Lucky Lira Essay, Research Paper

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The “lucky lira”

What is your lucky item you cherish or pray too for good fortune? The “Lucky lira” plays an important symbolic role in Nino Ricci?s novel Lives of the Saints. The coin was a sign of life saving properties, it also served as a protective talisman against evil and most importantly symbolized Vittorio?s loss of innocence. As a result of Vittos faith in the coin he is able to better cope with his misfortunes.

The lucky one lira was given to Vitto for his seventh birthday by Luciano , a restaurant owner in Rocca Secca and a friend of his moms. Luciano explained that during the war, in a field in Greece he had found it and the coin had saved his life, it deflected a bullet heading directly at his heart. Vottorio accepted the coin, not knowing how it would impact his life. The 1927 dented one lire given to Vitto symbolized a life saving property of the coin! .

?We lost the battle and many of my friends were killed. It was like a bad dream. But that night, when I was sitting in my tent, I found a little hole in my shirt pocket, like a bullet hoe. Then I remembered the coin I had pecked up, and when I took it out of my pocket I saw the mark on the wing. That?s when I realized that the coin had saved my life?? (Luciano pg65)

The quote illustrates what happened to Luciano and the lucky lira will further serve to protect Vittos life.

The lucky lira is again working its magic when Vittorio is ambushed by the older boys on the mountain and Fabrizio comes to his rescue, but in return Vitto betrays him ?and to know also that I had sunk so low in shame now that no magic or miracle could ever reclaim me.? (Vittorio pg128)

The quote shows Vittorio believing that the lira cannot save him and also acts as a premonition of things to come.

The lucky lira acts as a talisman against evil and is Vittorio comfort blanket in way. As young Vitto attempts his chicken sacrifice to the spirits and as the chicken goes up in flames he takes out the lire for comfort.

“I had taken my lucky coin from my pocket now and was rubbing it furiously, hoping to calm the spirits”(Vittorio pg115). From Vittos point of view his coin worked for the fire subsided.

The outside appearence of having the coin by his side was to protect him from evil and just like the whole towns superstitions ,Vitto also has his own. The underlying reason the lira was so very dear to Vitto was that it provided some stability in his life. Even as he was exchanging good-byes with his only friend Fabrizio he didn?t have the heart to give the lucky coin away!. ” I could not have imagined him giving it away, any more than I could have given away my lucky one lira coin” (Vittorio pg169).

This quote shows just how important the coin was especially because Vittorio knew he would never see Fabrizio again, but even Fabrizio?s friendship did not provide Vitto with a stable thing he could rely on, his whole life was filled with scandal, turmoil and constant change. The coin was the one thing that stayed the same and could not be taken from him.

The main symbolic importance of the coin is how it traces Vittorios loss of innocence throughout the novel. In the beginning Vitto is very dependent on his mom, but eventually is cast away from her and turns to the coin for help. Him receiving the coin symbolizes the beginning of the process and as the plot unravels its apparent that Vitto gradually becomes cynical, aggressive and takes on adult qualities. “?, it?s your mother. Because she was screwing in the stable(Fabrizio). ?but I threw myself on him, arms flailing, and the two of us fell to the ground.” (Vittorio pg104)

Vitto becomes protective and further looses his innocence by doing the spell and getting into fights.

Vittorio?s transition from childhood to adulthood is premature and the lucky lira serves as a timeline, surfacing at critical times to assert its influence over him. In the end eventually, Vittorios Innocence is completely lost as a result of his mothers death. He cannot cope with it and feels betrayed by the coin for it failed its purpose to protect him and his loved ones.

?In my pant pocket, where I?d put it that morning before the funeral, was my lucky lira, and I pulled it out now to look at it. But when I flipped the coin over to look at the bust on the other side, it slipped through my fingers-easily almost, without resistance, as I had not tried to stop it, or had not believed it could fall.. (Vittorio pg238)

The quote shows that Vitto reluctantly drops it as if he knew he had lost his innocence, or more as if it had been stolen from him. There is sadness in his voice but no despair. Vitto has realized that he doesn?t need the coin any more.

The “Lucky lira” plays an important symbolic role in Nino Ricci?s novel Lives of the Saints, it symbolizes a life saving quality, project?s Vittorio against evil and most importantly symbolizes his loss of innocence.

So in conclusion the coin is an intricate part of the novels plot.

31b