

## Translation and Opposition in Italian-Canadian Writing

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## Translation and Opposition

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**TRANSLATING EUROPE**

*Series Editors:* Margaret Rogers and Gunilla Anderman† 2007

# Translation and Opposition

Edited by

Dimitris Asimakoulas and Margaret Rogers

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## Chapter 9

# **Translation and Opposition in Italian-Canadian Writing. Nino Ricci's Trilogy and its Italian Translation**

M. BALDO

### **Introduction**

This chapter will consider the notions of opposition and translation in Italian-Canadian writing, a body of literature produced in the last 30 years by writers of Italian background living in Canada. Specifically, I will analyse these two notions in the trilogy of novels by Nino Ricci, one of the best known Italian-Canadian novelists, and in their Italian translation.

Ricci's trilogy of novels, *Lives of the Saints* (1990), *In a Glass House* (1993) and *Where She Has Gone* (1997), deals with the experiences of an Italian family before and after they emigrated to Canada. The protagonist is Vittorio Innocente, who narrates his personal experience, from his childhood to his migration and life in Toronto, and his return back, as an adult, to his maternal village in Southern Italy. Following the literary success of the trilogy in Canada, the texts were translated into Italian in 2004 by Gabriella Iacobucci with the publishing house Fazi Editore and adapted into a TV mini-series (2004), directed by Jerry Ciccoritti and starring the Italian actresses Sophia Loren and Sabrina Ferilli. The written translation of the trilogy into Italian appears in a single book with the title *La terra del ritorno* ('The Land of Return'),<sup>1</sup> which reframes the novel as a homecoming of the Italian-Canadian immigrant. The translation project was conceived with the purpose of: (a) capitalizing on the launch of the TV mini-series in the same year; and (b) offering Italian readers a coherent account of the trilogy (Canton, 2002).<sup>2</sup>



Thus, translation is understood here not only as the material transfer operation involving texts across languages and media, but also as a metaphor strictly linked to the idea of oppositional perspectives.

## **Why Opposition and Translation in Italian-Canadian Writing?**

Italian-Canadian writing first appeared in the mid-1970s with the work of Pier Giorgio Di Cicco, who was also one of the founders of the Association of Italian-Canadian writers in Vancouver in 1986.

The idea of translation as an abstract site of oppositions, which can be readily associated with this specific type of literature, mainly emerges out of a concrete generational gap. The majority of the writers I am referring to were either born in Canada to Italian families coming generally from rural areas of Southern Italy (as in the case of Nino Ricci), or emigrated to Canada at an early age and grew up there, and thus can be considered as second-generation immigrants. As such, they experienced a conflict between the values (such as self-promotion and individualism) conveyed in English by the school system, the media and the mainstream English-Canadian culture, and the values taught at home by their parents in an Italian dialect (such as filial obedience and patriarchal gender role division), which were often rejected (Tuzi, 1997: 14) because of the many prejudices circulating about Italians in Canada since the 1950s and 1960s (DeMaria Harney, 1998). However, the sense of guilt at attempting to break their bonds with the past provided Italian-Canadian writers with inspiration for their stories. Many narrate a journey of return to their Italian roots in their adulthood (in real and metaphorical ways) as a means of self-recognition (Pivato, 1994: 121, 163), of giving voice to a familiar past of silence.

The concept of opposition refers, therefore, to the contrast of values mentioned above and represents the driving force of Italian-Canadian writing. Writing constitutes a way of translating and negotiating cultural perspectives often in conflict with each other. As Pivato (1994: 127) has noted: 'The most important task for Italian-Canadian writers has been the uncovering and translation of their immigrant experience as an act of self-discovery'. Translation becomes a heuristic tool which enables Italian-Canadian writers to express themselves. In this Italian-Canadian writing, thus, both writing and translation meet as a practice of creation, of rewriting (Pratt, 1992), and 'writing and translating are synonyms' (Verdicchio, 1997: 110).

## **Heterogeneous Perspectives: Code-switching on the Page**

Italian-Canadian writing is therefore born out of the need to translate a set of cultural and linguistic oppositions. The most peculiar expression of this translation is the presence of multilingualism in this literature: Italian-Canadian writing mainly appears in three or four languages, Canadian-English, French, standard Italian and a variety of Italian dialects, and often in a mixture of all these languages within the same texts. As stated by Simon (1994: 20), incorporating texts and intertexts from other languages in a given text is described as 'a poetic of translation' which characterizes borderlands where creation and translation, originality and imitation, authority and submission merge. Translation is strictly linked to multilingualism (Delabastita & Grutman, 2005: 11); this link has been analysed, for example, by authors investigating post-colonial contexts (see Bandia 1996, 2008; Bhabha, 1990, 1994; Mehrez, 1992; Tymoczko, 1999), or situations of diaspora and migration (Cronin, 2006: 45).

Since the focus of the current analysis is the constant shifts or passages from one language and cultural sphere (Italy and Canada) to another, as a way of giving expression to the many oppositions experienced by Italian-Canadian writers, I will adopt the term 'code-switching' rather than 'multilingualism'. Code-switching, a phenomenon usually observed among speakers of bilingual communities in which two or more languages are in contact, is defined in syntactic terms as:

the alternative use by bilinguals of two or more languages in the same conversation. [...] It can occur between the turn of different speakers in conversation, sometimes even within a single utterance. (Milroy & Muysken, 1995: 7–8)

Although written and oral code-switching are not the same, the former can mimic the latter (Callahan, 2005: 100). Code-switching in literature can be considered a mimetic device used to imitate the real speech of characters in the narrative, so identifying them as members of an ethnic community (Camarca, 2005: 128). Written code-switching thus holds a sociological significance, as demonstrated by sociolinguists like Auer (1998), Gumperz (1982), Martin (2005) and Muysken (2000).<sup>3</sup> In the specific case of Ricci's trilogy, the use of Italian and Southern Italian dialects can serve to portray a group identity. As an example, the home language (Italian and dialect) is associated with intimacy and personal involvement (Gumperz, 1982), while the institutional language (Canadian-English) has connotations of authority and distance (Callahan, 2005: 18).

Yet, the process of indexing identity is not straightforward and rests in particular on the contrast achieved by the juxtaposition of the codes involved in the switching; this means that code-switching is partly independent from the meaning of the codes in the sociolinguistic repertoire (Gumperz, 1982: 84, 91). A concept that can clarify this aspect of code-switching is the notion of contextualization cues which are understood by Gumperz (1982: 131) as specific signposts hinting at extra textual factors whose inferential (and not referential) meaning (see Callahan, 2005: 17) speakers and listeners are forced to look at in order to contextualize a conversational activity. To Gumperz's idea of contextualization cues we can add the markedness model by Myers-Scotton (1993a: 57), which stresses further the creative role of the participants of a conversation in negotiating changes based on the type of conversation.

The complex functions of oral code-switching are further complicated in written code-switching because of the fictional nature of texts (where 'fictional' refers to the possibilities and constraints of the written medium). Written code-switching is a meta-discursive feature that, by indexing extra-textual factors, contributes to giving significance to a text (Pirazzini, 2000: 543). If the sociological characteristics of the languages involved in the switch are important, this is more so for the way these languages are embedded in the overall text and made to interact with each other (Delabastita & Grutman, 2005: 16). As an example, a writer in diasporic contexts can use code-switching to deconstruct stereotypes by putting together contrasting perceptions linked to a certain community (see also Auer, 1998). Given these considerations, a fruitful analysis of code-switching requires a detailed examination of cases of relevant shifts, as will be shown below.

## Narrative and Code-switching in Ricci's Trilogy

In order to analyse the textual function of code-switching in Ricci's trilogy it is useful to borrow concepts from narratology, complementing them with insights from post-structuralism. Code-switching is a strategy that is used to construct a narrative by translating and giving voice to often conflicting perspectives. By hinting at a shift of perspectives, code-switching thus relies heavily on the concepts of *focalization* and *voice*<sup>4</sup> (Määttä, 2004),<sup>5</sup> which refer to the perspective through which we see and talk about things. Both concepts were originally referred to as *point of view* (Genette, 1980: 186), a term which conflated two different questions, namely the questions of 'who sees' and 'who speaks'. Yet it is possible to speak without having seen the events, just by reporting someone else's view or what they have seen. Speaking and seeing can therefore be attributed to two different agencies

(Bal, 1985: 143; Rimmon-Kenan, 1983: 72).<sup>6</sup> Seeing is what has been defined in narrative as *focalization*, which entails not only the optical but also the cognitive, emotive and ideological aspects of the perception, while speaking or narrating has been defined as *voice*. Voice can be analysed in terms of grammatical persons (Abbott, 2002: 64); these could be either first-person or third-person narratives, as explained by Genette (1980: 244–245). In a text which is narrated in the first person, like Ricci's trilogy, the narrator refers to him/herself with the pronoun 'I', and is usually also a character in the story.

The link between code-switching, focalization and voice is shown by the fact that code-switched words represent the focus of attention. This phenomenon is known in oral code-switching as *flagging* (Callahan, 2005: 9) and is signalled in written code-switching, and in the specific case of Ricci's trilogy, by the use of italics (Callahan, 2005: 9), which visually highlight the contrastive function of code-switching (Camarca, 2005: 103).

Code-switching can direct focalization and voice in a contrastive mode in different ways. This contrast might be created by switches in focalization and voice between the adult narrator and the child protagonist, for example, as in the first novel of Ricci's trilogy, which presents a character-focalized vision embedded in the developing perspective of an external focalizer; or it might be the outcome of switches between the two different selves of the adult narrator, or between the narrator and a character, or from character to character. Switches in focalization and voice also impact on the construction of the plot. A narrative plot is defined in narratology as constituted by events arranged in time sequence and causally linked to each other (Somers & Gibson, 1994: 59). In Ricci's trilogy, code-switching can stress terms related to important episodes anchored to the ideological construction of the plots and it can also anticipate events or create suspense, through the 'prolepsis' technique (Genette, 1980).

Focalization, voice and plot are thus useful fictional tools, according to which literary authors can position their readers, manipulating their understanding of narratives (Abbott, 2002: 39). This claim points towards the ideological status of narrative, the fact that narrative is one of the ways in which identity is constructed (Currie, 1998: 32), a thought that has been particularly stressed in poststructuralist narratology and social theories of narrative.<sup>7</sup> In the light of the above it can be argued that code-switching, by signalling changes in focalization and thus translating the cultural oppositions which characterize Italian-Canadian writing, participates in the narrative construction of an Italian-Canadian identity, and in its re-narration/translation into Italian.

Translation in this diasporic/multilingual context is thus considered not only as a tool for expanding the horizon of one language (Burns

& Polezzi, 2003: 233) and representing and constructing one's identity, but also as a strategic transfer of texts from one culture to the next, as shown by the translation of Ricci's novels into Italian. Such a translation presents a unique challenge, because it involves a re-narration of already (author-) translated oppositional perspectives in the source text (ST), including cultural stereotypes, as will be shown below.

## Code-switching, Translation and Opposition in Nino Ricci's Trilogy

Code-switching in Nino Ricci's trilogy involves the **insertion** (using the definition by Muysken, 2000: 3) into a text written mainly in Canadian English of the following languages: standard Italian, *italiese* (only used sporadically), Southern Italian dialects, French and German (used very infrequently). The word *italiese* refers to a blend of *italiano* ('Italian') and *inglese* ('English') (Clivio & Danesi, 2000: 180): it consists of a mixture of Italian dialects, standard Italian (even though it is not used fluently by most speakers) (Vizmuller-Zocco, 1995: 515) and Canadian-English lexical borrowings. Along with *italiese*, the trilogy also features the use of a dialect (or a variety of dialects) from the Molise region<sup>8</sup> which is used in the speech of characters from the Molisan village of Valle del Sole and nearby villages, both in Italy and in Canada where these immigrants have settled.<sup>9</sup>

Although code-switching in *Lives of the Saints* occurs both in narration (with the presence mainly of nouns)<sup>10</sup> and in direct speech (with the presence of greetings, discourse openers and farewells, politeness markers, exclamations and interjections, imperatives and discourse markers), the number or frequency of switches is greater in direct speech.<sup>11</sup> This suggests that Nino Ricci is trying to assimilate the characteristics of orality into written language; however, this mimetic intent is constrained because of the implied Anglophone readership's limited linguistic competence in Italian or Southern Italian dialects (Camarca, 2005: 240). This stresses once more the fictional nature of written code-switching (as outlined above), which is used by an author to orient the reader towards a particular interpretation of the text that must take into account the contrastive passage from one code into another. Code-switching, both in narration and in dialogue, is mainly used to signal the following:

- (a) the contradictions of the idyllic representation of the old world by first generation immigrants;
- (b) the contrast of values between the old (Italy) and the new world (Canada).

With respect to the function of code-switching (point (a)), the portrayal of the contradictions of the Southern Italian world is performed through a category of nouns labelled as 'social positioning', which refer to people's status in their families (mother, father, son, etc.) and in society at large as a consequence of their jobs (doctor, teacher, etc.). The item *la maestra* ('the teacher') is often used to contrast the focalization of the child-protagonist Vittorio with the voice of his older, narrating self, as in Example 9.1 below. Here *la maestra* signals the restricted vision of the child Vittorio in the most important episode of the book, his mother's affair with a man who will consequently make her pregnant. After hearing a scream from the stable Vittorio runs to investigate and is vaguely aware of a man running away on foot, although he does not have a clear look at his face. However, upon his mother enquiring about what he has seen, he replies that he has seen nothing, justifying his answer to himself by remembering his teacher's emphasis on the need to be clear and succinct.

### Example 9.1

Question and answer: that was how *la maestra* taught us our lessons at school and how Father Nicola, the village priest, taught us our catechism. (Ricci, 1990: 7)

The child's response is ironic, since it is the product of a clash between the scattered images in his mind and the manipulation of those images by the adult world. Vittorio is asked to provide a coherent account of facts, a normalization of the events in a format that can be accepted by his mother. He does so by removing from his account the blurred images of a man running away from the stable. This episode illustrates that a narrative construction, in poststructuralist terms, is always the result of an operation of selection (and thus of inclusion and exclusion) of elements of a story, which are manipulated and assembled according to the agenda of the storyteller, and the conditions under which the story is narrated.

This inability by Vittorio to reconcile contrasting perceptions of the teacher as a person with a body and sexuality and as the simple incarnation of a role<sup>12</sup> reminds the reader of the contradictions which characterize the moral/cultural values of Valle del Sole in relation to Cristina's affair, who will be ostracized by the villagers for her out-of-wedlock relationship. *La maestra* is also juxtaposed with Vittorio's mother, Cristina, who is dismissive of the teacher's authority, and of other authorities who try to reposition her in the traditional role of *la signora* ('the lady'), such as the village priest, the captain of the boat on which she travels to Canada and the doctor Cosabene, on duty on the same boat.

In other cases her defiance of the traditional roles is shown in conversations with the villagers with politeness markers such as *scusa* and *scusate* ('excuse me', but also 'I beg your pardon' and 'I am sorry')<sup>13</sup> which are marked for informality and formality respectively. In Example 9.2 the barman of the village, Antonio Di Lucci (a character in *Lives of the Saints*), drives Cristina to the hospital after a snake bit her while she was in the stable with her lover (see Example 9.1). Antonio, through his questions, pushes Cristina towards confessing a dark scandal, which is supposedly related to the snake bite in the villagers' beliefs.

### Example 9.2

'Where did it bite you?'

My mother let out a sigh.

'Andò, you heard me say just a few minutes ago. On the ankle.'

'Yes, of course, on the ankle, but where were you when it bit you on the ankle?'

'Too close to a snake.'

'Ma *scusate*, Cristina, I'm asking a simple question.'

'*Scusa*, Andò, what does the doctor care where I was when the snake bit me?' my mother said, her voice tinged with irritation. (Ricci, 1990: 15)

With the directness of the informal *scusa* Cristina counteracts the formality and the indirectness of Di Lucci's formal *scusate*, breaking the reciprocity rules of the communicative speech act and foregrounding her vision of the facts. Her answer, 'too close to a snake', criticizes peasants' beliefs and superstitions behind which there is nothing but a sense of fatalism (Tuzi, 1997: 87).

With reference to the second contrastive function (point (b) above), code-switching is used on a more global level to signal clashes between the old and the new world's values, mainly through the use of discourse markers and terms (adjectives) which denote provenance (see Examples 9.3, 9.4, 9.5, 9.6 and 9.7 below). In Example 9.3, the interaction takes place at the Canadian farm in Mersea (Ontario region) where Vittorio's (the protagonist's) family has settled. The term is used by Vittorio's uncle Alfredo to address his wife Maria, who is worried about the disappearance of Mario, Vittorio's father. Alfredo firmly opposes his wife's suggestion to call the police.

*Example 9.3*

'Maybe you should call the police,' Tsia Maria said.

'Don't talk nonsense, what are the police going to do?'

'*Mbeh*, who knows where he's gotten to? Maybe he's lying in some ditch with his head broken.'

'*Grazie*,' Tsi Alfredo said. 'And what are you going to tell the police when they ask you why he's gone?'

'Tell them the truth, what's happened.'

'*Sì*. We might as well just publish it in the newspaper, and then everyone will know.'

'Everyone knows as it is.'

'Don't be an idiot. You know how they are here, every little thing they know about us, they make up some story. We'll take care of our own problems.' (Ricci, 1993: 27–28)

*Grazie* ('thank you'), used as a discourse marker rather than a politeness marker, and *sì* ('yes') foreground Alfredo's focalization of the events, his Southern Italian sarcastic distrust of social institutions and his belief that family betrayals are private and must be kept secret. He thinks that explaining (to the police) the reason for Mario's disappearance – his long-term depression caused by Cristina's betrayal – might expose the family and the whole Italian community to racism and stereotyping. *Mbeh* (well), used to foreground Alfredo's wife's different focalization of the events, shows a relationship in which the woman's opinion is not allowed to count (and in a similar way it will be used in other parts of the trilogy by Vittorio's aunt Teresa in response to her brother's violent manner). This event explains in part the development of the plot that leads to Mario's later suicide: he has been trapped by his Southern Italian sense of shame which prevented him and his family and relatives from seeking medical help for his depression from the Canadian health system.

Thus code-switching frames and transforms oppositional perspectives concerning the English/Canadian belief in institutions and the distress over the perceived old-fashioned male and female roles within the Italian-Canadian communities. By doing so, code-switching evokes the Southern Italian cultural background on which Ricci's characters draw and which they creatively challenge (see Myers-Scotton, 1993b) in view of the emerging influence of English/Canadian beliefs. This background is one of



harsh life, and this is shown in the use of interjections of anger, invocation or encouragement. An example is the extensive use of *dai* ('come on!'), mostly to deal with Mario's swinging moods and negative emotions, either his anger, ruggedness, or nervousness and depression.

It is worth noticing that in Example 9.3 the item *Mbeh*, which corresponds to the Italian *embè* (a transformation of the term *be'* derived from the elision of the Italian adverb *bene*), shows the contamination of Italian words by their exposure to English-Canadian. *Mbeh* appears only in the second book of the trilogy (while *beh* appears in the other two), with characters that are all first-generation immigrants. The terms *Tsi'* (uncle) and *Tsia* (aunt) (written in capital letters) never appear in italics, probably because they are highly familiar to the protagonist of the trilogy, since he lives surrounded by his aunts and uncles. In the first novel of the trilogy the terms *Tsi'* (uncle) and *Tsia* (aunt) are spelled in standard Italian (*zia* and *zio*), while in the second novel they are spelled as they are pronounced in the Molisan dialect spoken by Nino Ricci, but at the same time contaminated by the English orthography of the phonetic cluster 'tz'. This reflects the process of change and hybridization of Italian dialects as a result of the contact with Canadian English, since for the Italian diasporic communities in Canada, Italian was not learned at school (before the Multiculturalism Act, in the years in which the novel is set), let alone spoken at home.

Another item which is inevitably connected with immigration and thus raises issues such as change and contamination among Italians living in Canada is *paesano*. According to the Italian dictionary compiled by De Mauro (1999–2007), *paesano* is the person who was born and lives in a village ('paese'). For an Italian, *paesano* is thus a person who is from the same village or small town in Italy he/she comes from. For an Italian-Canadian, *paesano* refers to Italians from the same region in Italy, while for Canadians who are not of Italian origin it can signify Italians in general and it can even include Canadians of non-Italian origin. With this meaning it is used by a German-Canadian (who owns the farm where Vittorio's father, Mario, works) to address Mario, showing spiritual kinship and goodwill (Example 9.4).

#### Example 9.4

'Mario,' he [the German] said. 'Mario, Mario, *como stai, paesano?*' [...]

'That was the guy I bought the farm from,' he [Mario] said. 'Those Germans – *paesano* this, *paesano* that, everyone's a *paesano*. But the old bastard just wanted to make sure I do not forget to pay him.' (Ricci, 1993: 32)

### Example 9.5

'Don't think he was stupid enough to say a word about the money. You know how they are, always smiling, *amico paesano*.' (Ricci, 1993: 34)

*Paesano* signals the co-presence of different perceptions, the Canadian and the Italian-Canadian (Canton, 2004: 149). For the non-Italian/Canadian, *paesano* creates an emotional link with the Italian-Canadian since it suggests the idea of common aims and interests. The German-Canadian farmer's interpretation and use of *paesano*, however, is perceived as hypocritical by Mario (irony can be seen in the use of term *amico* ['friend'] as in Example 9.5), and indicates the fragility of a concept such as shared 'Canadian' identity. Code-switching thus draws our attention to contrasting perceptions of the same term (Canton, 2004: 154), on the basis of who uses it. The complex nuances of this item are also present in the following excerpt.

### Example 9.6

'Deutschman?' he said. 'Aufwiedersehen? Nederlander? Italiano?' 'Italiano,' I [Vittorio] said, clutching at the familiar word. [...] Ah Italiano!' He thumped a hand on his chest. 'Me speak Italiano much mucho. Me paesano.' When other boys got on the bus and came to the back, the black-haired boy said they were *paesani* as well, and each in turn smiled broadly at me and shook my hand. They tried to talk to me using their hands and their strange half-language. One of them pointed to the big silver lunchbox Tsia Teresa had packed my lunch in. 'Mucho mucho,' he said, holding his hands wide in front of him. Then he pointed to me and brought his hands closer together. 'No mucho mucho.' The other boys laughed. The black-haired boy took the lunchbox from me and held it before him as if to admire it. [...] 'Mu-cho mu-cho,' he said, thrusting the sandwich away to one of the other boys and pinching his nose. [...] They began to pass the second sandwich around. I tried to leap up to pull it away but the black-haired boy's arm shot out suddenly in front of me and pinned me to the seat, and then his fist caught the side of my head hard three times in quick succession, my head pounding against the glass of the window beside me. 'No, no, paesano.' (Ricci, 1993: 51–52)

Vittorio, the child protagonist, is questioned on the bus to school about his national origin by an older boy who bullies him, steals his sandwich and punches him. The teasing effect is reinforced by a mixture of different foreign expressions (*Deutschman*, *Aufwiedersehen*, *Nederlander*, *Italiano*) and

in particular by producing a false German term (*Deutschman*) and by combining Spanish with English and Italian (*me speak Italiano mucho mucho*), a sort of creole language employed to produce comic effects (aided by the stress on the syllables in *mucho*). Other Canadians' ignorance of foreign languages and, more specifically, Italian language and culture, is also implied (the Italian is mistaken for Spanish) as well as their reliance on stereotypes (one of which is related to Italian food, as the lunchbox episode shows).

*Paesano* underlines the specificities of the Italian-Canadian immigrant's experience (Canton, 2004: 156), which is rooted in the traditional Italian concept of *paese* ('village') but which adapts this concept, utilizing but also contaminating and challenging it, in the continuous reconstruction of a sense of community abroad, by including different communities of Italians (and non-Italians) in Canada. This strong sense of community can also explain how the plot is brought forward, specifically with respect to the shame felt by Mario for his wife's betrayal which leads him to commit suicide.<sup>14</sup> Ricci's view is that Italians in Canada are also subjected to stereotypes which they partially believe, and therefore develop a hatred of their own pre-acquired Southern Italian values (Pivato, 1994: 180), with psychological confusion and impasse stemming from that.

This opposition between the two battling selves of the adult narrator (one more faithful to the old country, the other to the new one) is present also in *Where She Has Gone*, a novel in which the adult Vittorio returns to Italy in order to recover a past which eludes him and in place of which another narrative is invented. The code-switched expressions in this novel are few and formulaic: Vittorio does not speak much Italian and forces himself into the language, in an attempt to reclaim a culture, the Italian culture, which has become distant. In Example 9.7 he takes a taxi in Rome and is asked about his nationality by the taxi driver.

### Example 9.7

'Ah, è italiano.' But it was clear from his forced smile that he'd in fact surmised the opposite, that I was a foreigner. [...] 'Americano?' the cabby said. 'Sì, No.' I had to struggle to dredge up my Italian. 'Canadese. But born in Italy.' (Ricci, 1997: 167)

The adult protagonist struggles to define the two elements inside himself, the Canadian and the Italian. To this battle there is no resolution since in another scene Vittorio, while leaving Italy on a train to Lyons, will tell a passenger in an assertive way that he is *Canadese*, not *Italiano*. The Italian-Canadian identity, as demonstrated by Ricci's use of the item

*paesano* and other adjectives of provenance, is an aggregate of diverse and potentially incompatible components (trans-national, social, psychological) which are themselves in a state of constant readjustment.

## Code-switching, Translation and Opposition in the Italian Translation of Ricci's Trilogy

Before analysing the Italian translation of Ricci's trilogy, it is useful to remember that translation is not only present in the ST as a metaphor but in the form of translation techniques such as literal translation into English of the code-switched expression, paraphrase and contextual translation (see Rudin, 1996),<sup>15</sup> used by Ricci to facilitate the comprehension of code-switched items by the Anglophone reader. These strategies contribute to reinforcing the idea that multilingualism and translation should be considered as complementary. On the other hand, when it comes to the actual interlingual transfer of the novels into Italian, the major techniques available to the translator are either the **maintenance** or the **suppression** of italics.

Overall the source text–target text comparison shows that one of the main features of translation is the **suppression** or the diminished use of italics to reproduce code-switched items in the ST. This suppression, specifically used for items referring to cultural references and to social positioning, including *maestra* and *signora* analysed in the previous section, diminishes the visual signalling of shifts in focalization and the overall perception of opposition in the texts. The reduction of the linguistic interplay of the STs in the target texts (TTs) is a very common translation strategy for multilingual texts in general, as stated by Berman (1985), since multilingual relations depicted in the STs are deeply rooted in the ST culture and are almost impossible to reproduce in other contexts (Delabastita & Grutman, 2005: 27). In the case of Ricci's trilogy, a reduction of the effects of code-switching is partly unavoidable, given that the languages of the code-switches (Italian and Molisan dialect) are also the target language (TL) and, therefore, there is logically no need to signal a domestic term when the code-switch is no longer operative. However, given that italics are also used as an emphatic tool in general, the translator could have chosen to preserve them, or to use English to translate code-switching in the STs, as she does with the title of some English songs and with a few English terms such as 'wop'<sup>16</sup> that she does not translate and opts to put in italics.

This shows that the translator has a different perception of the importance of the interplay of languages in the STs; however, despite the loss of

italics, she sometimes **maintains** it for *italiese* terms such as *lu boss*, *la ghel-lafrriend*, or for hybrid items which are apparently in standard Italian or dialect but have been used with a different meaning as a result of immigration, like *paesano*. *Paesano* is preserved in italics (along with other code-switched terms) in the translation of Examples 9.5 and 9.6 analysed previously (and see Examples 9.8 and 9.9 below) but not in the translation of Example 9.4 (see Example 9.10 below). This different treatment is probably due to the fact that in Examples 9.8 and 9.9 the comic and derogatory effects of the interplay of foreign languages are stronger than in other parts of the novels.

### Example 9.8

Tu lo sai come sono, sempre il sorriso, *amico, paesano*. (Ricci, 2004: 289)

### Example 9.9

«*Deutschman?*», disse. «*Aufwiedersehen? Nederlander? Italiano?*».

«*Italiano*», dissi, aggrappandomi alla parola familiare.

«Ah, *italiano!*». Si batté una mano sul petto. «*Me speak italiano much mucho. Me paesano*». [...] «*Mucho mucho*», disse, allargando le mani davanti a sé. Poi, indicando me, le avvicinò. «*No mucho mucho*». Gli altri risero. Il ragazzo bruno mi prese il porta pranzo e lo tenne davanti a sé come per ammirarlo. Poi lo aprì e scartò uno dei panini, ne annusò il contenuto. Storse la faccia.

«*Mu-cho, mu-cho*», disse, passandolo a un altro e chiudendosi il naso con le dita. (Ricci, 2004: 306–307)

### Example 9.10

«Mario», disse. «Mario, Mario, **come stai**, paesano?». [...] «Quello era l'uomo dal quale ho comprato la fattoria», disse. «Questi tedeschi ... paesano qua, paesano là, tutti sono paesani. Ma quel vecchio **figlio di puttana** è venuto solo a vedere se mi sono dimenticato di pagarlo». (Ricci, 2004: 287)

In Example 9.10 the loss of italics is **compensated for** by the use of a very informal/derogatory expression, *figlio di puttana*, to translate the term 'bastard', which emphasizes Mario's anger and sarcasm.

Along with the maintenance and the suppression of italics, three **compensation** techniques are employed: they range from changing the register of a sentence to paraphrasing and glossing linguistic material around

code-switching (also used in the case of the item *scusa/scusate*, analysed in Example 9.3) in order to convey some of the pragmatic force of the ST's code-switches. In Example 9.11 below (which corresponds to ST Example 9.2), the Italian translation emphasizes the formality and indirectness of Di Lucci's speech by using the second-person plural of the personal pronouns *you*, *vi* and *voi* and of the verb 'to stay' (*stavate*), and stresses the directness of Cristina's speech by using the second-person singular of the verb 'to hear' (*hai sentito*). These strategies cannot be used in English, which does not distinguish morphologically between 'you singular' and 'you plural' in verbs and pronouns.

### Example 9.11

«Dove **vi** ha morso?».

Mia madre si lasciò sfuggire un sospiro.

«Andò, l'**hai sentito** giusto un momento fa. Alla caviglia».

«Sì, va bene, alla caviglia, ma dove **stavate voi** quando **vi** ha morso alla caviglia?».

«Tropo vicino ad una serpe».

«Scusate, Cristina, sto solo facendo una domanda». (Ricci, 2004: 26)

Along with compensation, we have in Ricci the **transformation** of the code-switched item in the following ways: (a) when dialect is substituted with standard Italian and vice versa; (b) when the spelling of the Italian words are changed in order to reproduce the Italian graphic representation of terms; and (c) when an item is translated with a standard term or an expression more specific to the target culture.

In Example 9.10 above, the mispronounced and hybrid greeting (a mixture of Italian and Spanish) *como stai* in the ST is transformed in the TT into the standard Italian *come stai*. This happens also for the colourful discourse marker *mbeh* transformed into the standard Italian *be'*, or the item *Tsi'/Tsia* translated into the dialect term *zi'* (and not into the standard Italian *zio/zia*) (see Example 9.12 below). Here the translator corrects the spelling of these items, to make them sound either more Italian or dialect (Molisan dialect).

### Example 9.12

«Forse devi chiamare la polizia», disse zia Maria.

«Non dire fesserie, che deve fare la polizia?».

«**Be'**, chi lo sa dov' è andato? Magari sta in fondo a un fosso con la testa rotta».

«**Grazie**», disse **zi'** Alfredo. «E che dici alla polizia quando ti chiede perché è andato via?». (Ricci, 2004: 282)

The use of more specific terms and the change of spelling may be meant to facilitate the Italian reader's encounter with the text, 'aligning it more closely with domestic conventions' (Woodham, 2007: 78). This suggests a different perception by the translator of the implied readership, a perception that seems to be shared by Italian publishing houses in general which seem to avoid non-standard Italian linguistic forms, and what they see as grammatical and spelling mistakes, even though these textual elements might carry an important meaning.

## Conclusion

The analysis of some examples of written code-switching in Ricci's trilogy has revealed that the narrator is able to move beyond a simple stereotypical portrayal of Italianness and Italian-Canadianness; he does so by juxtaposing the focalization of minority subjects (see Fisher, 2002: 50) such as the child Vittorio and Cristina, with that of the authority, or by showing the opposition and the need for integration of old and new modes of existence for the Italian immigrants in Canada. This need will lead the protagonist back to his maternal village in Italy in search of a home that will never be found and has, instead, to be re-invented. In Ricci's trilogy, therefore, the constant shifting of perspective through code-switching creates a narrative identity which is in constant flux and which challenges nationalist diasporic narratives centred on the myth of return, on the nostalgic portrayal of the old country and on women's morality. Such a narrative can be compared to a journey made of constant new departures and arrivals, and can be defined as transcultural (Pan, 2004: 10), one that is always projected outside itself, and because of this yearns for further translations and journeys. One of these journeys is the return to Italy. Gabriella Iacobucci translated the trilogy into Italian with the clear intention of returning Nino Ricci home. However, the analysis of the translation, where the translation pays little attention to the hybridity of the texts and to the ironic and contrastive aspect of code-switching, shows that this type of return is an illusion, since it appears as though the Italian-Canadian migrant has never migrated.

This chapter elaborates on the general notion of opposition by focusing on the identity construction of Italian-Canadianness. Previous work on

Italian-Canadian writing has almost totally focused on thematic aspects of relevant literary works, ignoring the analysis of multilingualism and translation. This article represents the first investigation of Ricci's trilogy and contributes to the enrichment of an understanding of written code-switching<sup>17</sup> and translation (an area also neglected by narratological theories). The model of analysis suggested here can give a better understanding of (post)-migrant writing in general, by strictly linking micro-analysis with macro-analysis. At the micro-level, code-switching, a common feature of (post)-migrant writing, explains that the construction of a narrative is a sort of metaphorical translation because the text constantly refers to something else within itself. At the macro-level, this otherness within the text itself might tell us why works like those of Ricci, which involve the translation of terms which have already migrated, long to return to the place of departure through canonical translation, and how such a return/translation happens in practice. Linguistic analysis can thus clarify the narrative assumptions that make possible such translations, since the mechanisms of the text construction mirror those of the narratives circulating in society.

It would be highly interesting and methodologically productive to test this model on other (post)-migrant works in order to expand and enrich it, for example by seeing how code-switching can be linked to other textual devices or by identifying other textual elements which can be pivotal in the construction of the narrative text as well as for the need for translation.

## Notes

1. Iacobucci (personal correspondence between September and November 2008).
2. Iacobucci (personal correspondence between September and November 2008).
3. My choice of the term 'code-switching' is in line with the practice of scholars such as Bandia (1996, 2008), who employs the notion in analysing situations of multilingualism and power in post-colonial settings, along with the notion of translation, and the work of other scholars, Bandia (1996, 2008) included, who apply the term to written texts (Callahan, 2005; Camarca, 2005; Martin, 2005; Vizcaino, 2005; Woodham, 2007; Zabus, 1991).
4. The concept of 'voice' is also important because Italian-Canadian writing's main purpose was to give voice to a voiceless familial past (Pivato, 1994).
5. This issue has received some attention in two studies, one by Tuzi (1997: 77–78) and one by Baena (2000), who have analysed the double perspective in Ricci's *Lives of the Saints*. Voice and perspective have also been investigated recently by scholars in Translation Studies, who have attempted to define the translator's voice or the translation point of view (Bosseaux, 2004; Hermans, 1996).



6. 'Point of view' is an older general term which in English and North American criticism (see Booth, 1961; Stanzel, 1955) often includes the concept of 'voice' (Abbott, 2002: 190).
7. This view is dominant in scholars such as Currie (1998), Gibson (1996) and Somers and Gibson (1994).
8. It is important to note that the Italian dialects spoken abroad do not undergo the diachronic change that characterizes dialects in Italy (Vizmuller-Zocco, 1995: 514), and that a degree of dialect levelling occurred in Canada among speakers of different dialects as a result of immigration (Tosi, 1991: 407).
9. Nino Ricci (personal communication, June–October 2008) stated that the dialect used in the trilogy is the transcription, based on personal memories, of the dialect of his parents, who are from two villages in the province of Isernia, and of his relatives from the same or nearby villages.
10. Researchers in conversational code-switching have found that nouns are the most readily borrowed parts of discourse (Van Hout & Muysken, 1994: 39).
11. According to Camarca (2005: 230), 126 of the total of 337 instances of code-switching in Ricci's trilogy are in direct speech.
12. This contrast is accentuated by the fact that the teacher narrates to her pupils the stories of the lives of the saints (from which the title of the first novel is taken), in a way that makes religious concepts become more familiar but at the same time more disturbing because she often invokes the carnality of the body and the idea of nakedness as sinful thoughts.
13. *Scusa* and *scusate* can perform both the speech act of apologizing and the action of attracting the attention of the interlocutor, and thus function also as discourse markers (Collins English Dictionary, 2005).
14. To Mario, his wife's betrayal implies his inadequacy as a man, since he has not been able to take revenge by killing his wife's lover and punish her. However, in Canada he has to cope with the pressure of a different value-system, which gives vengeance no legitimacy or approval.
15. 'Contextual translation' is a translation in which the meaning of code-switching is inferred from the context, when, for example, a question is inferred from its answer (see also Bandia, 1996: 141–142).
16. 'Wop' is a derogatory term, sometimes used playfully to refer to people of Italian origin in Canada.
17. Written code-switching has been much less analysed than oral code-switching.

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