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*PSA* The official publication of  
the Pirandello Society of America

Subscriptions:

Annual calendar year subscriptions/dues:

\$35 individual; \$50 libraries; \$15 students with copy of current ID.

International memberships, add \$10.

Please see Membership form in this issue, or online:

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Make all checks payable to:

The Pirandello Society of America/*PSA*

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All correspondence may be sent to the above address.

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## Editor's Note

What it means to think of Pirandello as a “Sicilian” writer in an Italian context has long been a question of interest to his readers—it is a question that raises pertinent problems about how we conceive of cultural identity as well as the ways in which works are translated and transformed across cultures. In our new issue of *PSA* (Volume XXVII, 2014), a series of interventions reflect on similar problems and expand the scope of the question. Our authors consider Pirandello’s work in light of how it is translated and adapted, not only across cultural contexts (from Sicily to Italy to Europe and beyond) but also across time periods and media.

The volume opens with Elisa Segnini’s essay, “Continental Air: Performing Identity in “Leonora, addio!,” *L’aria del continente*, and *Questa sera si recita a soggetto*,” a study of how notions of cultural identity are translated and adapted to fit different contexts in Pirandello’s own re-working of his short story from 1910, “Leonora, addio!” [“Goodbye, Leonora!”]. This story became the Sicilian blueprint for his famous play, *Questa sera si recita a soggetto* [*Tonight We Improvise*] (1930). As Segnini argues, by applying a postcolonial theoretical lens to these works, and considering them together with another adaptation of the same story, Nino Martoglio’s play, *L’aria del continente* [*Continental Air*] (1915), it becomes possible to see a complex notion of the Sicilian character that Pirandello engages and transforms, responding to the traditional stereotypes of the island and complicating them. This game of elaborating on stereotypes in order to put them to new use involves not only an Italian adaptation of the “Sicilian” narrative, but also a further adaptation for a German audience with different cultural expectations. Segnini offers insight into how Pirandello’s texts, and Martoglio’s rendition, operate with a complicated cultural understanding on these multiple levels.

From this focus on Pirandello’s self-adaptation across cultural contexts, the volume then moves to a consideration of how Fascist film appropriated and made use of his work, the topic of Paolo Campolonghi’s essay on “*La canzone dell’amore: Adapting Pirandello to Fascist Propaganda.*” Like Segnini, Campolonghi examines the adaptation of a short story, Pirandello’s “In silenzio” [“In Silence”] (1905), the source of Gennaro Ringhelli’s *La canzone dell’amore* [*The Song of Love*] (1930), which had the distinction of

being the first sound film produced in the Italian film market. Because of this distinction, readings of the film have often focused on its use of the medium, and specifically of its experiments with sound; but as Campolonghi shows, there are also important questions to be raised about its content, and specifically the way in which it transposes Pirandello's story into the colonial and racial discourse of Fascist propaganda. Thus both Campolonghi and Segnini offer readings of adaptations that expand on the increasing consideration of colonial and postcolonial discourse in Pirandello's work.

Alessia Palanti's intervention also focuses on the move from Pirandello's written work to the medium of film. However, in her essay, "Scripting 'il cielo di carta': The Men behind the Curtain in Paolo and Vittorio Taviani's *Cesare deve morire*," Palanti draws our attention not to a direct adaptation but rather to one in which the deep influence of Pirandello's ideas is manifest in a new story that is contemporary to our present moment. The Tavianis are known for their adaptations of Pirandello's short stories in their earlier films, *Kaos* (1984) and *Tu ridi* [*You Laugh*] (1998); in *Cesare deve morire* [*Caesar Must Die*] (2012) they film the inmates of Rome's maximum security prison in Rebibbia. These inmates become the actors performing Shakespeare's play, *Julius Caesar*, in a Pirandellian film that blurs the lines between reality and fiction. As Palanti argues, these blurred distinctions point to the central role that aporia plays in Pirandello's works, and she thus compares their film to his early, modernist novel, *Il fu Mattia Pascal* [*The Late Mattia Pascal*] (1904), as well as his famous plays, *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* [*Six Characters in Search of an Author*] (1921/5) and *Enrico IV* [*Henry IV*] (1922). This central role of aporia is likewise replicated in the Tavianis' film about staging Shakespeare's play, which problematizes the audience's desire for authenticity in a Pirandellian fashion.

Laura Lucci's essay, "Pirandello's Humor and the Intersections of Translation and Dramaturgy," moves in a more theoretical direction, considering translation and adaptation in relation to Pirandello's own theories of the difference between the translated text and the original, as well as through the lens of his multifaceted concept of humor. With this conjunction in mind, Lucci argues that dramaturgy is itself an act of translation in important respects, and that this process of translation is actually

central to the potential meaning of the work, rather than being an obstacle to that meaning or a denigration of the original (views that emerge from Pirandello's early essays on the topic). In this way, Lucci's work is in dialogue with Michael Rössner and Alessandra Sorrentino's new edited collection (reviewed later in this issue of *PSA*) on the topic of cultural adaptation and translation, fostering an international conversation about this interesting new topic in Pirandello studies.

In addition to these four essays on translation and adaptation, we are very happy to feature an exclusive, full-length interview with Anne-Marie Creamer, the British artist and director responsible for bringing to life a new filmic adaptation of Pirandello's previously-unrealized project, *Treatment for Six Characters* (2014). Pirandello's efforts to turn his famous play into a major film never met with success, but Creamer revisits the scenario he wrote to bring life to that adaptation—originally intended for collaboration with the prominent German director, Max Reinhardt—in an updated form. Lesley Sullivan interviews Creamer about her new film, highlighting the exciting ways in which she has combined a fidelity to the spirit of Pirandello's self-adaptation with an artistic concern for contemporary developments that alter both the medium of film and also the context of Pirandello's story. What emerges is a fascinating account of the motivations and ideas behind Creamer's film, showcasing the Pirandellian love of *mise-en-abyme* structures and the powerful impact of sensory experience, but also unexpected insights into the profoundly ethical nature of Pirandello's concern with the relationship between the author and the creatures of his imagination.

Following on this contemporary film adaptation of Pirandello's work, we are also pleased to have four reviews of new performances that revive not only the most popular theatrical pieces but also some unexpected works for the stage. Anna Santucci reviews a performance of *Tonight We Improvise* (the same work at the core of Segnini's article on cultural adaptation and translation in a postcolonial context), performed at the Empire Black Box in Providence, Rhode Island (March 7-9, 2014), which highlighted the illusionary structure of meta-theater. Two performances of *Six Characters in Search of an Author* are likewise reviewed: Suzanne Epstein writes on the powerful adaptation

offered by the Théâtre de la Ville, directed by Emmanuel Demarcy-Mota, and performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (October 29-November 2, 2014); Thomas Graff examines the adaptation directed by Patrick Vassel at the University of Notre Dame (November 5-9, 2014), which transformed the play-within-a-play into a reality-TV-show-within-a-reality-TV-show with interesting effect. Finally, Krysta Dennis reports on an unusual new adaptation of Pirandello's novel, *The Late Mattia Pascal*, in a post-dramatic rendition offered by the Raw Material Ensemble at St. Leonard's Church in Shoreditch, London (October 22-26, 2014), *Mattia Pascal: The Man Who Lived*. This contemporary reworking captures key elements of Pirandello's anti-novel in a new medium. While it has sometimes seemed that Pirandello's plays primarily survive today in university productions, these reviews attest to the ongoing interest of professional theater groups, as well. Moreover, they reveal the continuing creative impetus of Pirandello's *oeuvre*, which seems to invite adaptation and re-working in new media and unexpected ways.

Volume XXVII of *PSA* closes with two book reviews that should help to bring additional attention to the important critical work going on in Italian scholarship; these books focus on adaptation and translation as well as Pirandello's situation in relation to postcolonial theory. Lisa Sarti reviews Alessandra Sorrentino's recent monograph on *Pirandello e l'altro. Una lettura postcoloniale* [*Pirandello and the Other: A Postcolonial Reading*] (2013). Sorrentino uses postcolonial theory to motivate a reconsideration of key short stories and to argue for a more complex understanding of the role of Sicily in his work. Finally, Michael Subialka reviews a recent collection of essays edited by Michael Rössner and Alessandra Sorrentino, *Pirandello e la traduzione culturale* [*Pirandello and Cultural Translation*] (2012), which features seventeen interventions from a conference held by the Europäisches Pirandello-Zentrum on the question of how recent theories of cultural translation can be applied to, or may even already be prefigured by, Pirandello's own works.

Scholarly discussion of Pirandello was further enlivened this year by a number of fascinating presentations made at the 2015 MLA Convention, held in Vancouver, Canada (January 8-11). The Pirandello Society of America sponsored a panel on "Pirandello: Politics, Crisis, Representation," which was chaired

by the Co-President of the Society, Jana O’Keefe Bazzoni. The panel featured a lively discussion of three comparative approaches to Pirandello, examining his politics and questions of adaptation and different media of representation. James Michael Fortney spoke on “Political Masks: Gender and Class in Pirandello and Aleramo,” Elisa Segnini related her work on “Pirandello, Brecht, Evreinov,” and Michael Edwards discussed “Pirandello’s Intermedial Legacy in Paolo and Vittorio Taviani’s *Tu ridi*.” Michael Subialka served as respondent. The Pirandello Society of America also co-sponsored a second panel in collaboration with the Modernist Studies Association on “Labyrinthine Modernisms in Pirandellian Times,” chaired by Leonard Diepeveen and with presentations by Nick Milne (“The Futility of Historical Narrative and the ‘Garden of Forking Paths’”), Michael Subialka (“Differing Models of Modernist Labyrinths: Eliot and Pirandello”), and Leonard Diepeveen (“Stein’s Labyrinth without Walls”). The Society is grateful to everyone involved for making these two panels a success.

It is a pleasure to be able to present this volume to you, but of course it would have been impossible without the hard work of the whole editorial team as well as the contributions of our anonymous peer reviewers and various collaborators. I am very grateful for all they have done. Likewise, many thanks to Susan Tenneriello and Samantha Burrier for their advice and guidance, as well as to Mandy Huang, the graphic design student from Baruch College (CUNY) to whom we owe our lovely cover design.

We hope you will enjoy this opportunity to be reminded of the important, and flourishing, role of adaptation and translation for Pirandello’s works.

Michael Subialka  
*St Hugh’s College, University of Oxford*



## **“Continental Air”: Performing Identity in “Leonora, addio!,” *L’aria del continente*, and *Questa sera si recita a soggetto***

ELISA SEGNINI

Recent scholarship has demonstrated that the writings of Luigi Pirandello can be read from a postcolonial perspective, especially in regards to texts that engage with the relationship between Sicily and the mainland after the 1860s and with the transformations brought about by the Italian unification (Rössner 2010; Bernardi 2010; Sorrentino 2013; Sorrentino and Rössner 2012). Short stories that question or subvert the axis of center and periphery, such as “Lontano,” “Lumè di Sicilia,” and “Donna Mimma” have received particular attention; “Leonora, addio!” (1910) and its adaptation as *Questa sera si recita a soggetto* (1930) have been reread in light of a conflict of culture between modernity and tradition. In this article, I add to this scholarship by reflecting on how the idea at the core of “Leonora, addio!” migrates from Pirandello’s prose to Nino Martoglio’s theater, to resurface, many years later, in Pirandello’s last play in the trilogy of the theater in the theater. Through a comparative analysis of “Leonora, addio!,” *L’aria del continente* (1915) and *Questa sera si recita a soggetto* (1930), I will examine the role of artists in shaping regional and national identities through representations.<sup>1</sup> In doing so, I will stress how the collaboration with Martoglio and the experience of the dialect theater continued to influence Pirandello as he became a well-known, international playwright; and I will draw attention to the implications of a rhetoric geared to question stereotypes but, at the same time, to satisfy the expectations and the imagination of the target audience. I will begin by illustrating how fiction and performances, at the beginning of the twentieth century, contributed to the construction and representation of the Sicilian character. I will then examine how Pirandello objected to these representations but engaged with these very stereotypes in short stories such as “Leonora, addio!” and the way in which the same commonplaces are used, in a comic key, in Martoglio’s *L’aria del continente*. With this step in mind, I will re-assess the implications of elaborating the contrast between the Sicilian and mainland

ways of life for the German audience, as Pirandello transforms “Leonora, addio!” into the play-within-the-play of *Questa sera si recita a soggetto*.

### **Describing and performing Sicilianness**

Since the late nineteenth century, the authors of *verismo* were particularly concerned with describing an ancestral Sicily defined through cultural and folkloric traits that they did not hesitate to exaggerate, at times resorting to imagination for the sake of stressing the specificity of the island’s traditions (Rapisarda 325-352). As Nelson Moe notes, these authors were aware of the fascination that rural Sicily had for the bourgeoisie of the mainland and exploited local idiosyncrasies accordingly, either by dwelling on the picturesque or emphasizing the island’s difference (250). On the one hand, the stress on distinctive traits turned diversity into exoticism, making the authors’ works appealing and marketable. On the other, the emphasis on difference contributed to a discourse that viewed Sicily in terms of a troubling alterity. The consequences that these narratives had on the national imagination are summed up in a comment by Luigi Capuana:

Come mai questi benevoli lettori non hanno riflettuto che noi, per ragioni di arte, abbiamo dovuto restringerci a studiare quanto vi ha di più singolare, di più efficacemente caratteristico nelle nostre province [...] e tralasciare tutto quello che esse hanno in comune con le altre province e che non è punto poco ... ? (quoted in Sciascia 44)

Why did these benevolent readers not recognize that, for the sake of art, we had to limit ourselves to studying what is most peculiar, most effectively distinctive in our provinces [...] and neglect all they have in common with the other provinces— which is by no means just a little... ?<sup>2</sup>

The traits and features that the audience has interpreted as typical, Capuana stresses, have been selected specifically for their appeal to the artistic imagination: they constitute exceptions, rather than the norm, and would gradually disappear if writers were not careful to record them.<sup>3</sup>

The way in which Sicilian plays were enacted by

travelling actors also emphasized—and often exaggerated—the image of Sicily as depicted by the writers of *verismo*. In particular, the performances of Mimi Aguglia and Giovanni Grasso, who in the first decade of the twentieth century toured Europe as well as the Italian peninsula, created a “Sicilian type” tailored to confirm the imagination of the national and international audience. In spite of the press’ praises, Verga was horrified by the “grotesque caricature of Sicilian character” enacted by Grasso in the Parisian performance of *Cavalleria Rusticana* and, irritated by his improvisation and change to the ending, went as far as ordering the play’s withdrawal from Grasso’s repertoire (Verga 1954).<sup>4</sup> In line with Verga, the theater critic Lucio d’Ambra, in a series of articles written between 1908 and 1909, reacted against the opinion that these plays offered a faithful portrait of Sicilian life. In “Giovanni Grasso e la commedia dell’arte” (1909), D’Ambra blamed the actors for conjuring the image of “un’Italia brigantesca e accoltellatrice, dove si ragiona a colpi di coltello ...” [“A predatory Italy filled with stabbings, where one reasons by knife-strokes”] (297). Contesting the view that Grasso represented the typical Sicilian, he described him rather as a pathological phenomenon. For D’Ambra, too, the most appealing and disturbing traits of difference, rather than as rules, are to be regarded as exceptions: “è un errore grave ed imperdonabile di quanti conoscono la Sicilia e il suo popolo, e specialmente dei siciliani, quello non dico di sostenere, ma di ammettere soltanto, anche alla lontana, che Grasso con l’arte sua rispecchi una parte, anche piccola, della vita e del carattere dei siciliani” [“it is a serious and unforgivable mistake on the part of those who know Sicily and its people, and especially of Sicilians, I am not saying to support, but even to admit, however remotely, that Grasso with his art reflects a part, however small, of the life and character of Sicilians”] (303).

A year later, an expert on folklore, Giuseppe Pitrè, would similarly warn against the disparaging representations of *Sicilianness* in contemporary theater: “Il siciliano non è quello che si vuol dare a credere. Le eccezioni non fanno regola; anzi intanto sono eccezioni, in quanto escono dalla regola. La gelosia connaturata alla fierezza isolana non dà il diritto di far dei siciliani delle belve” [“The Sicilian is not the type one wants to make the audience believe. Exceptions are not the rule; indeed they are

exceptions because they are outside the rule. Jealousy, inherent to the pride of the island, does not give us the right to portray Sicilians as beasts”] (quoted in Barbina 289).<sup>5</sup>

Having completed his doctoral studies in Bonn, Luigi Pirandello, after 1891, paid particular attention to the way in which Sicily was conjured in the German imagination. In a review of Konrad Telmann’s collection of Sicilian stories, “Trinacria” (1895), he complains that the writing of Capuana, Verga, and De Roberto has contributed to an inexact and stereotyped image of the island for both national and international audiences. He further regrets that Telmann, as a German author, has not been able to offer a more objective view to dissipate “quel brutto e falso concetto che se ne ha in Germania, com’io so per prova” [“that bad and false conception of Sicily that one has in Germany, as I experienced first-hand”] (338).<sup>6</sup> He mocks Telmann’s mistakes in referencing Sicilian folklore, his erroneous use of toponymy, and the exaggerated emphasis on sentiments such as jealousy, rage, and honor. The Sicily depicted by this German author, Pirandello concludes, reflects the imagination of the German bourgeoisie: “è proprio quell’aspro, selvaggio paese della loro romantica fantasia, fulminato per dir così perennemente dal sole, covo di briganti, d’assassini, qualcosa come (e anzi molto peggio) della Spagna rappresentata nella *Carmen* (libretto)” [“it is indeed that harsh, savage country of their romantic imagination, so to speak, perpetually struck by the sun, den of brigands, murderers, something like (and indeed much worse than) the Spain represented in *Carmen* (the libretto)”] (338). In Pirandello’s view, it is bad enough that Italy should have a negative conception of the island, but that Germany should contribute to such stereotypes is simply unacceptable:

Io quasi vorrei domandargli che forma crede egli che abbia la Sicilia, e se l’abbia mai vista in effigie su una carta geografica. Guardi, guardi un po’, il signor Telmann! L’Italia, che ha la forma di uno stivale, pare che allunghi un calcio, è vero, all’isola disgraziata; ma questo è un calcio dato, diciamo così, in famiglia, e poco male. Non vedo proprio la ragione perché lei, venuto di Germania, debba poi allungargliene un altro ... (338)

I would almost like to ask him what shape he thinks Sicily has, and if he has ever seen it on a map. Look, look closer, Mr.

Telmann! Italy, which has the shape of a boot, seems to stretch out to kick the unfortunate island, it's true; but this is a kick given, so to speak, in the family, and so it's no big deal. I do not see the reason why you, from Germany, should give it another one ...

A few years later, in the famous and frequently-quoted essay "Il teatro Siciliano" (1909), Pirandello reflects again on the image of Sicily in the national and international imagination. Joining the debate on the dialect theater, he comments on how the "spaventose bravure" ["frightening bravura"] of actors such as Mimì Aguglia and Giovanni Grasso arouse a reaction shifting between enthusiasm and repugnance towards the local culture. The main obstacle to developing a dialect theater that represents Sicily in its diversity and complexity is, in Pirandello's view, the scarce knowledge that the mainland has of the island. "Ora, fuori dei confini dell'isola," he questions, "che conoscenza si ha della Sicilia? Una conoscenza limitatissima di poche espressioni caratteristiche, violente, diventate ormai di maniera. Il carattere siciliano si è fissato, tipificato nella terribile, meravigliosa bestialità di Giovanni Grasso. Mancando ogni altra conoscenza della vita così varia e caratteristica della Sicilia, ogn'altra espressione di essa riesce quasi inintelligibile" ["Now, outside the borders of the island, what knowledge does one have of Sicily? A very limited knowledge of a few distinctive, violent expressions that have already become a fashion. The Sicilian character has been fixed, typified in the terrible, wonderful bestiality of Giovanni Grasso. Since one lacks any knowledge of the highly varied and characteristic life in Sicily, every other expression turns out almost unintelligible"] (981). He concludes that, outside of Sicily, people will appreciate only the clichés that they recognize and that a successful Sicilian theater for the mainland audience would inevitably result in a "Sicilia d'importazione" ["an imported Sicily"] (981).

In all these essays, we can already recognize a feature that will become increasingly important in Pirandello's work: the awareness of the power of cultural representations, as well as the understanding of identity as a performance—together with the idea that regional stereotypes can be tolerated within one's country, but not in an international context. On the other hand, as Christine Ott has observed, elsewhere Pirandello does not hesitate

in taking an essentialist view to describe the Sicilian character (Ott 76). This is, for example, evident in the essay on Verga, originally written in 1920 and presented again, with very little variation, in 1931, in which Pirandello uses the notion of “insularity” to define what he perceives as the immobile and unchangeable features of the Sicilian, naturally inclined to distrust and to remain closed-off (1000-1021).<sup>7</sup> Here, I am especially concerned with the emphasis on identity in three works whose theme is the contrast between life in Sicily and on the mainland.

### **“Leonora, addio!”**

Jealous, violent, unable to control his rage, the novella’s protagonist, Rico Verri, epitomizes the Sicilian vices prominent in the literature of *verismo*. It is useful to briefly recall the plot: in a town of the island’s interior, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Sicilian officer, Verri, falls in love with Mommina, the “wisest daughter” of an atypical family. Mommina’s mother, donna Ignazia, “plays the man of the house” and, bragging of her Neapolitan origins, looks down on her fellow townspeople, pushing her four daughters to defy local customs by adopting the manners of the mainland. Whereas local families enforce a closed-off lifestyle, Ignazia encourages her daughters to frequent a group of officers that, with the exception of Verri, come from the mainland. The sentence “in continente si faceva così” [“this is the way it is done on the continent”] becomes the refrain through which the women in the family justify behavior that goes against the local moral code, and the same sentence is repeated by the officers to get away with their transgressions.

In a recent essay, Guglielmo Bernardi observed that the crisis at the core of the novella originates from the profound social transformations brought by the industrial revolution and the Italian unification—the *Risorgimento* as myth and historical process is, in fact, a crucial theme for Pirandello and one that often re-surfaces in his fiction.<sup>8</sup> In “Leonora, addio!” the Sicilian town is depicted as an self-enclosed reality with distinct social and cultural practices; Naples, Ignazia’s reference for modernity—and capital of the no-longer-extant Kingdom of the Two Sicilies—is itself provincial, surpassed in importance by the modern cities of the north. The conflict, therefore, is one between insularity

and the provincial mainland. For example, the refinement that Signora Ignazia believes distinguishes her from the townsmen, the melodramas she listened to in the last season (*Gli Ugonotti* (1836), *Ernani* (1844), *Il Trovatore* (1853), *Faust* (1853), *La forza del destino* (1862)) are not at all contemporary but nineteenth century works (Bernardi 142).

Performance plays a crucial role throughout the short story: the women of the La Croce family attend the local theater, stage their own melodramas at home, and perform men's roles; Mommina, for instance, is described as a young girl as she sings the aria of Sibel in *Faust*, and in the end of the story dies performing the role of Manrico in *Il trovatore*. Taking advantage of a position that the family perceives as superior, the group of mainland officers perform the "continental manners" that Ignazia and her daughters envision. But whereas the young men are aware of their performance, Ignazia and her daughters are too embedded in the local culture to realize that their attempt to imitate continental life is a source of laughter and ridicule.

Rico Verri initially supports Ignazia in her "hate for all the savages of the island." The shift occurs when he falls in love with Mommina. It is at this point that jealousy emerges as the main trait of Verri's character, prompting him to adopt the traits that he had previously defined as barbaric. "Innamorandosi sul serio di Mommina," ["Seriously falling in love with Mommina,"] we read, "cominciò a diventare un selvaggio anche lui. E che selvaggio!" ["he, too, started to become a savage. And what a savage!"] (470). On the one hand, we are told that this jealousy is hereditary: it the same sentiment that had led his father to keep his mother as a prisoner. On the other, the metamorphosis is described as the result of conscious decision. His "particular sexual moral and erotic behavior" (Sciascia 24) is the fruit of a negotiation: the text speaks of "pacts" with his father as well as with the rest of the community.<sup>9</sup> To defend his honor, Verri locks Mommina in his house on the south coast of the island, where he keeps her in a constant state of physical and psychological strain. The description of Mommina's imprisonment contains significant geographical references that underscore the position of Sicily within a European geography: the country from which Rico Verri receives the locks that sentence Mommina to her imprisonment come, paradoxically, from Germany, a country

that Pirandello, during his stay in Bonn, had described as a place in which women enjoy considerable freedom (Rössner 2001, 153). Mommina's only window faces instead the "African sea" (571), a detail that implicitly compares her condition, and the customs that condemned her to it, to a reality beyond Europe, contextualizing Sicily as "a liminal zone between Europe and Africa" (Moe 49). The conclusion emphasizes Verri's sadistic and misogynistic behavior: Mommina dies as, nostalgic of her previous life, she performs the melodramas of her youth for her children. When Verri, upon his return, discovers his wife's body on the floor, he rushes to it filled with rage and does not even touch it, but rather rolls it over with his foot.

During the time spent in Germany (1889-90) Pirandello had been exposed to very different societal customs, to a contrasting way of life that led him to reflect on and to observe his own culture as if from a distance. One of the main differences to which he was exposed was the contrast between the customs that regulated the life of women in Sicily and their daily life in a city such as Bonn. It is not a coincidence that, when Pirandello had become an old man and an international writer, he chose to adapt "Leonora, addio!," a short story that makes the life of women into the main difference between the island and the mainland, for the play-within-the-play of *Questa sera si recita a soggetto*, a work written specifically for the German stage, published in German in 1929 and in the Italian version in 1930. However, many years earlier, Pirandello had played with the contrast between life in Sicily and the mainland in *L'aria del continente* (1915), a play by Nino Martoglio that Pirandello claimed to have co-authored, and to which he contributed at least in subject matter and structure.

### *L'aria del continente*

*L'aria del continente* premiered in Milan, at the *Teatro Filodrammatici*, on November 27, 1915, with Angelo Musco in the role of the protagonist.<sup>10</sup> Musco was famous for the mobility of his features and his ability to transition from a comical expression to a grotesque sneer; as Zappulla-Muscarà notes, his shows were often perceived and described as revivals of the *Commedia dell'arte* (1996, 14-15).<sup>11</sup> If Grasso was associated with the tragic Sicilian type, Musco was often considered his comical counterpart. At

the time, the poet, dramatist and actor-manager Nino Martoglio aimed to renew the repertoire of the dialect theater: he included new themes, shifted the action from a peasant to a bourgeois environment, and avoided emphasis on gory or violent scenes. *L'aria del continente* was in this sense an innovative play. As in previous works, however, it relied on the representation of the Sicilian type for a non-Sicilian audience.<sup>12</sup> The island's difference was underlined by contrast with the way of life on the continent: the audience laughed not only because the performance represented and exaggerated their expectation of Sicilian customs, but also because it presented them, as in a distorted mirror, with a comical representation of their own way of life.

A year later, in 1916, Pirandello, drawing from short stories written around the same time as "Leonora, addio!," would write four plays in Sicilian for Martoglio's theater, all to be interpreted by Musco ("Pensaci, Giacominu," "Liola," "A birritta cu' i ciancianeddi," "A Giarra"). In 1921/22, he would compose two other works in collaboration with Martoglio ("A vilanza" and "Cappiddazzu paga tuttu"). Scholars have often wondered why, after stating that "una letteratura dialettale è fatta per rimanere entro i confini del dialetto" ["a dialect literature is made to remain within the confines of the dialect"] (980) and criticizing the performances of Grasso and Aguglia, Pirandello chose to collaborate with his friend Nino Martoglio and to write for a dialect theater tailored to the mainland audience. Laura Lepschy and Paul Renucci agree that Pirandello changed his mind after witnessing the success of Martoglio's theater, whose greatest success was *L'aria del continente* (Lepschy 265-275, Renucci lvii). According to today's notions of authorship, it is not far-fetched to consider Pirandello a co-author of this play,<sup>13</sup> which enables us to trace a link between the representation of regional stereotypes for a mainland audience and the (much later) resurrection of the Sicilian type for the German stage.

Set in Sicily, in a town of the interior, the play tells the story of a mature gentleman, Don Cola Dusciu, who, after having been hospitalized in Rome, develops a "continental spirit" and returns to his Sicilian hometown accompanied by a singer, a young woman who goes by the name of Milla Milord, allegedly from Romagna. Having adopted a way of life that he believes to be continental, Cola insults his townsmen by calling them

barbaric and ignorant and defies their customs and traditions by openly living with the artist. In order to demonstrate that he is not suffering from jealousy, he goes as far as encouraging Milla to flirt with the townsmen. In the end he discovers her identity to be that of "Concetta Cafiso," born in Sicily, and, outraged, he chases the girl from his home.

Compared to "Leonora, addio!," where the conflict is mainly one between the island and the provincial mainland, here the tension between different layers of periphery is further developed. "Se lei è delegato, caro signore, io vengo da Roma!... Dalla capitale, ha capito?" ["If you are authorized dear Sir, I come from Rome.... From the capital, do you understand?"] (286), screams Cola to the officer in the first act, referencing Rome as the model for the civility that he strives to imitate. Other areas of the mainland, in particular the south, are considered provincial. "Dico, lei è del Continente, ma non nordico, sarà della bassa Italia" ["I say, you are from the Continent, but not Nordic, you must come from southern Italy"] (302), Cola guesses, for instance, about the lieutenant. The towns where Cola and Milla come from represent the insular, a reality with distinct societal customs untouched by modernity. After discovering Milla's true identity, Cola cannot comprehend how a girl from the interior of Sicily could have performed in Rome. "Puteva suppori mai ca 'na siciliana, una di Carrapipi, avissi avuto 'ssu spiritu di cantari a Roma? Dove c'è il re, c'è il papa, ci sono senatori, deputati e tuttu l'andirivieni di persone illustri?" ["Could I ever guess that a Sicilian, from Carrapipi, could have had this courage to sing in Rome? Where there are a king, a pope, senators, congressmen, and all the coming and going of illustrious people?"] (328). At the end of the play, "carrapipana," the adjective that defines the inhabitants of the town Carrapipi, where Milla is from, becomes a synonym for an insult (328).

The humor here relies not so much on the depiction of Sicilian customs as on the performance of the "continentalized" characters. In Pirandello's short story, it is Ignazia's defiant behavior, the transgression to which she pushes her daughters, that provokes Verri's jealousy and eventually leads to Mommina's imprisonment. In *L'aria del continente*, it is Cola, rather than his "backward" townsmen, who incites laughter by imitating continental manners. Many of the core motifs of Pirandello's

short story can be found in this play, although they unfold in a comical, rather than in a tragic, mode. Both works are set in a bourgeois environment, rather than in a peasant one. As in “Leonora, addio!,” the condition of women is referenced as the main difference between the way of life on the island and that on the mainland; and the necessity of imitating continental manners is used as an excuse to justify sexual liberties, with its ensuing misunderstandings. “Lasciatele libere, le donne, per Dio, fatele respirare, emancipatele dalla schiavitù...” [“Let the women free, by God, let them breathe, emancipate them from slavery...”], Cola proclaims in the second act in standard Italian (301). As he switches to Sicilian to address his townsmen, this reasonable suggestion is transformed into absurdity: “...E chi cci haju proibitu forsi, alla mia Milla, di trasiri e nesciri a piaciri so’, libira comu l’aria?...di fari chiddu ca voli?... Ppi mia po’ jri anchi in mezzu a un reggimentu di suldati!...Si po fari curtiggiari...” [“Have I perhaps forbidden Milla to come and go at her pleasure, free like air?... to do whatever she wants?... for me, she can even go in the middle of a soldier’s regiment ... she can let herself be courted...”] (*ibid.*). Translation, the play underlines, is not always possible, and what appears reasonable in the context of the mainland is transformed into a farce within the frame of reference of the island. In addition, as in “Leonora, addio!,” plenty of misunderstandings are generated by the encounter of the “continentalized” protagonist with a mainland officer. Even Cola’s sister, Marastella—who is compared to a *carabiniere* for the way in which she bosses around her brother, husband, and children—has certain features that display similarities with Ignazia, whose nickname is *la generala*.

By juxtaposing folklore with tokens of modernity, the stage notes underline the contrast between the way of life in Sicily and that in continental Italy. For instance, in the second act, the altar for the Christmas prayers, adorned according to local traditions, is described in great detail (296).<sup>14</sup> In the same environment we also find gambling tables, a map of northern Italy, and a map of Europe, in a progressive widening of the gap between local traditions and European modernity. This contrast is further underlined by music, as the religious litany sung by the women and children next to the altar for the Christmas prayers is interrupted by Milla and Don Lucino, who burst onto the scene dancing the *cancan* (312-13). Milla, initially introduced by Cola

as an opera singer whose repertoire consists mainly of Verdi, is eventually unveiled as a vulgar (and tone-deaf) cabaret performer.

As in “Leonora, addio!,” the mainland is constantly associated with civilization and modernity (Marastella: “all’uso cuntinentali!” Don Cola: “che poi è l’uso civile!”) [Marastella: “In the way it is done on the Continent!” Don Cola: “that is, of course, the civil way”] (291). Like Ignazia, Cola refers to the superiority of the way of life on the mainland and insults his townsmen as barbaric and ignorant: “Viva la faccia del continente” he proclaims, “unni ci su’ genti evoluti, genti di spiritu, e non certi cretini ‘ncuntrunuti nell’ignoranza e nei pregiudizi, comu cca!” [“Hooray for the surface of the continent, where there are evolved people, people of spirit, and not such cretins stuck in ignorance and prejudice, like here!”] (299). This conflict is now explored further than it is in the short story, and Cola goes so far as to propose a “civilization” course to teach continental manners, which becomes the pretext of a series of jokes that present, in a comical key, a similar situation to the tragedy that unfolds in “Leonora, addio!”:

LUCINO: Iu?... Mi dispiaci ca’ n Cuntinenti non cci pozzu jri puru iu!...

DON COLA: E vacci!...Fa’ qualunqui forzu per andarci!... Tornerai incivilito!...[...]

Metà di vuatri avissivu a jri in cuntinenti, a fari un corso di civiltà di ‘na decina di anni, e altrettanti cuntinentali duvissiru veniri cca, o’ vostru postu!...V’assicuro iu ca ‘stu paisi divintassi un paradisu!...

DON LIBORIU: Sintiti, d’accordo fussi iu, ppi ‘stu passaggiu d’abitanti, di ‘na parti a ‘n ‘altra, ma cca avissivu a purtari suli fimmini!...

TUTTI: benissimo!...Approvatu!... Fimmini, fimmini!...

DON COLA: (ride, osservandoli e commiserandoli): Già!... E quannu ‘sti fimmini vinissiru cca, ppi so’ svintura, trovassiru a vuatri, tutti istruiti, eleganti, galanti, spiritusi... ca l’accuglissivu ccu ‘a scuzzetta ‘ntesta e ‘u menzu tuscanu o’ ‘a pipa ‘n vucca... e allura è certu ca si ‘nnamurassiru di vui comu tanti signi!... (Ride, ride). Senza cuntari ca ‘i chiudivissivu dintra, a chiavi, e cci mittissivu macari ‘u catinazzu ‘nt’è barcuni, ppi non farli affacciari!...

DON FILADELFU: Chisti su’ esagerazioni!... (300)

LUCINO: Me?... I am sorry that I can’t also go to the Continent!

DON COLA: Go!... Make whatever effort needed to go!... You will come back civilized!... [...]

Half of you should go to the continent, to take a civilization course for a decade or so, and the same number of continentals should come here, in your place!... I assure you that this country would become a paradise!

DON LIBORIU: Listen, I agree to this exchange of inhabitants, from one side to the other, but we should only bring women!

ALL: perfect...! Approved!!!! Women, women!...

DON COLA: (laughs, looking at them and commiserating with them): Right!... And if these women came, to their misfortune, and found you guys, all educated, elegant, chivalrous, witty... and you met them with a *scuzzetta* on your head and a cigar or a pipe in your mouth... then it is certain that they would fall in love with you like many monkeys!... (laughs, laughs). Without mentioning that you would lock them in, and maybe add a bolt to keep them from appearing at the balcony!...

DON FILADELFU: These are exaggerations!...

Like “Leonora, addio!,” *L’aria del continente* emphasizes traits that the audience would recognize as typically Sicilian and revolves around the performance of regional and national character. In the play, the idea that identity is no more than a performance coexists with the notion of *Sicilianness* as a set of immobile, unchangeable features. Cola defines himself as “Continentale di spirito, di mentalità, di adozione” [“Continental in spirit, way of thinking, adoption”] (302). Whenever he threatens to give in to jealousy, Milla reminds him of their agreement, their “pact” (316), according to which Cola promised not to behave like a typical Sicilian. Ultimately, Cola’s adoption of the “continental spirit,” his attempt to imitate a culture perceived as superior, is only partially successful.<sup>15</sup> Milla, the cabaret singer, initially engages in a successful performance as she pretends to be from a northern region (Romagna); but in the end of the play she is unmasked, as underlined by the sudden code switching—before disappearing, she insults Cola in Sicilian. As in “Leonora, addio!” and *Questa sera si recita a soggetto*, the culture of the mainland is mimicked through a process that underlines, rather than erases, difference. Using a concept from postcolonial theory, we can say that locals try to be one with the dominant culture, but that this performance results in a distortion that produces “slippage, excess, [...] a representation of difference that is itself a process

of disavowal” (Bhabha 126). This exposes the culture that the protagonist is trying to repress. Allusions to the immobility of Sicilian character are further underlined through numerous references to race: “Io appartengo a un'altra razza... a un'altra categoria, sa!” [“I belong to a different race...to another category, you know!"] (310), confirms Don Cola to the mainland officer, afraid to be considered one with his fellow townspeople. “Razza siciliana antica, caru don Cola, e mi nni vanto!” [“Pure ancient Sicilian race, dear Cola, and I am proud of it!”] (308), asserts, a few lines later, Don Liboriu, defending the local customs. After discovering Milla’s true identity, Cola caricatures her shows at the cabaret, thereby impersonating a Sicilian man imitating a Sicilian woman who, in turn, impersonates a mainland artist (a scene written with Musco’s *lazzi* in mind). He then asks for a “scuzzetta,” [Sicilian beret] a “pipa di rasta,” [Sicilian pipe] and a “marruggio” [cane] (330) and waits for Milla to return. When Milla asks what is going on, Cola answers “mi stuffai di fari ‘u Continentali e sugnu turnatu sicilianu!” [“I got tired of performing the continental, and I became Sicilian again!”] (332). The ending is open to interpretation: on the one hand, Cola’s return to and embrace of local customs can be read as confirmation that his continental phase was only a show and that, at heart, he remained Sicilian. On the other, *Sicilianess*, too, is presented as a performance that, to be enacted, requires a certain use of language, the ability to code-switch, and all the necessary paraphernalia.

### *Questa sera si recita a soggetto*

In 1928, after a professional crisis, disenchanted by the situation of Italian theaters and attracted by the cinema industry, Pirandello left Italy and moved to Berlin. Here, he played once more with the representation of the Sicilian type and the contrast between island/mainland by selecting “Leonora, addio!” as the short story to be adapted in the play-within-the-play of *Questa sera si recita a soggetto*—a work that Pirandello hoped would result in great profits. The play has been thoroughly examined as a reflection on the dynamic among author, director, and actors, as well as in relation to the innovations and excesses of the German *Regie*.<sup>16</sup> However, if we shift our attention from the meta-play—Dr. Hinkfuss’s attempt to stage an improvised play and the

vicissitude of the actors—to the play-within-the-play—the story of the La Croce family—it becomes evident that the choice to adapt a short story that emphasizes Sicily's otherness entails a reflection on the way in which life on the island was imagined by the German audience.<sup>17</sup> Just as, during his involvement with Martoglio's theater, Pirandello had written his plays with Angelo Musco in mind (trying to tame his impulse to improvise) and tailored his plays for the mainland, he now conjures Sicily specifically for German actors, adapting "Leonora, addio!" for Germany.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the choice to adapt a story that, in the tradition of *verismo*, represents Sicily as a pre-modern space with archaic customs, and to do so using the latest technologies available to the German *Regie*, reflects aspects of the debate on Italy's place in modernity.<sup>19</sup>

By emphasizing the antinomy between life and form, reality and appearance, Hinkfuss' long monologue encourages the interpretations of German critics who, after the performance of *Six Characters*, had seen in Pirandello's work an echo of Kant's philosophy (Büdel 104). Through this monologue, Pirandello also establishes a link between *Questa sera* and the most successful and well known of his plays in Germany, *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore*, extremely popular since the *mise en scène* by Max Reinhardt (1924). In doing so, he presents the play as the work of an international author well established within the German literary and theatrical system.<sup>20</sup> Concurrently, he associates the play from the outset with the *Commedia dell'arte*, a tradition that foreign directors such as Gordon Craig, Jacques Copeau, and Vsevolod Meyerhold had celebrated and that Italians, in years of fervent nationalism, were in the process of glorifying and re-claiming as their own.<sup>21</sup> The exaltation of the genre was in line with the German reception of Pirandello's work. In fact, since the German tour of Pirandello's "Compagnia del teatro d'Arte" in 1925—which Mussolini had financed as a means to promote Italian theater and, more generally, the image of Italy and *Italianness* (Cometa 229)—Pirandello's work had been reviewed and praised in the German press in connection with improvised comedy (243). The representations of *Six Characters* by the Teatro d'arte, in particular, had unleashed a number of articles that, with an almost anthropological approach, had compared "Mediterranean" acting to the German *mise en scène*. The Italian actors were considered ill-suited to represent

“mysterious, translucent, typical Nordic creatures” (Tinterri 138), while Marta Abba’s performance was described through references to her “dark blood” and in terms of a pathological “desire to exhibit herself” (Alfred Kerr in Tinterri 138). How does *Questa sera si recita a soggetto* engage with these interpretations, and how is Sicily performed in this play? How does it differ from the Sicily conjured in the short story, and in what way do these changes recall Martoglio’s strategies?

From the outset, the conflict at the core of the story is simplified as attention is shifted from the complex reasons that isolate the La Croce family to jealousy. Hinkfuss, the German director, stresses that: “L’azione si svolge in una città dell’interno della Sicilia, dove (come sapete) le passioni son forti e covano cupe e poi divampano violente: fra tutte, ferocissima, la gelosia” [“The action takes place in a city in the interior of Sicily, where (as you know) passions are strong; they smoulder inside, then burst out violently. And the fiercest of them is jealousy”] (308). The imaginary geography of the short story is complicated by additional references to several levels of the periphery: the town of the La Croce family continues to represent insularity, and Hinkfuss still stresses the fact that Ignazia is a native of Naples, emphasizing her provincial pride, but now we are given additional details and told that the mainland officers come from Milan and Venice—smaller cities in the industrialized north.<sup>22</sup>

Using a strategy similar to the one employed by Martoglio, Pirandello underscores the contrast between Sicily and the mainland by setting side by side folkloric details and tokens of modernity. This contrast is underlined visually as well as sound-wise. A parallel can be established between the scene in which, in the second act of *L’aria del continente*, the litany sung at the Christmas altar is interrupted by Milla’s *can-can*, and the way in which, in the second act of *Questa sera*, the sound of the bells after the religious procession is gradually replaced by the melody of jazz (323-5). Scholarship has emphasized that the cabaret recalls the venues that Pirandello visited in Berlin, and its *chanteuse* the nightlife of European capitals.<sup>23</sup> If jazz symbolizes the cultural influence that arrives, via North America, in Paris and Berlin, the spectacular religious procession, a device that Pirandello had already used in *Il signore della nave* (1924), conjures instead the primordial religious sentiment of old rural communities.<sup>24</sup> Ancient customs stand out

against the backdrop of jazz, and the gap between the archaic and the modern assumes a European, rather than a national, dimension.

As noted, when the narrator of the short story describes Mommina's condition after her wedding, an emphasis is placed on Sicily as a liminal territory between Europe and Africa (Verri orders his locks from Germany; Mommina's window faces the African sea). In the play, such details are omitted but replaced by the musical intertext. Nenè is introduced as singing Bizet's "Habanera," provocatively playing the role of the gypsy in *Carmen*; Mommina performs "Stride la vampa" (*Il Trovatore*) dressed as Azucena—also a gypsy.<sup>25</sup> In his review of Telmann's *Trinacria*, Pirandello had traced several similarities between the Spain depicted in the libretto of *Carmen* and the stereotypes attributed to Sicily by the German bourgeoisie, underlining how both settings were conjured as marginal, dangerous spaces within modern Europe. The fact that Nenè and Mommina are now assigned the roles of gypsies (the rest of family sings, significantly, the gypsy choir of Verdi's *Trovatore*) underlines their subaltern and marginal status. In fact, like Carmen and Azucena, both sisters constitute—albeit in different ways—a threat to a deeply patriarchal society.

As in "Leonora, addio!" local culture is associated with savagery in comparison with the modernity of the mainland, but now the space dedicated to these comparisons grows significantly. Just like Cola in *L'aria del continente*, Ignazia suggests that her fellow townsmen should enroll in a course on civilization:

LA SIGNORA IGNAZIA: Ah voi dovrete acquistare una grande benemeranza, cari miei, verso la civiltà!

MANGINI: Noi! E come, signora Ignazia?

LA SIGNORA IGNAZIA: Come? Mettendovi a dar lezione, al vostro circolo!

POMETTI: Lezione? A chi?

LA SIGNORA IGNAZIA: A questi zotici villani del paese! Almeno per un'ora al giorno. [...] Una lezioncina al giorno, d'un'ora, che li informi di come si vive nelle grandi città del Continente... (341)

LA SIGNORA IGNAZIA: You should gain a bit of credit for yourselves, my dear friends, in the great march towards civilization!

MANGINI: Us? How is that, Signora Ignazia?

SIGNORA IGNAZIA: By giving lessons at your club!

POMETTI: Lessons? To whom?

SIGNORA IGNAZIA: To these boorish peasants here in town!  
An hour or so a day, at least. [...] A lesson a day, for an hour,  
showing them how they live in the big cities of the Continent...

Bernardi has stressed how, in creating an unpleasant character such as Hinkfuss, and in underlining his assertiveness towards a cultural patrimony that is not his own, Pirandello emphasizes and criticizes the process through which adaptation becomes cultural appropriation (142). It is in this light that we can read other variations, such the addition of a scene in which Sampognetta (the father) comes home to die after having been wounded at the cabaret. While the incident happens off stage, it provides a spectacular entrance, and since Sampognetta has been stabbed for courting the *chanteuse*, it underscores the clichés of the crime of passion. Hinkfuss emphasizes that his position as a non-Sicilian allows him to make use of stereotypes that a Sicilian author could not afford to display:

Scena capitale, signori, per le conseguenze che porta. L'ho trovata io; nella novella non c'è; e sono certo anzi che l'autore non l'avrebbe mai messa, anche per scrupolo ch'io non avessi motivo di rispettare: di non ribadire, cioè, la credenza, molto diffusa, che in Sicilia si faccia tant'uso del coltello. (369)

It's a very important scene, ladies and gentlemen, because of its consequences. It's my invention; it's not in the story. But I'm sure the author would never put it in anyway, even if it weren't for a scruple of his that I had no reason to respect: you see, he did not wish to reinforce the wide-spread belief that people are quite free with the knife in Sicily. (88)

Extraneous to the culture represented on stage, the German director can afford to reproduce common beliefs about Sicily, to reduce life on the island to a series of stereotypes, conjuring the image of a land "where one reasons by knife-strokes" (Barbina 297). The comic actor performs this scene out of character, outraged that the other actors do not react to his entrance as he had planned, thereby ruining the effect. However, the swift alternation of the Sicilian story with the meta-theatrical dimension does not prevent the audience from associating the scene with "southern" performances that, twenty years earlier, had shaped the Sicilian

type throughout the peninsula as well as abroad.

Hinkfuss justifies the addition of the episode with an explanation absent in the short story:

Il personaggio deve morire; la famiglia piombare per questa morte nella miseria; senza queste condizioni non mi par naturale che la figlia Mommina possa consentire a sposare Rico Verri, quell'energumeno. (369)

The character must die; as a result the family must plunge into poverty. If that doesn't happen it doesn't seem natural to me that the daughter, Mommina, would consent to marry that savage, Rico Verri. (88)

With these words, Hinkfuss gives the German audience a rational reason for Mommina's choice to marry "the brute." Immediately afterwards, however, he repeats the original explanation of the short story, ascribing it to the interpretation of the leading actress:

...il Verri, eh il Verri farà per lei, non uno, ma tre duelli con quegli ufficiali che subito, al primo colpo della sventura, si sono tutti squagliati: la passione dei melodrammi, in fondo, ce l'aveva anche lei in comune con le sorelle; Raul, Ernani, don Alvaro ... (370)

... Verri... Verri will fight not one but three duels with the officers, who all disappeared at the first sign of misfortune. After all, like her sisters, Mommina has a passion for melodrama: Raul, Ernani, Don Alvaro... (89)

If the first explanation was geared to the German audience, the second is ascribed to the Sicilian context: according to this view, Mommina marries Verri not only because of need but because she admires his passion and rage, recognizing in him the hero of a melodrama. This explanation, already present in the short story, can be introduced in the play only after the mediation of the first one, as it would otherwise "not seem natural" to the target audience.

Adapting "Leonora, addio!" into a play, Pirandello does not hesitate to underline outbursts of jealousy and spectacular killings, but, perhaps concerned with the target audience's reaction, softens the story's misogynistic tones. For instance, instead of being described in detail, Mommina's physical decay is

shifted to the metanarrative, where her mother and sisters work on her make-up and costume to transform her into a prematurely aged woman. Moreover, whereas the short story closes on a sadistic note, in the play *Momma* is found dead by her more compassionate mother and sisters, and the scene is immediately interrupted by Dr. Hinkfuss.

As in *L'aria del continente*, Pirandello engages with the representation of regional as well as national character. And, as in "Leonora, addio!," particular emphasis is placed on the "pact" established between Verri and the society that surrounds him:

I patti, i patti a cui Rico Verri, sposandola per la picca di spuntarla contro quei suoi compagni ufficiali, si sarà arreso con quel padre geloso e usurajo, e quali altri patti avrà con se stesso stabiliti, non solo per compensarsi del sacrificio che gli costa quel puntiglio, ma anche per rialzarsi di fronte ai suoi compaesani. (369)

What conditions did he have to agree to with his jealous father, the money-lender, so that he could marry her to spite his officer friends? What conditions did he have to agree to with himself, not only to compensate himself for the sacrifice his stubbornness cost him, but even to show his face again before his fellow villagers... (89)

On the one hand, the emphasis on a behavior adopted for societal approval, the negotiation with the older generation suggests that Verri's transformation is the fruit of negotiation. On the other, with a detail found nowhere in the short story, Ignazia makes Verri's behavior a question of blood:

L'ATTRICE CARATTERISTICA: Volevo dire che né io né le mie figliole [...] nessuno di noi s'accorse in prima che lei avesse nelle vene questo *sanguaccio nero dei siciliani*-

IL PRIMO ATTORE: Io me ne vanto! (319)

THE CHARACTER ACTRESS: What I wanted to say is that neither myself, nor my daughters [...] not one of us realized at first that you had that *terrible black Sicilian blood* in your veins<sup>26</sup>

THE LEADING ACTOR: I'm proud of it! (48)

As in "Leonora, addio!" and *L'aria del continente*, the performance of a "continental in spirit" results in grotesque

mimicry. However, the fact that Pirandello writes for the German stage now considerably complicates the matter. While in *L'aria del continente*, the “continentalized Sicilian” was played by Angelo Musco, a Sicilian, now the roles of Verri, Mommina, and her family members are played by German actors. More precisely, these actors play both the roles of German artists (the actors who are in the process of improvising the Sicilian story) and of Sicilian characters who strive to imitate mainland manners. In other words, they enact *Sicilianness*, as well as the Sicilian mimicry of *Italianness*. As the play is going to be performed in German, Pirandello cannot rely on code switching to underline insularity, but the actors must resort to acting strategies that the audience will identify or recognize as denoting “Southernness,” such as mimicry and accents. It seems almost inevitable that the result would be what was described in the reviews of the Königsberg and Berlin premières: *Sicilianness*, for the German audience, was not entirely distinguishable from *Italianness*.<sup>27</sup> After all, in the eyes of the German audience, both represented the South. Moreover, since, in the meta-play, the leading actress goes as far as “living” her role, and, through a process that, using Stanislavsky’s term, we can describe as *perezhivanie*, she becomes one with the Sicilian character, she in a sense experiences a cultural shift. As Nicola Savarese and Eugenio Barba point out, in *perezhivanie* the prefix *pere*, placed before *zhivanie* (the experience of living) indicates excess (62). In Pirandello’s play, the transcultural experience is in fact extreme, and the leading actress feels ill and can hardly get up after interpreting Mommina’s role.

## Conclusions

The comparative analysis of the three works exemplifies how the Sicilian type and the contrast between the way of life in Sicily and on the mainland were described and performed in a time frame between 1910 and 1930. “Leonora, addio!” *L'aria del continente* and *Questa sera si recita a soggetto* all emphasize the traits that the literature of *verismo* had contributed to underline as typically Sicilian. They also all identify the condition of women as the main difference between life in Sicily and the mainland. However, whereas “Leonora, addio!” unfolds into a tragic narrative, *L'aria del continente* tells a similar story in a comic key,

and in *Questa sera si recita a soggetto* the audience's attention is diverted from Mommina's tragedy to the metatheatrical frame. The analysis also underlines a progressive widening of the distance between the local and the European, the archaic and the modern: from a contrast between Sicily and the provincial south in "Leonora, addio!," we have a contrast among Sicily, the provincial south, and the capital in *L'aria del continente* and among Sicily, the provincial south, and modern Europe in *Questa sera si recita a soggetto*. Perhaps remembering the success of *L'aria del continente*, Pirandello uses strategies similar to the ones employed by Martoglio to represent this contrast. He sets side by side Sicilian folklore and tokens of European modernity, and does so in a visual, as well as in an auditory manner—with particular attention to music. Like Martoglio, he engages with the audience's knowledge and expectations of life in Sicily and, through the imitation of "continental manners," also encourages the public to recognize their own culture through the distorting lens of mimicry. As Pirandello translates Sicily for the German stage, the target audience is led not so much to compare the way of life of the island with the mainland, but the Italian south with the life of northern European cities. The island's specificity within the Italian south has faded, but the difference between northern Europe and the European South is underlined. Finally, all three works involve elements that present regional and national identity as a performance, but also include features that suggest a conception of Sicilian character as immobile and unchangeable. In line with this, from 1910 to 1930, we have identified increasing details related to questions of blood and race.

The question that arises is: why after criticizing the construction of a "Sicilia d'importazione" so sharply, does Pirandello twenty years later conjure a Sicily reminiscent of Telmann's short stories? We have seen that, in writing *Questa sera si recita a soggetto*, Pirandello was very informed about the reactions of the German press to his previous works and that he was hoping that the play would result in great profit. It is therefore not surprising that he would tailor the play to the audience for whom he was writing, emphasizing features associated with the "Italian spirit" and turning difference into exoticism. However, inventing a character such as Hinkfuss also gives Pirandello the opportunity to criticize—along with other issues—Germany's stereotyped view of Sicily as a "primitive," dangerous place where

one is “quite free with the knife” (*Questa sera...*369). Moreover, in times of frequent comparisons between northern and southern acting, scenes such as Sampognetta’s agony, along with such commonplaces, emphasize the actor’s struggle to improvise and can be read as addressing the difficulty that the German artist, to the contrary of its Italian counterpart, experienced in this kind of exercise. Conversely, devices such as the religious procession are instrumental to summoning an effect that, as scholars have noted, is not unlike the references to the *Tarahumara* that Artaud, several years later, would use to conjure a ritualistic theater (Rössner 2006, 167; Bernardi 161). The Sicilian background therefore fulfills several functions. Pirandello presents the audience with the clichés that it expects, but in such a way that allows him to underline them as commonplaces. In addition, he uses Sicilian folklore to create a sense of distance in space and time, a contrast with the audience’s and the actors’ world that culminates in the second part of the play, after Hinkfuss has been chased from the theater and the actors are “living” the Sicilian story.<sup>28</sup> The Sicily represented by *verismo* is not simply rejected or overcome but rather elaborated and exploited for a different purpose: it is the device through which the actors’ *perezhivanie* acquires a transcultural, ritualistic dimension.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> I am concerned with representations of regional and national character in the literature examined, and do not aim at an anthropological reading of Pirandello’s work. Such readings have been undertaken by Leonardo Sciascia (1961) and Lucio Lugnani (1986: 31-79). An anthropological interpretation of questions of honor in Mediterranean fiction is also offered by Christian Giordano (1994).

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Italian are my own.

<sup>3</sup> Capuana continues his argument underlining that, if attention is shifted away from the lower classes, life on the island does not differ much from life on the mainland. Elsewhere, he also comments that mainland audiences had become so used to the portrayal of violent scenes that they cannot recognize a story as Sicilian without a pistol shot or a stabbing (see Sciascia 47).

<sup>4</sup> On the enactment of *Sicilianness* on the European stage, see De Francisci, 95-110.

<sup>5</sup> The indulgence in stereotypes can also be explained by the fact that Capuana, Verga, and Pirandello initially considered the theater a way to make money rather than to realize artistic ambitions, and that they therefore heavily relied on the audience's expectations.

<sup>6</sup> Pirandello refers here to his recent experience in Bonn as a doctoral student in 1889-90.

<sup>7</sup> "I siciliani [...] hanno un'istintiva paura della vita, per cui si chiudono in sé, appartati [...]. Avvertono con diffidenza il contrasto tra il loro animo chiuso e la natura intorno aperta, chiara di sole, e più si chiudono in sé, perché di quest'aperto, che da ogni parte è il mare che li isola, cioè li taglia fuori e li fa soli" ["Sicilians [...] have an instinctive fear of life, therefore they keep to themselves, secluded. They perceive with diffidence the contrast between their closed souls and the clear, sunny, open nature that surrounds them, and they keep even more to themselves, because of this openness, this sea that isolates them from all sides, that cuts them off and sets them apart"] ("Giovanni Verga" 1013).

<sup>8</sup> On this theme, see the novel *I vecchi e i giovani*, in which Sicily is described as a "conquered land" and Sicilians as "barbarians that need to be civilized." Recent analyses of the importance of the *Rinascimento* for Pirandello and of his interpretation of this part of Italian history have been undertaken by Rössner (2010) and Sorrentino (2013).

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Klinkert suggests that Verri's metamorphosis can be read as type of "mimesis" that symbolizes the immobility of an archaic society, whereas the mimesis of the La Croce family is associated with modernity (163).

<sup>10</sup> On the great success of the play throughout the peninsula, see Muscarà (1985, 70-72).

<sup>11</sup> As Gramsci writes in 1916: "Angelo Musco è eminentemente un attore della commedia dell'arte, egli non può mantenersi mai nei limiti che l'autore ha fissato i personaggi; vuole aggiungere qualcosa di suo personale" ["Angelo Musco is primarily an actor of the *commedia dell'arte*, he cannot keep within the limits that the author fixed for his characters; he wants to add something personal"] (239).

<sup>12</sup> In this light, Musco's performance can be seen as having a similar function to Grasso's and Aguglia's, as it exaggerated diversity to confirm the expectations of northern and central Italian audiences (Valentini 21).

<sup>13</sup> See *Il taccuino segreto*, 27, for Pirandello's claim of authorship in a letter to his son Stefano. On the other hand, in his memoirs, Angelo Musco dismissed Pirandello's input as comprising a title and the play's "general structure" (141-42). Scholars have expressed divergent opinions about who may be the author of the play. Zappulla Muscarà and Alfredo Barbina, for example, define the play as "squisitamente martogliana" ["purely in Martoglio's style"] (Pirandello-Martoglio 35; Barbina 152); Leonardo Sciascia, instead, talks of it as "una commedia tra le più siciliane, e pirandelliane, che lo scrittore [Pirandello] abbia mai concepito" ["one of the most Sicilian, and Pirandellian comedies that the writer [Pirandello] has ever conceived"] (106).

<sup>14</sup> "Dentro l'alcova altarino per la novena di Natale (*cona*), messo con tutte le note caratteristiche e cioè: grappoli d'arance tra rami di cipresso, ostie colorate, cotone sfioccato etc." ["Inside the alcove the altar for the Christmas novena (*cona*), set up in all its features, that is: bunches of oranges between cypress branches, colorful wafers, frayed cotton etc."] (296).

<sup>15</sup> This can be seen as a general pattern in Pirandello's own fiction. The reverse is not always true; in Pirandello's short story, "Donna Mimma," for example, the midwife from Piemonte is able to adapt to the Sicilian environment (see Sorrentino 108; Rössner 2010, 51-6).

<sup>16</sup> See Alonge (2007, 87--102).

<sup>17</sup> This was not the opinion of Italian scholarship. Lugnani, for instance, claimed that Pirandello could have used any of his plays instead of "Leonora, addio!" (66). The idea that the representation of *Italianness* may be a concern of the play, and may have had an impact in the production, was first raised by Steen Jansen and Jane House.

<sup>18</sup> Pirandello finished the manuscript in 1929, and sent it to Marta Abba. In a letter dated April 7, 1929, he warns her: "Ma leggilo senza pensare affatto di rappresentarlo TU, [...]; ho scritto il lavoro in vista dei teatri di qua e degli attori e attrici di qua." ["But read it without thinking of acting in it; I wrote the work for the German theater and with German actors and actresses in mind"] (*Lettere a Marta Abba* 120). See also Alonge (2007, 92).

<sup>19</sup> This discussion had preoccupied fascist intellectuals throughout the 1920s. See, in this respect, the polemics that develop, especially after 1927, around *Strapaese* and *Stracittà* in the group of intellectuals gathered around Mino Maccari and his journal *Il Selvaggio*. According to Maccari, rural Italy offered the perfect background for

Italian modernity, while foreign, and especially Anglo-Saxon influence, embodied in phenomena such as jazz and the *Tabarin*, was corrupting and unhealthy. "Strapaese loves folkloric and rural Italy because it resists the influence of a civilization in which it does not recognize itself: America descends with its dollars, its black idols, its cocktails and jazz, the dazzling sparkle of a civilization that is all foam and no earth, all machine and no heart" (Maccari 1927, in Salvi, "*Il Selvaggio* tra fascismo e strapaese" (n.pag.web). Pirandello, who had joined the fascist party in 1924, after the murder of Matteotti, never challenged fascist ideology. At the same time, he was fascinated by America and phenomena such as jazz and the *Tabarin*, and saw Germany as the least resistant European country to embrace these influences (see Cometa 285-320).

<sup>20</sup> German translations of Pirandello's dramas were available since 1925, and his work was frequently staged and enjoyed great popularity in the 1920s.

<sup>21</sup> On the relation between *Italianness* and the *Commedia dell'arte*, see Braglia's *Evoluzione del mimo* (1930) and *I segreti di tabarrino* (1933).

<sup>22</sup> As Sorrentino notes, in Pirandello's work the center is not one, and most importantly, not fixed. See Sorrentino's analysis of "Lumè di Sicilia," 89-96.

<sup>23</sup> "Sa chanteuse qui nous semble bien plus berlinoise que sicilienne" ["His singer, who seems to come from Berlin rather than from Sicily"] (Boussy 1491).

<sup>24</sup> See *Sagra del Signore della nave*, in which a very similar religious procession is juxtaposed to the slaying of the pigs for the festivity of S. Nicola. The dialogue between the two teachers emphasizes the link between religious feelings and the progress of civilization: "è proprio vero, è... che col progredire della civiltà [...] l'uomo si fa sempre piú debole; e sempre piú va perdendo, l'antico sentimento religioso" ["It is true, that ... with the progress of civilization [...] man becomes weaker; and loses more and more, [...] the ancient religious feeling"] (434). Here, curiously, Vergani reports of how, during the play's rehearsals, the musician had suggested to use a saxophone to imitate the pig's grunt: "Lo sapevate che il grugnito e l'urlo del porco si imitano perfettamente col sassofono? Lo si sente in tante musiche sincopate di jazz" ["Did you know that the grunt and scream of the pig can be perfectly imitated with the saxophone? One hears it in a lot of music in syncopated jazz"] (Vergani 404).

<sup>25</sup> The performance of the gypsy choir takes place after Donna Ignazia, to alleviate her toothache, has recited the Ave Maria in Latin but

has been interrupted by Totina's cross-dressed performance of Sibel's aria in *Faust*.

<sup>26</sup> I am here modifying Campbell and Douglas' translation, as they render the expression as "cursed Sicilian blood." The reference is significant as it is the same that the German press used to define Abba's performance in 1925.

<sup>27</sup> For the press' reactions to *Questa sera si recita a soggetto*, see Jansen, 43-49.

<sup>28</sup> In his letters to Marta Abba, Pirandello stresses how the play becomes especially powerful after the actors have chased Hinkfuss (120).

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## ***La canzone dell'amore: Adapting Pirandello to Fascist Propaganda***

PAOLO CAMPOLONGHI

In 1930, Italy made its debut in the sound film market, despite the general skepticism that many intellectuals and political figures manifested toward this new trend in the movie industry. Additionally, the national commercial strategy leading to the realization of Italian sound movies, as opposed to importing foreign products, was based on the prediction that the “talkies” — spoken movies that were becoming especially popular in the States — could not appeal to Italian audiences because of linguistic barriers. This was the opinion of Deputy Bisi, the president of the Italian Cinematographic Board, who claimed that:

American talkies containing portions either spoken or sung in the English language were practically useless in any European country except England because they could not be understood by the public. Already this year, he added, European film theaters are finding difficulties in filling their programs, owing to the increasing number of American films which are unsuitable for exhibition in their countries. (Cortesi, 1929)<sup>1</sup>

Not only was Bisi likely shortsighted, he also probably underestimated the Duce’s increasing attraction for cinema. Mussolini was particularly interested in the propagandistic potential offered by the pairing of his image on screen with the sound of his voice.<sup>2</sup> As the *New York Times* reported on Oct. 2, 1928, Mussolini “was one of the first important European figures to appear in a talking film [a FOX newsreel],” and

[he] was profoundly impressed with the new phase of art of the screen. A medium that makes it possible to be seen and heard in hundreds of places at the same time is, in the opinion of the Italian dictator, of tremendous political importance. (“Italian Film Plan Stirs Europeans,” *The New York Times*)

Despite these observations on the Duce’s interest in the seventh art, scholars of Italian cinema interested in the first Italian

sound film, *La Canzone dell'amore* (Gennaro Righelli, 1930), often focus on its visual and acoustic experimentation.<sup>3</sup> Such analyses overlook its relevance as a representation of a set of ideas that embody core aspects of Fascist thought. In order to highlight these issues, my article will compare the film to the original short story on which it was based, "In silenzio," by Luigi Pirandello. Underlining the differences between the original story and the screenplay will shed light on how Fascist ideology leaks through the apparently conventional structure of the film. This analysis, in turn, will also demonstrate how a certain set of ideological concepts permeates the popular culture of the period. As Pirandello's short story is not well known, I will first provide a summary of the novella before embarking on a more extensive analysis of its adaptation for the screen.

Pirandello's "In silenzio" was written and first published in 1905, and it was later included in the 1922 collection, *Novelle per un anno*. The protagonist of "In silenzio" is Cesarino Brei; this diligent student is sent by his mother to a *collegio*, where she hopes he will improve his social life and break out of his shell. A rather shy, gaunt and submissive adolescent who hides behind the big glasses he wears, Cesarino grows up as an only child. His young and, Pirandello tells us, "good-looking" mother takes care of him in the absence of his father, who probably died at a very young age. The only thing Cesarino knows about his father is his name, Cesare, which is the origin of his own. Yet, even his relationship with his mother before moving to the *collegio* is rather distant. She stays out at work most of the day and, after some silent moments together at dinner, she attends to household duties and resumes her second job as a private tutor, correcting the homework of her high school students. Something about the environment in which the characters live seems out of place, the narrator tells us. Inexplicably, their apartment is better furnished and more fully equipped than their meager finances should allow. Nevertheless, even these furnishings are awkwardly incapable of masking the general melancholy that reigns over the house: "Mobili piú che decenti, tutte le comodità, guardaroba ben fornito, dispensa abbondantemente provvista, [...] ma che tristezza anche, e che silenzio in quella casa!" (Pirandello 1994, 75) ["more than decent furniture, all kinds of comforts, a well-equipped wardrobe, an abundantly stocked pantry [...] but what a sadness, and what

a silence in that house!"]<sup>4</sup> A bothersome doubt starts to nag at Cesarino's mind: despite her constant work, his mother is still a very attractive woman who seems to take care of her appearance—he thought—just a little *too* carefully. As Cesarino notes,

per una conversazione tra due compagni di scuola, le prime infantili finzioni dell'anima gli erano cadute, scoprendogli improvvisamente certi vergognosi segreti della vita finora insospettati. Allora la madre gli era come balzata ancor più lontana. Negli ultimi giorni passati a casa, aveva notato ch'ella, non ostante il gran lavoro a cui attendeva senza requie dalla mattina alla sera, si conservava bella, molto bella e florida, e che di questa bellezza aveva gran cura: si acconciava i capelli con lungo e amoroso studio ogni mattina, vestiva con signorile semplicità, con non comune eleganza; e s'era sentito quasi offeso finanche dal profumo ch'ella aveva addosso, non mai prima avvertito così, da lui. (76)

after a conversation among schoolmates, the first puerile impressions of his soul faded away, suddenly revealing to him certain shameful secrets of life he had not previously suspected. From that day on, his mother seemed to have left even further away from him. In the last days he spent at home, he had noticed that, in spite of the great labor to which she would restlessly attend from morning to night, she remained beautiful, beautiful and glowing, and that she cultivated this beauty with great care: she would comb her hair with scrupulous and loving zeal, she would dress with refined simplicity; and he almost felt offended even by the perfume she wore, which he had never noticed in that way before.

As time goes by, letters and visits from his mother become rare. As Cesarino returns home only rarely, the distance between the two grows bigger. Suddenly, Cesarino is informed of his mother's death, and his life is radically changed. Upon returning home, he discovers that his mother had a lover who abandoned both her and Ninni, the child born out of their relationship. Both moved by the situation and pushed by the drive to protect the baby who reminds him of his own condition as a fatherless son, Cesarino's character abruptly changes; the clumsy boy turns into a young man who now has responsibilities that he intends to face. He quits school, rents a small place for himself and Ninni, and finds a job to which he attends with compulsive and fervent

zeal, particularly when compared to the lazy attitude of his older colleagues. Just when the situation finally seems to settle down, Alberto, the baby's biological father, reappears to claim his rights over his son. Cesarino confronts him, fiercely opposed to the idea of Ninnì being taken away by someone who shirked his obligations and left both Cesarino's new ward and his mother. The law, however, is on Alberto's side and Cesarino has apparently no choice but to comply. Cesarino arranges things to appear as though he has accepted to move into Alberto's house together with Ninnì on the following day. However, after dismissing their loving servant, in a last tragic moment of rebellion against destiny, Cesarino goes to sleep leaving the embers of a fire burning in their bedroom, killing both Ninnì and himself.

Several of the innovative and quite audacious themes that the short story presents, such as the figure of a single mother, the irresponsible male lover, a baby born out of an extramarital relationship, Cesarino's hybrid role of brother, mother and father, are retained in Righelli's film adaptation. In the picture, however, some crucial changes are made in order to render the story and the protagonists acceptable to the intellectual climate of the 1930s. This climate, of course, was heavily informed by the cultural ideology of the Fascist regime. From this point forward, my analysis will discuss the development of the movie along these lines. I maintain that the modifications the film makes to Pirandello's story provide a latent reinforcement of the regime's propagandistic and ideological message. For a summary of the movie's plot I will quote directly from Francesco Callari's effective synthesis:

Lucia (che prende il posto di Cesarino Drei, il protagonista della novella) segue a Roma i corsi del Conservatorio di musica ed è innamorata di Enrico, suo compagno di studi, che ricambia il suo affetto e le offre una canzone [...] (che costituisce il motivo conduttore del film e, di fatto, il suo grandissimo successo): "Solo per te Lucia, / va la canzone mia / come in un sogno di passion / tu sei l'eterna mia vision..." Rientrata alla pensione, Lucia trova un telegramma che la chiama al capezzale della madre gravemente ammalata [...], parte subito per raggiungerla e la trova morta di parto: ha lasciato un neonato che scopre esser figlio di un certo Alberto Giordani che, ignaro, si trova all'estero. Lucia affronta con coraggio la situazione: dovendo far da madre al fratellino, torna a Roma e trova lavoro in uno stabilimento

discografico. Per non intralciare la carriera di Enrico, evita di vederlo e, per rispettare la memoria della madre, nasconde a tutti la verità. Enrico, deluso, accetta una scrittura per l'estero che lo terrà lontano per molto tempo. Quando torna, giunge anche a Roma Alberto Giordani divenuto ricco e libero d'ogni legame essendogli morta la moglie. Cerca e trova Lucia e le dice che intende riconoscere e prendere con sé il figliuolo adulterino. Lucia tenta di opporsi ma poi cede. Intanto Enrico viene a conoscenza di tutto e torna a Lucia chiedendole di sposarla. (Callari 319)

Lucia (who takes the role of Cesarino Drei, the protagonist of the *novella*) studies at the Musical Conservatory in Rome, and she is in love with Enrico, a schoolmate of hers, who reciprocates her affection and offers her a song[...] (which plays as the musical theme of the film, and, as a matter of fact, contributed to its great success): "Only for you, Lucia, / goes my song / like in a dream of passion / you are my eternal vision..." Back at the boarding house, Lucia finds a telegram that calls her to the bedside of her mother, who is seriously ill [...]. She leaves right away to reach her and finds that she has died in childbirth: she left a newborn child, whom Lucia discovers is the son of a certain Alberto Giordani, but he is abroad and unaware of his new status as a father. Lucia faces the situation with courage; since she has to be a mother for her brother, she comes back to Rome and finds a job at a recording company. In order not to get in the way of Enrico's career, she avoids seeing him, and, to honor her mother's memory, she hides the truth from everybody. Enrico, disappointed, accepts a job overseas that will keep him away for a long time. When he returns, Alberto Giordani, who has now become rich and free from all ties after his wife passed away, also comes back to Rome. Alberto looks for and finds Lucia and tells her that he plans to recognize and to take his son with him. Lucia tries to oppose him but eventually surrenders. In the meantime, Enrico comes to know everything; he returns to Lucia and asks to marry her.

The two main discrepancies between the *novella* and the film's script are the "feminization" of Cesarino, turned into a young woman named Lucia, and the love story between her and the male character, Enrico. This love story is characterized by a forced separation of the two characters, followed by a final reconciliation. The changes were not all Righelli's doing. In fact, Stefano Pittaluga—the key figure of the Italian movie industry at

the time—bought the copyright for the transposition of the novella on screen directly from his friend, Pirandello, in 1926, specifying that the story would undergo a number of changes for technical or commercial reasons. The movie had great success at the box office, which partially explains the three years that passed before Pirandello restated his dissatisfaction with the filmic version of his work, as he had done right after its debut. The Sicilian author indeed acknowledged Righelli's merit in having mastered the new sound technology despite the difficulties that the experimental technique could entail, and he did not deny the fact that the picture's commercial success could or should be interpreted as a sign of the product's quality. Nevertheless, Pirandello did not fail to express doubts and concerns over the editorial changes that the filmic adaptation imposed on his story. "Ciò stabilito [Having said that],"he stated:

è logico però che io non potessi approvare i mutamenti che erano stati imposti alla mia novella, fino a svisarla del tutto. E sono convinto che se la si fosse realizzata com'è nel testo originale, si sarebbe fatto non soltanto un'opera d'arte cinematografica ma il successo sarebbe stato di gran lunga superiore. [...] A che servono grandiosità di messinscena, bravura d'interpreti, mezzi finanziari, se non sono messi al servizio di un'idea originale, di un soggetto appassionante, umano, logico, inattaccabile? È anche vero che il cinema, sconvolto dalle nuove applicazioni, comincia appena ora a salvarsi dall'assurdo indirizzo che si è voluto dargli. Che l'industria e il commercio vadano male era prevedibile. (Roma 20)

it is logical that I could not approve of the changes that had been imposed on my short story to the extent of distorting it completely. And I am sure that, had it [the movie script] been produced as it is in the original text, they would have made not only a cinematographic work of art, but its success would have been much greater. [...] What purpose do the grandiose *mise-en-scène*, the skill of the actors, the financial means serve, if they are not put into the service of an original idea, a fascinating, human, logical, and irreproachable subject? It is also true that cinema, disturbed by new [technical] applications, only now begins to save itself from the absurd turn that it was taking. It was predictable that both industry and market would go bad.

Even more interesting is the fact that Pirandello's first reaction was less diplomatic. In an interview published October 16, 1930

in the magazine *Cinema Teatro*, he declares:

È desiderabile che i riduttori della CINES abbiano un concetto della novità cinematografica. Bisogna che sappiano non cadere nel fondaccio della banalità. [...] Dite chiaro e tondo che io non rispondo affatto né del dialogo né della riduzione né delle alterazioni che sono state fatte alla mia novella nella Canzone dell'amore. Il soggetto poteva prestarsi a modificazioni di ogni genere, è vero, ma non a tal punto. È così finito il "pathos" del ragazzo di diciassette anni che è protagonista della mia novella. Una donna ha la maternità istintiva, ma un ragazzo [...]. (Pupo 487, italics mine)

It is desirable that the CINES adapters have an idea of cinematographic innovation. It is necessary that they know how not to fall in the pit of banality [...] Make sure that you say loud and clear [in your article] that I am not at all responsible for the dialogue nor for the cuts or alterations that have been made to my short story in *La canzone dell'amore*. The subject could have lent itself to any sort of modification, it is true, but not up to that point. The "pathos" of the seventeen-year-old boy, who is the protagonist of my short story, has thus vanished. *A woman has a maternal instinct, but a boy [...]*. (Italics mine)

Without going into more depth on the notoriously controversial relationship between Pirandello and cinema, especially regarding its technological evolution, for the purpose of my analysis, I want to stress the last point of the above quotation.<sup>5</sup> According to Pirandello, the fact that a woman is a mother "by instinct" is a given; thus, the representation of her natural struggle to nurse the baby depicts a kind of platitude, one that ruins the daring description of the male father/mother figure at the center of his *novella*. Pirandello thus seems to be asserting his artistic right to shake the public opinion by presenting provocative subjects; yet, by criticizing the revision of his literary work for its essentially conservative and normalizing character, he ignores the fact that the idea of women possessing a "natural" inclination to be mothers is central to the Fascist project of socio-anthropological reform. My point here is not to establish whether, or to what extent, Pirandello consciously endorsed these ideas, but rather to understand how the film addresses certain themes and the purpose these serve within Fascist ideology.<sup>6</sup> These themes,

as I will show, function as embryonic forms of both conceptual and ethical constructions that fully develop in later phases of the regime.

The picture opens with an outdoor scene at a restaurant in the Roman countryside with a cheerful celebration for the upcoming marriage between the two protagonists, Lucia and Enrico. She is a music student studying voice, and he is a composer. Together, they are looking forward to starting their careers as artists, as an upper-class/bourgeois couple that nourishes aspirations and future dreams according to its own social status. However, these dreams are broken when Lucia learns about the death of her mother. Not only does she take over the role of sister/mother without hesitation, she also senses that her existence must now revolve around this unexpected event, which will cause a radical change in her lifestyle and her future plans. The film dramatizes this change when Lucia tries to communicate the escalation of events to Enrico at one of the many parties that occupy the promising composer's agenda. Before she can speak, Enrico enthusiastically informs her of having been offered the opportunity to tour around Europe, and he dreams of their travelling life being filled with celebrations and society events. Faced with the inadequacy of her condition when compared to the life her partner aspires to, Lucia understands that she now belongs to a different reality, and she steps aside so as not to interfere with Enrico's career. The incompatibility of artistic aspirations and a domestic, family life clearly emerges as a point of separation between the two lovers, as the movie repeatedly remarks in lines such as "l'artista ha bisogno di libertà" ["an artist has a need for freedom"] or "il matrimonio è la rovina dell'arte" ["marriage leads art to ruin"].

While Pirandello's short story draws much of its narrative power from the hardships Cesarino confronts, most of the challenges Lucia has to face are immediately turned into occasions to convey a message of cultural regeneration. This fascist renaissance is, on the one hand, based on new values that strikingly contrast with the mundane desires of a bourgeois lifestyle and, on the other, paradoxically linked to a very traditional polarization of gender roles and social agency. The "sin" of Lucia's mother, namely the child she conceived as the fruit of an adulterous relation with a married man, is the legacy that her daughter receives and which

she must remedy through a supposedly natural reaction. Lucia's renunciation of her artistic aspirations and her sentimental life in order to become a mother thus epitomizes the clash between the socio-cultural model that predated Mussolini's dictatorship and the new order that the Fascist regime aimed to erect. In this sense, for Lucia, the renunciation of bourgeois ease and the frivolous fantasies of a bohemian life corresponds to a descent into the popular world. Lucia must embrace this condition, emerging to adopt a rigid and long-lasting set of values that articulates itself in terms of ethical responsibility, social duty, and personal agency in accordance with a hierarchical order based on gender and social position.<sup>7</sup> The figures of Lucia and Enrico thus function as an allegory of a proletarian and industrious Italy contrasted with the corrupted and cosmopolitan model of European high society, still indulging in the decadent sophistication of the early twentieth century.

The crux of the movie is the sacrifice that a young woman faces in order to answer a call that she cannot neglect, thus Lucia becomes the model of decorous and morally proper conduct. On the contrary, the male figures—such as Alberto—are mostly absent or ethically questionable; and their attempts to redeem themselves are often delayed, clumsy, or brutal since they entail a manifest use of legal, economic, or simply authoritative force.<sup>8</sup> This negative representation of masculinity functions as the counterpart of the idealization of women as instinctually maternal. Far from showing a simplistic opposition between female and male attitudes, in fact, the movie instead represents the polarization between women—whose femininity became institutionalized in Fascist ideology as part of the organic functioning of the social and political machine—and men who, instead, were expected to manage their free-will in accordance with the ethos of self-discipline that characterized the ideal Fascist citizen. In other words, whereas women's allegedly natural drive to be mothers and wives was interpreted as an essential component of the State's "biological" system, men were husbands and fathers by choice, in fulfillment of a virtuous model of behavior that was part of the broader and complex conception of Fascist virility.

As Lucia Re points out, this polarized dynamic of agency is not simply a symptom of Fascist misogyny, but rather reveals "how central the ideology of gender difference as a binary logic

is to the construction of racial and class distinctions as well, at all levels of social and political discourse” (Re 83). Re continues:

The weakening or blurring of gender difference was a threat to the entire Fascist hierarchy of values. The demographic campaign launched by Mussolini in 1927, for example, [...] was intended to refeminize women by taking them away from the workplace and other masculinizing positions and restoring them to their proper role of child-bearers for the race [...]. [Giovanni] Gentile’s position is far from being a variant of a predictably vulgar biological essentialism. On the contrary, Gentile elaborates his own theory of woman’s, and of gender, difference, as a historical and cultural formation, rather than a biological given. (*ibid.*)

I maintain, however, that the Fascist idea of gender difference should not be discussed in terms of an opposition between a biological and a cultural conception, since the two are complementary parts, with the former being the basis on which the latter develops as the conceptual backbone of society. For there is a clear continuity between an essentialist interpretation of gender and the socio-cultural and political model that stems from it. Re goes on to quote Gentile, who claims “every healthy and well-ordered society [...] has at its core the family and religion, and it is the woman who acts as the principal agent and guarantor of ethics and sanctity of the family” (Re 85). In accordance with these remarks, Re stresses an important point again when she argues that “Gentile’s essay [Re is here referring to the draft of the *Manifesto of Fascist Intellectuals*] culminates in the exaltation of woman as mother” (*ibid.*), since it is in the maternal function of female individuals that the biologizing and the gendering of politics is legitimized as a form of civic commitment and as a social task.<sup>9</sup>

*La canzone dell’amore* is not a film that occupies a prominent position in the history of cinema, except for being the first film released in Italy featuring sound technology. As I have already pointed out, this is partially due to a tendency to analyze the picture quite superficially, at times simply as an entry in the catalogue of Italian cinematic productions. Nevertheless, I am not necessarily arguing that the themes I have highlighted thus far—and, in particular, this dynamic between gender roles

and agency as one of the underpinnings of Fascist society — were intentionally included in the screenplay in order to convey an educational and propagandistic message. I am more inclined to interpret the presence of these important elements in what is, ultimately, a fairly simple movie as a sign of how far Fascist ideology had permeated Italian popular culture and everyday life after eight years of dictatorship. What is striking about the content of *La canzone dell'amore* is the force and, at the same time, the simplicity, with which the picture represents social and cultural regeneration as a process necessary to step out of a morally contaminated and stagnant mentality. Consistent with this ideal, Enrico and Lucia are caught in a moment of transition symbolized both by their individual lives and their relationship. Indeed, as much as Lucia has to repair her mother's mistake and is willing to do so in the name of that maternal love that defines her as a woman, Enrico's decision to reconcile with Lucia and to take care of a child not his own counterbalances Alberto's corrupt behavior. As a further note, focusing on Lucia's character for a moment, it is interesting that her physiognomy recalls the traits of "la donna crisi" in her slim body and elegant bearing that contrasts with the aesthetics and behavioral standards set by the Fascist imaginary as the most suitable to match the idea of women as child-bearers; that is, for the centrality of their role in the reproduction of the species. It is thus no accident that a scene of the film shows Lucia renting a small apartment from a landlady with an opposite physique. Thanks to both her natural mothering instinct and her physical endowments the landlady is able to provide Lucia with concrete help in nursing Ninnì and with an example of domestic devotion.<sup>10</sup>

Pirandello's story, we will recall, is pervaded by a sense of gloom that expands and reaches its climax in the tragic ending. Even at its most dramatic moments, *La canzone dell'amore* does the opposite: allowing the spectator to anticipate its happy ending with Lucia and Enrico back together and their mutual intention to start a family with the official adoption of Ninnì. For all the reasons discussed above, this anticipation and final reconciliation suggests the possibility of recomposing a shattered, atomistic society into an extended notion of kinship, lending further support to my reading of the film as a depiction on the micro-level

of the higher order claimed by the Fascist ethical State. As David Horn reports, quoting Luigi Chiarelli:

Adoption had been opposed and restricted because the liberal state had limited its own role to conforming the family to “nature.” By contrast, the fascist conception of the family as “an institution of private law, but with social functions that the State supports, protects and coordinates,” meant adoption could not be considered “a simple fictitious means of imitating nature or a pure juridical lie.” Adoption was to be reimagined “as a means for realizing a form of family organization on the basis of real affective ties, which favors the solvency of the general social organization and the achievement of the social ends of the State.” (Horn 69)

It should now be clear how the movie touches on some critical points of the Italian ideal of rebirth under Fascism, stressing the centrality of the family not only as a scale model of the State, but also as a productive component of the governmental apparatus in its strategic function for population reproduction. It is thus through this lens that we can view the effort of the regime to regulate and systematize legal procedures and practices in matters of marriage, paternity, marital responsibilities, etc.; not so much in light of an egalitarian inspiration but as a strategy to limit possible dysfunctions within the family environment and to maximize its efficiency as an organ of the State. Quoting again from Horn, then:

In interwar Italy the family would emerge as both a privileged locus and agent of social intervention, a point of intersection for a variety of strategies that at times worked at cross-purposes but with the ostensible goals of securing the welfare and the fertility of the stock. In particular, the family was called on to play a positive demographic function, to guarantee the health and the expansion of the population. (75)

This is important because if the family—as Horn argues—becomes in this way an “institution of normalization,” in which the boundary between domestic and public space is blurred and “the familiar practices of both men and women took on new meanings” (*ibid.*), the final output of this normalizing process is the production of a regenerated “stirpe” or “stock,” capable of

leading Italy to the realization of its colonial and imperialistic destiny. It is inevitable, then, to see Ninnì as the unaware progeny of this new generation, as the cell of an organism sprung from a stronger breed.<sup>11</sup> And it is also inevitable to link this theme with the racial and colonial discourse to which the picture alludes in subtle but quite evident ways. Early in the movie (around min. 12), for example, there is a striking moment in which this link to an incipient rhetoric of colonial expansionism becomes manifest. Daydreaming about their future, Enrico and Lucia reveal to each other their desire to one day become parents, using a doll showing the features of a black newborn as a surrogate of their future child. Holding the doll and laughing at the thought, Lucia exclaims "Quanto sole che ha preso!" ["How much he's tanned!"]. In a later scene, the same doll is given to Ninnì as a toy to play with, as a token of those previous moments of serenity and hope, but also, of course, as a symbol of the destiny that is awaiting him. As Pierre Leprohon remarks while discussing early sound movie production, "by 1930 [the same year in which Righelli's picture was released] Mussolini was bombarding the Kufra Oasis in Libya, [...] and proclaiming after this famous victory 'Italy's invincible power in Africa'" (Leprohon 67).

From this perspective, the image of a white infant playing with a black doll acquires quite a powerful meaning, pointing to the Fascist racial and colonial discourse, the regime's designs for colonial domination, and the military enterprises these entail. At this point, the idea of regeneration that, in my opinion, is at the center of the picture reaches its ultimate configuration in the completion of a dialectical movement. Ninnì, the newborn, is shown as a creature put in danger by the mistakes of a past social system, which his putative parents were able to subvert in the name of the ideals and feelings that inspired the Fascist nation. Thanks to their care, Ninnì is rescued and healthy, ready to dominate over "inferior" races in the way a child would play with toys at his disposal. This final observation is consistent with my analysis of *La canzone dell'amore*. While this film does not pretend to be anything more than a popular sentimental drama, it actually provides a useful and interesting lens through which to observe a crucial phase of transition in Italian history.

It seems as though the technical experimentation for which the movie is usually mentioned represents only the most

superficial level of a quite surprising and daring work, considering the complexity of the themes it addresses and their implications for a number of concepts crucial to the experience of Fascism as a cultural and political system. Hence, while Pirandello probably had his reasons to be disappointed with the filmic version of his story, the producers made a smart decision in deciding to change its title. It would indeed have been odd to name the first Italian sound movie ever released *In silenzio*, but the change of title is also significant in light of my analysis. A posteriori, one may say that the most interesting content of the film seems to be whispered, indicated, but remaining nearly unuttered. It would have been a shame if such a clear hint were offered to future interpreters of Fascist culture, spoiling the effort of listening to that penetrating silence.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Cortesi (1929).

<sup>2</sup> On this aspect, see Crafton (1997).

<sup>3</sup> Francesco Callari's *Pirandello e il cinema* (1991) represents an exception to this tendency and, although briefly, the book offers some poignant observations on the genesis of the picture (318-20).

<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Italian to English are my own.

<sup>5</sup> Pirandello's condemnation of sound and "spoken" movies in particular is well known, as he clearly wrote in an article published by *Il Corriere della sera* in June 16, 1929 with the title, "Se il film parlante abolirà il teatro." As Callari reports in a fragment of an unpublished letter to Marta Abba, by 1930 Pirandello seems to have changed his mind: "[...] Bisogna orientarsi verso una nuova espressione d'arte:" —he wrote—"il film parlato. Ero contrario; mi sono ricreduto." (Callari 10). On this, see also Frank Nuif (1970-71).

<sup>6</sup> The complex relationship between Pirandello and Fascism is thoroughly analyzed by Gianfranco Vené (1971). As relevant contributions to an understanding of the broader relationship between intellectuals and Fascist propaganda, I refer to Giampiero Brunetta (1972) and Carlo Bordoni (1974).

<sup>7</sup> A clear change of settings and scenario occurs around min. 26 in the film, when Lucia is forced to sell her family house (her mother did not leave her any money and pawned the properties she possessed in life) and find a job to provide for the baby's needs.

<sup>8</sup> This observation is probably more applicable to Alberto's character than to Enrico's, although the latter, too, can at least be accused of a certain weakness and lack of initiative, for which he compensates only at the end of the movie.

<sup>9</sup> I am underscoring one particular aspect of the complex and controversial understanding of women in Fascist ideology and practice. Among the texts that address the subject, I refer in particular to: Victoria de Grazia (1996); Ruth Ben-Ghiat (2001); and Cristina Lombardi-Diop (2005).

<sup>10</sup> I must note here, however, that the landlady character speaks very bitterly of her condition as "moglie e madre" ["wife and mother"], blaming her husband—who never appears on scene, thus reinforcing the male absence that characterizes the story—for having forced her (directly or indirectly) into a life of sacrifice and to renounce her youthful dreams. Far from being in contradiction with the proposition of the iconography of the woman as mother and wife that the movie promotes, the figure of the landlady is the epitome of the wrong way to interpret femininity, as a condition of passive submission rather than as voluntary contribution and participation in the fascist social and political reform.

<sup>11</sup> For a compelling analysis of Fascist racial discourse, see Valentina Pisanty (2006).

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## Scripting “il cielo di carta”: The men behind the curtain in Paolo and Vittorio Taviani’s *Cesare deve morire*

ALESSIA PALANTI

Cassius: Tell me, good Brutus, can you see your face?

Brutus: No, Cassius, for the eye sees not itself but by reflection, by some other things.

—Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* Act I, scene II

Italian directors Paolo and Vittorio Taviani’s 2012 film, *Cesare deve morire* [*Caesar Must Die*] (2012),<sup>1</sup> presents a number of themes emblematic of Luigi Pirandello’s oeuvre and philosophies. Pirandello has consistently been a major source of inspiration for the Tavianis: films like *Kaos* (1984) and *Tu ridi* (1998) are the directors’ cinematic representations of the author’s *novelle* (short stories). With *Cesare*, the Tavianis’ Pirandellian pursuits are more subtle, yet evermore pungent. Winner of the Golden Bear award at the 62nd Berlin International Film Festival (2012), *Cesare*’s actors come from an uncommon milieu: Italy’s maximum-security prison at Rebibbia on the outskirts of Rome. The project involves the inmates acting in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, and traces the audition process, the casting, the rehearsal, and the eventual performance. The plot of the Tavianis’ film cleverly uses the excuse of stage renovation to “force” the inmates to perform their rehearsal throughout the rest of prison’s architecture—thereby making it a “staged renovation.” The play thereby unfolds within the penitentiary—its cells, courtyards, and corridors—which ceases to be a mere prison; it becomes the stage where the detainees interpret (and indeed embody) the roles of the drama. For the most part, the film is shot in black and white, turning to color only during the scenes of the drama’s final performance. And most strikingly, Shakespeare’s original English is not only translated into Italian but also into each inmate’s regional dialect. Aware that the prison context would stimulate the audience’s curiosity about its conditions and the prisoners’ lives, the Tavianis present a series of *retroscena* (“behind the scenes”). The film

intersperses the inmates' rehearsal with moments of interactions as well as personal avowals of their experience as convicts, actors, and characters. *Cesare* not only whets the audience's appetite for authenticity but also exposes its inherent *aporia*, thus opening up the possibility of multiple answers and interpretations.

It is possible to draw connections between the film and Pirandellian themes by contextualizing and analyzing some of the author's specific works. Pirandello built a reputation for developing discourses focused on individual fragmentation, identity, and communication by reformulating the same questions into different narratives. Critics most frequently cite his preoccupations with the separation between art and life: one of the connotations implied in the adjective "Pirandellian." According to Pirandello, the membrane that divides art from life (or vice versa) is irremediably porous, making the two not only interchangeable but also mutually influential. He found art not to be a mirror of life, so much as a mirror *for* life. In this sense, theater does not merely offer the flatness of a reflection—a two-dimensional stage, as suggested by Ciceronian formulation of the "speculum vitae." Rather, for every stage there is the corresponding depth of a retroscena which complements and gives meaning to the stage in itself.

The porousness between art and life unfolds in Pirandello's 1904 internationally renowned novel, *Il fu Mattia Pascal*. The novel introduces the idea of "lo strappo nel cielo di carta" ("the tear in the paper sky"), the element that triggers a crisis of identity.<sup>2</sup> When the character of Anselmo Paleari invites the protagonist Mattia Pascal to a marionette performance of Orestes' tragedy, he hypothesizes:

Se, nel momento culminante...si facesse uno strappo nel cielo di carta del teatrino, che avverrebbe?...Oreste rimarrebbe terribilmente sconcertato da quel buco nel cielo...sentirebbe ancora gli impulsi della vendetta...ma gli occhi, sul punto, gli andrebbero lì, a quello strappo...Tutta la differenza...fra la tragedia antica e la moderna consiste in ciò, creda pure: in un buco nel cielo di carta. (132)

[If at the climax of the play...suppose there was a little hole torn in the paper sky of the scenery. What would happen?...Orestes would be terribly upset by that hole in the sky...[he] would still feel his desire for vengeance...but his eyes, at that point,

would go straight to that hole...There's the whole difference between ancient tragedy and modern...a hole torn in a paper sky.] (Weaver 145-6)

According to Paleari's speculation, the tear would be Orestes's crippling diversion. He would not be able to sustain his desire for vengeance after realizing the sky is a simulacrum: he would become cognizant of his life as a performance. As the illusions of theater disintegrate, the fabric of identity too suffers a tear.

From the blemish in the paper sky, Pirandello tries to distinguish the puppet from the puppeteer. Ultimately, he expresses the ineluctable mystery as to who indeed is pulling the strings. The marionette performance is an apt allegory for the interplay of agency and the limits of knowledge. And by using a theatrical allegory within his novel, thereby addressing art within art—*ekphrasis*—Pirandello underscores how art strips away and exposes life's veneers. In his well-known 1908 essay, *L'umorismo* (*On Humor*), Pirandello expressed: "La realtà dell'opera d'arte potrà essere meno reale, forse, ma più vera"<sup>3</sup> (320) [The reality of the artwork may be less real, but it is more true] (my translation).<sup>4</sup> Art may seem less "realistic" perhaps, but it is "more true." That is, fiction and theater have the power to extrapolate an existential honesty that life itself may more adroitly conceal. Self-conscious craft does not attempt to persuade us that its fiction is real but rather it calls attention to the reality of its fiction.

The self-awareness explored in *Il fu Mattia Pascal*, is furthered in Pirandello's landmark 1921 drama, *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* (*Six Characters in Search of an Author*). The first part of his "theater-within-theater" trilogy, *Sei personaggi* is the twentieth century prototype of metatheater and is considered by many critics to be the peak of Pirandello's genius. The drama explores the relationships between characters, performers, authors, and audience, deconstructing dramaturgical structures and revealing the mechanisms and magic of theatrical production. The drama's title condenses its narrative: six characters are convinced they are "stuck" in the performance process and need an author to compose a play in which they may begin to act. As the drama unfolds, the six characters interrupt the rehearsal to criticize, ridicule, and eventually argue with their interpreters about their imprecise renditions. After being left alone on stage, the characters become competitive with one another: each of them viciously demanding

his/her narrative to be the most honest and most interesting one to write and represent. They are unaware that these very upheavals constitute the narrative itself.

The six characters' neurotic search for the author raises a number of epistemological, and consequently ontological concerns. Their drama is not only that of doubting personal identity but even more so about the impossibility of ever realizing it or much less communicating it. The ability to ever truly communicate, and the concomitant failure of mutual understanding, is a conundrum Pirandello pondered obsessively. "Non ci intendiamo mai" ["We never understand one another"] (*Mt*), laments *Il Padre in Sei personaggi*, a sentiment that echoes throughout the author's *oeuvre*. Through language, Pirandello attempts to eclipse inherent boundaries—if language cannot express truths, it can at least expose the impossibilities of such an endeavor.

When Pirandello's play was first performed at Rome's Teatro Valle in 1921, it received a sheering "Manicomio! Manicomio!" ["Madhouse! Madhouse!"] (*Mt*) from a very disapproving audience. Spectators were shocked and surprised by the stage's bareness and the lack of narrative distance between themselves and the performers. Pirandello made stage and house interchangeable, performer and spectator equals—he upset the comforts of going to the theater and turned the once recreational activity into a space for reflection upon it as an act. In *Sei personaggi*, La Figliastrà denounces theater when she explains what a stage is to the character of La Bambina: "Siamo su un palco scenico, cara! Che cos'è un palcoscenico? Ma, vedi? un luogo dove si gioca a far sul serio. Ci si fa la commedia. E noi faremo la commedia. Sul serio, sai!" (Pirandello 118) ["What is the stage? It's a place, baby, you know, where people play at being serious, a place where they act comedies. We've got to act a comedy now, dead serious, you know"] (Storer). La Figliastrà breaks the fourth wall by explaining, in a rather patronizing tone, what theater really is comprised of: a game in which one acts seriously, as opposed to a space in which one seriously acts.

Shortly after, in 1922, Pirandello staged another drama, *Enrico IV (Henry IV)*. In this work, Pirandello explores madness—perhaps foreshadowed by the Teatro Valle's audience one year earlier—as one of the outcomes of pushing theatrical boundaries.

The figure of the fool is archetypal of Pirandellian self-consciousness and the character of Enrico IV is Pirandello's "fool" *par excellence*. An (anonymous) actor falls off his horse during a historical cavalcade, in a trauma that leads him to believe he is indeed the Medieval character he was playing in the pageant. His nephew—also part of the role-play—decides to uphold the charade by having his uncle live in an ancient palace and hiring paid actors to be his councilors. After having unmasked the hoax, the protagonist chooses to remain Enrico IV for life, and refuses to integrate with the rest of present-day society. *Enrico IV*, then, explores through drama some of Pirandello's earlier theories in *L'umorismo*: "Chi ha capito il gioco, non riesce più a ingannarsi; ma chi non riesce più ad ingannarsi non può più prendere gusto né piacere alla vita" (Pirandello 125) ["Those who have understood the game can no longer fool themselves. But those who can no longer fool themselves will also cease to enjoy the pleasures of life"] (*Mt*). Once one becomes aware of artifice which is theoretically virtuous—i.e. the sky being made of paper—it is impossible to make oneself unaware of it. However, this awareness may ultimately paint life as precarious, meaningless, and entirely arbitrary. Thus, Enrico IV's decision epitomizes Thomas Grey's aphorism: "Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise."<sup>5</sup> Enrico IV does not believe that theater circumvents entrapment; on the contrary, theater is simply a different version of the same trap; one must choose her/his own farce.

As the examples of Pirandello's works demonstrate, there is an array of paradigms from which to draw connections to *Cesare deve morire*. While *Cesare* may not itself be the representation of any specific one of Pirandello's works, in part it owes its genesis to *Sei personaggi*. The brothers first came up with the idea for the film after attending a performance at Rebibbia, whose theater company is directed by Fabio Cavalli. Serendipitously, the company was putting on Pirandello's *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore*.<sup>6</sup> Paolo Taviani recounted:

The first day we walked in there we could feel the contrast between the obscurity of a life of imprisonment and the energy of a cultural, even poetic, event. We met the prisoners, men who had been involved with the mafia, camorra, and 'ndrangheta. They owned the dramatic strength of truth and knowledge as actors—a talent stemming from their innate

qualities and the hard work of their wise director, Fabio Cavalli. (Latto)

After the company's inspiring performance, the directors debated the feasibility of their project and drafted a screenplay that would have the company perform Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. The directors felt that *Julius Caesar* was the appropriate drama to examine the intimacies and intricacies of the inmates. Shakespeare's political piece takes place in Rome, and deals with corruption, crime, and honor—all themes the inmates are not only familiar with but also for which they may be paying the price.

The film forges an intimate relationship between audience and inmates—a relationship that would not have existed otherwise. At the beginning of the film, after the audition sequences, the members of the cast are framed one by one. Next to each prisoner appears his name, the crime committed, and the length of his sentence. In an interview, the Tavianis revealed that they suggested the inmates “use a fake identity if they wished to protect their privacy,” and expressed their own astonishment when they “realized that they all vehemently wanted to use their real names, the names of their fathers and mothers, and the places they came from. Who knows,” they expressed, “maybe being in the film was a way to remind the world that they were still around yet engulfed by the prison's silence.” The imminent Shakespearean characters bear the faces of human beings with real lives and real stories, each name encumbered by the abiding stains of criminal acts. The film's opening and closing, then, come full circle. While Pirandello's Orestes faces his pain and isolation singularly—that is, the reader may be affected but is not directly addressed—in *Cesare*, the inmates are calling the audience directly into cause. As the inmates stare into the camera, they put the audience into an unenviable position, where “pity's” double meaning—compassion and contempt—gels completely.

The experimental nature of this film is significantly reminiscent of the risks Pirandello took with his own theatrical performances in the early 1920s. The film's seamless and quite literally in-credible performance quality is perhaps the foremost staggering—and thereby confusing—asset. *New York Review of Books* film critic Geoffrey O'Brien's reaction to the viewing was especially poignant. He writes:

The black-and-white cinematography is classic in style, evoking not raw documentary but the stark elegance of an Italian studio production of the 1950s or 1960s; that is to say, the main body of the film is presented in a manner almost indistinguishable from fiction, as if it were possible that these prisoners might be actors playing prisoners playing actors. (“From Olivier to an Italian Prison”)

The prisoners’ *bravura* is simultaneously captivating and distracting, as the awed viewer is consistently searching for the correspondence to the “real world.” It is unexpected that a cinematic project taking place within the walls of a maximum security prison—one in which the majority of inmates are in for life—could prove successful. This particular aesthetic choice was also questioned by journalists at the *Caesar Must Die* Press Conference held at the Istituto di Cultura Italiana in New York on October 1st, 2012. Paolo Taviani responded:

Il film è stato girato in bianco e nero perché il colore fa violenza, essendo troppo naturalistico, troppo realistico... Entrare dentro le sbarre con il colore sarebbe stato troppo televisivo. Bianco e nero fa violenza alla realtà, e questo è un film con persone che hanno fatto violenza alla società.

[The film was shot in black and white because color does violence, as it is too naturalistic, too realistic. Going between the bars with color would have seemed too televised. Black and white does violence to reality, and this is a film with people who have done violence to society]. (*Mt*)

As the performers have themselves distorted society, the Tavianis found black and white almost more morally appropriate. Theirs is not an arbitrary aesthetic preference, but rather a meditated choice tailored to the ethical principles of the individuals the film forefronts. It is almost as if the directors exercised a sort of “aesthetic” punishment, or at least one intending to align their subjects with the cinematic representation.

Although the inmates’ world may become drained of color, linguistic plurality makes the film polychromatic. On the same aforementioned visit to Rebibbia, the directors witnessed a convict improvising Canto V of Dante’s *Inferno* in Neapolitan

dialect—the episode in which Paolo and Francesca are punished in the circle of lust. They realized the interpretation’s compelling and bewitching value: “Ci è sembrato di sentire il dolore di uno che vive veramente all’inferno” [“We felt as though we were witnessing and feeling the pain of a person who truly does live in hell”] (Mt). What the inmate’s recitation conveyed was an emotional honesty they felt perhaps no well-trained actor could match.<sup>7</sup> In part influenced by their affinity for neorealism, and in part honoring the Pirandellian porosity between art and life, the directors chose to foster a more personal relationship between drama and inmates by allowing them to interpret the text in their own dialects, slangs, accents, and inflections.<sup>8</sup>

*Cesare* extends the recent tendency in Italian cinema to shoot films in dialect rather than in standard Italian. After 1990 regionally-specific film production in Italy significantly increased, flooding the arena of independent cinema with films spoken in dialect. This put the average Italian audience into the same position as a non-Italian speaking audience used to relying on subtitles during a foreign film. A recent example of an international success is Matteo Garrone’s *Gomorra* (*Gomorra* 2008). The critically acclaimed film concerning the *camorra*, one of Italy’s main criminal organization (albeit the most disorganized of them) is spoken entirely in Neapolitan dialect. The film received domestic approbation only after gaining renown abroad. *Gomorra* reached audiences of all backgrounds: those who lived in or were familiar with Italy could grasp significant nuances, those who were less familiar could enjoy it as a genre film. Dialect forges a sense of realism, a closeness to the lives of the characters and their stories. *Cesare*’s realism is also indebted to the inclusion of dialect, but it idiosyncratically embraces various local idioms and funnels them through a more universal and popular Shakespearean register.

In *Cesare* the integration of the inmates’ individual dialects is an effort to overcome phonological differences and to acknowledge language as fundamentally constitutive of identity and therefore of expression. *Julius Caesar*, then, is not a hurdle for those unexposed to Shakespeare; it becomes accessible: simultaneously universal and personal. In the film, the convicts perform their lines fluidly to one another, as though lexical nuances were absent; the audience, on the other hand, will

often have to rely on subtitles. In this sense, the directors let the interplay between global and regional, universal and singular unfold in unforeseen harmonies, and ultimately turn the central dilemmas in Pirandello's *Sei personaggi* inside out. Pirandello's six characters lament the hurdle of human expression by using standard Italian. While they (and the audience) may comprehend each other's words, language itself is censured for being a deficient medium that by nature corrupts the authentic transmission of one's thoughts and identity. Cesare's inmates instead do not directly address the issue of misunderstanding; they embody the very impasses of language decried in *Sei personaggi* by speaking to one another and to the audience in varied idioms. That is, language becomes the audience's and not the inmates' predicament. The use of their own dialects allows the men to assimilate the early modern English text more intimately. And it is this profoundly dignifying act that softens any and all disorientation and isolationist effects of their regional specificities.

For the most part the film circumvents personal narrative and relies on the play to reveal the private. However, at unpredictable moments the plot derails from Shakespeare's dialogues and swerves into an "off-script" script—or a secondary plot—which presumably renders actual conversations between inmates and staff, as well as the inmates' private thoughts, and were presumably included at the discretion of the directors and the performers. While these moments may feel more intimate than the Shakespearean text—opening the door to the convicts as men rather than as characters—it is only deceptively so.

While rehearsing the famed conspiracy scene, Brutus (Striano) attempts to dissuade Cassius (Rega) and the others not to murder Caesar's closest ally and confidant, Mark Antony. He pleads: "No Cassius, justice is not a slaughterhouse. We are the executors of justice. That's how people should see us. We rebelled against the ideas, against the spirit of Caesar. This is not a murder, it's a sacrifice. If only I could tear out the tyrant's spirit without cutting open his chest. If only..." (*Cesare* DVD).<sup>9</sup> The camera follows Striano's movement circling round the group and into the corner next to the spotlight where the play's "director," Fabio Cavalli, is standing. Striano interrupts his lines and sits down, frustrated and forlorn (See Figure 1).



Figure 1: Salvatore Striano (Brutus, left), Fabio Cavalli (Theater Director, right).  
Photo courtesy of Alessia Palanti.

In an undeniably Pirandellian fashion, the theatrical setting becomes part of the film's *mise-en-scène*. Cavalli asks Striano if he has forgotten his lines, but the convict only murmurs and looks away. Answering on his behalf, Enzo Gallo (Lucius), reveals that Sasà (Striano's nickname) knows his lines, but that "the character of Brutus is inside him. I learned the lines by heart too, but it's difficult." Rega responds: "Difficult? Why? Were there no domineering Caesars back home? Betrayals, murders. It seems that he doesn't want to remember today." Patient and sympathetic, Cavalli asks Sasà what is upsetting him, to which the inmate storms: "What do you want? It's my business!" After a deep breath, Striano apologizes and explains: "It's this line that I have to say: 'If only I could tear out the tyrant's spirit without cutting open his chest,' I saw my friend's face right before my eyes." Striano shares a personal anecdote of when he and a friend were selling contraband cigarettes, and one night it was his friend's turn to silence a traitor. That very night he told him "exactly" what Brutus says, Striano claims: "The words were different, but identical at the same time. They arrived to the mouths of the neighborhood. They all said he was a nobody...And I joined the chorus. I feel bad about it now." Cavalli suggests they wrap for the day and turns out the lights. Striano sits solemnly for handful of seconds and then asks to continue the rehearsal; the lights are turned back on and the scene resumes.

Striano's chronicle is one of the most private and personal moments in the film. The scene elicits a connection with the convict

as an individual, rather than the convict as character. Moreover, it sheds light on the even deeper connection between the drama's characters and the inmates, and emphasizes the transcendental nature of Shakespeare's narrative. Striano's monologue invites empathy and becomes a kind of reality check: these actors are indeed imprisoned criminals, men the audience most likely will never meet and with whom they will never become close. Thus, the inmates' personal chronicles deceptively become parenthetical breaths of intimacy; yet there is no way to aver whether or not Striano's or others' accounts corresponds to real incidents, and neither should it matter. A more reliable—if not “authentic”—intimacy transpires through the inmates' interpretation the drama, through the personalization of their characters.

Another poignant moment to break from the formal Shakespearean script, focuses on the Caesar (Giovanni Arcuri) himself. The scene takes place in a room of the prison library where Arcuri is reading the Italian translation of Caesar's classic Latin text, *De Bello Gallico e De Bello Civili* (*Commentaries on the Gallic War and Commentaries on the Civil War*), originally published between 58-48 BCE. He is astounded by the memory of ever finding the treatise boring during his high school years and avows his utter admiration for “the great Caesar.” “A genius,” Cavalli responds to Arcuri, “even according to Shakespeare.” Cavalli suggest they begin to work on the scene and not waste any more time, to which Rega wittily responds: “What time, Fabio? I've been behind these walls for twenty years, and you're telling me ‘not to waste time!’” This brief instance is at once humorous and tragic: a swift and clever glimpse into the relativity of time's lineaments. Rega here wantonly reminds the film's audience of the length of his prison sentence established just after the auditions earlier in the film. By including this statement, the Tavianis—in a Pirandellian vein—at once encumber and relieve their audience. It is easy to smile along with Rega's grin, but it is just as easy to feel somber, if not almost embarrassed, by such lightheartedness.

Personal allegations are peppered throughout the film, penetrating even the men's thoughts. An exterior long-shot panning of the night-darkened prison is accompanied by an inmate's voiceover whisper: “They should call us ‘the guardians of the ceiling,’ not prisoners.” Immediately following is a medium overhead shot of an inmate in bed, passively staring at the ceiling



Figure 2: Francesco Carosone (Fotuneteller).  
Photo courtesy of Alessia Palanti.

(See Fig. 2), followed by another inmate in the same position contemplating a similar thought: “If they put us on the top bunk, you can see the ceiling. You watch it, you touch it, you speak to it. Francesco, my son, I’m trying to see your face on the ceiling.” The camera shifts to a low angle shot from outside one of the cell windows and we hear another inmates thoughts: “Everybody had diarrhea today. Five beds, five diarrheas.” The sequence concludes with another exterior panning shot and a layering of cries: “I want to confess. I want to speak,” enveloped in a crescendo of ominous music. The scene is chilling and affective: the lives of the inmates permeate through the drama to convey another “authentic” moment not only with the convicts physically but also with their private thoughts. The Tavianis punctuate the potential of the cinematic medium to transcend all barriers: both prison walls *and* minds. But the veracity of cinema does not imply nor guarantee accuracy: in front of the lens nothing eludes artifice.

Another moment to (re)construct what appears to be a “real dispute,” comes in the scene just after the conspiracy. A fight breaks out between Juan Bonetti (Decius) and Giovanni Arcuri as they rehearse Decius and Caesar’s dialogue in the prison library. Decius attempts to persuade Caesar to attend the senate assembly but Caesar hesitates, trepidatious after his wife’s dream prophesying his death. Decius reveals the senate’s intention to crown Caesar which might be reconsidered in the case of his absence. In order to convince him, Decius teases Caesar: “The sitting is postponed until Caesar’s wife has a good dream! You must excuse me for speaking to you so openly, but I speak as a friend.” Arcuri dramatically changes the register; his eyes become antagonistic, his tone derisive: “As a friend? As a liar. As an ars-

licker. As a shameless man." He turns to the other inmates who are observing the scene: "He's really good at playing a schemer," and then turns back to Bonetti and patronizingly squeezes his cheek as if he were a child: "You're so good at it. You're doing it so well with this face of yours." Bonetti replies that no such lines are in the script and that Caesar does not say what he is saying, to which Arcuri claims: "He would if he knew you. But I am not acting now, Juan." This last statement is simultaneously true and false—in line with the Pirandellian metatheatrical contract. Arcuri may have interrupted his performance of Caesar, but he is indeed acting for the film.

The dialogue becomes scathing and contentious, and the other inmates merely respond with a shrug: "It's *their* business" (italics mine). The two take their brawl into the corridor and the inmates look on behind the doorway, preferring to let them settle their own disputes. If they do not resolve their conflict, Gallo explains to Cavalli (and thus to the audience), the project risks being shut down. The inmates, bystanders to the fight, and the film's audience as onlookers of that audience, are not interested in who resolves it so long as it is resolved. However, the outcome of the dispute is immediately clear: if it had indeed not been resolved, there would be no film—thus "*their* business" is *our* business. Implementing, once again, typically Pirandellian metatheatrics to bend the narrative, the scene calls attention to how brawls may have perhaps been a real issue during the shooting of the film.

The scene between Bonetti and Arcuri is elegantly acted, so elegant that the *mise-en-scène* is transparent. It rouses questions with regards to a referent, making light of the viewer's instinctive desire for epistemological certainty. The Tavianis' film does not purport to "capture" an authentic moment as perhaps a documentary intends—the scene may or may not have been inspired by actual events. The directors' distance from the convicts makes it clear they believe that to capture, or even try to communicate the inmates' experiences of life in prison through cinema would be impossible, if not pretentious. Following Pirandello's example, the Tavianis rely on the authenticity of performance rather than on concealing its artifice.

In the film, the enactment of the conspiracy plot against Caesar takes place in the corridor outside Striano's (Brutus) cell. As the men await Brutus and Cassius, they debate over where East is located, and argue over which direction the sun rises.

Breaking from Shakespeare's script, Gennaro Solito (Cinna) ironizes the Early Modern narrative: "I'm thinking about those four fools who are about to kill the boss and they are dribbling on about where the sun rises." Solito's "unscripted" comment fits perhaps too perfectly as a metacinematic element. It cuts the illusion of the drama and creates the impression that the film is indeed entering "realist" territory where the inmates seem to be genuinely cognizant of their own foolishness, as characters, as actors, and as individuals. Much like Enrico IV's caustic response, Solito points out the trifling detail for what it is: a diversion, a distraction from things much more important.

Taking after Pirandello's favored fool, the conspirators follow Enrico IV's *modus operandi*. Responding to Solito, Francesco De Masi (Trebonio) states: "In fact, we are all fools to an extent, them too, the plotters. And just as well, that way the character is more like me." The inmate acknowledges the absurdity of enacting a conspiracy within a prison—an institution that castigates those who have plotted. His reflection does not eliminate, but rather perpetuates the same absurdity it dismantles. As part of the film's magnetic charm, the "off-script" interlude portrays the inmates as they each draw personal connections between themselves and their characters. Performance provides a distance from which the convict may assess his former role in society, and perhaps better come to terms with his present condition. Whether these epiphanies are authentic remains debatable, but nevertheless the scenes allude to a kind of catharsis.

Other parallels between Enrico IV and the inmates can be drawn, as moments of self-awareness abound. Upon murdering Caesar, the conspirators place their hands on his lifeless, wounded body and bathe their hands in his blood. Cassius lifts his head and looks straight into the camera, ominously pronouncing: "How many centuries hence will this glorious scene of ours be acted over? In kingdoms not yet born, in languages not yet invented." The camera cuts to a close-up of Brutus (Striano) continuing Cassius's inquiry: "And how many times must Caesar bleed on stage? Like here, today, in this prison of ours lying on this stone, no worthier than dust." The scene is patently metatheatrical, and the boundaries between the drama, the film, the inmates and the audience become utterly transfused. Shakespeare embroidered an imagined future—"how many *centuries hence*

will this glorious scene of ours be acted over?" — into a question that will undoubtedly be repeated time and again as the drama is performed. This question is being asked rhetorically, as the answer lies in the mere fact that it is once again being asked. And what is the Tavianis' film but one of Shakespeare's future interpretations? The film has reached those *new kingdoms*, reaching international audiences; it exploits *languages not yet invented*: Italian, its variations, and all relevant subtitles.

Brutus's question extends this transhistorical moment by putting forth another rhetorical point—"how many times must Caesar bleed on stage?"—and punctuates it with a self-referential present-tense reference to prison life. In the guise of Brutus, it is as if Striano were admonishing the film's audience: there are consequences to murder and these faces are the very proof of it. His "Caesar" is almost metonymic, a figure standing in for those who died at the hands of conspirators and criminals. These "questions" leave a bittersweet aftertaste: on the one hand, they reinforce art's potential to transcend history and they denote a shared human experience; on the other hand, it draws the audience into the darkness of their world, and makes the inmates' imprisonment that much more palpable.

The startling affect of the conspirators' monologues culminates with the public declaration of Caesar's death. The Romans (inmates) funnel through the prison's gated aisles shouting: "Freedom! Freedom!", celebrating the death of a tyrant. The scene is at once powerful, political, and perverse, and ultimately distills the contextual hermeneutics of liberty. That is, the meaning of freedom is entirely contingent upon the conditions of whom is speaking. The fine line between freedom and captivity is one of the central questions of Pirandello's *Enrico IV*, whose protagonist merely chooses one kind of a prison over another. To him, contemporaneous society is a stage of negligent actors unaware of their own performances—imprisoned by and in their own parts. He does not wholly abandon performance but instead opts for what he believes is a more honest cage. Rebibbia's inmates, however, lack the agency Enrico IV boasts within the drama, and do not have the same options.

It is the conclusion of the film that conspicuously evokes the theme of the Pirandellian tear in the paper sky. In the much discussed final scene—shot in color—the camera follows life-



Figure 3: Cosimo Rega (Cassius) in his cell.  
Photo courtesy of Alessia Palanti.

sentenced prisoner, Cosimo Rega (Cassius) back into his cell. The guard locks him in, Rega turns, scans the space melancholically, his eyes forlorn. In a close-up of his face, he stares directly into the camera, thereby “facing” the film’s audience, pronouncing a stirring:

“From the moment I have known art, this cell has become a prison.” A long-shot of Rega in the same space immediately follows, as he moves back into his quotidian by preparing himself a coffee (See Figure 3). The agony of imprisonment exacerbates once the play comes to a close. In this sense, Rega is ventriloquizing Orestes’ realization of the tear in the paper sky, giving voice and substance to what in *Il fu Mattia Pascal* was a mere hypothesis. At the same time, although Rega’s statement seems to lambaste art, the declaration is itself part of a work of art. Therefore, theater and cinema may not unshackle the inmates, but they *do* expose them to broader horizons; sadly, these horizons that will not be explored after the credits begin to roll.

The film’s haunting final scene was in most critics’ spotlight. During *Cesare’s* press conference at New York’s Italian Cultural Institute in 2012, Paolo Taviani stated: “la libertà nasce dall’arte” [“Freedom is born from art”] (*Mt*). Art may give the inmates a better understanding of freedom, but it also gives them a better understanding of detention. Commenting on Rega’s final statement, Vittorio Taviani shared:

Ciò che conta è far conoscere l’arte ai detenuti. Quando questo miracolo avviene...aumenta il dolore di non essere fuori e la

cella diventa effettivamente una prigione, ma è anche vero che si ritrovano altre dimensioni dei rapporti umani. Il film è anche un racconto della scoperta della potenza dell'arte.

[What matters is to introduce art to the detainees. When this miracle occurs—as the actor who interprets Cassius highlights in the last line of the film—the pain of not being outside augments, and the cell does effectively become a prison. But it is also true that other dimensions of human relationships are discovered. The film is also a story on the discovery of the power of art]. (Mt)

While Rega's allegation may be stirring and thought-provoking — as emphasized above — it is sutured into the film like a pre-fabricated tear into brand new jeans. Taviani's allegation implies that the ends justify the means: referents to reality are part of *Cesare's* constitution as a film. But art is inherently artifice, therefore if "spontaneous moments" are scripted and re-presented, they are not necessarily less evocative or less thought-provoking. And while performance is in many ways liberating, it is also distracting: Pirandello's imagined Orestes becomes distracted by the tear in the paper sky, *Cesare's* audience is distracted by discordant emotional responses, and the inmates are distracted by the illusion of freedom.

Pirandello deprived his characters, and consequently his audience, of any sort of relief or resolution. If denouement occupies no real place in life, then, Pirandello felt, it cannot have that place in theater. The Tavianis followed their beloved mentor's footsteps, and used cinematic craft to challenge expectations. Just because the film reveals various layers of the *retroscena* — the drama, the inmates, the making of the film — does not mean any one of them is less artificial. At the same time, the performances are no less real. *Cesare* leaves its audience on the edge, asking the same questions that Shakespeare, then Pirandello, and now the Tavianis are posing. As Pirandello's works suggest, authenticity and truth are sabotaged by relentless *aporia*: the answer is that there is no answer, or that at most, there is no single answer, but many coexisting and often contradicting ones. Nearly a century later, the same *aporia* is integral to the Tavianis' latest project. *Cesare deve morire* plays with the audience's desire for something authentic — an authenticity presumed to be antithetical to fabrication. But we no longer know what authenticity really is and perhaps we never have.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Henceforth referred to as Cesare.

<sup>2</sup> “Il buco nel cielo di carta” (“the *hole* in the paper sky”), and “lo strappo nel cielo di carta” (“the *tear* in the paper sky”), are used interchangeably in the novel. For this essay, I will use the word “tear.”

<sup>3</sup> Here Pirandello is being purposefully equivocal. He is using the synonymic nature between “real” and “true” or “truthful,” as the Italian “vera” connotes both meanings.

<sup>4</sup> “My translation” will henceforth be abbreviated as *Mt*.

<sup>5</sup> The aphorism comes from Grey’s 1747 poem, *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College*.

<sup>6</sup> While it is increasingly common for Italian penitentiaries to offer programs that include performing arts, the film’s set(ting) does not represent an average. Italian prisons are notorious for being filled beyond capacity and for neglecting inmates’ rights to education. The Tavianis’ film exposes a reality specific to the Carcere di Rebibbia itself, and does not reflect the current crises of the Italian penitentiary system. In January 2013, the European Union Court of Human rights in Strasburg fined the Italian government Euro 100,000 for violating basic rights of detainees based on the prisons’ inhumane conditions. Reports highlighted the *lack* of professional and formative activities for the process of social rehabilitation and re-education. Rebibbia is an unusual case, one of the few that implement educational or professional formation. See: Chiara Rizzo, “Dopo la visita di Napolitano a San Vittore, cosa si può fare per le carceri?” *Tempi*, Milano. February 7, 2013.

<sup>7</sup> “Non che i carcerati siano migliori degli attori professionali, ma hanno dentro qualcosa di diverso che è la tragedia della loro vita.” [“Not that convicts are better than professional actors, but they have something different inside them: the tragedy of their own lives”] (*Mt*)

<sup>8</sup> At the beginning of his career, Pirandello had a strong academic interest in languages and dialects. He wrote his thesis in 1891 on Agrigentian dialect and phonetics. His own prose began flourishing the following year in Rome, and his first publications and scripts often concerned Sicilian cultural customs and incorporated regional figures of speech.

<sup>9</sup> All subsequent citations of the film will be directly from the English subtitles. The various dialects cannot be faithfully transcribed.

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## Pirandello's Humor and the Intersections of Translation and Dramaturgy

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Pirandellian humor may appear a particularly odd parallel to draw to translation and dramaturgy. More than simply abstracting an idea and restating it within a different language or mode of representation, it is through these processes that meaning undergoes fundamental transformations that affect the reception of a work. Within the realm of drama translation, this transformation is even more acute as the multiple sign systems of performance are complicated across cultures, time periods, and artistic traditions. Thus, the role of the drama translator is a crucial one in the production process. For those who encounter the play text only in translation, it is the translator's choices that might strip or superimpose meaning, even before that text is realized through production. For the audience, the lack of recourse to the original makes the viewer entirely reliant upon what is presented, despite dramaturgical contributions implemented to compensate for shifts in meaning. Pirandello's own consciousness of the uncertainty of language and the relativity of experience presents a number of issues inextricably linked to his considerations of *l'umorismo*. This awareness is the product of the theoretical reflection which constitutes Pirandellian humor, at least in part. First and foremost speaking to his literary roots, the concept of humor might be expanded into a theory of discourse analysis in which meaning is not the product of passive observation, but a process in which the observer is implicated in its creation.

It is through this lens of Pirandellian humor that I intend to demonstrate how the challenges of translation and dramaturgy run parallel, but also might converge upon each other and will suggest ways in which the translator or dramaturge is inevitably visible through her textual or artistic intervention. To that end, I propose that the same reflexivity that Pirandello puts forward in his construction of humor might help to better situate the translator of Pirandello's drama in relation to the text, and by extension, establish the translator as an integral figure in the dramaturgical process—a process which, among other things, navigates the divide between text and action. As a process of

analysis and critical engagement, this concept serves to bridge the already small divide between dramaturgy and drama translation by ensuring the visibility of those who intervene in the work.

As a point of clarification, it is necessary before proceeding to delineate how I use the term dramaturgy. While the scope of dramaturgy is not limited to work that is necessarily text-based, for the purpose of this exploration, the term “dramaturgy” considers practices including, but not limited to: 1) background research which clarifies the cultural and political realities embedded within a text, and 2) the dramaturge’s critical presence in the production of that text.

Pirandello’s earliest writing on dramatic dialogue from 1899, *L’azione parlata (Spoken Action)* gives primacy to the role of the playwright, claiming that it is his inspiration which endows the work with a life of its own (1993a, 23). In the 1908 essay *Illustratori, attori e traduttori (Illustrators, Actors, and Translators)*—itself an extension of the 1899 essay—Pirandello cites the work of the actor as a stifling reduction of that inspiration—a sort of work similar to that of the illustrator or translator, in which life of the art is rendered in another, unfailingly inferior, medium (1993b, 28-29). Pirandello suggests here and in later comments on Sicilian theatre that this creative impulse is fixed through translation or acting and as such, diminished by these interventions (1993c, 35). Paradoxically, he asserts that such a distillation is a necessary feature of these processes; else the original is not truly art to begin with (1993c, 35). These early, seemingly cynical theories about the efficacy of translation and the transformative possibilities of dramatic adaptation, while chronologically long removed from Pirandello’s major theatrical works, speak to an already well-formed opinion on the organic quality of the artist’s work and the primacy of the author’s text over other forms, especially through the lens of adaptation (Anderman 238). Pirandello’s apparent cynicism is reactionary, citing and scrutinizing the conventions of *verismo*, the Italian analog to naturalism (Anderman 238). These early statements do not represent a methodological inquiry into the making of one text or performance, but are instead a series of early aesthetic statements that, when taken together, begin to assess the deficiencies Pirandello recognizes as endemic throughout Italy’s artistic and cultural institutions during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Even as he attempted to foster a theatre which reflected the intricacies of Sicilian reality, Pirandello recognized the inexportability of

regional traditions and the propensity for popular theatre to reduce regional culture to easily digestible stereotypes. In his 1909 essay, *Teatro siciliano? (Sicilian Theatre?)*, Pirandello writes:

Una letteratura dialettale, insomma, è fatta per restare entro i confini del dialetto. Se ne esce, potrà esser gustata soltanto da coloro che di quel dato dialetto han conoscenza e conoscenza di quei particolari usi, di quei particolari costumi, in una parola, di quella particolar vita che il dialetto esprime. [. . . ] Mancando ogni altra conoscenza della vita pur così varia e caratteristica della Sicilia, ogn'altra espressione di essa riesce quasi inintelligibile. (2006, 980-981)

A dialect literature, in other words, is made to remain within the boundaries of dialect. If it goes beyond them, it can only be enjoyed by those who have some knowledge of that particular dialect and of its particular uses and customs, and in a word of the particular life expressed by that dialect. [. . . ] Lacking any other awareness of Sicilian life in all its variety and diversity, clearly every other expression of Sicilianness becomes almost meaningless (1993c, 37).

Apart from the social and political reality which further degraded the perception and exportation of Sicilian culture, Pirandello had to also contend with the theoretical dimension of naturalist theatre, which attempted to locate the “unauthored character” within an aesthetic framework that was drawn from a familiar reality (Frieze 148). Regional theatre and dialect drama might be seen as an extension of that tradition, but only in a limited regard. It would appear that the unauthored character is rooted in the place of origin—outside of the original context, it must always traverse the distance from the creative impulse to the on-stage instantiation before an audience; such a character is only made intelligible through its dependence upon an intimate familiarity with the aesthetic, social, or moral convention from which it originates (150).

But the challenges that Pirandello outlines in these early, and relatively brief, aesthetic statements do not necessarily offer a new paradigm for the translation of his drama. In fact, these documents, which point at the deficiencies of theatrical practice in Italy and give the work of the author central importance, were written between 1899 and 1910, a period in which Pirandello was not writing for the theatre (Vincentini 30), and it will become clear how Pirandello tempers his opinion as he acquired experience in theatrical production. This is evidenced by Pirandello’s treatise on the work

of the humorist, which may be considered of principal importance in the work of translating Pirandello's drama. Slightly earlier than *Teatro siciliano?*, *L'umorismo* (*On Humor*) (1908) presents the most complete summary of Pirandello's aesthetic (Illiano and Testa viii). Pirandello's humor is not a product of his work in the theatre, but rather of his constant reflection on and re-evaluation of the state of contemporary artistic practice as well as that of the human condition. It is perhaps appropriate to say that his literary and artistic output speak to his conception of humor far better than his own theoretical account of it—most notably in the novel *Il fu Mattia Pascal* (*The Late Mattia Pascal*), and readily identifiable in his later theatrical output, in which Pirandello “creates situations which exist inside his characters, rather than in situations in which the characters are placed, a kind of inner realism that attempts to dramatize the dynamism of the self” (Illiano and Testa viii). That humor is essentially an inner process is what makes it so fundamentally different from the realism that presents characters as products of largely social influences and which Pirandello dispenses with in his work. Instead, eschewing any sense of mutual understanding, Pirandello's characters become isolated through their own means of coping with circumstances in which they find themselves. Though Pirandello's major dramatic endeavor comes long after the original text of *L'umorismo*— it is worth noting that his 1920 revision is situated in the midst of his earliest full-length plays and just before his first major success in the theatre with *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* (*Six Characters in Search of an Author*). We see the process of Pirandellian humor at work perhaps most clearly in the protagonist of *Enrico IV* (*Henry IV*), in which the character's insanity evolves into a voluntary exile in his play of sane-madness and a tragedy of a man who, in spite of the freedom he claims choice affords, is forever on the outside looking in at a world of which he can no longer partake.

*L'umorismo* offers a useful shorthand definition of “humor”: *il sentimento del contrario* (“the feeling of the opposite”) (Pirandello *L'umorismo* 135; *On Humor* 113). Like Mattia Pascal or the otherwise unnamed protagonist of *Henry IV*, the humorist (whose work corresponds to the definition which Pirandello offers) finds herself (pick one- see email) within an inherently reflexive process, one that implicates the observer/humorist in the process of meaning-making. In the 1920 revision of the text, Pirandello offered an example that has since become a touchstone for those contemplating his humor:

Vedo una vecchia signora, coi capelli ritinti, tutti unti non si sa di quale orribile manteca, e poi tutta goffamente imbellettata e parata d'abiti giovanili. Mi metto a ridere. Avverto che quella vecchia signora è il contrario di ciò che una vecchia rispettabile signora dovrebbe essere. Posso così, a prima giunta e superficialmente, arrestarmi a questa impressione comica. Il comico è appunto un avvertimento del contrario. Ma se ora interviene in me la riflessione, e mi suggerisce che quella vecchia signora non prova forse nessun piacere a pararsi così come un pappagallo, ma che forse ne soffre e lo fa soltanto perché pietosamente s'inganna che parata così, nascondendo così le rughe e la canizie, riesca a trattenere a sé l'amore del marito molto più giovane di lei, ecco che io non posso più riderne come prima, perché appunto la riflessione, lavorando in me, mi ha fatto andar oltre a quel primo avvertimento, o piuttosto, più addentro: da quel primo avvertimento del contrario mi ha fatto passare a questo sentimento del contrario. Ed è tutta qui la differenza tra il comico e l'umoristico (1986, 135)

I see an old lady whose hair is dyed and completely smeared with some kind of horrible ointment; she is all made up in a clumsy and awkward fashion and is all dolled-up like a young girl. I begin to laugh. I *perceive* that she is *the opposite* of what a respectable old lady should be. Now I could stop here at this initial and superficial comic reaction: the comic consists precisely of this *perception of the opposite*. But if, at this point, reflection interferes in me to suggest that perhaps this old lady finds no pleasure in dressing up like an exotic parrot, and that perhaps she is distressed by it and does it only because she pitifully deceives herself into believing that, by making herself up like that and by concealing her wrinkles and gray hair, she may be able to hold the love of her much younger husband—if reflection comes to suggest all this, then I can no longer laugh at her as I did at first, exactly because the inner working of reflection has made me go beyond, or rather enter deeper into, the initial stage of awareness; from the beginning *perception of the opposite*, reflection has made me shift to a *feeling of the opposite*. And herein lies the precise difference between the comic and humorist (1974, 113).

By placing himself in the role of an observer considering the appearance of an old woman, Pirandello characterizes humor as marked by the shift from the perception of the opposite to the feeling of the opposite. Such a shift offers a kind of translation—one of experience, at least in part—and a process of identification

in which the observer turns attention away from the initial subject back onto herself, taking on an active role in the creation of meaning. Returning momentarily to Pirandello's early skepticism about the theatre, particularly where the actor or translator is concerned, perhaps Pirandello's objections to the efficacy of their work—or rather the efficacy of their intervention in a pre-existing work—might be mitigated, if not dispelled, through the lens of humor. Just as the observer can only surmise that the old woman in Pirandello's analogy wants to maintain the interest of her young husband, the translator or actor can only complete her work by acknowledging her presence within it and limitations which she brings. At least for the actor, Pirandello offers the reprieve that, like the writer, the actor feels and experiences her work. If the reflexivity and awareness of the writer and actor are a given, then perhaps humor might permit—with respect to Pirandello's texts—the translator, and ultimately, the dramaturge a similar relationship to and experience of their work as they render not the literal meaning of the words on the page, but rather the process by which they first perceive meaning and then feel in themselves how such perceptions are unseated through reflection.

More introspective than the "comic," humor analyzes the underlying dynamics upon which meaning is constructed and suggests a rather sophisticated way in which not only the structures of discourse, but also the individual's experience of the quotidian may be undermined. Pirandello places humor at the intersection of laughter and sympathy, (1974, 131) but even so, his theatrical and literary output would speak to a complex grotesquerie that undermines the creative process and lays bare the inconsistencies inherent within human experience. Perhaps the most popular example of this is *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore*, in which a company of actors is confronted by their fantastic counterparts: six characters rejected by their author who seek to have their story told. Humor resides at the juxtaposition between life and form, exemplified by the incongruity of the actors' imposition of the formal and technical constraints of theatrical practice upon the fluidity of the artistic impulse which drives the characters.

The translator is situated in a similarly grotesque fashion. Lawrence Venuti identifies translation as "the process by which the chain of signifiers that constitutes the foreign text is replaced by a chain of signifiers in the translating language which the translator provides on the strength of an interpretation" (13). Venuti goes on

to claim that translation must ultimately distill (but perhaps it is more accurate to say “subdue”) the semantic potential which a text offers in order to appropriately situate it within the time, place, and linguistic tradition of the target culture (13). Even without delving deeply into Venuti’s advocacy for foreignizing translation (14), the relativity of the translator’s interpretation of a source text and his or her resulting output seems to speak to the very essence of the grotesque humor that marks Pirandello’s work. The inclination to either foreignize or domesticate a text, though of personal or aesthetic value to the translator, is not nearly as important as the initial compulsion to interpret and render the text in a new form. If Pirandellian humor serves as a method of analysis that disassembles and reconstitutes the dynamics of personal experience, then interpretation is supplanted and feeling is displaced—but not entirely. In Pirandello’s example of the old woman, the observer’s initial laughter is subverted and she is forced to recognize her place within the construction and experience of the narrative. For Pirandello’s six Characters, their own belief that there is something in them that must be told is confronted by the practical constraints which both facilitate that act of telling and violate the vitality of the original which resides in them.

In engaging with works that are particular to Pirandello’s career-long inquiry into the relativity of experience and the nature of the creative process, translators do not simply contend with the textual records emerging from the author’s output, but with Pirandello’s creative process itself, as the translator offers a singular interpretation of the work—by no means definitive, but contingent upon the conditions under which the translator takes on the task. However, these contingencies of translation seem to reinforce Pirandello’s own early suspicion of the translator’s work—that it diminishes rather than enriches the original by imposing a linguistic or aesthetic framework that detracts from its fundamental liveliness. The translator can never comfortably occupy the role of the writer—she may only be positioned along a spectrum of visibility. As such, the process of interpretation which guides their execution of the work marks both the text and the translator as the site of cultural, aesthetic, and theoretical contact. The work will always be an amalgamation of the translator’s expertise and interpretation of the values embedded within the source text and the target culture for which the translator renders

that text.

This humoristic reading of the translator's interpretive work as tempered by her own reflection upon her presence within the transformation of the text perhaps finds its best parallel in the hermeneutic motion which George Steiner theorizes is at work within translation: the initial that **trust**<sup>1</sup> there is something to be understood within the text, followed by the **aggression** with which meaning is deciphered and distilled, succeeded by the transformative quality of **importation** into a target culture, and ultimately balanced in the pursuit of a kind of reciprocity with the original in an act of **restitution** (193-98). Steiner's assertions firmly embed the translator within her work, and his characterization of this process highlights the limitations within which the translator must work, as it produces texts which "localize [. . .] project onto a screen, the resistant vitalities, the opaque centres of specific genius in the original" (196). In short, the translator may only work within the limitations of her experience and intellect. Self-awareness and reflexivity are at the heart of Pirandellian humor, and the translator is not a detached interlocutor in the discourse, but is invested intellectually and aesthetically. Likewise for Venuti, the choice to translate and the process of translation is dependent upon the aforementioned "strength of an interpretation," (13) and while his own exploration of translation concerns itself with the tensions between the foreign and the domestic, it is clear nonetheless that the translator must not only contend with texts, but also with limitations that an individual inevitably brings to the process.

Pirandello reveals the tools and manipulative means of the theatre in *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore*, suggesting the limitations of the theatrical conventions and the result of the imposition of those conventions upon a text. These restrictions are presented as self-evident to those professionals who make their livelihood within the theatre and unconscionable to the characters whose vitality these conventions undermine—an epistemological impasse exacerbated by the efforts of the company and the characters to create a play across incompatible planes of existence. Here we might turn our attention to "dramaturgy," a term, like translation, which defies any attempt to encapsulate the scope of the work within even the broadest of frameworks. Originating in the classical theatre, Gottfried Lessing would distill the term in his *Hamburg Dramaturgy*, pursuing a distinctly German performance tradition marked by a rigorously analytical approach to theatrical practice and creation that considered "writing,

staging, acting style, management, and repertoire” in its methodology (Turner and Behrndt 19-20). Lessing’s dramaturgical analysis addresses what shapes theatrical creation and performance and it is in this notion of “shaping” that the intersections of dramaturgy and translation are made most apparent. The dramaturge engages in what Norman Frisch refers to as “the dialogic relationship between *what* is being presented and *how* it is presented” (Turner and Behrndt 25). The translator navigates a similar tension between form and content, and both the translator and dramaturge must find the framing devices appropriate to the content they wish to communicate and the goals towards which that act of communication are directed. Casting a critical gaze on the work, the translator shares many of the same responsibilities that fall to the dramaturge who, in the production process is “closely involved in conception, processes of research, facilitation, shaping and discussion of work [and is] aware of the inner logic of the performance, and is able to take critical stock of whether the production follows its own logic” (Turner and Behrndt 166). Both translation and dramaturgy imply an intimate understanding of the underlying structure of the texts, and the means by which those texts are manipulated across languages and modes of communication (166).

In 1936, Pirandello writes in the introductory matter to Silvio d’Amico’s *Storia del teatro italiano*:

Il Teatro non è archeologia. [...] Il testo resta integro per chi se lo vorrà rilegger in casa, per sua cultura; chi vorrà divertircisi andrà a teatro, dove gli sarà ripresentato mondo da tutte le parti vizzate, rinnovato nelle espressioni non più correnti, riadattato a gusti dell’oggi. [...] Perché l’opera d’arte, in teatro, non è più il lavoro di uno scrittore, che si può sempre del resto in altro modo salvaguardare, ma un atto di vita da creare, momento per momento, sulla scena, col concorso del pubblico, che deve bearsene (1936, 25-26).

Theatre is not archaeology. [...] The text remains whole for those who would like to re-read it at home, for that is their culture; those who wish to be entertained go to the theatre, where it will be presented to the whole world—its withered parts and outmoded expressions renovated and adapted to today’s tastes. [...] Because the work of art, in theatre, is no longer the work of one writer, who can always safeguard it in another way, but an act of life to be created, moment to moment, on the stage, concurrently with the public, which should delight them. (my translation).

The man who penned these words just before his death seems

a far cry from the novelist, poet, and essayist who first began to conceptualize his artistic practice at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As Michael Rössner notes, Pirandello's reconsideration of the theatre's potential is a product of his work as a dramatist and director in the Teatro d'Arte (34). He was directly involved with the theatre, not only as a playwright, but also a director with direct contact with his company of actors (Vincentini 121). With this practical experience behind him and after having the opportunity to reflect on the possibilities which performance presents, Pirandello is able to offer an idea of dramaturgy—a process that allows for the revision and revitalization of the text to suit the needs of the audience to which it is presented and the time in which it is produced. Rather than a violation of the artist's original, Pirandello suggests that the theatre offers the possibility of an increased longevity. While it is unlikely that anyone would deny that Pirandello always would place the literary work at the fore, privileging its vitality and wholeness above all else, the new perspective which he outlines here acknowledges that this kind of intervention into a text necessarily allows the art to retain its vitality or revive itself in the face of changing methods, tastes, or attitudes. Following his own experience in the theatre, such a position is, if not surprising, certainly an indication of the considerable theoretical distance he traversed over the course of his career.

It is in the spirit of longevity and renewal that I propose this conception of translation of Pirandello's drama as inextricably tied to the particular brand of humor that distinguishes his work. Pirandello's reflection on the potential of theatrical production and performance, read in conjunction with the introspective and analytic conception of *l'umorismo* that would become a key feature of his work, offers a new paradigm for Pirandellian dramaturgy and translation. The translator and dramaturge guide the movement of a work according to its own mechanics and aesthetic principles—one on the page, the other on the stage. Thus far, I have contended the translator and dramaturge are each engaged in a dynamic and reflexive relationship with the text—each is constantly forced to consider her own placement within the work and the effects which her intervention within it may produce. The prospect of interpretation and re-interpretation through embodied practice extends this process of reflection to the text itself, as its relevance and viability are re-evaluated with respect to the changing conditions of the theatrical practice. As Pirandello

re-situates the author, actor and director, as well as the audience, over the trajectory of his career—perhaps most successfully in the last play of the theatre-within-the-theatre trilogy *Questa sera si recita a soggetto* (*Tonight We Improvise*)—he would appear to imply a re-situation of the translator and dramaturge as well, appearing more amenable to the kinds of transformations and renewals which are made possible through the manipulation of language and performance practices. To borrow from Claudio Vincentini's comments upon Andrea Pirandello's recollection of the playwright working with Marta Abba, it is not the work of the actor to reproduce the image of a character as imagined by his or her creator. Rather, it is necessary to evoke the actual presence of the character and to imbue the scene being played with the power that such presence affords in the world of the play (175). This is likewise the goal of the translator and dramaturge as they intervene in a dramatic text—the spirit of the text may be evoked by many means, and while it might not be a perfect reflection of the author's original, the resulting text or performance may still achieve something fundamentally resonant with the readers or audiences to whom it is offered. But, such an intervention is not completed in a vacuum and both the translator and dramaturge must contend not only with the textual contingencies at hand, but with the historical and sociopolitical context in which they work.

Play texts in particular offer a unique challenge to the translator. Occupying the middle ground between word and action, dramatic works suggest at once both the finite quality of the written text and the incalculable variations to which such texts are opened through performance (Xu and Cui 45-46). As practices and tastes change, it becomes necessary to account for the openness of the script. In other words, the way in which the dramatic text only finds completion, according to Cathy Turner and Synne K. Berhndt, in the act of performance is by contending with those elements of the play which have lost relevance over time (35). While there are numerous intersections between both the work of the translator and the work of the dramaturge, drama translation in particular allows the possibility of these roles collapsing into one another in ways that can be more or less intentional. The reality is that a translator's choices will inevitably affect performance and reception and blur the division between the work of the translator and the work of the dramaturge.

Some choices are unavoidable because they are the only clear ones available. For example, in the 1923 one-act play *L'uomo dal fiore in*

*bocca*, (*The Man with the Flower in His Mouth*) the opening dialogue is characterized by the use of the polite “you” — *Lei* in Italian rather than the familiar *tu*. This implies a formal distance between the title character and the delayed traveler he is attempting to engage in conversation:

**L’uomo dal fiore:** Ah, lo volevo dire! **Lei** dunque un uomo pacifico è... Ha perduto il treno? (Pirandello “L’uomo dal fiore in bocca”).

I shall now turn to my own experience as a drama translator and my earliest experiences translating plays for production. For a 2011 production of *L’uomo dal fiore in bocca*—coupled with a translation of the much earlier *Lumie di Sicilia*—at the Centre for Drama, Theatre, and Performance Studies at the University of Toronto, I ultimately rendered the text as the following:

**The Man:** Hey, can I speak to you? You seem nice enough . . . Have you missed the train? (3).

This, of course, was not my original version. Returning to the aforementioned problem of formal distance, the initial translation was much more literal: “Hey, I’ve been wanting to talk to you.” William Murray treated the line similarly in his 1970 translation of the play—published and licensed for performance by Samuel French—offering the following version of the opening lines:

**The Man:** Well, I’ve been meaning to talk to you. I hope you won’t mind. I suppose you’re an easygoing type and—you missed your train? (220)

In both Murray’s and my own early treatment of the line, one might feel that, in English at least, this entry point into the dialogue is awkward.<sup>2</sup> This initial line of the play highlights the fundamental tension in translation between preservation of literal meaning, and the interpretive leeway that a translator may adopt in his or her work. The Man’s exclamation—which we can read in a number of ways, such as an explicit effort to connect with The Traveler—may seem to the translator odd or out of place. There are also meanings embedded in the language and syntax of leaving and arrival—particularly with respect to pronouns. As a native English speaker translating the text for a production of the play in English, there are ways to approach such variance across languages. That is not

to say that Murray's more literal approach or my own modified treatment of the line is correct. Correct translation cannot exist; there can be appropriate and timely translations, but to pursue absolute meaning would be an exercise in futility. Regarding my final rendition of the line, that is, as a question rather than an exclamation, I hope to have offered a more comfortable point of entry into a play filled with weighty concerns—for both actors and spectators. As a result, in English, the register (level of formality) of this opening dialogue is lowered, and with it the ease with which the opening action seems to read in the original. With the use of the polite *Lei*, the formal distance between the two men and the nature of their co-presence at the outdoor cafe is implicit in the original dialogue. In English, even in using a question, to prompt The Man's interest in The Traveler. As a result, The Man appears to impose himself upon The Traveler, who, having missed his train must now wait for the first to leave the next morning, is a captive audience for the titular character and his musing about family life, shop windows, and his impending death. Treating the line even with the considerably more literal method of Murray or myself in early drafts, Pirandello's use of the imperfect *volevo* (from *volere*—"to want"), suggests that the action—the Man's desire to engage the Traveler in conversation—had begun in the past. The stage directions of the original play indicate that The Man and The Traveler are seated in sustained silence at their tables.<sup>3</sup> Without reading the stage directions, and with the difficulty of rendering in English the formality of the original and the nature of characters' relationship to their space and to one another which this formality implies, the audience loses the temporal associations of the original text, and it becomes difficult to gauge on the strength of translated dialogue alone that The Traveler and The Man have perhaps been sitting together in silence for a while. But even that is not the crux of the drama translator's process. Of greater importance is that The Man and The Traveler start talking at all. Here I demonstrate my sentiments that the translators, dramaturges, and humorists—à la Pirandello's work—parallel one another. In particular, the translator and her work exist in a "third space" (*spazio terzo*) and the translator does not merely transpose a message between languages (Rössner 28). There are elements of translation that only exist in the process of making translation, and these cannot necessarily be grasped as part of the

original, or in the final text (28). The task of the translator is a dynamic process of negotiation and renegotiation, and of decontextualization and recontextualization (28). Thus, the goal is not to identify with the text or its characters, but rather for the translator, and also the dramaturge, to ask how to get at the heart of the stories as the author or playwright creates them and how those stories might still resonate with the audience for whom the translation is made in consideration of and to whom it is ultimately presented.

Sometimes, however, in spite of the dynamism of the translator's process, other choices made in the translation process highlight the highly individual traits of playwrights, their texts, and their original audiences, and efforts to preserve the original conditions of the drama may face inevitable resistance. For example, the title of Pirandello's 1910 drama *Lumie di Sicilia* is often translated in English as *Sicilian Limes*. However, the *citrus lumia* is in fact a specific breed of lemon with a strong association to Southern Italy (which itself has an extended history of citrus cultivation) (Mazzola *et al* 311; 317). By translating *lumie* as "limes," the translator is able to place his or her work in a longer tradition of English translation and production of this particular play, such as Murray's rendering of the title and references to the fruit in the dialogue. But the use of limes instead of *lumie* has larger implications, as audience members, who may be approaching the play with different levels awareness in the historical conditions of Sicily and its relationship to the Italian peninsula, miss out on the symbolic value that Pirandello's selection of *citrus lumia* tacitly carries. Simply put, the use of *lumie* speaks to a geographic and agricultural reality of Southern Italy to which Anglophone audiences are unlikely to have access. Using "lime" destabilizes a central identifying image of the play and an integral feature of Pirandello's dramaturgy. In English, it is not difficult to point to, even anecdotally, the cultural or linguistic baggage that "lemon" carries, making it ill-suited to the themes of the play. For example, it is not uncommon to use the term to describe a product that was manufactured poorly and does not function correctly or as advertised (e.g., the car was a lemon). But, in the play, Pirandello uses the reference to the *citrus lumia* to denote to a place of origin in Southern Italy (both for the fruit and the central characters)—a place marked by unrest, conquest and violent transition at the hands of a political system dominated by Northern Italian interests after unification. Teresina's move to a northern Italian town in pursuit

of career advancement, her subsequent transformation from the naïve rural peasant girl to an illustrious singer, and implicitly, to a promiscuous woman—not to mention Micuccio’s sorrow at the realization of her transformation and broken promises—hearkens to that. This simple change in the title through translation results in a slew of dramaturgical concerns in which the political dimension of Pirandello’s work is sacrificed for its raw emotional power. In production this loss in meaning really cannot be rectified within the performance itself and this dramaturgical damage, while inherent in the process of translating, appears unavoidable with respect to this play and the longer tradition of translating Pirandello’s output.

It is evident that the preceding comments and considerations are far from exhaustive. I have aimed to demonstrate the ways in which the practical and theoretical dimensions of translation and dramaturgy parallel and converge upon each another. By reading some of Pirandello’s earliest aesthetic statements in dialogue with both his characterization of “humor” and his later, tempered considerations of the theatre’s potential, I have suggested ways in which the translator and the dramaturge may re-situate themselves in relation to their work, recognizing that their efforts, expertise, and limitations are all vital in the process of meaning making, rather than residing at the fringes of it.<sup>4</sup>

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> I have used boldfaced formatting here to help readers better identify Steiner’s terminology.

<sup>2</sup> In addition to Murray’s more literal version of the opening exchange of *L’uomo dal fiore in bocca*, and my own freer rendering of it, there are many more possibilities that the translator might consider. As one reviewer noted, there is a colloquial dimension that is part of the Italian “Ah, lo volevo dire!”—something along the lines of “I could have bet on it.” I’ve dispensed with this possibility in favor of a seemingly more natural interpretation that not only tries to indicate that the Man and the Traveler have been sitting in silence for a while, but also feels like a reasonable point of entry into a conversation between two strangers. The translator’s choices for her rendering of a line are necessarily in tension with the dramaturgical implications those choices raise. My early version of the line seemed to be an unnecessarily difficult obstacle to the director and actors as they tried to shape the opening moments of the play, something I could only understand after hearing it in reading groups and rehearsals. Though this

line may have been altered in meaning, when taking the translation as a whole, I found it to be a suitable concession, one that would allow the director and actors to build up the play's momentum as it approached the far more complex problems that Pirandello raises throughout.

<sup>3</sup> "Al levarsi della tela, L'uomo dal Fiore in Bocca, seduto a uno dei tavolini, osserverà a lungo in silenzio L'Avventore pacifico che, a tavolino accanto, succhierà con una cannuccia di paglia uno sciroppo di menta (As the curtain rises, The Man with the Flower in His Mouth is seated at one of the tables observing, in a long silence, The Easygoing Traveler at the next table, sipping a mint beverage through a straw)" (Pirandello *L'uomo dal fiore in bocca*).

<sup>4</sup> I would like to thank my friends and colleagues for their support and advice in writing and revising this essay, especially Aldo Lucci, Domenico Pietropaolo, Martin Revermann, Paul Stoesser, and the governing body of the New York College English Association, to whom an initial version of this work was presented during a conference in 2012. Additionally, I would like to acknowledge my colleague Paul Franz, who suggested I address changes in register as part of my considerations of the translator's influence on dramaturgical choices. Finally, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the very generous reviewers of this essay for their comments and observations. Their work was extremely encouraging.

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## **Pirandello's Unrealized Film, *Treatment for Six Characters*: An Interview with Film Director and Artist Anne-Marie Creamer**

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Throughout the last ten years of his life, Pirandello wrote multiple treatments for the filming of his great work, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. None were ever realized. We are left with only paper trails, leading to dropped contracts, and the nostalgia for a film that could have realized Pirandello's cinematic ideals: film has a unique ability to show the birth of artistic creation.

The *Treatment for Six Characters* is not a film version of *Six Characters in Search of an Author*; it is a work all its own. It depicts Pirandello's creative process: not just the writing, but the very birth of the Characters in the mind of the Author. And the Author is Pirandello himself, named. This makes the *Treatment* even more interesting, as Pirandello himself becomes one of his Characters, asking to live in us. For 90 years, this film has waited.

In her 2014 film of the *Treatment*, Anne-Marie Creamer, artist and art film director, walks right into a strongly marked absence of representation, but her work does more than produce Pirandello's unrealized film. Among other things, Creamer participates in the wider life of the *Treatment* itself. She respects what we might call the person of the *Treatment*: conceived and aged and eternally unborn. Her work reveals the *Treatment* itself as one of Pirandello's Characters, asking, like the Father in Pirandello's original play, "to live, just for a moment, in you." Creamer understands the great weight of that call—"We want to live!"—which weighed on Pirandello and weighs on the occupiers of the Teatro Valle Bene Comune; and her film allows us to feel that urgency as well.

The absence of Pirandello's unrealized film is at the center of Creamer's *Treatment*; it is born from this absence. It is, therefore, a pregnant absence. Creamer's film—whose every shot quivers expectantly—both delivers and stays heavy with that pregnant space which invites creation beyond her own.

It is an act of humility. Through her disciplined withholding, Creamer is participating in the *mise en abyme* that she mentions: she maintains the pregnant absence that gave life to her project so that the audience, too, can give life. In this way, we—herself included—participate in Pirandello’s creative process, giving life to characters beyond us. It touches on perhaps the greatest human calling, to allow something to live through you that has life beyond you. Giving birth to something eternal: the ultimate *mise en abyme*. And isn’t this, after all, Pirandello’s call to us as well?

Here I offer the edited transcript of my interview with Anne-Marie Creamer on her motivations, approaches, and insights into Pirandello’s unrealized *Treatment*. In our exchange we discussed everything from her own interest in this piece to questions about how re-envisioning it as a contemporary film both translates and also amplifies Pirandello’s own preoccupations and ideas. What emerges is also a testament to the ways in which adaptation can bring new life to Pirandello’s works and serve as both a faithful reproduction as well as an insightful commentary on his vision—nearly a century after the premiere of his epoch-making play.

**LS:** *What drew you to Pirandello in the first place?*

**AMC:** My interest in Pirandello comes from the perspective of my being a visual artist, and it started long ago while I was a painting student at the Royal College of Arts in London. At that time, in the late 1980’s, I sometimes painted images of people in rooms loosely based on my interest in Samuel Beckett, trying to capture the fact of a person standing in a room.

During a tutorial one of my tutors remarked that a recent painting reminded him of Pirandello’s *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. I was in my early twenties and had absolutely no idea who Pirandello was or what *Six Characters* was but on researching Pirandello was delighted at the connection my tutor had made to the ambiguous kind of presence I was trying to achieve as a painter. Since that point I have always been intrigued by *Six Characters*; its “meta” qualities and the sheer innovation of Pirandello’s premise have always stayed with me.

**LS:** *What drew you to this particular film of the unrealized “Treatment” specifically?*

**AMC:** In more recent years the possibility of going to Rome arose through the work of the British School at Rome, and in preparing research about the city I found out that Pirandello lived there. Shortly afterwards I came across the book *Pirandello and Film*, by Nina da Vinci Nichols and Jana O’Keefe Bazzoni, which, in addition to exploring Pirandello’s wider interest in the early history of film, also outlined his plan to make a film, not of *Six Characters in Search of an Author* directly but instead to represent a fictional version of the creative process leading to his famous play. Of course the real event of the premiere of *Six Characters* at Teatro Valle in Rome was a disaster for Pirandello—he had to flee the theater having coins thrown at him—and it is interesting that the final part of *Treatment for Six Characters* also concludes with a fictionalized version of the historical event of the premiere of the play at that same theater. The link between the two works forms a curious temporal loop, connected by the stage at Teatro Valle, which Pirandello seems to have conceived on several levels as a space of becoming. This relationship to site and re-enactment, especially where a historical site is also a place of fiction, speaks to contemporary visual art where similar ideas have gained currency in recent years.

**LS:** *What motivates this short film?*

**AMC:** Reading *Treatment for Six Characters* it became apparent that as well as the under-lying formal aspects of the work it is also an exploration of the ethics of the creative process. The major plot of the work is the inability of the famous Author, clearly modeled on Pirandello himself, to see how he has projected his own creative fantasy onto a real, struggling, Roman family, resulting in a tragedy largely of his own making. The subject of the ethical responsibility of the author or artist within wider economies of production of their work remains prescient, if not more urgent now. I also enjoy that Pirandello created one work as a form of fictional documentary from the basis of another. Within the context of contemporary art, which is my own area, that is incredibly current and ambitious. *Treatment for Six Characters* is a kind of *mise en abyme*.

**LS:** *What would you say your goals are with this short film?*

**AMC:** I came to this work interested in how it might be possible to make cinema without using film in conventional ways. Previously I had made a prologue to one of my own works, *Meeting the Pied Piper in Brasov*, focusing on a journey to Transylvania where I encountered a group of dancing Sekely children in the town of Brasov. Although I had described this journey many times there is no film footage or photographs of the journey or the moments leading up to the encounter with the children. Instead, with reference to silent movies, I tried to tell the tale via 52 black and white drawings, which have become the film I can no longer make. As well as narrative images I also painted the film's opening and closing title sequences, film directions to fade up or down. Of course this helped me recognize a way to approach *Treatment for Six Characters*, which to begin with I was also going to draw out.

**LS:** *What were the key steps in developing your approach?*

**AMC:** As in *Meeting the Pied Piper in Brasov*, a prologue, I was keen to maintain the essential elements of story while also maintaining a sense in which Pirandello's film remained a kind of phantom. This is true even though I would use all the objects and many of the places of Pirandello's *Treatment for Six Characters*: the rooms and objects of Pirandello's home in Rome feature strongly, the pen and type-writer he might have used to write the work, his bed, his books, his personal objects. There are pictures of Marta Abba, who was an obvious muse for him, for this work and others. I also got access to a real fashion atelier in Rome, the Micol Fontana Fondazione, which becomes the rooms of Madame Melloni's fashion atelier. Crucially I got access to Teatro Valle, which was under political occupation at the time. Being able to use footage from these sites gives the work, and Pirandello's plot, indexical authority even as Pirandello's work remains a conceptual, virtual proposition: I compel the audience to "make" Pirandello's film in their mind as they watch my film unfold. As in my earlier work I have tried to wrap one film around Pirandello's absent, unrealized film.

Trying to pull this off was always going to be very complex and it became clear to me that I would have to carefully

calibrate the relationship between the imagery, the use of sound, and the voice of the Narrator. I worked hard to develop the interrelationship between the visual, textural, and aural story-world of the film, and also found a great actor, Norman Mozzato, a veteran Italian actor who had previously worked with Andrei Tarkovsky, who performed as my Narrator. Norman gives a wonderfully resonant narration of the plot of Pirandello's film. I asked him to animate and fully possess the characters and plot of the work so that his voice also conjures up the absent film for the audience. It took me some time to edit the work, as the timing of the relationship of image, sound, voice and subtitle have to be precisely calibrated so that there is just enough time for the audience to also see their imagined version of Pirandello's film while also seeing my film unfold. It was a difficult balancing act. The goal for the work was to see if I could pull all of this off, as it would mark a formal innovation for me if it could be achieved.

**LS:** *Congratulations, then! Do you have a specific audience in mind?*

**AMC:** In terms of audience I come from the art world and so my first intention is to see if the work can have a life within galleries and museums. As the work is so recently finished plans for this are taking shape at the moment. The response by curators and artists who have seen it has been incredibly positive. The best I have ever experienced. I must say the British School at Rome have also been incredibly supportive and are at this time working towards a larger screening event. Once the circulation of the work in the art world has gathered momentum, I have also been encouraged to consider film festivals, which I will do at a later date. That will be a new industry for me. I have also been delighted and surprised that the response by Pirandello scholars seems to have been so positive. I was not sure if my attempt to make *Treatment for Six Characters* would be regarded with skepticism, especially as I am not from the world of literary criticism and as I have adapted some of the original text, but in fact people appear to have been very engaged.

**LS:** *In fact, in some respects the film seems to be a close realization of Pirandello's **Treatment**, and in others it seems that you have taken liberties and made your own adaptation.*

**AMC:** While I was in Rome and working at the British School at Rome I used to joke with the archeologists that Pirandello's text was every bit as much of a ruin as the remains of the buildings they were working with, which is to say that any transcription of a work from an older time is always an act of interpretation, made according to the conditions of the time you are working in. Pirandello was aware that the theatrical production of his plays was always to some extent a re-interpretation, necessary for the medium and the work to come alive in a new situation. I view the act of transcription as an ethical, creative act.

**LS:** *How did you go about determining the balance of these elements?*

**AMC:** One must always draw out elements of an historical work that are prescient to the contemporary moment while also being careful not to put words in a dead author's mouth. In terms of the adaption of the text *Treatment for Six Characters* is exactly what it sounds like: a film treatment, which is really a series of prose paragraphs outlining the plot that are used in negotiations with film studios and producers in order to proceed to realization. So, *Treatment for Six Characters* as a text was intended as a point of negotiation rather than being a final, published literary work. As you know, Pirandello wrote three such treatments between 1925 and 1935: and the last version, written in 1935, is the one I have worked with. It was used to facilitate a conversation between Pirandello, film studios in Los Angeles, and the Austrian theater director, Max Reinhardt, and the German film director, Josef von Sternberg.

As you know it does look as if the project would have finally proceeded, but negotiations were stopped on the event of Pirandello's death in 1936. Nina da Vinci Nichols and Jana O'Keefe Bazzoni's book includes a copy of a letter sent to Pirandello's assistant after his death; there Reinhardt and von Sternberg were still trying to proceed with the project and were rather despairing at the slow progress. They outlined about 6-8 points of criticism about Pirandello's *Treatment*, suggesting revisions. These included advising a less harsh approach to the "real" daughter of the family, who may or may not have been a prostitute; but they also encourage a more visual, less repetitive approach.

Many of these points appear to have been made to Pirandello before his death. He had conceded that the text was a “work in progress.” Many of Rheinhardt/von Sternberg’s revisions have made it into my adaption. I have made the question of the girl’s being a prostitute more ambiguous, and this also serves the wider project of making it clear that the projective imagination of the Author is feverishly at work throughout the film—in turn making the ethics of the Author/Pirandello’s creative process more stark, as it seems was Pirandello’s intention. It was also clear that a number of repeated plot points and motifs were present in the work, but Pirandello may not have realized that these could also be handled visually, that the integrity of his project could also be maintained through textual, visual and sonic approaches.

**LS:** *What was behind your decision to use shots of contemporary elements (modern cars, the Teatro Valle Bene Comune flag, and so on)?*

**AMC:** The revisions I made helped me distill the work while also remaining faithful to his original premise. I added a prologue to the work. This is made very clear, the credits for Pirandello’s work start after the prologue ends. Given the fact I had worked so extensively in Teatro Valle and that the theater was at that point under a political occupation I wanted to find a way to link Pirandello’s characters—proposed as still present, if hidden, at Valle 92 years later—with the contemporary occupiers of the theatre, the group Teatro Valle Bene Comune. Taking my cue from Pirandello’s implicit aspiration to link *Treatment for Six Characters* with the historical fate of his play at Valle, I thought to take this further and to place the urgency of Pirandello’s characters’ need to live, to be heard, within the political intensities and urgencies of the occupation. Both Pirandello’s *Treatment for Six Characters* and Teatro Valle Bene Comune have moral, ethical concerns at their center; the moral dilemmas and obfuscations of the individual creator measured here against the wider, moral context of the arts in relationship to society, which is offered by Teatro Valle Bene Comune. Teatro Valle Bene Comune’s creed is “Like water, like air, let’s reclaim culture,” and of course Pirandello’s characters want to make an act of reclamation too, of the trajectory of a more

fully realized life. Both are ways of saying: “We want to live!”

The prologue features footage that was originally out-takes from filming the sequence of the Mother’s confrontation with Pirandello at Valle, which was interrupted several times. We filmed that sequence at 9am, and the actress Simona Senzacqua had to run screaming through the theater. This woke up people sleeping on the upper floors of the theater, to comical effect. Against these sequences I put the imagined voices of Pirandello’s characters, who are proposed as witnessing the production of my film. The form of the Greek chorus seemed apt. Using rhythmic speech and the sounds of the body hitting drums, the floor or clapping (in fact my characters stomp and hit the floor throughout the film), the chorus directly address the audience about the social and political significance of the work they are about to see, as is typical of the form.

**LS:** *Can you say more, for example, about the decision not to use actors?*

**AMC:** As I have already stated the decision not to use actors throughout the work, apart from one crucial sequence when the character of the ‘real’ Mother confronts Pirandello/ the Author, reflects my concern, particular to my practice, about maintaining Pirandello’s *Treatment for Six Characters*, as a phantom object and in getting the audience to imagine Pirandello’s work while watching my film. In effect viewing my work is to watch two films simultaneously: my film—some say it is a kind of documentary, some have remarked it is a horror film—which is at the same time wrapped around Pirandello’s still absent film.

**LS:** *Do you think of the departure from Pirandello’s expressionist aesthetic as a modernization of the piece, or is that motivated by other factors?*

**AMC:** In fact I feel the expressionist aesthetic is present, the work does feature the use of shadow, and weather is used to expressive effect throughout the work. I also use clouds, the moon, the relationship between light and dark, the pulsing light of streetlights, together with large dark trees swaying under the moon throughout the work. Of course because the original

German expressionist cinema of the 1920's and 30's, developed from visual reuses of the Gothic, has its own clichés, I was careful not to use that aesthetic wholesale. The work is predicated on keeping a little distance from Pirandello's *Treatment*, so that some elements of it are given over to the imagination of the audience, as I mentioned earlier. There is a level of abstraction in my approach to the work, and in leaving some elements to the audience it is important to also respect the intelligent engagement of the audience to see the film in their terms. My use of sound is also important in this respect.

**LS:** *The use of sound in the film is very striking. To some extent the sounds seem to do a large bit of the work that Pirandello's treatment had originally ascribed to visual effects like mist, superimposition, and so on.*

**AMC:** Thank-you! There was as much work put into the soundtrack as the visuals in fact. Rather than artificially creating mist or fog I was keen to document the sites of the film but to heighten the sense of fiction through sound, using sound in effect to help create a "story-world".

This entailed a counterintuitive combination of a documentary approach to the visuals, (even though the overall visual aesthetic of the film has been developed so that the visual surfaces, colors and textures are quite lush), which were combined with a use of sound that suggested that such locations have a fictive dimension. For instance, added to voice is location sound, by which I mean the sound of objects and straight-forward cause and effect, i.e. if a car passes or some-one walks into the frame, or a flash of lightening is seen in the sky, you will also hear them. But added to this are layers of audio that lend atmosphere, including minimal music, plus layers of low frequency sounds.

**LS:** *How would you describe the film's sounds?*

**AMC:** In terms of how I organized the soundtrack I conceived of a sound map for the whole work in which firstly I divided the film into two connecting but separate story-worlds. In the first are Pirandello's characters, present from the prologue at the beginning of the work and then signaled by the aggressive

sound of stomping the floor. This bodily sound, as I said earlier, seemed to me to be redolent of the call to the body, a form that the Greek chorus is known to use. Maintaining the sound of the stomping feet throughout the film also allowed me to suggest that the characters perpetually hover just outside the story-world of Pirandello's film. The aggression of the stomp also punctuates the wider work, giving it further rhythm and structure but also signaling the characters' sense of urgency, the desire to break through the world of the story in order to live. The second story-world is the world of the plot of Pirandello's *Treatment for Six Characters* and for this I conceived of a structure of inter-related sounds and music.

**LS:** *How did you conceive of them and execute them?*

**AMC:** Firstly, there are low frequency sounds, which with the right sub-woofer speakers have a real physical force you can literally feel in your body as you watch the film and which are intended to suggest a hidden force or pressure trying to break through the façade of the visuals. These low sounds are present from the beginning but disappear after the appearance of the character of the Mother, after which the dominant sounds change to much thinner, metallic and glass sounds, such as the glass violin. These are intended to reflect the more fragile, melancholy, and fatalistic state of mind of the author as he realizes the damage he has created.

I also make use of musical instruments throughout. I was clear that there should be no melody in the work; instead I wanted a more abstract use of music, fitting with the latent abstraction in the wider film, in for example my use of visual detail, weather and the overall relation of sound to image throughout the film. In fact I did not employ a musician but instead bought the rights to sounds of single cello, violin or piano notes, plus one or two cello sequences that were more staccato in character. I then placed these single notes into the film-score one note at a time, looking to build rhythm and tension at key points. As you can imagine using this method it took some time to develop the sound world of the film. When this was done I worked with an Italian sound engineer, based in London, who helped me "sweeten" the sound, really just making the sound as clean as possible. He also helped

me balance the overall elements of the soundtrack.

**LS:** *I found the vibrations of the cello sounds particularly moving.*

**AMC:** Some sequences have already generated a strong reaction from the audience, such as the point when the Author/Pirandello begins to imagine overtly his fictional version of the Roman family for the first time. Rather than use superimposition, which I would view as unnecessary, I show a large tree blowing in the wind on a dark night against the moon. Against this is played a staccato cello together with Norman's evocative voice. I believe this combination invites the viewer to use their imagination to see this transformation taking place. In effect handling the representation this way invites the audience to mirror the imaginative action of Pirandello's text so that rather than seeing the transformation literally the audience also imagine, as the Author/ Pirandello does, the fictional family emerging. Two simultaneous projective imaginations are at work at that moment, which is why I think the audience seems to like that point so much. Learning what to leave out is also crucial in the construction of any art-work, a point I believe Pirandello would have appreciated.

**LS:** *What kind of interplay do you envision between the personal and the creative in Pirandello's Treatment?*

**AMC:** When I introduced my film for a screening at the Italian Cultural Institute in London, I stated that although Pirandello's text does not consistently name the Author—mainly he is the "famous Author"—it is clear this is Pirandello. The Author is cited as being the writer of *Six Characters in Search of an Author* so there is no mistaking this point. I have also read that in the negotiations with Max Rheinhardt, who knew him well, Pirandello had agreed that he would play the character of the Author in the film they were intending to make. Of course this never happened as Pirandello died soon after, but given the nature of the story—that the author wields such a destructive force in the plot of an examination of the ethics of the creative process—I view it as fascinating that Pirandello was willing to implicate himself within the questions he had chosen to explore. There is a level of risk-taking in this work that is laudable on his part. Given the potential of this

I viewed it as essential to site Pirandello's unmade film within the locations and objects of his life. I do point out though that as plausible as the plot of *Treatment for Six Characters* is, it is a fictional representation of his creative process.

**LS:** *What about the fact that Pirandello himself and then his heirs never succeeded in making Six Characters into a film?*

**AMC:** The fact the work was never made in Pirandello's life-time made it more attractive for me and was one of my motivations. The missing object of Pirandello's film is something I have tried to preserve in the structure I gave to my film. It is also interesting, tantalizing even, to consider what might have been had Pirandello succeeded; it seems that at each key point in time in 1925, 1928 and 1935 it would have been a completely different film, as the context around Pirandello changed with time as well.

**LS:** *Does that affect you as a director and your choices for this short film?*

**AMC:** I, too, would have loved to have seen what Josef von Sternberg and Max Reinhardt might have achieved with Pirandello. However, I am clear I have not made their film. That would be a foolish under-taking. I could never be them, have their precise configuration of talents. I live in an entirely different moment, am a different gender, nationality, and bring to the project differing possibilities as well as restrictions.

**LS:** *Lastly, in what ways has your view of Pirandello, Six Characters, and/or the Treatment changed over the course of your project?*

**AMC:** Of course over time my relationship to Pirandello's *Treatment for Six Characters* has deepened and become more nuanced as my insight into the work and its structure developed. Initially I was aware of the ways the text paralleled concerns within contemporary art, especially the texts meta qualities, but in grappling with the *Treatment* and seeing ways to make it again I gained increasingly awareness of the works structure, this includes its weaknesses as well as its strengths. After noticing its "meta"

qualities I enjoyed understanding the ways the work examined the ethics of the creative process and the ways Pirandello seemed willing to implicate himself within this. I'm also drawn to, and not yet finished with, the ways *Treatment* unites with the event of the historical premier of *Six Characters*, using the theatrical stage of Teatro Valle as a site for acts of 'becoming' on a number of competing levels - the characters need for life, the sudden moral insight and empathy of the Author, the self-possession of the Mother: the act of creativity and the site this takes place at are placed at the nexus of competing emotions; the desire for a coming into being, of an art work, of the characters, is set against acute grief at the losses that this is predicated on for the subjects of the work, and for the ways the artist/ writer and audience is implicated within this. The ways those strands are inter-woven are Pirandello's achievement, I have tried to recognize this and tried to materialize it within the work I have made.

Making the work at the time I did, in late 2012 with postproduction over 2013/14, coincided with a specific time in Rome in which by a combination of luck and tenacity I managed to gain access to many of the key historical sites of the work, namely Pirandello's home, a famous fashion atelier, and crucially Teatro Valle. The chance to work at Valle during the situation of a political occupation did force me into re-think the potential of the work within a context of political intensity. It is an interesting thought that if that had not happened I may not have considered the political dimensions of the work. It is not lost on me that it turns out that there was only a brief period in time when it was possible to make this work. In Autumn 2014 the Teatro Valle Bene Comune were forced out of the theater by the new major of Rome. Although there are plans to sustain the organization its true to say it now hangs in the balance. So, if I had gone to Rome earlier or was arriving now it would not have been possible to make this work.

**LS:** *What's next?*

**AMC:** While researching the *Treatment for Six Characters* I also began to study the later stagings of *Six Characters* and have now come to the conclusion that *Treatment for Six Characters* will now be part of a larger project for me. As I said I originally went out to

Rome to draw Pirandello's film, which has been happening, but I will now also make a final work which takes another evening and another staging of *Six Characters* as its subject; just after its Rome premiere *Six Characters* went onto premiere in the UK, in a theatre in Holborn, London in the hands of an avant-garde Russian director fresh from the Russian Revolution. This Russian Director, Fyodor Kommissarzhevky was also a colleague of Stanislavski, he was at this time an important advocate of Stanislavski 's ideas, namely the invention of what would later become Method Acting, when the line between actor and character took on new implications. That theatre no longer exists, although the site does. So eventually I intend that my version of *Treatment for Six Characters*, the drawn version, & that final Holborn work will form a kind of triptych.

**LS:** *Thank you for your thoughtfulness, I look forward to your upcoming projects.*



*Treatment for Six Characters*

Photo courtesy of Anne-Marie Creamer

Special thanks to the Teatro Valle Bene Comune



*Treatment for Six Characters*

Photo courtesy of Anne-Marie Creamer

Special thanks to the Teatro Valle Bene Comune



*Treatment for Six Characters*

Photo courtesy of Anne-Marie Creamer

Special thanks to the Teatro Valle Bene Comune



## PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

### ***Tonight We Improvise* in Providence, Translated and Directed by Rebecca Maxfield (Empire Black Box, Providence, March 7-9, 2014)**

ANNA SANTUCCI  
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Concerning Pirandello's trilogy of "theater within the theater," Roberto Alonge has argued that its meta-theatrical discourse is inevitably out of date because of its intrinsic historical relativity (25). If this is true, then one should conclude that *Tonight We Improvise* cannot avoid being staged as a period piece; yet there is also another solution: staging fully fledged adaptations that include reflections on its meta-theatrical discourse and appropriate such discourse so that it is meaningful to a given historical and geographical context. Interestingly enough, Rebecca Maxfield's *Tonight We Improvise* did not fit into either of these two categories; it was neither a period piece nor a contemporary adaptation, but a mixture of the two.

Her *Tonight We Improvise* was staged in Providence on March 7th-9th 2014, at the 95 Empire Black Box Theater; it was "her" *Tonight* indeed, since Maxfield adapted and translated the text, directed the play, and cast herself as the director of the play within the play. *Tonight We Improvise* questions and blurs the boundaries between fiction and reality, and investigates the nature of art and its relation to life. The staging of a piece like this, so dense with meta-discourse and with reflections on the role of the artist in general, and of the actor and the director in particular, is particularly challenging. In this case, the main challenge related to one of the central themes of the play, the conflict between the author of the dramatic text and the director of the play, since they were conflated in the same person: strictly speaking, Maxfield was herself the author of the piece she directed, as she translated and heavily shortened the text. I found it surprising, therefore, that her extremely abridged prologue only very briefly mentioned the discussion about the role of the dramatic author; the within-the-play director's discourse on the elimination of the author could

have been fertile terrain for an introspective analysis of Maxfield's own choices and multiple roles of translator and director.

Pirandello's ironic characterization of the director of the play within the play was also somewhat reduced in Maxfield's version, since her script featured no Dr. Hinkfuss. The director of the play within the play was in this case "Rebecca"; that is, Maxfield decided to share with her actors the fate of having one's real name woven into the play: as the real-life actors lent their names to the Actor-characters (as Pirandello's text directs), also she, the real-life director, lent her name to the Director-character she played. Casting herself in that role, however, had significant implications in terms of the alteration of Pirandello's discourse on the author/director conflict, which was in fact quite effaced.

This is not to say that one necessarily has to be "faithful" to the meaning infused into the text by its original author; the concept of "fidelity" has been discredited by many adaptation scholars (Hutcheon 2006; Sanders 2006). Texts, in the broadest sense of the word, that derive or have been inspired by other texts are not secondary or derivative; rather, they deserve to be evaluated and appreciated as independent artistic objects. Indeed, a certain degree of "palimpsestic" nature is inherent in any work of art, since its production is inevitably influenced by the cultural milieu of its author and its reception is inevitably shaped by the cultural milieu of its consumers (Genette 1997). Moreover, as Pirandello himself believed, fidelity in the dramatic creation is inherently impossible (see his essay, "Illustratori, attori e traduttori"). Like any artistic appropriation, therefore, the staging of a play does not necessarily need to be faithful to the original text; rather, it should constitute an independent and coherent discourse that originates from such a text.

Some of the reductions that Maxfield applied to the script were probably dictated by cast restrictions; these were very skillfully handled and unproblematic: in her version, Mommina had two sisters instead of three, the officers that hang out with the La Croce daughters were two instead of five, and secondary characters like the cabaret costumers were absent. Yet other reductions she made were more substantial. In her prologue, for example, the Director provided no introduction to the action nor any information about the Sicilian setting of the play within the play; this was particularly surprising considering that her

text was a translation meant for an American audience, which would have greatly benefited from being offered some cultural background. Some spectators might have been disoriented by the fact that no mention of Sicily was made until well into the scene in which Verri bursts into the La Croce living room while the La Croce sisters are performing *Il Trovatore*.

Of course, another problem one has to face when appropriating *Tonight We Improvise* relates to the dense cultural references, as melodrama and opera—and *Il Trovatore* in particular—play a crucial part in the play within the play. In her version, Maxfield kept intact the *Trovatore* intertext of the play within the play, but using English lyrics. At the same time, she decided to modernize the language and the cultural references of the frame level, that is, of the lines spoken by the Actor-characters. For example, she has them address each other and the Director by their first names, rather than by last name. The original has the Leading Actor saying to Hinkfuss: “This cursed theater of yours, God damn it to hell!” (as translated by Campbell and Sbrocchi, p. 91; Pirandello’s Italian reads: “[il] suo maledetto teatro che Dio lo sprofondi!”, p. 124). Maxfield translated this line as “you and your fucking theater!” Including such modernizations in her translation showed Maxfield’s attention towards bridging the temporal gap dividing Pirandello’s original text and her own audience. Yet her choice of modernizing the frame but not the play within the play also had the effect of creating a temporal and geographical separation between the two fictional levels of the play. The consequence was that the three-way intersection created by Pirandello (reality/frame play/play within the play), was substituted in Maxfield’s version by a two-layer discourse; all the linguistic, cultural and temporal references that “sounded old and Italian” related to the play within the play, while the frame level was conflated with the reality. Her rendition therefore interpreted the play within the play as a “period piece,” shifting the temporal gap that exists between today and Pirandello’s time, and replacing it between the frame of the play and the play within the play. This allowed for the exposure of the staging machinery of the “within the play” play, but hid the one of the frame; the choice therefore enhanced the conflation between real life and the frame, but reduced the one between the frame and the play within the play.

The biggest challenge of staging a play like *Tonight We Improvise* in a different period from the one in which it was written is figuring out how to render its experimental dimension. A 2014 version of the play needs to toy with 2014 conventions as Pirandello's text toyed with the conventions of his time, especially on a formal level. Maxfield strived to achieve this in several ways; for example, she successfully employed lights and music in lieu of the gong and curtain cues. Moreover, the black-box space where the play was performed implicitly encouraged the kind of theatrical experimentation that adapting Pirandello calls for. The theater's physical space and its implementation on the different levels of narration is one of the issues at the heart of *Tonight We Improvise*; for this reason, I was a little disappointed with the cut of the scene at the opera theater in Maxfield's version; that is the scene that most invites re-shaping in terms of adapting this play to another place and another time.

The black-box space was used very efficiently, though a little more classically than I was expecting. I particularly appreciated the way in which the action was specifically tied to the black-box space in the scene in which the actors throw the director out of the theater. Instead of pushing her out through the door from which the audience came in, which leads to a small foyer, the actors pushed Maxfield through the emergency exit on the side of the performance space; the scene was particularly effective, since it was afternoon and the light of day came through the doors and flooded the dimly lit black box. For just a second, the real world out there pierced the performance bubble, and the audience could glimpse the astonished director standing out there on the sidewalk before the door slammed close. The astonishment was performed, of course, but the reality of the sidewalk outside did contribute to the scene quite positively. This breaking of a "third wall," so to speak, was a welcome addition to the exquisitely Pirandellian, yet no longer so unconventional, breaking of the fourth wall.

As regards the acting, I did not always agree with the excessively stagey way in which some of the within-the-play characters were played. When staging *Tonight We Improvise* the real-life actors have to constantly shift between their Actor-characters and their within-the-play characters; depending on how good an actor they consider their Actor-characters to be, there

is definitely room for ironic performance in certain scenes. Indeed, Maxfield's crew did repeatedly provoke laughter in the audience; yet the laughter should have stopped during the final part of Sampognetta's death scene, in which the tone of the original text changes drastically when, by describing how his death scene *was supposed to be*, the Old Comic Actor actually performs it. However, the play did feature some very talented actors: Stuart Wilson (Mr. La Croce) and Audrey Del Prete (Mommina La Croce) stood out in particular.

I especially appreciated the repeated hints at the illusionary nature of the meta-theatrical construction: the transition scene in which Mrs. Ignazia and her younger daughters, on stage, put make-up on Mommina's face and dress her for the final scene was staged very effectively, as was the last scene, in which the Leading Actress/Mommina (at this point, any distinction between the Actor-characters and the within-the-play characters is gone) "created" her walls by simply accompanying with a gesture her delivery of the words: "This is a wall! This is a wall! This is a wall!" The final sequence was excellent: the actors' movements ran extremely smoothly and their dramatic performance completely engaged the audience. Finally, Maxfield also made justice to Pirandello's anti-climatic conclusion, which throws the audience back into the real world without any forewarning.

Overall, this was a very interesting contribution to Providence's theater scene. I would maybe have preferred different choices here and there; but then again, Pirandello had already warned us: each one of us lends life to art in our own, individual way, which is why no illustration, no translation, and no staging created by others will ever be able to compete with our own interpretation ("Illustratori..." 99-100). This was Maxfield's interpretation; it was her *Tonight We Improvise* and her actors', and it was a very enjoyable performance of an extremely subtle play that is definitely not staged often enough, especially in the United States.

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**Reality Theater: Staging Film in the University of  
Notre Dame's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*  
(Patricia George Decio Theatre, University of Notre Dame,  
Nov. 5-9, 2014)**

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The Father [*with dignity, but not offended*]. A character, sir, may always ask a man who he is. Because a character has a life of his own, no matter how twisted or terrible; for which reason he is always "somebody." But a man—I'm not speaking of you now—but a man may very well be "nobody" at all. (Vassel, 53)

Patrick Vassel's adaptation of Pirandello's seminal drama, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, could not help but blur notions of art and identity. Adapted specifically for its University of Notre Dame audience, Pirandello's classic narrative of disjointed familial ties and the drama of identity and representation met its perfect modern counterpart: reality TV. Not just any reality TV, but "The Irish Bachelor," a staged, mock-version of Notre Dame's very own student run "Irish Bachelorette" that ran the previous fall 2013.

Within this university performance of Pirandello's dramatic masterpiece, Vassel succeeds in foregrounding—however tragically—the playwright's larger artistic project of defining and negotiating the modern identity. Thematically, he does this by exploring the relationship between "life" and "form." A man's "life" is ever-changing, dynamic, and open to re-conceptualize itself at any new moment or decision. His "form" is static, a historical definition of identity, the "character" expected to interact with the world around him in particular ways. The conflict of life and form plays out on three levels in the play: the level of Pirandello's characters and their human narratives, the level of the fictional recreation of Notre Dame students as reality-TV actors, and the level of the "real" life of the Notre Dame audience.

As an initial complication, the on-stage cast is composed of students "playing" themselves as Notre Dame students within

this filmed romantic reality TV show. If its status as a “reality” TV show were not enough to communicate Pirandello’s love of confusing the many valences of personal, social, and performed identities, all of the characters of “The Irish Bachelor” and their production crew use their real-life names as their stage names. Reality TV becomes “reality theater,” producing the double irony of real Notre Dame students playing a “character” of themselves in a play in which this character is asked to play a scripted version of itself for the reality show, with the double pretense of being authentic.

The audience is introduced to Mary, the inquisitive and often confrontational student from the local all-girls university, Saint Mary’s College. She acts as the romantic competitor of Elizabeth, an uptight and competitive student from Notre Dame. Both vie for the heart of Phil, the confident baseball player and Notre Dame bachelor, while the audience sees the scripting and on-stage management of the production staff that surrounds them. Patrick Vassel mentioned in a personal interview that one of the great artistic challenges and satisfactions of adapting *Six Characters* was watching the actors engage for an entire week before rehearsals with the script and their characters, setting the groundwork for the contemporary dialogue with Pirandello that would continue on stage.

What continues to fascinate audiences, for Vassel, is Pirandello’s continual relevance to questions about the human condition: “One of the things about him that I think continues to resonate [...] is that very few of the questions that he posed, and that he was grappling within his work, have been answered [...] and honestly a lot of them don’t really have answers, and he knew that when he was asking them. But I think that’s why he is such a compelling figure and someone [...] we keep coming back to.” Vassel also emphasized the many “transformations of art” unique to Pirandello’s legacy. Such perennial questions cannot but jump off of the page and transform into a new, complex conversation when embodied in contemporary characters on stage and on the camera.

Thus in its staging, the Notre Dame *Six Characters* is self-consciously technological with its use of on-stage mounted and hand-held video cameras. These cameras feed footage to one TV monitor on stage and two TVs on the walls bookending the stage.

A full light board is present on stage, with calls for stage manager Dylan to fix the multiple, unexpected Pirandellian blackouts that interrupt the action, and synchronized house lights which shift throughout the play from warm, bright lights to the blues, greens, and harsh whites of the final scenes. From the beginning of the show, amidst the many Notre Dame references and inside jokes that would permeate the play, the audience itself is addressed formally by one of the production assistants, Fo. To participate fully in the live filming of the season finale, Fo points out the three dramatic signs that will light up for audience participation throughout the filming, which invite the instant responses of "Awwww," "Laughter," and "Applause."

The filmic element further allows for interesting off-stage and pre-filmed footage, e.g. Mary and Elizabeth's interviews off-stage concerning Phil and the finale, a still-life of the six Characters staring back at the audience and uncertainly at each other, black-and-white footage of elementary school children as a backdrop for the Stepdaughter's own troubled childhood narrative, and home-videos of Phil, the bachelor, himself for the reality TV audience to enjoy.

However, the on-stage filmic elements are the most fascinating. By means of the close-up cameras, the audience members watching the monitors assume visually that close-up point of view. In this way, they are invited to imagine themselves onto the stage they see before their eyes, confronting personally not only the Notre Dame actors and the family of Characters but also the Producer himself. Thus the audience is torn between two different perspectives of viewing the same experience, one theatrical and the other filmic. Between controlled signals to "awwwww," laugh, and applaud, and this new framing of close-up shots of particular dramas within the whole scene, the audience is invited to enter the drama in a self-aware manner and become its own "character" in the play.

In these unique ways Pirandello's tragic narrative is contextualized in the contemporary theater. What results, very much like the many levels of Dante's *Inferno*, is a new, technological recording of the conflicting and wounded narratives of Pirandello's fictive family. And by the end of the play, if the audience did not already think they were implicated as a distinct part of the drama, the characters ensure it in leaving the stage

and entering the space of the audience. Carrying the limp bodies of the dead Boy, who shoots himself, and his sister, the Girl who drowns just moments before, the Father leaves the audience with the haunting lines: "Reality, sir? This is reality." In this way Pirandello and Vassel slowly coax the audience into assuming an active role in making Pirandello's theater into a "reality," now as caught up in the drama and confused as the Characters who begged for its resolution to begin with.

### **Work Cited**

*Six Characters in Search of an Author: A Comedy in the Making.* By Luigi Pirandello. Adaptation by Dir. Patrick Vassel. Text adapted from the Edward Storer English translation. Patricia George Decio Theatre, Debartolo Performing Arts Center. Notre Dame, IN. 5-9 Nov., 2014. Performance.





***Six Characters in Brooklyn***  
(Theatre de la Ville at BAM, Oct. 29-Nov. 2, 2014)

**SUZANNE EPSTEIN**

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Theatre de la Ville's production of *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, directed by Emmanuel Demarcy-Mota, came to the Brooklyn Academy of Music last 29 October-2 November 2014. Demarcy-Mota, artistic director of the Theatre de la Ville in Paris since 2008, has reprised his 2001 production of Pirandello's classic play. This production is part of a long collaboration between Demarcy-Mota and author and translator Francois Regnault to bring classic and contemporary texts to the French stage. Since 1994, they have collaborated and brought to fruition the works of Georg Büchner, Bertolt Brecht, Shakespeare and Pirandello.

This production was performed in French with simultaneous translation on a screen placed above the stage. However, the speed at which the actors spoke and the complexity of their dialogue did not make it easy for an American audience to follow the play. Even this reviewer's fluent French could not always keep up with the rapidity of the actors' delivery. However, there was, at times, an almost sensuous delight in hearing the actors deliver Pirandello's text in a turbulent stream of words and phrases, as if the delivery was more important than the character's emotional state. It is the text and the pleasure of hearing it that matters here.

There is a theatrical style in much of contemporary French theater that works very well with *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, one in which theater is a literary event; the actors are less living personalities but rather channels through which exquisite monologues and stories are expressed. This 2001 Theatre de la Ville production adheres very much to this particular tradition—the play and its language are central, and the actors' craft is less so. The French translation and the direction underscore Pirandello's theme that the characters are not ghosts but "created realities" (Bentley 9), who in their search to exist are an embodiment of literature. The actors tended to rush through their monologues

and keep an unrelenting energy throughout the play, but, as an audience member, one wished at times for a few still or silent moments just to catch one's breath.

What was different in this production is the constant movement of the objects on stage. The actors, the stagehands, even the six literary characters are constantly moving chairs, hats and objects. This perpetual series of tasks and movement created an atmosphere of theatrical structure and an absence of structure at the same time. A chair is a chair but when moved somewhere else on the stage it might be something other. None of it feels chaotic throughout the production but in close adherence to Pirandello's text there is also no fixed representation of what is true. Eric Bentley describes in his introduction to the English translation "the apparent disorder of *Six Characters* is really a new and different form of order" (Bentley xvi). The poignant dialogue between the father (Hugues Quester) and the director (Alain Libolt) best illustrates this when they challenge each other's version of reality. The father cries out, "Ours [reality] does not change, it cannot ever change or be otherwise because it is already fixed, it is what it is, forever—a terrible thing sir—an immutable reality" (Bentley 61).

From the opening moment the stage lighting dominates the production. The lighting design by Yves Collet (who also designed the set) moves back and forth between the play rehearsed by the "real actors" to that of the six characters, who are bathed in a light that seems to float in time and space. At times the actors take second stage to the *mise en scene*. The light, the use of moving objects, coats floating upwards, and trees dangling in space make this particular production more of a visual interpretation of the characters search for some sort of reality, some sort of concrete existence. It is the direction, combined with the set design that brings to life this lack of tangible existence for the characters. Even the reality of the so-called real actors is subject to question in a set that is in constant movement or floating in space. This is best seen when the characters and the actors all hang their hats and coats on invisible hooks in order to make Madam Pace (Céline Carrère) appear. The hats and coats are suspended in air for a moment, and then fly up through the air and hang over the stage for the duration of Madam Pace's scene. It is a delectable moment of the magic of theater.



*Six Characters in Search of an Author* at BAM  
Photo Credit: Richard Termine

Even though the French actors are gifted and the *mise en scene* is quite beautiful and intriguing, there is a feeling of rushing throughout the play. There is also a high level of energy that begins from the moment the production starts and never seems to calm down. Almost from the moment the six characters appear on stage there is an urgency and a delivery style that does not allow the audience to enter into the action or even feel the confusion of the play's narrative. It is this confusion that is so very important to the melodrama of Pirandello's play, as the director, the actors and the audience are all called upon to ask themselves if this is reality or fiction. In the play's climax, where the boy and the girl, each in turn dies, the horror and confusion is hard to feel in any depth, as the scene arrives rapidly and proceeds at great speed.

All in all, this production by Theatre de la Ville is an intriguing interpretation of Pirandello's best-known play. The visual atmosphere shaped by the lighting design and the *mise en scene* balances the fast pace. It is also a treasure to have foreign language theater productions produced here in the United States, giving American audiences the opportunity to reflect on how Pirandello sounds and lives in other languages.

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***Mattia Pascal: The Man Who Lived*—A Multi-vocal  
Exploration of Pirandello's Anti-novel  
(St. Leonard's Church, Shoreditch, London, October 22-26,  
2014)**

**KRYSTA DENNIS**  
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*Mattia Pascal: The Man Who Lived*, a devised performance or “multi-vocal composition,” by Maria Gaitanidi and the Raw Material Ensemble, draws its subject matter from Pirandello’s novel, *Il fu Mattia Pascal*. The production is a far cry from *Liolà*, Pirandello’s own theatrical adaptation of the novel. Gone is the light-hearted anarchy of *Liolà*’s non-traditional lifestyle; the focus here is on the existential anguish that comes with being (or not being) Mattia Pascal. In the way that Pirandello’s *Il fu Mattia Pascal* functions as an anti-novel, *Mattia Pascal: The Man Who Lived* performs as an anti-drama. While *Liolà* is based entirely upon events that occur in chapter four of *Il fu Mattia Pascal* (which are briefly summarized in narrative form at the beginning of *Mattia Pascal: The Man Who Lived*), this incarnation of the story seeks not to represent a part or even a whole of the novel, but to embody the complex web of Pascal’s life/lives. The production situates itself within the framework of the post-dramatic, presenting a multi-faceted dialogic relationship between past and present, reality and representation, self and perceived-self. It presents multiple and easily displaced identities that function within a shifting narrative in time and space, and reflects a palimpsestuous intertextuality.

The Raw Material ensemble (composed of Maria Gaitanidi, Mark Edel-Hunt, Valeria Rinaldi, Agne Nemanyte, and Raymonda Pravertas) claims to make work using solely *raw materials*:

The occupation of found and/or non-theatrical spaces, the simple being and organic presence of the performers, the literary analysis of texts without imposing an exterior vision, the use of what is present in the moment of performing and which might have not been premeditated (objects, people, situations, etc).  
(Raw Material Profile)

The ensemble do so in this case by situating the action of the production within the confines of St Leonard's Church in Shoreditch, London. The location becomes a major player in the action in its own right: the church both dictates the limitations placed on the performers as well as provides creative material with which to work. The performers draw chalk patterns on the stone floors, hurl apples along the aisles, turn out all of the lights, threaten to damage the church, and utilize the acoustics to manipulate the sounds of their voices. The outside sounds of busy Shoreditch High Street permeate the peaceful interior, with street sounds of engines revving, cars honking, and people shouting. It is cold in the church, and the performers acknowledge this, at the same time acknowledging the presence of the audience. A performer states: "You look cold Alessandro. Where are you from? Yes, it is much colder here than in Sicily." The location itself is also in dialogue with the location of the narrator/protagonist in Pirandello's novel: Mattia Pascal writes as the librarian of a crumbling library in a deconsecrated church.

In the performance, Mattia Pascal exists both in the time in which Pirandello wrote him as well as in the now. He encounters Sicilian peasants, self-aware contemporary women, and even Vladimir Putin. He exists in a time in which he could disappear to a different town after a body was found and presumed to be his, yet he also exists in a globalized world in which there are easy encounters with people from different nations. Mattia Pascal exists as Mattia Pascal, Italian peasant, Hadrian/Adriano Meis, and as actor Mark Edel-Hunt, who appears occasionally through the holes in the fabric of the character(s). Another company member asks him: "You're not a real Londoner, are you?" To which he responds: "Eight years. I have been in London for eight years." Raw Material explains that this element of the performer peeking out from behind the character is a result of "a unique acting process where the performer's self becomes matter for art." The company supports this performative choice by identifying "the performer as creator, as the canal (intermediary) between aesthetic and philosophical ideas and the world we live in, at the centre of our work." (Program Notes)

Mattia Pascal takes a multi-vocal approach to gender as well: the women in Mattia Pascal's life are both objectified and objectifiers. We are told that Mattia Pascal has impregnated two

different women, and we see him mistreat a number of them, including one female character who finds herself humiliated with her eyes closed and an apple core in her mouth. As Mattia Pascal walks away from her, he responds to his own earlier question to her, “Are you an idiot?” by saying: “You sure look like an idiot.” Mattia Pascal does not, however, objectify women as a rule—his identity is far too bifurcated for that. He struggles somewhat with the lines between representation and reality, coming into a church and finding a woman standing at the altar intoning a prayer, he assumes her to be a lady priest. She reacts with some confusion, stating that she is only there saying a prayer out to the church; this does not mean that she is a priest. Later, her gender becomes irrelevant as she dons a coat and becomes Vladimir Putin. The women also objectify Mattia Pascal, putting him up for auction. “Who wants a bad man?” the auctioneer asks, “he has no job, he has gotten two different women pregnant, his mother was a saint, and he will treat you badly.” With a healthy dose of irony, the women react with delight, the amount of lira they are willing to pay for Mattia Pascal mounting and mounting, each woman hoping to be the one to be mistreated by him. This implies an interesting ownership over both the man and the destiny that awaits the woman attached to him.

Raw Material’s adaptation of *Mattia Pascal* does make one significant connection to Pirandello’s *Liola*, and this is a linguistic one. Pirandello originally wrote *Liola* in the Sicilian dialect of the region in which the action takes place, and *Mattia Pascal* also makes a point of being true to dialect(s). The ensemble, an international group, including Italian, Russian, Lithuanian, and British company members, perform in their own “authentic” dialects. Performers speak their text as if it were spontaneous, sometimes searching or appearing to search for a translation for an Italian word into English, mispronouncing a word (rebel, for example, used as a noun but pronounced as a verb), and making the minor errors of grammar and syntax that constitute the performers’ own voices. The text does not feel as if it has been learned; it feels as if it is being spontaneously generated in the space due to this adherence to personal speech patterns. Mattia Pascal, with his trained actor’s English accent, is the one who seems as if he has planned his words, with the others taking part in spontaneous situations that appear around him. This approach is in stark contrast to the

one taken with *Liolà* at the National Theatre in November 2013, reviewed by Jane House in volume XXVI of *PSA* (2013, 115-20). In that performance, the Sicilian peasants (for their activities, names, and places did not change) all spoke with Irish accents.<sup>1</sup> This imposition of one nation's peasantry upon another seemed heavy-handed and baffling, due to the strict naturalism to which the rest of the production adhered. But in the world of *Mattia Pascal: The Man Who Lived*, a world of multiple and competing narratives, it seems only natural for the voices in dialogue to be the performers own, international voices, more capable of asking, in a globalized context, what is/are the identity/ies of Mattia Pascal.

*Mattia Pascal: The Man Who Lived* is perspicacious, complex, and finely tuned, but, as can sometimes be the case with palimpsestuous post-dramatic work, it is somewhat inaccessible. It is self-reflexively aware of this inaccessibility, but it remains insular, sometimes linguistically, and often topically. For those audience members familiar with Pirandello's novel *Il fu Mattia Pascal* and the play *Liolà*, there are more channels of accessibility and more available tools for meaning-making; however there is a risk that those who are unfamiliar with Mattia Pascal's journey might become lost along the way. We are told at the beginning that nothing is certain, nothing but the fact that the man we see before us is Mattia Pascal, though even that may not be certain. This uncertainty is the foundation upon which *Mattia Pascal: The Man Who Lived* is built. Adding yet another voice and developing a more significant dialogue with Pirandello's *Liolà* might have imbued the production with the humour *Liolà* so effortlessly embodies and delivered the production to a more accessible plane for audience members. However, the deconstructive framework, within which *Mattia Pascal: The Man Who Lived* functions, is certainly a logical one with which to approach the anti-novel. By working within this framework, Raw Material has made an appropriate and effective choice for the production.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Translator Tanya Ronder explains this rather jarring choice: "Richard Eyre knew immediately that he wanted to cast the play with Irish actors for the premiere production at the National Theatre London. Not to transplant the play to Ireland, but to give us the sound of a forgotten community somewhere on the West coast while still placing it in

rural Sicily. Besides the transferable characteristics—Catholicism (albeit Pirandello’s Sicily having a more relaxed form) a tradition of singing, women working, talking, getting by as best they can—the Irishness gave us the earth, heat, and tongue which would be all but buried in an English counterpart” (Pirandello 9).

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## BOOK REVIEWS

**Alessandra Sorrentino.** *Luigi Pirandello e l'altro. Una lettura critica postcoloniale.* Carocci Editore: Roma, 2013. Pp.142. €15.00.

**Lisa Sarti**

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A much-needed volume in Pirandello studies, Alessandra Sorrentino's *Luigi Pirandello e l'altro* positions the Sicilian writer within post-colonial discourse and arguments about national identity construction. The poststructuralist approach allows Sorrentino to investigate the Southern Question before, during, and after the Unification of Italy (1861), as well as Pirandello's stand in the Risorgimento debate. Sorrentino deconstructs the historical argument involving the politically and socially fragmented new Kingdom of Italy, while exploring how Pirandello recoiled from simplistic dichotomies between the South, in this case Sicily, and the Italian peninsula.

Sorrentino's three sections are divided into focused sub-chapters chronicling the methodology and application of colonial studies, detailing the history of the Italian Unification, and deconstructing Pirandello's critique of a fixed construct of reality. This broad and interdisciplinary approach to post-colonialism seems intended to break away from the conservatism of traditional scholarship (pp. 15-18), advancing instead a dialogue with more recent *Kulturwissenschaften* (cultural studies).

Although Chapter 1 does not appear as fundamental to these broader aims because of its summary structure, Chapters 2 and 3 are probing and rich in theoretical argument. Here, Sorrentino clarifies how post-colonial theory applies to Sicily, notwithstanding the fact that the island was not colonized. Scholars often treated Southern Italy in isolation, feeding the stereotype legacy that conditioned—and still conditions—historical, political, and social debate. Building on Jane Schneider's *Italy's Southern Question: Orientalism in One Country* (1998) and Nelson Moe's *The View From Vesuvius. Italian Culture and the Southern Question* (2002),

Sorrentino discusses the idea of the South as a racialized “other.” Opposite points of the peninsula could validate their *raison d’être* only in their alterity.

In Chapter 2 we see how literature nourished the imaginary definition of the South through the lens of the North. Foreign and Italian narrators tended to belittle the South for its lack of civilization and industrialization in comparison with a technically superior North. The resulting rhetoric relied on a number of metaphors. Attentive to them, Sorrentino observes that even political documents employed clichéd and offensive vocabulary, as when the Minister of Internal Affairs, Farini, wrote to Cavour condemning the “barbarian” attitude of the inhabitants of Molise, who he claimed were not even “worth” being compared to African Bedouins (41-42). Sorrentino invokes Irish historian Lucy Riall to denounce the portrayal of the island as impenetrable, holed up in an irrevocable backwardness that even hampered military imposition of law and order. By reinforcing the misconception of Sicily as gangland, the government was able to justify armed violence aiming at purging the South of its alleged rampant criminality, so-called *brigantaggio*. Sorrentino points out how new historiography, especially that emerging from John Dickie’s *Cosa Nostra: A History of the Sicilian Mafia* (2004), viewed banditry as a revolution against the state’s incapacity to keep its promises, rather than a criminal act *per se*. Government attempts to quell rebellion in the South endorsed the arrogant power of Northern emissaries over submissive Southerners.

Considering the years following WWII, Sorrentino proposes that the time is ripe to change research parameters and overcome the comparative/opposite logic of the North/South debate. Such an approach overlooks how cultural diversity is vital to the construction of self-identity. Sorrentino praises 1980s “revisionism” as the initial remedy to a tainted image of the South. Looking back into Marta Petrusiewicz’s research (1989), Sorrentino reminds us how Sicily at the dawn of the Unification could still count on agricultural assets that were anything but underdeveloped. It was the post-unitary campaign, with its aggressive and conforming propaganda, that fueled the South’s homologation to the new industrialized asset of the country. Violence and extreme measures endorsed stereotypes that emerged essentially for political reasons.

This volume follows Alberto Banti’s *La nazione del Risorgimento* (2000) in aiming to rediscover the “Risorgimento

Canon." Opera, historical novels, narrative, and the visual arts transfused ideals and the national sentiment that grounded a new idea of homeland. Far from an elite movement, the Risorgimento ignited the masses and gave birth to a new moral rhetoric and mythology of fearless heroes. Sorrentino demonstrates how the critique of the binary logic tarnishing the relationship between the North and the South applies to ongoing bias among Pirandello scholars. How are we to interpret his art through the rule of binary opposites? The contrast between art and life, being and appearance, and the titanic fight of the spiritual soul against the positivist soul all appear to be ephemeral categories.

Sorrentino points out how in Pirandello the positivist attitude is overturned by his fascination with changeability. She effectively analyzes his "Sicilian narrative," novels and short stories in which the island's otherness becomes the ideal ambience—a sort of quintessential *third space*—hosting protagonists in search of themselves, hybrid souls that do not fit in the rigid categorization of binary opposites. We are invited to read the Pirandellian character as a multiple subject engaged in the continuous search of that *je ne sais quoi*, the uncertain element that Michael Rössner calls *différance* (55).

It is incommunicability, however, that triggers Sorrentino's analysis of Pirandello's dislike for language, a defective category incapable of conveying understanding. Indeed, Vitangelo Moscarda laments precisely this illusion of comprehension: "We thought we could understand each other, but we did not understand each other at all" ["Abbiamo creduto di intenderci e non ci siamo intesi affatto"].<sup>1</sup> Only humor can rescue the characters, allowing them to inhabit a liminal space of constant negotiation with the surrounding world. Little wonder that the love for "his" Sicily motivated Pirandello to use fiction to investigate the Southern condition and the political forces fueling its isolation.

The point also applies to the novel *I vecchi e i giovani*, which Sorrentino aims to rescue from Romano Luperini's severe criticism of its uncertain historical and political underpinnings. The leading theme in the novel is certainly disillusion at a failed Risorgimento; however, as Renato Barilli argued, we should not disregard a psychoanalytic re-reading of the characters' "subconscious motivations" (58) ["motivazioni inconscie"]. It is out of their voices, in fact, that Sorrentino's "contro-storia"

appears clear.

More than a mere literary device, Pirandello sets the historical discourse as the background for his rebellious characters. They do not recount what “official” history hands down, but their own story, their own truth—the indignation that Sorrentino traces in the anger of Caterina Auriti, the character representative of “a whole generation of patriots” (62) [“di un’intera generazione di patrioti”]. In her carefully reasoned argument, the characters emerge as living at the threshold of two clashing cultures, inhabitants of a *third space* that is deeply ambiguous and problematic.

They cannot but come to terms with the new ideals, as they suffocate the old ones. Their only way out is to go along with the times: a new rhetoric is simply replacing the other. Sorrentino is right in claiming that Lando, the hero, is no one but the witness to “historical necessities” (71) [“necessità storiche”] that function in politics. Pirandello’s novel itself is a love letter to Sicily, aiming to give his island back that “dignity to be narrated of which official history had deprived it” (74) [“la dignità di essere narrata che la storia ufficiale le aveva tolto”].

Chapter 3 also explores Pirandello’s short stories, from “Lontano” and “Donna Mimma” to “Zafferanetta,” “Lumie di Sicilia,” “La verità,” and others. The analysis here no longer turns on the conflict between historical truth and the deceptiveness of the Risorgimento rhetoric. “Lontano,” for instance, speaks of the constant negotiation experienced by individuals living in-between, torn apart by two different cultures. Sorrentino points out the Norwegian sailor Lars’s incapability to go back to Norway, despite his distaste for Sicilian customs. She re-elaborates the *mimicry* Lars experiences when he attempts his integration with the local Sicilian community. She builds on the work of Homi Bhabha, who is also mentioned in her overview on post-colonial theory in Chapter 1. However, she simply states that Lars “experiences a splitting of the Ego as intended by Homi Bhabha and not Sigmund Freud” [“vive una scissione dell’io, nel senso in cui la intende Homi Bhabha e non Sigmund Freud”]. This moment might warrant a more elaborate critique, making use of Bhabha’s vision of *mimicry* as “constructed around an ambivalence,” as he expresses it in his seminal essay, *Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse*.<sup>2</sup>

This rather thin contextualization to her analysis of “Lontano” occurs repeatedly in Chapter 3, and this is the only shadow that falls on Sorrentino’s otherwise luminous book. Rather than merging all the theoretical contributions made to post-colonial studies in Chapter 1, Sorrentino’s argument might have benefited from putting them to work in her analysis of Pirandello’s narrative practice. After all, what is the point of mentioning in the preliminary chapter the relevant concepts brought to the post-colonial critique by the “holy trinity,” Said-Spivak-Bhabha, if they are not then problematized beyond their theoretical boundaries? A similar approach would have spared Chapter 1 from appearing like a summary of post-colonial studies, a précis detached from the broad scope of the volume, and the most seminal names in the 1960s colonial debate (Foucault, Derrida, and Lacan) from being confined to a footnote on page 20.

Sorrentino’s *Luigi Pirandello e l’altro* is a challenging volume that commendably questions the logic of binary opposites and the dialectics of political struggle. Sorrentino is motivated by the Pirandellian belief that a single truth does not exist. Thus, what she offers is an impressive, multifaceted representation of post-unitary history, which is nothing but a partial interpretation of events, subjective and debatable as it can be. This book shows how we can continue to gain new and enriching insights by working through multiple disciplines and interpretations, and Sorrentino’s pages benefit from the tension generated by differences in culture. This remains the book’s true gift, to be valued and preserved.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Luigi Pirandello, *Uno, nessuno e centomila*, p. 769.

<sup>2</sup> Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” p.86.

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**Michael Rössner and Alessandra Sorrentino, eds.**  
*Pirandello e la traduzione culturale [Pirandello and Cultural Translation].* Rome: Carocci Editore, 2012.  
Pp. 190. €20.00.

**MICHAEL SUBLIALKA**

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This volume on the relationship between Pirandello's works and recent theories of cultural translation collects seventeen essays, all in Italian, that were given as papers at a 2011 conference of the same title sponsored by the Europäisches Pirandello Zentrum e.V, held in Munich (22–24 November). These essays use theories of cultural translation to re-read Pirandello's works and reception, and the volume is broken into three sections based on the methodological approaches adopted by each essay.

In the first section, the authors examine how theories of translation emerge from and can be applied to Pirandello's works, including: how cultural misunderstanding and communicative failure relate to Pirandello's poetics of subjectivity (Paola Casella, "Comunicare per cenni e per parole" (17-26)), the relationship between translation and comprehension in Pirandello's theory and practice (Michael Rössner, "Pirandello, la traduzione e la comprensione" (27-36)), *Six Characters* as a "primary translation" influencing the German literary polysystem (Fausto De Michele, "Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore nel polisistema letterario di lingua tedesca" (37-45)), the humorous role of linguistic and gestural tics in the short stories (Bart Van den Bossche, "Differenze linguistiche nelle novelle di Pirandello" (47-55)), the reader's role as translator (František Hruška, "Tradurre e interpretare" (57-64)), and the role of critics of *The Late Mattia Pascal* as translators (Johannes Thomas, "Il fu Mattia Pascal. Per un'analisi metacritica" (65-78)).

In the second section, the interventions focus primarily on instances of cultural translation in the adaptation of works for new national and regional contexts; the problems of translation that emerge in these treatments are both linguistic and cultural. These essays include examinations of the reception of Pirandello in Central and Eastern Europe, including Hungary (Ilona Fried,

"Pirandello e la scena internazionale" (81-9)), Czechoslovakia (Tereza Siegllová, "Luigi Pirandello e la Cecoslovacchia (1923-36)" (91-8)), and Poland (Cezary Bronowski, "Pirandello nella cultura polacca del Novecento" (109-16)); they also examine adaptation within the confines of Italy, including in the rearticulation of Pirandellian themes by Eduardo De Filippo (Alessandra Sorrentino, "La traduzione 'regionale' di Pirandello" (117-25)) and in the cultural differences that mark the three stages of development in Pirandello's own reworking of *Sicilian Limes* (Domenica Elisa Cicala, "Ciascuno al suo posto" (127-35)). This section also contains a seemingly unrelated essay that nonetheless offers an interesting treatment of how Alberto Cantoni's works inform Pirandello's theory of humor (Alice Flemrová, "Arguzia affettuosa di Alberto Cantoni" (99-107)).

The third section uses theories of translation to consider the multi-media adaptation of Pirandello's works. This includes essays on how comics (*fumetti*) circulating during Pirandello's life as well as subsequent comics (Japanese manga) manifest Pirandellian themes (Monika Schmitz-Emans, "Pirandello e i fumetti" (139-47)); how Pirandello's plays function as translations of his short stories, including the self-translation of *Six Characters* (Dominique Budor, "L'iter trasmediale dei *Sei personaggi* in Pirandello" (149-57)) and a broader look at strategies of self-interpretation in other plays (Thomas Klinkert, "Pirandello e la 'traduzione' generica" (159-67)); how the short stories and poems translate a vision of Sicilian-ness (Walter Geerts, "L'amplesso di Porto Empedocle" (169-76)); and how the metatheater of *Each in His Own Way* translates the metafiction of *Shoot!* (Simona Micali, "Dal metaromanzo al metateatro" (177-85)).

These readings cover a vast array of subjects related to the general topic of translation, and many arrive at interesting new ideas and conclusions. However, the application of the "translational turn" to Pirandello does not intend to revise our overarching image of the author and his works. In her analysis of the early short story, "Lontano" ["Far Away"] (written in 1898, published in 1902), Paola Casella shows that applying a "translational" lens confirms that the story's themes of failed communication correspond to the themes of later works, which depict our conception of reality as subjective and mutable (25). The aim of these studies is not to reconceive our notion of Pirandello's

worldview so much as to add nuance to our understanding of how he constructs and communicates that worldview. The payoff of studies like Casella's is thus in the details of how we interpret particular elements of his works at a highly focused level. As Michael Rössner puts it in the opening of his contribution, in 39 years of studying Pirandello he consistently finds that each new theoretical "turn" reveals how Pirandello's works already contained elements of that theory's outlook (27). In a sense, then, this volume actually uncovers the ways in which Pirandello's writing, self-adaptation, and international reception prefigure key elements raised by contemporary theories of cultural translation.

This might lead a skeptical reader to worry that, at a theoretical level, adding the notion of a "translational turn" to Pirandello studies is unnecessary—since it does not change the critical consensus that Pirandello's work unearths the gaps, differences, and changes that take place in communication at a variety of levels. Yet there is no doubt that the studies in this volume highlight interesting ways in which specific elements of his works articulate those differences, and also how they make use of such differences in order to communicate with their own audiences. Rössner does this by applying a new lens to the old question of Pirandello's stance on translators—and actors and illustrators—(as do others in the volume, like Dominique Budor), unveiling a basic tension in Pirandello's outlook between an unattainable ideal of direct artistic communication (the "utopia" of Villa la Scalogna in *The Mountain Giants*) and the necessity of translation to communicate meaning (34-5). Fausto De Michele adds specificity to our notion of the influence that *Six Characters* exerts over German theater by examining it as an instance of "primary translation," a translation that enters into its new literary field as if it were a primary text from within that tradition (38). In a different vein, Johannes Thomas offers what may be the most provocative intervention in the volume, arguing that the ways in which prominent criticism of *The Late Mattia Pascal* obscures or reduces the text motivate us to return to the text and understand it better; this leads him to argue that meta-criticism can be used as a philological method to gain a more precise understanding of the original text, revealing criticism as an act of translation (77-8).

Evident even in these limited highlights, the interventions here are typical of those in volumes collected from conference

presentations in that they do not cohere into a single main point. Instead, they offer a panorama demonstrating how notions of translation and adaptation are central to Pirandello's works, both in his own composition as well as in later adaptations and in his international and critical reception. In addition to the critical and theoretical insights highlighted above, the volume will be of particular interest to those working on questions relating to Pirandello's self-adaptation, his European reception (in Germany, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia), and his own theories of communication, translation, and acting. It gives further insight into the challenges Pirandello envisions for his own acts of artistic communication, which seek to convey an experience of the world across boundaries—challenges that span from individual differences to regional and national ones.





## CONTRIBUTORS

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**Anne-Marie Creamer's** practice encompasses videos, drawings and paintings; her exploratory and experimental approach to narrative often features stories nested within other stories, forming larger mise-en-abyme structures. Her work is regularly exhibited internationally at galleries and museums such as: Sogn og Fjordane Kunstmuseum (Norway), Palm Springs Art Museum, Kunstvereniging Diepenheim (The Netherlands), The Sir John Soane's Museum (London), Apex Art (New York) Draiocht Arts Center (Dublin), Sagacho bis (Tokyo), Galerie der Künstler (Munich), and Spacex Gallery (Exeter). Publications that feature her work include *The Drawing Book*, edited by Tania Kovats (Black Dog Publishing, 2006). She received the Derek Hill Scholarship in Drawing at the British School at Rome, 2012. Anne-Marie was one of a number of artists responsible for the London-based, artist-run Cubitt Gallery in the 1990's. She still occasionally curates exhibitions & projects. She was educated at Middlesex University & the Royal College of Art, and she is currently a Lecturer at the University of the Arts, London.

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