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Beyond Self-Translation and Translation in Licia Canton's *The Pink House and Other Stories*

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Article abstract

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BEYOND SELF-TRANSLATION AND TRANSLATION IN LICIA CANTON'S *THE PINK HOUSE AND OTHER STORIES*

MARIA PIA SPADAFORA

Summary: Despite the vast field represented by translation and self-translation, there is much more to say about these two distinctive practices and their differences within the Canadian landscape. This paper focuses on Licia Canton's short-story collection *The Pink House and Other Stories*. It discusses the self-translated stories in the collection, comparing them with other stories which I have attempted to translate into Italian. By referring to the work of scholars such as Popović, Grutman, Blanco, Tanqueiro, Serafin, Bassnett, Tagore, and Gumperz, this paper aims to highlight what is inevitably lost in translation whilst underlining the importance of self-translation in the Canadian context.

La traducción no es la obra sino un camino hacia la obra.

–José Ortega y Gasset, *Libro de las misiones*

Introduction

Observing Gustav Klimt's *Mother with Two Children (Family)* in the Belvedere Museum in Vienna, it is quite disagreeable to see that those aspects of his earlier technique in *The Kiss*, with Klimt's use of golden-like colours, are dulled in a deep brown as if to suggest being covered by earth. The portrayal of an intimate scene of a sleeping mother embracing her two children, also asleep, is disturbing when compared to *The Kiss*. Only after reading the plate below the canvas can one read, come to connect, or translate that this is a more personal work of his, suggestive of not only shimmering beauty but also suffering. Similarly, one can view/interpret translation and self-translation within its original texts, such as Klimt's mother with her children, through translation and self-translation. This can be understood as the "offspring" of an original text. Even though the children are separated, they share the same mother as well as the same text; however, there are two distinctive practices here, comingled.

Translation is “rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way the author intended the text.”¹ Thus, it is a process of transferring messages or a transference of meaning from its original source language into an “other” whilst attempting to convey the writer’s position. On the other hand, self-translation is defined by Anton Popovič as “the translation of an original work into another language by the author himself.”² Thus, both translation and self-translation consist of bridges toward an original message. The main difference between these two practices is who translates the text. With self-translation, the writer of the original text becomes the “other” as translator of his/her own work, whilst a separate translator does not harbour the origin of the text.

On the basis of this premise, this essay investigates two practices in the Canadian landscape with distinct focus on Licia Canton’s short-story collection *The Pink House and Other Stories*, emphasizing the two practices not only as distinctive and separable but also as two attentive and valuable renditions of an original text – and as one more approach to enhancing the issue of identity in Canada.

A Journey into Translation and Self-Translation in Canada

In 1534, Jacques Cartier brought to France two First Nations persons, Taignoagny and Domagaya of the Iroquois. His intent was to teach them French so that by 1535 he would be able to use them as interpreters for negotiations with the First Nations. Up to and including the Seven Years’ War, most, if not all, First Nations translation was conveyed by missionaries who devoted themselves to producing glossaries and dictionaries and identifying the syntax or grammar of Indigenous languages. With the French defeat of 1759–60, the major order of business for catholic missionaries became translation. This endeavour varied between translating French to English and vice versa. Then, within the next two hundred years, the arrival of other colonial immigrants speaking other languages necessitated further translation to and from these other languages, most of them considered unofficial. Despite the increasing participation of other languages, for these groups, made up of ethnic minorities, the practice of translation predominantly continued between French and English. With the advent of the British North America Act (the BNA Act)

¹ Newmark, *A Textbook of Translation*, 5.

² Popovič, *Dictionary*, 19.

of 1867, these two languages gained the official status of becoming parliamentary languages, notably in certain provinces: Quebec, Ontario, and New Brunswick.

Canada also depended on translation for trade. It is for this reason that several translation agencies have existed in Canada – agencies that put Canadian bilingualism at the centre of its identity. The discourse of translation in reference to bilingualism in Canada is also central – from a historical point of view – to the formation of the nation, characterized by the contention of English and French and the coexistence of what famously became “two solitudes.”³ In Canadian literature, the first book to be translated from French into English was Aubert de Gaspé's *Les Anciens Canadiens* by translator Georgiana M. Pennée in 1864. In contrast, the first translation from English into French was J.A. Genand's work in 1865, *Antoinette de Mirecourt: Or Secret Marrying and Secret Sorrowing*, translated by Rosanna Eleanor Leprohon.⁴

Another relevant moment in Canadian translation history was the passage of the OLA (Official Language Act) of 1969. It led to the creation of translation agencies and developed programs to institutionalize translation in Canada officially.

The Act also reflected the asymmetrical power relations between the two languages and echoed the relationship between English and French Canada that had been apparent since the colonial beginning of the nation: to date most translations from French into English are literary works, while translations from English into French are predominantly official documents, legal and commercial.⁵

In addition, this act reinforces a relationship of cultural and political instability between these two languages, where English is seen as the dominant language, wanting to take up a metaphor of colonizing, while French is seen as the second language, the indomitable “other,” forever being colonized. Different from the act that accentuated the power relations and cultural tensions

³ The expression “two solitudes” was first used in the title of a 1945 novel by Hugh MacLellan, in which the protagonist struggles with this dual anglophone and francophone identity.

⁴ Capperdoni, “Act of Passage,” 250.

⁵ Capperdoni, “Act of Passage,” 250. A comprehensive list of Canadian translators can be found in Newman and Stratford, *Bibliography of Canadian Books*.

between the two languages, literary translation was alternatively seen as a way to bridge the two cultural, political, and especially linguistic realities (anglophone and francophone) while evading any questioning of the creation of these boundaries.⁶ It is no accident that Canada perfectly represents what is defined by Mary Louise Pratt as a contact zone – the place where originally separate cultures and languages “come together and establish ongoing relations.”⁷ It is by establishing these relations between two diverse yet strong literary cultures that a rich tradition of literary translation arises to build Canada, along with a “well-developed sensitivity to the dissymmetry of the impact and cultural value of translation.”⁸

A critical development that recognizes the unique and intrinsic value of translation in Canada has been represented by feminist movements. From women’s right to vote to the Women’s Liberation Movement of the early 1970s, predominantly of European and North American influence, translation is a phenomenon that, as Deborah Saidero states, was “developed by the 1980s mainly in Canada, which, despite its cultural-historical distinctness, has also had important repercussions worldwide.”⁹ Canadian feminists took their point of departure from linguistic identity, developing it into both a concept and an idea of “translation as transformation,” as proposed by Jacques Derrida’s deconstructionism, placing the difference between original text and translation as the focus. The latter translation is transformed into a site for questioning ideological and political values, while at the same time giving new form and definition to otherness and identity. Furthermore, twentieth-century feminism led to a reversal of power relations between anglophone and francophone Canada. For example, Sherry Simon approaches the issue of translation from the feminist perspective by condemning a particular tendency toward linguistic *machismo*; the Canadian scholar advocates a view that finds parallels between the role of translation and the role of women. Canadian feminist translation, proposing to debunk these power dynamics, became the bearer not only of the transmission of the dominant culture but also of the cultures that constitute minorities, namely French culture. Indeed, by privileging the cross-cultural dialogue between English and French, the

⁶ Capperdoni, “Act of Passage,” 251.

⁷ Bassnett and Trivedi, *Post-colonial Translation*, 58.

⁸ Bassnett and Trivedi, *Post-colonial Translation*, 163.

⁹ My translation. “[...] si sviluppò a partire dagli anni Ottanta principalmente in Canada che, nonostante la sua specificità storico-culturale, ha avuto ripercussioni importanti anche a livello internazionale”; Saidero, *La traduzione femminista*, 9.

recognition of Canada's other European linguistic minorities, such as Italian or "other," became decidedly arduous, "forcing many women writers to disavow their multilingualism and assimilate into one or another of the official languages."¹⁰

In the article "Se traduire au quotidien," Canton addresses a different issue by way of her own experience:

I speak my Italian dialect, French, English and Italian. And it is in this order that I learned these languages. I wear many "hats" daily: mother, wife, daughter-in-law, sister, writer, translator, director of a cultural magazine, president of a writers' association. I change these hats often and switch from one language to another just as often. By the very fact that I live on the island of Montreal, Quebec, where bilingualism and multilingualism are part of my daily life, it is inevitable that I practice self-translation, both oral and written. I live in a French-speaking province in a predominantly English-speaking country. I chose the English language as writer, and therefore I am part of a minority (English-speaking writers in Quebec) in another minority (French-speaking province in an English-speaking country). I have chosen to raise my children in Italian, but I speak English with my husband. My reality is such that I live in a zone of continuous translation, a linguistic alternation.¹¹

¹⁰ Simon, *Gender in Translation*, 13.

¹¹ My translation. "Je m'exprime en dialecte, en français, en anglais et en italien. Et c'est dans cet ordre que j'ai appris ces langues. Je porte plusieurs chapeaux au quotidien: mère, conjointe, belle fille, sœur, écrivaine, traductrice, directrice d'une revue culturelle, présidente d'une association d'écrivains. Je change de chapeau souvent et je passe d'une langue à l'autre aussi souvent. Par le fait même que j'habite l'île de Montréal, Québec, où le bilinguisme et le multilinguisme se manifestent au quotidien, il est inévitable que je pratique l'autotraduction à l'oral comme à l'écrit. J'habite une province francophone dans un pays majoritairement anglophone. J'ai choisi la langue anglaise comme écrivaine, et donc je fais partie d'une minorité (écrivains de langue anglaise au Québec) dans une autre minorité (province francophone dans un pays anglophone). J'ai choisi d'élever mes enfants en italien, mais je parle l'anglais avec mon conjoint. Ma réalité est telle que je vis dans une zone de traduction continuelle, une alternance linguistique"; Canton, "Se traduire au quotidien", 87.

Thus, Canton feels most comfortable with English, but at the same time she tends to code switch from one language to another. She therefore decided to raise her children in Italian so that she continuously experiences linguistic crossing in a zone of continuous translation, both in her daily life and in her writing. Such an approach to writing as well as living in multiple languages is also transcribed into the language or languages of new identification of being, as Cesare Pitto both illustrates and interprets:

It could perhaps be said that whenever they express themselves, they write in three languages: the mind thinks in English or French, the heritage writes within itself in the language or dialect (mostly dialect) of ancient Italian origins, while the third written language becomes literature, because of its power to produce creative writing that manifests the emotions of its own multiple essence.¹²

Hence, the concept of multiple identities is extended. Becoming visible, once again, from the point of view of writing, is an expression of the distinctiveness of Italian-Canadian culture. As Jim Zuccherio writes, “language has been an important tool but often neglected theme in Italian-Canadian writing. Language has functioned as a flashpoint for exploring fundamental questions of identity.” Moreover, Zuccherio adds that “the discourse of language is of considerable importance for at least two reasons: the first concerns the author’s choice of language, which is crucial, as it will influence the audience and reception of the work. The second concerns the particular use the writer will make within the text which can have multiple effects.”¹³

As we have seen, self-translation is a widespread practice among Italian-Canadian authors, Canada’s Indigenous peoples, and the Canadian migrant diaspora. For this reason, it is necessary to pause a moment to analyze this practice, which, although it has been carried out for centuries, has only recently aroused a growing interest. It has been trending around the world, influenced by the globalization of English and recognized as a discipline in its

¹² My translation. “Si potrebbe dire forse che ogni volta che essi si esprimono scrivono in tre lingue: la mente pensa in inglese o francese, il retaggio scrive dentro di sé nella lingua o dialetto (per lo più dialetto) delle antiche origini italiane, mentre la terza lingua scritta diventa letteratura, per la sua forza di produrre una scrittura creativa che manifesta le emozioni della propria essenzialità molteplice”; Iacobucci, *Strange Peregrination*, 48.

¹³ Iacobucci, *Strange Peregrination*, 181.

own right, leading to the publication of several studies and debates through various conferences dedicated to the subject. This interest derives from a willingness to recognize the practice of self-translation from various theoretical points of view. Today, there is an important role to be played by plurality, where the boundaries and definitions of nationhood, colonization, colonialism, and post-colonialism, which have seen language and people as one, are no longer as clear cut as they once were.

The first scholar to provide a definition of the practice is the above-mentioned Popovič. Yet the most organic and well-known definition of his praxis is one provided to us by Canadian scholar Rainier Grutman, who defines it in the following terms: "The term 'self-translation' can refer both to the act of translating one's own writings into another language and the result of such an undertaking."¹⁴ Moreover, it is important to recall Maria del Pilar Blanco's definition as it emphasizes a fundamental problematic of this practice – namely, the elimination of the dichotomy that exists in a translated text of two monolithic entities represented by a source text and a target text. Ergo, "while the translation is carried out by an outsider [...] the self-translation is done by the author of the original, thus eliminating the traditional dichotomy that exists in a translated text."¹⁵ These distinct definitions highlight the ambiguities that this practice brings with it, which have led to the separation of two opposite poles by scholars: the literary one, which sees the practice as a particular form of rewriting, and the translating one, which sees self-translation as a particular type of translation. Already, the very prefix "self," as Salmon explains, carries two implications. While it refers to translation on one hand, on the other hand it refers to the authorial dimension.¹⁶ Thus, we can find among scholars two different approaches that oscillate between two well-defined lines of thought: the first one is oriented toward a parallelism between the translator and self-translator, who have the same goal, as Helena Tanqueiro points out, which is "to make their work accessible to a linguistic community distant from the original one";¹⁷ the second one is inclined to look at the practice of self-translation as a work that the author can modify at will

¹⁴ As cited in Baker and Saldanha, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, 257.

¹⁵ My translation. "Mientras la traducción es realizada por una persona ajena a la obra [...] la autotraducción la lleva a cabo el propio autor del original, eliminándose así la dualidad fundamental que existe en el texto traductivo"; Blanco, "La autotraducción," 107.

¹⁶ Ceccherelli, *Autotraduzione*, 78.

¹⁷ My translation. "[...] dar a conocer su obra a una comunidad lingüística distante de la original"; Tanqueiro, "Un traductor privilegiado," 22.

without being stigmatized with “infidelity.” What many scholars emphasize in the context of self-translation is the notion of the “original” being questioned, as well as the dichotomy between the original and its translation. Thus, source text and target text lose their meaning because it is the same author who first writes the work and then translates it, but both activities are involved in the creative process of writing. Despite these different approaches, all scholars seem to agree on at least one aspect: specifically, the otherness represented by the process of self-translation as opposed to translation.

The practice of self-transliteration has also arisen from Migration Studies. As Silvia Serafin points out, in order to examine self-translation, it is necessary to have in mind

the broad spectrum of migrant literature of which all the thematic and morphological elements, necessary for the construction of an overall systematic framework of the genre, are being delineated with increasing force.¹⁸

In this way, this practice has become an important tool for analyzing and understanding a range of meanings that reveal migrant literature or what is also known as post-colonial literature. Therefore, Canada and multicultural Canadian literature can boast a conspicuous network of evidence showing the relevance of the practice of self-translation. These types of translators are usually bilingual due to historical reasons and out of necessity. Hence, the translation of their own works is strongly linked to external factors.

In the case of Canton, which mirrors many other cases in the Canadian landscape, we can speak not only of bilingualism but also of multilingualism. In this context, the writer can choose to write in multiple languages within the same text, giving rise to the phenomena of code switching, although Canton often chooses to resort to self-translation, not only with two hegemonic tongues but also with a minority language. In Quebec’s multicultural landscape, French and English have “precise sociolinguistic functions: English is usually the language of business and work, while French is employed in social relations.”¹⁹ This is different for a minority language such as Italian, which “on the one hand, represents the link with the family and the migrant’s condition.”²⁰ All these languages together, continues Mirko Casagrande,

¹⁸ As cited in Ferraro, *L'autotraduzione*, 7.

¹⁹ Casagrande, *Traduzione e codeswitching*, 51.

²⁰ Casagrande, *Traduzione e codeswitching*, 51.

"form a multilingual network with which intellectuals and writers can give voice to their identity 'on the move.'" Hence, self-translation takes on tremendous value in this context by becoming an important tool to emphasize the polymorphic identity of the writer, in the practice of self-translation, who "is not a professional translator [...] but rather a person who belongs to two cultures and 'lives in two languages.'" ²¹

Another relevant factor associated with self-translation is its use in the autobiographical genre as a means of emphasizing dual identity under conditions of exile. Such an example might be detected in Rabindranath Tagore, who, through his self-translations from Bengali into English, reinforced the idea of the translator as rewriter. All discourses on self-translation invite us to abandon the dichotomy between original and copy, and to embrace a fluid and alternative idea of translation. As Susan Bassnett states, "The concept of the original is much more fluid than in other types of translation, and indeed doubts even arise about the very existence of an original." ²²

Licia Canton in Self-Translation

Prior to the analysis of Canton's self-translated stories, we must conceive of her experience. Canton was born in Cavarzere (Venice) and then migrated, at the age of four, with her parents and sister to Montreal, where she currently lives with her husband. Canton attained a Ph.D. in Canadian Literature from Université de Montréal, and for more than a decade she has been working on Canadian minority literature, specifically Italian-Canadian literature. Canton has published in several journals, anthologies, and essay and short story collections worldwide, particularly in French, Italian, and Chinese. She has, in addition, co-edited several volumes and critical pieces, including *Here & Now: An Anthology of Queer Italian-Canadian Writing* (2021), which is, as the publisher describes it, considered "the most comprehensive volume yet of Queer Italian-Canadian writing, and a milestone in Italian-Canadian studies and Canadian literature." ²³ Canton also directed the documentary *Creative Spaces: Queer and Italian Canadian* (2021). ²⁴ In addition to writing, she is involved in translation and literary criticism, and she is editor of the

²¹ Casagrande, *Traduzione e codeswitching*, 57.

²² As cited in Ceccherelli, *Autotraduzione*, 37.

²³ See <https://aicw.ca/books/>.

²⁴ See "Creative Spaces." To learn more about this project, visit <http://www.queeritaliancanadian.com>.

English-language magazine *Accenti: The Canadian Magazine with an Italian Accent*. She has taught literature and fiction and has been mentoring emerging writers for several years. The genre for which this writer is best known is the short story, as evidenced by the publication of her first work, *Almond Wine and Fertility*, in 2008 – a collection of short stories set between Canada and Italy. The same volume was published by a different publisher in Italy, in 2015, under the title *Vino alla mandorla e fertilità*. Canton published a second edition of the collection with a foreword by Professor Joseph Pivato.

The Pink House and other Stories was published in 2018, a full decade after *Almond Wine and Fertility*. The book is a collection of short stories, the framework of which is precisely the short story “The Pink House,” which gives its title to the entire collection. Canton herself states in an interview that “many of the stories are linked. Interestingly, some of the stories in *The Pink House* are also linked to stories in my first collection, *Almond Wine and Fertility*. I’m not sure that I did that on purpose.”²⁵ The collection consists of fifteen short stories set between Canada and Italy. The sources of inspiration that gave rise to the collection are many, but most important is the trauma due to an incident that personally affected the writer physically and psychologically, which occurred in 2012 after a Leonard Cohen concert – “an accident which changed my perspective on life.” Hence, the title of one of the short stories is “Because of Leonard Cohen,” forming part of a series of stories – exactly six short stories – interwoven throughout the book. These stories form a single cycle, but can also be read as individual stories, where themes such as hope, resilience, and the healing process, as well as the writing process, stand out. Listening to Canton speak about the period when she was involved in the writing of *The Pink House and Other Stories*, we learn that her writing process lingered: “this book took a long time to come together as these stories were written over the course of a few years.” In fact, she calls herself a seasonal writer, because “there are times I can sit down and write several stories at once. Whereas, for months I may only be able to write notes about stories I hope to write.”

As previously mentioned, the collection contains two stories that Canton self-translated, namely “Watching Them Laugh” and “Refuge in the Vineyard.” These two short stories constitute obvious examples of how, in Canada, bilingualism, multilingualism, or a linguistic vernacular is a notable

²⁵ See Domenico Capilongo’s interview with Canton, online here: <http://italo-canadese.com/2018/09/12/un-momento-with-licia-canton/>.

and apparent transmission of both speaking and writing. In this context, not only does a Canadian author, such as Canton, lean toward writing in multiple languages within the same text but she is also inclined toward the phenomenon of code switching. Canton often chooses to resort to self-translation not only with the two more obvious hegemonic languages but also with minority languages. "Watching them Laugh," the first story of the collection, is a tribute to first-generation Canadian-Italian immigrants for whom Canton says she is "very grateful," adding, "my generation and my children reap the benefit of their migration. I acknowledge their hardships and the ease that ensued from their determination and sacrifice."²⁶ This story, originally written in Italian as "Il negozio della lana," was published in *In-Between Spaces* (2017), but it is presented in English as a self-translated piece. The story revolves around three female figures who symbolize three generations of immigrants: the first is represented by the grandmother, the second by an observant mother who is also the narrator, and finally by the little girl – a daughter and granddaughter.

The discourse of self-translation challenges the author-translator and source- vs. target-text dichotomy to consider that the author and translator "coincide and the two languages coexist in the same person not only as vehicular languages, but as a means of identity expression."²⁷

As Casagrande suggests, it is inaccurate to speak of self-translation,

as the emphasis on source and target text is maintained and the connotation of linguistic simultaneity through which the bilingual mind works is lost. For the bilingual writer, in fact, (self-) translating may mean reformulating in one language what had already been expressed in another without, however, involving major cognitive differences from one code to another.²⁸

Canton rewrites the text, reformulating it again in a first and second language, giving rise to two texts that in themselves are original, yet closely related.

²⁶ See Capilongo's interview with Canton.

²⁷ Casagrande, *Traduzione e codeswitching*, 58.

²⁸ My translation. "[...] in quanto si mantiene l'accento su testo di partenza e testo di arrivo e si perde la connotazione di simultaneità linguistica attraverso cui la mente bilingue lavora. Per lo scrittore bilingue, infatti (auto)tradursi può significare riformulare in una lingua ciò che era già stato espresso in un'altra senza però che questo comporti sostanziali differenze cognitive da un codice all'altro"; Casagrande, *Traduzione e codeswitching*, 58.

Canton's "Il negozio della lana"/ "Watching Them Laugh" brings out this dual and emblematic character of self-translation. The short story is written in the first person and the narrator is a woman who is both mother and daughter of the two protagonists at the centre of the action. Starting with the original Italian title, it is possible to observe a willingness to rewrite the text. The author's choice highlights a place of action that recalls the unusual outing between grandmother, daughter, and granddaughter. Due to the grandmother's need to create an excuse to visit the yarn store so that she can keep the company of her granddaughter, as seen in the English text, the title comes to life with the mother's contemplation and observation of both her daughter and her mother enjoying each other's company. Although the two narratives maintain the same desire to emphasize the grandmother-granddaughter relationship, their titles demonstrate a slightly disparate sensibility of setting (place) vs. the act of "watching."

Comparing the Italian text (IT) and the English text (ET), we can see how each uniquely enriches the narrative. In fact, the ET presents a richness from a lexical point of view by giving the syntax a greater nuance of meaning. The example below clarifies the difference between the two versions:

IT: Le bocche spalancate, i corpi si muovevano al ritmo delle risate. **Un ridere esilarante**. Non si sente che ridono.

ET: Mouths wide open, their bodies move to the rhythm of **ex-hilarating** laughter. Theirs is **hilarious, inaudible** laughter.²⁹

In the ET, we can observe a variety of adjectives that specify the nature of the laughter, while in the IT, this is simplified by one adjective: "esilarante." The author's switch to writing the ET uses the adjectives "hilarious" and "inaudible" to define the laughter, while in the IT, "non si sente che ridono" merely expresses that the laughter cannot be heard. As such, the ET provides more context than the IT and is more readily suggestive of a subtext. In addition, further lexical variety is observed with the use of words such as "mall" and "shopping centre" as well as the use of "stacks" and "displays." These words are explored and shared to both define and exchange "centro commerciale" and "vetrine."

Both ET and IT have omissions, as the following examples show:

²⁹ IT: Canton, "Il negozio della lana," [161]; ET: Canton, *The Pink House*, [9]. In these and other examples, I have bolded the most relevant words and phrases.

IT: "Vado io. Sedetevi qui," ho indicato il tavolino più pulito. **Poi ci ho ripensato**, "Cosa prendi tu, mamma?"

ET: "I'll go. Sit here," I pointed to the cleanest table. "What will you have, Mom?"³⁰

IT: "Va bene." Ho tagliato la torta e ne ho messo metà davanti a mia madre.

ET: "Fine," **she pouted**. I cut the cake in two and gave a piece to my mother.³¹

The omission of "Poi ci ho ripensato" in the ET indicates a choice that the author/translator makes, perhaps subconsciously during the translation process, with respect to the protagonist's hesitation, lingering, and finally her decision to sit at the table with her mother and daughter whilst they all wait to be served together. What does this indicate or say about the protagonist? What does this indicate or say about the grandmother and her granddaughter, who is also the protagonist's daughter? Hence, the English reader cannot perceive this inner truth of the mother's experience as well as the subtext in the ET.

In the second example, Canton chooses an opposite approach as the action of "pouting," *mettere il broncio*, is completely omitted in the IT. At times, the IT is more specific. For example, her use of "toy store" is made explicit in the IT with the name of a particular toy store in Montreal, although in the ET, it's unidentified. Again, what does this reveal about the author/translator's intent in her process of translation?

IT: Il negozio "La tour des jouets" era proprio accanto ai tavolini, dall'altro lato del negozio di lana.

ET: The toy store was right next to the tables, on the other side of the yarn shop.³²

Another common feature of the text is the presence of an exchange of messages between wife and husband. These maintain a consistency of text messaging using abbreviations typical of English that might be difficult to interpret in the IT. Take the following, for example:

³⁰ IT: Canton, "Il negozio della lana," [162]; ET: Canton, *The Pink House*, [11].

³¹ IT: Canton, "Il negozio della lana," [163]; ET: Canton, *The Pink House*, [12].

³² IT: Canton, "Il negozio della lana," [164]; ET: Canton, *The Pink House*, [12].

IT: "Giornata lenta. Cena in ritardo stasera. Sono alle Galeries d'Anjou." "K. <3"

ET: "Slow day. At Gals. Dinner late tonight." "K. <3"³³

Analyzing this message exchange, it is possible to see that in the IT there is more and more specificity, such as mentioning the "Galeries d'Anjou," which in the ET has been shortened to "Gals." Finally, the husband's concise response is retained. For an Italian reader, it might be difficult to understand the meaning of "K," an abbreviation of "okay." However, the exceptional symbols and numbers representing a heart are also recognized as part of a universal texting semiotic.

In the IT, there is the repetitive use of altered nouns that in Italian evokes a very strong sense of emotion – such as *tavolini*, *dolcetti*, *nipotina*, *messaggino*, *maschietti* – whereas in the ET, this is not as intensely expressed, even when using adjectives. A possible interpretation is the author/translator's choice to portray sweet nuances of the scene in the IT. Another element pertinent to the dominant culture of belonging, namely the Canadian culture, is the improper use of "sesta elementare" in the IT. Meanwhile, in the ET, it is simply "sixth grade," which would correspond to the Italian *prima media*. What emerges from this analysis overall is that the two versions of "Watching Them Laugh"/"Il negozio della lana" are basically a mirror of each other with minimal changes to the story's plot; however, certain omissions and additions can be of significant consequence to the subtext. Therefore, what prevails within both texts is the author's ethos of a blurred Italian-Canadian identity.

In "Refuge in the Vineyard," we find a comparable family portrayal, different from the previous one but similar in that it places the female figure at the centre as mother and wife living in Canada, contrasted with the patriarchal figure of the father, who has returned to reside in his beloved Italy. It begins with the father who has been, for years now, comfortably living in a small village near his vineyard, although he laments the distance between himself and his daughter and grandchildren. Another important element of this story is the vineyard, as it is a metaphorical location of painful memories of the woman that also represents fertility, prosperity, and the condition of an abused and victimized mother. This story first appeared in 2016 in Canadian Literary Fare, and was later published in Italian by the author herself in the anthology *I paesaggi del vino: Immagini e rappresentazioni* in 2019. The story

³³ IT: Canton, "Il negozio della lana," [165]; ET: Canton, *The Pink House*, [14].

was written during Canton's stay in Italy at the Marco Belli Institute in May 2016.

Unlike "Watching them Laugh"/"Negozio della lana," "Refuge in the Vineyard" originated in English and was later self-translated by the author into Italian. The title is literally translated word for word into "Rifugio nel vigneto," staying consistent with the ET, unlike what happened with "Il negozio della lana." "Rifugio nel vigneto" is more dominant with its use of lexical changes. In fact, the ET has several words in Italian that are always highlighted using italics, but in the IT, we find them translated into English, as the following examples show:

ET: Eyes closed she listened to the silence. **Silenzio**. Soothing.
Soothing silence.

IT: Con gli occhi chiusi, ascolta il silenzio. **Silence**. Silenzio. Lenitivo. Il silenzio confortante.³⁴

ET: The vines were her friends. **I suoi amici**. She spoke to them.

IT: Le viti le erano amiche. **Her friends**. Parlava loro.³⁵

ET: That was pain. **Dolore**.√ She had slept [...]

IT: Quello era dolore. **Pain**. Dolore.³⁶

ET: The cold. **Il freddo**. Is that a good reason to move back?

IT: Il freddo. **The cold**. Sarebbe quello un buon motivo per tornare?³⁷

It is interesting to note the choice Canton has made in the third example, which shows a translation different to the other examples. In the IT, the word "dolore" is specified later, possibly suggesting the translation of the word "pain," which is not the case in the ET, signaled by √. In other areas of the ET, Italian words remain in Italian without undergoing any change – words such as "mamma," which in the ET are placed in italics. The author's decision to place "mamma" instead of "mum," "mummy," or "mom" is likely to be

³⁴ ET: Canton, *The Pink House*, [39]; IT: Canton, "Rifugio nel vigneto," [237].

³⁵ ET: Canton, *The Pink House*, [39]; IT: Canton, "Rifugio nel vigneto," [237].

³⁶ ET: Canton, *The Pink House*, [40]; IT: Canton, "Rifugio nel vigneto," [237].

³⁷ ET: Canton, *The Pink House*, [41]; IT: Canton, "Rifugio nel vigneto," [239].

influenced by the fact that in the Italian-Canadian context and beyond, it is the most frequently used of the three colloquial names for mother.

This short story features code switching in the dialogues. Among the various definitions and subdivisions that have been attributed to the phenomenon, which are still given today, the one proposed by John Gumperz is most interesting with respect to Canton's story. In particular, Gumperz talks about "conversational code-switching," investigating the motivation for speakers to adopt multiple languages, in these terms:

Conversational code switching can be defined as a juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech of belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems. Most frequently the alteration takes the form of two subsequent sentences, as when the speaker uses a second language either to reiterate his message or to reply to someone else's statement.³⁸

Sharing the same linguistic and cultural context of the speakers turns out to be fundamental in code switching, which takes on the function of a kind of symbol for the speakers who try to establish a common ground: "costruire lo scambio verbale sulla base del principio di cooperazione introdotto da Paul Grice [...]"³⁹

Within the IT of "Rifugio nel vigneto," code switching is lost in a particular dialogue between father and daughter. The father complains to his daughter, code switching into Italian in the ET. In the IT, this code switch is inevitably lost because we are faced with a dialogue completely in Italian between the two characters. This choice to approach the ET in this way also indicates a severe limitation that the self-translator imposes upon the IT as any evidence of code switching is lost in scenes of this nature; the readers of IT do not witness the character of the father make this mental and emotional shift. The example offered below better clarifies the loss that the Italian reader witnesses:

ET: "*Non vieni mai,*" he complained. She was here now. "*Non porti mai i bimbi,*" he grumbled. They were all here now.

³⁸ As cited in Casagrande, *Traduzione e codeswitching*, 87.

³⁹ Casagrande, *Traduzione e codeswitching*, 80.

IT: "Non vieni mai," si era lamentato. Ma ora era lì. "Non porti mai i bimbi," aveva borbottato. Erano tutti lì ora.⁴⁰

Code switching appears in the later published IT when there is a whole sentence from the ET, which operates as a sort of broken-English dialogue that begins with English and then continues in Italian. See the following example:

ET: "*L'acqua, l'acqua, manca l'acqua.*"

IT: "Water, water, manca l'acqua."⁴¹

ET: "*Il formaggio. Dov'è il formaggio?*"

IT: "Where is the cheese? Il formaggio!"⁴²

In the IT, code switching of single words or smaller portions of a sentence, namely dialogue, is completed in the Italian language, which is also distinctive from the ET, where a sentence can be found completely in Italian. In effect, along with a whole sentence in Italian or English in the IT, there is the coexistence of both languages in the same sentence. Some examples are found here in the following dialogues:

ET: "What, no cheese? It isn't pasta without cheese."

IT: "What, no cheese? Ma non è pasta se non c'è il formaggio!"⁴³

ET: "Where's the wine? You forgot the wine. Who's going to get the wine?"

IT: "Dov'è il vino? Hai dimenticato il vino. Who's going to get the wine?"⁴⁴

This analysis shows that there are minimal changes in each version that involve layered lexical and linguistic levels of thought. What prevails within both texts is the dominant culture and identity of the author – an Italian Canadian – one that emerges strongly and imposes itself onto the two texts in two different ways. The English version highlights, through code switching,

⁴⁰ ET: Canton, *The Pink House*, [40]; IT: Canton, "Rifugio nel vigneto," [240].

⁴¹ ET: Canton, *The Pink House*, [42]; IT: Canton, "Rifugio nel vigneto," [240].

⁴² ET: Canton, *The Pink House*, [42]; IT: Canton, "Rifugio nel vigneto," [240].

⁴³ ET: Canton, *The Pink House*, [42]; IT: Canton, "Rifugio nel vigneto," [240].

⁴⁴ ET: Canton, *The Pink House*, [42]; IT: Canton, "Rifugio nel vigneto," [240].

the habitual use of the Italian language through the voice of the characters; in the Italian version, the distinctive code switching highlights the habitual use of English. Thus, trading the importance of both languages, an in-between space is created where Italian-Canadian identity emerges and stands out.

Identity and Self-Translation in Colonial to Post-Colonial Literature

In effect, Post-colonial Studies provides Translation Studies with opportunities for discourse and debate of some significance. Since “colonialism and translation went hand in hand,”⁴⁵ the analysis of translation from a post-colonial perspective is particularly interesting, as Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi point out in the introduction to *Post-colonial Translation*:

In this post-colonial period, when, as Salman Rushdie puts it, the Empire has begun to write back, it is unsurprising to find radical concepts of translation emerging from India, from Latin America, from Canada, from Ireland – in short, from former colonies around the world that challenge established European norms about what translation is and what it signifies.⁴⁶

Despite numerous debates and differing opinions, Canada and its “settler” or “newcomer” literature, such as Italian-Canadian literature, falls under Rushdie’s theoretical definition:

Translation is become the literary equivalent of colonization. For the First Nations of Canada, this principle is at the forefront of what is called, the colonizer’s literary tradition. At the root of these discourses, translation is considered beyond linguistic discourse; in fact, translations turn out to be always intertwined with the political and cultural systems in which the texts were produced.⁴⁷

Considering what has been theorized about translation, it is evident that the process of translating is not unrelated to the persistence and endurance of survival that raises questions of identity in relation to resistance, hegemony,

⁴⁵ Bassnett and Trivedi, *Post-colonial Translation*, 3.

⁴⁶ Bassnett and Trivedi, *Post-colonial Translation*, 4.

⁴⁷ Bassnett and Trivedi, *Post-colonial Translation*, 6.

and power. Even Maria Tymoczko confirms links between translation and post-colonial theories when comparing colonial and post-colonial literary works and literary translations. In this way, writers are free to choose what to present to their audience, while translators do not have the same freedom of action because they are strictly confined to one text; however, the self-translator exists in both texts. As such, self-translators are not so confined. What the two figures (the colonial and post-colonial writer and/or translator) have in common, however, is that they address a multicultural audience and try to transfer different contexts from one culture to another through one language to another.

To reiterate, using the language of the colonizer, Italian-Canadian literature tends to be identified under the umbrella term of “migration literature,” which is closely linked to Post-colonial Studies. According to Annalisa Bonomo, “migrant writing [...] asks for some recovery of the past. On such terms, storytelling, memory, travelling, and translation are strictly intertwined with a new sense of belonging to and wandering between languages and cultures in some unresolved states of being, which are typical of migration life stories.”⁴⁸ Therefore, translation and self-translation become means to create identities. Canton's collection of short stories is a coherent example of this. As a matter of fact, by translating her own stories, “passionately engaged with Italy and Canada, Canton explores the intricate bonds between the two, allowing several voices to emerge as spaces ‘in-between’ of her personal journey into the fabric of national and personal identities at a crossroads.”⁴⁹

Conclusion

Including this collection in an Italian-Canadian literary canon raises questions of how Italian Canadians approach translation – questions that are still open, propelling spaces of debate among scholars and academics that reference this kind of study in Italian-Canadian literature. In truth, embodiment of this literary sensibility is much broader and more complex than the one represented in this paper. In fact, while there is a claim to an Italian-Canadian identity, culture, and literature, there is also an increasing desire and feeling to belong to the Canadian landscape – which continues to ask, since the advent of colonialized Canada, “*What is identity?*” – within the multilingual

⁴⁸ Bonomo, “Thinking Our Way(s) Home,” 3.

⁴⁹ Bonomo, “Thinking Our Way(s) Home,” 3.

and multicultural nationality that characterizes this country. Overall, this can be an excellent starting point for future insights regarding “belonging,” applicable to the practices of translation and self-translation, which offer further possibilities for reading, interpreting, and rendering these texts.

Like the children in Klimt’s *Mother with Two Children (Family)*, translation and self-translation must embrace their mutating condition as the “offspring” of an original text, their mother. Even though both are related to her, they are two distinctive entities, as is the nature of the Italian Canadian. This paper has tried to illustrate the nature of translation and self-translation in the works of *The Pink House and Other Stories*, as well as its relatability to the Canadian literary landscape – a widespread practice which offers an influential connection, journey, and discovery toward identification.

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