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When the Same Book Speaks Two Different Languages. Identity and Social Relationships across Cultures in the Italian Translation of *The Uncommon Reader*

> The common reader, as Dr. Johnson implies, differs from the critic and the scholar. He is worse educated, and nature has not gifted him so generously. He reads for his own pleasure rather than to impart knowledge or correct the opinions of others.
> Virginia Woolf, *The Common Reader*

Introduction

Building on previous work on the same topic, this paper aims to explore how Monica Pavani, a translator and poet from Ferrara, has dealt with the translation of style in *The Uncommon Reader* by Alan Bennett.[1] It provides wider background information as well as further evidence and stronger arguments in support of the translation analysis and criticism previously made available. Moreover, the analysis is presented in its completeness and in relation to the general architecture of both the source and the target text.

The paper starts with an introduction aimed at identifying the theoretical framework in which the analysis is set: the approach is translator-centred and also stretches to tentatively explore the specific issues of both feminist intervention and literary sociolinguistics. Pavani has revealed, on different occasions, her habit of reflecting on the mental processes underlying both writing and translating, which makes her a particularly interesting subject for those who would like to delve into the intertwined issues of translation as a form of creative writing and the translator's voice. Furthermore, not unlike many feminist and postmodern translators, when reflecting on her work Pavani also seems to look at translation as a form of *écriture* which extends and develops the source text. It was this aspect emerging from some of Pavani's accounts of her translation work that elicited the need for an exploration of the issue of feminist intervention as well. However, despite the boldness of some choices linked to the sketching of possibly the three main characters in Bennett's story (the Queen; Norman Seakins, the kitchen boy turned page; and Queenie, the British writer and journalist J.R. Ackerley's dog), Pavani does not seem to take the re-writing aspect of translation to an extreme in this translation. She does not go so far as to attempt linguistic creation: the Queen's use of both 'one' and 'we' and 'I' in the source text is reduced to an alternation between the simple majestic plural and the first person singular in the target text, which removes from the story the added comic effect of 'royalese', among other things; nor does she seem to have a hidden political agenda. On the other hand, she does not seem to refuse recourse to standardization, either: a normalization procedure seems at work in the most subversive area of Bennett's writing, probably in an attempt to make a prototext

[1] Emilia Di Martino, "*La sovrana lettrice* e *The Uncommon Reader*: un approccio critico al testo tradotto", in Flora De Giovanni, Bruna Di Sabato, eds., *Tradurre in pratica* (Napoli: ESI, 2010), 113-140; "Da *TUR* a *Lsl*: voci in transito", in Oriana Palusci, ed., *Female Voices across Languages* (Trento: Tangram, 2011), 289-300.

– which may have otherwise sounded too crammed with gay references – more 'palatable' for the Italian reader.[2] All this goes (paradoxically) side by side with other assertions from Pavani which seem to betray, instead, a 'passive', receptive disposition to translation. The translator is probably just using here, as most expert translators do, a mixture of procedures and strategies. The result is a text that seems to lie in a moderate sphere of 'creativity'[3] in terms of feminist intervention but in a bolder attempt at recreation in sociolinguistic terms.

Theoretical framework

Traditional conceptions of gender roles have characterised the discussion on translation up until the 1970s, viewing it as a passive, essentially reproductive (and therefore feminine) practice. Deconstructionism and post-structuralism, instead, particularly through Barthes' reader empowerment[4] and Derrida's idea of *différance*,[5] have brought about the erosion of authority and theorised a textual relativism which has seen the author disappear along with the subject, thus granting the translator more freedom of action within the text, and even the power of creation when following the project of questioning master-narratives and challenging status quo truths.

In its attempt to explore and contribute to the issue of translation practice and the translator's own perception of this practice, this paper sets itself amongst those contemporary theoretical approaches which are usually referred to as translator-centred due to their being focused on the translator's subjective response to the source text and which are, most importantly, based on the assumption that translation is a form of creative writing.[6] It does so by addressing the issue of style across languages which, set against a background of literary sociolinguistics, specifically means here (1) analyzing variation within a specific character's language use; (2) examining the issue of language choice in terms of community-belonging.

Furthermore, this paper also touches on the issue of feminist intervention or, to paraphrase von Flotow's words, the feminist belief that the translation of a line like "Ce soir j'entre dans l'histoire sans relever ma jupe"[7] as "this evening I'm entering history without opening my legs" (rather than "this evening I'm entering history without pulling up my skirt") is not only "acceptable", but even "desirable".[8] Commenting on her 'womanhandled'[9] translation of Lise Gauvin's *Lettres d'une autre*, Lotbinière-Harwood confesses, for example:

> [m]y translation practice is a political activity aimed at making language speak for women. So my signature on a translation means: this translation has used every possible translation strategy to make the feminine visible in language. Because making the feminine visible in language means making women seen and heard in the real world. Which is what feminism is all about.[10]

[2] The recent fierce criticism of *The Sims* by some Italian politicians due to the videogame featuring gay families (Marco Pasqua, "Attacco al videogioco con le famiglie gay 'Minaccia l'educazione dei bambini'", *La Repubblica*, 14 May 2011) is but the latest evidence of at least part of the country's attitude to sexual diversity.

[3] The term is bracketed because, despite the translator's creative attitude to her work, her intervention is not one of creation from scratch.

[4] Roland Barthes, *Image Music Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977).

[5] Jacques Derrida, "Des Tours de Babel", trans. by J. F. Graham, in John Biguenet, Rainer Schulte, eds., *Theories of Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 218-227.

[6] Susan Petrilli, "Traduzione e semiosi: considerazioni introduttive", *Athanor*, 10.2 (1999-2000), 9-21; Susan Bassnett and Peter Bush, *The Translator as Writer* (London: Continuum, 2006); Manuela Pertenghella and Eugenia Loffredo, eds., *Translation and Creativity* (London: Continuum, 2006).

[7] Nicole Brossard, France Théoret et al., *La Nef des sorcières* (Montréal: Quinze, 1976).

[8] Luise von Flotow, "Feminist Translation: Contexts, Practices and Theories", *TTR: Traduction, Terminologie, Redaction*, 4.2 (1991), 69-84.

[9] Barbara Godard, "Theorizing Feminist Discourse/ Translation", in Susan Bassnett

and André Lefevere, eds., *Translation, History and Culture* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1990), 87-96.

[10] Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, preface to Lise Gauvin's *Letters from An Other* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1990), 9.

[11] Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility. A History of Translation* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

[12] In addition to writing papers, she has given talks on translation and writing on several occasions (meet-the-author public interviews, book festivals, conferences, etc.).

[13] Monica Pavani, talk presented on the occasion of the seminar "Esperienze di traduzione letteraria", organised by AARDT (Associazione degli Archivi Riuniti delle Donne Ticino) in Melano on 9 April 2008, featuring Monica Cerutti, Tina D'Agostini and Monica Pavani, <http://www.archividonneticino.ch/studi/05esperienze_traduzione_pavani.pdf>, 30 June 2012.

[14] Ibid.

By making the feminine 'seen and heard' in her translation, Lotbinière-Harwood contravenes the translator's traditional practice of invisibility,[11] she appropriates the source text and 'hijacks' it in order to make it serve her political intentions. From writing in its own right, translation here further stretches into re-writing aimed at bending the source text to pursue specific political ends. However, this paper will argue that feminist intervention may sometimes be a form of overt 'hijacking' as compared to the more subtle forms of re-appropriation and re-purposing that the translation critic may detect using the tools of literary sociolinguistics.

The translator

Monica Pavani is a translator and poet from Ferrara. Born in 1968, she has mostly translated feminine voices but also some male authors, in particular novels, short stories and poetry from English and French. She has published books of poems – amongst them *Fugaincanti*, dedicated to Camille Claudel, which has been described as "un inno alla potenza del genio femminile" – and regularly writes book reviews and essays for *Tratti* and *Leggere Donna*, in addition to being the author of some pieces of literary criticism.

Pavani has revealed, on different occasions, a habit of reflecting on the mental processes underlying both writing and translating, which invites looking at both the translation strategies used and the choices made in her works as deliberate and well thought out, rather than just the result of good language competence and, sometimes, chance.[12] Pavani confesses to being fanatical about the music and rhythm of a text (which, she says, would not even exist for her without those): "… quando traduco dall'inglese devo assolutamente disfare il discorso, rifarlo cinquanta volte prima che suoni vagamente in italiano, … per me un libro deve scorrere o comunque deve avere un ritmo molto riconoscibile. Arrivo a rasentare livelli di maniacalità, nel senso che, finché non c'è il ritmo giusto, per me quel testo *non esiste*".[13] Moreover, not unlike many feminist and postmodern translators, Pavani also seems to look at translation as a form of *écriture* which extends and develops the source text:

> [m]i capita spessissimo che, ricercando una parola diversa perché la prima che mi è venuta in mente non mi 'suona', ecco che si innestano degli incroci strani di parole che sgorgano tutte insieme e cominciano a funzionare, producendo significati leggermente diversi e magari più interessanti. Sono i momenti in cui si amplia l'orizzonte della pagina e dell'universo – qualunque esso sia – che la pagina tenta disperatamente di riprodurre, e si cominciano a vedere più paesaggi.[14]

However, this 'confession of infidelity' must result from a need to 'come clean' and start afresh rather than from one to 'untie the knot', as it is counterbalanced by the use of two metaphors that the translator often uses to refer to the act of translation, which fit into a picture of respect for the source text instead: listening and letting the author's voices/words/images/landscapes get at and into you.

Translators, she says, feel the need to step out of their heads, or in her own words, "accantonare la propria pelle" (put their own skin to one side), which – she clarifies – does not mean entering someone else's, but rather letting, as written above, the author's voices/words/images/landscapes enter you. This is a very feminine metaphor, which Pavani further describes as a condition of total, absolute focus on the other's voice, a condition which translating shares with the writing of poetry, in Pavani's opinion. Stepping outside of the self and letting the other in does not mean appropriating the author you are translating, nor does it equal self-denial or personal annihilation.[15]

The following paragraphs will try to show how this process of openly confessed *écriture* works in practical terms, counterbalanced as it is by an equally admitted 'passive' predisposition to translation, in the context of *La sovrana lettrice*/*The Uncommon Reader*. In particular, focus will be on the boldness of some choices linked to the sketching of the three main characters in the story as well as on the normalisation of Bennett's writing in some points and on the loss of its intertextuality, in the attempt to offer a general account of the overall architecture of the target text.

[15] The result is a type of writing which is "né azzerata né egocentrica, ma *decentrata*, capace di ascoltare voci diverse" (Ibid., 9).

The Uncommon Reader

One day the Queen bumps into a ginger-haired kitchen boy, Norman Seakins, at the City of Westminster travelling library which happens to be parked outside the kitchen at Buckingham Palace. The young man was taking out a book by Cecil Beaton, while Her Majesty was just chasing after her dogs – a pack of corgis who were refusing to come in and were barking sharply at the large van – and had only entered the bookmobile to apologise for the noise, but felt obliged to borrow a book once in. She selects a novel, a random volume of Ivy Compton-Burnett's, intending to return it the following week. She finds the book quite a hard read, but returning it the following week, she feels obliged to take out another book. *The Pursuit of Love* by Nancy Mitford proves to be extremely inspiring, infecting the Queen with an inexplicable urge to read and read, to make up for time lost. Palace life changes. The more the Queen expands her reading under the direction of Norman, whom she has discovered is a far more accomplished reader than she is and has therefore turned into her literary advisor and companion, the more she appears distracted while on her public duties. She even insists on introducing literature into inappropriate contexts, such as her Christmas broadcast. Her behaviour gets so odd that the palace staff begin to wonder if she is suffering from Alzheimer's disease ("Thus it was that the dawn of sensibility was mistaken for the onset of senility"[16]), and her Private Secretary and the Prime Minister decide that they must put an end to this unacceptable state of affairs. Norman is sent to university, and a pile of books he had chosen to enliven her time during a visit to Canada mysteriously disappear. An elderly family confidante who is persuaded to get her to quit her new habit talks her into writing, instead. Thus begins her writing stage, which absorbs her even more than the reading.

[16] Alan Bennett, *The Uncommon Reader* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), 81; further references in the text.

In the end, the Queen discovers that Sir Kevin, her Private Secretary, was behind the crusade to stop her from reading and writing, and she appoints him the High Commissioner to New Zealand to get rid of him. On her eightieth birthday, when all the ministers gather to wish her well and drink champagne, the Queen announces her idea of writing a book and asks those who have read Marcel Proust to raise their hands. Just a few hands go up. Like Marcel in Proust's masterpiece, she says, she feels that her life "needs redeeming by analysis and reflection." (115) The Ministers are alarmed by the news. When the Queen rebukes the Prime Minister – who has said that Her Majesty is in a unique position and that a monarch has never published a book – she provides a few examples of ancestors who have done so, mentioning among them her uncle the Duke of Windsor. The Prime Minister makes the objection that he could do so because he had abdicated. At which point, the Queen seems on the point of making an important announcement ("'Oh, did I not say that? said the Queen. 'But…why do you think you're all here?'", 121), and this is where the book ends.

With its 121 pages, *The Uncommon Reader* is longer than a short story, but too brief to be listed as a novel. A novella, then, with quite a lot packed into such a small space. Bennett's clever prose and his humour, resulting from the fine line he creates between reality and absurdity, makes it a little jewel. The fast witty narrative functions as a cultural *Bildungsroman* (the Queen of England turns from a duty-bound reader[17] into a voracious reader-for-pleasure[18] and later a writer). It also fosters reflection on both the humanising power of literature and the potentially subversive nature of reading.

[17] "She'd never taken much interest in reading. She read, of course, as one did, but liking books was something she left to other people. It was a hobby and it was in the nature of her job that she didn't have hobbies" (6).

[18] "What she was finding also was that one book led to another, doors kept opening wherever she turned and the days weren't long enough for the reading she wanted to do" (21).

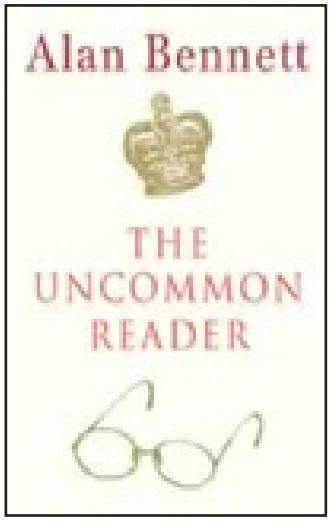

Fig. 1: Original cover of *The Uncommon Reader*, Alan Bennett, 2006.

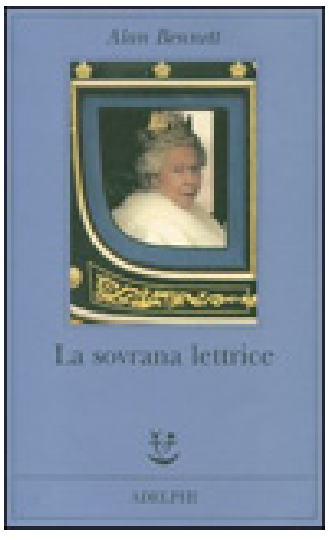

Fig. 2: Italian cover of *The Uncommon Reader/La sovrana lettrice*, 2007.

La sovrana lettrice

La sovrana lettrice came out with Adelphi in 2007, immediately standing out from the English version for its title and the picture on the front cover (see Fig. 1 and 2). Whereas *The Uncommon Reader* reveals its interdiscursive relation with Woolf's *The Common Reader* in the very title, and the fact that the uncommon reader is Her Majesty the Queen of England is only hinted at – not stated – by the picture of a crown on top of the title, *La sovrana lettrice* seems if anything to keep the lid on the former and overstate the latter. In Woolf's book the common reader could be any of us; it is Woolf herself, who reads English literature defying the conditionings which literary critics are often slave to. In Bennett's book the uncommon reader is none other than the Queen. However, like Woolf's common reader, she goes from one book to another following her instinct and personal taste, without any particular order or regard for what should be read.[19]

As already hinted at above, the choice of *La sovrana lettrice* as the Italian title is quite a bold one as – the Italian version of Woolf's book being *Il lettore comune* – one would have expected Pavani's choice to fall on *Il lettore non comune* or, just to satisfy her stated need for musicality, *Il lettore inconsueto*. *La sovrana lettrice* drops the interdiscursive relation with Woolf in the title, which – we know – strongly affects the reader's approach to any text, and attributes a sex to the 'uncommon reader' whilst the picture clearly identifies the latter with Elizabeth II. At first sight, this seems to convey another possible play on the phrase 'common reader'. Indeed, it may be tempting to say that 'uncommon' is also a play on the word 'commoner' - the Queen is not a 'commoner' like her subjects. However, on reading the book one seems to gather that the Queen is 'uncommon' not in as much as she is a monarch, but rather because she is – or better, becomes – a reader, unlike most of the people by whom she is surrounded or with whom she comes in contact.

Once the link with Woolf had been dropped, the title could have been changed into *La sovrana lettura*, which would have well reflected the book's content, the real protagonist being reading rather than the Queen herself, whilst at the same time also keeping the further meaning of 'common reader' as the set text that a group (usually of students) are expected to read to build up a common background. Keeping the link both to the person reading and the act of reading simply would not have been possible in Italian, unless the translator opted for a degree of linguistic creativity, producing something like *La sovrana letto/ura*, which would keep together the *nomen agentis* and the *nomen actionis*, whilst at the same time foregrounding the female agent. Vowel alternation being another way of marking the gender of nouns, the term *lettora* does sound possible. Even more so if we think that nouns ending in *–tore* preceded by a consonant different from 't' do have a feminine form in *–tora* (for example, *pastora, tintora, impostora*). However, the suffix *–ice* not having a negative connotation in Italian (unlike *–essa*, for example) and the term *lector* having no feminine in Latin (unlike *minister*, which features the feminine *ministra/ae*, thus allowing for the use of the term *ministra* in Italian) – which is itself, of course, an

[19] "… to her all books were the same and, as with her subjects, she felt a duty to approach them without prejudice" (48).

example of how language is deeply gendered – many would probably disapprove of the term *lettora*.[20] Moreover, supplementing, i.e. *foregrounding* the compensation strategies used to convey the multiple layers of a text – which is, in itself, a legitimate process – may be looked at as annoying exhibitionism and overstatement which repels rather than attracts potential readers when used in the very title.

As already hinted at above, it is not immediately clear why Pavani drops the interdiscursive relation with Woolf in the title. However, if one also focuses on the different pictures used on the two front covers, the choice starts making sense. In 2006 – which is also the year when *The Uncommon Reader* was first published in the *London Review of Books* before being published in hardback the following year – a film about the British monarchy in the aftermath of Diana's death by director Stephen Frears (starring Helen Mirren in the role of Her Majesty and Michael Sheen in that of Tony Blair) came out in the cinemas around the world. The film was acclaimed by both critics and the public, particularly thanks to Mirren's and Sheen's excellent acting. Mirren, who won the Oscar for Best Actress for her performance, publicly praised the Queen in her acceptance speech,[21] and was invited to dinner at Buckingham Palace in May 2007 (but had to decline due to work commitments).[22] As is clear, Frears's film had a huge coverage in the media all over the world, and Adelphi could clearly not miss the opportunity.[23] The decision of severing the interdiscursive relation with Woolf's *The Common Reader* to set up a new one with Frears's film, which is clearly confirmed by the front cover of the Italian version, was perhaps a purely commercial choice: the relation with *The Common Reader* would have probably not been immediately obvious for the Italian common reader, while the film was surely in most people's memories. Pavani also confesses to deliberately drawing inspiration from the film to sort out some tricky language issues posed by the translation: she may, as well, have tried to create a link, albeit tenuous and debatable, between the source text and the target readership.

As for the book's content, what one notices at first sight is a lack of meta-textual materials – footnotes, preface or other immediately visible signs of intervention on the translator's part, i.e. a lack of all those strategies that feminist translators usually employ as a strategy of visibility. Since Pavani is a translator who is used to reflecting on her work, this choice may be deliberate, but is probably due to the publisher's own policy, as usual in these cases. However, some bold linguistic choices stand out, and it is exactly on those that the following paragraphs will focus, as they are linked to the sketching of the three main characters in the story, the Queen, the queen and Queenie.

The Queen

One of the most delicate issues in the translation of *The Uncommon Reader* is quite obviously the Queen's language. One can surely still agree with Wales that "[i]t is in grammar, in pronoun usage in particular, that royalese is most strikingly illustrated apart from pronunciation",[24] where 'royalese' could be described as "a group of

[20] However, in Carlo Alianello's *L'eredità della priora* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1963), the character 'Madre Lettora' shows the word has actually been used in this form. A 'Madre Lettora' is the nun who is weekly entrusted the duty of reading passages from the Bible or the Rule during meals in a convent.

[21] "For 50 years and more, Elizabeth Windsor has maintained her dignity, her sense of duty and her hairstyle. If it wasn't for her, I most certainly wouldn't be here – ladies and gentlemen, I give you the Queen"; BBCNews, "Mirren 'Too Busy' to Meet Queen", 10 May 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/6643793.stm>, 30 June 2012.

[22] Ibid.

[23] In an interview Pavani admitted to watching the film to this very end: "Ovviamente me lo sono riguardato attentamente non appena mi è stata proposta la traduzione di questo libro"; Luca Balduzzi, "Intervista via e-mail a Monica Pavani", 4 November 2007, <http://www.imolaoggi.it/civetta/index.cfm?wnews=105>, 30 June 2012.

[24] Katie Wales, "Royalese: the Rise and Fall of 'The Queen's English'", *English Today*, 10 (1994), 39.

linguistic features widely associated in Britain with the speech of members of the Royal Family, as well as certain other high status groups",[25] or better as the language of the older members of the Royal Family which reflects their ideological as well as social distance, i.e. what we could call the linguistic manifestation of "the distance between royalty and commonalty".[26]

The two pronouns which characterise the language of the Royal Family and of the Queen in particular as 'royalese' are 'royal we' and 'royal one'. The 'royal we', or majestic plural, is a marker of the speech of Shakespearian rulers, although Queen Victoria was allegedly the first monarch to be reported as using it in real life, with the famous remark, "We are not amused".[27] Others have suggested that the quotation is not an example of the 'royal we', since Victoria was probably speaking on behalf of all the ladies present at court. Princess Alice denied Queen Victoria ever uttered the comment in a 1978 interview; she said she had asked her grandmother about the expression, "but she never said it", Queen Victoria being "a very cheerful person".[28]

It has not always been of exclusively royal use though, as 'We have become a grandmother' was Margaret Thatcher's statement to the press on the birth of her first grandchild in 1989, a statement which caused much controversy and hilarity.[29] At present, the pronoun is "[v]irtually obsolete … in the mouth of the current monarch, but … very much alive in the 'royalese' of satirical journalism, parody and caricature, a crude symbol of royalty, like the orb and scepter"; according to Wales, "the present queen is more likely to use the properly exclusive 'royal firm *we*', speaking on behalf of the royal family present and past; or the 'royal tour *we*', equivalent to *my husband and I*",[30] the latter having become a real catch-phrase.

Unlike 'royal we', 'royal one' meaning 'I' is still "undoubtedly used frequently by royalty, in real life as in stereotype",[31] but also by people only even remotely connected with the Royal Family. It is as much an object of caricature and mockery as 'royal we': in a famous episode of *Dead Ringers*, a television comedy show broadcast on BBC Two, the character impersonating Her Majesty, taking over Helen Mirren's role in *Prime Suspect* in revenge for the actress playing her role in Frears's film, closes the episode saying "One's telling you one's nicked, you slag!". Other examples of 'royal one' being "a marked and widely recognised stereotype"[32] are easily found in the tabloid press: "One is not amused by Prince Harry's smokebomb prank";[33] "One is NOT amused! Or how the Queen can't help revealing her royal displeasure"[34] are just two of the many. More recently, when publicity agency Saatchi & Saatchi conceived the idea of marrying T-Mobile's 'Life's for Sharing' slogan with the April 2011 royal wedding, they rephrased it into 'One's Life's for Sharing'.[35] Margaret Thatcher also used 'royal one', which probably confirmed people in their disdain of her pretentious manners, in addition to producing popular linguistic jokes.[36]

In addition to 'royal we' and 'royal one', Her Majesty must also use – probably much more often than 'royal we' or 'one' – in the right contexts, the pronoun 'I', although in public she only seems to use it in the famous and much laughed about phrase mentioned above, 'my husband and I'.[37]

[25] Sharon Goodman, "'One' and the Pun: How Newspapers keep the Monarchy in its Place", *Language and Literature*, 6.3 (1997), 197.

[26] Wales, "Royalese", 5.

[27] Caroline Holland, *Notebooks of a Spinster Lady* (London: Gassell and Company, 1919), 269, <http://www.archive.org/stream/notebooksofspins00spinuoft/notebooksofspins00spinuoft_djvu.txt>, 30 June 2012; also found in Elizabeth Knowles, "we", *The Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) <http://www.encyclopedia.com /doc/1O214-we.html>, 30 June 2012.

[28] Here is the context provided by Caroline Holland: "There is a tale of the unfortunate equerry who ventured during dinner at Windsor to tell a story with a spice of scandal or impropriety in it. 'We are not amused', said the Queen when he had finished" (268-269).

[29] "Lately [Margaret Thatcher] has seemed to take almost a regal view of her position, using the royal we. On a television program after the birth of her first grandchild she said, 'We have become a grandmother'"; Anthony Lewis, "Is It Thatcher's Britain?", *The New York Times*, 23 March 1989.

[30] Wales, "Royalese", 64.

[31] Ibid., 9.

[32] Sharon Goodman, "'One' and the Pun", 198.

[33] Lucy Ballinger, "One is not Amused by Prince Harry's Smokebomb Prank",

The Daily Mail, 2006, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-406731/One-amused-Prince-Harrys-smokebomb-prank.htm>, 30 June 2012.

[34] Mailonline, "One is NOT Amused! Or how the Queen Can't Help Revealing her Royal Displeasure", 2008, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1079864/One-NOT-amused-Or-Queen-help-revealing-royal-displeasure.html>, 30 June 2012.

[35] The spoof video, featuring royal lookalikes dancing down the aisle "has been viewed more than 8m times since it was launched on YouTube on April 15"; Clare Dowdy, "The Public image: T-Mobile Viral Video", *The Financial Times*, 2011, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/51b5ce42-6f64-11e0-952c-00144feabdc0,dwp_uuid=0c3d2eca-300c-11da-ba9f-00000e2511c8,print=yes.html>, 30 June 2012.

[36] As the UK abandoned the pound bank note in favour of the coin whilst Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister, one of the Tories was rumoured to invite scornful laughter: "Why is Margaret Thatcher like a pound coin?" "Because she is thick, brassy and thinks she's a sovereign."

[37] Think of the popular YouTube spoof video of the comedy sketch from BBC impression show *Dead Ringers* where 'the Queen' announces the release of a DVD of her Christmas speech outtakes <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FXrbw4y9BYc>, 30 June 2012.

The following paragraphs will draw on Wales's categories of 'royalese', trying to show how they relate to personal and social meaning, i.e. how they influence the creation of identities and social relationships in Bennett's book. Style and social context can indeed be said to inter-relate in fiction as in real life: in both, linguistic behaviours can be seen to be iconic representations insofar as they depict the social relations and community groupings that they 'index'. In ordinary life, people construct their identities through language use: linguistic variation is always meaningful. In literary texts, authors make their characters the carriers of specific language ideologies through their style. As real individuals project different social identities and create various representations of themselves in relation to others through their language choices, so characters are made to use the resources of language to construct themselves and make meaning in social encounters.

What follows sets out to analyse the specific style of Bennett's Queen focusing on the verbal 'actions' in which she is made to engage and addressing the semantics of pronoun address, in particular. The aim is twofold: on the one hand, it intends to show how the Queen positions herself in relation to others by using specific linguistic forms that convey social information but also relate to power and solidarity dimensions (different language choices characterise relationships with different categories of people and hint at different levels of symmetry/asymmetry); on the other hand, it also aims to draw attention to how the social information and the meaning of power issues that style implies completely change when a literary text journeys across languages/cultures. To this end, pronouns will be looked at as indexes of subtle levels of closeness/inclusiveness and/or distance/exclusiveness.

In *The Uncommon Reader* Her Majesty uses the full range of pronouns, apparently saving 'I' for exchanges which she wants to mark as more personal, less formal. The first exchange presented in the book provides a first glimpse:

> 'Now that I have you to myself,' said the Queen, smiling to left and right as they glided through the glittering throng, 'I've been longing to ask you about the writer Jean Genet.'
> 'Ah,' said the president. 'Oui.'
> The 'Marseillaise' and the national anthem made for a pause in the proceedings, but when they had taken their seats Her Majesty turned to the president and resumed.
> 'Homosexual and jailbird, was he nevertheless as bad as he was painted? Or, more to the point,' and she took up her soup spoon, 'was he as good?' (3)

Here the Queen is clearly trying to get better acquainted with the president of France, in order to hear from him something she is really eager to know – what French people really think of Jean Genet – rather than getting from him the sort of pre-packaged, pre-conceived opinion one would expect on such an official occasion.

An example of how Bennett uses 'I' in Her Majesty's speech to mark her attempt to decrease social distance and get closer to ordinary people is the switch from 'one' to 'I' in the next two extracts, which describe the Queen's first and second encounter with her future literary aide Norman Seakins and the librarian of the City of Westminster travelling library:

'One has never seen you here before, Mr…'
'Hutchings, Your Majesty. Every Wednesday, ma'am.'
'Really? I never knew that. Have you come far?'
'Only from Westminster, ma'am.'
'And you are…?'
'Norman, ma'am. Seakins.'
'And where do you work?'
'In the kitchen, ma'am.'
'Oh. Do you have much time for reading?'
'Not really, ma'am.'
'I'm the same. Though now that one is here I suppose one ought to borrow a book.'
…
'Is one allowed to borrow a book? One doesn't have a ticket?'
'No problem,' said Mr Hutchings.
'One is a pensioner', said the Queen, not that she was sure that made any difference. (6-7)

'How did you find it, ma'am?' asked Mr Hutchings.
'Dame Ivy? A little dry. And everyone talks the same way, did you notice that?'
'To tell you the truth, ma'am, I never got through more than a few pages. How far did your Majesty get?'
'Oh, to the end, Once I start a book I finish it. That was the way one was brought up. Books, bread and butter, mashed potato - one finishes what's on one's plate. That's always been my philosophy.'
'There was actually no need to have brought the book back, ma'am. We're downsizing and all the books on that shelf are free.'
'You mean I can have it?' She clutched the book to her. 'I'm glad I came. Good afternoon, Mr Seakins. More Cecil Beaton?' (11)

As is evident, a certain form of complicity is created among the three characters by the chance encounter as well as surely by the fact that the Queen is not used to meeting ordinary people outside official occasions and, above all, without the presence of a mediator. Also, through her occasional slip into the use of 'I', Bennett probably wanted to convey the Queen's personal curiosity and enthusiasm for a world she does not know particularly well.

Bennett has the Queen using 'we', instead, to express the other (upper) extreme of the formality spectrum. The pronoun is only used on a few occasions in the book, which confirms Wales' idea of it not being very much in use today ("I doubt if the present Queen ever uses it", [38]). The first context where 'we' is used is a conversation with Sir Kevin about a royal visit to Wales where the Queen's literary aide, Norman, is called to intervene:

[38] Wales, "Royalese", 8.

'Norman.'
Sir Kevin heard a chair scrape as Norman got up.
'We're going to Wales in a few weeks' time.'
'Bad luck, ma'am.'
The Queen smiled back at the unsmiling Sir Kevin.
'Norman is so cheeky. Now we've read Dylan Thomas, haven't we, and some John Cowper Powys. And Jan Morris we've read. But who else is there?'
'You could try Kilvert, ma'am,' said Norman.
'Who's he?'

> 'A vicar, ma'am. Nineteenth century. Lived on the Welsh borders and wrote a diary. Fond of little girls.'
> 'Oh,' said the Queen, 'like Lewis Carroll.'
> 'Worse, ma'am.'
> 'Dear me. Can you get me the diaries?'
> 'I'll add them to our list, ma'am.' (37)

The first 'we' is clearly used as 'royal tour *we*', i.e. as an equivalent of 'my husband and I', whereas the second can be said to correspond to 'you and I', a sort of 'inclusive we' (for Norman's benefit) which is at very same time an 'exclusive' one (for Sir Kevin's detriment). It is also a linguistic manifestation of the humanising power of reading, which is bringing the Queen closer to common people than to her usual entourage of ministers, councillors, etc. This seems to be confirmed in the following exchange, where the Queen finishes off a conversation with the Prime Minister which she does not find particularly pleasant turning to a very formal 'we':

> The Queen sighed and pressed the bell. 'We will think about it.'
> The prime minister knew that the audience was over as Norman opened the door and waited. 'So this' thought the prime minister, 'is the famous Norman.'
> 'Oh, Norman,' said the Queen, 'the prime minister doesn't seem to have read Hardy. Perhaps you could find him one of our old paperbacks on his way out.' (58)

> The Queen is cross because the Prime Minister would not agree with her idea of her sitting on a sofa and reading Hardy for her Christmas broadcast, so she probably wants to stress her distance from the Prime Minister, while at the very same time teasing him with the possible hint of a special complicity existing between her and Norman: indeed, 'one of our old paperbacks' could also mean 'yours and mine'.
> Pavani has confessed that translating the Queen's speech into Italian was not an easy task:
> il testo in lingua originale presentava una difficoltà pressoché insormontabile: quando parla Sua Maestà, Bennett quasi sempre le fa usare l'impersonale che caratterizza ossessivamente la sua parlata, ossia l'"one" che ancora una volta è l'indizio linguistico della quasi assenza di individualità che contraddistingue la Sovrana. Così lei, soprattutto quando prende la parola in veste ufficiale, fa discorsi del tipo: "One is a pensioner", "One doesn't read" ecc… Ovviamente in italiano la traduzione letterale con il "si", o ancora peggio "uno non legge", sarebbe stata terribile, quindi – lavorando di squadra con la redazione Adelphi – abbiamo optato per un'alternanza di soggetti, usando il "noi" quando non creava ambiguità e non diventava troppo artificioso. Soluzione – tra l'altro – abbastanza in consonanza con il bel film di Frears, *The Queen*.[39]

[39] Luca Balduzzi, "Intervista".

Differently from what Pavani says, in the book Bennett seems to mark - both linguistically and narratively – the Queen as an individual with personal ideas and beliefs, often in contrast with those of her entourage. And Pavani's translation does seem to show this, although probably more as a result of the influence of Frears's film than of a deliberate attempt to respect the source text. However, what the text certainly loses in the movement across the two languages is the linguistic manifestation of how reading brings the Queen closer to common people who share her love for reading than to ministers (and family) who do not. Indeed, Pavani seems to use 'noi' without exception when the Queen talks to her 'friends of reading'. The extracts presented earlier, and brought together below side by side with their translation, can help exemplify this:

'One has never seen you here before, Mr…' 'Hutchings, Your Majesty. Every Wednesday, ma'am.' 'Really? I never knew that. Have you come far?' 'Only from Westminster, ma'am.' 'And you are…?' 'Norman, ma'am. Seakins.' 'And where do you work?' 'In the kitchen, ma'am.' 'Oh. Do you have much time for reading?' 'Not really, ma'am.' 'I'm the same. Though now that one is here I suppose one ought to borrow a book.'	«Non l'abbiamo mai vista da queste parti, signor…». «Hutchings, Maestà. Tutti i mercoledì, signora». «Davvero? Ne eravamo all'oscuro. Viene da lontano?». «Solo da Westminster, Maestà». «E lei…?» domandò rivolta al ragazzo. «Norman, Maestà. Seakins». «E dove lavora?». «Nelle cucine, Maestà». «Oh. Lei ha molto tempo per leggere?». «Non proprio, Maestà». «Nemmeno noi, sa. Anche se adesso che siamo qui, immaginiamo sia il caso di prendere in prestito un libro».
… 'Is one allowed to borrow a book? One doesn't have a ticket?' 'No problem,' said Mr Hutchings. 'One is a pensioner', said the Queen, not that she was sure that made any difference. (6-7)	… «Occorre una tessera per prendere libri in prestito?». «Non c'è problema» disse il signor Hutchins. «Noi siamo in pensione» dichiarò la regina, non sapendo bene se faceva la differenza. (12)
'How did you find it, ma'am,' asked Mr Hutchings. 'Dame Ivy? A little dry. And everyone talks the same way, did you notice that?' 'To tell you the truth, ma'am, I never got through more than a few pages. How far did your Majesty get?' 'Oh, to the end, Once I start a book I finish it. That was the way one was brought up. Books, bread and butter, mashed potato - one finishes what's on one's plate. That's always been my philosophy.' 'There was actually no need to have brought the book back, ma'am. We're downsizing and all the books on that shelf are free.' 'You mean I can have it?' She clutched the book to her. I'm glad I came. Good afternoon, Mr Seakins. More Cecil Beaton?' (11)	«Come l'ha trovata, Maestà?» chiese il signor Hutchings. «Dama Ivy? Un po' noiosa. E parlano tutti nello stesso modo, ci ha fatto caso?». «A esser sincero, non ho mai superato le prime pagine. Lei dov'è arrivata, Maestà?». «Oh, fino in fondo. Quando cominciamo un libro lo finiamo. Ci hanno educate così. Libri, purè, pane e burro: bisogna finire quello che c'è nel piatto. È la nostra filosofia da sempre». «Non occorreva restituire il libro, Maestà. Siamo in fase di ridimensionamento e tutti i libri su quello scaffale si possono prendere gratis». «Intende dire che possiamo tenerlo?». La regina si strinse il volume al petto. «Abbiamo fatto proprio bene a venire. Buongiorno, signor Seakins. Sempre Cecil Beaton?». (15)

Fig. 3: extract 1 and 2 from *The Uncommon Reader/La sovrana lettrice*

Although using 'noi' throughout the first extract, Pavani opts for an impersonal in one case («Occorre una tessera per prendere libri in prestito?»), and the result is that the comic effect produced by the mixing of registers – the use of 'ticket' in connection with 'royal one' - is lost. As for the second extract, Pavani uses 'noi' consistently despite the use of 'I' in the source text, which prevents her from marking linguistically the Queen's attempt to get close to Mr Hutchings and Norman, but at the very same time makes it possible for the text to keep its comic flavour.

The lines '"You mean I can have it?' She clutched the book to her. 'I'm glad I came. Good afternoon, Mr Seakins. More Cecil Beaton?"' clearly suggest more to the English reader than they do to an Italian one, as royals are commonly described in the tabloid press as 'scroungers'.[40] Italian readers may not immediately share this association of ideas, but the Queen's use of high-sounding 'noi' in Italian, in

[40] Sharon Goodman, '"One' and the Pun", 203.

connection with her clutching the book and stating she is glad she went to the mobile library, manages to achieve the same effect. In short, the complicity implicit in the pronoun switch may be lost, but the comic effect is saved for that very reason.

The exclusive use of 'I' being one end and the use of 'we' being the other (rare) end of the formality/distance spectrum, the unmarked use of pronouns in the Queen's speech in *The Uncommon Reader* seems to be an alternation of 'one'/'I', as in the following extract, where Her Majesty and Sir Kevin are discussing the Queen's new habit of reading, a habit Sir Kevin does not particularly appreciate:

> 'It's important,' said Sir Kevin, 'that Your Majesty stay focused.'
> 'When you say "stay focused", Sir Kevin, I suppose you mean one should keep one's eye on the ball. Well, I've had my eye on the ball for more than fifty years, so I think these days one is allowed the occasional glance to the boundary.' (29)

The Queen is clearly unhappy with Sir Kevin's comment, but her position requires her to outwardly react with aplomb, and Bennett brilliantly manages to convey that.

A similar alternation of 'one'/'I' is evident in this other extract, where the Queen and the Prime Minister appear to have different ideas about Her Majesty's Christmas broadcast:

> 'I thought this year one might do something different.'
> 'Different, ma'am?'
> 'Yes. If one were to be sitting on a sofa reading or, even more informally, be discovered by the camera curled up with a book, the camera could creep in – is that the expression? – until I'm in mid-shot, when I could look up and say, "I've been reading this book about such and such,", and then go on from there.'
> 'And what would the book be, ma'am?' The prime minister looked unhappy.
> 'That one would have to think about.' (56)

Unlike Bennett's use of an alternation between 'one' and 'I' in the Queen's speech even in confrontational situations, Peter Morgan's script of Frears's film presents a consistent use of 'I' on such occasions.[41] Indeed, whereas 'we' and 'one' are used in an interchangeable way throughout the film as the royal unmarked pronoun, the switch to 'I' outside the family context seem to be the linguistic manifestation of the Queen's disagreement and dissent, or simply a way of making her point clear. Distant as she may look from ordinary people and their thoughts and feelings, Her Majesty's language seems to tell a whole different story. If anything, she can lose her temper just as much as anybody else. The following exchange with Tony Blair seems to be good evidence of this:

> **TONY**
> Your Majesty, the country has spoken...and I come now to ask your permiss..
> **ELIZABETH**
> (interjecting)
> No, no, no. It's usual for ME to ask the questions.
> TONY winces. Wishes the ground would swallow him up.
> **ELIZABETH**
> Mr Blair, the people have elected you to be their leader. And so the duty falls on me, as your Sovereign, to ask you to become Prime Minister, and form a government in my name.

[41] Peter Morgan, *The Queen*, script, IMSDb (The Internet Movie Script Database), 2007, <http://www.imsdb.com/scripts/Queen,-The.html>, 30 June 2012.

Morgan's use of 'I/me' as an outward manifestation of the Queen's will to clearly state her point and express her disagreement is probably even more evident when comparing/contrasting the two extracts that follow.

Here Her Majesty is simply informing Blair of her decision for Diana's funeral to be a private one, which makes the use of 'royal we' the most suitable option:

> **ELIZABETH**
> We've spoken to the Spencer family, and it's their wish… (a beat)…their express wish, that it should be a private funeral. With a memorial service to follow in a month, or so.
> …
> **ELIZABETH**
> Given that Diana was no longer a member of the Royal Family we have no choice but to respect their wishes.

When Blair insists Diana should have a state funeral, instead, the Queen switches to 'I', as she clearly wants to make her point clear: she is obviously irritated, as is revealed in her language:

> **ELIZABETH**
> As I said. That's the Spencers' wish.
> …
> **ELIZABETH**
> It's a family funeral, Mr. Blair. Not a fairground attraction. (a beat) I think the Princess has already paid a high enough price for exposure to the press, don't you?
> PRINCE PHILIP enters, dressed and ready for church. He indicates his watch.
> **ELIZABETH**
> Now, if there is nothing else I must get on. The children have to be looked after.

This is another example of how Morgan uses 'I' in Queen's speech when he wants her to sound direct, straightforward, and determined to make her point clear with no misunderstanding whatsoever:

> **ELIZABETH**
> If you're suggesting that I drop everything and come down to London before I attend to two boys that have just lost their mother… you're mistaken.
> **PRINCE PHILIP**
> Absurd..
> **ELIZABETH**
> I doubt there are many who know the British more than I do, Mr. Blair, nor who has greater faith in their wisdom and judgement. And it is my belief that they will soon reject this 'mood' which has been stirred up by the press...in favour of a period of restrained grief, and sober, private mourning. (a beat) That's the way we do things in this country. Quietly. With dignity. (a beat) It's what the rest of the world has always admired us for.

As hinted at above, Pavani has openly recognised that the translation choices she made about the Queen's speech are in tune with Frears's film.[42] This is evident in her version of the exchange between the Queen and Sir Kevin which was analysed above and is brought to the reader's attention again in Fig. 4, side by side with the translation:

[42] Luca Balduzzi, "Intervista".

'It's important,' said Sir Kevin, 'that Your Majesty stay focused. 'When you say "stay focused", Sir Kevin, I suppose you mean one should keep one's eye on the ball. Well, I've had my eye on the ball for more than fifty years, so I think these days one is allowed the occasional glance to the boundary.' (29)	«È importante» disse Sir Kevin «che sua Maestà non perda di vista gli obiettivi». «Quando dice "non perdere di vista gli obiettivi", Sir Kevin, immagino intenda stare sulla palla. Be', dopo esserci stata per sessant'anni, penso di potermi guardare un po' intorno». (28)

Fig. 4: extract 3 from *The Uncommon Reader/La sovrana lettrice*

Indeed, Pavani opts for a very straightforward 'I' which ends up sketching the Queen's character in the Italian text in quite a different way from Bennett's. The same seems to happen in the Italian version of the other extract presented above, where Pavani's Queen shows a much more decisive personality and determined character than Bennett's. Both the extract and Pavani's translation of it are presented in Fig. 5:

'I thought this year one might do something different.' 'Different, ma'am?' 'Yes. If one were to be sitting on a sofa reading or, even more informally, be discovered by the camera curled up with a book, the camera could creep in – is that the expression? – until I'm in mid-shot, when I could look up and say, "I've been reading this book about such and such,", and then go on from there.' 'And what would the book be, ma'am?' The prime minister looked unhappy. 'That one would have to think about.' (56)	«Pensavo che quest'anno potremmo fare qualcosa di diverso». «Di diverso, Maestà?». «Sì. Per esempio potrei stare allo scrittorio a leggere o, in modo ancora più informale, seduta comodamente sul divano con un libro in mano; la telecamera potrebbe avvicinarsi finché non sono in piano medio – è così che si dice? –, dopodiché potrei alzare gli occhi e dire: "Sto leggendo un libro che parla di questo e di quest'altro". E proseguire da lì». «E che libro sarebbe, Maestà?». Il primo ministro aveva l'aria afflitta. «Dovrei pensarci». (48)

Fig. 5: extract 4 from *The Uncommon Reader/La sovrana lettrice*

The Queen's use of 'one', 'we' and 'I' in *The Uncommon Reader* thus becomes an alternation between the simple majestic plural and the more direct 'I' which removes from the target text the linguistic signs of complicity/non-approval the Queen seems to use in her interactions and the messages of distance/closeness she appears to convey through them. In particular, as argued above, Pavani's choice removes from the text the linguistic signs of a Queen who is more willing to get close to those common people who share her love for reading than to the members of her usual entourage (or family) who do not, while focusing on and overstressing, instead, the Queen's wish to make her point clear and have her way. Though present in the source text, this wish is not re-enforced linguistically, thus producing the image of a Queen who is not only faithful to the British ideal of self-control and understatement, but also perfectly aware of her minor role in the ruling of her country.

Indeed, although both Bennett and Frears can be said to have contributed to putting a human face on an institution – the British monarchy – characterised by aloofness and respect of protocol, they have done so in a very different way. They have both offered a sympathetic and affectionate portrayal of Her Majesty, but each has carried it out in their own distinctive ways. Bennett's Queen is maybe somewhat limited in the breadth of her education but clever and thoughtful and sensitive, and as much eager to learn as to share her acquired knowledge and understanding with ordinary people, some of whom being allowed to get closer to her than the closest member of her entourage (or family). Decisions have always been made for her, even by her dogs (see the mobile library episode); she now feels the time has come for her to try to change this, although she seems to be aware, at all times, that this is only partly possible, due to the limits imposed by the so-called Royal Prerogative, i.e. by the political tradition according to which the British monarch reigns but does not rule. Frears's Queen, instead, is a woman who seems to be used to having her every desire satisfied and command obeyed, even by her dogs, although deep down she is probably a shy person thrown into a life she did not ask for. She seems to be an affectionate grandmother, torn between tradition and public expectations. She finally has to recognise the world has changed and the monarchy – which, she now clearly understands, only represents the country – has to 'modernise'.

These different characterisations are carried out as much through narration as through language. Pavani's choice to dress Bennett's story with a language which is closer to that chosen by the film's scriptwriter probably responds to the need of meeting the expectations of the target public. Despite not having a specific interest in the British monarchy – or being particularly keen on reading – Italians have come to develop a certain curiosity in the Royal Family's private affairs after Squidgygate, Camillagate and Diana's death thanks to the media coverage of these events as well as to films like Frears's. Moreover, they already have a model for the Queen's language (and therefore personality) in mind. Publishers are not charities and they do not produce books for the sake of culture (or at least not just for that). Books are marketed like any other product. To put it less cynically, Pavani may be attempting here to build a network of connections for Bennett's book to find a suitable place in the Italian reader's culture – and memory; she is probably trying to recreate a link, albeit debatable, between source text and target readership or, if one prefers to look at the question from the point of view of the target text, she is trying to 'anchor' it, just like the source text was 'anchored' in its turn. Clearly, this also results in producing a completely different ideal reader from Bennett's book.

Pavani's use of pronouns in the Queen's speech does not just affect characterisation; it also has an effect on narration at a different level. Indeed, the fusion of 'royal we' and 'royal one' into a 'noi' which has no other connotation in Italian than that of being used either as majestic plural by people of high rank or as a modesty plural by orators and writers, deprives the text of the added comic effect of 'royalese'.[43] Brits are accustomed to hearing/seeing 'royal we' used over

[43] The specific entry in DeMauro's dictionary reads: "usato in luogo del singolare come plurale maiestatico da persone d'alta autorità: *n. impartiamo la benedizione apostolica*; come plurale di modestia da oratori e scrittori: *i testi da n. citati*".

and over again in transgressive ways. It is used with a lack of deference which brings the Queen down to their level whilst appropriating her language, in a carnivalesque sort of way. On the one hand, this presumably helps to relieve class tensions by acknowledging people's concerns, but actually it is probably used to defend the *status quo*.[44] Italian 'exclusive we', instead, does not seem to have the extra connotation of sounding comic, as it is not often used to parody heads of state – or popes – who tend (despite a few exceptions: see next footnote) to use the singular in their speeches, instead, and are thus not figured as using such a pronoun in other contexts.

The Queen's voice in *La sovrana lettrice* is, as argued above, probably more Pavani's than Bennett's, and it surely characterises Her Majesty as a stronger, more self-respecting and self-assured woman than the one sketched in *The Uncommon Reader*. However, Pavani does not seem to intend to take the re-writing aspect of translation too far, after all, considering that she could have probably thought of an original way of dealing with the issues which have only just been touched upon (the comic flavour of 'royal one'). Maybe building up a further interdiscursive relation for the Italian reader, or even attempting some form of linguistic creativity, might have resulted in a more exciting text. This would have had the added benefit of saving the text its comic force.[45]

[44] Sharon Goodman, "'One' and the pun".

[45] Think of Berlusconi's habit of speaking in the third person: "Gli italiani hanno chiaro che Silvio Berlusconi difende la sicurezza di tutti"; "… sanno che … non ruba e che non utilizza il potere a suo vantaggio personale"; Presidente del Consiglio, Interviste e interventi, 2009, <http://www.governo.it/Presidente/Interventi/testo_int.asp?d=50067>, 30 June 2012.

The queen

This paragraph and the paragraphs that follow aim to show how in fiction, as in real life, speech patterns are also tools that speakers/characters manipulate in order to place themselves and to categorise others. In doing so, they automatically create and/or identify themselves as part of particular speech/cultural communities. The specific reference will here be to purported gay speech, or better to a specific set of language choices which may be a crucial element in Bennett's text. The paragraph will also show how the social/cultural groupings implicit in the source text can only be inferred by a handful (if any) of readers of the target text due to linguistic choices that may stem from the translator's (or editorial staff's) deliberate attempt to affect the text's reach.

We first read about Norman Seakins in *The Uncommon Reader* when he is taking out a book by Cecil Beaton from the City of Westminster travelling library parked outside Buckingham Palace. His reading choice provides a good insight into his personality straightaway. Cecil Beaton was the foremost fashion and portrait photographer of his day. He worked as a photographer for *Vanity Fair* and *Vogue*, in addition to photographing celebrities in Hollywood as well as the Royal Family themselves for official publication. In 1972, he was knighted. He was rumoured to have had a relationship with Greta Garbo but the real love of his life was art collector Peter Watson, a striking figure himself, loved by women but obsessed with American male prostitute and socialite Denham Fouts. Beaton and Watson never became lovers, and the photographer supposedly had relationships with other men. He even claimed to have had an affair with Gary Cooper. Going back

to Norman Seakins, this character's primary interest in life seems to be in gay books and photography. Thanks to his chance encounter with the Queen, the unattractive young man is lifted out of his humble role as kitchen hand and promoted to page, with special responsibility for the recommendation of books. Seakins advises Her Majesty as to what to read; he even introduces her to several works of fiction by gay writers and becomes her sole support in her attempt to quench her thirst for reading. As Her Majesty suggests, he is turned into her amanuensis, "[o]ne who writes from dictation, copies manuscripts. A literary assistant" (24). It is when the Queen finally finds the right word to describe Norman's occupation that Pavani surprises us with quite a bold choice, as she substitutes the word *amanuensis* with *factotum*. The Oxford English Dictionary provides this definition of the latter word: "In mod. sense: A man of all-work; also, a servant who has the entire management of his master's affairs".[46] It does not seem to describe Norman's role at Buckingham Palace quite clearly, as he is surely not a general servant and he does not have "the entire management of his master's affairs" but a precise and specific responsibility: guiding the Queen in her new adventures in reading. He is, as suggested, a literary advisor and aide, his duty being, in detail, to advise, look up information and fetch Her Majesty's books. He "had a chair in the corridor, handy for the Queen's office, on which, when he was not on call or running errands, he would spend his time reading" (24). The *OED* defines an *amanuensis* solely as "[o]ne who copies or writes from dictation of another";[47] Norman Seakins was most probably looking up the term in this very dictionary, but adding the further fictional definition of "literary assistant". By contrast, the online Merriam-Webster dictionary entry for the term, "slave with secretarial duties", seems to be well in tune with the character's duties, were it not for the by now politically incorrect 'slave' (which solidly anchors the term to its Latin origin, however).

[46] *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[47] Ibid.

Pavani may have preferred the word *factotum* in order to keep in Italian the use of Latin in the Queen's speech, clearly identifying it as belonging to a high register. Whereas *amanuensis* does sound like a Latin word to the English reader, to the Italian reader it has in fact lost all trace of Latin origin; by contrast, he/she would immediately recognise *factotum* as a Latin word due to its ending. However, this choice has an awkward effect on the narration as the term *factotum*, despite being of Latin origin, belongs to the ordinary Italian person's vocabulary much more than 'amanuense' does; this makes Norman's search in the dictionary seem somewhat odd for someone who is certainly not an intellectual but still quite well read.

The *amanuensis*-to-*factotum* choice is not the only surprising one. In the first few pages of the book we are informed that the view of Norman reading outside the Queen's office "did him no good at all with the other pages, who thought he was on a cushy number and not comely enough to deserve it" (24). The young man's plainness is the object of mockery on two clear occasions: when the Queen describes him to the duke as very intelligent, the latter observes that "'[h]e'll have to be' (…) 'Looking like that'" (17); later on, when sir Kevin wonders how come "'a young

man of some intelligence"' was employed in the kitchen, an equerry comments that he is "'[n]ot dolly enough' (…) 'Thin, ginger-haired. Have a heart"' (15).

The word 'dolly' – which does not immediately resonate as 'pretty' or 'beautiful' to the ordinary person (Pavani translates "Brutto com'è" - literally: "as ugly as he is") – has a strong gay connotation in this context. Indeed, the OED informs that, as an adjective, it is 'usually applied to a girl: attractive; fashionable. *colloq.*'.[48] Moreover, 'dolly' is also short for 'dolly bird', which the online Merriam-Webster dictionary[49] defines as a British expression used to refer to a pretty young woman, and the online Gay Slang Dictionary[50] lists the expression 'Dial-A-Dolly-Service' meaning:

1. *colloq.* Male prostitute that gets his business by phone. Source: [80's]
2. A 900 phone sex line. Source: [90's]

As is clear, the Italian 'Brutto com'è' omits the extra hint to the kitchen hand-turned-page's sexual preference contained in the word "dolly", a hint which seems to be crucial for the characterization of Norman in the English text. As hinted at above, the word 'dolly' does not immediately mean 'pretty' or 'beautiful' to the ordinary person today; it is in Polari,[51] i.e. in gay slang that 'dolly' means 'pretty, nice, pleasant'.[52] The equerry who uses the word may himself be gay, considering that, as Ackerley suggests in *My Dog Tulip*,[53] to the Queen's surprise "the guards seemed to be as readily available as the book made out and at such a reasonable tariff. She would have liked to have known more about this; but though she had equerries who were in the Guards she hardly felt able to ask" (20).

Because the equerry uses the term when talking to the personal secretary, the latter may be implicitly included in the community, and indeed he is the one who seems to most clearly identify Norman as a 'queen' for the benefit of the ordinary reader. When the special advisor asks him if Norman is a 'nancy', we learn that "Sir Kevin didn't know for certain but thought it was possible" (65). It is probably only at this point in the text that the Italian ordinary reader, who has very thin chances of spotting the allusions contained in Norman's favourite reads, clearly understands his sexual orientation, as Pavani well translates the word 'nancy' as 'checca'.

Had Pavani dared to translate dolly as 'sbarbato', the allusion to Norman's sexual orientation would have probably been made clear earlier on in the text, although only to a limited number of readers: the term both means 'with no stubble' – thereby implying the young man is effeminate or defective in some physical way (too little facial hair to look handsome in a masculine way) and therefore needs to compensate this by proving to be of above average intelligence – and points to his sexual orientation in a subtle way. The word 'sbarbato' may in fact ring a bell for readers of Riccardo Bacchelli, whose 1935 novel *Mal d'Africa* reads "Cheri spiegò in due parole al capitano che quei due mozzi erano del bel numero degli sbarbati, genere fiorentissimo in quelle contrade e rivali in amore delle donne".[54]

However, the terms 'dolly' and 'sbarbato' do not share the characteristic of being part of a private slang, besides which they are chronologically distant. Polari may date back to the 16th century[55] and was most popular in the 1950s and 60s thanks

[48] *Oxford English Dictionary*.

[49] *Merriam-Webster On-line Dictionary* (2009), <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dolly bird>, 30 June 2012.

[50] Gay Slang Dictionary, <http://www.odps.org/glossword/index.php?a=term&d=8&t=3747>, 30 June 2012.

[51] Polari, <http://dizionario.reverso.net/inglese-definizioni/polari>, 30 June 2012.

[52] Paul Baker, *Polari. The Lost Language of Gay Men* (London: Routledge, 2002).

[53] Joe Randolph Ackerley, *My Dog Tulip* (New York: The New York Review of Books, 1965).

[54] Riccardo Bacchelli, *Mal d'Africa* (Milano: Mondadori, 1962 [1935]), 41.

[55] The on-line Collins Dictionary (also in *Collins English Dictionary*, London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2000) defines Polari as "an English slang that is derived from the Lingua Franca of Mediterranean ports; brought to England by sailors from the 16th century onwards. A few words survive, esp. in male homosexual slang".

to its use by Julian and Sandy, the homosexual characters of BBC radio shows *Beyond our Ken* and *Round the Horne*, which were packed with double meanings and sexual innuendo. The term 'mignone', which identifies the gay individual whilst also pointing to physical appearance due to its origin from French 'mignon', for 'cute, lovely',[56] would have probably presented the same problem.

Unfortunately, the connotation of the term 'dolly' as characteristic of gay speech seems doomed to be completely lost in Italian. This may be why Pavani chooses to let drop the sexual connotation of the term 'dolly' altogether, opting for the clearly domesticating 'brutto', which simply directly makes explicit that he is 'ugly' but helps to attain her highly-sought-after aim of music, rhythm and fluency. 'Dolly' was not worth the effort.

This is actually not the only culturally gay-related connotation to be dropped altogether; a further web of inter-textual references 'naturally' builds up for the British reader around the word 'queen', as Bennett most definitely makes subtle reference to the Queen Mother's famous remark:

> Whilst waiting to be served her Gin & Tonic, the Queen Mum could hear two openly gay members of her staff arguing in the hallway outside her sitting room. Impatient at being kept waiting so long the Queen Mother eventually called out "When you two old Queens have finished arguing, this Old Queen wants her Gin".[57]

Moreover, the reference to Cecil Beaton in the source text may well be said to 'encapsulate' the fictitious character of Norman for the British reader: Cecil Beaton, who was gay and the Queen Mother's friend,[58] is indeed still celebrated for his loving portraits of the Royals and especially of Queen Elizabeth II.[59]

Queenie

Norman Seakins, on his first commission for Her Majesty ("the Queen gave Norman her Nancy Mitford to return, telling him that there was apparently a sequel and she wanted to read that too, plus anything else besides he thought she might fancy", 16), hearing from the librarian that dogs may be a subject of interest, picks *My Dog Tulip* as the Queen's next read. The 1956 novel by J.R. Ackerley tells the story of a man's relationship with his dog, most probably echoing the author's discovery, in middle age, of his ideal companion, an Alsatian bitch whom he named Queenie.

Despite only being mentioned once in the book and never actually reaching Her Majesty's ears – "'It's supposed to be fiction, ma'am, only the author did have a dog in life, an Alsatian.' (He didn't tell her its name was Queenie.) 'So it's really disguised autobiography.' (17) – Queenie is a crucial character in the story for a series of reasons. Besides the Queen's love for horses and dogs being one of the few things everybody knows about Her Majesty, Queenie is, together with her fictional counterpart Tulip, the only dog to be clearly identified in the book. Dogs are the physical trigger in initiating the Queen's new course of life in *The*

[56] The *Vocabolario gay, lesbico, bisex e trans* drawn up by Rai – Segretariato sociale lists the term *mignone* as meaning "Ragazzo omosessuale passivo. Dal francese *mignon*, grazioso, gentile".

[57] <http://bytesdaily.blogspot.it/2012/06/funny-friday.html>, 30 June 2012; the present Queen's mother was known as the Queen Mother.

[58] Alex Needham, "Cecil Beaton: photographer to the young Queen Elizabeth II", *The Guardian,* 6 February 2012.

[59] Mark Brown, "Unseen Cecil Beaton pictures of Queen to go on show at V&A.", *The Guardian,* 9 June 2011.

Uncommon Reader. Had it not been for her corgis, Her Majesty would have never seen the mobile library, met Norman or developed a love for reading:

> It was the dogs' fault. They were snobs and ordinarily, having been in the garden, would have gone up the front steps, where a footman generally opened them the door. Today, though, for some reason they careered along the terrace, barking their heads off, and scampered down the steps again and round the end along the side of the house, where she could hear them yapping at something in one of the yards. (4)

Moreover, *My Dog Tulip* marks the Queen's first encounter with diversity in the book, a path along which she herself for a moment becomes a potential queen:

> E.M. Forster figured in the book, with whom she remembered spending an awkward half-hour when she invested him with the CH. Mouse-like and shy, he had said little and in such a small voice she had found him almost impossible to communicate with. Still, he was a bit of a dark horse. Sitting there with his hands pressed together like something out of *Alice in Wonderland*, he gave no hint of what he was thinking, and so she was pleasantly surprised to find on reading his biography that he had said afterwards that had she been a boy he would have fallen in love with her. (20-21)

Even more crucial, due to the interdiscursive relation of *The Uncommon Reader* with *The Common Reader,* Queenie may be seen as the comic counterpart of both Woolf's dog Pinka (a present from Vita Sackville-West, a black cocker spaniel who became a very important part in Virginia and Leonard Woolf's life together) and her fictional double Flush (Elisabeth Barrett's golden cocker spaniel who enlightened the poet's sad life in Wimpole Street and accompanied her through her happier times in Italy. Virginia Woolf wrote a novel about their special relationship, *Flush*, and it has even been suggested that Flush's trauma after being dognapped for ransom, mirrors Woolf's child molestation by stepbrothers George and Gerald). At the very least, that is the mental association some reader (possibly a more alert reader than the ordinary one) may have made when reading this portion of the text.

Woolf's canine metaphors in her writing,[60] though inspired by a probably erroneous reading of Johnson as a misogynist and actually strongly contributing to the re-enforcement of such a myth,[61] are well known, and so is her habit of animalising (n a letter to David Garnett she signed herself 'Yours affectionate old English springer spaniel Virginia'[62]). Elizabeth Barrett's parallel between lapdogs and women as mentioned in Stone[63] and detailed here by Adams[64] seems to be relatively well known:

> As Elizabeth gazed into the mirror at herself and Flush, she suddenly recognised, as Emily Brontë would also do, the unsettling similarity between lapdogs and women in Victorian England. Both were powerless, and both were dependent for their very existence on pleasing others. With something like the self-acceptance she attributed to Flush, Elizabeth bluntly stated, "Why, what *is* Flush, but a lapdog? And what am I, but a woman? I assure you we never take ourselves for anything greater." (22)

Being a sophisticated reader herself, Pavani may have been aware of this possible network of cross-references when translating *The Uncommon Reader,* and she may have tried to accommodate them in some way.

[60] Jane Goldman, "'Ce chien est à moi': Virginia Woolf and the Signifying Dog", *Woolf Studies Annual,* 13 (2007), 100-107.

[61] James Basker, "Dancing Dogs, Women Preachers, and the Myth of Johnson's Misogyny", *The Age of Johnson* 3 (1990), 63-90; Bonnie Hain and Carole McAllister, "James Boswell's Ms. Perceptions and Samuel Johnson's Ms. Placed Friends", *South Central Review* 9.4 (1992), 59-70.

[62] Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann, eds., *The Letters Of Virginia Woolf: Vol. 5 (1932-1935)* (New York: Harcourt, 1979), 232.

[63] Marjorie Stone, "Elizabeth Barrett Browning", *Victorian Poetry,* 46.3 (2008), 310-327.

[64] Maureen Adams, *Shaggy Muses: The Dogs Who Inspired Virginia Woolf, Emily Dickinson, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Edith Wharton, and Emily Brontë* (New York: Ballantine, 2007).

Though being an Alsatian, which is very similar to a German shepherd (but not exactly 'un pastore tedesco', as Pavani translates) – that is, a big, aggressive dog that one tends to identify as male – Ackerley's dog is not only female, but is called Queenie. Queenie was probably called this by her owner to state how important she was for him (think of the expression 'the queen of my heart'), and Queenie is also the pet form for the affectionate name Queen, as we learn from the OED (1), Dictionary.com[65] (2) and Dictionary of First Names[66] (3):

(1) **Queen·ie:** A queen: used esp. with reference to Queen Elizabeth II (often as an informal name or form of address).
(2) **Queen·ie**
–noun
a female given name.
(3) **Queenie:** Pet form from the affectionate nickname *Queen*, with the addition of the diminutive suffix *-ie*. In the Victorian era it was sometimes used as an allusive pet form for Victoria.

Alternatively, Queenie – which the OED also defines as '[a]n effeminate male, a homosexual (used esp. as a form of address)'[67] – could be a gay-related analogy to the fact that the name Rex (King) is a commonly given name to male Alsatians/German shepherds in England.

However, Ackerley's dog's name was changed to Tulip because the publisher "thought Queenie would encourage jokes about Ackerley's sexuality".[68] Indeed, the name has quite a strong gay connotation, as already hinted at (OED), and there is consistent evidence confirming this. Whereas the Online Slang Dictionary[69] defines 'queenie' as "a spoiled or selfish female" only, the on-line Dictionary of Sexual Terms[70] offers two entries for 'queenie' or 'Queenie':

1. queen, a male homosexual; may be disparaging or affectionate depending on context.
2. Queenie, gay nickname for a pet lover or a pet poodle, one who will chew on a bone for hours and love it.

Even more explicit is the Urban dictionary,[71] which lists as entry number 2:

2. Queenie
gay or effeminate male; male person with a bitchy, narcissistic attitude; a man who projects the very worst characteristics of femininity.

According to many,[72] proper names should not be the object of translation, and Pavani does seem to follow this piece of advice in the Italian translation of *The Uncommon Reader* in most cases: Queenie stands out as the only exception (Reginetta) (see Fig, 6), which clearly raises a whole set of questions:

[65] Dictionary.com, 2009, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/queenie>

[66] Patrick Hanks, Kate Hardcastle, Flavia Hodges, *A Dictionary of First Names*, 2006, accessed from Encyclopedia.com, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O41-Queenie.html>, 30 June 2012.

[67] *Oxford English Dictionary*.

[68] Dylan Skolnick, "My Dog Tulip". *Pulse - Long Island Magazine*, 31/08/2010.

[69] Waler Rader, *The Online Slang Dictionary*, 1996-2009, <http://onlineslangdictionary.com/definition+of/queenie>, 30 June 2012.

[70] Dictionary of sexual terms, Farlex (2004), <http://www.sex-lexis.com/Sex-Dictionary/queenie>, 30 June 2012.

[71] *Urban Dictionary*, 1999-2009, <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Queenie>, 30 June 2012.

[72] See, for example, Peter Newmark, *Approaches to Translation* (London: Prentice Hall, 1988).

[…] it reminded Norman of something he had read that could fit the bill, J. R. Ackerley's novel *My Dog Tulip*. … 'Tulip,' said the Queen to Norman later. 'Funny name for a dog.' 'It's supposed to be fiction, ma'am, only the author did have a dog in life, an Alsatian.' (He didn't tell her its name was Queenie). 'So it's really disguised auto-biography.' (16-17)	A Norman venne in mente un libro che aveva letto e poteva fare al caso suo: L*a mia cagna Tulip* di J.R. Ackerley. … «Tulip,» disse più tardi la regina a Norman. «Che strano nome per una cagna». «La storia è romanzata, Maestà, ma l'autore una cagna ce l'aveva veramente, un pastore tedesco». (Non le disse che si chiamava Reginetta). «Quindi fuor di finzione è un libro autobiografico». (19)

Fig. 6: extract 5 from *The Uncommon Reader/La sovrana lettrice*

De Mauro's *Grande Dizionario Italiano dell'Uso*[73] provides four different entries for Reginetta:

1 dim. ⇒ regina
2 BU giovane regina
3 CO estens., ragazza vincitrice di un concorso di bellezza | ragazza che primeggia tra le altre per bellezza ed eleganza: *la r. della festa*
4 CO al pl., reginella

De Mauro's online dictionary of synonyms and antonyms also stresses the link of the word Reginetta with the domain of beauty contests:

· **CO** *(di un concorso di bellezza)*
Sinonimi
ES *ingl.* miss
♦
(di una festa e sim.)
Sinonimi
FO regina; CO prima donna
· 2
CO *al pl.*
Sinonimi
CO reginelle

The word chosen by Pavani as an equivalent of Queenie seems void of any specifically sexual connotation, thus representing a loss for the Italian reader, a loss which does not justify the substitution of the name, which would have probably sounded more suggestive of the gay world, if anything else because it reminds most people of the rock band Queen, whose vocalist Freddie Mercury was widely known to be gay. Why Reginetta, then? As hinted at above, Pavani could have left the name Queenie in English, as usually happens in today's translations, to anchor the text

[73] Tullio De Mauro, *Grande Dizionario Italiano dell'Uso* (Torino: UTET, 1999), vol. V, 454.

to the source culture, and as she herself usually does in most of the book. The fact that she does not, makes one want to consider this choice as particularly meaningful.

Queenie's fictional counterpart is called Tulip, as stated above, and this, although not as clearly connoted as Queenie, is still a very 'gay' name for a dog.[74] *My Dog Tulip* was recently translated into Italian by Giona Tuccini, who decided to leave the proper name unchanged and opted for the more neutral option 'cane' when it came to translating the word 'dog', at least in the title. The book was published by Voland in 2007. Although we know Tulip is a female dog, a bitch, to use the precise scientific term, the English title does not specifically characterise the dog as feminine. Nor does the Italian translation by Tuccini. Indeed, the dog's sex is irrelevant in the Bennett text. So why does Pavani use the feminine 'cagna' – as we can see in the extract in Fig. 6 above – which seems to have the same negative connotation in Italian as the English equivalent 'bitch'?

The OED lists the following entries for the word 'bitch':

1. a. The female of the dog.
b. The female of the fox, wolf, and occasionally of other beasts; usually in combination with the name of the species. (Also as in sense 2.)
2. a. Applied opprobriously to a woman; strictly, a lewd or sensual woman. Not now in decent use; but formerly common in literature. In mod. use, *esp.* a malicious or treacherous woman; of things: something outstandingly difficult or unpleasant. (See also SON OF A BITCH n.)
b. Applied to a man (less opprobrious, and somewhat whimsical, having the modern sense of 'dog'). Not now in decent use.
c. A primitive form of lamp used in alaska and Canada. (OED)

Grose identified bitch as "the most offensive appellation that can be given to an English woman, even more provoking than that of whore" back in 1811, in his *Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*.[75] However, in more recent usage in the context of feminism, the term has been reappropriated and stretched to connote a *strong female*. Nowadays, it is actually rather used as a compliment than as an offense, probably under the influence of *The Bitch Manifesto*:[76]

> 1) Personality. Bitches are aggressive, assertive, domineering, overbearing, strong-minded, spiteful, hostile, direct, blunt, candid, obnoxious, thick-skinned, hard-headed, vicious, dogmatic, competent, competitive, pushy, loud-mouthed, independent, stubborn, demanding, manipulative, egoistic, driven, achieving, overwhelming, threatening, scary, ambitious, tough, brassy, masculine, boisterous, and turbulent. Among other things. A Bitch occupies a lot of psychological space. You always know she is around. A Bitch takes shit from no one. You may not like her, but you cannot ignore her.

The French equivalent of 'bitch', 'chienne' has been chosen by Florence Montreynaud to name a French feminist movement, *Chiennes de Garde*, which

[74] The dog could not have possibly been called Pansy, which is a disparaging term for a man/boy who is considered effeminate. Despite the range of floral names the dog owner might have picked, Tulip would not resonate with an Italian reader, except for possible associations with the Tulip chair.

[75] Francis Grose, *Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (1811), hosted at Project Gutenberg; quot. in Mark Steven Morton, *The Lover's Tongue: A Merry Romp through the Language of Love and Sex* (Toronto: Insomniac Press, 2003), 60.

[76] Joreen, "The Bitch Manifesto", in Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine, and Anita Rapone, eds., *Radical Feminism* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1973), 50-51.

probably ironically refers in turn to watchdogs, protectors of established order.[77] Also, the term 'bitch' is widely used by Riot grrrls (Kathleen Hanna, Kathi Wilcox, Tobi Vai) and in Riot grrrl culture, which is often associated with third wave feminism.[78] Indeed, Riot grrrls bands (Bikini Kill, Bratmobile, etc.) have reappropriated such terms as 'cunt', 'bitch' and 'slut' (which men traditionally used as offensive, derogatory names for women), sometimes even writing them proudly on their bodies. Recently, even a culturally unengaged Lindsay Lohan has sponsored the use of the word, which many women now use as another term for 'hun' and 'babe', i.e. a way to address a friend, together with the less harsh and connoted 'biatch' (just the result of alternate spelling/pronunciation, which can, however, still be used in an offensive way[79]) and 'bish'. The term 'biatch' also echoes both AAVE and the African American community's reclaim of the word 'nigger' at the same time.

Although the word has lost much of its negative connotation in English, to the extent that it might even be used as a compliment, this does not seem to have happened in Italian as yet. These are the entries the *Grande Dizionario Italiano dell'Uso* lists under the heading 'cagna':[80]

1 cane femmina: *la c. ha avuto cinque cuccioli*
2a fig., spreg., donna di facili costumi, donnaccia
2b BU fig., donna malvagia, rabbiosa
2c BU fig., cantante o attrice da strapazzo
3 BU gerg., cambiale
4 RE sett., bugia, frottola

De Mauro sinonimi e contrari lists, as a synonym:[81]

· **CO** *spreg. (donna)*
Sinonimi
AU puttana *volg.* CO donnaccia

However, there are traces of the word being used recently in a positive way when it is a translation of the English term in contexts such as the ones identified above. For example, Anne Sexton's Ms Dog was translated as Madonna Cagna by Florentine translator Rosaria Lo Russo for publisher Le lettere in 2003 (*Poesie su Dio*). In light of this, Pavani's use of 'cagna' in her translation of the title *My Dog Tulip* (*La mia cagna Tulip*) seems an invitation to look at her choices in a different light: while bringing about a tinge of feminism in the text and probably being itself a sort of appropriation of the perceived derogatory use of the term, a bold choice and – maybe – a potential act of feminine dissidence which might have opened up a whole alternative reading path (the dissonance created in the text by a word so pregnant with meaning signalling to the reader such a possibility) if Pavani had stretched the text a little further. The use of the word 'cagna' also seems to place

[77] See 1932 *Les Chiens de garde* by Paul Nizan and *Les Nouveaux Chiens de garde* by Serge Halimi.

[78] Riot grrrl culture and third wave feminism both developed in the early nineties. Riot grrrl culture is often looked at as a third wave feminism cultural movement, but it is also sometimes seen as its starting point.

[79] Think of Busted's 'Big assed biatch'.

[80] Tullio De Mauro, *Grande Dizionario Italiano dell'Uso*, vol. I, 828.

[81] Tullio De Mauro, *Il dizionario dei sinonimi e dei contrari* (Torino: Paravia/Pearson, 2002-2009), <http://demauroparavia.it/6619/cagna>, 30 June 2012.

La sovrana lettrice at the heart of a tightly woven, complex network of references (it recreates the past references to Barrett and Woolf and builds up more recent, new ones with contemporary feminist artists), and thus to restore in the target text the density hidden within the apparently light texture of Bennett's book. Indeed, Pavani's new intertextual marker seems to function very effectively in the 'architecture' of the target text.

As already hinted at above, Bennet's translator, Pavani, does not seem to make unfaithfulness a political choice, though, for she could have gone much further both in terms of content and form and in terms of intertextuality. Just as an example of how much further she could have stretched the text in terms of intertextual 'architecture', one may briefly point out that she might have renamed Queenie Virginia, which, in addition to regaining the text the interdiscursive relationship with *The Common Reader* by also recalling its author's name, would have also kept the link with a Queen's nickname, magnified the power issues which are latent in the text – let us not forget that 2007, the year Pavani's translation was published, celebrated America's 400th anniversary and Her Majesty's visit to the first successful English settlement in Jamestown, Virginia – and created a further interdiscursive relationship within the target culture, although with a writer whose conduct could not be more distant from Ackerley's.[82]

[82] Italian 18th-century poet Parini's 'vergine cuccia' (*Il giorno*) was loved by her owner and hated by all others as the Queen's dogs ("'None of his friends liked the dog, ma'am.' 'One knows that feeling very well,' said the Queen, and Norman nodded solemnly, the royal dogs being generally unpopular", 17).

Conclusion

Despite openly looking at translation as a form of *écriture* which extends and develops the source text and actually putting this into practice in a few bold translation choices in *La sovrana lettrice*, Pavani does not seem to use unfaithfulness as a political strategy. Her personal touch may well be visible in some portions of the text and even a tinge of feminist intervention may pop up now and then, but these are only detectable for the alert reader travelling across source and target texts and intentionally looking for possible clues. Moreover, they come across, by and large, just as traces that are never actually woven into an agenda. Indeed, although confessing on a few occasions to usually extending authors' intentions, Pavani does not seem to take the re-writing aspect of translation to an extreme in *La sovrana lettrice*, nor does she appear to want to turn her intervention (both in terms of content and form and in terms of intertextuality) into a real political act. A few bold choices cannot be classified as 'hijacking', or as evidence of an attempt to pursue a consistent personal political agenda of any kind. To use Pavani's own words, she is probably just opening up new 'landscapes' in *La sovrana lettrice*, while pointing to the possible doors leading to them for the benefit of those readers who are most used to daring.

And yet, on taking a closer look at the rationales behind the characters' linguistic choices, i.e. to the social identities and relationships that each character in *The Uncommon Reader*/*La sovrana lettrice* inevitably projects through the specific style he/she is assigned, one cannot help but be tempted to say that the two texts tell two

completely different stories. Unfaithfulness is the inevitable effect of translation for, as Johnson puts it, "the original text is always already an impossible translation".[83] Some (mostly feminist) translators bring this common fate to an extreme by openly and explicitly manipulating the source text to suit their ends. Others, and Pavani may well be included among these, place their work in the more moderate sphere of those refusing to endow both male and female translators with the right to abuse the source text, thus implicitly sharing Simon's belief that "[f]eminist translation implies extending and developing the intention of the original text, not deforming it"[84] and Arrojo's statement that feminist translators "open, 'subversive' interference in the texts they translate serves goals that are quite similar to the ones they so vehemently attack in what they call male, colonialist modes of translating".[85] Pavani's attempt at attaining a voice which is "né azzerata né egocentrica, ma decentrata, capace di ascoltare voci diverse" is probably what accounts for the mixture of procedures and strategies used in *La sovrana lettrice*, procedures and strategies which, taken individually, would certainly seem to push the text into different directions but, looking at the larger picture, actually generate a consistent, convincing target text, instead. However, still a text that in (literary) sociolinguistic terms seems to be completely different (independent, to use a less judgmental descriptor) from the source, thus conveying a whole new message and more subtle forms of text re-appropriation and re-purposing.

[83] Barbara Johnson, "Taking Fidelity Philosophically", in Joseph Graham, ed., *Difference in Translation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 146.

[84] Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation. Cultural identity and the Politics of Transmission* (London: Routledge, 1996), 16.

[85] Rosemary Arrojo, "Fidelity and The Gendered Translation", *TTR: Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction*, 7.2 (1994), 160.