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The Country Wife.
Between Pragmatic Analysis and Translation

Edited by Alba Graziano

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The Country Wife. Between Pragmatic Analysis and Translation

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Miscellany

Special Section

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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;

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[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.

SIR JASPAR 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:

HORNER (*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:

LADY FIDGET . . . 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 SEX IS CHINA, Lady Fidget's turn attributes several characteristics of
the source domain CHINA to the target domain SEX 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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