Introduction

A. What, Timon! does old age begin t'approach,
That thus thou droop'st under a night's debauch?
Hast thou lost deep to needy rogues on tick
Who ne'er could pay, and must be paid next week?
Tim: Neither, alas, but a dull dining sot
Seized me i'th'Mall, who just my name had got.
He runs upon me, cries, 'Dear rogue, I'm thine,
With me some wits of thy acquaintance dine.'
I tell him I'm engaged, but as a whore
With modesty enslaves her spark the more,
The longer I denied, the more he pressed;
At last, I e'en consent to be his guest.

'Timon', lines 1–12[1]

The satire 'Timon', attributed to the earl of Rochester and probably written in 1674, exemplifies much that is generally thought to be typical of Restoration poetry.[2] Densely packed with cultural allusions and expectations, it is preoccupied with money, sex, eating and drinking, and the pleasures and dangers of contemporary London. The world it inhabits is both cliquey and competitive; other men divide into the speaker's allies and the targets of his abuse, while women are present, if at all, only to be mocked or seduced, or both. This is also a world of casual but intense sociability, as witnessed both by the situational premise of the poem, apparently a street encounter between Timon and his interlocutor, and the prior social interactions that form the main substance of the poem. Timon's chance

[1] John Wilmot, earl of Rochester, *Selected Poems*, ed. by Paul Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 47–8.
[2] On the attribution and dating of 'Timon', see *The Works of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, ed. by Harold Love (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 481–2.

meeting with the 'dull dining sot', carefully placed 'i'th'Mall' – a new and fashionable venue in the heart of London – leads to his near-forced participation in an impromptu dinner with companions whose wit and judgement fall absurdly short of his own nonchalant but exacting standards.[3] Literature and politics are the chief topics of conversation: the sot first tries, unsuccessfully, to demonstrate his knowledge of elite satirical poetry and later, with his dinner guests, gossips ignorantly about drama and jingoistically about the French king's wars. Love, as opposed to sex, is mentioned only by his ageing wife, whose very existence marks him out for further ridicule. The one missing element in this virtuosic array of Restoration conventions is religious scepticism, presumably too advanced and demanding a topic to interest such intellectual lightweights as the sot and his friends. Restoration scepticism would, however, find powerful articulation in two of Rochester's other 1674 poems, 'A Satire Against Reason and Mankind' and his translation of the Act 2 chorus from Seneca's *Troas*.[4]

Conventions are conventions for a reason, and while few other contemporary works fulfil readerly expectations of Restoration poetry as fully as 'Timon', many of those that seem most typical of their period are recognisably in touch with its imaginative world. John Dryden's *Mac Flecknoe* and *Absalom and Achitophel*; much of the oeuvre of John Oldham; the 'painter' poems of Edmund Waller and others; the satires and lampoons studied by scholars such as W. J. Cameron and Harold Love; the wealth of commendatory prologues and epilogues generated by the Restoration theatre: all are comprehensible in terms of the matrix of cultural and historical associations adumbrated within 'Timon'.[5] Collectively, such works make for a view of Restoration poetry as urban, usually London-based; preoccupied by sex and politics; and frequently sceptical and abusive. Often interested in its own conditions of textual production and circulation, and with a predilection for name-dropping contemporary people, places and events, verse of this period seems especially topical in its focus. Its typical protagonist, a smart young man about town, is clever and cynical, quick-witted and fast-talking, and sexually savvy and self-aware, if not always sexually successful. And while normative masculinity, needless to say, was

[3] On the Mall, see Love's note to line 6, Rochester, *Works*, p. 482.
[4] On the dates of these poems, see Love in *Works*, pp. 383 and 370–1. The latter, like so much else in the Rochester canon, is speculative.
[5] W. J. Cameron, ed., *Poems on Affairs of State: Augustan Satirical Verse, 1660–1714*, vol. 5, 1688–1697 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971); Harold Love, *English Clandestine Satire, 1660–1702* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

far from new in English poetry, the self-interested male values of so much Restoration erotic verse – not least its frequently exploitative, crude or dismissive treatment of women – also distinguish its version of masculinity as unusually self-assertive and aggressive.

Much Restoration poetry does indeed answer to this description – at least up to a point. Much, however, does not. Stereotyping Restoration poetry as urban, libertine and sceptical fails to account for such landmark 1660s publications as John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Katherine Philips's *Poems*, and Abraham Cowley's *Works*. Overemphasising the period's preoccupation with the contemporary similarly fails to account for the role of classical translation and imitation in the works of major poets such as Dryden, Oldham and the earl of Roscommon. Even the undoubted hypermasculinity of so much Restoration poetry needs to be set against the unprecedented visibility of female poets in the late-seventeenth-century literary sphere. Writers such as Philips, Lucy Hutchinson and even Aphra Behn did not unquestioningly reproduce the norms and assumptions of male-authored poetry, but brought their own – often explicitly gendered – perceptions to bear on literary genres and conventions. A narrow stereotype of Restoration poetry, furthermore, risks underestimating the complexity of those works that it seems most fully to characterise. The cultural resonances of 'Timon' – both the person and the poem – cannot be appreciated without reference to literary history, whether Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens* or Rochester's immediate source, Boileau's 'Satire III'.[6] The apparently confident masculinity of many Restoration lyrics proves, on close reading, to be riddled with contradictions and anxieties. An unduly essentialised view of the Restoration may also risk overstating the differences between pre- and post-1660s literature: differences that, as Steven Zwicker has argued, are not always borne out by the statistical evidence.[7] Rupture and contrast are inherent in the notion of 'Restoration', but so too are continuity and precedent.

My aim in *The Restoration Transposed* is to reappraise and offer new perspectives on Restoration poetry. Verse of this era – which has often tended to take second place to its drama – has attracted renewed scholarly interest in recent years; important publications include such wide-ranging studies as Steven Zwicker's *Lines of Authority*, Harold Love's *English Clandestine Satire*, Paul Hammond's *The Making of Restoration Poetry* and Elizabeth

[6] On Rochester and Boileau, see Love in Rochester, *Works*, p. 481.
[7] Steven N. Zwicker, 'Is There Such a Thing as Restoration Literature?', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 69.3 (2006), 425–50.

Scott-Baumann's *Forms of Engagement*, as well as monographs and collections on specific authors (especially Dryden and Rochester).[8] In this book I draw gratefully on this work, especially with regard to issues of literary history, textual circulation and gender. Where *The Restoration Transposed* most clearly differs from existing studies, however, is in its conceptual methodology and organisation. Conceptually, I seek to probe behind Restoration poetry's well-known preoccupation with the urban present, exploring its less obvious but equally important engagement with wider historical and geographical contexts. Organisationally, this objective is realised through three long chapters, each of which provides a sustained historical rereading of Restoration poetry from a deliberately unusual perspective. While none of these perspectives is in itself new to literary historiography, none has previously been applied to Restoration poetry in such length and detail. All chapters also include substantial attention to texts and authors that, in my view, have been unjustly neglected in recent scholarship. The result in each case is a fine-grained analysis that variously interrogates, challenges and complements conventional accounts of Restoration poetry – an approach summed up in my titular term, 'Transposed'.[9]

The three main chapters of *The Restoration Transposed* approach these foundational issues of history and geography in complementary ways. In Chapter 1, 'The Spenser Problem', I focus on literary history, countering perceptions of the Restoration as preoccupied with the contemporary through reconstructing its engagement with this most monumental but problematic of literary predecessors. While Restoration dramatists' knowledge of, and responses to, earlier English theatre are well understood and frequently studied, analyses of Restoration poets' reception of Elizabethan and early Jacobean poetry are rather less commonly undertaken. The chief exception is Ben Jonson, whose importance to writers such as Dryden and Oldham has been frequently considered.[10] Jonson's

[8] Steven N. Zwicker, *Lines of Authority: Politics and English Literary Culture, 1649–1689* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993); Paul Hammond, *The Making of Restoration Poetry* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006); Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, *Forms of Engagement: Women, Poetry, and Culture 1640–1680* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). For Dryden and Rochester, see, among others, Paul Hammond, *Dryden and the Traces of Classical Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999) and Steven N. Zwicker and Matthew C. Augustine, eds, *Lord Rochester in the Restoration World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[9] *OED* lists 'the ordinary sense' of 'transpose' as 'To alter the order of (a set or series of things)', as opposed to the now obsolete meaning 'to transform, transmute, convert'. *The Restoration Transposed*, as period specialists will realise, puns on the title of Andrew Marvell's satirical tour de force *The rehearsal transpros'd* (1672). No satirical purpose is intended.

[10] Discussions of Dryden and Jonson include Hammond, *Making*, pp. 168–78; on Oldham and Jonson, see Hammond, *John Oldham and the Renewal of Classical Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 42–4, 84.

influence on the literary Restoration, however, was due as much to his drama and translations as to his original poetry, while his neoclassicism rendered him a guide for, rather than a contradiction of, post-1660 literary aesthetics. Spenser's poetry, by contrast – undeniably important but irreducibly resistant to neoclassical norms – represented a challenge for many late-seventeenth-century readers. Although the Restoration has to date barely featured in studies of Spenser's afterlife, it was, as this chapter demonstrates, crucial to the construction of his personal reputation and literary canon. My discussion attends both to his publishing history – in particular, the 1679 folio of his *Works* – and to creative and critical responses to his poetry by authors such as Milton, Oldham, Behn and Dryden.[11] I also consider how poets', readers' and publishers' engagement with Spenser in this period contributed to emerging perceptions and evaluations of English poetry in what proves to have been a formative period for English literary historiography.

In Chapters 2 and 3, I broaden my approach to Restoration literary history to incorporate attention to literary geography. My point of departure, in each case, is the London focus of much existing scholarship on Restoration literature. Given the importance of London-based institutions – court, theatres, publishing houses – to literary production in this period, such an emphasis on London is understandable and, to a degree, appropriate, but is also, in its own way, limiting. Several cities other than London – Edinburgh, Oxford, Boston, Dublin – acted as centres of literary production in the late seventeenth century, while many of the best-known Restoration poems published in London are concerned with – and in some cases derive from – rural environments. In Chapter 2, 'Poetry and Restoration Ireland', I begin my exploration of literary geography by considering one of the most fascinating and diverse, yet critically neglected, literary phenomena of the Restoration: namely, the flourishing of poetry in and about Ireland. Restoration Dublin offers an especially instructive parallel with contemporary London given both the revival of the viceregal court (which, like Charles II's return to the English capital, stimulated cultural production) and the personal ties and frequent movement

[11] The few exceptions to the general scholarly neglect of Restoration Spenser include Clare Kinney, '"What s/he Ought to Have Been": Romancing Truth in *Spencer Redivivus*', *Spenser Studies*, 16 (2002), 125–37; Michelle O'Callaghan, 'Spenser's Literary Influence', in *The Oxford Handbook of Edmund Spenser*, ed. by Richard A. McCabe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 664–83; and Hazel Wilkinson, *Edmund Spenser and the Eighteenth-Century Book* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), introduction.

between the two cities in these years. My discussion in this chapter offers the first sustained critical account of poetry in and about Ireland from the early 1660s to the outset of the eighteenth century. Building on recent important work by scholars such as Andrew Carpenter, Deana Rankin and Marie-Louise Coolahan, I discuss the coterie poetry generated by Katherine Philips's visit to Dublin in 1662–1663, and subsequently examine the poetic careers of two of Philips's literary collaborators, Orrery and Roscommon. I consider the role of print and manuscript verse in consolidating identities and communities and intervening in political discourse in the 1680s and 1690s, with particular attention to textual engagement with the Popish Plot and the 1688 Revolution. I also read the production of Irish poetry in relation to developments in Irish publishing.

In Chapter 3, 'Poetical Plants and Leafy Landscapes', I return from Ireland to England, diversifying my exploration of Restoration literary geography through considering the literature of plants and trees. Although poetry of this period is well known for its engagement with the built environment – the street scenes so common in Oldham's and Rochester's poetry; the London setting of *Mac Flecknoe*; the town satires collected and studied by Harold Love – many poets of the period were also attentive to plant life of numerous kinds and in various settings. Such poets were influenced in part by the close metaphorical association between the Stuart monarchy and the oak tree: an association that predated the Civil War but had been given renewed currency in the aftermath of the battle of Worcester (1651), when the defeated Charles II was said to have hidden in an oak. Another factor was John Evelyn's *Sylva*, an ambitious taxonomy of and guide to English trees and their cultivation, first published in 1664 and reissued in 1670, 1679 and 1706. Now recognised as foundational to the history of arboriculture and environmentalism, *Sylva* drew eclectically on both literary resources and post-Restoration political ideologies to advocate increased knowledge and cultivation of trees of all kinds. My chapter acknowledges and evaluates the role of both royalist ideology and *Sylvan* proto-environmentalism in the treatment of plants and trees by Restoration poets from Waller to Dryden. It considers the significance of translation – usually, though not invariably, from classical literature – in informing and complicating English poets' understanding of the natural world. It also provides the first integrated assessment of the role of plants and trees in the English and Latin poetry of Abraham Cowley. Through detailed analyses of Cowley's post-Restoration poetry in English and Latin, I compare and contrast his engagement with plants and trees in both languages. I also use his English poetry as a frame for

reading contemporary poets' work on the same subject, and consider the posthumous reception of the *Sex Libri Plantarum* in the 1680s and beyond.

The three main chapters of *The Restoration Transposed*, while complementary, are each, to an extent, freestanding narratives, offering separate though parallel accounts of the literary Restoration. In my conclusion, 'Transposing the Restoration', I take stock of all three chapters, identifying and exploring interconnections between them, and discussing such recurring issues as the increasing visibility of women as both authors and subjects in Restoration poetry and the significance of the period for textual circulation and book history. I also assess the book's implications for questions of literary periodisation and canonicity – considering why, in the former case, the 1660s and 1680s seem to have been more poetically productive than the 1670s or (to an extent) the 1690s. With respect to the canon, I revisit the range of poets addressed in *The Restoration Transposed*, attending both to those authors (Katherine Philips and Edward Howard; the earls of Orrery and Roscommon; even Marvell and Milton) whose work is often omitted from, or marginalised within, literary histories of the period and also to those whose position in the Restoration canon is more secure but who look rather different when read in these wider historical and geographical contexts. I also reconsider and re-evaluate those poets whose work features substantially in all three chapters of *The Restoration Transposed* – Dryden and Cowley – as well as another who features rather more marginally, the earl of Rochester. I end by tackling the key question of how different the literary Restoration might seem if reconceived along the lines sketched out in this book. What does it mean to 'transpose' the Restoration?

One of my aims in *The Restoration Transposed*, as I have stressed, is to reassess those poets whose very familiarity within the literary canon may obscure some historically significant aspects of their work. One such poet, albeit from an earlier period, is Edmund Spenser, whose works – in particular, *The Faerie Queene* – look very different when read through a Restoration lens. Though now regarded as among the outstanding literary achievements of the Elizabethan age, Spenser's poetry represented a rather more complicated legacy for the Restoration, held in reverence by some writers but much criticised by others. This legacy and its literary-historical implications are the subject of my first chapter, 'The Spenser Problem'.

CHAPTER 1

The Spenser Problem

> There are so few who write well in this Age, said Crites, that methinks any praises should be wellcome; they neither rise to the dignity of the last Age, nor to any of the Ancients[.]
>
> John Dryden, *Of Dramatick Poesie* (1668)[1]

Dryden's Crites, a figure for his brother-in-law, Robert Howard, was far from alone among Restoration writers in his concern with the status and value of contemporary literary culture. Ruminations on the place of English-language literature within both domestic and international contexts were, needless to say, far from new: Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poesy* (c. 1582–1583) and George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), which read sixteenth-century English poetry in the light of classical and modern European literature, provide only the most obvious precedents within English literary historiography. Writers in the Restoration, however, seem to have perceived the task of evaluating and locating contemporary literary culture both as especially pressing and as a matter of particular critical anxiety. The many factors underlying this anxiety include the increasing cultural dominance of French literature, as exemplified at the mid-century by the drama of Corneille and Molière and, later, by the theoretical pronouncements of critics such as Nicolas Boileau, René Le Bossu and René Rapin. More specific factors include the sense of cultural dislocation engendered by the Civil Wars and interregnum. The closure of the theatres between 1642 and 1660, while not representing such an absolute break in dramatic history as was once thought, did nonetheless mark a creative hiatus of sorts.[2] In poetry, the years before the Civil Wars had

[1] John Dryden, *Of Dramatick Poesie: An Essay* (1668), p. 5.
[2] Robert D. Hume, *The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 6–7.

witnessed the deaths of poets including Donne and Drayton (1631), Herbert (1633), Randolph (1635), Jonson (1637), Carew (1640) and Suckling (1641). Among still-living poets, both Abraham Cowley and Edmund Waller had emerged from the Civil Wars with equivocal political reputations that, for some, compromised their literary standing, while John Milton was not only regarded with abhorrence by many because of his pro-regicidal propaganda but also seemed, in the early 1660s, to have abandoned poetry indefinitely. Given such discontinuities, the readiness of Dryden's Crites to distinguish between the writers of 'this' and 'the last Age' is scarcely surprising. Nor is his assumption that, in any comparison between the two, contemporary writers must inevitably be deemed second-best.

Yet for many writers, the new circumstances of post-Restoration England represented opportunity rather than decline. Even within *Of Dramatick Poesie*, Crites' apparently categorical edict that current writers do not 'rise to the dignity of the last Age' represents an opening gambit in a dialogue rather than Dryden's own settled views. Within a few pages, Crites has been brought to agree – or at least 'not much oppose' – both that 'the sweetness of English Verse was never understood or practis'd by our Fathers', and also 'how much our Poesie is improv'd, by the happiness of some Writers yet living'.[3] Writing *in propria persona* a few years later, Dryden would still more confidently assert: 'Those who call theirs [i.e. the era of Shakespeare and Fletcher] the Golden Age of Poetry, have only this reason for it, that they were then content with Acorns, before they knew the use of Bread'.[4] But the very fact that, as late as 1672, Dryden was obliged to defend his own and his contemporaries' practice against the supposed superiority of 'Golden Age' writers testifies to the latter's stubbornly persistent cultural prestige. Literary theorists and historians in the time of Sidney had felt it necessary to appraise present-day writing in relation both to classical texts and to European vernacular literature. By the 1660s and 1670s, the literature of Sidney's own age formed yet another daunting standard of comparison.

Within this self-conscious and hypercritical literary culture, the poetry of 'the last Age' represented a very particular creative and critical challenge. Recent scholarship on the relationships between Restoration and early modern literary culture has tended to focus on drama, with such reworked plays as Nahum Tate's *King Lear*, Dryden's and Davenant's *The Tempest* and Rochester's *Valentinian* gaining attention and respect as

[3] Dryden, *Of Dramatick Poesie*, p. 7.
[4] Dryden, *The Conquest of Granada* (1672), p. 164.

literary achievements in their own right.[5] At the same time, however, relatively little attention has been paid to the readership and reception – or, indeed, the publication – of earlier poetry in the decades after 1660. The principal exception – Paul Hammond's discussion of earlier poets' role in the Restoration literary canon – is valuable but brief; it also concentrates, for the most part, on the publication of early to mid-seventeenth-century poets such as Herbert, Carew and Lovelace.[6] Similarly, while scholars such as David Scott Kastan, Timothy Raylor and Stephen Barnard have written informatively on the outputs of leading late-seventeenth-century literary publishers – Humphrey Moseley, Henry Herringman, Jacob Tonson – they too have, for the most part, focused on these publishers' work with contemporary or near-contemporary authors.[7] Tonson's role in publishing English poets of earlier ages – as opposed to translations of classical poetry by contemporary writers – is sometimes taken to have begun with his edition of Milton in 1688; however, given that Milton had died as recently as 1674, with his poetic works (including *Paradise Lost*) continuing to be published throughout the 1670s, the Tonson Milton cannot properly be seen as innovative in terms of historical reach. (The unprecedented sumptuousness of Tonson's Milton editions is a separate issue.) The other deceased poets published by Tonson in the 1690s and early 1700s – Rochester, Crashaw, Cowley, Denham – prove, on examination, to have had near-continuous posthumous publication histories, often (though not invariably) with one of Tonson's professional associates, such as Herringman.[8] It was not until 1715, with John Hughes's edition of *The Works of Mr. Edmund Spenser*, that Tonson was to publish a poet from a markedly earlier period of English literary history.[9] Tonson's production

[5] See, for example, Sonia Massai, 'Nahum Tate's Revision of Shakespeare's *King Lears*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 40.3 (2000), 435–50; John Shanahan, 'The Dryden-Davenant *Tempest*, Wonder Production, and the State of Natural Philosophy in 1667', *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*, 54.1 (2013), 91–118; and David Francis Taylor, 'Rochester, the Theatre, and Restoration Theatricality', in *Lord Rochester and the Restoration World*, ed. by Matthew C. Augustine and Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 121–40.

[6] Paul Hammond, *The Making of Restoration Poetry* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006), pp. 5–6. The two pre-seventeenth-century poets mentioned by Hammond are Chaucer and Spenser.

[7] David Scott Kastan, 'Humphrey Moseley and the Invention of English Literature', in *Agent of Change: Print Culture Studies after Elizabeth L. Eisenstein*, ed. by Sabrina Alcorn Baron, Eric N. Lindquist and Eleanor F. Shevlin (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), pp. 105–24; Timothy Raylor, 'Moseley, Walkley, and the 1645 Editions of Waller', *The Library*, 2.3 (2001), 236–65; Stephen Bernard, 'Henry Herringman, Jacob Tonson, and John Dryden: The Creation of the English Literary Publisher', *Notes and Queries*, 62.2 (2015), 274–7.

[8] On the transfer of copyrights between Herringman and Tonson, see Bernard, 'Henry Herringman, Jacob Tonson, and John Dryden'.

[9] Even then, as we shall see, the break between Tonson's and previous editions was not as clear as it may seem.