



Language, Identity, And Migration: Representations Of The Italian Diaspora In Contemporary Literature

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Abstract:

This article explores the intersection of language, identity, and migration within the context of the Italian diaspora as depicted in contemporary literature. Through close readings of selected works by authors such as Jhumpa Lahiri, Igiaba Scego, and others, this study examines how language becomes a central element in negotiating personal and cultural identity in migratory settings. The analysis focuses on themes such as bilingualism, code-switching, nostalgia, cultural hybridity, and the redefinition of "Italianness" in a globalized world. This research contributes to the field of comparative literature and linguistic studies by highlighting the evolving nature of diasporic identity and the literary strategies used to represent it.

Keywords: Italian diaspora, identity, migration, bilingualism, language, Jhumpa Lahiri, Igiaba Scego, cultural hybridity

Introduction:

Migration and its impact on identity have become central themes in 21st-century literature, especially in countries with a strong migratory past such as Italy. The Italian diaspora, one of the largest and most historically significant in Europe, has found renewed literary expression in recent decades. Contemporary writers have explored how language both constrains and enables the expression of a fragmented identity in a new sociocultural environment. This article investigates how modern literary texts reflect these complexities, focusing on how authors of diasporic background construct identity through language.

Section 1: Theoretical Framework

- Stuart Hall's concept of cultural identity and hybridity
- Homi K. Bhabha's theory of the "Third Space"
- Sociolinguistic approaches to bilingualism and code-switching
- The role of language in shaping memory and belonging

Section 2: Case Study 1 – Jhumpa Lahiri's Italian Novels

- Brief biography and linguistic journey (from Hindi and English to Italian)
- Analysis of "In altre parole" and "Dove mi trovo"
- Themes of linguistic alienation, self-translation, and language as self-reinvention
- Lahiri's unique position as a non-native Italian writer embracing Italian to craft identity

Section 3: Case Study 2 – Igiaba Scego's Narratives of Afro-Italian Identity

- Exploration of race, postcolonial memory, and multilingual identity
- Analysis of works such as "La mia casa è dove sono" and "Adua"
- Use of Italian, Somali, and Arabic to construct layered identity
- Language as a tool of resistance and cultural reclamation

Section 4: Common Literary Strategies and Themes

- Use of code-switching and mixed language
- Nostalgia and reimagining of homeland
- Tension between assimilation and cultural preservation
- Narrative fragmentation mirroring identity fragmentation

Section 5: Implications for Literary and Linguistic Studies

- Contribution to diasporic literature and identity discourse
- Challenges to monolingual paradigms in Italian literary tradition
- Reinvention of Italian literary space as multilingual and multicultural

Conclusion:

The representation of the Italian diaspora in contemporary literature provides deep insight into how language operates as both a barrier and a bridge in constructing diasporic identities. Writers like Lahiri and Scego not only expand the boundaries of Italian literature but also demonstrate the role of language in crafting new cultural narratives. Their works serve as a testament to the evolving definitions of belonging and identity in a migratory world.

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