, the "Cock" and the "Dog and Partridge" are translated as "Gallo" and "Cane e Pernice" in both cases. Fashionable venues for the ladies, mentioned by Alithea in Act 2, such as Mulberry Garden, St James's Park, the already mentioned New Exchange, and Whitehall are not translated by Bajma Griga at all. Foligno, instead, translates some of them, at least partially: "il parco di Saint James", and, as before, "la Banca Nuova", "Corte" again mentioning the functions explicitly (300, 301); Mulberry-Garden is hyphenated, but otherwise unchanged. In Act 4, several fashionable residential districts are mentioned: Lincoln's Inn Fields, St James's Fields, and Pall Mall. Bajma Griga does not translate but mentions only the first and the third place ("Lincoln's Inn Fields o a Pall Mall", 167), omitting the second one. Foligno mentions them all, hyphenating all the names: Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, Saint James's-Fields, and Pall-Mall (337). When Margery Pinchwife goes to the New Exchange and asks for out of fashion texts to read, *Covent Garden Drollery* (a collection of songs and excerpts from various plays published in 1672 and edited by Alexander Brome), *Tarugo's Wiles* (Thomas St Serfe's comedy, 1668) and *The Slighted Maiden* (Robert Stapleton, 1672), the three titles are treated differently by the translators: Bajma Griga does not translate the title of the collection by Brome but translates the titles of the two other texts, which do not appear to have ever been published in Italian. The titles are therefore invented by him: *Le furberie di Tarugo* (clearly modelled on *Les Fourberies de Scapin* by Molière) and *La vergine oltraggiata*. Foligno, instead, decides to translate all the three titles as *Versi burleschi, Le astuzie di Tarugo, La ragazza piantata* (323).

Modernisation or use of old-fashioned lexicon is of course inherent to the moment the translation was carried out, to the speaking and writing habits of the translator and to the general attitude towards an early modern text. Some translators purposely use old-fashioned language to archaise the final result giving it a patina of time. Some wish to modernise the translation though avoiding anachronism (Agostino Lombardo, for example, was an upholder of this stance). In their own ways, it is possible to see a tendency towards modernisation in both translators of Wycherley, even though Foligno's solutions in many cases do sound nowadays very obsolete, for obvious reasons. Probably not so in 1961, as reading the translation of Pinter's play at the end of the third volume of the collection (*The Birthday Party*, translated as *Il compleanno*), one can feel the same sort of estranging effect as when the language is the same and yet not the same anymore. There are exceptions: for example, as a way to refer to men and women, Bajma Griga often employs "dame" and "gentiluomini" (archaising tendency), whether

Foligno uses the more frequent and domesticating "signore" and "signori" (modernising tendency). This is more reader-oriented on the cultural level, and more modern in the use but, as it is to be expected, Foligno is generally more old-fashioned in his lexicon: "stolido contegnoso" (Foligno, 288) vs "pomposo imbecille" (Bajma Griga, 114) for "formal fool" (9); "surgeon's" (16) is translated as "cerusico" in Foligno (293), as "chirurgo" in Bajma Griga (119). "Children" is rendered with the now obsolete "figliolanza" in Foligno (287), "marmocchi", more colloquial and modern, in Bajma Griga. The insulting repartee by Dorilant at the beginning of Act 3.2, says "Yet he must be buzzing amongst 'em still, like other old headed, lickerish drones" (Wycherley 2014, 59). Foligno translates as "Eppure deve ancora andar ronzando tra loro, come altri disutilacci zucconi e beoni" (319), whereas Bajma Griga translates as "Eppure continua a ronzare fra loro, come certi vecchi fuchi avvinazzati e rimbecilliti" (147).

Puns on speaking names are integrated in the dialogue with very different results as a consequence of the translation/zero translation procedure as far as names are concerned. When Sparkish appears in Act 1, he plays on his own surname and frequently employs the term "spark", used at the time as a depreciatory way of referring to "A young man of an elegant or foppish character; one who affects smartness or display in dress and manners. Chiefly in more or less depreciatory use" (*OED* n. 2, 2a), thence the character's name. Here is what the character says: "How is't, sparks, how is't?" (Wycherley 2014, 18) and then "But, sparks, pray hear me" (20). Foligno, who translates Sparkish's name as Favilla, employs the same term to preserve the pun: "come va? faville! come va?" (Foligno, 294) and later "Ma, faville, per favore, ascoltatemi!" (295). Bajma Griga in the first case interestingly integrates the pun in the dialogue with an expansion: "Come va, brillanti amici, come va?" (121), but later opts for a generalisation and employs "Su, giovanotti, ascoltatemi, vi prego" (122). It is to be conceded that the repetition of "brillanti amici" in the second stance would not have worked and a different solution was necessary.

There are also other examples of disambiguating stance, which sometimes are in contradiction with the general attitude of the translators: Foligno tends to remain very close to the original whenever possible, whereas Bajma Griga sometimes disambiguates expressions. For example, when Dorilant mentions "drunken vizard masks", the note in Ogden's edition states that the meaning is "(here) prostitute" (14), Foligno translates with "maschera ubriaca" (292), Bajma Griga with "prostituta ubriaca dietro la sua maschera" (118), thus incorporating the explanatory note into the text. In this case, the proximity of Foligno's translation to the English words obscures the true meaning of the utterance. Later on, while talking about women, love, wine, vinegar and oil, the so called "wits" (the libertines) in Act 1 discuss about

what is best and Harcourt, the young libertine who will turn to lover and marry the virtuous Alithea, says: "I grant it; love will still be uppermost" (16), where the underlying metaphor is oil and vinegar, with love (oil) floating on the surface. Foligno keeps the metaphor and translates "[c]oncesso, e l'amore rimarrà al di sopra lo stesso" (293), Bajma Griga disambiguates the metaphor and translates "Secondo me l'amore prevarrà sempre" (119), thus losing the metaphorical element.

Forms of address pose a notoriously debatable problem, as the alternating use of you/thou is typical of early modern texts. Both translators decided to translate the formal "you" as *voi*, and not with the use of the more modern but certainly anachronistic *Lei*. Shifts in use of "you/thou" occur very often in the original and Foligno follows the text very closely, as can be seen in this example, where the alternating pronouns occur within the same sentence. The original runs:

> I am obliged to you indeed, dear friend. I would be well with her, only to be well with thee still; for these ties to wives usually dissolve all ties to friends. I would be contented she should enjoy you a-nights, but I would have you to myself a-days, as I have, dear friend. (Wycherley 2014, 65)

Foligno translates:

> Vi sono proprio tenuto, caro amico; desidero d'essere in buona con lei per rimanere ancora in buona con te; perché questi vincoli con le mogli di solito sciolgono tutti i vincoli con gli amici. Mi rassegnerei che vi godesse la notte, purché vi avessi per me il giorno, come vi ho avuto fin qui, caro amico. (323)

Bajma Griga normalises and opts for the informal mode of address:

> Ti sono davvero obbligato, caro amico. Se voglio essere in buoni rapporti con lei è solo per continuare a esserlo con te; poiché questi legami con le mogli di solito sciolgono tutti i legami con gli amici. Mi contenterò che lei si diletti la notte con te, caro amico, ma ti voglio per me tutto il giorno, così come ti ho avuto finora. (152)

Moreover, generally speaking, Bajma Griga decides to have all the witty men address each other with the informal mode of address (*tu*) among themselves: a choice probably determined by the fact that they often address each other by the first name, Dick, Frank, Jack. This poses yet another kind of cultural problem in translation: in English the use of first names generally implies a certain degree of intimacy, as we see in the text when the group of young friends interact among themselves; they call each other by name and often use "thou" as a pronoun. In Italian, informality and intimacy correspond to the use of *tu* and generally speaking it goes with the use of first names as well. But there is another mixed, intermediate form of address between

formal *Lei* or *voi* + use of surnames (usually with titles), and the informal one. And this is the case of first name + formal *Lei/voi*. This may sound condescending or patronising, but it can also be used in formal contexts to lighten up the situation, for example in working environments. The fact that Foligno sometimes employs the formal *voi* among friends who call each other Riccardo, Franco and Gianni (294, 296) adds a distancing effect that is not present in the original.

According to the fashion of the time, foreignism, in particular the use of French words and expressions, was very frequent. One occurs at the very beginning, when Horner declares he will gain entrance to all the ladies' chambers and employs the French *passe-partout* (13). Even though the expression is very common in Italian as well, Foligno chooses to render it with "chiave maestra" (291); Bajma Griga keeps the original "passe-partout" (118). Later there is the phrase "old beaux garçons" (15), unaltered in both translations by Foligno (292) and Bajma Griga (118). The famous erotic French book *L'École des filles*, mentioned by Horner, is not translated in either case.

A very important concept for female characters, constantly mentioned in this as well as in other texts of the Restoration era, is that of "quality", a term that is difficult to translate properly as the English refers to social level and is therefore a term for aristocratic, high-born people (now archaic, see *OED*, 5). Foligno translates with the term "condizione", which partially conveys the meaning, but falls short of the task. Bajma Griga employs the word "qualità", which apparently remains very near the original, but suggests a very different idea in Italian, more linked with moral qualities than rank: the opposite of the original meaning. In my opinion, in the course of the play in translation, the use of the term *qualità* in a context where it clearly refers to social class rather than to personal virtues produces a shift in the semantics of the Italian term: *qualità* ends up meaning "quality" in the Restoration sense. The effect is quite estranging at the beginning, but by the end of the play Italian readers are quite able to understand what *qualità* in that context refers to.

The issue of sexual censorship is very important when dealing with a Restoration comedy, and especially in *The Country Wife*, where there is an extensive use of openly sexual references, language related to sexual transmitted diseases and obscene puns. For example, there is a wide use of the terms "smallpox", "big one" or "great one" and "pox", which are repeated throughout the text as expletives as well as references to widespread sexually transmitted diseases common at the time, syphilis in particular. "Pox" is a very common invective or swearword, widely used in this text: it is translated as *malanno* in Foligno ("il malanno a lui!", 321), thus losing the sexual reference, diluted in a more generic health-related semantic area. The same expression is rendered in various ways according to the function in conversation in Bajma Griga, as *peste* (here referring very indirectly to a frightening infective

disease, see 136 where "A pox on you all" is translated as "La peste vi colga tutti quanti!"), as *al diavolo, perbacco*, and so on. The reference to syphilis is completely erased in Foligno, but rendered explicit in Bajma Griga, as in the following example:

Wycherley	Foligno	Bajma Griga
Quack . . .you'll be as odious to the handsome young women as–	Il Ciarlatano . . . e diverrete odioso alle belle signore giovani, come…	Medicastro . . . e per le belle fanciulle diventerete tanto odioso quanto…
Horner As the smallpox. Well–	Horner Come il vaiuolo. Bene…	Horner Quanto il vaiolo. Bene…
Quack And to the married women of this end of the town as–	Il Ciarlatano E alle maritate di questa parte della città come…	Medicastro E per le donne maritate dei dintorni quanto…
Horner As the great ones . . . (7)	Horner Come il demonio . . . (287)	Horner Quanto la sifilide. (113)

At a later stage in the text, the sentence closing Act 1, "'tis hard to find an old whoremaster without jealousy and the gout, as a young one without fear or the pox", is translated by Foligno as "è altrettanto difficile di trovare un donnaiuolo vecchio senza gelosia e senza la gotta, quanto uno giovane senza paura e senza peste" (299). The same is rendered as "è più difficile trovare un vecchio puttaniere senza la gelosia o la gotta che trovarne uno giovane senza la paura o la sifilide" by Bajma Griga (126). If the use of *peste*, which means "plague", as a swear word to translate the original "pox" can be acceptable, the full meaning of the term in Italian is a serious alteration of the source text. The choice may have been suggested by the use of *appestato* ("infected with the plague", but with a general meaning of "infected") to indicate someone who has been infected by contagion in general. In this case by syphilis. *Peste*, in any case, seems the most frequent word employed by Foligno to replace syphilis, with an evident attenuation of the original by employing a euphemism. This is not the only shift in use detectable in Foligno: when women mention the syphilis, he recurs to an even more mitigating term, as when Mrs Pinchwife says that her husband "won't let me go abroad for fear of catching the pox", and Alithea, quite shocked, retorts "Fie, the smallpox you should say" (Wycherley 2014, 30), Foligno writes "non vuole lasciarmi andare in giro per paura che prenda le bolle", and the answer is "Brr! Il vaiuolo dovreste dire" (301). Bajma Griga translates "non vuole che vada fuori per paura che mi prenda la sifilide" and Alithea answers "Ma no! Il vaiolo vorrai dire!" (128).

In Foligno there is also a general restraint in the use of coarse language pertaining to the sexual semantic area. When in Act 1 Pinchwife complains he could never "keep a whore to myself" and Horner replies that "you only married to keep a whore for yourself" (Wycherley 2014, 26), he translates as "non mi riusciva di tenermi una femmina per me" and the reply is rendered equally as "vi siete sposato soltanto per tenere una femmina per voi" (298). Bajma Griga does not censor the vulgarity and translates "non sono mai riuscito a tenermi una puttana tutta per me" and later "ti sei sposato per avere una puttana tutta per te" (125). Also, the term "wench", here often used in the sense of prostitute or mistress (*OED*, 2) is translated as "maschietta" in Foligno (320), "puttanella" in Bajma Griga (148).

The super famous china scene (4.3) is a masterpiece of comic and obscene double entendre which has to be conveyed so that the comic effect and the sexual innuendos are recognisable in translation. Both translations are functionally apt and run smooth, but Bajma Griga's sounds more natural to contemporary ears. Here are a few examples from the three texts.

Wycherley	Foligno	Bajma Griga
Sir Jaspar . . . I thought you had been at the china house. Horner (*Aside*) China house! That's my cue, I must take it. (101)	Sir Jaspar . . . Credevo foste andata dal chincagliere. Horner (a *parte*) Chincagliere! È lo spunto per me, devo seguirlo. (347)	Sir Jaspar . . . Credevo foste andata al negozio per comprarla. Horner (a *parte*) Il negozio di porcellana! Ora tocca a me, devo afferrare la battuta al volo. (178)

The metatheatrical use of the term "cue" in Horner's line is better preserved in Bajma Griga, man of theatre, than in Foligno. "Spunto" is a more generic word, "tocca a me" and "devo afferrare la battuta" are both more densely connected with the idea of a performance.

Funnily enough, the obscenest exchange between Horner, Sir Jaspar and Lady Fidget sounds slightly more vulgar in Foligno than in Bajma Griga, as in the following excerpt:

Wycherley	Foligno	Bajma Griga
HORNER Now she is throwing my things about, and rifling all I have, but I'll get into her the back way, and so rifle her for it.	HORNER Adesso starà buttando all'aria le cose mie e saccheggiando tutto quanto ho; ma le capiterò addosso per la porta di dietro e saccheggerò lei per rivalsa.	HORNER Mi sta buttando all'aria tutta la mia roba, e rovista tra le mie cose! Ma adesso arrivo a lei dalla porta di dietro e ci penso io a frugarla per bene.
. . .	. . .	. . .
SIR JASPAR Wife! My Lady Fidget! Wife! He is coming into you the back way!	SIR JASPAR Moglie! Donna Nervi! Vi vien dentro per la porta dietro.	SIR JASPAR Moglie! Lady Fidget! Moglie, sta venendo a prenderti da dietro.
. . .	. . .	. . .
LADY FIDGET Let him come, and welcome, which way he will. (103)	LADY FIDGET Venga pure, benvenuto per qualunque via gli piaccia. (348)	LADY FIDGET Che venga pure da dove vuole, sarà il benvenuto.

Both versions convey the double entendre completely and effectively, even later in the scene when Mrs Squeamish arrives and requires her part of Horner's china. The long metaphor is sustained and works effortlessly in translation.

4. Conclusive Remarks

To conclude, the two translations are both academic and disseminative projects, and they perform both functions. The disseminative aim explains much of Foligno's type of choices. If we employ Schleiermacher's dichotomy, later resumed by Venuti as "domesticating" and "foreignising" attitudes (Venuti 1995, 20), we can see in Foligno's translation a more domesticating stance ("an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bringing the author back home", Venuti 1995, 20). Bajma Griga, who translates at least forty years later, can project an implied reader with some knowledge of English drama and language. His translation is consequently not so much in need of explaining everything and his attitude can be identified as relatively speaking more foreignising ("an ethnodeviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad", Venuti 1995, 20).

As a consequence, we find many more terms that are not disambiguated or translated and are left in the original. On the other hand, Bajma Griga uses expansive translation techniques which include explanations in the translation, and he also inserts a few endnotes: his translation is reader-oriented and tries to reach out to his readers. Foligno, instead, either leaves some names completely untranslated and unexplained (Castril and Bayes in the Prologue, for example) or he normalises the translation to make it sound natural to Italian readers, translating speaking names, in some cases place names or institutions. On the whole, both translations are a valid effort to carry a less known author to Italian readers; Foligno's nowadays sounds out-dated and antiquated, Bajma Griga is more modern and sometimes colloquial as a consequence. Bajma Griga, as Venuti points out, being a re-translator could be more free to experiment and could certainly avail himself of critical editions of the text which helped him in lexical choices which may sound arbitrary until one reads the notes and finds out that he often incorporates them in his translation, as when he translates "chemist" with "alchimista" (117) instead of "farmacista" (as Foligno had done, 291) or "chimico": Ogden's note says "alchemist. In Jonson's *The Alchemist* the client's incredulity and impatience are supposed to harm the alchemical process" (Wycherley 2014, 13). As a consequence, his translation can be more fully intertextual.

The layering of translations gives the text a tail of the comet: not too long so far, yet already leaving a mark in the Italian literary canon.

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Michela Marroni*

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

Abstract

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

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

1. Preliminary Remarks

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

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

Both translators are academic with an ample experience in the field of translation, even though Masolino d'Amico has a much longer and more continuous experience on his side. In fact, he has edited and translated Byron, Richardson, Stevenson, Lewis Carroll, D.H. Lawrence and Hemingway as well as Shakespeare, Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams and Alan Ayckbourn. Besides publishing the monograph *Scena e parola in Shakespeare* (Einaudi, 1974) and the outstanding volume *Dieci secoli di teatro inglese 970-1980* (Mondadori, 1981), d'Amico also worked in the movie field as translator and script writer. As regards Loretta Innocenti, she has written extensively on English drama (*La scena trasformata: Adattamenti neoclassici di Shakespeare*, Sansoni 1985; rpt. Pacini 2010) and has gained a good amount of experience as a translator: she translated, for instance, *Love's Labour's Lost* (*Pene d'amor perdute*) for Salerno Edizioni in 2014.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2. Translation as a Matter of Strategies

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

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

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

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

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

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

3. A Reader-Oriented Translation?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5. Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Francesca Forlini*

Challenging Narratives: Immersive Practices and the Representation of the Refugee Experience in Clare Bayley's *The Container*

Abstract

First performed inside a container lorry at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 2007, Clare Bayley's *The Container* takes an unconventional approach to altering British perceptions of the refugee crisis, bespeaking the changing reality of migration histories. By looking at the major challenges faced by theatre makers in representing the refugee experience, this article seeks to reflect on the relatively recent turn towards immersive and participatory practices witnessed by contemporary British theatre. It does so by discussing the major challenges faced by theatrical representations of the refugee experience examining the primary issues that arise when attempting to present or represent the refugee experience on stage. How does contemporary British theatre complicate stereotyped media representations of forced migrants? How can it renovate our understanding of the global refugee crisis? Drawing upon studies such as Emma Cox's *Theatre & Migration* (2014) and Alison Jeffers *Refugees, Theatre and Crisis: Performing Global Identities* (2011), this contribution reflects on the increasing attention towards issues of displacement and migration as manifested by the most recent proliferation of community drama workshops, refugee festivals and grand scale productions in the UK, arguing that refugee theatre can serve as a valuable space for real life's institutional and extra-institutional encounter, fostering understanding and cohesion and bringing about real change.

Keywords: immigrant theatre; refugee theatre; site-specificity; *The Container*; Clare Bayley

1. Entering *The Container*

It's dark, it's cramped, and it's not usually the best place to hold a performance. Yet, for director Tom Wright, a shipping container was the ideal stage for a play exploring the challenges and determination of illegal migrants trying to make their way to the west in search of a better life. Clare Bayley's *The Container* – first created for a trio of school performances in the Thames Gateway area – not only dramatises that terrifying experience as one of the key journeys of our time, but sets the action inside a real container parked outside the Young Vic Theatre, in central London. The effect is devastating. As the big metal doors slam shut on the audience, the spectators are plunged

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into the sweaty darkness of a different world that is only inches away from us, as we go about our daily lives.

Since its premiere at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 2007, where it won both a Fringe First award and the Amnesty Freedom of Expression award, Clare Bayley's play has been produced in containers in Cardiff, Toronto, Melbourne and Texas, as well as in Mexico and Germany. In 2013, Kwame Kwei Armagh – the only Black, male artistic director within America's top hundred theatres – and the first African-Caribbean director to run a major British theatre – produced the play at Baltimore Centre Stage, in the US. In 2014, the Digital Theatre version of Tom Wright's production was broadcasted on London Live TV. Interestingly, in the same year, the play was also translated into Italian and staged by Carlo Emilio Lerici at Teatro Belli, in Rome.

Given the wide range of productions made available in the last couple of decades, it seems crucial to point out that the focus of this article is on the revival staged in 2009 outside the Young Vic Theatre and made available for streaming on the Digital Theatre platform. By looking at the major challenges faced by theatrical representations of the refugee experience, the first section of the article discusses the play in light of the increasing attention of contemporary British theatre towards issues of displacement and migration as manifested by the increasing availability of community drama workshops, refugee festivals and grand scale productions in the UK. How can theatre complicate stereotyped media representations of forced migrants? How can it renovate our understanding of the global refugee crisis? By looking at the major challenges faced by theatrical representations of the refugee experience, the article moves on to examine three primary issues that arise when attempting to present or represent the refugee experience on stage: 1) the ethical implications of speaking on behalf of the other; 2) the tendency to aestheticise violence and trauma; and 3) the risk of reinforcing oppositions by portraying the refugee experience through the performance of victimhood. Reflecting on the relatively recent turn towards immersive and participatory practices witnessed by refugee theatre, this contribution argues that refugee theatre can serve as a valuable space for real life's institutional and extra-institutional encounter, fostering understanding and cohesion and bringing about change.

2. *The Container*: Being an Audience for Refugee Theatre

In a bluish semidarkness illuminated by handheld torches wielded by audience members and actors, five characters begin their journey towards an uncertain fate. The cloistered space is empty when the small group of twenty-eight people from the audience is first escorted inside, allowing

them time to take in the bleak, claustrophobic set design devised by Naomi Dawson. The seats are wooden pallets covered in blankets set against the longer sides of the container, a configuration which turns the space into a thrust stage. The tenuous light filtering from the entrance reveals a number of wooden crates. The unfurnished metal walls of the container reinforce the grudgingly sparse and cramped nature of the space. Gradually, the actors step into the container, unobtrusive to the point that it is easy to mistake them for audience members, their plain clothes allowing them to mingle with the small audience and thus straightforwardly and effectively challenging the distinction between 'subject' and 'object' of the performance.

The show begins mid ride: when the doors are shut the whole space starts rumbling and vibrating to create a convincing illusion of being on a moving vehicle, the result of designer Naomi Dawson and sound designer Adrienne Quartly's combined efforts. Inside the pitch-black container, someone lights up a torch. There are four people aboard: Fatima (Doreene Blackstock) and Asha (Mercy Ojelade), two Somali women that have escaped from a refugee camp in Africa and that pose as mother and daughter; Ahmad (Hassani Shapi), a wealthy businessman from Afghanistan; and Jemal (Abhin Galeya), a Kurd who wants to reunite with his family after having been denied his asylum application. Naturally, the geographical origins of the characters are not casual. Fatima and Asha are originally from Somalia, a country that has one of the highest migration rates in the world, due to the civil war and to the massive refugee crisis that the country has been facing since the fall of dictator Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991 (OCHA 2021). Ahmad is fleeing Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban regime following the joint U.S. and British invasion in late 2001, while Jemal is trying to make it back to the UK, the country that has deported him back to Turkey after having granted him asylum. Taken together, the backstories of Bayley's characters highlight the massive scale and global impact of the issue of forced migration and evoke the major conflicts that have radically shaped the geography of the modern world until 2014, when war knocked on the door of Eastern Europe.

The reference here is to Russian annexation of Crimea following Ukraine's political shift towards the European Union. The annexation was widely condemned by the international community and led to ongoing tensions between Russia and Ukraine, particularly in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Despite the gap of almost twenty years that separates the piece from the time of writing, the numbers generated by these conflicts still rival the scale of those caused by the Russia-Ukraine war and major natural disasters such as the twin earthquakes that struck Syria and Turkey on 6 February 2023. With an estimated 3.8 million people internally displaced across the country, Somalia currently has more internal displaced persons (IDPs) than the Syrian Arab Republic (OCHA, 2023) and was only recently surpassed by

Ukraine with 5.1 million IDPs (IOM, 2023). In 2022, Afghan refugees were still the third largest displaced population in the world after Syrian and Ukrainian refugees (UNHCR, 2022) and the Kurdish-Turkish war had claimed at least some 40,000 lives, the vast majority of them Kurdish civilians. A figure that is even more tragic when we consider that the last report was in 2016 and that the casualties of the Russian-Ukrainian war as of July 2023 amounted to a verified total of 9,369 civilian deaths (OHCHR, 2023).

The show reaches its turning point when a fifth person is suddenly let on, Mariam (Amber Agar) who, like Ahmad, is from Afghanistan. She has food, which she is prepared to share to overcome the wariness of her fellow travelers. Yet, the mysterious illness that afflicts her, which we later discover is due to her pregnancy, sets her apart from the others. As the show progresses, the characters barter for food and water, all the while revealing different backstories and survival strategies, all in the hope of making it across the Channel. They have already spent days locked in their mobile prison when the agent who organised their passage demands more money in order to get them across the border between England and France. Some of them do not have the money or are unwilling to lose more. Jemal offers to pay for the young Somali girl, Asha, but no one is prepared to do the same for Mariam, who is left to find – and the suggestion is here deliberately ambiguous – "another way to pay" (2007, 43).

> Immigration has always been an integral part of our country's make up, and never more so than now. Yet despite this, the coverage these stories get in much of the mainstream media focuses entirely on a xenophobic, NIMBY-ish little Englander point of view. The real story – the story of what people have come from, what they have gone through to get here, and what they are confronted with when they do arrive – is largely ignored. As a playwright, it was this I wanted audiences to understand. And if they could get some sense of what those stories involved by experiencing them from the inside of a container, then so much the better. (Bayley qtd in Sinnot 2016)

Bayley's thoughts on the play and its rationale are clearly outlined in the blog documenting the original production. Here, the urgency of confronting the reality of forced migration is linked to a crucial element of performance: the audience.

As Alison Jeffers has already noted in a collection of essays on refugee performance edited by Michael Balfour (2013), much of the writing that has emerged in recent years has devoted little attention to exploring the role of the audience in refugee theatre. Since the early 1990s, the UK has witnessed a significant growth in arts and cultural activities among community groups made up of refugees and asylum seekers (Barnes 2009; Gould 2005; Kidd et al. 2008). Driven by the emergence of this liminal figure in the work of Black

and Asian women playwrights, as evidenced by plays like Amrit Wilson's *Survivors* (1999) and Tanika Gupta's *Sanctuary* (2002), the growing interest of the British theatre sector in the refugee or asylum seeker as opposed to the economic migrant has led to a proliferation of community drama workshops, refugee festivals and theatre projects engaging with refugee community groups.[1] In 2005, Creative Exchange undertook one of the first national studies to assess the role of arts and culture in the integration of refugees and asylum seekers. The study identified 76 refugee arts projects in the UK, with a higher concentration in London (Gould 2005), a number that was set to grow exponentially. By 2008, the authors of *Arts and Refugees in the UK: History, Impact and the Future* reported over 200 arts projects operating in the UK and mostly concentrated in London, Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow and other urban centres (Kidd et al. 2008).

In 2020, Migrants in Theatre, a movement of first-generation migrant theatre artists and companies who have come together to campaign for more and better representation of foreign-born artists in British theatre, widened the scope of the existing research and began circulating a survey to gather information on migrants' experiences in the industry. The preliminary report, included in the collective's founding document, not only addressed issues of representation and misrepresentation of migrant artists in the UK, but also highlighted the deep discrepancies between the government support offered in response to COVID-19 and the rapidly approaching, still unclear Brexit (MIT 2021). The growing interest in refugee theatre in the UK is intricately linked to the simultaneous rise in audience-related activities. As this genre gains prominence, there is a heightened awareness of the pivotal role the audience plays in shaping the narrative and fostering empathy. Productions often incorporate interactive elements, post-performance discussions, and community engagements to not only enhance the audience's understanding of the refugee experience but also to encourage active participation and reflection. The synergy between the subject matter and audience-related activities is part of a collective effort to bridge understanding and build

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[1] The diversity of taxonomic categories reflects the intricate nature of the migratory phenomenon. According to Amnesty International, an asylum seeker is an individual who is seeking international protection. In countries with individualised procedures, an asylum seeker is someone who is waiting to receive a decision on their asylum claim. Amnesty International defines a refugee as someone fleeing their country due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, social group, or political opinion. The definition does not cover displaced people due to environmental disasters. Thirdly, an economic migrant is someone who leaves their country of origin purely for financial and/or economic reasons. Consequently, economic migrants do not meet the criteria for refugee status and are not eligible for international protection (Amnesty International 2023).

connections, emphasising the transformative power of theatre in fostering compassion and awareness.

In response to the growing demand for representation, visibility and support infrastructure, the UK arts sector has witnessed an increase in collaborations between theatres and refugee organisations in recent decades. In 2014, the West Yorkshire Playhouse became UK's first Theatre of Sanctuary, establishing a singing group for refugee women, as well as workshops and educational events for refugees and asylum seekers. In 2016, the Young Vic followed in its footsteps, winning the Sanctuary Award for the Arts for hosting the Beyond Borders conference in partnership with Counterpoints Arts and Platforma and for dedicating an entire season to exploring the lives of refugees. In the same year, SBC (Stand up and Be Counted) became the first Theatre Company of Sanctuary for their work around detention involving an asylum seeker in research and for giving her the lead role in the play *Tanya*. By 2019, it was clear that Theatres of Sanctuary would become a national network. To date, thirty-seven theatre companies and theatres have joined the project. However, such an understandable focus on refugees, on their experiences, and on the ways in which participatory theatre and community-engaged projects have proven beneficial, has meant that the act of being the audience for this work has mostly been ignored.

According to Alison Jeffers, the absence of any significant body of writing that systematically addresses audience experience and identity in refugee theatre has inevitably led to audiences being divided into two broad categories (2011). The first one includes people who are new to the issue and that are therefore perceived to be in need of education. This calls for performances that aim to articulate the experience of refugees and their condition of migrancy, exposing the difficulties that migrants face in the process of applying for asylum, in dealing with trauma and in integrating into the new lives and circumstances in which they find themselves. The second category is at the opposite end of the spectrum and includes a more knowledgeable audience, who attend refugee theatre out of solidarity with the plight of refugees and asylum seekers. Having identified these two categories, Jeffers asserts that neither of them is accurate or helpful in assessing the impact of refugee theatre. Indeed, many recent publications in audience studies have challenged the idea of the audience as a monolithic entity (Kjeldsen 2018, Reason et al. 2022).

Similarly, I argue that assumptions about the monolithic nature of the audience prove to be particularly unhelpful in understanding what actually happens in a theatrical exchange, especially when this complexity is further deepened by the fact that the relationship between performer and audience is particularly unstable in refugee theatre. To put it into Helen Freshwater's words, "there may be several distinct coexisting audiences to

be found among the people gathered together to watch a show" (2009, 9). As individual audience members, we attend a theatre performance "with varying capacities, from varying positions, from different interests from one moment to the next" (Rayner 1993, 4), but we also approach the experience conscious that we will be sharing it with other people. When people come to see a piece of refugee theatre or a play about illegal migration, they are signalling not only a willingness to listen, but also a desire to listen as a group. What happens then when we shift the focus to look at this collective body from the point of view of audience-actor interaction? Once the 'we' of the audience is transformed into a 'you', then the performers also become a 'you'. This creates what Alice Rayner has defined as "simultaneous subjectivity" (1993, 13). By not being afraid to categorise refugee performers as 'you' in the sense of 'not us', their otherness becomes "not a datum for knowledge but a condition of interest and dialogue" (Rayner 1993, 15).

In Clare Bayley's play, it is precisely this configuration that allows for a face-to-face encounter between performer and audience, and symbolically between refugees and non-refugees. Here, simultaneous subjectivity creates the grounds for a dialogic relationship that raises questions about the apparent stability of the two categories: in what ways and to what extent are we a 'we'? And more importantly, how do we respond to the questions of responsibility for the other that are addressed to us from the stage? On a spatial level, the seating arrangement in Tom Wright's production reflects this approach. Indeed, the parliamentary configuration adopted is not only a figurative nod to the call for political activism, but also a device that forces the audience to confront the action on stage and themselves. In order to gain a better understanding of the hardships that refugees are forced to endure in the name of the protection of state borders, in the name of us as citizens, audiences of the Young Vic production are asked to sit shoulder-to-shoulder in the face-to-face theatrical encounter and to stand together in the act of considering how to respond to the interaction of the performance both during and after the show. The act of watching a piece of refugee theatre therefore challenges the audience to rethink their critical position and to enter into a set of relationships that Mireille Rosello has aptly described as "a complicated ballet of proposals [and] expectations" (Rosello 2001, 127). On the one hand, the audience occupies a privileged position. By giving refugees a voice and a space to share their stories, they place themselves in a hierarchical relationship with the refugees, keeping them in their place (Smith 2014, 183). It is a system of power relations that can be framed by drawing on gift theory from the work of Marcel Mauss (1954), Jacques Derrida (1992), Pierre Bordieu (1997), and recent work by Helen Nicholson (2014). Like gifts, the offer of a "hospitable stage" has a positive connotation. However, it can often be hierarchical: those able to give are in a position of

privilege, and, as Mauss argues, gifts are often self-interested because of the implicit debt and the social obligation to reciprocate and to conform to the expectations of the giver. On the other hand, the presence of the audience is also a form of commitment through an act of trust and generosity. In the process of listening to refugee stories told through the medium of theatre, the audience amplifies the experiences of storytellers by allowing them to engage with a wider audience and to participate in the process of building a civility. As Alison Jeffers has pointed out, "this process is not about creating exclusivities but about coming to an understanding of the ways in which these stories also become part of our civility" (2013, 308).

Civil listening allows us to distance ourselves from feelings of togetherness while still demonstrating a commitment to dialogue. This seems particularly evident in a play where storytelling is so prominent that it almost erases all action, and where we, as an audience, can do little other than use our privileged position to amplify these stories and increase their chances of being heard. In "I Am Not Your Canvas" (2019), Anna Gotlib sheds light on the risks associated with speaking on behalf of the other, explaining how the efforts to embrace the singularity of others can end up perpetrating a veiled form of colonialism, normalising and erasing the essential uniqueness of the other. "Even the nonxenophobic, well-meaning master narratives – the ones designed to inspire empathy for the downtrodden refugee, casting a kindly eye on the homeless migrant – can be both morally and epistemically damaging to the refugee and self-complimentary to the narrators" (243) she writes, concluding that by giving voice to these master narratives, we "not only silence but also create spaces of liminality where refugees are unable to engage as moral agents" (Gotlib 2019, 248). Are the voiceless truly voiceless? If so, who has taken their voices away?

3. Voicing the Refugee: Aestheticising Trauma and the Hero Narrative

When it comes to refugee theatre, issues of storytelling and representation become even more sensitive. Indeed, while theatrical modes of representation seek to inclusively portray the invisible and voiceless foreigner, in refugee theatre this intention is often challenged by the paradox, inherent in the staging process, of having to embody a condition based on non-presence from a perspective that is often aligned with societal norms. In *Performance, Identity, and Immigration: a Theatre of Undocumentedness*, Gad Guterman examines the paradox of refugee representation, highlighting the challenges and the risks of making present for audiences a condition based on non-presence. In his analysis, Guterman explores the implications of casting refugee and non-refugee actors in refugee roles. On the one hand, he

notes that having non-refugee actors play refugee characters can deprive refugees of valuable opportunities for representation and contribute to the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes. On the other hand, having refugee actors expose their situation as undocumented migrants can put pressure on them to assimilate to the cultural norms of the host country and to conform to the expectations of the audience. Therefore, Guterman (2014) concludes that having refugee actors perform their own experiences can be just as morally and epistemologically damaging as having non-refugee actors give voice to refugee accounts, as both attempts can ultimately end up silencing and limiting refugees' agency.

The Container addresses the paradox of refugee representation on two levels: the dramaturgical and the performative. On the dramaturgical level, the narrative of Afghan, Somali, Kurdish and Turkish refugees is entrusted to a white, middle-class English woman and to a cast of non-refugee actors. In a note on her blog published on the occasion of the opening of *The Container* at Canadian Stage, Bayley explains how the urgency of making the refugee condition present for British audiences led her to take on the challenge of writing from a refugee perspective, despite her radically different background. Indeed, when she was first commissioned to write the play, people were just starting to arrive in the UK, smuggled in the back of lorries:

> All the headlines in the right wing press were about the 'flood' of 'migrants' sneaking into our country in order to steal our jobs and claim our benefits. I felt that the picture needed to be put straight. When I was in the middle of writing it, fifty-eight Chinese students were found suffocated inside a locked container at Dover. When that happened, I wondered whether I could continue to write the play. Then, I realised it was more important than ever. The people inside these trucks and containers had to be known. (Bayley 2016)

At that time, no one else was addressing the issue from the refugees' perspective. So, *The Container* came to fill that gap. Then, when hundreds of thousands of people started crossing the Mediterranean, walking through Greece and Hungary, the issue of forced migration started to get media attention. By the time the play was ready to be transferred to the stage, refugees were telling their own stories. Newspapers received personal accounts. Broadcasters gave people cameras to document their journeys. The story itself was already in the mainstream. At one point, Bayley felt that her work was losing its meaning. But she came to the conclusion that her job, as an artist, was "to attempt to portray the world as seen through other people's eyes. Not just to write about herself. That meant writing about Afghans, Somalis, Kurds and Turks. And incidentally, that also meant providing jobs for actors of different ethnicities" (Bayley 2016).

For Bayley, the real challenge of making refugee theatre was learning how to deal with stories without exploiting or appropriating them. It was a challenge that Bayley approached keeping in mind an incident with her mother that had happened at the beginning of her career. At the time, Bayley was writing a short story based on her mother's personal account of her evacuation to Toronto during the Second World War. The story and its emotional impact were so vivid in her mind that Bayley felt entitled to appropriate the material without asking for permission: "I wrote my first ever short story about it and presented it proudly to my mother. To my shock, she was horrified and angry. She said it wasn't my story to tell" (2016). This incident made Bayley realise the dangers of telling other people's stories, and the importance of approaching storytelling with a deep understanding of the complexities involved. A lesson that she put into practice in the writing of *The Container.*

Mindful of the risks of appropriating other people's stories, in *The Container* the playwright and the performers make no attempt to voice the refugees' stories directly. Instead, the play emerges as a product of interviews with people who have first-hand experience of being smuggled and living as refugees. These people shared their stories on condition of anonymity, usually because they were waiting for their asylum applications to be processed and feared that anything they said might be used against them. As a result, Bayley had to conceal the individual identities of her subjects and reshape their stories. This process of manipulation and reimagining resulted in a play that is ultimately a work of fiction, based on careful research. One of the most problematic aspects, which Bayley has managed to avoid by relying less heavily on verbatim material, is the re-enactment of trauma through the portrayal of violence and suffering in the refugee narratives. Having reworked the original narratives that inspired the play and having cast non-refugee actors, Bayley's show did not move along the lines of legal processes such as Refugee Status Determination (RSD), which require refugees and asylum seekers to perform their experiences of persecution – both to tell their stories and to convince judges of their suffering (Jeffers 2011; Wake 2013; Cox 2014). Mindful of the crucial influence that the performance of victimhood has on the trajectory of a refugee's life, Bayley distances herself from what Jeffers has termed "bureaucratic performance", highlighting how most refugee narratives of persecution rely heavily on the language of trauma and evidence of post-traumatic stress disorder to make a compelling case (2008, 217). Authentic identity as a refugee is inextricably linked to the aestheticisation of violence and trauma. As Anna Street (2021) has pointed out, the identity of refugees "depends upon carefully and convincingly presenting their stories of fear, shame, and degradation". Refugee performance also generates expectations about the kind of theatre and the topics that are to be explored. The risk of

transferring such performances to the stage, therefore, is that of re-enacting the very system they seek to oppose. By casting non-refugee actors for the Young Vic production, Bayley has managed to avoid the dangers of literal translation or naturalistic repetition of trauma identified by Julie Salverson (1999), who warns of the reductive and potentially re-violating effects of refugee plays.

Bayley's play thus demonstrates how the attempt to construct a discourse around refugee performance is caught up in an unwavering paradox. On the one hand, as stated, the legal process of gaining asylum requires evidence of trauma that is meticulously constructed as a form of performance. On the other hand, theatre adopts these very criteria for aesthetic purposes. Against this background, Bayley's decision to transform verbatim material into a fictional narrative based on thorough research and to cast non-refugee actors is both problematic and ethical. It is problematic in that it may undermine the very goals it seeks to achieve by depriving refugees of the opportunity to speak for themselves. Yet, it is ethical because it refuses to commodify the refugee experience and to promote simplistic messages. Within this framework, the role of the audience is also crucial. Just as the playwright's choice to portray the refugee as 'the other' can be done in ways that victimise rather than validate, so too can the audience thrust them into configurations of superiority or oppression. In her analysis, Jeffers highlights a common trend in cultural productions centered on the refugee experience. Often linked to the pressure to meet the criteria of bureaucratic performance, these representations, according to Jeffers, focus on portraying refugees as victims of trauma and persecution (2011, 129).

This desire for empathy and emotional connection can lead to an oversimplification of the refugee experience, reducing it to a one-dimensional narrative focused solely on suffering. Katrin Sieg notes that this kind of representation is prevalent in verbatim and documentary theatre produced by human rights organisations (2016). However, despite their good intentions, such efforts tend to oversimplify the refugees' stories of resilience, resourcefulness, and agency. By focusing exclusively on depictions of victimhood and trauma, these representations risk perpetuating a skewed and incomplete understanding of the refugee experience. There is also a risk that such representations cast refugees in a heroic light, as in Liisa H. Malkki's depiction of the "saintly refugee" (1996). According to this trope, refugees are portrayed as myth-busters, whose contribution to society is so significant that it seems capable of dispelling all negative stereotypes. Although well-intentioned, the emphasis on what refugees have to offer and on their potential to contribute to the nation can, according to Bonnie Honig, "feed into the xenophobic anxiety that they might really be takers from it" (2001, 199). Thus, while aiming to counteract negative perceptions of

refugees, the push to portray them as endearing and heroic may inadvertently exacerbate existing divisions and reinforce the 'us versus them' divide.

This is not to say, of course, that these configurations cannot be creatively subverted. Indeed, when established oppositions such as us/ them, judge/victim, citizen/refugee, inside/outside are skillfully transformed into uncomfortable experiences, the deliberate construction of a binary can paradoxically undermine itself and appropriate the very normalised structures it seeks to establish. Conversely, the reverse holds true, and even the most immersive participatory performances, where the audience is encouraged to empathise with the refugee's perspective, step into their shoes, and envision themselves as the other, may not necessarily challenge these pre-existing divisions. Instead, there is a genuine risk of inadvertently reinforcing these divisions. As Jeffers eloquently puts it:

> interpellation and, more specifically, deliberately inaccurate interpellation within a theatrical frame is thus used to displace the refugee body in performance by re-placing it with the citizen's body but all this does is to draw attention to the ways in which the citizen ultimately assumes the safety and security that comes with a sense of belonging. (2011, 67)

At times, the performative journey into the refugee experience can ironically lead us to cling all the more tightly to what we perceive as our inherent privileges. In the context of *The Container*, the interplay between audience engagement and the representation of refugees opens up new perspectives. Indeed, while the play may invite audiences to confront discomfort and challenge established perspectives, it is crucial to acknowledge that the form of engagement it generates does not inherently dissolve the entrenched distinctions between refugees and non-refugees. Instead, the play navigates a delicate equilibrium, aiming to creatively challenge audience positions while remaining mindful of the risk of reinforcing social divisions.

4. Refugee Theatre, Site-Specific Performance, and the Creative Agency of the Spectator

Conquergood's exploration of de Certeau's assertion that "what the map cuts up, the story cuts across" (1997, 126) underlines the transgressive boundaries between established forms of knowledge represented by "the map", and the experiential, embodied knowledge of marginalised voices represented by "the story" (2002). This distinction becomes particularly relevant in the context of refugee performance, where individuals and communities in a host country must learn how to navigate the challenges of survival, reconstruct homes, process traumatic experiences, and find their place within new cultures.

In this context, both story and place can become sites of negotiation and resilience, helping people to adapt to new circumstances by forging a sense of belonging. In Bayley's play, space is not just a backdrop but a dynamic and integral element that contributes to the overall meaning, aesthetics, and impact of the production. According to Verónica Rodríguez, Bayley's play can be classified as a 'container play' (2022, 148). This genre finds antecedents in Christoph Schlingensief 's *Bitte Liebt Österreich!* (*Please Love Austria!* 2000) and, less famously, in Maxim Biller's Kühltransport: *Ein Drama* (*Refrigerated Transport: A Drama* 2001). While Michael Shane Boyle contends that "the story that propels *The Container* gives audiences little choice but to interpret the infrastructural aesthetic as a narrative device", this contribution posits that the symbolism of the container extends far beyond its mere narrative function (2016, 67).

Firstly, the idea of the container resonates deeply with the migrant experience, usually related to confinement in various ways: within bordered spaces, modes of transport, and in liminal spaces and states. Moreover, the container serves as a potent and contradictory symbol of globalisation. Essential for transporting consumer goods worldwide, it simultaneously conveys associations with pollution, dehumanisation, and objectification. On a dramaturgical level, Bayley's script is functional in showing how different forms of migration follow the path of globalisation. Forced to cross entire countries in order to reach Europe and the final leg of their journeys that will hopefully bring them to the UK, the route taken by each character in the play paradoxically represents a "spatial view of globalisation" because in each of these routes "spatial differences are convened under the sign of temporal sequence" from "underdeveloped" countries, through their "developing" neighbours, to the "developed" world of the global north (Massey, 82). According to Rodríguez, the staging and proxemic relations in the play further suggest that the theater and its audience are embedded in a globalised circuit of objectification (2022, 149). The close physical proximity between the cast and spectators implies a shared space, challenging any notion of disentanglement. This not only highlights the imbalanced positioning of the spectators but also suggests their potential to be in the migrants' position, emphasising the interconnectedness and interdependence of their status.

The proxemic relationship also encapsulates a sense of migratory aesthetics, with the confined space illuminated solely by torches, recreating the heat, smell, and claustrophobic conditions that often characterises the migrants' journey. This immersive symbiosis is heightened by staging the container in a public space within a specific borough with a high refugee population in the UK. These deliberate choices prompt broader reflections on space and the interconnectedness between the migrants' narrative, the audience, the public sphere, and the lived geography. Typically, citizens of the

host country are perceived as insiders, while migrants are seen as outsiders. As highlighted by Rodríguez, the staging of *The Container* challenges and disrupts established roles by situating the migrants – the outsiders – within the container and the UK while simultaneously situating the spectators – acknowledged as insiders – beyond the conventional comfort of the theatre building and the typical narrative presented by the media in the world of the outsiders (2022). Rather than framing audience members as mere witnesses, *The Container* attempts to bodily turn spectators into the characters it depicts. At the heart of the play's reception is the recognition that all the crucial features of the theatrical experience configured by the text function only by virtue of the fact that performers and spectators share a lived, embodied experience of space .

This pronounced emphasis on communal engagement and active participation achieved through the site-specific mode found striking resonance in the critical accounts of the 2009 production. Hermione Hobby's review for *The Guardian* emphasised the inadequacy of the term 'spectator' when applied to the experience of Tom Wright's production, where so much more than looking is being done and where all the senses are engaged. In her account, Hobby emphasised how how the immersive setting and the close proximity of actors and audience members alike placed the audience in a very different relationship to the text, the site of the performance and their purpose for being there:

> With the metallic door resounding shut and locked, the very notion of a "captive audience" takes on a renewed dimension. As the initial characters exchange their dialogue in hushed whispers, their torchlight beams traversing the confines of the container's walls, the audience finds themselves straining to perceive both sound and sight, juxtaposing the simulated cacophony of the lorry with the genuine urban hum outside. (Hobby 2009)

A similar review in *The Independent* emphasised the sense of physical and emotional discomfort caused not only by sitting in a confined space but also by the difficulty of seeing the actors:

> The first few minutes are truly horrifying. In pitch darkness, the silence is broken only by the insistent, nausea-making vibrating sounds of a lorry in motion. After what feels like an eternity, the noise stops and a flashlight shines out of the black. Torches are the only lighting used in Tom Wright's production, often shining directly into the eyes of the audience as the action unfolds in a narrow, dusty strip down the middle of the container. It's all hugely uncomfortable – which is the point, of course. (Jones 2009)

Overall, the reviews' characterisation of the experience as unsettling and disturbing underscored that the immersive setting of *The Container*

profoundly enhanced audience engagement and the emotional resonance of the play. However, Bayley's decision to stage the play as a site-specific piece led the performance to engage far more deeply with its chosen location and with the social and political issues that are inextricably linked to place.

As Gay McAuley beautifully puts it, "anyone setting out to make a site-based performance must of necessity enter into negotiations with the owners of the site, those who currently occupy it, and those who have control over it: the police, fire brigade, usually the local councilor other municipal authorities and, nowadays, insurance companies" (2005, 30). The tangible presence of the people who occupied or inhabited the container used for the performance as well as the sites outside it and the city of London itself, the traces of the people who had inhabited these spaces in the past, the histories of partially erased or contested occupations, became present in the performance and led the play to collaterally raise the issue of ownership: legal as well as commercial and moral. Ownership is an issue that has recently gained prominence in many countries in relation to issues of intellectual property and copyright. At the time of the production, however, this distinction held even greater political complexity in the UK, where it was at the heart of the many campaigns of the Right to Roam movement. Ownership is also a crucial issue when it comes to illegal migration, as it carries with it authority, power, rights, borders and their enforcement, privileges of exclusion, and privileges of inclusion.

Overall, *The Container*'s site-specific approach reflects the recent interest in immersive and participatory practices witnessed in refugee theatre in the UK. Though still under-documented, the rise of refugee plays recurring to site-specific and immersive stagings can be attributed to several compelling motivations. As seen in Bayley's production, immersive approaches can help bridge the empathy gap between audiences and refugees, fostering a deeper understanding of the refugee experience and encouraging audiences to question their assumptions, challenge stereotypes, and develop a deeper sense of empathy. By involving audiences in the creation and performance of refugee stories, the site-specific mode can also become a platform for self-expression and agency, leading to a broader societal shift in attitudes towards refugees and fostering a more inclusive and empathetic society. However, while immersive and participatory practices offer promising perspectives for refugee theatre, we must not forget that they also present challenges and ethical considerations. Ensuring the emotional wellbeing of both performers and audiences is paramount, as immersive experiences can evoke intense emotions. In addition, avoiding sensationalising and trivialising refugee experiences is crucial to maintaining the integrity of the narratives presented. Ensuring authentic representation and participation is also essential. The line between genuine empowerment and exploitation can

be thin. It is therefore imperative to involve refugees in the creative process and provide a platform for diverse voices within the community. Finding the right balance between creative expression, artistic integrity, and ethical responsibility remains an open challenge.

5. Conclusion

The Container by Clare Bayley presents a thought-provoking and immersive exploration of the complex realities faced by refugees and asylum seekers. Through its unique site-specific setting, the play forces the audience to engage with the harrowing journeys and experiences of its characters within the confines of a shipping container. This intimate theatrical encounter blurs the boundaries between performer and audience, inviting them to confront the ethical and moral dilemmas posed by forced migration. The play delves into the personal stories of its characters, reflecting the global scope of displacement and migration caused by conflict. In so doing, it also speaks of the ethical complexities and the challenges of representing the stories and the experiences of marginalised people. The act of giving voice, even with well-meaning intentions, can paradoxically limit the agency of those being represented and confine them to a state of liminality. Navigating the complex intersections of storytelling and representation, *The Container* grapples with issues of authenticity and appropriation that are inherent in the process of transferring the refugee experience to the stage. Bayley's decision to transform verbatim material into a fictional narrative, based on meticulous research, and to cast non-refugee actors exemplifies a conscious effort to navigate this ethical terrain. The role of the audience in this narrative is also crucial. While immersive and participatory approaches aim to foster empathy and understanding, they too must be subject to critical scrutiny. The very act of stepping into the shoes of the other can paradoxically reinforce the divide between 'us' and 'them'. The representation of refugees as victims or heroes can oversimplify their experiences and inadvertently perpetuate dangerous stereotypes.

Amidst these complexities, *The Container* skillfully navigates the fine line between empathy and exploitation, awareness and appropriation. The play highlights the multifaceted nature of refugee experiences and underscores the need for respectful, ethical storytelling that reflects the true complexity of their lives. It serves as a reminder that the act of representation is a delicate process that requires a deep understanding of the voices being portrayed and a commitment to authentic, inclusive narratives. In the broader context of refugee theatre, this article provides a lens through which to critically engage with the representation of refugee experiences on stage. It challenges

creators to examine their intentions, methods, and the potential impact of their work, while inviting audiences to question their own perspectives and preconceived notions. Ultimately, the journey towards ethical representation in refugee narratives is an ongoing process that requires sensitivity, cultural awareness, and a genuine commitment to amplifying the voices of those whose stories are often silenced or overlooked.

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Gherardo Ugolini*

Medea and Prometheus. Two Archetypes of Greek Tragedy on the Stage: Ancient Theatre Festival - Syracuse 2023

Abstract

The programme of the 58th edition of the Ancient Theatre Festival at Syracuse (11 May – 2 July 2023) presented two of the most renowned Greek tragedies to have survived, which also happen to be two archetypes of ancient myth. The *Medea* of Euripides, directed by Federico Tiezzi, translated by Massimo Fusillo, appears as a sort of Ibsenesque 'bourgeois drama' and focalises on the struggle between two cultures and two forms of violence: the instinctual and natural passion of an archaic society expressed by Medea against the conscious ferocity of Jason, who places power and wealth above feelings. The staging of Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* directed by Leo Muscato and translated by Roberto Vecchioni is particularly successful with its interpretation of Scythia as a desolate, decaying wasteland where the derelict ruins of factory buildings are the dominating feature. The physicality of Alessandro Albertin's portrayal of the Titan Prometheus is extremely effective in rendering the character's rage, suffering and pride and his refusal to submit to the will of Zeus.

KEYWORDS: Medea; Euripides; Prometheus; Aeschylus; Greek tragedy; National Institute of Ancient Drama; Federico Tiezzi

Medea has come back to the Greek Theatre of Syracuse. And it has been a comeback in style judging by the heartfelt welcome on the part of the public not only at the play's first night on the 12th May 2023 but every following performance, including those at the Teatro Grande at Pompeii (1st and 2nd July 2023) and at the Roman Theatre in Verona (12th and 13th September 2023).[1] Starting with Ettore Romagnoli's 1927 production, Euripides' *Medea*

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[1] *Medea* by Euripides, director Federico Tiezzi, Italian translation Massimo Fusillo, scenic project Marco Rossi, costumes Giovanna Buzzi, lighting Gianni Pollini, choir master Francesca Della Monica, assistant director Giovanni Scandella, Original chorus and prologue music Silvia Colasanti (with the collaboration of the Rome Opera House Children's Choir), Assistant stage designer Francesca Sgariboldi, Costume designer assistant Ambra Schumacher, Choir and vocal arrangement assistant William Caruso, Stage director Nanni Ragusa, Assistant stage director Dario Castro, cast: Laura

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has been staged many times by the National Institute of Ancient Drama and employing directors and actors of exceptional artistic merit. Medea has been interpreted by, among others, Valeria Moriconi (twice), the first time in 1972 (directed by Franco Enriquez, in the translation by Carlo Diano) and the second in 1996 (directed by Mario Missiroli in Maria Grazia Ciani's translation), Maddalena Crippa in 2004 (directed by Peter Stein in Dario del Corno's translation) and Elisabetta Pozzi in 2009 (director Krzystof Zanussi, translator Maria Grazia Ciani).

This year it was Laura Marinoni's turn to put on the robes of the princess of Colchis. Marinoni has been the star performer of the annual presentations of classical drama at Syracuse in recent years; she played Helen in 2019 and then Clytemnestra in 2021 and 2022. Federico Tiezzi's direction is founded on a specific interpretative key, that of the traditional idea of "individual retaliation" on the part of Jason's ex-wife, but should be understood rather as "a conflict between two different conceptions of strength, between an archaic society and a post-industrial one" as the director has explained in a note (Tiezzi 2023,16). In 2015 he had already staged Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* at Syracuse and had also directed other ancient Greek plays among which Aristophanes' *The Birds* (2005-2006) and Sophocles' *Antigone* (2018). His direction of *Medeamaterial* by the German playwright Heiner Müller should also not be forgotten. Tiezzi has explained that his intention was to turn Euripides' *Medea* into an Ibsenesque or Strindbergian "bourgeois drama", which was definitely an original idea, but one not lacking in risks, the first of these being the danger of trivialising a story that Euripides imagined against the mythical background of a Corinth at indeterminate moment of a remote past. In actual fact the *mise-en-scène* links several thematic points with one another, including the relationship between a man and a woman and the

Marinoni (Medea), Alessandro Averone (Jason), Roberto Latini (Creon), Luigi Tabita (Aegeus), Debora Zuin (Nurse), Riccardo Livermore (Pedagogue), Sandra Toffolatti (Messenger), Francesca Ciocchetti (first Corifean), Simonetta Cartia (Chorus leader), Alessandra Gigli, Dario Guidi, Anna Charlotte Barbera, Valentina Corrao, Valentina Elia, Caterina Fontana, Francesca Gabucci, Irene Mori, Aurora Miriam Scala, Maddalena Serratore, Giulia Valentini, Claudia Zappia (Chorus), Matteo Paguni, Francesco Cutale (children of Medea), Jacopo Sarotti, Alberto Carbone Carlo Alberto Denoyè (Creon's men), Andrea Bassoli, Alberto Carbone, Sebastiano Caruso, Alessandra Cosentino, Gaia Cozzolino, Sara De Lauretis, Carlo Alberto Denoyè, Lorenzo Ficara, Leonardo Filoni, Ferdinando Iebba, Althea Mara Luana Iorio, Denise Kendall-Jones, Domenico Lamparelli, Federica Leuci, Emilio Lumastro, Arianna Martinelli, Moreno Mondì, Alice Pennino, Edoardo Pipitone, Jacopo Sarotti, Mariachiara Signorello (Chorus). Euripides' *Medea* directed by Federico Tiezzi and produced by INDA, saw its first performance at the Greek Theatre of Syracuse on the 12th May 2023, with repeat performances until the 24th June 2023. There were further performances at the Teatro Grande of Pompeii (1st and 2nd July 2023) and at the Roman Theatre in Verona (12th and 13th September 2023).

transformation which occurs when disappointment turns erotic passion into the desire for implacable revenge.

The interpretation of the play as a bourgeois drama is especially noticeable in the scenography and the costumes: in the vast circular space of the orchestra the interior of a modern house can be made out, represented by cuboid geometrical structures created from faintly illuminated neon tubing. The house is furnished with tables, benches and chairs in black and white and decorated by classical busts on marble columns. Medea's home, far from being that bare house in the suburbs we imagine from Euripides, but an apartment which is as luxurious as it is chilly.

The first scene opens with an effective dramatic stratagem: two semi-choruses dressed in white come on stage with a woman between them. Her face is covered by a mask in the form of a bird and it is clear that this is Medea. They perform rituals of prayer and supplication in an incomprehensible language (probably that of Colchis) predicting the death of innocent beings. This is an addition to Euripides' text but makes a great impression on the public. The scene is alluding to a past event when Medea was still in Colchis and presided over religious rites. But this is not simply intended to characterise the protagonist's 'barbarian' dimension right from the start. What Tiezzi is aiming at with this prologue of an almost oneiric quality is to suggest that all that happens from this point on could be interpreted as a ''dream' on Medea's part, a product of the character's unconscious, a "vision", to use a term dear to Pier Paolo Pasolini, emanating from Medea herself.[2]

The nurse (Debora Zuin) has a Balkan accent, a housekeeper's overall and a white suitcase from which she unpacks old costumes from the far-off homeland. Hers is a particularly successful interpretation: a symbol not only of her affection for her mistress but also of their attachment to Colchis and their condition as exiles. It is with her that the Corinthian women who make up the chorus and who are dressed as cleaners in blue overalls and caps (Fig.1) converse, while the rhythms of the dance are transmuted by the movements of cleaning floors and furniture.

Medea's entrance on to the stage is preceded by the anguished cries and violent curses she launches from the wings ("I want to die", "Can't you see I'm suffering", "I hope you and your father drop dead"). Laura Marinoni enters the scene regally, dressed in a costume covered in feathers of a colour which oscillates between blue and black. At first her face is hidden by the same mask of a bird of prey she was wearing in the prologue. The use of animal masks is a *Leitmotif* of this production. These are indeed totemic masks

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[2] I am referring to *Visioni di Medea* (Pasolini 2001, 1207-88), the preliminary version of the 1969 film *Medea*, with Maria Callas (Medea), Massimo Girotti (Creon), Giuseppe Gentile (Jason), Gerard Weiss (Centaur), Margareth Clémenti (Glauce).

whose meaning is symbolic and may perhaps be interpreted as follows: Medea's mask indicates a universe impossible to grasp, whose principal components are freedom and rapacity; the children's rabbit masks symbolise their predestination to be sacrificed as innocent victims; the crocodile masks worn by Creon and his henchmen are clearly emblems of power and ferocity. The expedient of masks could be seen to be superfluous or excessive, but this is not the case, particularly as they are only worn for a short time.

Creon (Roberto Latini), in his elegant dark suit, is a pitiless subjugator who bullies his bodyguards, but who, in the dialogue with Medea ends up by allowing her what she asks for: a delay of twenty-four hours before she is exiled (Fig.2).

Fig. 1 Medea (Laura Marinoni) and the Chorus of Corinthian Women. Photo AFI Siracusa

Fig. 2 Medea (Laura Marinoni) and Creon (Roberto Latini). Photo AFI Siracusa.

Jason (Alessandro Averone) is also attired in a modern middle-class manner with a tie and a dark overcoat. But beneath the clothes of an apparently respectable gentleman is concealed a lucid and ferocious violence, one which puts wealth and power before feelings. However he ignores the fact that he will have to reckon with another kind of violence, the primitive and instinctual violence of Medea, which derives from the force of nature itself and which once unleashed is unstoppable. At this point it is worth quoting the director's own thoughts (Tiezzi 2023, 16):

> Jason, too, in his own way, is a purveyor of violence: but his is violence of a different kind – a symbolic kind which today we would call "neocapitalist". This violence is dictated by expediency – whether political, dynastic or economic. Jason embodies, and this not too covertly, the violence hidden in every advanced society, always sublimated but never transcended, instead often converted into more subtle practices, which may be less perceptible but never less brutal . . . *Medea* is a force field in which two "modalities of violence" challenge one another. Medea herself affirms the superiority of the force pertaining to her world in defiance of the one in Jason's; she opposes the physical destruction of the family to Jason's proposition of its symbolic destruction. In a certain sense she is really the one who "wins"; as Roland Barthes maintains when writing about the Marquis de Sade, the letter always defeats the symbol, the event prevails over the structure justifying it, the body comes before any and every metaphor. The children succumb and perish together with the very idea of a future. Silence alone remains: the image of disaster and of an impossible return to the native land, to a divine "*before*" that may, as in Freud's case studies, only be dreamed of.

The scenes of the dialogues between Medea, the rejected wife, and Jason, the new husband of the Corinthian princess are very successful moments in the production. This is also the merit of Massimo Fusillo's excellent translation; here as elsewhere he manages to render the Greek text in a vocabulary and syntax which are both comprehensible and fluid, without ever falling into banality and without too much modernisation. The proxemic interaction between the two protagonists is certainly a long way from respecting ancient modalities: Medea and Jason touch one another, fondle one another, exchange caresses. She embraces him, then bites his hand while repeatedly calling him "Bastard!" in a scathing tone of voice. She kisses him passionately before roughly pushing him away. Traditionalist spectators may well have something to say here but in the context of 'bourgeois drama' Tiezzi's solutions are perfectly congruent and they work.

In contrast to the sombre hues of the bourgeois costumes worn by Creon and Jason, Aegeus (Luigi Tabita) sports a white suit with a Panama hat on his head. The solution of presenting him as a dandy, elegant and refined, sincerely

concerned about what will happen to Medea seems a good one. His is an external perspective which differs completely with the cynical, pusillanimous utilitarian dynamics of Creon and Jason, the other male protagonists.

The key event of the play, the infanticide, is the artistic and dramaturgical apex of this production and is without doubt its most moving and most spectacular moment. Neither could it have been otherwise, in reality, if we consider the fact that the murder of her children has become, from Euripides onward, the indelible marker that characterises Medea.[3] The act of violence does not take place on stage, but is related by a messenger (here a woman, Sandra Toffolati), following Euripides' original script. But the narration of the event relies heavily upon scenic chromatism: lasers envelop the site of the crime with red light, while offstage the endless screams of the butchered children can be heard, overwhelming the chorus. The music – which includes excerpts from *Mulholland Drive* by Angelo Badalamenti, Zbigniew Preisner's *Lacrimosa*, Franz Schubert's *Gretchen am Spinnrade* (Gretchen at her Spinning-Wheel) from Goethe's *Faust*, and fragments of Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* – create an aura of mystery around the sacrifice carried out by the murderess mother, torn apart by the dilemma between her love for her children and the compulsive need not to be despised and derided by her enemies. The finale takes on the emotional atmosphere of a sacred esoteric rite, with the bodies of the children exposed to the public and the chorus of Corinthian women who are cleaning the floor after the slaughter and rhythmically moving the blood-soaked clothes. Meanwhile Medea, who has been hoisted by a crane up on to a cart (Helios' chariot), pitilessly celebrates her triumph.

One aspect of the production should not, perhaps, need to be mentioned. Tiezzi's direction and Fusillo's translation underscore an element that Euripides' play certainly contains, but that interpretations and stagings often tend to ignore: the empathy towards Medea that the dramatic action solicits from the public and which increases exponentially as the play goes

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[3] As is well-known, nothing certain can be said, based on the sources and witnesses that we possess, about the infanticide committed by Medea before Euripides' tragedy of 431 BCE. There are no decisive arguments that can affirm with any certainty that Euripides innovated the mythological plot by making Medea responsible for the murder of her children, or that he had come across the most suitable variant of the myth, dramaturgically speaking, among the many that existed and had chosen that one. According to one story, Euripides received a monetary recompense from the Corinthians for writing a play attributing the infanticide to Medea and in this way relieved the people of the Isthmian city from the blame (Schol. Eur. *Med.* 264). Besides this, it seems that the poet Eumelus, in his *Corinthiaca* (8th century BCE) related that Medea had in fact killed her children but by mistake during a ritual of regeneration that was supposed to give them eternal life (Paus. II, 3, 11). On the question of the infanticide and on the ways in which it may be realised on the stage see Easterling 1977, Schmidt 1999, Beltrametti 2000, Syropoulos 2001-2002, Sala Rose 2002, Rodighiero 2003, Catenacci 2003.

on – despite the threats of revenge and despite even the infanticide – only evaporating at the conclusion. The spectators are encouraged to feel for the protagonist a "negative empathy", to use Fusillo's own well-chosen definition (2022), a sort of unconscious admiration which develops in the face of their condemnation of her thoughts and actions. At certain moments, especially during Medea's celebrated monologues, if Marinoni's performance could have been less emphatic and extravagant, more understated, it would have better obtained the effect of emotive harmony.

The staging of *Medea* is always a challenge, almost a risky one, even if at the same time it is fascinating as it allows the director to get to grips with one of the best known and most classical of Western theatrical literature. To put on *Medea* means to confront the staging and interpretation of a complex character with many faces, a figure that has been classified under many labels (the barbarian, the sorceress, the outcast, the refugee, the exile, the avenger, the sly one, the abandoned woman, the violent woman, the wise woman, the shamanic priestess, the witch, the monster or the murderess mother). Each of these labels contains a nugget of truth, but none of them either defines or sums up the whole. A production of *Medea* must not only engage wholly with Euripides but has inevitably to come to terms with a substantial body of traditional rewritings and adaptations in the fields of theatre, narrative and cinema, which have been lodged, more or less deliberately, within the collective memory of our culture. Federico Tiezzi has carried out this task by exploiting both great talent and detailed research, and has kept his balance between respect for dramaturgical and textual dynamics and the right amount both of innovation and of the role of spectacle (I refer in particular to language, lighting and music). The most distinctive interpretative key to this production is the idea suggested by the prologue, that is, that all that happens is simply a dream of the protagonist. This could be considered as a Freudian reading of Euripides' play that Tiezzi summed up neatly in an interview in the newspaper *La Sicilia* the day before the opening performance (Cartia 2023):

> This Colchis is a place where there is no fear of violence nor monsters nor blood, and this place is the unconscious. From here I found a pathway towards the fact that Medea in my head became a case study in which who knows perhaps this woman dreams everything that is happening. Perhaps she dreams of killing her children but she never gets to the actual act that in point of fact in my production is never seen. I decided to have nothing to do with blood spilled by Medea. The barbarian land – this is what Jason calls it – where Medea is born and lives is connected to the Sun as the principle of life, of vital life. It is linked to violence but to the violence of nature. With this action Medea rejects bourgeois civilisation, rejects the civilisation that I have called neocapitalist and is that to which Jason belongs.

The second tragedy staged at the Greek Theatre at Syracuse in 2023 is Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, another essential archetype of ancient myth.[4] This is, as is well-known, the only complete play to survive of a trilogy performed in Athens in about 460 BCE written by the poet from Eleusis, the rest of which has been lost. The director, Leo Muscato, at his debut at Syracuse, opted for a nebulous, indefinite location at a suspended, far-off time, with a few symbolic props, worn-out by the passing of the years, things that evoke in the spectators' minds an exhausted and unsuccessful technical era. The director explained the reasons for his setting in this way (Muscato 2023, 15-16):

> *Prometheus Bound* is a work that speaks to spectators from all ages as the protagonist embodies the archetypal hero who faces up to the strongest to protect the weakest. He is a father ready to do anything to protect a particularly fragile son . . . When I began to study the text and to imagine its staging I realised straight away that we should have to chain Prometheus in a metaphorical place to a symbolic rock. Pressing the accelerator on the central theme of human progress, I began to imagine this place as an industrial area abandoned for such a long time that it had become an integral part of the surrounding environment. All is arid and rusty and everything emanates desertion and neglect. The Scythia to which Prometheus is taken is a sort of *finis terrae*, that can only be reached in a goods wagon travelling towards a dead end on a siding.

The rebellious hero, who has dared to oppose Zeus, is nailed down, not to a rock but to a derelict modern chimney, symbol of a now obsolete progress, just as the remains of a factory also appear obsolete (rusty pipes, a ramshackle gate, a cistern, a turbine, a section of railway track, various iron tools) that are scattered around the great orchestra of the Syracuse theatre. The scenography, designed by Federica Parolini, represents mythical Scythia as a dilapidated post-industrial site, even if the railway siding and the truck upon which Kratos and Hephaestus arrive with the hooded and chained Prometheus following

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[4] *Prometheus Bound* by Aeschylus, director Leo Muscato, Italian translation Roberto Vecchioni, dramaturgy Francesco Morosi, scenic project Federica Parolini, costumes Silvia Aymonimo, lighting Alessandro Verazzi, music Ernani Maletta, choir master Francesca Della Monica, choreography Nicole Kehreberge, Assistant director Marialuisa Bafunno, assistant stage designer Anna Varaldo, assistant costume designer Maria Antonietta Lucarelli, stage director Mattia Fontana. Cast Alessandro Albertin (Prometheus), Silvia Valenti (Bia), Davide Paganini (Kratos), Michele Cipriani (Hephaestus), Alfonso Veneroso (Oceanus), Deniz Ozdogan (Io), Pasquale di Filippo (Hermes), Silvia Benvenuto, Letizia Bravi, Gloria Carovana, Maria Laila Fernandez, Valeria Girelli, Elena Polic Greco, Giada Lorusso, María Pilar Pérez Aspa, Silvia Pietta, Giulia Acquasana, Marina La Placa e Alba Sofia Vella (Chorus of Oceanids). *Prometheus Bound* by Aeschylus directed by Leo Muscato, produced by INDA, had its first performance at the Greek Theatre at Syracuse on the 11th May 2023 and was repeated until 4th June 2023.

them on foot could be said to recall the symbolic imaginary of a concentration camp. The state of abandonment and desolation of the site also brings to mind the context of a nuclear apocalypse like that of Chernobyl (Caggegi 2023). The spectator's feelings will obviously be engaged by this ambience that lends the mythical tale a significance that goes beyond the remote timeline of myth. Alessandro Albertin as Prometheus, bare-chested for the whole performance, nailed like Christ on the cross seven metres above the scene, manages in the most vigorous manner possible to express both the rage and pride of the Titan and his anguish that he can no longer communicate with the human beings who are his protégés and that he no longer knows anything about them (Fig. 3).
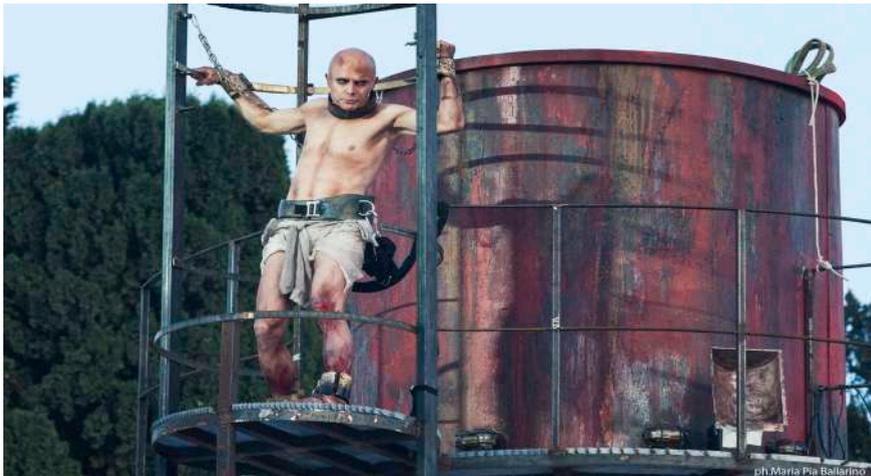

Fig. 3 Prometheus (Alessandro Albertin). Photo Ballarino_AFI Siracusa

Bia (Silvia Valenti) is a sadistic jailer dressed in shorts, Kratos (Davide Paganini) looks like a brutal police officer, while Hephaestus (Michele Cipriani), a limping blacksmith-welder in a leather apron and welder's mask with a blowtorch in his hand shows repugnance for what he is about to do. Oceanus (Alfonso Veneroso) seems to be almost a caricature, and Hermes (Pasquale de Filippo), bare-chested under a lame jacket tries to intimidate Prometheus with his skill, but he has to reckon with the tenacious obstinacy of the hero who does not want to reveal to him the danger that is threatening the king of Olympus. However, the fatal secret is revealed to Io (Deniz Özdogan), the girl Zeus has punished by turning her into a cow that Hera's hatred has caused to wander the world for ever, unable to sleep or eat, while being constantly tormented by horseflies. The scene with Io is without doubt among the most successful. Io's entrance is announced by oriental polyphonic music (Macedonian songs and Berber resonances); then, when the Turkish actress comes on stage, she generates a crazy, anguished character who, as

she moves and expresses herself vocally, adopts animal-like gestures, but in essence, reveals herself to be the most human character in the play (Fig. 4). She is the only one capable of showing empathy to Prometheus, because of the unjust punishment of which she is the victim. Other people who are on the hero's side are the Oceanids, the chorus, who sweep over the stage like waves from an enormous chimney, covered in petrol stains, dressed as fish-women in silver trousers and lightweight black robes with long fishtails.

Fig. 4 Deniz Özdogan as Io. Photo Pantano_AFI Siracusa

This *Prometheus* directed by Muscato is a production of the highest quality and is completely successful in its aim of modernising Aeschylus' tragedy without forcing the original unnecessarily and without exaggeration, amalgamating to perfection images, sounds and words (Roberto Vecchioni, well-known as singer and songwriter, and as a sophisticated intellectual and long-time teacher of classical studies in the Licei, has provided a limpid and agile translation). Above all this *Prometheus* should be recognised as having suggested a distinctive interpretative key which was then developed efficaciously right to the conclusion. The director is questioning himself through Euripides' text about the role of technology in modern society and about its relationship with nature. The foresighted Titan has given fire to human beings and left them the freedom to exploit the technical but "because of some individuals, who founded world economy on their own personal interests, on the accumulation of capital, the technology that should have been used to allow men to live better has devastated nature" (Muscato in Grasso 2023). The hermeneutic perspective that sees in Prometheus a depiction of the necessary rebellion against productivity, consumerism, human alienation, against the subjugation of nature to the logic of exploitation has solid roots in European cultural tradition, starting at

least from Goethe's ode *Prometheus* and passing via Kafka to Heiner Müller.[5]

   Before this year, Aeschylus' *Prometheus* had been staged several times at the Greek Theatre at Syracuse, in productions of high artistic level which have passed into history. One needs only to think of Luigi Squarzina's *Prometheus* (1964) in Gennaro Perrotta's translation and with Vittorio Gassman as the enchained hero and Anna Proclemer as Io; or that of 1994 directed by Antonio Calenda, translated by Benedetto Marzullo and interpreted by Roberto Herlitzka and Piera degli Espositi; or again that of Luca Ronconi (2002), translator Dario Del Como, with Franco Brancaroli as Prometheus. Leo Muscato's *Prometheus* is a fitting inheritor of these past events and deserves to be numbered among them.

Translation by Susan Payne

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[5] See on this particular hermeneutic choice the thoughts of Fornaro 2023.

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Beatrice Righetti*

Simonetta de Filippis (ed.), *William Shakespeare e il senso del comico*[1]

Abstract

The review of *William Shakespeare e il senso del comico*, edited by Simonetta de Filippis (2023), explores a significant scholarly undertaking that originated from the eponymous conference hosted at "L'Orientale" University in Naples on January 9-10, 2019. Among its many qualities, this volume brings together diverse voices to investigate Shakespeare's complex relationship with comedy. Structured into four sections, the volume showcases collaborative efforts from academics, young researchers, and PhD students, each offering unique perspectives on Shakespeare's handling of such an enduring dramatic genre. Contributors delve deep into the nuances of Shakespearean comedy, unravelling its layers as a genre, language, and rhetorical stance within the vast tapestry of Shakespeare's literary oeuvre. The review emphasises the volume's innovative approach, which opens the door to new and fruitful reflections on comedy as a genre investigated as a dramatic space for experimentation, a mirror reflecting social power dynamics, an object of linguistic code-mixing, and inspiration for stage adaptations. By exploring this dramatic genre not merely as a form of entertainment but as a profound expression of language and culture, the contributors provide readers with a fresh lens through which to view Shakespeare's works.

Keywords: Shakespeare; comedy; adaptation; humour; language

The volume *William Shakespeare e il senso del comico,* edited by Simonetta de Filippis, opens to new and fruitful reflections on comedy –as a genre, language, and stance –once inscribed within William Shakespeare's literary *oeuvre*. This contribution feels particularly compelling given the recent rise in academic interest in this topic, as works like Bart van Es' *Shakespeare's Comedies: A Very Short Introduction* (2016), Heather Hirschfeld's *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespearean Comedy* (2018), and Cartwright's *Shakespeare and the Comedy of Enchantment* (2020) prove. Stemming from the homonymous conference held at the "L'Orientale" University in Naples (9-10 January 2019), this volume is divided into four sections, each welcoming contributions from academics, young researchers, and PhD students about Shakespeare's handling of one of the most well-known, complex, dramatic genres of all times.

[1] Napoli: Unior Press, 2019. ISBN 9788867191802, pp. 320

The first section is entitled "Il senso del comico" (The meaning of comedy) and opens with a contribution by the editor of the volume, Simonetta de Filippis. In "William Shakespeare e il senso del comico. La commedia come terreno di sperimentazione" (William Shakespeare and the meaning of comedy. Comedy as a place for experimentation), de Filippis first traces the complex nature of comedy as a dramatic genre. This exploration starts with its Greek etymology, *kôsmos*, which readily associates the genre with a diverse and transgressive perspective, as well as a deep knowledge of the world. Borrowing from Cicero, who describes comedy as "imitatio vitae, speculum consuetudinis, et imago veritatis" (23), de Filippis points to the difficulties in treating comedy like a well-defined, fully delineated genre. Contrariwise, its "liquidity or porosity" (ibid.) borrows from the complexities of real life and lends to the stage a multifaceted reflection of it. The effects of this bidirectional mechanism lie in the continual renewal, adaptation, and amplification of themes and linguistic mechanisms related to comedy. These are particularly evident in the section dedicated to the *problem plays*, which alone suggests the difficulty in approaching Shakespeare's comedies as an unproblematic genre. De Filippis' overview happily succeeds in explaining the reason behind one of the main themes of the volume, which is the ambiguous, complex nature of Shakespeare's comedy, and its role in mirroring the unsettling emotions the early modern individual was experiencing in a period of incessant socio-economic and political change.

"Il comico shakespeariano tra ambivalenza e mutevolezza" (The Shakespearean comic between ambivalence and mutability) by Laura Di Michele digs deeper into the transformative power of the comedic genre once handled by Shakespeare. In defining Shakespeare's comedy as a "trans-genre" (41), the author reflects on the socio-psychological notion of 'ambivalence.' This definition not only positively affects textual multidimensionality and interdependence (ibid.) but also draws inspiration from Ovid and Spenser, exploring the idea of 'mutability' as fertile incompleteness. The former notion is explored in *The Taming of the Shrew*, especially in the Induction scene thanks to the character of Sly, a "mediator between the stage and the stalls" (50), and to the play-within-the-play, "a fixed plot-framework of the main storyline which includes many other secondary and conflicting ones, favoring genesis and development" (50–1). Mutability is explored in *Love's Labour's Lost*, more specifically in the contrast between the "rhetoric and anti-rhetoric of its love language" (51) as well as in the images of the green world (the woods) and the blue world (the sea). This contribution ends with further proof of the successful openness and ambivalence of Shakespeare's comic writing, that is, Corinne Jaber's adaptation of *Love's Labour's Lost* for the Afghan stage (Kabul, 2005).

"Il comico come controdiscorso del senso" (Comedy as a counter-discourse of meaning) by Lorenzo Mango is the concluding contribution to the first section. In his essay, Mango explores the role of Shakespeare's clown in constructing meaning and suggests how his belonging to neither comedy nor tragedy enables him to speak both. Delineating the terminological differences between 'clown' and 'fool' and highlighting the main linguistic, physical, and acting characteristics of the former, Mango defines the clown as "a resolutive form of the spontaneous rhetoric of the earlier clowns and the premeditated status of [dramatic] texts" (69). The clown's unique position between two opposing dramatic genres enables him to build counter-discourses that blend elements of both comedy and tragedy in his interlocutor's speech. The Porter scene in *Macbeth* provides these rhetorical processes, where the scurrilous language of Porter/the clown only apparently downplays the profoundly tragic moment of Macduff and Lennox's arrival at Macbeth's gates. In "forcing tragedy through comedy, . . . the Porter literally becomes the gatekeeper of hell . . . whose only presence mentions . . . death, but in reverse" (77). Similarly, in *Hamlet*, this process is explored in the dialogue between the two gravediggers/clowns and between the first gravedigger and Hamlet, where the prince momentarily takes the place of the second clown in the exchange. Despite both plays eventually leading to a full "triumph of death" (79), Mango notices in *Macbeth* how the clown's counter-discourse is reduced to one scene, while in *Hamlet*, it becomes a structural element of the prince's identity.

The second section, "I modi del comico" (The ways of the comic), includes four contributions that deal with the comical ambiguities of specific plays and characters. In "La commedia radicale *The Merchant of Venice*: la libbra di carne, l'anello di Leah e l'ideologia mercantile" (*The Merchant of Venice*, a radical comedy: the pound of flesh, Leah's ring, and mercantile ideology), Anna Maria Cimitile borrows from Jonathan Dollimore the label of "radical comedy" as one which "interrogates prevailing beliefs . . . radical in the sense of going to their roots and even pulling them up" (96) in relation to the mercantile ideology underlying the comedy. Shylock is the only character in the play aware of the dangers of commerce as the endless and aprioristic exchange of goods, symbols, and words; thus, to him, not everything is up for sale. As proof of such a distinction, Cimitile shows how Shylock seems to be the only character to know the difference between "gift" and a valuable: he would have renounced Antonio's pound of flesh as much as he would have never given away Leah's ring, which Jessica steals from him and sells in his flight to Belmont with Lorenzo. Although not fully expanded upon, the problematisation of such aspects of the mercantile society was only possible by means of the comic structure they had been framed in.

In "Tra farsa e commedia. L'antropologia patriarcale di *The Taming of the Shrew*" (Between farce and comedy. Patriarchal anthropology in *The Taming of the Shrew*), Rossella Ciocca relies on gender studies to analyse the comedy and its power dynamics within its most well-known couple, that of Kate and Petruchio, the shrew and the shrew-tamer. Her study opens with an overview of the "cultural practices, ritual and festive models, social systems of control and sanction" as well as of the "mainly anthropological imaginative horizon of microstories, [and] local anecdotes" (177), which forge the cultural background of the main plot. As Ciocca underlines, the presence of 'shaming rituals' such as the cucking stool or the skimmington ride echo in the language of *The Taming of the Shrew* and proves how the rural, highly patriarchal past these rituals belong to still lingers in the proto-capitalist world of Kate and Petruchio. Great attention is given to farce as the dramatic engine that allows one to "performatively interpret" shame and turn it from a mechanism of physical and psychological violence to one of "comical ridicule and mockery" (125).

The third contribution to the second section, "I 'luoghi' del desiderio e riconfigurazioni dello sguardo in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*" (The 'places' of desire and the reconfigurations of the gaze in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) by Giuseppe De Riso, expands on the relation between gaze and space in amorous quests and identity metamorphoses. More specifically, he aims to "discuss how specific conditions of disorientation or displacement enable . . . the author to draw paradoxical, affective geographies where to trace new and surprising identity paths" (130). The journeys from Athens to the woods and vice versa coincide with the loss and acquisition of new identities on the characters' behalf: filial relationships capsize, love relationships become blurred and unstable, and even the magical world suffers its share of ontological confusion. Even though it can be distressing, such misrecognitions are necessary "tools to question gender, class and ideology as identity-making spaces" (141), which affect the spectator too. The fluidity of these categories and the characters on stage displaces the audience, prompting the audience to shift its perspective not only on the events unfolding on the stage but also within itself.

"Da Falstaff a Yorick. Il corpo e il fantasma della *vis* comica shakespeariana" (From Falstaff to Yorik. The body and the ghost of Shakespeare's comic *vis*) by C. Maria Laudando brings this second section to a close. Her analysis focuses on the character of Falstaff, a Shakespearean Janus who "embodies to the highest degree the most distinctive features of the comic tradition from an anthropological, ritualistic, and festive point of view [as well as] exudes all the ambivalences . . . and residues of the political and historical material with which Shakespeare grapples" (147). Laudando first deals with Falstaff's linguistic subversiveness and his belonging to a carnivalesque dimension,

which do not deprive him of gravity. Following New Historicist criticism, the author first presents the historical alter ego of Falstaff, i.e., Sir John Oldcastle, and then shows how the character's borderline grotesque language associates him with pamphlets parodying Puritan religious and political outbursts of the time. The character's liminality between facetiousness and gravity, investigated mainly in *King Henry IV, Part I* and *Part II*, with a brief nod to *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, grants him a perpetual metamorphic process which makes him one of the Shakespearean characters with the most successfully contemporary adaptations.

The third section, "I linguaggi del comico" (The languages of comedy), deals with Shakespeare's comic language also from a linguistic point of view. This is the case with Bianca Del Villano's "La retorica della (s)cortesia in *As You Like It*: una proposta di analisi pragmatica dei discorsi di Touchstone" (The rhetoric of (im)politeness in *As You Like It*: a pragmatic analysis proposal of Touchstone's speeches). First providing the reader with some basic tenets of historical pragmatics, Del Villano offers a thorough overview of (im) polite strategies in the play and discusses their importance as "documentary witnesses, representation of a given society" and textual engines that "transform social issues in rhetoric, in *active discourse*" (166). In her analysis, Touchstone's language helps present some of the main pragmatic mechanisms, such as "claim common opinions," "seek agreement," and "joke" (174), which low-status characters may adopt to win verbal skirmishes with their superiors while saving face. In such investigation, the author also explains how these strategies comment on two fundamental aspects: the loss of feudal values, thus the loss of the coherence between word and world, and the fool's characteristic crafty politeness, which assimilates him with the figure of the skilled courtesan in disguising their sharp comments under the guise of "strategic courtesy" (173). This latter element is most evident in his wit combination of impoliteness and rhetoric of inversion, which allows him to ironically parody common rhetorical motifs, such as the courtesan's crafty politeness, in early modern England.

Angela Leonardi's "Oscillazioni del comico in *Twelfth Night*" (Variations of comedy in *Twelfth Night*) analyses the comic mechanisms foregrounding the play as dramatic bridges from light-minded, carefree merriment to complex, ambiguous forms of humour. Much of Leonardi's attention is dedicated to a close reading of the verbal and gestural exchanges between Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek and the melancholic lines of Feste and Malvolio. As investigated in the contributions by Mango and Cimitile, comedy leads to the creation of counter-discourses on themes such as death, which spark "serious meditations . . . on the meaning of comedy as an endless fluctuation between folly and wisdom, . . . life and death" (191). This is most evident in the exchanges between Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek and

in the character of Feste, the clown who has lost his comic *vis* and is now reminiscent, both visually and psychologically, of Hamlet's Yorick's skull, a signifier of past happiness. Leonardi shows Feste's status of the wise among the fools with the visual aid of Hieronymus Bosch's *Ship of Fools* (1490-1500). The comic trajectory, which first opened with harmless linguistic jokes, ends with the bleakest of remarks as Malvolio's "I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you!" (5.1.63), which grimly anticipates the closing of theatres by the Puritan parliament in 1642.

More focused on the linguistic alphabet of the play, Aureliana Natale's "Il Co-mix shakespeariano: codici, generi e linguaggi tra parole e immagini" (The Shakespearean co-mix: codes, genres, and languages between words and images) illustrates how Shakespeare's elusiveness to categorical definitions in terms of genre, codes, and languages resonates and well fits its adaptation to the genres of comic and graphic novels. Their characteristic mixture of visual and textual codes proves to be particularly effective in best preserving and conveying the deep performativity and fluidity that characterise Shakespeare's plays. An overview of the most well-known cases of such adaptation includes Walt Disney's *The Lion King* (1997), which incorporates elements of the plot of *Hamlet*; the Italian rendition of *The Taming of the Shrew* as *Paperon Bisbeticus Domatus* (1998), where Kathrine is substituted with the shrewish Scrooge MacDuff; and manga renditions, such as Sakuishi's *Seven Shakespeares* (2014) on the quest for the Bard's identity. Most attention, however, is dedicated to Neil Gaiman's *Sandman*, where Shakespeare is shown in his "personal, cultural and theatrical background" (219). In this text, innovative forms of "play-within-the-comic-book" (ibid.) show new ways of presenting literary material and interrogating the source text.

The last contribution of this third section is Antonella Piazza's "*Cymbeline*: un *romance* storico" (*Cymbeline*: a historical romance). In her analysis, the author approaches the play, considered a tragedy until 2015, as a "tragicomedy," that is "[not] a co-mix of dramatic genres, but a transition . . . from tragedy to a new type of comedy" (225). The comparison of the play with *King Lear* proves how the mixture of dramatic genres characterising the "history romance" helps resolve traditional tragical outcomes through comical pressure (224). In the play, this process is most clearly testified by the different fates awaiting Cordelia and Imogen. While the first succumbs to Lear's rage and possessiveness, the second frees herself from her father's incestuous desires and her husband's obsessive control. Besides rewriting gender relationships, *Cymbeline* redefines and eventually overcomes potentially tragic political issues already found in histories and Roman plays. The resolutive element is Imogen, the "tender air" or feminine principle, once again. Her actions and words resolve all social and political tensions within the play and grant its

happy ending by mythologically linking Augustan Rome with Cymbeline's/ James I's Britannia.

The fourth and last section, "Mettere in scena il comico" (Staging comedy), includes three contributions to theatrical adaptations of Shakespeare's comedies. It opens with Roberto D'Avascio's "La ricetta del comico: *La Dodicesima Notte* di Shakespeare nella rivisitazione di Laura Angiulli" (The recipe for comedy: Shakespeare's *Twelfh Night* in Laura Angiulli's stage adaptation). After a brief introduction to the play and its plot, D'Avascio underlines the fluidity of the characters who are "obsessed with the satisfaction of reciprocity, but with no 'inner or spiritual balance'" (257), defining *Twelfth Night* as a "hamletic comedy" (260). As in Leonardi's contribution, D'Avascio dedicates a footnote on Feste and his liminal role between wisdom and folly. Giving full attention to its adaptations, the challenge this comedy presents was successfully accepted by the director Laura Angiulli, who had first brought on stage *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Measure for Measure*. Thanks to her careful efforts at textual reduction, Angiulli created a "dream-like setting, which hosts a theatrical dimension specifically rooted in the power of words" (263). The nearly empty stage and monochromatic lighting underline the theatrical potential of Shakespeare's text, infused with a satirical twist that immediately engages the audience when they notice that the same actor plays both Viola and Sebastian. The author eventually comments on Angiulli's decision to alter the ending, where Orsino is shown listening to the music that originally opened the play, and suggests that her choice aimed to underline the "human matter" in *Twelfth Night* as well as the director's awareness that any "reconstruction is never perfect" (268).

"Il viaggio di Falstaff: transcodificazione di un personaggio" (Falstaff's journey: the transcodification of a character) by Annamaria Sapienza focuses on Falstaff's adaptations in both melodrama and films. After overviewing the character's theatrical and historical origins and metamorphic quality, the author deals with his success in nineteenth- and twentieth-century artistic production. Sapienza first introduces Giuseppe Verdi's *Falstaff* (1893), his third melodrama based on Shakespearean plays (*Macbeth*, 1847 and *Othello*, 1887). Thanks to the fruitful collaboration with the librettist Arrigo Boito, Verdi writes a melodrama where "comedy is the very core of the dramatic writing, both the means and the end of the representation that governs its timing and rhythms" (280). The author's focus then shifts towards Orson Welles' *Falstaff: Chimes at Midnight* (1965), which is also discussed as the director's coronation of his fascination for this character, already witnessed by his *Five Kings* in 1939. Welles retraces Shakespeare's production in the movie by following the melancholic Falstaff in his metamorphic relationship with Hal and the King. Overall, Sapienza's comments on the artists' attempts at rendering Falstaff's complex comical nature show how "on the written page, in music, on the

stage and the screen it is possible to maintain something of Shakespeare's dramatic writing which still enhances its expressive tension" (290).

Paolo Sommaiolo's "Mettere in scena il mondo onirico. Il *Sogno di una notte di mezza estate* nelle produzioni del Teatro dell'Elfo" (Staging the oneiric world. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* adapted by Teatro dell'Elfo) brings the fourth section as well as the volume to a close. After expanding on the similarities between the world of dreams and theatre, such as their contingency and otherworldly nature, Sommaiolo discusses Salvatores' rock-punk musical *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1981-1982). Considering opposites as his creative focus, Salvatores plays with dichotomic sounds, colours, and acting registers to highlight categorical distinctions, such as night/day and the fiery passions inhabiting the Shakespearean characters. In 1988, Elio De Capitani offered Teatro dell'Elfo a new reading of the play as a tragedy of disaffection ("tragedia del disamore", 303). His adaptation gives great attention to the violence on the – mainly female – body as an anticipatory moment of an all-encompassing destructive tendency. Sommaiolo closes his essay by relating Capitani's following adaptations of the play (1997, 2010, and 2016), where comedy regains its primary role and, as such, allows the director to convey onstage an ever-changing world through the sensual, poetic, and grotesque energy deriving from Shakespeare's characters.

The volume edited by de Filippis dramatically contributes to the field of Shakespearean studies by offering a diachronic and multidisciplinary perspective on the complex subject of comedy and its Shakespearean adaptations. Each section in the volume clearly defines its focus and methodological framework and effectively expands on these aspects throughout its contributions. This approach results in autonomous portrayals of a heterogeneous yet coherent dramatic world. The volume's use of thematic *fils rouges* enhances the reader's experience. Some of these themes are quite overt, such as the investigation of Falstaff through different methodological lenses in Laudando's and Sapienza's contributions, as well as the cogency of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in De Riso's and Sommaiolo's papers. In other cases, subtle echoes within the volume can be found with recurring concepts, like counter-discourse, used explicitly in Mango's and implicitly in Cimitile's essays. Overall, the volume offers a rich and exhaustive overview of what comedy means in Shakespeare's writing, encompassing its dramatic genre, language, themes, and adaptations, providing the readers with the necessary methodological tools to approach this otherwise extremely vast and possibly confusing topic.

Francesco Marroni* and Enrico Reggiani**

A Conversation on *Teatro di George Bernard Shaw,* edited by Francesco Marroni[1]

Abstract

Enrico Reggiani interviews Francesco Marroni on his latest publication, a meticulous edition of George Bernard Shaw's dramatic work in *Teatro* (Bompiani, 2022).

Keywords: George Bernard Shaw; theatre; translation; Independent Theatre; W.B. Yeats

ER: The most effective way to start our dialogue on Francesco Marroni's Shavian enterprise is by focusing on the project's editorial foundations and scientific features, because they are all highly original, commercially attractive and therefore worthy of admiration. As a matter of fact, if one looks for publishing initiatives of the same kind in twentieth-century Italy, one can find some catalogue numbers, e.g., by Mondadori (cf. the 22 volumes published from 1923 onwards as *Teatro Completo di Giorgio Bernardo Shaw*, and those issued in the 1950s in the *Biblioteca Moderna Mondadori*, *Sezione Teatro*), UTET (in the series *Scrittori del mondo: I Nobel*, 1968), or Newton Compton's three volume *Teatro* (1974). However, all these publications are limited as regards both the efficacy of the translations and the accuracy of the critical apparatuses.

Needless to say, Marroni's monumental edition is completely immune to these shortcomings, because it provides its readers not only with valuable Italian versions of the plays, but also with very welcome Italian renderings of Shaw's general and specific thoughts on his theatrical pragmatics. This courageous and far-sighted editorial choice reflects perfectly what Shaw himself very often did along the years to explain his aims to his reading and theatrical public, and to get them used to his innovative approach to the theatre (which he intended as literature). How has Bompiani reacted to the unusual profile of your Shavian project?

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FM: Thank you for your words of appreciation, Enrico. This project has taken me several years to complete but, thanks to the valuable contribution of the colleagues involved,[1] I was able to see it through to the satisfaction of the editor of the "Classici della Letteratura Europea" series and the publishing house itself. As for the development of my Shavian project, the simplest thing to say is that, in reality, the series director already had in mind the idea of reviving the works of George Bernard Shaw. Evidently, the total absence of such an important author on the Italian publishing scene in recent decades must have seemed patent even to the publishing house itself. Therefore, once I had the editorial director's approval, I immediately set about bringing together a group of scholars who would be worthy of the task. I must add that my proposal was also justified from a commercial point of view since there have been no translations of Shaw or any monographs or articles written about him in Italy for decades. Thus, the field appeared to be open for a return to the Irish playwright's work. On the other hand, it must also be said that in the United States Shaw's popularity has never waned. There have been two important journals dedicated exclusively to his work for decades: *SHAW*: *The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies* and *The Shaw Review*. In contrast to Europe, Shaw is still highly regarded in the United States and continues to be respected in academic circles. It is no coincidence, then, that the greatest scholars of his work are American, starting with Dan H. Laurence, who has edited his works as well as the four volumes of letters, but I could mention many other names as well.

Getting back to my task as editor of the volume, I'd like to add that the series requires a precise format and internal organisation, which I tried to respect by giving a number of detailed indications to the editors of the individual works, all with the parallel text (including the Prefaces). As for the general structure, apart from my introduction, each translated play is accompanied by:

1. an introduction (in several cases long and detailed),
2. a description of the plot act by act,
3. the history of the text,
4. critical perspectives,
5. its fortune on the stage, and
6. bibliographical references.

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[1] Below is a list of the translators who have contributed to this project, along with the corresponding works they have translated: Richard Ambrosini (*Arms and the Man*); Raffaella Antinucci (*The Man of Destiny*, *Pygmalion*), Benedetta Bini (*Mrs Warren's Profession*), Elisa Bizzotto (*Widowers' Houses*, *Caesar and Cleopatra*), Fiorenzo Fantaccini (*Captain Brassbound's Conversion*, *John Bull's Other Island*), Francesco Marroni (*Candida*, *Man and Superman*), Loredana Salis (*The Philanderer*, *The Devil's Disciple*), Enrico Terrinoni (*Saint Joan*).

Work began in late 2018 and was concluded in August 2022, which is quite a considerable length of time for a publication of about 3.300 pages.

ER: Your sketch of the your publishing criteria for Bompiani is very illuminating and useful. Could you give us an analogous overview of the criteria you have followed in the choice of the plays with the related Prefaces, critical commentaries and metatexts? By going through the table of contents of your *Shaw*, one becomes easily aware that,

> 1. firstly, the first two well-known "phases" (*Plays Unpleasant and Plays Pleasant*) are fully represented and introduced ("springboard-like") as Shavian milestones;
> 2. secondly, the *Plays for Puritans* seem to be thought of as an integration to what was available to the Italian reader beforehand; and,
> 3. thirdly, four great theatrical masterpieces (*Man and Superman*; *John Bull's Other Island*; *Pygmalion*; *Saint Joan*) synthesise the manifold potentialities of Shaw's evolution as a playwright. Could you tell us something more, especially about these four choices (and about the plays you have not included), which of course demonstrates a very specific and solid view of Shaw's evolution?

FM: Well, Enrico, your question touches on one of the points that made me ponder at great length when I was deciding what to include and exclude. Obviously, the editor has to take responsibility in these cases. Having worked extensively on Shaw's life and canon, I have become convinced that the works of the first phase are the best in revealing his thought and the very essence of his personality as a man of the theatre. Shaw aimed to set himself up as an iconoclast in his life and works. The first goal he set himself as a playwright was to break with the dominant themes of Victorian theatre. The *Unpleasant Plays* of his debut deal with themes that no Victorian author would have ever dreamed of tackling and, in many ways, already suggest the direction of Shaw's theatre. On the other hand, *Plays Pleasant* are no less polemical, and this, besides shedding light on their literary history, confirms the disruptive tension that inspired their author. It is no coincidence that works like *Widowers' Houses* and *Mrs Warren's Profession* had to wait a few years before they were approved by the British censors. Again, the decision to prioritise the plays written up to 1901 corresponds, so to speak, to a choice of ideological reliability and biographical truth in the sense that, as I see it, the essence of his dramaturgical theory is all encompassed in this first phase. In these years, the choice to break with the *pièce bien faite* theorised by Eugène Scribe and to imagine a totally different theatre is countered by a social-political tension that led him to join the Fabian Society in the hope of bringing about social renewal.

In this sense, *Man and Superman*, written between 1901 and 1902 and performed in 1905, can be considered his ideological and theatrical bible in terms of the "new drama". In the Preface to this long play, Shaw wanted to review the literary tradition that inspired him and, at the same time, explain the innovative spirit underlying *Man and Superman*, which, incidentally, was written at the beginning of the twentieth century. These were years of great cultural excitement and Shaw was in contact with many men of the theatre in his frenzy to establish himself both in the theatrical world and on the British political scene. Hence the great revelation of his encounter with Ibsen's plays, from which he drew his own conception of the theatre. In fact, his lecture on Ibsen – delivered in July 1890 and published in 1891 under the title *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* – is not so much an analysis of the Norwegian playwright's individual plays as an initial statement of Shaw's theatrical theory. Indeed, in those years, he was anxious to impose his new dramaturgical creed. For him, realism was to be pursued above everything else, and, thus, was also to be included in his battle against the hypocrisies and falsehoods of late Victorian society. All of this can be seen in his first phase, which ends, as I said, with *Man and Superman*. In the choice of plays to be translated, I excluded *Heartbreak House*, which is nevertheless considered fundamental by such renowned scholars as Stanley Weintraub (1971, 162-83) and, in our country, Paolo Bertinetti (1992, 44-7). One cannot disagree with Bertinetti that *Heartbreak House* marks a turning point in Shaw's productions. Still, despite his desire to change direction and renew his method, in my opinion, *Heartbreak House* is an unsuccessful work. Here, more so than in his other plays, he fails to construct characters that are not authorial mouthpieces. His intention was to denounce the lassitude of the ruling classes, the collapse of a culture and, above all, the end of the dream of order that had fired the imagination of the Victorians for decades. Well, Shaw shows us all of this by representing a series of characters who are anything but authentic and who reflect his urge to make speeches and pass judgements. As a matter of fact, David Hare has written that in *Heartbreak House* what you see on the stage are "puppets, not people" (2000, viii). Indeed, after Ibsen, the second most important revelation for Shaw was the theatre of Chekhov which he tries to assimilate in this play after seeing a London performance of *The Cherry Orchard*. In this sense, the subtitle: "A Fantasia in the Russian Manner on English Themes" is significant.

On closer examination, at the beginning of the twentieth century Shaw became a passionate advocate of Chekhov's work. According to the English translator of Chekhov, Julian West, it seems that Shaw, in support of the great Russian playwright, had said: "Every time I see a play by Chekhov, I want to chuck all my own stuff into the fire" (qtd in West 1916, 3). Actually, the author of *The Cherry Orchard* had many admirers in England, including

Arnold Bennett who considered him a master of the short story. However, in spite of this exaggerated praise for Chekhov's art, Shaw was moving in a different direction – every single character always had something to say and did so in the most incisive and eloquent way, whereas in Chekhov's theatre, the protagonists seem to move on the fringes of reality, often lacking certainty and unable to speak their minds in a corrupt and declining society. As a confirmation of the brevity of the period in which he was inspired by "the Russian Manner", after *Heartbreak House* Shaw wrote a cycle of five plays entitled *Back to Methuselah: A Metabiological Pentateuch* (1918-1920), where he returns to the concept of Creative Evolution as the only salvation for a mankind doomed to catastrophe. This cycle, with its Preface of over fifty pages, also harks back to *Man and Superman* for its ideas on eugenics as the only possibility of salvation for mankind.

Here I'd like to say that I did not really have any qualms in excluding *Back to Methuselah*. However, I must also admit that to give a more complete representation, I would gladly have included *Heartbreak House* and two important comedies that precede it: *Major Barbara* and *The Doctor's Dilemma*. All these works were reluctantly excluded but unfortunately, as I said, the fact that the length of the anthology was limited, forced me to make drastic choices. Of course, I could not exclude a play as important as *Saint Joan*, which has had a great impact on the history of twentieth-century theatre. Some Italian scholars have also pointed out the absence of *Geneva* (1936), but, in my opinion, this is a minor work. In *Geneva*, which Shaw wrote after abandoning the dream of a world entrusted to natural born leaders, he wanted to portray the end of another dream, that of the "Great Men" (Shaw 1986, 336-7) who would save mankind, offering comic and ludicrous versions of Hitler, Mussolini and Francisco Franco as they try to defend themselves before the International Court of Justice.

ER: I'd like to go back to some meta-Shavian fundamentals that you have just mentioned. It is something that we learn, especially, from the Prefaces (which my theoretical I greatly appreciates and for which we are all very grateful, I am sure).

I may summarise it as follows: the culturological and intertextual genealogy of Shaw's reformist enterprise and stage socialism is both theoretically grounded and, at the same time, not conformistically "constructed" (Shaw 1893, xiii) but, nonetheless, textually effective in the perspective of the theatre of the word. Please, expand on and, if necessary, correct this without time restrictions . . .

FM: Let's go back for a moment to *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*. You only have to read the first few pages to realise that Shaw was fighting against all forms

of idealism. For him, ideals functioned as masks, a way of hiding the truth. The "New Drama" was supposed to celebrate a realistic and antirhetorical reading of social phenomena, by "pulling the masks off and looking the spectres in the face" (Shaw 1917, 22). It is no exaggeration to say that all of Shaw's work is aimed at demolishing idealism in its various declinations. His artistic journey is characterised by the representation of truth, even at the cost of being "unpleasant" as in his early plays. When he talks about realism, his ideological touchstone is John Bunyan. Significantly, he defines himself as a Puritan in the Preface to *Three Plays for Puritans*: "I have, I think, always been a Puritan in my attitudes towards Art" (2000, 21). In defining himself as a puritan author, he recognises Bunyan as his model and inspiration. The motivations behind this choice can be summarised in three points.

> 1. Bunyan had created a literary form that expressed its message with the utmost clarity and, therefore, with the utmost dramatic effectiveness.
> 2. In Bunyan's works and, in particular, in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, he had almost exclusively favoured realism and, for this reason, had adopted the language of the people.
> 3. Finally, the third point concerns the dialogic system that characterises both *The Pilgrim's Progress* and Bunyan's other works: his characters express their vitality in dialogue that, whether peaceful or conflictual, it is always characterised by truth – a truth that is, however, conveyed neither in the language of angels nor in the language of God. His hero, Christian, speaks the language of everyday life, which is the same as saying the language of real life. It is no accident that F. R. Leavis in 1964 emphasised that "Bunyan the Puritan allegorist was an artist […] a great name in the history of prose fiction" (1981, 287). And it was precisely on the level of style and tone that, for Shaw, the author who had inherited Bunyan's legacy was Daniel Defoe. Indeed, on the narrative level, Defoe had fully developed the realistic tones and attitudes of the Puritan preacher. In other words, he set himself a precise goal, just like a religious reformer: "I write plays with the deliberate object of converting the nation to my opinions" (1987, 25), he had written in the Preface to the play *The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet* (1909).

Thus, clearly, there is a tendency to messianism in the Shavian zeal for reform which is part of a precise line that includes Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin and William Morris. From Carlyle he borrows the idea that "heroes" will save humanity; the concept of the hero here is to be understood in terms of the broad meaning expressed by Carlyle in the famous lectures he delivered in 1840 and later collected in the volume *On Heroes, and Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*. Moreover, from another of Carlyle's works, *Past and Present*, written in 1843, Shaw derives the notion of the "Aristocracy

of Talent" (Carlyle 1960, 26-32) called upon to lead the battle against the plutocracy and the industrial bourgeoisie that have reduced human relations to pure materialism.

As is well known, the essence of Carlyle's thought was taken up by Ruskin, whom Shaw wanted to celebrate in a lecture given on the occasion of the first centenary of his birth. He entitled the lecture "Ruskin's Politics", emphasising the social reformer of his last phase as well as the political valency of the Guild of St George and the letters of *Fors Clavigera*. When praising Ruskin's thought he called it socialist and in closing the lecture went so far as to say that if there was a party with which Ruskin's role as prophet could legitimately be associated this would be "the Bolshevik party".

At this point, as can be read in the transcript of the lecture, the audience burst into loud laughter, ridiculing Shaw's absurd and improbable conclusions.

Undoubtedly, in Shaw's formation, the Carlyle-Ruskin line found its natural development in William Morris who, besides representing the aesthetic and anti-technological version of socialism, instilled in him the idea of utopia and the need to imagine perfect worlds in order to improve the present one. As his biographer Michael Holroyd has written, "Shaw's two gods in matter of art were Ruskin and Morris" (2006, 83). Not only that, but from Morris's thought Shaw also derived a way of looking at the past without falling into the idolatry of history and its heroes, as Carlyle had done. Ultimately, in the Carlyle-Ruskin-Morris triad he recognised a line of coherent and rigorous opposition to contemporary reality and denounced its blindness to the vulgarity of the bourgeoisie and the consequent decadence of its customs.

This is why I entitled the first section of my introduction to the volume "An Anti-Victorian Victorian" precisely to emphasise the fact that Shaw, who was educated in the middle of the nineteenth century and strongly attached to Victorian culture and literature, defined his social and cultural identity by setting himself in opposition both to the dominant thought of the time and, more generally, to the Victorian frame of mind. In other words, he became the opponent of all forms of cultural and social orthodoxy and conformity.

As far as the genealogy of Shavian dramaturgy is concerned, I have already mentioned Ibsen and Chekhov. Here I'd like to add that, for Shaw, Shakespeare became the unsurpassed model whose masterpieces offered a full and complex representation of the human thanks to "his enormous power over language" (1922, 43). To cope with this inferiority complex, he spent his whole life struggling against Shakespeare whose ideological limitations he would point out whenever he had the opportunity, the first of which would be his inability to offer a philosophical system and, thereby, a well-defined conception of the world. For him, the Bard was only able to portray chaos and human weaknesses in his plays, which is why he condemned Shakespeare's

scepticism in the face of social phenomenology. From a Shavian point of view, bardolatry had to be fought with every means and he felt that plays such as *Hamlet*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth* expressed an entirely personal pessimism, which was all inscribed in the temperament of the Bard who was unable to consider the whole scope of the world: "Shakespear's pessimism is only his wounded humanity" (2004, 29), he writes in the Preface to *Man and Superman*. It's as if he'd never read Montaigne's essays and as if he'd never known the great Shakespearean tragedies. In his willful blindness, he didn't want to recognise the modernity of Shakespeare's entire canon. But really, on another level, he was all too aware of Shakespeare's uniqueness and greatness so he tried to compete with him, hoping to become the Shakespeare of his time. In the long course of his life – he lived from 1856 to 1950 – Shaw had his say on a very wide variety of subjects, even of a non-strictly theatrical nature. He lived a very long life and had an extraordinarily complex personality; so it would be reductive and misleading to try to give an unambiguous definition and interpretation of his ideas and his theatre.

ER: Let's talk about William Archer and his Independent Theatre. On the one hand, I'd like to stress on both the cultural and theatrical relevance of the adjective "Independent" in the denomination of the Independent Theatre, and the need to answer a very basic question about it: "Independent" from what? Archer and Shaw answered "independent from commercial success" and their management of production costs had a direct impact on the centrality of the word in their theatrical conception, writing, and performance.

On the other hand, in his important Preface to *Widowers' Houses*, William Archer made another substantial contribution towards defining how Shaw's theatrical logic worked in the context of the Independent Theatre: a theatre considered as *experimental*, *word-oriented*, and *liberal-minded* literature (which would probably horrify any theatre scholar of our days), which avoids censorship nets by performing in a private context, on a private stage, and for private audiences. It is obvious that censorship officials were well aware of what was performed at the Independent Theatre, but they were not entitled and obliged to intervene in that private situation.

FM: I absolutely agree with you. In the late Victorian and Edwardian period, the Independent Theatre had an extraordinary function, not only because it allowed censorship to be bypassed, but also because it was also a space in which a transnational culture unfolded as an unprecedented phenomenon of great importance in defining the New Drama. For those who worked outside the mainstream and were on the side of experimentation, the Independent Theatre, which was the British version of the Théâtre Libre in France and Die Freie Bühne in Germany, was a solution both with regard to the strict

censorship and the mental anxieties of those theatre managers who hardly ever wanted to abandon the financial certainties of commercial theatre. In 1891, as Ibsen's translator, William Archer warmly welcomed Jack Grein's idea of founding the Independent Theatre Society which, thanks to the subscriptions of its members, was able to offer a theatre free of commercial constraints, just as had already happened on the Continent. Therefore, it was possible to perform those Ibsen plays that had not had the censor's approval; and even when the Norwegian playwright's works entered the commercial theatre circuit, his plays continued to be the strong point of independent theatre. Let's be clear, not only Ibsen but also Shaw and many other playwrights were too daring for London's most well-known theatres.

ER: I cannot help recalling that Archer also informs us that, while writing *Widowers' Houses*, Shaw had Marx's *Capital* in German and an orchestral score of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* in front of him, which gives us another surprising glimpse of his innovative and transdisciplinary creative logic. Could you expand a bit on the relationship between Shaw and Wagner (which, as you know very well, is very close to the core of my melopoetic interests)?

FM: I must confess, Enrico, that there is only one way to answer your question, and that is to write a monograph on the subject. If we are talking about Shaw and musicology, it should be remembered that before *The Perfect Wagnerite* (1898), Shaw wrote a heated defence of Wagner in his essay *The Sanity of Art*, which appeared in 1895. The occasion for this polemical piece was provided by Max Nordau's volume *Degeneration*. Published in German in 1892 under the title *Entartung*, this book outlined a version of art and artists from a perspective that favoured mental illness and various forms of instability, psychic disturbances and moral corruption. Dedicated to Cesare Lombroso, whose pupil and legitimate heir Nordau felt he was, *Degeneration* quickly became a bestseller, one of the most translated and read books of the European and American intelligentsia. According to Nordau, all great men of art are victims of mental problems and perversions that, precisely, find expression in their works. So, for Nordau, one could not understand Tolstoy's work without taking into account his mysticism, just as one could not understand Wagner without taking into account not only his megalomania and his cult of the barbarian ages, but also his incurable persecution complex. Nordau, a physician and sociologist as well as a Jew by culture and education, observes in this regard: "For years Wagner was convinced that the Jews had conspired to prevent the representation of his operas – a delirium inspired by his furious anti-Semitism" (1895, 172).

From a musical point of view, what prevailed in Wagner was the chaos of an unstable mind, full of itself, deeply egocentric and only capable of

imagining a world at the service of his own megalomania.

The attack concerned the exponents of all the arts, including the Impressionists, and it would be impossible to make a complete list here of so many other writers. While the debate over *Degeneration* raged, Shaw initially wished to avoid being involved in it. Because of the preposterous pseudoscience and substantial nonsense underlying the book did not merit his attention. However, anarchist circles were in turmoil because, in his book, Nordau had equated the anarchist with the common criminal. For the leading figures in anarchism, this was intolerable. And so it was that Benjamin Tucker, the editor of the anarchist newspaper *Liberty*, asked Shaw to intervene to silence Nordau's nefariousness. After some hesitation, he was convinced about countering the ideas expressed in *Degeneration*. And he did so by writing *The Sanity of Art* where one can read a reasoned defence of the German musician in the chapter "Wagnerism". Nordau had declared Wagner to be "a madman who was reducing music to chaos, perversely introducing ugly and brutal sounds into a region where beauty and grace had reigned alone" (Shaw 1908, 31). As a "perfect Wagnerite" Shaw replied that the exact opposite was true since Wagner's works were "masterpieces of the form proper to their aim . . . are straight and sensible instance of that natural development of harmony" (32). The Irish playwright wanted to defend the kind of harmony that led to modernity via Mozart. As for the attack launched against Impressionist painting, Shaw had no hesitation in praising its innovativeness and aesthetic value: "The Impressionist movement led to a busy study of atmosphere, conventionally supposed to be invisible" (23). Therefore, the Impressionist painters represented "a movement wholly beneficial and progressive, and in no sense insane or decadent" (24). So, from a culturological angle, Shaw had an extraordinary ability to understand this sense of aesthetic transformation by placing Wagner's musical exploration in the same area and the same sensibility as the Impressionists' pictorial explorations. For this reason, *The Sanity of Art* is perhaps an essay that allows us to understand the main aspects of Shavian aesthetics more than his other writings do.

ER: I'd like you to comment on the acrobatic and contradictory motivation of the 1925 Nobel Prize to Shaw, which an obscure member of the Swedish Academy (Per August Leonard Hallström, 1866-1960) formulated as follows: "The Nobel Prize in Literature 1925 is awarded to George Bernard Shaw for his work which is marked by both idealism and humanity, its stimulating satire often being infused with a singular poetic beauty".[2]

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[2] Both Per Hallström's *Motivation* and his *Award Ceremony Speech* are available here: *The Nobel Prize in Literature 1925*. NobelPrize.org. Nobel Prize Outreach AB 2023.

To remind us of both Hallström's granitic inadequacy to his role and the Swedish Academy's institutional and cultural contradictions, I'll also quote a few passages from his Award Ceremony Speech, where, though acknowledging that Shaw's "prefaces have given him the rank of the Voltaire of our time", he *judicially* states that Shaw's "ideas were those of a somewhat abstract logical radicalism"; that "he had to fool people into laughing so they should not hit upon the idea of hanging him"; and that "in this casual manner he came to create what is to some extent a new kind of dramatic art".

FM: It seems to me that the motivation was absolutely antithetical, so I agree with your view of it, Enrico. In its completely misplaced judgement, the Nobel Committee of the Swedish Academy demonstrated its limitations, if not its deliberate intention not to tell the truth about an uncomfortable and often heretical author like Shaw. As you said, Hallström's words show how inadequate he was as Chairman of the Nobel Committee. Perhaps the only correct thing he said concerned the playwright's consistency over the decades. Because it is a fact that Shaw always remained true to himself and his self-projection as prophet and interpreter of the twentieth century, even if his ideas could often be self-conflicting. The fact remains that in 1925 Shaw was the celebrated author of *Saint Joan* as well as many other essays that carried a programmatic intention to provoke and go against the grain of most contemporary debates. For example, on the eve of the First World War, when everyone was for intervention, he did not hesitate to go against public sentiment and declare his pacifism. Thus, it is difficult to give a definitive portrayal of Shaw and his works. In brief, I believe that no motivation, however broad and well-constructed, can define him. As William York Tindall acutely observed, Shaw's chief aim was "to please, astonish, and displease" (1956, 29).

ER: It goes without saying that, for personal and academic reasons, I am particularly interested in your view of the relationships between George Bernard Shaw and Ireland, and, more specifically, between Shaw and W. B. Yeats, who, though operating on very different premises, were surprisingly awarded the Nobel Prize in the very same years, but with strikingly different motivations.

FM: As evidence of the connection between Shaw and W. B. Yeats, it seems important to recall that the play *John Bull's Other Island* was written at the request of Yeats, who was desperately looking for texts for the 1904 theatre season. In the Preface to the play, Shaw reminds us that Yeats had asked him

for "a patriotic contribution to the repertory of the Irish Literary Theatre" (1984, 7). However, the playwright did not like being constrained by rules and instructions of any kind, so he presented his ideas while carefully avoiding any extolment of Irish patriotism. When he was given the manuscript, Yeats immediately gave his positive opinion on the profound truths contained in the text. But, although it alternates between moments of comedy and moments of intense emotion, *John Bull's Other Island* is ultimately an attack on the idealistic vision of the neo-Gaelic movement and, at the same time, denounces the many faults of the Irish. Hence also Shaw's very harsh judgement of the old Ireland, of the generation that had grown up with anti-British resentments and delusions of grandeur. Probably, Yeats, being the informed man that he was, was already prepared to receive an anti-celebratory text, devoid of idealism and passion, so much so that he used to call Shaw "a notorious hater of romance" (1955, 283). After all, although he was quite aware of the atrocities committed by the British rulers, Shaw did not want to give a Manichean representation of the conflict: he was well aware that today's victims can turn into tomorrow's executioners. By now, he had no illusions about history or the reliability of the version given by historians. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Shaw had already embraced the doctrine of eugenics, which, as time would prove to him, was also a form of idealism, a utopia of the human race with no relation to reality.

As for the relationship between Yeats and Shaw, it is easy to imagine how much has been written and how almost all scholars, while they note many points of contact, end up by concluding that the two great Irishmen represent two very distant worlds with two very different temperaments. I do not want to go on for too long about this, but I believe that ultimately, their friendship withstood their continual contrasts and mutual tirades and the substantial differences in their respective worldviews. As R. F. Dietrich says, Shaw and Yeats are "two Irishmen divided by a common language" (1995, 65).

ER: It is nonsensical to blame Shaw *a posteriori* for his search for world-models through which he could interpret a historically meaningless reality, even though we are all well aware now that those models were holistic in an unacceptably and unjustifiably totalitarian perspective. He and many other Anglophone intellectuals (Yeats among them) who temporarily showed interest in Mussolini and Fascism's absurd world-views, found in them a seemingly legitimate response to their communitarian or (more ideologically) communitaristic needs and convictions. Don't you think that this holds perfectly true for a social preacher and "a natural-born mountebank" (Shaw 1901, xxi, which is the *natural* choice for *your* Shavian monography, which is currently being printed by Casa Editrice Rocco Carabba) whose "Irish mind" possessed – according to Yeats – "an ancient cold, explosive, detonating

impartiality" (1931, 31)?

FM: You are undoubtedly right. It is always easy to pass judgement and censure after events. As I have already mentioned, behind Shaw's position regarding the "Great Men" was a tradition of thought that from Carlyle onwards he had perfectly and profoundly assimilated. The Irish playwright was a great believer in Mussolini who, in his view, had brought order to a nation that had been living in social and political chaos since the end of the Great War. It is also no coincidence that, in confirmation of his faith in the Duce, on 24 January 1927, Shaw published a letter in the *Daily News* defending Mussolini and his Blackshirts and giving great emphasis to the popular support the dictator enjoyed. On the other hand, it is also true that Shaw always regarded parliamentarianism with a certain scepticism precisely because his political experience as a Fabian socialist had taught him to view those who too easily promised social justice and the arrival of a better world with suspicion. At the beginning of the twentieth century, in one of the maxims in *The Revolutionist's Handbook*, he bitterly observed: "Democracy substitutes election by the incompetent many for appointment by the corrupt few" (Shaw 2004, 252). Behind these words we shouldn't imagine a socialist that converted to totalitarianism, but, more simply, a Fabian militant who saw a great truth in Carlyle's belief in the "aristocracy of talent". If, in the wake of Yeats, we want to speak of "detonating impartiality", we should conclude that this is the consistent impatience of a playwright who, as in the case of his response to Nordau, loved to give his all in the battle of ideas, without the fear of being sectarian or iconoclastic.

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Simona Brunetti*

Corey Wakeling. *Beckett's Laboratory. Experiments in the Theatre Enclosure*[1]

Abstract

In *Beckett's Laboratory. Experiments in the Theatre Enclosure*, Corey Wakeling proposes an original approach to Beckett's dramaturgical work, demonstrating that his writings for the theatre self-consciously use the theatre as a laboratory for investigating the theatrical representation in the 20th century. The key elements of his argument are very simple: first, to clear up the misconceptions about Beckett's attitude to experimental theatre; second, to identify his views on modernism; finally, to revise the concept of his authorship. The core work of the book is then divided into seven closely related chapters that explore different aspects of the argument: use of pantomime; sensory deprivation; symbolist inheritance; dream space; spectacle and politics; hypnosis; adaptation. Focusing on the philosophical underpinnings of Beckett's practice and his practical approach to playwriting, an eclectic mix of plays and their corresponding theatrical productions are examined in detail. This dense and original study sheds new light on Beckett's dramatic work with a particular emphasis on the plays of the late period. By reconsidering this approach to stage directing and the innovative representation of humanity that emerged in his stage practice, the author of this book reassesses Beckett's dramaturgies as compositions essentially intended for performance. Although provocative in relation to a more traditional critical view and, at times, extremely careful to bring out different aspects and alternative interpretations of his latest dramaturgy, Wakeling's analysis is particularly compelling regarding the process of formal experimentation that underlies the Irish playwright's dramaturgical creation and indirectly offers an entirely new perspective on his theatrical production.

KEYWORDS: Beckett; late dramas; laboratory; experimentalism; performance

Corey Wakeling is currently an Associate Professor at Kobe College in Japan. In *Beckett's Laboratory. Experiments in the Theatre Enclosure*, he revises and enriches, on the one hand, the fruits of a passionate and meticulous doctoral research project on "Samuel Beckett and Experimentation", conducted from 2010 to 2013 at the University of Melbourne School of Culture and Communication under the primary supervision of Peter Eckersall and the secondary supervision of Clara Tuite; on the other hand, he collects and develops under a coherent vision some essays developed from his thesis and already published in prestigious international reviews from 2015 to 2017.

The scope of Wakeling's study is explicitly stated from the outset: to propose a novel and original approach to Beckett's dramaturgical work, demonstrating that his writing for the theatre treats the theatre as a laboratory of performance. Starting with Latour and Woolgar's definition of the space of a human workshop ("an enclosure where previous work is gathered"), the author of this volume provides at the outset the definition to which he refers throughout his discussion: "a theatre laboratory tends to stand for theatre in a state of progress", it is a space still to be defined.

The key elements of his argument are briefly outlined in his *Introduction*, entitled *Performativities of the laboratory* (1-21), in which he first clears the field of misconceptions about Beckett's attitude to influential figures and body practices in experimental theatre in the decades after the Second World War. Far from being the writer's sole imaginative domain, Wakeling explains how much Beckett's approach to dramaturgy was, from the outset, experimental and capable of indeterminacy. For him, the Irish writer's well-known remarks against theatre or performance laboratories like Grotowski's should not be taken as definitive statements about dramaturgy, while his negative attitude towards experimental performance does not necessarily imply the absence of an inherent experimentalism in his writing. The secret of Beckett's worldwide influence and success, even in the visual field, lies more in formulating an influential dramaturgical experiment than in advocating a coherent dramaturgical theory. To make this point clearer, the author of this volume finds it particularly useful to analyse the origins of two short plays, *Actes sans paroles I* and *II* (*Act Without Words I* and *II*), to show how Beckett uses cage scenarios to explore the limits of logic and utility, as the two plays for mimes were designed to observe human performance in the context of both Wolfgang Köhler's ethological laboratory work and Ludwig Wittgenstein's enclosure in language.

Secondly, in his *Introduction*, Wakeling considers the category of experimentalism in relation to aesthetic theories and modernism before attempting to define his notion of Beckett as an experimentalist. After identifying the two main views in the relationship between experimentalism and modernism – experimentation as the pinnacle of aesthetic autonomy or as a means of undermining it – the author presents the discussion that has arisen around Clement Greenberg's concept of medium refinement, particularly in the direction taken by modern performance practice: the freedom to experiment. Suppose the Adorno-derived view of Beckett's theatre tends to dissociate it from the political experimental practices of the theatrical avant-garde. In that case, Wakeling aims instead to show how the Irish author's dramaturgical writings are deeply intertwined with these practices and cannot be understood without them.

Finally, the author explains his guiding idea in considering Beckett's theatrical production as an experimental compositional mode of composing, referring to what 'remains' to be revealed in composition rather than to pre-determined ends of art. Indeed, from his point of view, it is a negative process rather than a negative vision that underpins his writings. To resist reading the Irish playwright's plays as the result of a predetermined aesthetic orientation towards the spectacle is to revise the concept of his authorship. This way, Wakeling proposes an unusual way of understanding the author's creativity.

The core investigative work of the book is then divided into seven closely related chapters that explore different aspects of the argument.

In the first chapter ("Laboratory Acts Without Words", 23-48), the author focuses on the two parodic pantomimes *Act Without Words I* and *II*. Both written before 1956, they were conceived in close association with the Irish author's two most critically acclaimed plays: *En attendant Godot* (*Waiting for Godot*) and *Fin de partie* (*Endgame*). On the one hand, for Wakeling, this inexplicable connection is a sign of Beckett's special attention to pantomime in the 1950s and, on the other hand, of a particular experimental turn to the diagram in his dramaturgy. The author demonstrates how diagrams serve as an important tool in the playwright's recent works, also proving valuable for directors and actors during performances. Following this, the volume explores the complexities of contemporary pantomime and the resulting paradoxes brought about by metamimicry in a more thorough and persuasive manner. At the end of the chapter, the two facets of the argument come together in a sharable final observation: Beckett's theatre shows that when no one believes in mime any longer, the modalities of the discipline can come to stand for the raw facticity of the subject's nonetheless ongoing practice of self-simulation.

The second chapter is devoted to "Sensory Deprivation" (49-72). The author refers to the plays written for Billie Whitelaw, the actress whom Beckett considered his Musa and the best interpreter of his late dramatic works, written after the 1960s: *Not I* (1972), *Footfalls* (1976) and *Rockaby* (1981). Drawing attention to the actress's experience of dizziness during the rehearsal of *Not I* and her subsequent fainting spell, Wakeling aims in this chapter to show how the performance of Beckett's plays written after 1960 requires a performer who is an athlete of subtraction, adept at enduring the fatigue of stasis. The author contends that in plays crafted for Whitelaw, Beckett aims to gauge the impact of sensory limitations on audiences. For instance, in *Not I*, where a mouth speaks rapidly in a black field, this requires a specific physical effort and reconfiguration of bodily energy. This, Beckett believes, prompts the audience to engage with spectacles highlighting the connection between the corporeal and incorporeal, as seen in *Footfalls* and *Rockaby*. These unveil a ghostly figuration through physical

enactment, revealing a dimension not previously explored through lighting or storytelling, as initially seen in the 1963 production of *Play*.

In the following chapter ("Impediment and the Symbolist Dramaturgical Inheritance", 73-96), Wakeling makes an excursion into the artistic and literary currents active in the period in which Beckett's first dramatic compositions were written in order to show how a greater understanding of the material practice of the Parisian theatres of the time, a combination of epic theatre and post-surrealist metatheatrical theatre, is also necessary. Beckett's rejection of a certain type of realist theatre seems to have been motivated by a desire to create new access to the audience rather than by the dream of symbolism and its impossible enterprise of simulation through negation. The Irish author's resistance to realism cannot be the only vector for identifying echoes of symbolism in his production. In fact, from the author's point of view, Beckett's resemblance to Symbolist dramaturgy conceals an unresolved materialism and not the extension of the trajectory of abstraction argued in detail by critics of the past. Wakeling's idea is, on the one hand, to propose an expanded theory of the Irish playwright's theatre that includes the insensate and insensible dimensions of stagecraft, design, and concept as dimensions of the materialism of the stage and, on the other hand, to explore the human figure as a uniquely theatrical creature, neither mere concept nor human.

In the fourth chapter ("Dream Space, the Other Laboratory", 97-108), special attention is given to all the plays in which the sleeplessness motif is present in one way or another. The dreamscape of Beckett in performance can be read as an allegorical representation of an inverse side of the dialectical spectacles of unconscious human life, realised in the material gesture of 'sleeplessness.' Thus, rather than locating voice and text as the infinite domain within states of absolute sleep or void, the late Beckett instead constructs anatomies of dreamscapes and their gesture. Indeed, Wakeling argues that Beckett's figures "existing at the edges of sleep produce gestures that expose the emergence of once-solitary spaces of interiority to a representational field". To explore this theme further, he suggests that we begin by analysing the entanglements in which Sleepless intervenes as a rejection of the main conditions and goals of sleep: rest and death. The dreamscapes in his dramaturgies can be read as allegorical representations of dialectical spectacles of unconscious human life. In this way, the late Beckett constructs anatomies that retain the inescapable signs of a self-visibility on the verge of disappearance. He uses gesture as a primary means of notation, referring to the difficult location of sleep, gestured by characters who remain sleepless as long as they are visible. In several dramatic cases, such as *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958), *That Time* (1976), or *Happy Days* (1961), the dream is the setting or condition of the characters. In all these cases, waking life is presented as an interruption of the apparently more receptive state of

sleep, and the urge to perform is linked to the will to live. The dream thus becomes a context for reaching out to an inaccessible self that disappears into the realm of the unconscious.

In the fifth chapter ("Catastrophe and the Politics of Spectacle", 109-24), the author of the book focuses on the politics of Beckett's theatre in the context of the late 1970s and early 1980s theory of negation and the human. Wakeling traces the convergence of political-aesthetic ideas in the work of Marcuse, Beckett, and Havel as a common opposition to the dehumanisation of the ideological spectacle. For him, however, Marcuses's account of the Beckettian concept of hope is deeply negative and is demystified in his use of it to articulate the political power of literature. Through a detailed analysis of the play *Catastrophe* (1982) – which employs a deconstruction of the spectacle – and the Havellian notion that the human is the locus of dissent, Wakeling can observe in context how an experimental process of dramaturgy that deduces what remains of the human also deduces what remains of dissent as a result. The catastrophe referred to in the title is the catastrophe of appearances. The play is dedicated to Havel as part of a larger protest against his house arrest for political activities opposing the Czechoslovak state. In the scenario of the play *Catastrophe*, there is no hope of dissent: human subjects are shaped into life as uncritical objects of one-way contemplation. Therefore, the catastrophe in the play is not Havel's arrest but his absence from the stage – the development of an authoritarian ideological scene in the place of dissent. Beckett seems to imagine what removing figures like Havel from the stage might do. Havel's arrest means Havel's absence, says Wakeling, "leaves a void to be occupied by the exhibition of desubjectivised life". While *Catastrophe* proves to be an affirmation of Havel's view of dissent as a matter of enduring humanity, the play also offers many interrelated concepts about the ambiguous nature of hope. In particular, Wakeling argues that the Beckettian experiment realises an anti-ideological counterclaim of stage and gestural formulations.

More interesting, in our view, is the sixth chapter ("Hypnosis: a Theory of Beckett Spectatorship", 125-46), in which the plays already analysed from the actor's point of view in the second chapter are now re-examined with a different methodology that privileges the act of spectatorship and the hypnotic ends of the experiments carried out on the stage. The idea that the immersive experience of the vertiginous aspects of these plays gives special value to their affective construction is already present in the premises of sensory deprivation. In this chapter, Wakeling, drawing on personal experience, combines strategies of immersive dramaturgy with the attention to manipulation techniques used in psychoanalysis and clinical therapy sessions to address the issue of hypnosis in Beckett's stage writing. The hypnotic effect, Wakeling claims, emerged as a result of many events in

the course of Beckett's stage career: the varied success of pantomime and mime artists; a changing, escalating use of the stage diagram; an increasing separation between the performer's body and the soundscape; a deeper engagement with the paradoxes of the unconscious. Furthermore, the author of the book argues that to understand the kind of attention required in this latest dramaturgical production, it is necessary to refer to the application of the three dynamics of attention: reflexive, automatic, and voluntary. Without an emphatic spectatorship, though, the subjectivities conceived by the Irish author cannot appear at all. Then, the spectator who accepts to be part of such hypnotic representation as those proposed by the characters in *Not I*, *Footfalls*, or *Rockaby*, registers a sensory confusion induced by the sensations and echoes of memory that they produce and becomes responsible for a personal 'recomposition' of perceived rather than seen affects.

The Seventh and final chapter ("'Adaphatrôce', or the Contentious Fringes of Beckett's Dramaturgy", 147-68) deals with the adaptation for the stage of some of Beckett's narrative texts, with his consent and, at times, also with his collaboration. Adaptation, says Wakeling, proves to be one of the most controversial and least coherent topics of Beckett's dramaturgy studies, not least because of Beckett's well-known preoccupation with it. He even described adaptations of his prose works as 'adaphatrôce', an atrocity in his evocative word, yet he allowed many of them to go ahead. However, Wakeling's main point is how these plays underline the Irish writer's interest in experimenting with theatrical practice. Adaptation is a reflection on one's writing in the light of the latest dramaturgical creations. How contemporary theatre companies and artists have engaged in major revisions of Becket's dramaturgies through careful interrogation of the medium and composition has led to a new and heightened focus in their interpretation and significant performances. Indeed, a more enduring interpretation of the ability of Beckett's dramaturgy to cross-medial divisions is guided by artists sensitive to compositional problems such as the practices of diminution, negation, and focalisation. In this regard, the chapter also pays particular attention to Peter Brook's work as a director and his staging of *Fragments*, a series of plays by Beckett. Although both Brook and Beckett return to the essence of the stage, a cornerstone of their dramaturgy, the process of deconstruction they put into practice is very different. Wakeling argues that Brook's adaptation ignores Beckett's characteristically ambivalent dramaturgical practice. Although Book's practice is essentially based on refined pantomime, and Beckett explicitly uses pantomime as a means of experimentation, the former trusts mimesis while the latter questions it.

At the end of the book, the Notes (169-92) are followed by an extensive and accurate Bibliography (193-204) and finally by an Index of names and works cited (205-13).

In conclusion, Corey Wakeling's creative, dense, and original study sheds new light on Beckett's dramatic work and his inventive approach to writing for the stage, with particular emphasis on the plays of the last period. By reconsidering the Irish playwright's approach to stage directing and the innovative representation of humanity that emerged in his stage practice, the author of this book reassesses Beckett's dramaturgies as compositions essentially intended for performance. Although provocative in relation to a more traditional critical view and at times extremely capable of bringing out different aspects and alternative interpretations of his latest dramaturgy, his analysis is timely and compelling about the process of formal experimentation that underlies the Irish playwright's dramaturgical creation and indirectly offers an entirely new perspective on his theatrical production.

Serena Demichelis*

Claire Gleitman. *Anxious Masculinity in the Drama of Arthur Miller and Beyond: Salesmen, Sluggers and Big Daddies*[1]

Abstract

This is a review of Claire Gleitman's *Anxious Masculinity in the Drama of Arthur Miller and Beyond: Salesmen, Sluggers and Big Daddies* (2022). The volume represents an insightful study of the figure of the 'anxious breadwinner' and its legacy in American drama up to the late 2010s. *Anxious Masculinity* offers theatre and literary scholars the opportunity to look at classic and contemporary American authors from a new angle, but it also significantly contributes to the broader cultural debate around gender dynamics.

KEYWORDS: masculinity; drama; Arthur Miller; anxiety; gender dynamics

In the introductory pages of his 2015 edited volume, *Configuring Masculinity in Theory and Literary Practice*, Stefan Horlacher, quoting Vera Nünning, claims that "especially when discussing a potential crisis of masculinity, literary discourses become a privileged site for registering patriarchy's 'loss of legitimacy' and how 'different groups of men are now negotiating this loss in very different ways'" (2015, 4). He goes on to state that "in literary texts, we find both . . . self- as well as externally-determined or enforced configurations of masculinity as well as the very mechanisms of their production or enforcement" (2015, 6). While not a volume strictly concerned with the concept of masculinity (and masculinities) in literature at large, Claire Gleitman's *Anxious Masculinity in the Drama of Arthur Miller and Beyond* seems to start from similar assumptions on gender representation:

> [T]his book confronts the suited figure of the 1950s breadwinner – respectable, responsible, and distinctly anxious – as he makes his way across the American cultural scene and the American stage, both in the widely produced plays of Arthur Miller and, in varied fashions, in the plays of some of Miller's most notable playwriting contemporaries and descendants. (2022, 5)

Gleitman thus sets forth to investigate a crisis (to quote the term used by Horlacher) – specifically, that of "dissatisfaction" coming from "ideals of masculinity that are largely unobtainable . . . and that place males and females intractably at odds with one another in terms of their values, their hopes, and their self-perceptions" (2022, 4).

According to Gleitman, Miller's characters represent some sort of prototype of anxious male breadwinner – a figure that, throughout those decades and into the new century, has been faced with multiple and continuous challenges in his self-perception. By following an order that is both chronological and thematic, Gleitman's volume is thus articulated along the axis of masculinity and its representations, which are divided into macro-categories defining the historical and sociocultural frames the works and characters investigated belong to.

The book opens with an introduction entitled "The Prison House of Gender" – the image, particularly apt to describe males inhabiting (and struggling with) the worlds described by Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams, delineates the spatial and symbolic dimension of captive domesticity in which anxious masculinity is inscribed. This domesticity is to be meant in literal and broader terms – encompassing families, homes and societies at large. In a way, in fact, Gleitman's journey across various stages of anxious masculinity is one across stages of 'establishment'-anxiety – i.e. the fear of losing grip on power, typical of social categories traditionally associated with the maintenance of the status quo: white, heterosexual, privileged males. This is why, throughout the chapters, the author enlarges the scope of her analysis by engaging with issues pertaining not only to gender representation, but also class, sexual orientation and race.

Gleitman opens her volume with a quotation from a letter Miller wrote to Marilyn Monroe shortly before their marriage. The quote perfectly outlines the tensions and complexities of "domestic space and a male's relationship to it" (1), which were thoroughly explored in post-War theatre and left "a lasting mark on the American drama of the ensuing seven decades" (ibid.). Emblematic Miller characters like Willy Loman, Eddie Carbone and John Proctor, in fact, all struggle, though in different terms, with both their identity as males and with their relationship with women and "the feminine" at large. This is partially the result of a gendered polarisation whose "linchpin", according to Gleitman, and as she explains in chapter one ("Strudel and the Single Man"), "is a philosophical conflict between idealism and practicality" (21) – a conflict that is never resolved, no matter how much such a resolution is desired by characters, in Miller's plays. In these works, breadwinning men, traditionally associated with practicality, start losing their role and developing homosocial idealistic fantasies, thus incurring an overturning of values and mores that they do not find easy to deal with. After

all, Miller's protagonists are notoriously divided in binomial conflicts: by his own admission,[2] what the playwright tried to represent in his works was the struggle of men trying to be whole – "psyche and citizen, individual subject and social actor" (Murphy 1997, 12). Perhaps, however, Miller failed to see how intrinsically gendered this perspective was.[3] The generalised turmoil he strives to represent, in fact, is channeled and thematised in different ways throughout Miller's plays via categories which Gleitman aptly summarises, employing images such as witchcraft, clearly related to the interpretation of male/female relationships in *The Crucible*, and "the weird", the adjective used to describe Rodolpho in *A View from the Bridge* and which unveils Eddie's – and, in a way, a broadly "male" – attitude towards queerness.

The theme of subverted heteronormativity emerges in and permeates Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, which Gleitman devotes her third chapter to. While she claims that she does not wish to identify instances of "influence" (83) between Miller and Williams, she is nonetheless confident that the shared context in which the authors wrote necessarily contributed to the elaboration of characters (and plays) resonating with one another. For the purposes of this analysis, it is worth mentioning that one core difference in Williams's works when compared to those of his fellow playwright is that characters like Stanley Kowalski are significantly more capable of performing – and, consequently, affirming – their masculinity in the context they live in. Taking the example of the protagonist of *Streetcar*, we see how Stanley manages to overcome several obstacles and establish the dominion of white heteronormativity in his exploitation of Blanche's hostility and in denying the degree to which being Polish can impair his whiteness. His success, in short, almost *depends* on the challenges he meets along the way, because they represent an opportunity to perform. Similarly, in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* the instability affecting masculinity is "papered over" (110) by an act of performance – namely, openly "embracing heteronormativity" (ibid.) and hypermasculinity (111).

In the decades following the immediate post-War period, elements challenging masculinity and its prerogatives started characterising plays and protagonists in an increasingly marked way. With chapter four, Gleitman opens what we may consider the second part of her volume; the last three chapters of the book are in fact devoted to as many macro-themes, which can

[2] Miller gives a full account of his outlook on this subject in "On Social Plays", the essay included as preface to the first edition of *A View from the Bridge*.

[3] As Gleitman notes, Miller was fairly reluctant to acknowledge the relevance of gender inequality in Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (24), despite the Norwegian playwright being one of his models; in a way, it is as if Miller wanted to represent this gendered conflict or divide without recognising its toll on the female characters of his plays.

be summarised as class, queerness and race, in playwrights active between the 1960s and our present times.

Focusing on the works of Lorraine Hansberry, Sam Shepard and August Wilson, chapter four ponders the weight of economic disadvantage and marginalisation as playing a central role in shaping anxious masculinity in the decades starting from the 1960s. In Gleitman's words,

> [c]ulturally, of course, a great deal changed in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, as many Americans engaged in a struggle to create a society whose opportunities could be available to a greater range of human beings. Still, historically disadvantaged groups struggled to find a foothold in a nation whose privileges continued to skew strongly toward white males. (113)

The male father figure in the domesticities represented by such playwrights is not immune to the charm of power and patriarchal ideology. However, he is no longer able to play the part of the troubled yet successful breadwinner – on the contrary, these fathers and husbands' dysfunctional attitude towards their feelings, work and finances brings them and/or their families to the verge of (or to) economic collapse. To better understand the kind of character inhabiting these plays, let us take a look at stage directions in *Fences*: "Troy is fifty- three years old, a large man with thick, heavy hands; it is this largeness that he strives to fill out and make an accommodation with. Together with his blackness, his largeness informs his sensibilities and the choices he has made in his life." *Fences* is part of Wilson's *American Century Cycle*, a series of ten plays meant to cover every decade of the twentieth century. Set in the 1950s, the play depicts a *milieu* reminiscent of Miller and Williams's works, but it displays a much more acute awareness about the implications of both racial *and* class struggle. Troy Maxson is presented as a working-class Black man, and spectators immediately hear and see him discussing work *and* race issues together:

> TROY Now what he look like getting mad 'cause he see the man from the union talking to Mr. Rand?
> BONO He come talking to me about . . . 'Troy Maxson gonna get us fired.' I told him to get away from me with that. He walked away from me calling you a troublemaker. (*Anxious*) What Mr. Rand say?
> TROY Ain't said nothing. He told me to go down to the commissioner's office next Friday. They called me down there to see them.

Troy is thus immediately characterised as a "troublemaker", someone who turns to unions and tries to defend his rights. At the same time, he knows that his wishes and desires as a working-class man are inextricably linked to his being Black, as the very next scene in the play testifies: "You think only white fellows got sense enough to drive a truck? That ain't no paper job. Hell,

anybody can drive a truck. How come you got all the whites driving and the coloreds lifting?". As Gleitman puts it,

> Wilson's Troy expresses no nostalgia for the lost American frontier, never a locus of freedom for African American writers. Yet he does display a restlessness rooted in a journeying impulse that his wife arguably seeks to contain—or, more aptly here, to fence—as well as heroic longings that his status as a Black man inhibits. Troy thus becomes a bully because of the frustration engendered in him by his inability to be what he calls at one point "a different man"—by which he means a man unimpeded not only by racism but also by domestic expectations. (131)

The markedly liberal dream chased by prototypical anxious breadwinners is shared by Troy, though with necessarily different premises dictated by his racial and social status.

Chapter 5 moves on to the topic of the intersection between anxious masculinity and queerness by focusing on plays such as Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*, Paula Vogel's *How I learned to drive* and Jeanine Tesori and Lisa Kron's *Fun Home*. Gleitman's focus, here, is not so much on positive queer characters such as Louis and Prior in *Angels*, but on negative ones, and specifically on father or semi-father figures struggling with what they (or societal and ethical norms) regard as unacceptable desires. While in one of the cases the unacceptability is universally recognisable and agreeable upon (*Fun Home*'s Uncle Peck is, in fact, a pedophile), in other instances characters are denying their homosexuality and living with the ensuing turmoil and confusion. Emblematic in this respect is the fictionalised Roy Cohn we find in *Angels in America*: "Roy Cohn is not a homosexual. Roy Cohn is a heterosexual man, Henry, who fucks around with guys" (Kushner 1995, 46). The quote, which Gleitman also uses to exemplify Cohn's closeted identity (146), is indeed symptomatic of a whole mindset – one that acknowledges the terrible truth: *what one is* may end up establishing *who one is*, but we can change that by denying our identity.[4] This clash between *what* and *who* results from the fear of losing privilege and authority, which can only be maintained if everything stays the same. Cohn finds a chance to deny the inevitable collapse of his status, caused by his deteriorating health due to AIDS, in reinstating a father-son relationship with Joe Pitt, another closeted homosexual man and a more positive character in the play. Moreover, he denies having AIDS and lives (and dies) in the pretense of suffering from liver cancer, a disease with a more

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[4] A point that Cohn makes in the same context. Indeed, he clearly refuses to be called homosexual on the grounds of his own self-hatred and shame, but he also makes it very clear that homosexuality is incompatible with his political identity as a man in and of power.

markedly 'heterosexual' connotation. This condemns him to a stasis soon to become irreversible – Cohn in the play dies, just like Cohn in real life, shortly after retiring from the public sphere. In the plays investigated in this chapter, as in others presented elsewhere in the volume,[5] the immobilism *vs* mobility scenario corresponds to a masculine *vs* feminine one: as Gleitman notes,

> it is a female who achieves some degree of liberating mobility that permits her to leave a more static male figure behind. All three plays link psychological progression with sexual and aesthetic fluidity, in the characters' lives, their art, and the plays' own forms. By contrast, the chief patriarchal figures in each play—Roy Cohn, Uncle Peck, and Bruce Bechdel—are paralyzed, on "Hold," and haunted by demons whose origins they are determined not to see. (168)

The final chapter in *Anxious Masculinity* deals with plays which "all ask their (likely predominantly white) audiences whether Blacks in America can ever be freed from performing for a simultaneously uncomprehending and appropriating white gaze" (171). Of the three works considered in this chapter, *Fairview* by J.S. Drury is perhaps the one which more explicitly dramatises this question. In it, it becomes evident that the status quo, which has apparently enlarged to accommodate people traditionally left on the margins – as the Frasiers, the African American protagonist family – is still more powerful than any apparent progress. Moreover, it is clear that it weighs unbearably on the shoulders of marginalised people – as is expressed quite literally by one of the characters, Keisha, who laments that she feels held back in life by some unspeakable force. The Black characters of the play seem to have reached that level of neoliberal wealth that their earlier, working-class fellow characters had been barred from (as in *Fences* and *A Raisin in the Sun*, both analysed in chapter four); however, this is not enough for them to be considered 'full-fledged human beings' by white people, who keep fetishising, appropriating and colonising their lives. This process becomes literal in the play, where previously invisible white characters appear in the final act to take over the role of absent members of the Black protagonist family. Chapter six hence emphasises all the more powerfully what has been briefly stated at the beginning of this review, something that, in Gleitman's words, "make[s] starkly visible what will have been covertly evident before" (6) – i.e., that "anxious masculinity cloaks an anxious whiteness" (6). The immobilism resulting from the anxiety of the establishment emerges here as one of the most problematic issues of American society – namely, that of race and the legacy of slavery.

In conclusion, *Anxious Masculinity in the Drama of Arthur Miller and Beyond* successfully reaches its aim of showing how preoccupations which

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[5] As for example *The Crucible*.

characterised the immediate post-War years in the United States were absorbed and re-elaborated by Arthur Miller in his works, and how his prototype of the anxious breadwinner reverberated in the following decades. The book devotes comparatively less space to the analysis of Miller's characters in and of themselves, with only two chapters explicitly dealing with four plays – *Death of a Salesman*, *All My Sons*, *The Crucible* and *A View from the Bridge*. However, Loman, Proctor and Carbone are constantly resurfacing in other chapters; far from being misleading (after all, Miller's is the only name appearing in the title), this choice helps avoiding the traps awaiting anyone choosing to deal with a classic (i.e., critical repetition and redundancy). The author successfully manages to show her expertise on the subject while at the same time bringing forward fresh and captivating insights on American drama – one example being, for instance, a re-reading of *The Crucible* which barely touches upon the political interpretation of the play (chapter 3).

While the main linking thread in the volume is undoubtedly represented by the analysis of characters, Gleitman manages to maintain a strong argumentative coherence also thanks to a thorough investigation of shared themes, as for instance by recognising the problematisation of race relations in Miller's *The Crucible* as well as Kushner's *Angels*, or that of male homosexual desire in Williams, outside of chapters explicitly connected to such issues. The author's knowledge and multidisciplinary expertise as both an academic and drama teacher surfaces in her understanding of the subtle nuances and layers of performance, which are clearly the result of an eye not limited to scholarly scrutiny. *Anxious Masculinity* is thus both a valuable resource for researchers in drama and theater studies *and* a fascinating investigation into a specific cultural and literary phenomenon, addressed in a clear and approachable manner. At the same time, the volume contributes to a debate which goes beyond the immediate context of theatre and drama and involves contemporary, relevant issues more broadly. Discourses around masculinity and masculinity studies, when conducted in these terms, are indeed necessary to develop a full-fledged criticism of patriarchal systems and their representations. In an age ever more concerned with dismantling and debunking toxic discourses around gender, Gleitman's volume represents an insightful resource for carrying awareness practices in the world of literature and literary studies.

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Melissa Croteau*

Alexa Alice Joubin, Victoria Bladen (eds), *Onscreen Allusions to Shakespeare: International Films, Television, and Theatre*[1]

Abstract

The title of this superlative recent volume of essays, edited by Alexa Alice Joubin and Victoria Bladen, boldly announces its focus on a topic that could be seen as trivial: mere allusions to Shakespeare and his works in screen texts. The films and shows covered therein are *not* screen adaptations of Shakespeare, which are the subject of a great many books. Instead, the essays in this volume examine brief Shakespeare references in film or television texts. This study continues the ongoing work of postmodern and cultural studies strategic goals to *read* all cultural products and practices as *texts* that reveal the multiple potential meanings of any given text, which is always already embedded in multifarious contexts. The essays in this volume demonstrate that the Bard has been and is a *ubiquitous presence* in international media in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, evidenced by the fact that each essay looks at film and/or televisual texts from a different country. Refreshingly, Joubin and Bladen contend that this volume examining Shakespearean allusions extends beyond the question of whether a screen text is or is not "Shakespeare(an)", instead focusing "further along the intertextuality continuum" to look at the often powerful ideological and artistic work performed by brief references to Shakespeare. Indeed, the Bard's brief appearances in screen texts like these, as adeptly argued in this volume, help keep Shakespeare alive in significant ways, rather than damning him to a purgatorial half-life.

Keywords: Shakespeare; Shakespeare on screen; theatre; intertextuality; allusion; adaptation; global media

The title of this superlative recent volume of essays, edited by Alexa Alice Joubin and Victoria Bladen, boldly announces its focus on a topic that could be seen as trivial: mere allusions to Shakespeare and his works in screen texts. The films and shows covered therein are *not* screen adaptations of Shakespeare, which are the subject of a great many books. Instead, the essays in this volume examine brief Shakespeare references in film or television texts. This study continues the ongoing work of postmodern and cultural studies strategic goals to *read* all cultural products and practices as *texts* that

reveal the multiple potential meanings of any given text, which is always already embedded in multifarious contexts. Joubin and Bladen point out that "Shakespeare has a ubiquitous presence in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. [The Shakespearean corpus] has been continually deconstructed, quoted in and out of context, hybridized, recycled and appropriated in a wide range of contexts. Fragments of Shakespeare's texts prove highly mobile" (2022, 2). Indeed, the essays in the volume demonstrate that the Bard really gets around, evidenced by the fact that each essay looks at film and/or televisual texts from a different nation. The editors' curation of the volume truly embodies the "international" focus declared in its subtitle.

Refreshingly, Joubin and Bladen contend that this volume e xamining Shakespearean allusions extends beyond the question of whether a screen text is or is not "Shakespeare(an)", instead focusing "further along the intertextuality continuum" to look at the ideological and artistic work performed by "[n]uanced and attenuated" references to Shakespeare (5). The editors assert: "Shakespeare may not be the main focus of tattered allusions in cinema, television and theatre, yet even passing references to Shakespeare can have the power to shift the meanings and readings of a work" (2). This *power* is well demonstrated in each essay, whether the topic is a Brazilian *novela* or a Maltese short film. While the word *tattered* is used throughout book; however, as it indicates an artifact in poor or dilapidated condition, it does not quite seem an accurate modifier for the Bard as he appears in these chapters and the screen texts they examine. These "Shakebytes", to use Poonam Trivedi's redolent coinage, are not insubstantial cameos or ragamuffins peregrinating through these screen texts. Quite the opposite, Shakespeare's brief appearances in screen texts like these, as adeptly argued in this volume, help keep Shakespeare alive rather than damning him to a purgatorial half-life, like King Hamlet's Ghost. As Maurizio Calbi avers, Shakespeare still haunts us and these allusive texts because he can be transformed and repurposed in so many ways, even in potent small "bites". The authors gathered in *Onscreen Allusions* reveal many of the diverse functions for which Shakespeare can be used, such as signaling "sophistication and class," both positively and negatively: paying deference to "an established authority" while channeling that authority, or, conversely, citing the Bard as "an act of resistance or challenge to the hypotext" (4). As these essays show, quoting or misquoting, alluding to or gesturing toward Shakespeare's texts also "carries with it the burden of previous uses of those lines" (4). Indeed, references to Shakespeare are frequently made via allusions to screen adaptations rather than his plays directly, such as the use of musician Nino Rota's love theme, "What is a Youth?", which appeared in Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* (1968), in a Brazilian comedic televisual spoof of the balcony scene in the same year, as Aimara da Cunha Resende examines in her chapter in this volume.

We have arrived in an era when spectators the world over are likely to be more familiar with Shakespeare's afterlives – film adaptations, advertisement imagery, YouTube videos, culturally specific Bardic touchstones – than with the plays as they appear on the page, be it material or digital.

There are two major conceptual through lines in *Onscreen Allusions*: intertextuality and spectatorship. These are distinctly and deftly interconnected throughout the volume in ways that are not always conspicuous in writing employing these theoretical discourses. Linda Hutcheon's book *A Theory of Adaptation* is referenced several times in the volume, across multiple chapters, in regard to "knowing" and "unknowing" spectators (Hutcheon 2013, 120-8). This points to the crux of intertextuality's ultimate reliance on spectators who "know" the "other" text(s) being referenced. As the authors in this volume masterfully present, small shreds/threads of Shakespeare woven into other narratives often require an even deeper knowledge of the Shakespearean work than an adaptation, as the reference is fleeting and its relationship to the story, theme, characters, and *mise-en-scène* can flow by unnoticed and unnoted. To some degree, intertextual allusions are always reliant on spectators "knowing". However, there are screen texts able to communicate the significance of their intertextuality to both knowing and unknowing audiences, such as films and television content aimed at middle and lower-class audiences, which are discussed here in chapters by Trivedi, Resende, Márta Minier, and Boris N. Gaydin and Nicolay V. Zhakharov. In addition, "knowing" always operates on a continuum: there are Shakespeare scholars (who generally are *not* the target demographic) and there are folks who learn about Shakespeare plots, characters, and images through cultural circulation without ever seeing or reading a Shakespeare play.

Resende's chapter on allusions to *Romeo and Juliet's* balcony scene on Brazilian television provides excellent examples of viewers who have little or no exposure to Shakespeare or the play beyond the images circulating in their culture, but that is in no way a barrier to the comedy or pathos communicated in references to this iconic scene (100). Critically, Resende reminds us that Shakespeare's presence in Brazil – a former colony of Portugal, not Britain – is "a matter of hybridism rather than of sacred permanence" because "[t] he Bard is not known by the average Brazilian" (99, 100). Conversely, as can be seen in Trivedi's chapter on three Bollywood films, India's relationship with Shakespeare is siphoned through centuries of their British colonial past, such that indigenising Shakespeare, even in pieces, is an oppositional act. However, Resende contends that the Brazilian short films and hybrid-genre *novelas* alluding to the balcony scene are reaching out to a new, different kind of audience: "no more the *erudite* author or director catering to *cultured minds*, but the evanescent content and language of everyday life embodied in native performers bringing to the fore quotidian situations and easy laughter,

often rooted in satirical ridicule of politicians and people from the higher social stratum" (101). The screen texts discussed in this volume sometimes take a mocking stance toward the Shakespeare 'bits' embedded in them, using referents like the balcony scene to display the absurdity and irrelevance of 'elite' culture and reinforcing class identity by inviting viewers join the text's oppositional gaze at a Shakespearean icon.

An analogue invoked a number of times in the volume is that of the *palimpsest*, a classic image for intertextual theorists. The writing on the vellum is scraped off and overwritten, but traces of the previous message(s) remain. In the introduction, Joubin and Bladen make the key point that the "study of 'Shakespeare in tatters' and in fragmented citations differs from the study of full Shakespeare plays" (3). As the chapters in this book brilliantly display, the palimpsestic (or palimpsestuous, as Shakespeareans often prefer) relationship between the brief allusion or citation of Shakespeare to the larger narrative in which it is placed can be much more complex than in adaptations of the plays. To analyze the significance of these often momentary appropriations of Shakespeare texts, "we have to understand it as a palimpsest that contains multiple layers of intertexts and meanings. The meanings of these palimpsests are inherently unstable, because they depend on the knowledge and experiences of the observers" (3-4). One chapter that demonstrates this beautifully is Mariacristina Cavecchi's, "Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* in Federico Fellini's *Roma*", in which she explores the significance of the historical and iconic roles of the figure of Julius Caesar in Italy and specifically Rome, the consequential position of Shakespeare's play in those contexts, the ways Mussolini employed these icons, and Fellini's complex relationship with all of these factors as embodied in his 1972 film *Roma*. Cavecchi compares Fellini's approach and structure in *Roma*, "a city literally and metaphorically built on layers", to Shakespeare's presence in the film: "Like the archeological finds, Shakespeare survives in a fragmentary fashion, which functions as a reminder of his oeuvre and his distance from us in such a way that our perception of his work and even of small tattered pieces of it is inevitably tied to our own expectations and lives" (147). This could, of course, describe a great many "Shakebytes", and it returns the reader to the realm of spectatorial theory and its crucial relationship with intertextuality. One of the most fascinating questions grappled with in this chapter is whether Fellini's brief allusion to a theatrical Julius Caesar is or is not referring to Shakespeare's play (after all, his is not the only one). So, is it Shakespeare('s)? Ultimately, it does not matter because *Roma* is built on layers of Shakespeare embedded in the history, theatre, opera, and screen texts of Italy. Another matter she explores might be a little too close to home: Are Shakespeare-spotters "overfishing" (for) Shakespeare in other texts? Do we (perhaps speciously) see Shakespeare everywhere? Is this a problem —

maybe even ridiculous? Cavecchi declares that the Julius Caesar play referred to in Fellini's *Roma* is probably not Shakespeare's, "[y]et, this discovery does not materially change how 'Shakespeareans' [scholars, students, fans] . . . interact with it and the film. What I am suggesting is that the meanings of *Roma* and of its *Julius Caesar* segment are shaped and determined to some extent by the expectations of this specific kind of viewer [us!]" (132). Shakespeare or not, the allusion still functions as a referent to his play and all of its Italian baggage. Like the speaker "Prufrock" in T. S. Eliot's eponymous poem, Shakespeare is not the "Prince" here, but an "attendant lord" in the entourage; he swells the scene in a way that illuminates and elevates the Roman protagonist (Caesar, Mussolini, Fellini, take your pick).

Intertextual theoretical models fruitfully used in the volume include Douglas Lanier's "Shakespearean rhizomatics" and Maurizio Calbi's notions of Derridean spectrality and "hauntology" in Shakespeare, an extension of the work in his exceptional monograph *Spectral Shakespeares*. In *Onscreen Allusions*, Calbi investigates three very different films, two Italian and one Filipino: director Davide Ferrario's *Tutta colpa di Giuda* (Blame it on Judas) (2008), set in a prison in Turin; Alfredo Peyretti's *Moana* (2009), a biopic about an Italian porn star; and Connie Macatuno's *Rome and Juliet* (2006), a Filipino lesbian romance. In the first film, a postmodern mix of *cinéma verité* and musical, prisoners participating in a theatre program laugh at the pieces of *Hamlet* 'quoted' at them, "What piece of work is man . . .", on a video clip, revealing an "unbridgeable chasm between 'high' and 'low' culture" and inviting the audience to identify with the scornful prisoners. This snippet of Hamlet's risible "hauteur doubles as the hauteur of 'Shakespeare'", countering the "'therapeutic Shakespeare' that emerges from a largely US-based tradition of 'prison Shakespeare'" (19-20). *Moana* uses a quotation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and other references to "Shakespeare", once again, to "draw the boundaries between high culture and cinema, theatre and porn cinema. Yet, the world of porn turns out to be uncannily proximate to a festive comedy gone awry", particularly in the enforcement of patriarchal power over women's bodies, but this woman's story does not end in jocular matrimony (25). The third film covered by Calbi, *Rome and Juliet*, also centers on patriarchal prerogatives but does so by challenging heteronormativity *and* canonical Shakespeare. Calbi cogently identifies "Shakespeare" as a "fragmentary, spectral presence" in each of these films.

Victoria Bladen's chapter also uses the notion of Shakespeare as spectral presence and as a ghost haunting specific characters in three very different Australian films citing Shakespeare. These films —Raymond Longford's silent comedy *The Sentimental Bloke* (1919), Peter Wier's eerie *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975), and Jerzy Domaradzky's poignant *Lilian's Story* (1996) — are historically diverse, arising from different moments in the history of

Australia and its screen culture(s), yet they demonstrate that the Bard is "a crucial part and active force in the process of negotiating complex questions of national identity and articulating the postcolonial relationship between Australia and Britain" (34). Speaking of haunting, Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin's chapter looks at a French film adaptation of Agatha Christie's novel *By the Pricking of my Thumbs* (1968), translated idiomatically into the title *Mon petit doigt m'a dit…* (dir. Pascal Thomas, 2005), wherein she uses a *double auteur* approach that investigates, with a dash of playfulness, whom the film is referencing: Agatha or Bill? Vienne-Guerrin's mysterious chapter follows a creepy musical motif throughout the film, which is revealed only at the end to have lyrics taken from Shakespeare: "By the pricking of my thumbs / Something wicked this way comes". Shakespeare turns out to be a major key to solving the mystery, but he has been hiding in a melody all along: "when it comes to studying Shakespeare in tatters, we deal with ghostly figures, Shakespeare being there without being there" (124).

Shakespeare as spectral signifier of colonial subjugation from a postcolonial perspective is at the heart of the chapters of Chris Thurman and Poonam Trivedi. After providing crucial South African contexts for Shakespeare and the nation's special relationship with *Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Othello*, Thurman turns to the critically acclaimed 2011 film *Otelo Burning* (dir./prod. Sara Blecher), an isiZulu language film about teenage boys living in a Black township who are competing in the sport of surfing and for the affections of Dezi. There are a few echoes of the plot and, of course, the nomenclature of the film and characters Otelo and Dezi that connect it to Shakespeare's tragedy, but, overall, the film "honors" *Othello* more "in the breach" than in the "observance" (*Ham.* 1.4.16). This prompts Thurman to examine the production history of the film, deducing that statements from the director indicate that the South African government foundation from which the filmmakers sought funding "would not support a South African film production unless it conformed to an archetypal, recognizable, 'universal' narrative" (64). Thus, "Shakespeare helped to authorize the South African narrative — he provided a form of cultural authority, a stamp of approval . . . which would in turn guarantee audience buy-in" (ibid.). The bits of Shakespeare in *Otelo Burning* were its ticket to coming to fruition: no Shakespeare, no funding. As in other postcolonial contexts, South African Shakespeare has been used as "a tool of the oppressor" as well as "an icon of the struggle for freedom" for indigenous and formerly enslaved peoples (65). Poonam Trivedi's vivacious chapter, "Bits and Bites in Indian Cinema", explores three films that use different "modes" of referencing bits of Shakespeare, or "Shakebytes" (79-80): *Eklavya: The Royal Guard* (dir. Vidhu Vinod Chopra, 2007), *Matru ki Bijlee ka Manola* (*Matru's Biljee Changes her Mind*) (dir. Vishal Bhardwaj, 2013), and *Bodyguard* (dir. Siddique, 2011). *Eklavya* reiterates pieces of Shakespeare's Sonnet 18 as a symbol of

both love and elite culture, in a film structured by the *Mahabharata*'s story of Eklavya, which is about a low-caste man following his dharma despite the harrowing sacrifices demanded of him to do so. Trivedi describes this mode as "surrogacy," as Shakespeare is used to "justify and redeem . . . a tale of centuries-old oppression, deceit, and treachery" (84). Vishal Bhardwaj – who made the Shakespeare adaptations *Maqbool* (2003), *Omkar*a (2006), and *Haider* (2014) – uses quotations of *Macbeth* as part of an elaborate prank in his Bollywood masala film *Matru ki Bijlee ka Manola*, achieving "a nimble appropriation for comedic inversions and a self-assertion of [Bhardwaj's] own games with Shakespeare" (87). This displays ludic playing with Shakespeare, citing the tragedy both for humor and to point toward political and commercial corruption. The final "mode" is "shadow Shakespeare", to be found in *Bodyguard*, wherein *As You Like It*'s cross-dressing courting games are alluded to but not named. Trivedi concludes that these three types of Shakebytes "present a new diversity of form and intent in the referencing of Shakespeare in Indian films", and she reminds us that "[d]ismembering the iconic bard and appropriating its bits and pieces" is always a way of possessing, indigenizing, and repurposing a signifier of past colonial control (88).

Travelling from postcolonial to post-Soviet Shakespearean environments, we turn to the chapters of Márta Minier, investigating two very different films of Polish provenance, and Boris N. Gaydin and Nicolay V. Zhakharov, exploring several Russian screen texts alluding to *Hamlet*. Minier's piece looks predominantly at *Żółty szalik* (*Yellow Scarf*) (dir. Janusz Morgenstern, 2000), a Polish film made for television, wherein she analyzes the significance of the collisions between Polish Christmas rituals, family relationships, addiction, and Shakespeare: a very 'local' combination of factors. Minier tantalisingly declares that this film "may be seen to construct the missing Christmas tale of Shakespeare that Max Beerbohm's 'Shakespeare and Christmas' . . . playfully laments not having" (158). The film also echoes Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, featuring a protagonist who goes on a journey of reckoning and potential reconciliation in the midst of the Christmas holidays. This "Everyman-meets-nativity-meets-Scrooge-meets-Hamlet" film does briefly quote the "To be" soliloquy in a bar scene and presents "Hamletian existential questions", but the Bard is not primary: the orchestration of *Yellow Scarf*'s contextual and intertextual discourses demands that Shakespeare be read in relation to the local and personal rather than the other way around (166, 161). Minier also discusses the award-winning global film *The Pianist* (dir. Roman Polanski, 2002), a holocaust narrative, and its brief but telling allusion to *Merchant of Venice*. In their chapter "Soviet and Post-Soviet References to Hamlet on Film and Television", Gaydin and Zhakharov explore Russia's complex relationship with Shakespeare's Danish prince: "in Russia, Hamlet is the undisputed leader . . . Russians consider Shakespeare

their own national poet, and Hamlet is one of the main iconic images that are deeply rooted in the very core of Russian culture" (177). These authors explore several different screen texts that reference Hamlet, ranging from brief references "to what we term Hamletization", which "suggests a process of appropriation encompassing allusions, appropriation of and/or references to characters, motives and/or aspects of plot" (178). Gaydin and Zhakharov provide the fascinating example of a Soviet "crime comedy film", *Beware of the Car* (dir. Eldar A. Ryazanov, 1965), wherein in protagonist, "an eccentric modern-day Robin Hood", is a thief and an amateur actor playing Hamlet in a community theatre production. The acting coach for this *Hamlet* asks his thespians, "'Isn't it time, my friends, to hitch our wagon to [alternately translated '*to have a stab at*'] William, you know, our Shakespeare?' The phrase. . . has remained very popular in Russia and has become almost like a proverb that is used when somebody is encouraging others to do something difficult but special, in an ironic way" (ibid.). Once again, we find ourselves in the realm of Shakespeare in the second, third, or perhaps fourth degree, yet he continues to haunt our utterances and shape how we perceive the diversity of worlds around us in meaningful and surprising ways.

The fine "Afterword" of this volume is penned by Mark Thornton Burnett, wherein he explores a fifteen-minute short film from Malta, *Daqqet ix-Xita/ Plangent Rain* (dir. Kenneth Scicluna, 2010). Burnett, as the other scholars in this volume, provides illuminating historical and cultural contexts while performing an incisive close reading of the film text itself. The ubiquitous use of water imagery along with the film's black-and-white cinematography underscore the "melancholy and dreariness" of this tale of grief and familial dysfunction, establishing "motifs of soddenness and rottenness", the dis-ease that haunts *Hamlet. Plangent Rain* is an experimental film that uses sound contrapuntally, as Sergei Eisenstein insisted it should be, creating cinematic collisions that force spectators to feel and think, yet the film answers some of the questions Shakespeare's play leaves open by "furnish[ing] us with a backstory" (197). In his summation, Burnett reiterates Trivedi's question of whether a taxonomy of allusions is possible (200). However, the vitality and diversity of the chapters in *Onscreen Allusions* reveal that one standardised taxonomy, as those posed by Gerard Genette, while occasionally helpful, would always be insufficient to encompass the infinite variety of Shakespearean intertextuality.

Each example in this book demonstrates that particular shreds and patches of Shakespeare have been carefully chosen for and articulated in these films and television series to communicate messages both local and global: Shakespeare is a signifier wielded for a purpose. *Onscreen Allusions* importantly extends current work on screen media Shakespeares that are *not* adaptations (although the long debate over the boundaries of "adaptation"

also continues). Another outstanding study devoted to Shakespearean intertextuality that is cited several times in this volume is *Shakespeare / Not Shakespeare* (edited by Christy Desmet, Natalie Loper, and Jim Casey), published in 2017. However, as that volume focuses predominantly on Anglophone texts, *Onscreen Allusions* opens up new territories, demonstrating that these Bardic references are significantly shaped by, as Resende avers, "the metamorphosing influence of the target culture and the individualized stance of its appropriator", thereby establishing that "[t]his kind of deviation is partly responsible for Shakespeare's *immortality*" (97). Playing with "Shakebytes" can evince hearty laughs or be deadly serious, as we read in these excellent chapters, but all of it is worth exploring as enriching intertext, a means of speaking to spectators through multivalent palimpsests of historically and culturally situated screen texts. As Mikhail Bakhtin recognised in regard to literary studies nearly a century ago, this is the direction Shakespeare on screen is and should be heading: pursuing diverse voices, audiences, media, cultural contexts, industrial profiles, and hermeneutic methodologies. Perhaps Shakespeare is not our contemporary, but his ever-metamorphosing ghosts most definitely are.

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