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## **Invisible agents in translation history: Censors and actors in performed drama of eighteenth-century England**

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**Abstract:** In dialogue with the social turn in translation studies, this article uncovers the work of invisible agents shaping the translation of performed drama in eighteenth-century England. Unlike other genres, performed drama was subject to a system of state censorship that shaped translation practices in ways that have not been fully accounted for by translation historiography. Using Carlo Goldoni as a case study, the article reveals the intervention of censors and actors in shaping Goldoni's translations, making visible for the first time the central role they played as 'rewriters' in English theatrical culture. In reading translation through the material conditions of eighteenth-century theatre, an argument is made for a re-evaluation of performed drama in the historiographical account of eighteenth-century translation in English.

**Keywords:** translation history, eighteenth-century theatre, drama translation, Carlo Goldoni, agents of translation, censorship, actors.

This article brings to light the hidden forces that shaped the translation of performed drama in eighteenth-century England. It does so by tracing the multiple forms of rewriting that characterized the translation of Carlo Goldoni's drama in English. As a bilingual playwright who wrote for both *commedia dell'arte* and the *Comédie-Française*, Goldoni's translated repertoire offers a unique lens through which to investigate the translation of performed drama on the London stage across different dramatic traditions. Drawing upon sociocultural approaches to translation, and, in particular, Andre Lefevere's influential notion of "rewriting" (2017, 4), the idea that domestic norms and agendas shape and transform translations, the article extends such thinking by locating it within the context of English eighteenth-century theatre practice. In doing so, it uncovers two forces that were unique to the rewriting of performed drama in this period: censors and actors, both of whom, in very different ways, had a material impact on the shape of the translated text. However, the actors, who were visible in their era as they performed the plays and were considered the authorial force behind successful performances, have now joined the censors in their invisibility, lost as they are from our

contemporary vision. In order to recover the nature of that impact, this article examines censorship in practice, using manuscript versions of the translated plays with censors' and actors' annotations. The following questions will be considered: Which cultural forces shaped the translation of performed drama? How visible is the influence of the theatre censors on Goldoni's plays in English? To what extent did the translators themselves adopt censorial norms to secure the success of their plays? And how important was the influence of celebrity actors who performed the plays on the shape of these translations? Paying attention to the materiality of translation, and in particular to what H  l  ne Buzelin aptly calls "the very processes of fabrication" of translated texts (2007, 53), rather than reading them as finished products, the article will trace the multiple rewritings that occur across foreign source, censored translation, and published versions. In reading translation through the material conditions of eighteenth-century theatre, the article interrogates the shaping power of censors and actors as invisible agents of translation and, interacting with and furthering Lefevre's notion of "rewriting", it also argues for a re-evaluation of the practice of translating for performance in eighteenth-century England.

### **Modelling "rewriting" in theatre translation**

The rewriting or domestication of a text is not just a matter of linguistic difference, but the manifestation of visible and invisible cultural forces which actively shape translations in the culture for which they are intended. A recognition of this has been perhaps one of the most important contributions of socio-cultural approaches to translation – the emphasis on how texts are rewritten across cultures and by whom.<sup>1</sup> The intervention of these cultural agents, who Lefevre aptly calls "rewriters," is visible throughout the history of translation: "rewriters adapt, manipulate the originals they work with to some extent, usually to make them fit in with the dominant ideological and poetological currents of their time" (2017, 12). Whilst not examining theatre censorship directly, Lefevre (1998) emphasized the implicit conservatism in such rewritings, the clear suppression of the subversive; that is, any element that may seem to threaten domestic canons or ideological norms. Understood as rewritings, or "refractions" as Lefevre termed them in his early writing, translations and adaptations of canonical drama are shown to be prime vehicles for ideological manipulation (1984, 192). As fundamental as Lefevre's work remains, it is important to acknowledge that it revolves primarily around the recognition of the literary forces that shaped translated drama, such as editors, publishers and critics. While uncovering the ideological pressures shaping the interventions of adapters and translators, Lefevre's articulation of "rewriting" does not consider the process of *staging*, thus

silencing the multiple forms of labour that occur in the rewriting of foreign drama for performance. While drama is shaped by some of the same forces that literature is subject to, as Lefevere demonstrates in his discussion of Brecht in English<sup>2</sup>, it is also subject to other forces which literary texts escape. A useful counterpoint to Lefevere's focus on the ideological forces shaping translation practice is the recent work in translation sociology which foregrounds the different forms of labour involved in translation and its "processes of fabrication" (Buzelin 2007, 51). For Buzelin, translation

cannot be explained solely in terms which are either subjective (the translator) or objective and abstract (historical context, polysystem, ideology); rather, it needs to be considered in the very processes of fabrication, in the way in which human, technological, financial, etc. resources are mobilized and interconnected (2007, 53).

Such perspectives reveal translation to be not just the product of the translator's work but the result of a collective process of production. Translation in the theatre functions, and has always functioned, in very specific ways that take translated texts out of the realm of literary criticism and into the sphere of public performance and spectacle.

### **Reviewing eighteenth-century theatrical culture in translation**

Despite the central role played by translation in eighteenth-century theatrical culture, the translation of performed drama has been systematically marginalized in historiographical accounts of the period. On the whole, translation historians have based their review of eighteenth-century translation primarily on the classics, poetry and fiction. The most influential histories of English translation (Steiner 1976; Venuti 1995; France 2000; Gillespie and Hopkins 2005) disproportionately feature examples from fiction and poetry, whilst either neglecting drama altogether (Steiner 1976; Venuti 1995; Gillespie and Hopkins 2005) or discussing it in passing as an extreme case of "domestication" (Venuti 2000, 60). The recent *Oxford History of Literary Translation in English* series shows an encouraging development in this regard, as both its fourth and fifth volumes include a chapter specifically dedicated to the translation of drama. Both chapters stress the appropriative nature of translation in the context of performed drama, which makes it stand out from the general trends that characterized translated literature (Kewes 2005; Hale 2009). They demonstrate how, unlike poetry and fiction, plays intended for performance "were amplified, mixed, matched and revamped as occasion served" (Kewes 2005, 317), with theatre translators effectively taking on the role of original authors. Such

readings of translated drama as a form of opportunistic plundering ties in with a dominant narrative that has found much currency in English translation history: that the eighteenth-century was a period of target appropriation of foreign texts (Steiner 1975; Bassnett 1980; Venuti 1995).<sup>3</sup> However, if we examine what was happening to foreign texts meant for public performance, a different picture of eighteenth-century translation emerges. Unlike in the case of the translation of poetry and fiction, the translation of performed drama in this period was subject to systematic institutional censorship. The Licencing Act, which imposed the examination of all plays by the state censor, only applied to performed drama, making translating for performance very different from other forms of translation. State censorship and the role played by actors as active agents in the rewriting of foreign texts in this period made the “domestication” of performed drama unique. Although theatre censorship and the cult of the actor genius in this period have been amply documented in theatre history (Conolly 1976; Worrall 2006; Milhouse and Hulme 2015), this is the first study that brings them to bear on translation historiography. Instead of reading Goldoni’s drama in English through the lens of eighteenth-century literary trends, this article places his translations within eighteenth-century theatrical culture, thus reading them within the material conditions in which they were produced.

Carlo Goldoni’s repertoire offers ideal ground for the exploration of the hidden forces shaping performed drama in eighteenth-century translation. As a multilingual playwright who wrote in literary Tuscan, Venetian and French, Goldoni’s plays grant a comparative vantage point to translation that eschews national narratives, facilitating an analysis that can take into account the effect of censorship and acting traditions on the translation and circulation of foreign drama. Goldoni’s work is also valuable because he is one of the few authors for whom we have the censor’s annotations and therefore his works in translated form allow us to reconstitute the often hidden but powerful influence of these invisible agents. This article draws on archival material which has never before been studied by translation historians. While translation historiography of this period has so far relied on the repertoire of published translations (Kewes 2005; Venuti 2000; Hale 2009), the analysis offered here is based on a comparison of the original texts, published translations and the original manuscript copies submitted to the theatre censors, which are part of the so-called “Larpernt plays”.<sup>4</sup> As intermediate drafts between the translator’s copy and the acted version, the Larpernt manuscripts represent a state of composition that precedes the printed version and offer unique new insights into the role played by censors and actors in the translation of foreign drama.

Translation was central to theatre production in eighteenth-century England. According to Allardyce Nicoll's bibliography of late eighteenth-century English drama, half of the plays written in English during the period were adapted from continental sources (1927, 56) and the figure is even higher in the case of melodrama (Tolles 1940, 22). One of the reasons for this importation of continental drama was the exponential growth of the cult of the actor, which led to the commercialization of theatre. The most successful shows had, for decades, been vehicles for celebrity actors, and the Patent theatres<sup>5</sup> wanted to bank on that success. The companies' chief concern was profit rather than literary value. Indeed, the vast majority of translators were involved in the theatre professionally, often as writers, actors or stage managers (the eighteenth-century equivalent of the director/producer) and had more of a stake in the success of the play as a performance than in its literary value as a publication. In order to respond to the increasing demand for new plays, but also to navigate their way around state censorship, which viewed with suspicion any contemporary domestic topic as potentially politically subversive, the Patent theatres embarked on a dual policy of rewriting old classics and massively importing foreign plays.<sup>6</sup> Goldoni's plays are representative of this trend and he is by far the most frequently translated Italian dramatist in this era.<sup>7</sup> His prolific repertoire of *libretti* in the original Italian was well known among London theatre-goers.<sup>8</sup> However, when it came to prose drama, Goldoni's work was systematically appropriated between 1750–1800 with little or no acknowledgment of Goldoni as the author. We find, for example, Foote's *The Lyar* (1764) from *Il bugiardo*, Jephson's *The Hotel: or the Servant with Two Masters* (1783) from *Il servitore di due padroni*, Jephson's *Two Strings to your Bow* (1791) from *Il servitore di due padroni* and Holcroft's *Knave or Not* (1798) from *Il raggiatore, La serva amorosa*. Whilst drawing on trends exhibited by all these translations (e.g. cultural relocation, re-orientation of the plot and moral adjustments) this article examines in detail the published version and the Larpent manuscript of two translations in particular: Thomas Vaughan's *The Hotel: or the Double Valet* (1776) and Elizabeth Griffith's *The Times* (1780). The first is based on Goldoni's *commedia dell'arte* play, the aforementioned *Il servitore di due padroni* [The Servant with Two Masters] (1745), and the latter on his *Bourru bienfaisant* [The Beneficent Grouch] (1778), which was written in French for the *Comédie-Française*. In terms of plot, both plays offered Goldoni's unique combination of comedic humour and romantic misunderstandings that would have attracted London audiences to the theatre. *Il servitore di due padroni* is a story of mistaken identities and misunderstandings chiefly caused by the ineptitude of the stock *commedia* servant, Truffaldino. Through a combination of impatience and luck, he becomes employed by two masters at the same time, Florindo and Beatrice. Florindo has fled to Venice after killing Federigo, the brother

of his lover Beatrice. Meanwhile, Beatrice arrives in Venice disguised as her brother in an attempt to collect a dowry from Pantalone, the father of Federigo's former betrothed, Clarice. The comedy centres on the servant who tries desperately to keep his demanding masters from discovering each other, creating multiple opportunities for misunderstandings and physical humour. Unlike *Il servitore, Le bourru* (1778) is one of Goldoni's later "character" comedies.<sup>9</sup> It explores the transformation of the character of G ronte, from stereotypical grouch (*bourru*) to generous benefactor (*bienfaisant*). For fear of upsetting their choleric uncle G ronte, his niece and nephew set into motion a series of misadventures and misunderstandings that drive several plotlines. G ronte's niece Ang lique agrees to marry an older man (Dorval) rather than the object of her affection (Val re); and G ronte's nephew Dalancour risks going to prison for the debts he contracted to keep up his and his wife's extravagant lifestyle. Moved by Madame Dalancour's repentance and Ang lique's kindness, G ronte is able to curb his choleric nature and become the family's saviour by paying off Dalancour's debts and providing a generous dowry for Ang lique's marriage to Val re. As these plot summaries show, Goldoni's plays contained many of the ingredients sought after by the patent theatres to please their audiences (sentimentality, a strong comedic lead and numerous subplots) but they also presented continental sensibilities and references to carnivalesque subversions typical of *commedia dell'arte*, which, as the next section will illustrate, would not have easily passed the scrutiny of the censor.

### **The censor as rewriter**

The general consensus among theatre historians is that the material conditions under which theatre operated in England changed dramatically as a direct result of the Licensing Act of 1737, which introduced censorship on an unprecedented scale.<sup>10</sup> Drama had already been subjected to censorship for over two hundred years, but it was only after the Licencing Act of 1737 that it became a systematic process, formally sanctioned by an act of Parliament (Worrall 2006, 2). The Act limited the production of scripted drama to two Patent theatres (Drury Lane and Covent Garden) and required that all companies submit every script to the theatre censors for approval before performing them. Before examining in detail the type of corrections made and their possible interpretation, it is important to contextualize the Larpent manuscripts in relation to theatre censorship: how it functioned and who exercised it.

The principal means through which Government controlled the content of staged drama in eighteenth-century Britain was through the "direct censorship of dramatic texts" by the Examiner of Plays. The Examiner's work involved "the reading and marking for excision of

offensive passages, or sometimes, the suppression of entire plays” (Worrall 2006, 103). Theatres that sought to perform uncensored scripts would have to pay a £50 fine (around £8,000 in today’s money) and even more seriously would have their licence revoked. Such hefty consequences meant that “no new play was ever produced (in the patent theatres at least) without having been sent to the Examiner” (Conolly 1976, 21). This does not mean that irregularities did not happen: scholars alert us to a number of examples where speeches were altered after the licence was granted (Worrall 2006, 126–127). But what remains uncontested is the absolute control censors had over the content of performed drama; an absolute authority which required no explanation nor permitted any right of appeal (Conolly 1976, 15). This system of statutory censorship introduced by the Act of 1737 made censors central to the shaping of translated drama on eighteenth-century stages and made the context of performed drama substantially different from any other form of translation at the time.

Between Vaughan’s and Griffith’s translations, the role of Examiner of Plays changed hands, so while Vaughan’s text was examined, in all likelihood, by Edward Capell (the Deputy Examiner), by the time Griffith’s text reached the censors, John Larpent had taken up the office (Worrall 2015). Capell was recognized as a “scrupulous” and “meticulous” examiner who could read French and Italian, which made him useful for the assessment of Italian operas submitted for licencing (Worrall 2015, 105). This also meant that he would have been familiar with Goldoni’s work and the characteristics of *commedia dell’arte* and would likely have been on the lookout for any reference to the subversive form. John Larpent is described as a less political and more moralistic censor, who was more concerned with matters of moral propriety and decorum (Conolly 1976, 32–24). Both Vaughan’s and Griffith’s translations were approved by their respective censors but while Vaughan’s manuscript only shows a small number of corrections, Griffith’s play was considerably shortened, with key scenes rewritten or completely excised from the manuscript.

As with many manuscript collections, the Larpent plays pose problems in determining responsibility for many of the deletions and alterations found in the censored manuscripts. Scholars who have worked extensively on the collection warn against accepting all the deleted passages as the work of the censors (Conolly 1976, 7), as there may well be cases where a prompt copy with markings from theatre managers was submitted to the censors. My approach has been to consider as direct censorship only those cases where there was reasonably conclusive evidence of the censor’s intervention (i.e., where the alterations were clearly made by the same hand that signed the approval document). Their interventions in both manuscripts vary from simple editorial corrections of grammatical and lexical oversights (“from house and



home” is changed to “out of house and home” [Vaughan 1776, Lm 12]; “informed” is changed to “confirmed” [Vaughan 1776, Lm 26]) to more extensive excisions, additions and rewritings. The passage below, from Vaughan’s Larpent manuscript, is an example of a more serious correction which involves censorship of morals around what was acceptable behaviour for a young woman.

< Figure 1 about here >

Here the censor tones down Clarissa’s response to Neville who offers to embrace her after her disguise has been revealed. The line “I am happy to accept such a shelter and let the steps I have taken communicate” becomes “let the steps I have taken convince you of my affection. More I cannot at present communicate” (Vaughan 1776, Lm 78). Instead of accepting, albeit metaphorically, Neville’s embrace and letting their physical closeness act as an emotional one, the censor rewrites the line to clearly affirm the right of the young woman to withdraw from physical or emotional expressions of affection, which were judged as inappropriate in a social context.

When we move to Griffith’s manuscript, we can see that the censor made a number of considerable interventions. The large majority of these occur in Scene 5, the last scene of the play where Mr and Mrs Woodley (Delacour and Madame Delacour in Goldoni) are convinced to take part in a card game. The gambling theme is one that Griffith borrowed from Goldoni, but while in Goldoni it served the function of furthering the characterization of G ronte, *le bourru*, by showcasing his totally disproportionate annoyance at having lost a game of cards, Griffiths uses it to put on stage the depravity and dissoluteness of the aristocratic circles that Mr Woodley and Lady Mary frequent. Despite Griffiths’ condemnation of gambling as morally reprehensible through the voice of the characters, the scene is heavily cut by the censors, as can be seen from the figure below:

< Figure 2 about here >

John Larpent reduces the gambling scene from six pages to less than two, thus transforming a scene which was entirely set in a gambling parlour to a few lines exchanged by the main characters (the Bromleys and the Woodleys) hinting at the card game. The cuts also have the effect of removing the crudest expressions of the card players and their uncouth taunting of

Lady Mary, e.g. “your Ladyship is basted”; “Your Ladyship is a Beast! A Beast!”; “What a racket they make at this paltry play, I dare swear!” (Griffith 1779: Lm 84).

Another revealing intervention occurs earlier on in the play, with the excision of a key scene which is central to Goldoni’s text and which appears at a crucial moment in the middle of the play (Act II, Scene 20). It is the key moment of transition in the characterization of the protagonist, when G ronthe’s authoritarian tendencies are overwhelmed by his desire to do good: when the grouch becomes beneficent. The scene is positioned before the third act and it is this change of character which then moves all the action of the final act. It is also the scene which recalls most closely *commedia dell’arte*, in the conflictual relationship between the master and his servant. The pace of the dialogue is particularly revealing as it makes visible the change occurring in G ronthe’s mind between his immediate reaction, one of anger and aggression (“Te renvoyer, malheureux!” [I’ll dismiss you, you wretch!]), and his more rational and more reasoned response (“Point du tout. Va-t’en chez ta femme, qu’on te soigne.” “Tiens, pour te faire panser” [Absolutely not. Go to your wife, she will take care of you. Here, so you can have it bandaged.]) (Goldoni 1778, Acte II, Scene 21). But it also reveals the protagonist’s desire to understand the subtleties of human behaviour and the motivations behind other people’s actions (“Tu refuses de l’argent? Est-ce par orgueil? Est-ce par d p t? Est-ce par haine?” [Do you refuse my money? Is it pride? Is it out of spite? Or out of hatred?]) (Goldoni 1778, Acte II, Scene 21).

Griffith’s published translation shows no sign of this scene. The incident with the chair is completely erased and the dialogue with the servant is reduced to two lines where Sir William, in typical farcical style, insults his manservant for being less intelligent than half the furniture in the house. Upon reading the published play in isolation, this extract could easily pass off as a new comedy written in the French style; but Griffith’s Larpent manuscript tells a different story, as we can see from the comparison table below:

< Table 1 about here >

The manuscript provides empirical evidence that Griffith’s play is indeed a translation of Goldoni’s text. Unlike the published version, the Larpent manuscript retains both the structure of the scene and Goldoni’s shift to the character of the master. The characterization of G ronthe, as in Goldoni, moves from the farcical stereotype of the “grouch” who reacts with anger and aggression (“Though eternal blockhead, dolt, dunderhead!”) to a more rational and benevolent character who is able to provide a more reasoned response (“go home to your Wife, let her take care of you till you are well – I can dispense with your attendance – here is something to pay

the surgeon”). The openness and compassion towards the lower classes encouraged here by Goldoni’s play and Griffith’s translation clearly did not sit well with the censors, who eliminated it altogether. A likely reason for such extensive excision is that the censors may have considered Goldoni’s egalitarian attitude towards the lower classes as dangerously subversive and a threat to the codified modes of behavior, which underpinned class hierarchies in eighteenth-century British society. Multiple examples of such toning down are visible in Vaughan’s translation too and can be seen in the omission of some of the most “political” speeches Goldoni places in the mouths of his servants (Goldoni 1973, 34; 57). These were not the result of direct censorship but of a subtler form of control which occurred well before the play was submitted to the censors, as next section on the translator’s rewriting will demonstrate.

### **The translator’s rewriting**

Vaughan’s and Griffith’s published translations show that the translators were not just passive recipients of censorship but active implementers of censorial norms. Censorship, as Michaela Wolf points out, is a term often identified with “repressive regimes” but its range of meanings is so diverse that it “cannot be restricted to the oppressive practice of autocratic government” (2002, 45). Wolf and others have articulated a strand in translation studies that links censorship with the imposition of norms in translation practice and discourse. According to this view, translators are not just subject to external censorial pressures but often adopt the codes of dominant discourse becoming agents of censorship themselves (Tymoczko 2008, 38). This section will explore the role played by translators as part of the broader system of censorship operating on eighteenth-century performed drama and uncover a range of stylistic and dramaturgical strategies employed by the translators to rewrite the foreign source. These strategies take many forms, but for the sake of clarity they can be grouped into three main categories: cultural relocation, re-orientation of the plot and moral adjustments.

The translator’s rewriting through cultural relocation is visible in the radical changes made to the titles and settings of all the translations analysed. Unlike Goldoni’s *opera libretti*, which circulated in the original Italian or retained the same titles in English translation (Cope 1995), performed drama was consistently re-titled and transposed to a different setting. All the translations of Goldoni’s plays in this period completely change the titles of the play in ways that shift the focus from the main character (*Il servitore; Le bourru bienfaisant; Il raggiatore; Le donne curiose*) to a more generic thematic title (*The Hotel; The Times; Two Strings to Your Bow; Knave or Not?; The Old Curiosity Shop*), with the result of further distancing the translation from the continental tradition of so-called stock character comedies.

Another key strategy at work in the translators' rewriting of Goldoni's drama is the re-orientation of the plot via a complete reworking of the opening scene. All the translations analysed rewrite the opening scene, and in so doing change the dramatic genre from which it originated. In Goldoni's *Servitore* the function of introducing the play is in the hands of the father, Pantalone, the *commedia dell'arte* mask who introduces the other characters at the beginning of the play. Such a stock introduction scene would have been problematic in translation, as it would have made the play easily recognizable as *commedia*, a genre that was explicitly banned from the Royal Theatres as a populist and potentially subversive genre (McConachie 2006, 190). Vaughan's tactic here is to reorient the scene by making the daughter the lead at the opening of the play. Through her conversation with a confidant, her maidservant Tabby, Flavia sets the scene (her secret correspondence with her beloved John Seymour), introduces the characters (Mr Montague, Sir John Seymour, Tabby) and presents elements from the dramatic past (her forced engagement to Mr Montague). By using the technique of the confidant and focusing on the romantic subplot, Vaughan signals to the audience that what they are seeing is a bourgeois comedy rather than a potentially subversive Italian *commedia*.

Similarly, in *The Times*, Griffiths re-orientes Goldoni's *Le bourru* away from the romantic plot, which would have been easily recognized as a continental romantic comedy, to a money-oriented plot, more typical of a British farcical tradition. In Goldoni's *Le bourru*, the play opens with Valère, Marton and Angélique, who set the scene for the entrance of the central character of M. Gèronte, *le bourru bienfaisant* of the title. Their discussion initiates the romantic plot. While Angélique paints a picture of Gèronte as very much a *bourru*, a surly, gruff old man, referring to a stereotypical grouch à la *Misanthrope*, Marton introduces the central tension between his grouchiness and his generosity of spirit. This is a central and driving theme of the original play. Gèronte's apparent misanthropy in fact conceals a desire to do good. It is this tension between anger and kindness, aggression and generosity in the characterization of Gèronte that will drive the dramatic development of Goldoni's play. Griffith's translation begins instead with a dialogue between the servant and a frantic Mr Woody, the nephew of who in Goldoni was Gèronte, and who has just received a letter from his creditors announcing the end of his credit and the depth of his financial troubles. The scene then continues with the arrival of the Colonel and Mr Woody's farcical attempts at selling off some of his possessions (with the excuse that he does not like them) to make up for his debts. While these rewriting strategies could be seen as purely domesticating practices, and explained as ways of conforming with "the dominant generic trends of the day" (Kewes 2005, 318), my analysis argues that they should be

read in conjunction with what the Larpent play reveals: the many instances of moral adjustments imposed on the texts by the system of censorship surrounding their production.

A large number of shifts in the dramatic construction of Vaughan's translation appear to align action, dialogues and character development with the moral requirements of the censors. Among Vaughan's many changes for the sake of moral adequacy, the most striking concern Goldoni's characterization of women and romantic relationships and his description of the lower classes; in particular, the character of the servant. Because *commedia* plays are primarily aimed at making things happen on the stage and keeping the pace of the plot going, there is very little room for character development. The focus of the writer is to keep the theatrical machine going and not to pause to consider the character's moral fibre. It is perfectly acceptable in *Il servitore* that Beatrice, after the death of her brother, should follow her lover Florindo, despite the fact that he had just murdered her own brother in a duel. What the audience went to the theatre to see with *commedia dell'arte* was a comedy of errors where the death of an off-stage character is just another cog in the theatrical machine. To solve this moral mismatch, Vaughan removes the reference to the murdered brother, thus making the relationship between the young lovers acceptable. A further consequence of these rewritings, however, is a more profound ideological shift: the heroine moves from active pursuer of her own economic independence (Goldoni) to a good damsel who disguises herself as a man to protect her virtue (Vaughan). As we have seen in the previous section on direct censorship, these were exactly the type of changes that would have helped the play disguise its *commedia* origin to pass the scrutiny of the censors.<sup>11</sup>

Griffith's rewriting of Goldoni's *Le bourru* also brings together moral adjustments with a broader re-orientation of the play away from the setting of the sentimental comedy and the romantic plot. She does so by introducing additional characters and changing the role of others. For instance, the scheming and powerful Mme Dalancour, who is one of the drivers of the plot in Goldoni, becomes in Griffith's text Lady Woodley, an object of ridicule, a vapid socialite and one of the causes of the financial ruin of her husband (Griffiths 1780, 6–9). Such plot-rewriting creates a space to re-cast the character's central moment of repentance away from the open display of passions of the sentimental comedy and in line with English notions of propriety. In Goldoni, upon hearing that she is the cause of her husband's financial ruin, Mme Dalancour launches into a long speech where she repents and takes full responsibility for her actions, deciding, rather melodramatically, to sacrifice herself for her husband by accepting Géronte's threat to throw her out in the streets ("pourvu que mon mari soit digne de vos bienfaits, je suscrits à votre fatal arrêt" [So that my husband may be worthy of your favour, I'll

submit to your fatal decree]) (Goldoni 1778, 56). Griffiths' Lady Mary Woodley responds very differently to the news of her husband's ruin. Her reaction is not repentance but a somewhat puritanical embracement of a simple life away from the excesses of aristocratic society ("with pleasure I will renounce all the fantastic gayeties of life, and find true happiness in your society"; "let us discharge all our servants and become patterns of economy and conjugal happiness" [Griffiths 1780, 63]). Griffiths' play thus closes with a return to (puritanical) order that is not just on the individual level, for a formerly dissolute husband and wife, but for the whole of society. Griffith's rewriting turns Goldoni's exploration of the complex and contradictory character of the *bourru* into a cautionary tale on the dangers posed by gambling and a superficial attachment to the trappings of high society. This is a far more appealing ending than Goldoni's original for the censors, who saw the theatre as a place for the education of the masses and the maintenance of the status quo.

As we have seen, while sharing a number of common strategies, Griffith's and Vaughan's translations differ when it comes to the question of moral adequacy. As a *commedia dell'arte* play, *Il servitore* was much further away than *Le bourru* from the canons of the bourgeois drama that would have been acceptable for performance by the Patent theatres. In contrast, as a text Goldoni wrote specifically for the *Comédie-Française*, *Le bourru* exhibits many of the characteristics of the sentimental comedy which would not only have been accepted but encouraged by the Royal Patent. This is an important point in the argumentation in favour of seeing these texts as a response to censorship rather than purely cultural appropriations, because it demonstrates that eighteenth-century translators did not rewrite foreign texts only in line with English sensibilities, as Vaughan's moral adjustments could suggest if read in isolation. Read in conjunction with Griffith's re-orientation of a play which would in terms of both themes and form not have posed any problems to English audiences, these changes provide strong evidence in support of the argument that eighteenth-century translators went well beyond ideological domestication and deliberately censored their sources. Vaughan and Griffiths clearly adopted the codes of dominant discourse of the censors, who sought to limit the circulation of potentially subversive continental ideas on the British stage. In the next section, we will see how the creative genius of actors intervened in the shaping of Goldoni's plays in English, providing a fuller picture of the forces determining the "rewriting" of foreign drama.

### **The actor's rewriting**

Any study of the invisible agents shaping Goldoni's translated text would not be complete without reference to the actors who performed it. Their impact and influence would have been

highly visible in their day as they performed the plays, often in a star capacity. But, in the absence of recording technology, their performances are now lost to us and this article seeks to restore the visibility of their influence on the shape of the translated plays in which they starred, an influence which translation scholars have thus far largely neglected. Actors were highly influential in the selection and shaping of translated repertoire in this period. The commercialization of theatre which followed the Licencing Act of 1737 brought with it the cult of the actor genius (West 1991). Many pamphlets, books, critiques and paintings of the period were entirely dedicated to actors and actresses to illustrate and discuss acting styles and clothing fashions as well as their public personae and private lives.<sup>12</sup> All that concerned the life and activity of the actor had become a matter of public interest and the actors themselves had come to be the focus of the theatrical event. The authorial status enjoyed by actors at this time had a profound impact not only on the way that plays were performed but also on the way in which foreign texts were selected and translated.

The instrumental nature of Goldoni's translations as vehicles for celebrity actors is clearly visible in the prologues of the published versions, where translators go to great lengths to express their gratitude and indebtedness to the creative genius of the performers: "to the great attention and excellence of the performance" (Vaughan 1776); "a composition written merely to serve a favourite Performer" (Jephson 1778); "it is impossible for language to do justice to Mr King" (Griffiths 1780). Of particular significance is the fact that the translator would refer to actors such as Thomas King, who took the lead role in the performance of both Vaughan's and Griffith's play, was one of the favourites of Drury Lane at the time the translations<sup>13</sup> and it is significant that the translators, publishing their play after the performance, should refer to him and the other actors as the creators and intellectual owners of the performances, of which the written plays are only inadequate transcriptions ("it is impossible for language to do justice to Mr King" [Griffiths 1780]). It was the actors and not the original author with whom eighteenth-century audiences were familiar. It was Mr King's performance and not Mr Goldoni's text that Vaughan and Griffith felt their work was going to be measured against. The prologues of Goldoni's translated drama evidence a shift in the creative ownership of the plays from the hands of the original author to the actors who performed it and made it successful for contemporary audiences.

The shaping power of the actor as culture's creative genius is visible in the translations themselves, which bear traces of the actor's performance. A radical revolution in acting took place in the eighteenth-century, which brought a new "naturalistic" style based on the recognition and expression of "passions" (Nicoll and Rosenfeld 1980). The reference to

“passions” here is to be understood in its peculiar eighteenth-century sense of the expression of feelings and not the contemporary sense of romantic or physical passion (Taylor 1972). Any reference to romantic or physical passion, as illustrated by some of the examples excised by the censors, would have been deemed indecent and inappropriate for public performance. This acting style greatly influenced the way in which foreign texts were rewritten for eighteenth-century audiences. If we look at the characterization of Truffaldino in Goldoni and Vaughan, for instance, we can identify a move away from a stock and caricatured portrayal of the servant, typical of the improvised form of *commedia dell’arte*, towards the creation of a more believable and psychologically realistic character. What we have in Goldoni’s play is the transcription of physical gags developed through improvisation by the lead *commedia* actors. Most of the characterization of Truffaldino in Goldoni is done *a-posteriori* as it attempts to recollect and capture for the page the performance of one of the most renowned *commedia* Harlequins of his time, Antonio Sacchi. This is done through the use of dialect, which identifies the stock character of *commedia dell’arte* and its repertoire of jokes and stage directions. In Vaughan’s translation, we move from a performance authority that manifests itself through physical comedy and dialect to one that is all about naturalism and style, stage presence and elocution; all the physical gags are replaced by witticisms and verbal humour. The characterization of the servant in Vaughan is achieved through stylish and witty lines, which may sound unnatural to a contemporary ear (especially for a servant) but would have sounded completely natural to eighteenth-century English audiences (Vaughan 1776, 15, 22, 29, 38). These are accompanied by suggestions for delivery which emphasize the emotional state the actor should mimic to achieve the impression of real feeling (Vaughan 1776, 15, 22).

Additions to the texts which relate directly to acting styles would have been developed by the actors through rehearsal and staging, and would have been added to the acting script by the prompt clerk or by the translators themselves whilst attending rehearsals.<sup>14</sup> Rehearsals usually started after the play was submitted and approved by the censors and these changes would therefore only appear in the manuscript subsequently given to the publisher. While the Larpent manuscript only notes a few stage directions, Vaughan’s and Griffith’s printed plays are rich in acting annotations and suggestions for delivery which evidence the shaping power of the actor as an agent of translation. The suggestions vary from very general states of mind (“Angrily” [Vaughan 1776, 17; 21; 23], “Agitated” [Vaughan 1776, 17; 27; 27], “Hastily” [Griffith 1780, 23], “Anxiously” [Griffith 1780, 17], “with eagerness” [Griffith 1780, 29], “Surprised” [Vaughan 1776, 22; 24], “with emotion” [Griffith 1780, 62]) to very specific responses to events (“Expressing great surprise at hearing the name” [Vaughan 1776, 14],



“Expressing looks of great pleasures at the letters” [Vaughan 1776, 6] “Looking gravely at her” [Griffith 1780, 62]). Both eighteenth-century actors and audiences conceived of performance as a series of isolated and individual emotions rather than a process of development of a character – and this acting style had a formative effect on how continental plays were translated for eighteenth-century audiences. The creative position that actors acquired in the eighteenth-century made acting styles and modes of delivery one of the languages into which any foreign text was rewritten.

## **Conclusion**

The acts of translation that have emerged from the analysis of Goldoni’s plays in English are complex and multifaceted, undertaken by multiple agents of translation, to whom this article has sought to afford a measure of visibility. By locating Goldoni’s translations within eighteenth-century theatrical culture, the article has extended the reach of Lefevere’s thinking by articulating how the process of rewriting functioned differently outside literary criticism and publishing in a specific theatrical culture. The rewriting of performed drama involved different cultural forces and forms of labour from those that shaped poetry and fiction. In the case of Goldoni’s drama in eighteenth-century England, these forces were not the result of literary criticism or the economics of publishing, but rather emerged from censorship and the cult of the actor genius and were embedded in the process of theatre making. Examining the “process of fabrication” (Buzelin 2007) of translated drama through the Larpent manuscripts provides tangible evidence of the labour of censors who significantly reshaped continental plays. Examples from Griffith’s and Vaughan’s manuscripts show how notions of propriety were important for the censors and acted as strict controls on the representation of social behaviour, especially in relation to women and attitudes towards the lower classes. The expression of romantic love through physical contact between the sexes or compassion towards the lower ranks is visibly and repeatedly suppressed.

Censorial practices did not manifest themselves only through the censors and were instead adopted by the translators themselves, who became part of a broader system of censorship. Their censorial interventions can be traced in the extensive changes they made to align plots and characters’ behaviours to the moral standards of the time. Radical alteration to the setting and orientation of the plays provided translators with the freedom to re-orient speeches and actions so they would conform with the standards of morality upheld by the censors. While these translations have been read by critics as cases of cultural appropriation

(Kewes 2005) or the result of the translator's domesticating approach (Venuti 2000), my analysis offers a different interpretation. By reading the translator's rewriting in conjunction with the censor's excisions and the intervention of actors, the discussion offered here provides compelling evidence that these moral adjustments were the result of multiple forms of labour which operated solely on performed drama and made translation in the theatre unique.

While the translators' and the censors' interventions are easily identifiable in the printed play and the Larpent manuscript respectively, it is only through a comparison of the two with Goldoni's texts that we can begin to trace the formative role played by actors and acting styles in the shaping of translated drama. Vaughan's and Griffith's prologues are very clear in acknowledging the actors, and especially leading man Mr Thomas King, as the true intellectual owners of the plays they had written down. Acting styles, and in particular the representation of "passions", which was the result of a move towards more "naturalistic" representation in English theatre at the time, is visible in the translations themselves, which replace *commedia dell'arte* techniques with the expressions of feelings that accompanied the actor's actions and lines. The inclusion of copious acting annotations, which are visible in the printed plays but not in the censor's manuscripts which preceded them, shows how the creative power of the actor's performance contributed to the rewriting of translated drama.

Finally, the analysis presented here has shown that eighteenth-century drama was being re-written not only through direct and indirect censorship, but also through the process of rehearsal and staging, by different agents (actors, censors), and their hidden influence has been far greater than has been acknowledged by historiographical accounts of eighteenth-century translation. It is reasonable to suggest that the influence of such rewritings was not limited to performed drama. A useful direction for future research could set out to trace the impact of censorship and acting style on the broader circulation of ideas in eighteenth-century literary cultures by examining the large-scale publication of performance-based playscripts that took place in this period (Milhus and Hume 2015) and how translated plays were consumed in both public and domestic settings. The ideological and cultural shifts that emerge from translated drama may well have contributed to shape English eighteenth-century literary and cultural landscapes more broadly.

### **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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<sup>1</sup> For a fuller discussion of cultural approaches and, in particular, Lefevere's notion of rewriting as a precursor of the "social turn" and the notion of translation agency, see Marinetti (2011).

<sup>2</sup> Lefevere's work on Brecht charts the intervention of multiple translators and literary critics in the rewriting of Brecht's drama but does not venture into how the text was rewritten through the process of performance and staging (Lefevere 1998).

<sup>3</sup> Lawrence Venuti's influential *The Translator's Invisibility* furthers this myth of uniformity in eighteenth-century translation practice, whilst completely neglecting the translation of performed drama. He unambiguously states that: "In Dryden's wake, from Alexander Pope's multi-volume Homer to Alexander Tytler's systematic *Essay on the Principles of Translation* (1791), domestication dominated the theory and practice of English language translation in every genre, prose as well as poetry" (Venuti 1995, 65).

<sup>4</sup> The Larpent collection consists of official manuscript copies of plays submitted for licensing between 1737 and 1824 that were in the possession of John Larpent, the Examiner of plays, at the time of his death in 1824. The manuscript collection of the Larpent plays is held at the Huntington library in San Francisco but is also available, via subscription, through the *Eighteenth Century Drama* collection online (ECD) and at the British library in microfiche format.

<sup>5</sup> The Patent Theatres, or Royal Theatres (Drury Lane and Covent Garden) were the only two theatres which had permission to perform prose drama in London after 1737.

<sup>6</sup> On this point, see Nicoll's account of foreign influences on drama (1927, 56–73, 110–24) and also Hogan (1968, 354–360).

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<sup>7</sup> The success of Goldoni's plays in translation is evidenced by both eighteenth- and nineteenth-century catalogues, such as Baker et al. (1812), and more contemporary bibliographies (Nicoll 1927).

<sup>8</sup> Several of Goldoni's *opere buffe* were published by London printers in bilingual editions as well as in the Italian original. For an overview of the circulation of Goldoni's operatic repertoire in this period, see Sciullo (1976) and Cope (1995).

<sup>9</sup> Like many of his Parisian plays, *Le bourru* is an example of how Goldoni's writing was maturing towards the representation of more psychologically developed characters which were part of his larger intellectual project of *riforma* (reformation) of Italian theatre away from the most subversive aspects of *commedia dell'arte*. For an authoritative contextualization of the plays within Goldoni's *riforma*, see Mangini (1965).

<sup>10</sup> The consequences of the Licencing Act of 1737 on the systematization of censorship practices under the Office of the Examiner of Plays are well documented; see Worrall (2006, 1–3) and Conolly (1976, 13–47) but also McConachie (2006, 190–191) and Thomson (2000, 336–337).

<sup>11</sup> For a full discussion of the censor's approach to continental sources, see Conolly (1976, 54–66).

<sup>12</sup> In-depth explorations of historical sources on the dominance of the actor on the eighteenth-century London stage can be found in Taylor (1972) and Nicoll and Rosenfeld (1980), whilst for more recent discussions of the social and material contexts underpinning the shift from textual to performance authority, see West (1991) and McConachie (2006).

<sup>13</sup> According to the Drury Lane records of the season of 1776–1777 and 1779–1780, actor Thomas King played the lead roles of many main pieces such as Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth and Richard III and, together with W. Smith, was the highest earning male actor with a salary of £12 per season. (Hogan 1968).

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<sup>14</sup> For a full discussion of rehearsal practices on eighteenth-century English stage, see Milhouse and Hulme (2015).