

Translation as Re-Narration in Italian-Canadian Writing: codeswitching, focalisation, voice and plot in Nino Ricci's trilogy and its Italian translation

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ABSTRACT

This study draws on poststructuralist narratology in order to examine a trilogy of novels by the Italian-Canadian author Nino Ricci, in the context of diaspora and multilingualism in general, and Italian-Canadian writing more specifically. The novels by Nino Ricci, *Lives of the Saints* (1990), *In a Glass House* (1993) and *Where She Has Gone* (1997), which were translated from English into Italian by Gabriella Iacobucci in 2004, narrate the personal experience of an Italian family before and after they emigrate to Canada and are characterised by the use of codeswitching (the passage from English to Standard Italian or dialect and vice versa). Both in this trilogy and in other Italian-Canadian diasporic texts, codeswitching is linked to translation: it represents an attempt to translate, resolve and negotiate a linguistic and cultural conflict experienced by second generation Italian immigrants, between the Italian values taught at home and the Canadian values taught through formal education. By constantly hinting at these contrasting Italian and Canadian cultural perspectives, codeswitching can signal shifts in focalisation and voice. Changes in perspective impact also on the construction of the narrative plot since they involve changes in temporal and spatial positioning. By using the classical narratological concepts of focalisation, voice and plot (Rimmon-Kenan 1983, Bal 1985), but as they are now understood in poststructuralist narratology (Gibson 1996) and narrative theory (Somers and Gibson 1994), this research attempts to illustrate how, by both destabilising the fixed positions of characters and foregrounding those elements that are important for constructing the plot, shifts in focalisation and voice serve as an ideological operation aimed at constructing Italian-Canadian identity as hybrid and unstable. The use of codeswitching in literature is difficult to reproduce in translation; consequently, as the texts travel into the Italian literary panorama, major shifts occur at the level of focalisation, voice and plot which affect the re-construction and re-presentation of the Italian-Canadian identity narrative as outlined in the source texts.

KEYWORDS: codeswitching, Italian migration, narrative theory, poststructuralist narratology, translation.

Completion of thesis

Place: University of Manchester

Year: 2008

Supervisors: Professor Mona Baker and Dr Francesca Billiani