PIRANDELLO'S META-THEATRICAL PLAYS
BEYOND THE TRILOGY

by

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abstract

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The discussion of the evolution of Luigi Pirandello's process of revision of the very nature of the theatrical experience is the focus of the present study. The Sicilian's internal debate, on the one hand his essays on theatre and theatricality, on the other his plays, are the focal point of the study. Since Pirandello, the essayist, strongly defended the importance of the text and saw its staging only as a necessary evil, an outline of Edward Gordon Craig's position, in antithesis to Pirandello's initial stance, is central to the first chapter. The comparison between Craig, who is commonly considered the forefather of contemporary stage directing and Pirandello, who is often only considered a great playwright, is essential to shed new light on the Italian's role in the development of Twentieth century theatre theory.

The second chapter deals with Pirandello's theoretical writings on the theatre vis-à-vis an analyses of Enrico IV, Ciascuno a suo modo and Sagra del Signore della Nave.
The third chapter deals with the various re-writings of Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore and centers on the differences between the 1921 text and the 1925 version of the play. Pirandello's various attempts as capocomico to pragmatically give new vitality and vigor to the theatrical experience are also the focus of this chapter. His interaction with the actors while director at the Teatro d'Arte are also closely scrutinized as they influenced his vision of the theatre and his subsequent play writing. Lazzaro and La nuova colonia are seen as the product of Pirandello's failure to revive the theatre while director of the Teatro d'Arte.

The fourth chapter centers on Pirandello's attempt to find "another stage," that of the mind in Sogno (ma forse no), and a purely mythical stage in I giganti della montagna. In conclusion, the present work studies Pirandello's role in defining and proposing a resolution to the theatrical impasse in which the stage had found itself at the beginning of the Twentieth century. It proposes a new perspective on Pirandello's plays as theory of the theatre.
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Introduction

The hiatus between the text and its mise en scène, the dichotomic relationship between the stagnant text and the dynamic, ever changing staging was at the centre of the debates on and around the theatrical event at the beginning of the twentieth century. Far from being only a formal discussion on the nature of representation, those debates initiated consequential aesthetic speculation on theatre in particular and on art in general, as they investigated the relationship between art and truth, and sought after the possibilities of creating signification in a world that had lost the certainties surrounding experience.

Significantly, two of the most important contributors to the debate, lived and worked in Italy: Edward Gordon Craig (1872-1966) and Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936). The former addressed the problem from a director's standpoint, concentrating on theatre as event, whereas the latter tackled the issue from an author's perspective, focusing on textuality. Their research will characterize the controversy throughout this century, as their successors will reflect on the theatre by privileging either the text or the performance. Even though Craig and Pirandello sought after
answering the questions related to theatre as drama or performance, their end was analogous: define and determine the function of drama as an artistic means to create signification. The two viewpoints conglomerate both the theoretical hypothesis and the empirical stage experimentation of the twentieth century. Craig and Pirandello can be considered to have been fully aware of the unstoppable crisis of classical and bourgeois drama and at the same time, the forerunners of the theatrical research which developed afterwards. They understood that the crisis of the theatre had been determined by the newly achieved awareness of the contrast between the written text and the performance text, between the author and the director, the author and the actor as well as between the director and the actor.

This process of "relativization" of drama with its various historical stages, and the problems related to representation, originated by the speculation on representation in the second half of the nineteenth century will ultimately be taken to their zenith by Luigi Pirandello. The discussion of the evolution of Pirandello's process of revision of the very nature of the theatrical experience is the focus of the present study. We do not focus - except for a reading Sei personaggi in cerca
d'autore in a new light - on those plays which are commonly considered as metaphors of the theatre: his famous trilogy of the theatre within the theatre. The Sicilian's internal debate, on the one hand his essays, on the other his plays, are the focus of the first chapter. Since Pirandello, the essayist, strongly defended the importance of the text and saw its staging only as a necessary evil, an outline of Edward Gordon Craig's position, in antithesis to Pirandello's initial stance, is also the focus of the first chapter. They, in fact, both addressed and problematized the traditional notions of author and text, and investigated the problematic relationship between the event on stage and the experience of the spectator. Craig and Pirandello also posed questions concerning directing and acting techniques. The comparison between Craig, who is commonly considered the forefather of contemporary stage directing and Pirandello, who is often only considered a great playwright, is essential to shed new light on the Italian's role in the development of Twentieth century theatre theory. In fact Pirandello contributed greatly to the development of the mise en scène greatly. Not withstanding Pirandello and Craig started their theoretical speculations in great contrast at the end they addressed the same problems and often arrived to the same conclusions.
The second chapter deals with Pirandello's theoretical writings along with an analyses of Enrico IV, Ciascuno a suo modo and Sagra del Signore della Nave. The playwright's endeavor to solve the conflicts relating to the written text and its staging are investigated in the light of the above mentioned plays.

Pirandello's various attempts as capocomico to pragmatically give new vitality and vigor to the theatrical experience is the focus of the third chapter. His "hands on" experience with the stage proved to be essential for the development of his play writing. Particular attention is put on the re-writing of Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore, after attending various mise en scènes by other European directors. Pirandello's interaction with the actors and his practice as director at the Teatro d'Arte are also closely scrutinized as they influenced his vision of the theatre. The playwright's demise and isolation, after the dissolution of the Teatro d'Arte, both as a person and as an artist, at the end of the twenties is seen as one of the creative forces behind his later production.

The fourth chapter centers on Pirandello's attempt to find "another stage," that of the mind in Sogno (ma forse no), and a purely mythical stage in I giganti della montagna. His research lead him to the only possible solution, that is a
stage that was both real and fictitious.

The conclusion emphasizes Pirandello's role in defining and proposing a resolution to the theatrical impasse in which the stage had found itself at the end of the last century and proposes a new prospective on Pirandello as theorist of the theatre.
Chapter I
A Beginning: Craig and Pirandello

1.1 Edward Gordon Craig: The Search of Truth

The first to address concerns on the crisis of theatre in a purely theatrical setting was certainly Edward Gordon Craig, son of Ellen Terry, England's greatest actress of the last century.¹ His first experiences with the theatre as director and producer in England were catastrophic. As any whatsoever innovation, actorial, scenographic, artistic, always resulted in complete failure. His vision of the theatre would subsequently be extremely influential as he theorized that seeing is much more important than hearing from the stage. Craig was mainly concerned with the visual aspects of the theatre, thus proposing a theatre that would do away with the text as an external, "other" factor, and promoted a stage on which movement would be central. Craig, in 1906, after working and living in Northern Europe transferred to Florence; a change that will result crucial to his career. In fact he would produce in this city his most important works as theorist of the theatre and as stage designer as he states in his autobiography published in 1957.² In Florence he would also open and teach acting in a
Theatre school, The Arena Goldoni, and his fame would quickly grow throughout Italy, Europe and North America.

Notwithstanding the complete failure of his efforts to give life to a new theatre while residing in his native land, England, a brief account of his youthful experiences is essential for a thorough understanding of the theory and practice of the theatre Craig would later develop while living in Italy.

His first years as an actor in Sir Henry Irving's theatre company, The Lyceum, mark a very important beginning in his career. Irving's influence on Craig:

was both as an actor and in his later ideal of a theatrical form that would be an Art rather than an imitation of life.

Craig worked with Irving for eight years, from 1889 to 1897. However already in 1893, he had begun to pick up the "first essentials in wood cutting," and that same year he directed his first staging: No trifling with love, a stage adaptation of On ne badine pas avec l'amour, written by Musset in 1849. In this first direction the predominance of Lyceum-like style of representation is evident. Both the acting and the stage setting were of traditional form. The text had been adapted for the stage by Craig himself who
many years later acknowledged that more than an "adaptation," it had really been a "mutilation." 7

In 1897, with the Lyceum, Craig was cast by Sir Henry Irving to play great roles and gained enormous success. Yet, he suddenly decided, with great consternation of many fellow-actors and friends, to conclude his career as an actor. 8 His mother, Ellen Terry, 9 will never really understand why Craig made this decision as she writes in a letter to her friend Jennifer Leeper years later:

I have never known anyone with so much natural gift for the stage... Unconsciously he did everything right—I mean all the technical things over which some of us have to labour for years...I have good reason to be proud of what he has done since, but I regret the loss of the actor always. 10

Many hypotheses have been advanced on the reasons which induced Craig to abandon a promising career as an actor. 11 However this decision will result as the turning point in his understanding of the theatre and will allow him to concentrate on the problems directly related to the mise en scène, and thus, the directing of a play.

In 1898, Craig began the publication of the journal The Page in which he announced the formation of the Purcell Operatic Society that would promote and produce works by Purcell, Arne and Gluck. 12 The first direction under the
auspices of the Purcell Operatic Society staged in 1900, was
*Dido and Aenenas*, a work written by Purcell himself. This is
considered Craig's first true direction as he moved away
from the *Lyceum Theatre Company*’s agenda and created his own
personal method. The printed program of the staging states
polemically: "The director has particularly avoided any
whatsoever resemblance to costumes, scenery and detail of
the historical period."¹³ The obvious target of Craig's
ironic comment were those dramatists and playwrights who at
the time were pursuing a "realist" *mise en scène* on the
European stage.

The circumstances in which the play was staged were to
be crucial in his pursuit of new avenues to revive the
theatre:

We hadn't a penny, that was the least of the
bothers. We hadn't a theatre, that was nothing of
insurmountable. We had no company of actor/singers
and we couldn't engage one because that would
require a capital of several thousand pounds. We
decided, right away, to rehearse and rehearse till
the thing was ready; not to limit rehearsals to a
fortnight maximum. No money, no theatre, no
company. Add to this no staff!¹⁴

Paradoxically, these practical problems resulted in the
artistic success of the *mise en scène* of *Dido and Aeneas*.
However, just as all of Craig's future directions and
productions in England, it was a financial disaster. After
staging *The Vikings of Helgeland* by Ibsen\textsuperscript{15} in 1903\textsuperscript{16} and having cast his mother Ellen Terry in the leading role, Craig realized that it would have been impossible to pursue his investigations on the theatre in England, as this production again failed to attract any whatsoever consensus amongst critics, actors and fellow directors. The only positive account of the production was written by James Huneker who wrote that even though the production was "doomed at the start" as it was completely miscast, as no one "can picture Ellen Terry as the fierce warrior" wife of Gunnar Headman, "it had its compensations." He continued:

In fact Miss Terry's son Edward Gordon Craig exercised full sway on the stage, lightning, costumes. ... He has endeavored to escape the deadly monotony of the London stage...The impression he [Craig] creates is one of real unreality. From above [the stage] falls a curious, sinister light which gives purplish tones to the stony surfaces and masks the faces of the players with mysterious shadows.\textsuperscript{17}

During the rehearsals for the *mise en scène* of *The Vikings*, Craig had had serious problems with the actors. Prior to this production he had never directed professional players but only amateur actors who were ready to follow his stage directions *ad litteram*. The professional actors, instead, were unwilling to change their acting techniques in order to satisfy Craig's directorial necessities. He
realized that all their formal training as actors went directly against his experimentation, and was an insurmountable obstacle for his quest for a new theatre.

Just before leaving England, Craig manifested his disappointment to his friend and collaborator, Martin Shaw:

My feelings about The Vikings are just yours. But I feel convinced that no Vikings can be done unless each character will listen to the stage manager and hear what character he has to play. What the hell is the use of act I, what's all the bother about on the rocks, the Rock and the Giants, the swords ten inches thick and blood flowing, wrestling of limb and brain, if Hjordis [the main character of The Vikings] is not the exact opposite of all her exterior might. What is the storm of the play but the counterpart of the storm inside her heart, and what has exterior storminess to do with her—absolutely NOTHING... You did The Vikings and I did The Vikings—and the rest were doing jokes—and never got rid of their skins, much less others. And only because, as it goes today, that is an impossibility. The stage is upside down.18

Craig had hoped that by having the actors use extremely heavy swords, "naturalistic" acting would have been avoided. The swords' weight was to slow down the movements of the actors and thus make their movements as affected and unnatural as possible. The actors however continued, not withstanding the weight, to act by imitating actual sword-fights and thus dispersing and frustrating Craig's efforts:

...Ted wanted Oscar Asche and Holaman Clark to fight with swords, but these
traditionalists thought of the usual broad sword technique used in Macbeth, where they delighted in prating about the stage, said it was impossible. Ted explained that it should look more like the ancient Samurai fighting with their enormous swords; great slow movements, with sudden flashes. That, they thought, would make them look absurd.

The reference, in the letter to Shaw, to the "internal storm" representing the psychological conflict within the main character is the need of staging the "idea" rather than giving, what was for Craig, an insignificant and useless account of the climatic features present during the action of the play. Craig's approach is Platonic, in that, according to Plato, reality is to be found in supreme form, that is in the idea of an object. In fact, in his Republic, Plato had called for the dismissal of artists from his ideal state. He writes that artists are futile and dangerous as they, including the dramatist, imitate the factual/material world through mimesis and insodoing they reproduce a copy of something that is already a copy. This will be a fundamental point in Craig's theory and practice, as it clashes directly with what the "traditional" theatre theorists and dramatists preached: "realism." It is also what differentiates him, as we shall see, from Pirandello, who did not believe in the possibility of recuperating "wholeness" of signification, not even in the
idea. His position was also different from Marinetti's who later took yet another avenue as he and the Futurists insisted on an idea of theatre so synthetic as to annihilate it completely in total nowness.22

After staging The Vikings Craig will leave England forever. Moving to Florence in 1907, his most productive years as theorist and designer of the theatre began.23 His love for Italy in general and for Florence in particular intensified in 1906 when he was appointed stage director and designer for the mise en scène of Rosmersholm by Ibsen, staged at the Teatro Pergola in Florence. He had been invited by Eleonora Duse24, whom he had met the previous year in Berlin. Once again, what seemed to have great potential for the realization of Craig's vision of the theatre failed. Notwithstanding the fact that the staging of Ibsen's play in Florence was an enormous success,25 for both public and critics, and even though Duse was enthusiastic of his artistic direction and thanked him for his work,26 Craig's collaboration with the great Italian actress would shortly afterwards come to an end.27 However the mise en scène of Rosmersholm is extremely important as it marks the first isolated effort of creating a new theatre in Italy; a theatre that refused the conventionality of the Italian stage and that rejected realism. It is said that Tommaso
Salvini, the famous nineteenth century actor and perhaps Italy's greatest actor ever, exclaimed "Bella! Bella!" during a brief silence of Rosmersholm's staging.28

Yet, Craig's productions were and would always be conditioned by various factors29 which would prevent him from ever realizing completely his idea of theatre on a stage. His anger and bitterness over the obtuse attitude of dramatists, critics and theatre goers is quite tangible in all of his theoretical writings. This would eventually lead him to seclusion. More and more, he drew away from others and society, concentrating his work on theoretical instances rather than on practical ones. "The theory comes after the practice" is the motto which accompanied him throughout his entire life.

1.2 Craig's Writings on Theatre

Craig published his first theoretical writing in 1905 when he was thirty three years old. At the time he had already gained considerable experience as theatre actor, set designer and producer-director. That same year he also began to meditate on the necessity of publishing a journal. In his writings, not only did Craig deal with the many and intriguing problems relating to the theatrical event in his
complexity, but he also addressed and elaborated on contemporary thought. He tackled the problems related to the theatre from every angle: from those concerning the artist of the theatre who wants to define and justify his work, to those relating, in the most rigorous way possible, to a clarification on the general principles that govern the theatrical event.

At the time, Craig was not an isolated thinker in Europe. André Antoine, Constantine Stanislavsky, Adolphe Appia and other directors were fighting the traditional conventions that dominated the theatre at the beginning of this century. Yet, Craig did not have great consideration for the work of Antoine, as he believed the Parisian's style was "naturalistic." Furthermore, even though acknowledging the perfect organization of the Stanislavski's Art Theatre in Moscow, Craig did not approve of the Russian's methods either. In fact, Stanislavsky had refused to shut down the theatre for a few years, as Craig had requested, in order to complete and elaborate on his theories. Craig, instead, admired the work of Appia whom he considered an artist-creator. However, Craig objected to Appia as he believed the Swiss author was not an artist of the theatre but rather an artist who "worked for the theatre." The true artist of the theatre should, according to Craig, be actor, director
and producer of the staging: "everything must be the work of his mind and of his hands." The true artist of the theatre must create a unitary and autonomous work of art. Craig also sustained that the theatre must be an independent and distinct art. This concept is fundamental in the development of his critical thought. The artists who are called to work in the theatre, that is, the author, the musician and the painter, are useless.

Craig worked systematically on the various constituents of the theatrical event: music, scene, text and performance, acting and creation of signification. He however wrote nothing substantial on the role of music as there are very few and unimportant references to this aspect of the staging in his writings. Yet, it is relevant to mention here the rewarding collaboration Craig had with the musician Martin Shaw who had been musical director of the Purcell Operatic Society and of almost every play directed by Craig. Shaw had a great admiration for his friend Craig:

My admiration for Craig's work increased with every new production. In his broad sweeping style there is something belonging to us, [British] something national.

Craig's theories of the theatre arose from the contrasts and the practical problems he had had in his productions with
those who refused to follow and implement his beliefs. This was not the case with Shaw who accepted and carried out Craig's wishes. Significantly, Shaw described to what extent he was ready to "please" the director:

...immediately over the conductor's head (mine) a local builder, under Craig's direction, had built a plank platform, which sagged a little lower at every performance. I felt like the man in Poe's story of the inquisition, where the ceiling descended towards him every day. He just managed to escape in time and so did I."

This justifies the fact that in his writings, the references to music are few, notwithstanding that music was, according to Craig, one of the prime elements of the mise en scène.

Yet, the extremely rich references and discussions on painting, literature and acting in the theatre are overwhelming because of the difficulties he had experienced in his theatrical activity. Craig sustained that painters were harmful for the theatre and that they (the painters) had usurped a territory that did not belong to them as he claimed a theatre for those born in the theatre. This vice against painters may seem contradictory if one looks at Craig's immense graphic production, but as Craig wrote himself, that, being without a theatre, the only avenue he had to visualize his ideas was to make drawings on paper. In
fact, even at a later date, he invented and used model stages, miniatures, to visualize his ideas and theories.

In a discussion on the misprision of the text as a qualifying trait of Twentieth century theatre, Craig's hold on the elimination of literature from the theatre is very important. Following this idea, he draws the most extreme consequences from the distinction between theatre as spectacle and theatre as work of art. For the first time, the dramatic text becomes a visual inspiration which gives life to a performance text and, thus, creates an original work of art that will have only a thematic relationship with the "original" dramatic text.

Craig rejected the idea of staging classical dramatic texts because he believed they represented literature to which the theatrical event had been subdued to for many years. He proposed the autonomy of the mise-en-scène from the text and declared several times that Shakespeare's plays are theatrically unrealizable, for they were written to be read, not staged. Craig's j'accuse against the tyrannical text in the theatre, is an anticipation of the querelle which would enfold dramatic theory and practice from the first years of this century to this day. He hinted at the problem, and yet did not develop this thought in his most important writings:
On the Art of The Theatre, Towards A New Theatre⁴¹ and Scene,⁴² nor did he tackle the issue on the pages of his journal The Mask.⁴³ However, in On the Art of the Theatre, he underlined the necessity of highlighting the "ideal content" of the text on the stage and stated that the only way to achieve an artistic mise en scène of a classical text, was to concentrate and unify the stage director's efforts in order to reawaken the visual capacity of the spectators.⁴⁴ Even though, at this point, Craig theorized the possibility of staging a classic text, subsequently he stated that it is impossible to represent texts in the theatre. Actually, Craig had dedicated three years of his life to the staging of Hamlet at the Art Theatre of Moscow. However, in a note added to the second edition of the 1911 version of On the Art of the Theatre published in 1912, he explained that he accepted to stage Shakespeare's Hamlet only because he wanted to confirm what he already knew: "it was impossible."⁴⁵ As empirical evidence to his statement, he produces the first scene of the second act of Macbeth, precisely, Macbeth's soliloquy where he tries to gain sufficient strength to kill King Duncan. Craig remarks that the reading of this passage is in itself difficult, even if read at a moderate pace, stating that "in order for the reader to fully understand its meaning, he must read it over
at least three times."\(^{46}\) Insodoing, the reader has the opportunity to feel and understand the text, but as the reading of the text is impossible in a theatre, it is useless to stage it.\(^{47}\)

In 1913, Craig will polemically postulate the total elimination of an *a priori* written text for the stage in his book *Towards a New Theatre*.\(^{48}\) Craig calls for the complete elimination of words from the *mise en scène*, while he erects voice as a fundamental aspect of the staging. "Voice" substitutes "word" in Craig's ideal theatre, a theatre that should not be "...a place for hearing thirty thousand words babbled out in two hours"\(^{49}\); and not even a pantomime as "...the artist of the Theatre of the future will create his masterpieces out of action, music and voice."\(^{50}\) Words have lost the ability of creating signification, as the split between signifier and signified has swelled to an abyss. Meaning, through words, is irredeemable. Again, Craig anticipates one of the main concerns of twentieth century dramatic theory and practice: the recovery or the invention of an autonomous theatrical language. Such a language ought to be capable of annulling or at least reducing the gap between signifier and signified, and thus to create and communicate signification.
Craig suggests gesture and action as primary means of theatrical communication. Movement endowed with harmony and uniformity of spirit is dramatic. Drama is born out of gesture and not out of words:

I sometimes live in Trafalgar square, where all sorts of undramatic things go on all day long, but when I hear a band in the distance, and I see the troops coming along, I feel that although it is merely a regiment of men, it is dramatic.\(^\text{51}\)

However, the dramatic pathos does not spring out of great passion and emotion, as the simple passage of a lit candle through a dark room can give rise to drama.\(^\text{52}\)

Emblematic is what Craig writes in regard to one of his drawings/plays,\(^\text{53}\) *The Arrival*:

This is for no particular play, but it is what I believe to be true drama. The name explains the drama... The Arrival is a kind of stage direction. It tells us of something which is being done, and not of something which is being said, and the fact that we do not know who is arriving, or what they will look like when they appear, makes it, to my mind, dramatic.\(^\text{54}\)

The only ones to capture the secrets of silent movement were the ancient Greeks, and Craig believed that movement was not only the root of the art of theatre, but something
much deeper and mysterious. Movement, according to Craig, was divine.\textsuperscript{55}

Movement can be divided into two distinct parts, the movement of two and four which is the square, the movement of one and three which is the circle. There is ever that which is masculine in the square and ever that which is feminine in the circle.\textsuperscript{56}

With this metaphysical perspective, "perfect movement" springs out of the combination of the feminine and the masculine, which ultimately coincide with the universal rhythms of Reality.

Silence, together with music and movement, are the essential element of the \textit{mise en scène}. Theatre becomes an essential visual experience. Drama of speech is substituted by drama of silence. This, however, does not mean the complete elimination of the sonority of the staging, but rather the visualization of the dramatic moment.\textsuperscript{57} By eliminating anything that could distract the spectator, and particularly the text, Craig tried to reach the emotional unity of the \textit{mise en scène}. He declared certain elements of traditional theatre inessential, while he introduced strictly theatrical components.

Another fundamental statement on the theatrical event is made in his essay entitled "The Actor and the Über-marionette"\textsuperscript{58}(Super-marionette), with which Craig provoked
debates and criticisms throughout Europe and North America. The Super-marionette is, according to Craig, the most important element of the theatre of the future.

Often, when exposing a new theory, he provokes the reader by exaggerating and by using paradoxes. The reason why Craig used this technique to propose his ideas to the public, was to ensure that they would be readily noticed and discussed. This caused many misunderstandings and contributed greatly to lessen the comprehension of his thought.

Craig's starting point is that anything that is accidental cannot be artistic; art is in antithesis with chaos. Art can only be produced by working those materials that we are able to control. Humans, who are enslaved by their emotions, are not made up of these materials: humans tend towards freedom. Thus, the actor is enslaved by emotion; therefore the human body is absolutely unusable as artistic material. Craig states that "to act is not an art, therefore an actor is not an artist." This assertion is a typical example of his use of overstatements. In fact, he was here alluding to the actors who were dominating the stages of Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century. Actors who acted in a naturalistic manner, trying to impersonate, in a realistic fashion, the characters of the
According to Craig, the artist is he who, tracing forms and signs, creates the impression of the object he wants to represent. The traditional actor, instead of trying to produce a realistic portrait of life that would compete with a photograph, should create with the assistance of nature. The actor must give the public the spirit, the essence of an idea and not a copy of nature which is lacking art. The actor who impersonates is an imitator, not an artist.61

Craig thus does not preclude the possibility of the actor to become an artist. On the contrary, he encourages research for new acting techniques which can "open wonderful prospects for actors."62 According to Craig, by creating a new form of acting, consisting essentially of symbolic gestures, the actor can become an artist. In fact he writes:

They [the actors] must create for themselves a new form of acting, consisting for the main part of symbolic gesture. Today they impersonate...tomorrow they must represent and the day after tomorrow they will have to create."63
Craig thus refused traditional realistic acting and not the actor per se. In a letter written to Martin Shaw, he stated that he would work with professional actors only if:

...a breed can be grown which are like the rest of my thought: hard, clear-cut, passionless.\footnote{64}

If one analyses the characteristics that Craig gives to the Super-marionette, one can easily identify its many human traits. The Über-marionette has to have "a living spirit...a noble artificiality ... rhythms of natural movement"\footnote{65}: such qualities are obviously impossible to find in an inanimate marionette.

In \textit{The Credo Of The Mask Since Its Foundation in The Year 1908}, it is clearly stated that "The Mask believes in the actor and the actress," and the \textit{Credo} concludes with the following appeal:

And help us by routing misrepresentation. YOU OUR READERS AND ENCOURAGERS, nail the lies to the doors of the liars...
The Tarradiddle that we want no drama.
The Yarn that we want nothing but scenery.
The Whopper that we despise the actor.
That we want to glorify the Producer only.\footnote{66}

Craig wanted to ban from the stage the easy spontaneity, the narcissistic and disorderly exhibition of
emotion by the actors. He wanted the actors to submit their bodily expression to formal stylization. Only by eliminating the accidental elements, relative to the actors' passion, can the actor understand and unveil the "deep truths of inner life."  

The Uber-marionette is nothing more than an idealist example, a consciously utopian one, of an actor able to offer a highly artistic representation of humanity. Symbolic and not imitative acting, depersonalized and thus able to seize the essence of the idea that is being represented.

Craig proposed the eastern acting tradition as the model to follow, in particular, the techniques of the Japanese actors, who, according to Craig, had the same intrinsic qualities of the classic Greek actors:

The Japanese with its strict ritual, its noble conservatism which still preserves traditional postures without change or modification, its obedience to a fine tradition, its perfect control of its materials—that is the human body—approaches more nearly to the stately and splendid ceremonies of the past, of which, among us some trace lingers in the symbolic gestures of the priests celebrating mass, and thus partakes more nearly of the nature of an art.  

Craig's main preoccupation is that of recuperating signification contiguous to his idealistic aesthetic. Complete control over the entire mise en scène is necessary,
and the actor's creative process cannot escape this. Craig's aim is that of redeeming the actor from the pure idiocy of realism on the stage.

Ferruccio Marotti, in the introduction to his Italian translation of Craig's work, states that the problems relating to acting spring out from the necessity, in a director's theatre, to project and realize an art of the theatre in which the "actors" language must become homogeneous with that of the other elements existing in the mise en scène. He continues by saying that the only way to reach unity of the staging is through gestures, avoiding any whatsoever linguistic or psychological reference.

Traditional realist theatre had none of the characteristics Craig believed essential for theatre to recuperate its ancient function. Just before his death in 1966, he had understood the impossibility of realizing a theatre intended as autonomous art. He had also understood that it was not sufficient to substitute an old way of "representing" with a new one to overcome the impasse in which the theatrical apparatus had come to. The new theatre had to be generated from something so completely new that Craig stated, "the art to which I dedicated my entire life to transcends theatre itself." This statement is extremely important as it explicates the impossibility to create an
autonomous language for the theatre. Ultimately, Craig was convinced that no matter how much one theorizes it is impossible to overcome the codified strategies of Renaissance theatre. If one reads his later directorial projects, and if one meditates on his conception of the actor, one can perceive the presence of a cinematographic mind at work. In *Catalogue of Etchings Being Designs for Motion* Craig writes that the "illusion of action is produced by the mysteries that lay behind light and shadow." One can speculate that Craig was no longer speaking of theatre, but of cinema, which he considered inartistic, without knowing that he was one of the forefathers of this new art.

1.3 Pirandello's Search for Truth

Contemporary to Edward Gordon Craig, on a personal and yet parallel path, Luigi Pirandello was also investigating the possibility of staging artistic texts. His starting point was diametrically opposite to Craig's. However, there seems to be an internal dialogue between Pirandello's artistic writings and his essays, that never really finds a true resolution.
The Sicilian dramatist surely knew Craig. In 1934 Pirandello invited Craig to attend the International Conference on the state of the theatre in Rome. However, many sustain that Pirandello often attacked and ridiculed Craig's theories in his own artistic works. In particular in *Stasera si recita a soggetto*, the malicious director Hinkfuss is said to actually depict Craig himself. Craig was also familiar with Pirandello's work. He signed an article written in his journal *The Mask*, with one of the various eighty two pseudonyms regularly used, entitled ironically "The Originality of Pirandello," where he attacks the Italian fiercely. Amongst other things he accuses him of being a "novelist who uses dramatic form without having any understanding of the theatre." Nevertheless they both contributed to the debate on the theatrical event. Even if Craig's position was always extremely rigid, almost monotonous, and Pirandello was surely more aware of the philosophical implications such a discourse could bring about, they both continuously challenged the status quo.

Pirandello's theatre, and specifically his famous "meta-theatrical" trilogy, *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* (1921), *Ciascuno a suo modo* (1924) and *Stasera si recita a soggetto* (1930), a group of works in which he addressed
many of the same issues confronted by Craig, can be considered the foundation on which the modern theatre has been built. However, one finds that between Pirandello the essayist and the playwright a never ending battle endured.

In fact, the following statement was made by Pirandello in 1936, only a few months before his death, in his introduction to Silvio D'Amico's *Storia del teatro italiano*.

Il Teatro non è archeologia. Il non rimettere le mani nelle opere antiche, per aggiornarle e renderle adatte a nuovo spettacolo, significa incuria, non già scrupolo degno di rispetto. Il Teatro vuole questi rimaneggiamenti, e se n'è giovato incessantemente, in tutte le epoche in cui era più vivo. Il testo resta integro per chi se lo vorrà rileggere in casa, per sua cultura; chi vorrà divertirsi andrà a teatro, dove gli sarà ripresentato mondo da tutte le parti vizio rinnovato nelle espressioni non più correnti, riadattato ai gusti dell'oggi. E perché questo è legittimo?

Perché l'opera d'arte, in teatro, non è più il lavoro di uno scrittore [...] ma un atto di vita da creare, momento per momento, sulla scena, col concorso del pubblico.

Such an assertion may seem in great contrast to his previous writings on theatre and acting, but significantly it was written after he had actually experienced being *capocomico* at the Teatro d'Arte from 1925 to 1928. Almost twenty years earlier, in an essay published in 1908, entitled *Illustratori, Attori e Traduttori*, an elaboration
of *L'azione parlata,* an essay he had written in 1899, Pirandello fiercely opposed any "interpretative" action by the director or the actor. He disputes the artistic validity of the _mise en scène_ by arguing that there is an irredeemable dissonance amid the text written by the author and its staging; paradoxically mirroring Craig's initial position yet reversing it completely.\(^8^2\)

In fact in _Illustratori, attori e traduttori_, Pirandello states that, if sometimes the _mise en scène_ of a text results better than the written text itself, it's only because the written text was of no value in the first place. In the same essay, Pirandello also maintained that if one does not want a mere "traduzione più o men fedele, ma l'originale veramente a teatro, ecco la Commedia dell'Arte: uno schema embrionale, e la libera creazione dell'attore."\(^8^3\) He concluded his essay by sustaining that the Commedia dell'Arte is nevertheless a trivial form that lacks the ideal simplification and concentration common to every superior work of art.\(^8^4\) Central for Pirandello is, at this point, therefore the text; the written word here is considered to be the playwright's artistic creation and the staging is seen only as a mawkish and unnecessary product.

Pirandello's attitude towards the theatre was however quite different only a few years earlier. It is noteworthy
to recall that Pirandello had written his first dramatic works when he was very young but he burnt them when he turned twenty. La gente allegra and Le popolane, written when he was in his twenties, have also been destroyed.\textsuperscript{85} However, between 1891 and 1899, he wrote three plays L'epilogo, Il nibbio and Scamandro which will not be staged until many years later. His love for the theatre was, at this point, extremely evident. In fact, in a letter sent to his family from Rome in November of 1887, he writes: "Oh il teatro drammatico! Io lo conquisterò. Io non posso penetrarvi senza provare una viva emozione, senza provare una sensazione strana, un eccitamento del sangue per tutte le vene."\textsuperscript{86} Yet, between 1899 and 1916, Pirandello will not write anything for the theatre except for Lumie di Sicilia (1910), Il dovere del medico (1911) and Cecè (1913).\textsuperscript{87} During this period, on the contrary, he will compose several short stories and, in 1904 he will publish what is considered his narrative masterpiece, Il fu Mattia Pascal.\textsuperscript{88} In 1908, he also completed his essay on humor, L'umorismo,\textsuperscript{89} which is pivotal for an understanding of his aesthetics, and is considered his existential and philosophical testament.

Many have argued that Pirandello's attack on theatre in Illustratori, attori e traduttori was triggered by the fact that his first theatrical works had been always turned down
by producers and directors. Furthermore, his disposition towards the theatre was considered to be a personal vendetta against the entourage that had refused to stage his first plays.

It is important to note, however, that even in 1925, after he had received international acclaim, while in Paris for the staging of Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore, in an interview given to the daily paper Le Temps, he reiterated everything he had written in Illustratori, attori e traduttori. He explained that he still believed that the staging of a play is always "a betrayal of the original," that is of the text as the author conceived it, and that the mise en scène is not a work of art. What is extremely startling is that Pirandello, from 1916 onwards, would devote practically his entire artistic production to the theatre. Yet, only a few months before his death, in the introduction to the Storia del teatro italiano cited above, did Pirandello "redeem" the stage. In fact, he there states that those who expect complete fidelity to the text from its staging should stay at home and read it. His closing statement is surprising as he maintains that the work of art in the theatre is no longer the work of a writer but an act of life to be created, moment by moment, on the stage and in collaboration with the audience. In this last statement, he
is implicitly maintaining that the two works, the text and the mise en scène, belong to two different realms of art, and are both to be considered, legitimately, "art." This finds reinforcement in a basic observation. Even though between 1899 and 1916 Pirandello hardly wrote anything for the stage, many of the short stories composed in this period will serve as thematic bases for the plays written after 1916. Moreover, the short stories can be considered the "experimental laboratory" for his future dramatic production. Pirandello himself, in an interview given to the daily Idea Nazionale on February 10th 1920, stated that: "[i] germi [della mia produzione teatrale] erano già tutti nella mia opera narrativa precedente, anche in quella di quasi trent'anni fa."94

The sixteen-year period in which Pirandello the playwright was dormant are the same years in which the crisis of the two leading theatrical aesthetics, Naturalism and Symbolism, reached its peak.95 Pirandello's theoretical starting point in L'azione parlata and Illustratori, attori e traduttori coincides with that of the Naturalists.96 He continuously insists on the validity and necessity of the written text. However, as he explored the possibilities of the stage, he realized that the impasse that such a conception of the theatre would create, had to be overcome.
This awareness coincided with the realization of the impossibility to create narrative works capable of producing meaning.\textsuperscript{97}

As discussed previously, Pirandello was not the sole dramatist trying to find a resolution to the theoretical impasse the theatre was facing throughout Europe.\textsuperscript{98} As a matter of fact, at the beginning of this century, all the various theories of the stage reveal and investigate the contrast between three aesthetic domains: that of the artistic elaboration of the text by the author, that of the director and that of the actor. Edward Gordon Craig, as discussed, was certainly one of the first theorists to address these contrasts, drawing the most extreme consequences from the distinction between theatre as spectacle and theatre as work of art. However his starting point was not the dramatic text. Instead, he insisted on the importance of the visualization/inspiration of the text, which should give life to a "performance text," and create an original work of art that will have only a "thematic relationship with the dramatic text."\textsuperscript{99} There is a statement in Pirandello's \textit{Illustratori, attori, traduttori} that seems to be a confutation of Craig's thesis:

\begin{quote}
Per quanto l'attore si sforzi di penetrare nelle intenzioni dello scrivitore, difficil-}
\end{quote}
mentre riuscirà a vedere come questo ha veduto, a sentire il personaggio come l'autore l'ha sentito, a renderlo sulla scena come l'autore l'ha voluto."¹⁰⁰

As Umberto Artioli observes in his study *Il ritmo e la voce. Alle sorgenti del teatro della crudeltà*, even though both thinkers insist on the necessity of an auctor, Craig believes that such a role is played by the director, and the "enemies" are the text and the actors, whereas for Pirandello the auctor is the dramatist himself.¹⁰¹ However, as previously mentioned, in his 1936 essay Pirandello asserts, just as Craig did, the independence of the mise en scène from the text. He does not go as far as maintaining that the staging of a text is superior to its written form, but Pirandello promotes theatre to art and exhorts directors to intervene on the "written word." In fact, Pirandello's introduction to D'Amico's history of Italian theatre can be seen as the playwright's point of arrival, and his dramatic works can be considered an evidence of his journey.

Luigi Pirandello's position towards theatre is thus problematic; his theoretical writings until 1936 display a kind of "suspicion" on his part towards the very concept of "theatricality." In contrast, in his dramatic works and in particular in his famous trilogy of the "theatre within the
theatre," he directly addressed the problems related to the relationship between text and mise en scène.\textsuperscript{102}

In this perspective, Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore is the breaking point within his dramatic production as well as within the development of modern and contemporary drama since the issues relating to the relationship between the text and its performance, the production of signification and connection between fiction and reality are strongly and directly discussed in this play. Problems and questions which recurrently trouble most of today's theorists of the theatre as well as dramatists.

Unlike Craig, Pirandello looked for the answers in the text, and it is not by chance that in Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore the actors and the director are rehearsing Il giuoco delle parti, a dramatic work written by Pirandello himself in 1918. In Il giuoco delle parti, the conflict between the individual and society bears the typical structure of traditional bourgeois drama. Pirandello, however, destroys it by making the six Characters interrupt the rehearsal, a rehearsal that will never resume. As Sergio Colomba observes in his volume La scena del dispiacere,

La struttura conflittuale tipica di esso [drama borghese] tra individuo e società qui nei Sei Personaggi, cade, viene a mancare. Il giuoco delle parti non può essere rappresentato. La loro
Pirandello's insistence on the existence of a text before the arrival of the six Characters is noteworthy. Up to their appearance, the script of *Il giuoco delle parti* is the main protagonist. *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* begins with a few lines exchanged between the stage director and an electrician; immediately thereafter, one finds a stage direction in which the actors are brought onto the stage together with the prompter who is carrying the script of *Il giuoco delle parti*. Upon the arrival of the director the actors are told the exact point in the script in which he wants the rehearsal to begin, while the prompter is ordered to read the stage directions from the script. The prompter will then be often interrupted by the director, who will make detailed suggestions (always arising from the text), about the mise en scène. Moreover, when the first actor asks if he has to wear a chef's hat, the director's "irritated" reply is, "Mi pare! Se sta scritto li! [indicherà il copione]."\(^{104}\)

The first part of the play mirrors Pirandello's essay *Illustratori*. Interestingly the first part of *Sei personaggi*
in cerca d'autore, the rehearsal of *Il giuoco delle parti*, has a double function. On the one hand it asserts the uselessness of theatrical operations such as *Il giuoco delle parti*, and on the other it declares the obsoleteness of the directing and acting techniques of the time. In fact, as soon as the six Characters become part of the action, the situation changes dramatically; the prompter will no longer have to read the script to the actors, on the contrary he will merely have to record on paper the succession of the scenes, and the six Characters' lines, and insodoing, invert the process of textual creation. At the beginning of the play, with the director's insistence of representing the text *ad litteram* on the stage, Pirandello is mimicking the attitude the Naturalists had towards the *mise en scène* of a written text. By introducing the six Characters onto the stage, he maps a new possibility for the *mise en scène* which can no longer be tyrannized neither by the author's text nor by the actors' techniques. However, the production of a performance text will not be created by the Characters themselves who instead will see their exploration fail miserably. Nevertheless the director in *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore*, with great hesitation, agrees to listen to the Characters, and thus gives the prompter the following orders:
Capocomico (seguitando, al suggeritore). "Segua le scene, man mano che saranno rappresentate, e cerchi di fissare le battute, almeno le più importanti!"\(^{105}\)

It is with the appearance of the six Characters and their "unwritten" text that problems begin for the actors. While the performance of the pre-existing text, *Il giuoco delle parti*, does not challenge the actors and their acting techniques, once they try to impersonate the Characters, they are scorned, as inadequate actors.\(^{106}\) Pirandello seems to be suggesting here that as theatre moves away from Nineteenth century bourgeois agenda, new acting techniques are also necessary.\(^{107}\) Throughout his work one can find evidence of a growing awareness of the fact that it is impossible "to represent" life in a naturalistic way as he maintained in an early short essay entitled, "Avvertenza sugli scrupoli della fantasia," that he added to his novel, *Il fu Mattia Pascal*.\(^{108}\) Even though Pirandello was obviously investigating there the problem in a narrative context, the impossibility to provide a naturalistic representation of the "Real" would become one of his constant concerns as he "returned" to theatre.

In *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore*, Pirandello goes even further and appears to be suggesting that the new
theatre can only be represented by the Characters themselves. As he writes in the preface added to the play in 1925, the Characters introduced themselves to him; they were not evoked or invented by him, they simply appeared from a "zone of penumbra," the Pirandellian oltre, the "beyond."

Essi si sono già staccati da me; vivono per conto loro; hanno acquistato voce e movimento; sono dunque già divenuti di per se stessi, in questa lotta, che han dovuto sostenere con me per la loro vita, personaggi drammatici, personaggi che possono da soli muoversi e parlare; vedono già se stessi come tali; hanno imparato a difendersi da me; sapranno ancora difendersi dagli altri.109

The Characters' place of origin is, thus, otherness. The issue of the "independence" of the character in respect to the author had already been contemplated by Pirandello in three short stories, Personaggi, La tragedia di un personaggio and Colloqui coi personaggi, published respectively in 1906, 1911 and 1915.110 Each short story begins in the same way, the author, Pirandello himself, is visited by characters who more or less implore him to give them life in some manner. Each of the short stories presents different characters, and is a pretext for Pirandello to investigate and elaborate on the reasons why a character has the right to live his or her own life. The idea is that the character is not to follow the plot created
by the author, but rather that the plot will unfold from the "life" of the character itself. The Characters are ultimately sent away by the author who is not willing to grant them their desire.

In Six Characters in Search of an Author, the situation of independence is extreme, as not only a life (that of a character) is not to be narrated, but staged, and moreover there takes place a proliferation of characters. Precisely, we have six of them, and five of them insist that their story be represented. There is no dialogic relationship nor any real interaction amid the Characters. There lacks any possibility for mediation, that is, a fundamental component for the fulfillment of meaningful communication, necessary to achieve interaction amongst the characters in a play, is lost. Emblematic is the Father's comment to the confused capocomico and to the Stepdaughter's cry of outrage.

IL PADRE Ma se è tutto qui il male! Nelle parole! Abbiamo tutti dentro un mondo di cose; ciascuno un suo mondo di cose! E come possiamo intenderci, signore, se nelle parole ch'io dico metto il senso ed il valore delle cose come sono dentro di me; mentre chi le ascolta, inevitabilmente le assume col senso e col valore che hanno per sè, del mondo com'ehli l'ha dentro? Crediamo d'intenderci; non c'intendiamo mai!"
Far from making a merely metaphysical statement, Pirandello is hinting at the possibility or rather, necessity to overcome the dualistic nature of "experience." The extreme subjectivism of the Characters, a mirror of the new Weltanschauung, is evident throughout the play as the "epic relativisation" depicts the split of the synthesis between subject and object, which is undoubtedly a qualifying characteristic of Sei Personaggi in cerca d'autore.\textsuperscript{112}

In fact, the Characters are not able to find the author they are looking for; an author in the etymological sense of the word: the authority. Thus their play is not performed; what is staged instead are their useless attempts to find such a producer of an unequivocal and definite text: "Il dramma non riesce a rappresentarsi appunto perché manca l'autore che essi cercano; e si rappresenta invece la commedia di questo loro vano tentativo."\textsuperscript{113}

In 1923, two years before Pirandello had written the introduction to Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore, Antonin Artaud\textsuperscript{114} attended the mise en scène of the play in Paris, and saw that there was no text as he stated in his review of the performance:

\begin{quote}
Au commencement la vie continue. Il n'y a pas de spectacle. Le regard plonge sur la scène jus'au fond. Envolé le rideau. Toute la
\end{quote}
salle est un immense plateau où, pour une fois, le spectateur va assister à la cuisine d'une répétition. Répétition de quoi? Il n'y a pas de pièce. Le drame va se faire devant nos yeux. Ultimately, the "epic relativization" produced by the split of the synthesis between subject and object, in Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore, an "epic relativization" which is considered undoubtedly a qualifying characteristic of most modern dramatic works, earns Luigi Pirandello a prominent place among the protagonists of the theatrical revolution of the twentieth century. Significantly, Pirandello placed Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore at the beginning of his collected theatre, Le maschere nude, thus proposing its centrality in the development of his artistic vision. In this play, Pirandello not only suggests but states the impossibility to identify a single source of discourse and an unambiguous instance of signification. Here, one finds an explicit conflict between the author's subjective stance and the fabula that each Character believes to be objective, so that in Sei personaggi, more than in any other text of the trilogy, "the battle of signatures explodes." This unresolved conflict extends also to the supposed "objectivity" of the written text and the subjectivity of author, Actors, Characters and
spectators, a conflict which never finds a true resolution in the Pirandellian text. The absence of a dominant point of view leads the Characters prey to their conflicts. The autonomy of the Characters and the refusal of the author to give them life are, according to Romano Luperini, the substance of a gnostic play. For Luperini the traditional author, with his capacity to interpret, is forfeited. The Characters are in search of a universal truth which no longer exists, and one that the author is consequently unable to assert.\textsuperscript{18}

In Pirandello's play, the actors, once interrupted, are not able to represent the Characters, yet the Characters are necessary, as a matter of fact, indispensable for the mise en scène.

When the capocomico asks the Father where the script is, the answer is "È in noi, signore."\textsuperscript{19} From his first appearance, the Father insistently attempts to become simultaneously character, actor, and, most importantly, "author" of what he believes to be the "true story." He strives to impose his account of what happened and is, in this, opposed by everybody else in the play: the other five Characters, the actors rehearsing Pirandello's \textit{Il giuoco delle parti}, the director and most importantly by Pirandello, the author of \textit{Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore},
himself. According to the playwright not only can an author no longer be auctor, but the existence of any auctor whatsoever has been forfeited as the unity of interpretation in the play collapses.

On the stage this signifying chaos explodes as the actors, who were rehearsing Il giuoco delle parti, are not fit to play the Characters, thus frustrating the mise en scene. In fact, as the Characters live a life of their own and feel in a subjective way, so do the Actors, who are unable to harmonize or at least reconcile themselves with the multiple selves of the Characters. Here one cannot but think back to the scene in which the director casts the leading actress of Il giuoco delle parti as the Stepdaughter. When the actress utters the lines previously narrated by the Stepdaughter, the latter bursts out in laughter and states, "Ma non dicevo per lei, creda! dicevo per me, che non mi vedo affatto in lei, ecco. Non so, non... non m'assomiglia per nulla."[20] Again, Pirandello here attempts to resolve textually the contradiction presented by the staging of a play. The actors as human beings are conditioned by their psychological, social and material existence. Such characteristics undermine the possibility of the actors to feel and essentially to be as the Characters feel and are. With the actual staging of the play this
problem is taken to its extreme as there are actors who are playing actors, who are rehearsing \textit{Il giuoco delle parti}, who want to play the Characters, who are actors, of \textit{Sei Personaggi in cerca d'autore}, a play which the author does not want to write.

At the very core of \textit{Sei personaggi}, one finds the attempt the Characters make as performers to play \textit{Sei personaggi}. They utter their lines first and by doing so generate the text. Through the negation of a pre-existing text (that in the case of \textit{Sei personaggi} is \textit{Il giuoco delle parti}), and the assertion of the incompatibility between the text and the director, the actors and the Characters and ultimately between the Characters themselves, Pirandello poses, textually, the problems relating to artistic creation as a means of knowledge.

There is however one Character, the Son, who is unwilling to be given a fixed role "Non ho proprio nulla, io, da fare qui! Me ne lasci andare, la prego! Me ne lasci andare."\textsuperscript{121} An unwillingness which he strongly reiterates towards the end, when the Father asks him to represent the terrible scene in the garden, and he answers, "Io non rappresento nulla! E l'ho dichiarato fin dal principio!".\textsuperscript{122} Interestingly, in the Preface to the play, Pirandello himself comments on this matter,
C'è un personaggio infatti—quello che "nega" il dramma che lo fa personaggio, il Figlio—che tutto il suo rilievo e il suo valore trae dall'essere personaggio non della "commedia da fare"—che come tale quasi non appare—ma della rappresentazione che io ne ho fatta.\textsuperscript{123}

Pirandello virtually closes his 1925 Preface to the play by arguing that he is quite aware of the confusion introduced by this character, the Son, and yet, in so doing, he reaffirms the centrality of a character who, as he himself says, has been almost peripheral to the play to be; a character who denies the play.\textsuperscript{124}

In a hamletic manner,\textsuperscript{125} Pirandello's Son refuses his fixed role, thus he tries to subvert the mise en scène with his unwillingness to act out his given role. In Sei personaggi, the illusion of the "I" is staged. Such an "I" cannot be recomposed in the character/actor, since each Character, except for the Son, wants to stage his/her story. In the play, the Son is unwilling to represent and therefore is the only one of the Characters who interprets the author's intention, which is, in fact, not to give life to the play, "Io non mi presto! non mi presto! E interpreto così la volontà di chi non volle portarci sulla scena!"\textsuperscript{126} By not wanting to represent, the Son renounces to his existence, something the other Characters are not ready to
do. Paradoxically, the situation is a complete overturn of the one presented in the three short stories that represent the literary antecedent of the play, that is, Personaggi, La tragedia di un personaggio and Colloqui coi personaggi, and where the Characters begged the author to give them life, as well as a reversal of the experience of the other Characters in the play itself Six Characters who all insist that they exist as they are, without accepting any sort of compromise.

However, despite the Son's reluctance, a play will unfold and swiftly move towards its problematic ending. It is at the very close of the most debated upon play by Luigi Pirandello, a dramatist who has been repeatedly accused of being incapable of untangling himself from the tyranny of the written text, that he conjectures the necessity and yet impossibility of a performance text. At the close of the play Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore, at the boy's presumed/real death, fiction and reality merge on Pirandello's stage, "E' morto! Povero ragazzo!" says the actress, while one of the actors utters "Ma che morto! Finzione! finzione!" and the actors from the right, "Finzione? Realtà! realta! E' morto!" and the actors from the left, "No! Finzione! finzione!" (and finally the father, "Ma che finzione! Realtà, realta, signori! realta"127 As all the Characters leave the stage, the capocomico aimlessly
tries to regain control over the performance and thus reality, and exclaims, "Finzione! realtà! Andate al diavolo tutti quanti! Luce! Luce! Luce!" Yet, this last attempt to put order into the chaos is doomed to fail, as the shadows of the Characters regain access to the stage and the Stepdaughter, the one who had constantly insisted on representing her drama, and not narrating it: "Qui non si narra! Qui non si narra!" , ultimately leaves the place of representation, the stage. She rushes into the orchestra and she plunges into the place of narration, the place of history and thus reality.

In Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore, Pirandello did not find any answers to the various questions he had posed. Firstly, he tried to solve, at the level of the text, the problem related to the creation of a performance. While the Characters were in search of an author, Pirandello was searching for a resolution to the problem relating to the creation of an absolute and univocal truth to be expressed by the mise en scène through the Characters. By confiding totally in the written word, in this phase, Pirandello was unable to pose the question at the level of representation, nor was he convinced of the validity of the theatrical medium itself. With Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore, his investigation of truth and of the possibility to create
signification began by dissecting entirely the theatrical apparatus, that same theatre which he dismissed several times as inartistic, and would yet become more and more pivotal to his artistic production.

Pirandello's investigation on the possibility of the characters' total independence from their author and his awareness of the impossibility of creating a single source of signification, together with a close investigation of the workings of the theatre, were to take the playwright to a deeper understanding of drama. On the one hand, in Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore, his search for unity and meaning ended in a multiplication of signifieds. On the other he was not consciously able to realize that the possibility to narrate in presentia had been exhausted completely; in fact he constantly hoped to find a resolution to the crisis of his narrative voice. He continually stated that he was about to and wanted to return to writing narrative works. His theatrical career was to be only a brief parenthesis as he invariably underlined in many interviews and letters:

...nella mia opera di narratore si è aperta questa parentesi del teatro, che mi auguravo si dovesse chiudere presto, e che invece, come purtroppo accade, è rimasta e rimane tuttora
aperta per i molti impegni derivatemi dai primi lavori.\textsuperscript{130}

He concludes this interview by stating that he wants to write a new novel of vast proportions, \textit{Adamo ed Eva}, and thus "mettendo completamente da parte il teatro".\textsuperscript{131} Even \textit{Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore} was to be a novel as the playwright himself states in a letter to his son, Stefano, in 1917: "ho già la testa piena di nuove cose! [...] e una stranezza così triste, così triste: \textit{Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore: romanzo da fare}".\textsuperscript{132} Macchia, in his book \textit{Pirandello, o la stanza della tortura}, writes that

> Aver pensato non a un romanzo, ma a un dramma significava scegliere la via più diretta: dar corpo vivo, saldo a quegli spiriti prepotenti e vaganti.\textsuperscript{133}

And yet he never really returned to his narrative art completely and he continued, obsessed, captivated, and bewitched to turn out dramatic masterpieces, longing for clarity in order to overcome his narrative impasse. He persevered in exploring the possibilities of drama on a journey which would take him from the labyrinths of \textit{Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore} to the magic of \textit{I giganti della montagna}. 
2 His debut as an actor was in 1876 when Craig was only six years old. See Craig, *Index to the story of my days*, 29.
3 Henry Irving (1838-1905) was a leading classical actor of the second half of the Nineteenth century. He headed the most important British theatre company, the Lyceum, from 1878. He was the first actor ever to be knighted for his service in the theatre.
6 Original theatre program of *No trifling for love* at the Edward Gordon Craig Foundation in Florence.
8 Craig, *Index to the story of my days*, 190.
9 Ellen Terry (1847-1928) was an established leading actress of her day, especially after joining the Lyceum headed by Irving. 
12 *The Page* (Kingston on Thames: G.B. Printers, 1898-1901).
13 Original program of the play *Dido and Aeneas* at the E.G. Craig Foundation in Florence.
14 Craig, *Index to the story of my days*, 226.
15 *The Vikings of Helgeland* was written by Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906). Even though Ibsen participated in the stagings of some of his plays, he cannot be considered a "director" because there was no whatsoever interpretative stance taken by him. His only contribution as "stage manager" was to ensure fidelity to the text and correct timing of the actors. 
16 Prior to this latest economic failure, Craig produced and staged, again with no success, *Acis and Galatea* in 1902. He began to call for "total unity" within the mise en scène as he realized that too often the various elements (directing, scenery, writing, acting) clashed. This strategy, at this stage is in embryo but will eventually become the focal point of his theatrical theory.
19 Ibid, 171.
20 Reality for Plato was to be found in the domain of ideas therefore what is perceived by humans on earth is only a copy of the "original and unique" idea. Plato, *The Republic*, Trans. Francis Mac Donald Cornford (London: Oxford University Press, 1941) vv. 595-638. 
21 Ibid.
Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944) was the founder and most important figure of Futurism. He published three manifestos on Futurism. The first of various manifestos was published in Paris on the Figaro, February 20, 1909. His opus can be found in Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Teoria e Invenzione Futurista. Ed. Luciano De Maria (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1968).

Craig, Index to the story of my days, 297.

Eleonara Duse (1858-1924) one of Italy's greatest actors. One should also mention here that Craig was introduced to Eleonora Duse by Isadora Duncan, the celebrated dancer, with whom Craig had a "tormenting yet beautiful" love affair. See Craig, Index to the story of my days, pp.256-291; Craig, Gordon Craig: The story of his Life, pp. 178-222; Ferruccio Marotti, Edward Gordon Craig (Bologna:Cappelli, 1961): pp.81-85; and Isadora Duncan, My life (London: 1928).

Enrico Corradini, who personally attended the staging, wrote about his experience in "Edward Gordon Craig" in Vita d'Arte I.3 (1908), and G.A. Borgese, who also attended the mise en scène, many years later wrote an account of the performance in "Contemporaneità della Duse" in Comoedia VI.9 (1924).

After the debut in Florence, Duse wrote the following note to Craig: "Merci - c'est ma première parole ce matin. J'ai travaillé hier dans le rêve-et lointaine- Vous avez travaillé dans des conditions très pénibles, et d'autant plus je vous dis MERCI. J'ai compris hier soir votre aide et votre force- Encore: MERCI. Je espère que nous travaillerons encore, et avec Liberté et joie. Eleonora." Letter published in Craig, Index to the story of my days, 292.

The performance was brought to Nice and Duse allowed the technicians to shorten Craig's set in order for it to fit onto the new stage. Craig accused Duse of having ruined his art and abandoned the set. Craig, Index to the story of my days, 293.

Marotti, Edward Gordon Craig, 86.

For a detailed description, see Craig, Index to the story of my days, 293; Craig, Gordon Craig: The story of his life, pp. 225-333; Denis Bablet, Le théâtre de Edward Gordon Craig (Paris: L'Arche, 1962): 66-140.


Craig had been in fact invited in 1908 by Stanislavsky to stage in Moscow a production of Hamlet. He was unable to supervise the rehearsals throughout the three years of preparation, and was quite upset when he arrived in Moscow only one week before the premiere to find that many of his stage directions had been changed. He threatened
to have his name erased from the program. Nevertheless the play was performed in January of 1912 with Craig's name on the program. It was an immense success. See, Craig, Gordon Craig: The story of his life, pp. 244-275. An accurate account of the staging can be found in an unsigned article (Terence Philip?) in The Times, January 8, 1912.

For an accurate study on Craig and Appia see Feruccio Marotti, Amleto o dell'oxymoron (Roma: Bulzoni, 1966).


Ibid, 102.

Martin Shaw, Up to now (London: Oxford University Press, 1929):36.

Craig, On the Art of the Theatre, 74.


Craig, On the Art of the Theatre, pp.69-71.


Craig, On the Art of the Theatre, pp. 71-72.

Craig, Towards a New Theatre, p.3.

Craig, Towards a New Theatre, 15.

Craig produced very few "written plays" which were to be staged by puppets: Mr. Fish and Mrs. Bones; The tune the old cow died of; The Gordian knot and Three men of Gotham. All plays are in The Marionnette Florence, 1918-19. Craig did however create several drawings, without any text, which were to be staged.

Craig, Towards a New Theatre, p. 23.


Craig, On the Art of the Theatre, p.52.

Craig, Towards a New Theatre, p. 40.

Craig, On the Art of the Theatre, pp. 32-84. Craig used the German term with clear reference to Friedrich Nietzsche's "Super-Man" theory.


Craig, On the Art of the Theatre, pp. 37-45.
Craig, The Mask, Florence, 1924.
Craig, On the Art of the Theatre, p. 38.
Manuscript entitled Books and Theatres at the E.G. Craig Foundation in Florence.
The conference was held in Rome October 8-14, 1934.
The conference was held in Rome October 8-14, 1934.
A complete list of pseudonyms can be found in Innes, Edward Gordon Craig, pp. 114-115.
The dates here provided are those of the publication of the plays and not those of the first stagings.
It is relevant here only to recall that, in 1959, the Living Theatre staged Tonight We Improvise with great success as they investigated the relationship between theatre and reality. See Peter Biner, The Living Theatre, histoire sans légende (Lausanne: Ed. L'Âge d'Homme-La Cité, 1968). Furthermore, Six Characters in Search of an Author is considered the forerunner of modern theatre. See, Franca Angelini, Teatro e spettacolo nel primo novecento (Roma: Bulzoni, 1993): 44.
Pirandello, "L'azione parlata" in Saggi, poesie e scritti vari, pp. 1015-1018. The essay was first published in Il Marzocco, May 7, 1899.
Craig's argument on Shakespeare's Macbeth can be found in Towards a New Theatre, 24.
Pirandello, Illustratori, attori e traduttori, 224.
Ibid, 224.
Alessandro D'Amico, "Cronologia" in Maschere Nude (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1886)
Lumia di Sicilia (1910), Il Dovere del medico (1911); and Cecè (1913) are commonly considered as "novelle sceneggiate" (short stories adapted for the stage) rather than "drammi" (plays).
It was first published in episodes in La Nuova Antologia beetween April and June 1904.
First published entirely in 1908. L'umorismo (Lanciano: Carabba, 1908).


92 Interview to Pirandello, "En confidence" in Le Temps, July 20, 1925.

93 Claudio Vicentini, Pirandello. Il disagio del teatro (Venezia: Marsilio, 1993). This latest work by Vicentini on Pirandello's theatre is here a precious source for my discussion of the playwright's role in the development of Twentieth century theatre and of his relationship with contemporary theories of the theatre.


95 Vicentini, "Il problema del teatro nell'opera di Pirandello" in Pirandello e il teatro, pp. 9-36.

96 Naturalism was a movement that also involved the theatre and initiated in the second half of Nineteenth century. Its scope was to eliminate artifice from the stage and make theatre the mirror of life with the utmost crudity; a step beyond realism. Its major contributors were Emile Zola (1840-1902), Henri Becque (1837-1899) and André Antoine (1859-1943).


98 As stated earlier the Futurists themselves actually addressed this problem in their various theatrical manifestos as well as in their mises en scène. It is however noteworthy to recall that while they took a quite diverse position Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, the founder of Futurism, emphasized the primary role Six Characters in Search of an Author played in mediating the subversive Futurist positions towards a broader audience, and thus he somewhat asserted the "Futurist" nature of Pirandello's play. See, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Teoria e invenzione futurista, 171.

99 Craig, On the art of the theatre (London: Chelsea, 1911).

100 Pirandello, Illustratori, attori e traduttori in Saggi, poesie scritti vari, 215.


102 Even though, as stage manager and director at the Teatro d'Arte from 1925 to 1928, Pirandello addressed the problems related to the complex relationship between the written text and the mise en scène practically. On this matter, see Chapter II and III.


105 Pirandello, Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore in Maschere nude (1993), 709.

106 Pirandello scorns the behavior of the actors right from the beginning of Sei Personaggi, when he introduces the prima attrice, who not only arrives late but also brings a dog with her to the rehearsal.
It is certainly relevant to note here that some of the most important contributions to a contemporary theory of acting were formulated during Pirandello's lifetime. Amongst these theories, one must mention Konstantin Stanislavsky's *My life in art* (London: Bles, 1924) and *An actor prepares* (London: Theatre Arts Books, 1936); Adolphe Appia's *La mise en scène du drame wagnérien* (Paris: Léon Challey, 1892), and *L'Oeuvre d'Art Vivant* (Genève-Paris: Edition Atar, 1921); and Edward Gordon Craig's *On the art of the theatre* (London: William Heinemann, 1911). Later on, of course, a major contribution will come from Bertolt Brecht, and particularly with his *Schriften zum Theater. Über eine nicht- aristotelische Dramatik* (Frankfurt am Main: Siegfried Unseld Suhrkamp Verlag, 1957).


Pirandello, "Prefazione" to *Sei Personaggi in Maschere nude*, vol. II (1993), 656.


*Szondi, Teoria del dramma moderno*, pp. 107-10

Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) French actor, director, poet and playwright. His work has greatly influenced contemporary stage. Actively involved in theatrical research he founded the Théâtre Alfred Jarry in 1927. His influence is widespread even today.


Romano Luperini, "L'atto del significare allegorico nei Sei personaggi e in Enrico IV" in *Rivista di studi pirandelliani* IX.6-7, pp.9-19.


Ibid, 712.

Ibid, 748.

Ibid, 749.

Pirandello, "Prefazione" to *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* in *Maschere nude*, vol. II (1993), 666.

Pirandello, "Prefazione" to *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* in *Maschere nude*, vol. II (1993), 667.

There seems to be a parallel between the Son and Hamlet as also the latter refuses to act out his "given role" and yet, after many hesitations, he does execute his "captious duty."

127 Ibid, 757.
128 Ibid.
131 Ibid.
2.1 *Enrico IV*: the perfect theatrical machine

*Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* deals directly with the problems relating to the *mise en scène*, as it unfolds entirely on a stage. Yet, one must note that the play that immediately following *Sei personaggi*, Pirandello's *Enrico IV*, can be considered a metaphor of the theatrical event as well. Written in 1921, only a few months after he completed the first version of *Sei Personaggi in cerca d'autore*, *Enrico IV* was staged for the first time in 1922.2

The title of the play itself presents some anomalies within the body of Pirandello's works. Firstly he uses the name of the main character of the drama, thus renouncing to the usual metaphoric titles of his other plays. Secondly, an absolute novelty is represented by Pirandello's utilization of the term "tragedy," that is used for the first time in the title of one of his plays which here reads, *Enrico IV, tragedia in tre atti*.3
As in Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore, one can acknowledge three, carefully knit, central themes in Enrico IV: a) the relationship between the fictitious and the real; b) the rapport between madness and knowledge; c) a discourse on theatre and theatricality. The first and third motifs are powerfully present in both Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore and Enrico IV, and yet they are developed differently. The second theme, which is somewhat present throughout Pirandello's work, even though in a more or less marginal manner, in Enrico IV becomes pivotal.

Before discussing Enrico IV as a metaphor of the theatrical event, it is relevant to discuss a peculiarity of this dramatic text. In the page on which the dramatis personae are listed, Pirandello wrote a stage direction which reads:

N.B. - Sarà chiuso dentro una parentesi quadra [ ] un breve passo del I atto che nella rappresentazione della tragedia sarà bene omettere per la necessaria rapidità dell'azione.

Thus, Pirandello suggests that the following long segment be omitted in the mise en scène:
ENRICO IV

[Questo è un momento solenne e decisivo. Potrei, guardate, ora stesso, mentre parlo con voi, accettar l'ajuto dei vescovi lombardi e impossessarmi del Pontefice, assediandolo qui nel Castello; correre a Roma a eleggervi un antipapa; porgere la mano all'alleanza con Roberto Guiscardo. - Gregorio VII sarebbe perduto! - Resisto alla tentazione, e credetemi che sono saggio. Sento l'aura dei tempi e la maestà di chi sa essere quale deve essere: un Papa! - Vorresti ora ridere di me, vedendomi così? Sareste tanti stupidi, perché non capireste che sapienza politica mi consiglia ora quest'abito di penitenza. Vi dico che le parti, domani, potrebbero essere invertite! E che fareste voi allora? Ridereste per caso del Papa in veste di prigioniero? No. - Saremmo pari. - Un mascherato io, oggi, da penitente; lui, domani, da prigioniero. Ma guaj a chi non sa portare la sua maschera, sia da Re, sia da Papa. - Forse egli è ora un po troppo crudele; questo si.]

It is apparent that this strategy stands in great contrast with what Pirandello had written in Illustratori, Traduttori Attori, where he insisted on the necessity of performing plays as they were written. He had gone as far as stating that if this were not possible the play itself was of no value. It seems that the playwright is drawing here a net distinction between the written text and its performance. This adjustment to the mise en scène on behalf of the author surely unveils Pirandello's awareness that the
stage has its own pace and that the playwright's text requires to serve the performance and not vice versa as he had stated in his earlier essays. In "Teatro e Letteratura", an essay written in 1918, Pirandello strongly criticized those authors who wrote specifically for the stage. Those authors, Pirandello stated, who write not for the text but for its translation (its staging) are unworthy.

The long passage he believes should be omitted, would in fact weigh down noticeably the already complicated "machination" of the plot in Enrico IV. The dramatic text would be practically impossible to follow for an audience in a theatre, whereas a reader of the play could re-read it several times. In one of the revisions Pirandello made to the text, specifically in 1923, he went as far as suggesting two segments of the text not be performed.

If one analyses the text of Enrico IV closely, as we have done with Sei Personaggi in cerca d'autore, a conflict of "texts" and "narrative instances" is being proposed within the play, and such a conflict is nothing but a reflection of the contrast between what is real for Enrico IV and what it is for all the other characters. In Sei Personaggi in cerca d'autore, the capocomico insisted the actor utter all the lines, even though "ridiculous," of the
text *Il giuoco delle parti.*' Once the Characters arrive on stage, the capocomico asks the prompter to write down the Characters' lines as their story unfolds. In the preface to the play, as in the three short stories which inspired the play, Pirandello also theorized the existence of the Characters' text which pre-exists the written word of the author. This would seem a first attempt, on Pirandello's part, to investigate the exigency of determining the origin of a narrative or theatrical text - be it a priori, the Characters' or the playwright's, which in *Sei Personaggi in cerca d'autore* is *Il giuoco delle parti*, or produced as it is uttered by the Characters themselves. The outcome is, however, that none of the "texts" is actually enacted.

In *Enrico IV*, Pirandello goes beyond the purely aesthetic and theoretical contingency by presenting three "internal" and two "external" texts, well-defined and different from one another. Thus, internally one finds three texts: the characters' in the twentieth century, the characters' in character, and Enrico IV's. Externally it is possible to detect the text of the reader and that of the mise en scène.

The actors' inability to impersonate the Characters in *Sei Personaggi in cerca d'autore*, the impossibility, that is, to transfer the "word" of the Characters to the stage
and thus to life, in Enrico IV is overcome. Enrico IV is able to incarnate the fictitious and the real; without resolving however which is which. He, as the Father in Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore, states:

ENRICO IV
E' il loro modo di pensare, il loro modo di vedere, di sentire: ciascuno ha il suo! Avete anche il vostro eh? [...] Parole! Parole! che ciascuno intende e ripete a modo suo.12

Those words Enrico IV, as "double actor," is capable of controlling and mastering, and not through an authoritative stance by which imposing meaning onto them, as the Characters in Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore unsuccessfully attempt to do, but by taking total control over words' ineffectiveness to portray the real. He takes charge thanks to his awareness, as both Enrico IV and the Unnamed,13 of the impossibility of being. He achieves this via his conscious disguise, as he pretends being insane, be it as Enrico IV or as the Unnamed, as both are fraudulent.

Such a disguise extends from the characters to the set design. In fact the setting of the play can be seen as depicting a theatre stage. The house in which Enrico IV lives has been re-decorated to suit and mirror the authentic German Emperor's time: the year nine hundred circa. The
later being a true historic figure while the former lives believing/pretending he is after having hit his head during a theme masquerade party. In *Enrico IV* we are not in the presence of a pure "theatre within the theatre" situation as in *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* and as it will be in *Ciascuno a suo modo* and *Questa sera si recita a soggetto*, but at the same time, it is immediately clear in *Enrico IV* that what is seen on stage is "theatrical."

Such an awareness of the theatrical nature of the event is achieved by making the readers/spectators immediately aware that the action takes place in the 1920s even though the set design and the actors costumes are of a much earlier era. A *mise en abîme* is obtained, one which is not totally juxtaposed as in the trilogy of the "theatre within the theatre," and yet one which is a reflection and a disclosure of a multiple deception. Indeed, it is immediately possible to identify at least three major deceptions: a) the reconstruction of a historical setting in which the action of the play takes place with its Machiavellian purpose; b) evidence of Pirandello's era; c) the actual time in which the play is performed.

Pirandello's opening stage directions in this sense are illuminating, as first he sets the action in a precise historical context:
Salone nella villa rigidamente parato in modo da figurare quella che poté essere la sala del trono di Enrico IV nella casa imperiale di Goslar.

and yet he continues by blurring the time frame as he writes:

Ma in mezzo agli antichi arredi due grandi ritratti a olio moderni...

The various levels of time mingle throughout the play as Bertoldo and Arialdo comment on the "modern" portraits mentioned in the stage directions,

BERTOLD (guardando) Quella li? Eh, mi sembra, scusa, prima di tutto una bella stonatura: due quadri moderni qua in mezzo a tutta questa rispettabile antichità.

ARIALDO Hai ragione. E difatti prima non c'erano. Ci sono due nicchie, là dietro quei quadri. Ci si dovevano collocare due statue, scolpite secondo lo stile del tempo.

And the unexpected arrival of the old servant, Giovanni, "in tails," visually reinforces the contrast between the "now" and "then": "BERTOLD: Oh! E come? Qua dentro, lui?" And, in reply, "LANDOLFO: Un uomo del mille e novecento! Via!" Soon after Enrico IV "reveals" himself and night falls,
ENRICO IV
...S'è fatto bujo, qua.

ORDULFO (subito facendosi avanti)
Vuole che vada a prendere la lampa?

ENRICO IV (con ironia)
La lampa, si...Credete che non sappia che, appena volto le spalle con la mia lampa ad olio per andare a dormire, accendete la luce elettrica per voi - qua e anche là nella sala del trono? - Fingo di non vederla.\textsuperscript{18}

The idea of time is conveyed by closely linking the set design and the historical costumes worn by the characters to the dramatic action or by linking them by contrast. In fact the bizarre and the incongruous relationship between the actors' lines and the setting and/or the actors' actions and the setting concoct the schizoid structure of the play.

As a matter of fact, Enrico IV as a whole dwells on the setting of the play right from the start. Landolfo, Arialdo, Ordulfo and a servant comment and discuss the historic decor of the room at length. They try to reconstruct historic events through the set design. A common praxis of the theatre in Pirandello's time was in fact, that of reconstructing, as precisely as possible, the stage for representing historic plays. As Landolfo puts it,
...il nostro vestiario si presenterebbe a fare una bellissima comparsa in una rappresentazione storica, a uso di quelle che piacciono tanto oggi nei teatri.¹⁹

At the beginning of his speech Landolfo seems to be commenting on the naturalistic/historical theatre which was, as he states, very popular at the beginning of the twentieth century. A form of theatre which Pirandello moved away from further with Enrico IV.

In fact all the characters of the play are aware they are playing a part, better still, they are "performing" only to help Enrico IV regain what they believe to be his lost sanity. Their conformity reassures them of their correctness, of their being "real." Furthermore they all have studied the historical circumstances in which the action should take place. Even though one of the characters, Bertoldo, realizes he has prepared for the wrong period, in fact he has mistaken Henry IV of France with Henry IV of Germany, there is no real crisis of interpretation. He is immediately convinced of his error and laments that he will not be able to play the appropriate role having wasted time studying the wrong period. His complaining only focuses on the time he has dissipated in preparing for the part.²⁰ The characters as actors are conscious of the peculiar condition
in which they are in. They however believe that there is a real self - when they're not in character - opposed to a fictitious one. Landolfo comments on their unusual situation,

...Siamo peggio dei veri consiglieri segreti di Enrico IV; perché si, nessuno neanche a loro aveva dato da rappresentare una parte; ma essi, almeno, non sapevano di doverla rappresentare: la rappresentavano perché la rappresentavano: non era una parte, era la loro vita [...] Noi altri, invece, siamo qua, vestiti così, in questa bellissima Corte... per fare che? Niente...Come sei pupazzi appesi al muro, che aspettano qualcuno che li prende e che li muova così o così e faccia dir loro qualche parola.21

Thus every character believes that, when she/he is not pretending to be someone else (a historical figure of Henry IV's time), they are her/himself.

One could look at Enrico IV's "personal plot" also as Pirandello's investigation into a director's and/or an actor's system. In the play the characters are bound to follow the Emperor's "directions," notwithstanding their attempts to overturn Enrico's status quo. Indeed, Enrico IV has often been seen also as a comment on the impossibility of an understanding of the real as fictitious worlds, at different levels, antagonize.22 Just as in Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore the boundaries between the fictitious and the
real are commented upon by the Sicilian playwright, as he presents a conflict among the various characters. However, in Enrico IV there are only two fronts: on the one hand Matilde Spina, her daughter Frida, Carlo di Nolli, Tito Belcredi, the doctor, Dionisio Genoni, and four fake advisers and on the other Enrico IV. Unlike the Father's and the other characters' failed attempt to impose his/their reality on each other, and ultimately onto the play, in Sei Personaggi in cerca d'autore, Enrico IV's vision of "reality" will, in conclusion, be imposed onto the other characters, who will have to accept, and above all, suffer the consequences of the world Enrico IV has manufactured.

At the end of the pièce, Enrico IV's vision seems, and is, more real than that of the other characters. In fact, once Enrico IV returns to his "modern identity" and the characters think they have redeemed the present, he executes his "script" thoroughly, and thus imposes his world onto the others. It is relevant here to note that in Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore the boundaries between the seemingly unreal and the seemingly real are always separated. In that play, one finds both the Characters opposing the cast rehearsing Il giuoco delle parti, and the Characters confronting one another. Each persona, be it a member of the theatre company or a Character in search of an author, has
his/her own individual understanding of the real. Each and everyone of the Characters, in bona fide, recount/portray what presumably did or did not take place, and the actors, who were rehearsing try, unsuccessfully to impersonate the Characters.

In Enrico IV, instead, the main character, abandons his "role" of Emperor, and confides in the four fake advisers at the end of the second act of the play. He suddenly astonishes the other characters by revealing that he was aware of the masquerade all along; that he was only pretending to be insane.

ENRICO IV
...Buffoni! Buffoni! Buffoni! - Un pianoforte di colori! Appena la toccavo: bianca, rossa, gialla, verde...E quell'alto là: Pietro Damiani. _ Ah! Ah! Perfetto! Azzeccato! - S'è spaventato di ricomparirvi davanti. [...] 

[to Bertoldo] Non capisci ? Non vedi come li paro, come li concio, come me li faccio comparire davanti, buffoni spaventati! E si spaventano solo di questo, oh: che stracci loro addosso la maschera buffa e li scopra travestiti, come se non li avessi costretti io stesso a mascherarsi, per questo mio gusto qua di fare il pazzo!

LANDOLFO, ARIALDO and ORDULFO (sconvolti, trasecolati, guardandosi tra loro) Come! Che dice! Ma dunque?
ENRICO IV (si volta subito alle loro esclamazioni e grida, imperioso)
Basta! Finiamola! Mi sono seccato!23

Thus Enrico IV, as a character is disjointed, almost chaotic, as he comes out of one character and dresses the part of another, only to return to the former. Yet, he is totally in control. Interestingly, when Enrico IV is out of "character," his name is never mentioned, only the third person singular pronoun "lui" is used to refer to him. His "real name" is not in the list of characters, where most of the other characters are presented with either both their "real" name and the name they go under while re-enacting the historical period of Henry IV of Germany, or both their names and roles are mentioned in the text itself. Thus the sole entry "...Enrico IV" and the sole usage of the pronoun for the main character depicts the split of two characters within one: the "madman," who actually acts as if he were the Emperor of Germany, living a thousand years earlier, Enrico IV, and the Unnamed character who, instead, is described, at the beginning of the play, as the ridiculous, at times alienated, Twentieth century man as he was before the "tragic" fall.
DONNA MATILDE
...Era [Enrico IV] così dottore. Un po' strano, certo; ma ricco di vita: estroso.

BELCREDI
Non dico che simulasse l'esaltazione. Al contrario, anzi: s'esaltava spesso veramente. Ma potrei giurare, dottore, che si vedeva subito, lui stesso, nell'atto della sua esaltazione[...] Dico di più: sono certo che doveva soffrirne. Aveva a volte, scatti di rabbia comicissimi contro se stesso. [...] Concertatore famoso di quadri plastici, di danze, di recite di beneficenza; così per ridere, beninteso! Ma recitava benissimo, sa.*

While the dichotomy reality/fiction presented in Sei Personaggi in cerca d'autore is between the Characters and the actors and amongst the Characters themselves, in Enrico IV, it invests only one character, Enrico IV; nullifying the tangible separation between the presumably fictitious and the presumably real. As both Enrico IV and the Unnamed are the same persona in the Tragedy, the dichotomy has now invested the personal sphere. The split, in Enrico IV, is no longer external - I and you/ us and them - it has become intimate, almost visceral. Only a year earlier in a newspaper interview Pirandello explained his theatre.

Quando uno vive, vive e non si vede. Orbene, fate che si veda, nell'atto di
vivere, in preda alle sue passioni, ponendogli uno specchio davanti: o resta attontito e sbalordito del suo stesso aspetto, o torce gli occhi per non vedersi, o sdegnato tira uno sputo alla sua immagine, o irato avventa un pugno per infrangerla; e se piangeva, non può più piangere, e se rideva, non può più ridere, e che so io. Insomma, nasce un guajo per forza. Questo guajo è il mio teatro.25

Pirandello's insistence on the usage of specific theatrical terms in Enrico IV, allow a twofold reading of the play. Actually, the world becomes a stage as Enrico IV and the Unnamed can subsist only as characters. Paradoxically he is more real than the others who unknowingly live as entities who are actually entrapped in the maze of identities manufactured by others. As Enrico IV renders: one can exist only if one ceases to live and decides, with premeditated tenacity, to simulate endlessly. In this manner one has total mastery over the precarious and the unfixed: life. By impersonating Henry IV of Germany, Enrico IV is incontrovertibly a character, one and inalienable, as established by history.

Hence from a close look at the problems relating to the characters and the actors in Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore--specifically, a character's right to be given life, the actors' acting techniques, the texts and their
staging—in Enrico IV, we progress to a comprehensive meditation on the mise en scène, the stage designing, and the stage directing and acting. In fact, the actors impersonating the various historical figures have no trouble in presenting them. What instead is obvious is Enrico IV's manipulation of the actors. If on the whole he is maliciously deceiving them, as they comply to his scheme, at one point he speaks to them as a theatrical director would.

ENRICO IV
Non capisci? Non vedi come li paro, come li concio, come me li faccio comparire davanti, buffoni spaventati! E si spaventano solo di questo oh: che stracci loro addosso la maschera buffa e li scopra travestiti; come se non li avessi costretti io stesso a mascherarsi, per questo mio gusto qua di fare il pazzo.26

Later he executes his "directorial function" in front of our eyes:

ENRICO IV

(to Arioaldo)
Ecco, tu così...

(and then to Bertoldo)
E tu così...

Finally, he himself sits down and exclaims:

E io qua...
...Ma guardate, guardate che magnifico quadro notturno: l'Imperatore tra i suoi fidi consiglieri...

He exercises immediate and complete control over what he has invented: reality. Paradoxically Enrico IV has forced onto the others something that is seemingly removed from what they consider to be real, but which he can manipulate and thus dominate. In a Godlike fashion, he has created a world which, in the end, is "more real than the real," even though it is removed from what is commonly considered tangible: the factual world.

Enrico IV brings the problems relating to the theatre and the creation of signification, which Pirandello confronted in *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore*, to a new, more intricate point in his search for the "real." He is becoming more and more aware of the inevitability of using the theatre to pursue his investigation of the real, as only theatre, not narrative, can abide with its multiple levels of experience. It is not by chance that Pirandello participated actively in the rehearsals of *Enrico IV*, "explaining his intentions to the actors and annotating his observations on the performance to the producers."
2.2 *Ciascuno a suo modo*: the house of mirrors

The scope of Pirandello's playwriting broadens as he realizes the theatre's immeasurable potential. This is immediately ascertained by his next meta-theatrical play in which he amplifies the possible levels of representation by moving the action of the play out of the theatre itself. *Ciascuno a suo modo* represents the expansion of Pirandello's displacement of codified theatrical aesthetics. In fact, an additional layer is attached as the action of the drama is to begin in front of the theatre, outside, as the spectators begin to enter the building and before they take their seats in the orchestra. This is not a gratuitous self-serving stratagem to lure audiences to his play, nor a purely formal novelty. In fact, it enhances the shadowy boundaries between the unreal and the real. Pirandello writes in his stage directions to the play

*La rappresentazione di questa commedia dovrebbe cominciare sulla strada, o più propriamente sullo spiazzo davanti al teatro, con l'annunzio (gridato da due o tre strilloni) e la vendita d'un*
"Giornale della Sera" appositamente composto su un foglio volante, di un modo che possa figurare come un'edizione straordinaria, sul quale a grossi caratteri e bene in vista, nel mezzo, fosse inserita questa indiscrezione in esemplare stile giornalistico:³⁰

Pirandello then gives a graphic account of the newspaper edition which is entitled

"IL SUICIDIO DELLO SCULTORE LA VELA E LO SPETTACOLO DI QUESTA SERA AL TEATRO ...(Il nome del teatro)."³¹

The newspaper clip reads that Pirandello's play Ciascuno a suo modo to be staged that same evening was inspired by a tragic event: Mr. La Vela's suicide. He in fact, had discovered his fiancee, a famous actress, A.M. in an intimate situation with Baron M. Instead of punishing the two lovers, he committed suicide. To make things even more interesting and controversial the news clip continues

...Sembra che il barone N. dovesse sposare la sorella del La Vela. [...] E' molto probabile che se n'abbia qualche sgradevole ripercussione in teatro questa sera.³²

A fairly long segment of the stage direction dedicated to Amelia Moreno, earlier referred to as A. M. is noteworthy. She is with three men who are trying to persuade her to leave the theatre and even though the segment in not in quotation marks, it is clearly written in direct speech.
The three men actually exhort her to allow them to take her away from the theatre. Really extraordinary, at the end of this first stage direction, is a passage in which there are lines, in quotation marks, which the actor playing the Baron should utter.


This is extraordinary because the stage direction proceeds the page with the list of characters thus it anticipates the play's text itself. The actor playing the character of the Baron is actually beginning his role before the play itself is in existence. Pirandello himself often remarks in *Ciascuno a suo modo* on the necessity of displaying various levels of reality from its very start as he separates the fictitious characters from the "real" ones on the *dramatis personae* page. He divides the characters into two distinct
categories: those "Fissati nella commedia sul palcoscenico" from those who are "Momentanei nel ridotto del teatro."\textsuperscript{34}

Such a separation was already present in Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore where one finds "I PERSONAGGI DELLA COMMEDIA DA FARE" and "GLI ATTORI DELLA COMPAGNIA."\textsuperscript{35} A significant difference is that the second group of characters in Ciascuno a suo modo are not actors but "real" people who either "inspired" the play or are "attending" its performance. Adding yet another layer to the play. In his long stage direction after the end of the first act of Ciascuno a suo modo, Pirandello comments:

\ldots La presenza in teatro, tra gli spettatori della commedia, della Moreno e del Nuti stabilirà allora per forza un primo piano di realtà, più vicino alla vita, lasciando in mezzo gli spettatori alieni, che discutono e s'appassionano soltanto di una finzione d'arte. Si assisterà poi nel secondo intermezzo corale al conflitto tra questi tre piani di realtà, allorché da un piano all'altro i personaggi veri del dramma assalteranno quelli finti della commedia e gli spettatori che cercheranno di interporsi.\textsuperscript{36}

Pirandello then goes as far as suggesting two segments of the play be improvised by the actors. The brief part that takes place out side of the theatre should be "a soggetto" and the entire "PRIMO INTERMEZZO CORALE" "si potrebbe
recitare a soggetto" except for "le battute più importanti." 37

Pirandello himself has become, as Enrico IV had, supreme manipulator. His manipulation of the audience's response annihilates the separation between the mise en scène and the spectators themselves. Pirandello has complete control of the mise en scène, on paper that is. The time has come to take his investigation further, right to the heart of drama, of theatre: the stage itself.

Only a year after writing Ciascuno a suo modo Pirandello with his son, Stefano, Orio Vergani, Massimo Bontempelli, Giovanni Cavicchioli, Giuseppe Prezzolini, Antonio Beltramelli, Leo Ferrero, Lamberto Picasso, Guido Salvini, Maria Letizia Celli and Claudio Argenteri, establishes his own theatre company: "Teatro degli Undici" o "dei Dodici" o "Teatro d'Arte." Pirandello is its "capocomico." 38

2.3 *Sagra del Signore della Nave*: the unrealizable theatre

As discussed in the first chapter the reasons for which Pirandello placed *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* at the
beginning of his collected plays *Maschere Nude*, was not because it was chronologically written at the beginning of his theatrical career, but because it is crucial to an understanding of his dramatic production, as well as to emphasize the importance of this work in the evolution of his dramatic artistic creation. *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore*, thus, breaks with the traditional structure of bourgeois drama and explores new possibilities of producing signification in a theatrical context.

In discussing Pirandello as director, one must likewise stress the fact that he decided to begin his career of "capocomico" in 1925, at the Teatro d'Arte in Rome, producing and directing a double feature: *The Gods of the Mountain* and *Sagra del Signore della Nave*. The Pirandellian play is adapted from a short story published in 1916, while the other is a play written in 1910 by the Irish playwright, Lord Dunsany.

Pirandello's decision to inaugurate in this way his direction of the Teatro d'Arte, on April 2, 1925 is therefore extremely important and requires an investigation into his reasons for such a choice. Furthermore, the probing of the *Sagra del Signore della Nave* will allow us to analyze the state of Pirandello's reflections on the theatre in a year that can be considered crucial in the development of
his theatrical career. In fact, after having at length produced on paper both the innumerable intrinsic conflicts of the theatrical event and explored its potential, the playwright decided to personally experience the enigmatic world of the stage. His direct encounter with the stage is actually three fold: firstly he had to deal with the physicality of the stage, secondly he had to work with actual actors whom he often ridiculed in his essays, and lastly, he determined that often the written page, although complete and integral, was not fit for staging.

It is noteworthy to state that Pirandello hesitated before accepting the request of some of Italy's most influential theatre artists to direct the Teatro d'Arte, to renew the Italian stage by presenting a generous repertoire of new European playwrights' texts. The Teatro d'Arte, also known as "Teatro degli Undici" or "Teatro dei Dodici," as stated, was established in 1924 by Pirandello, together with his son Stefano and other prominent intellectuals, but it was the playwright's total commitment to the project which gave it life. In a letter to Ugo Oietti Pirandello writes:

Saprò che mi sono messo anima e corpo a un'impresa nuova: fondo un teatro, senza che me ne venga nulla in tasca, per "amore d'Arte". Cioè anche un pò per vergogna di
Pirandello's goal was to produce "quality" plays and to oppose what was being staged in Italy in that period. This is remarkable especially if one realizes that as soon as his "adventure" at the Teatro d'Arte ended in 1928, he then debased the role of the director in his play *Stasera si recita a sossetto*. In fact the director is there portrayed as an infamous character who undermines what Pirandello considered art, the text of a play.

From the point of view of the staging, Pirandello capocomico presents one with many novelties if compared with Pirandello the playwright: the *Sagra del Signore della Nave* appeared as an almost cinematic orchestration of occasional moments during a peasant feast. The dialogue, always central in Pirandello's previous plays, is almost peripheral in this play, in which sight and sound hold sway on the stage, as reported in the review of the play published in the daily *Corriere d'Italia*:

> Nella Sagra la visione ed il suono dominavano la scena: la folla rumorosa, le urla dei venditori, i balli, le risse, la processione, la luce ed i colori diventavano protagonisti; ed il tutto abilmente sincronizzato e reso...
uniforme dalla direzione artistica di Pirandello."

His directorial innovations were promptly noticed by contemporary critics who, notwithstanding the praise for Pirandello's "artistic direction," did not display any appreciation whatsoever of the play itself. In fact many were surprised that Pirandello had chosen to undertake his directorial debut at the Teatro d'Arte with the "peasant drama" Sagra del Signore della Nave. However a closer investigation of the pièce brings about the emergence of a stimulating discussion by Pirandello's thematic quest for a vivid insight into the theatrical event of his times.

Political allusions have readily been pointed out by many critics who saw in the Sagra del Signore della Nave a critique of the Fascist regime. In particular this political undercurrent has been detected especially towards the end when the crowd regains its composure, a composure which "in qualche modo è parallelo alle iniziative ideologiche, alla manipolazione del consenso attuata dal fascismo." Even though the play has often been seen as a metaphor of Fascism it is important to underline that in this play, Pirandello intended to meditate on the state of the theatre in Italy in the 1920s, (with all the political implications this
carries). This is emphasized by the intrinsic theatrical content of Sagra del Signore della Nave.

On opening night, moments before the beginning of the performance, in a brief speech Pirandello declared that "l'intento è di promuovere la rinascita del teatro in Italia." Pirandello had become more aware of the importance of the fruition of a theatrical pièce at the level of its staging. This can be seen in the "unusual," for Pirandello that is, construction of the staging of the Sagra del Signore della Nave. In fact in his review of the play Silvio D'Amico noticed that,

...la prima della Sagra è stata un'orgia di colori tra lo strepito del baccanale e gli inni religiosi, tra il gemito dei porci accorati e il mea culpa dei pentimenti."

He also pointedly observed that, thanks to the synchronicity of all the elements of the staging, Pirandello had created an atmosphere of "tragica nostalgia spirituale." The key word in D'Amico's review is "synchronicity" as all aspects of the staging were combined and given equal importance. As mentioned earlier, in Illustratori, attori e traduttori, Pirandello had written that the text, and only the text, was to be considered art. His involvement in all aspects of the mise en scène denotes an expansion of his vision of the theatrical event.
By directing this play, and by having spent time on the movements the actors were to perform, by investigating the possibilities of light, and finally by coordinating the staging completely, Pirandello was, for the first time, seeing the mise en scène as the "real thing."

In the Sagra del Signore della Nave, one also finds a true proliferation of actors onto the stage, so much so that it seems that the spectators themselves are overcome by the actors. When comparing this play to Pirandello's previous dramatic works, the most notable innovation is indeed the number of actors required for the mise en scène: one hundred and thirty in total. This is certainly an indication of the emphasis of the visual over the audio. The theatrical highlights of the mise en scène continue in the opening stage directions. Pirandello insists on the necessity of having the orchestra in communication with the stage. This provokes a process of mise en abîme, a process of continuous reflection which becomes cipher of the deep reflective nature of the Sagra del Signore della Nave in particular and of theatre in general. Pirandello wrote in the opening stage directions:

Per la rappresentazione di questa Sagra sarà necessario predisporre un congiungimento del palcoscenico con la sala del teatro. Appena gli spettatori di buono stomaco avranno preso
posto, un ponticello di passaggio alto circa due palmi e mezzo si drizzerà, all'alzarsi del sipario, lungo il corridojo tra le due ali delle poltrone, mediante un congenio meccanico che potrà così drizzarlo come tenerlo appiattito al suolo. E la varia gente che si recherà alla festa, signori e popolani, beghine e miracolati del Signore della nave, venditori d'ogni mercanzia, sonatori ambulanti, contadini, ecc., entreranno dalla porta d'ingresso nella sala, alle spalle degli spettatori; traverseranno su quel ponticello il corridojo e saliranno sul palcoscenico, che rappresenterà una parte dello spiazzo davanti la chiesetta di campagna.

The union of the stage with the orchestra by means of a bridge emphasizes the continuity between the "theatrical artifice" and "reality." This expedient, together with the first word of the title of the play "sagra" (feast), which often has a distinguishing pagan ring to it, or at least a mix of Christian and pagan attributes, sets the tone for the entire play. It is not by chance that the play begins with the a totally mercerized event. Everyone on stage is preparing everything that is needed in order for the participants of the feast to spend the day in a pagan manner, eating and drinking. The worldly/animalistic necessities are the focus of this first part. The economical implications of the feast are also widely accounted for as the vendors are preoccupied only with selling their goods
and ensuring that their vending spot will guarantee the highest possible profits

BERCIO D'UN DOLCIERE
Crocanti, crocanti, biscotti anaciati!

BERCIO D'UN GELATAJO
Lo scialacuore, lo scialacuore! Un soldo la giara, lo scialacuore

BERCIO D'UN COCOMERAJO
Taglia ch'è rosso! Taglia ch'è rosso!

BERCIO DI PESCIVENDOLI
Triglie e merluzzi venuti d'ora!

Biscuits, watermelons and cod are the soul of the feast, they are not simple elements of the decorum of the staging, but are and become more and more throughout the pièce, microstructures of the mise en scène. This scene inevitably brings to mind a passage of the Gospel according to John (2:13) in which Jesus goes to Jerusalem.

And he found in the temple those selling cattle and sheep and doves and the money brokers in their seats. So, after making a whip of ropes, he drove all those with the sheep and cattle out of the temple, and he poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.

This situation is parallel to the opening scene of the Sagra del Signore della Nave. In the following passage of the Gospel according to John, Christ will avenge the
sacredness of the site and will reclaim the place of God. inorder for this to be achieved, it is necessary to destroy the temple and rebuild a new one. Such a condition is similar to the state of the theatre in Italy in Pirandello's time. In fact the theatre had become a merely fashionable activity and it had lost the fundamental role of educator it had held in antiquity. The rapport between art and theatre had been lost and it had been reduced to a "mestiere scaduto, disprezzato che versava in malo stato.";

It is significant that at the beginning of the play there are no references to the sacredness of the event. Only with the appearance of two sailors, one old and the other young, the first of many oppositions present in the text, one finds the introduction of the sacred element.

...si vedranno venire due marinaj miracolati del Signore della Nave: uno vecchio e l'altro giovane; il vecchio alto ma curvo, con faccia legnosa e quasi nera, duri e lisci capelli grigi, duri occhi adirati, la barba a collana; il giovane tozzo e forte, con larga faccia ridente [...] sul petto una tabella votiva, appesa al collo, nella quale sarà dipinto un mare blu in tempesta, che non potrebbe essere più blu di così, e il naufragio della barchetta col suo bravo name scritto grosso grosso a poppa, che ciascuno possa leggerlo bene, e tra le nuvole sguarciate il Signore della Nave che appare e fa il miracolo.\textsuperscript{54}
Both characters have received the grace and have witnessed a miracle. They both have a sign hanging from their necks on which the miracle they received is reproduced. Just as the young sailor sings lode to the Lord of the Ship, together with the other sailor and devoted women, this sacred moment is immediately undermined by the arrival of two laborers accompanied by a drunken slut. Again, as before, Pirandello's text proceeds through oppositions. In fact the first worker is "gentile, civilino, con una barbeta da malato, e la chitarra a tracollo", while the other worker is "malmesso e sguajato."

In direct opposition to the sacred moment evoked by the two sailors and the devoted women, we are suddenly presented with the slut who is "di sconcia grassezza e violentamente imbellettata seduta con le gambe discoste." It is the appearance of the slut, which, by reflecting the profanities of the market scene, disarticulates the humoristic procedure. In Pirandello's universe, after a reflective stage, this process normally produces the "sentimento del contrario." In fact, it was in his essay On Humor published in 1908 that Pirandello called for a strategy which would enable an understanding of the universe.

The arrival of a young teacher, who tries to present himself as the typical Pirandellian raisonneur, together
with the arrival of the "mastro-medico (dottore artigianale)" moves the attention towards a conceptual understanding of the feast. The young teacher is,

magro, pallido e biondo, vestito di nero: spirante. Poeta in petto, difende dall'ironia dei digiuni e dall'oscena brutalità delle quotidiane esperienze la fede incorruttibile nei valori ideali della vita e sopra tutto l'umana dignità.

In the short story published eight years earlier there is no description of the young teacher, whereas in the play he seems to be described satirically. He is in fact slim, pale and dressed in black. With this pungent portrait of the raisonneur, there seems to be the realization on Pirandello's part of the impossibility of taking the "humoristic" route any longer to comprehend reality. For Pirandello, on the one hand the humorist is incapable of living because he is intent in watching himself live, as Enrico IV; on the other the humorist, is different from the comic writer who can only see the incongruencies which exist between humans and nature, a feeling which Pirandello calls "avvertimento del contrario." The humorist instead, thanks to an act of reflection, "va oltre a quel primo avvertimento, o piuttosto, più addentro: da quel primo
avvertimento del contrario," he goes to "il sentimento del contrario." Furthermore, he continues:

...la riflessione è quasi una forma del sentimento, quasi uno specchio in cui il sentimento si rimira. Volendo seguitare quest'immagine, si potrebbe dire che, nella concezione umoristica, la riflessione è come uno specchio, ma d'acqua diaccia, in cui la fiamma del sentimento non si rimira soltanto, ma si tuffa e si smorza: il friggere dell'acqua è il riso che suscita l'umorista, il vapore che n'esala è la fantasia spesso più fumosa dell'opera umoristica.51

Reflection, thus, interrupts the spontaneous flow which creates ideas in an harmonious form. In this essay Pirandello claimed that in the creation of a humoristic work,

la riflessione non si nasconde, non resta invisibile, non resta cioè quasi una forma del sentimento, quasi uno specchio in cui il sentimento si rimira; ma gli si pone innanzi, da giudice; lo analizza, spassionandosene; ne scompone l'immagine; da questa analisi però, da questa scomposizione, un altro sentimento sorge o spira: quello che potrebbe chiamarsi, e che io di fatti chiamo il sentimento del contrario.60

In the Sagra del Signore della Nave this humoristic manner stately fails miserably. The teacher/humorist's investigation of the universal signification of the feast is in fact aborted. The Sagra del Signore della Nave exposes
the progressive disintegration of the understanding of the sacred element, that is, the possibility of acquiring higher meaning is lost. In fact when the Schoolteacher asks the "mastro-medico" if there is some sort of connection between the killing of the pigs and the celebration of the Lord of the Ship, the only answer he receives is a doubtful one, as the doctor replies "non saprei." In a prospective that sees the Sagra del Signore della Nave as a metaphor of the creation of signification in a general and in the theatrical event in particular, the answer alludes to the fact that the symbolic synthesis which represented the fundamental element of the theatre of antiquity has been dissipated. In the play the loss of a collective memory of the sacred moment of the feast and of its relation with the pagan killing of the pigs is the acknowledgment of the impossibility of retaining signification in a symbolic fashion. This prospective is at the core of Pirandello's study of humor, as in that essay a humorist glance, a reflective/allegorical glimpse at the universe would recover the possibility of creating signification. By the time he worked at the Sagra, quite clearly Pirandello believed that this cognitive and signifying process was no longer possible as the capacity of identifying with the universal has been lost.
The young teacher's initial strategy is in fact humoristic, as he, through reflection, tries to interrupt "il movimento spontaneo che organa le idee e le immagini in una forma armoniosa." However since his first appearance, he is described ironically, and such an approach provokes an overturning of the humoristic strategies: thus, he is unable of capturing any whatsoever signification. In this play, the humoristic reasoning does not produce that "sentimento del contrario" which would equal an acquisition of meaning. It is by stating the loss of a collective memory of the meaning of the feast that Pirandello is affirming the impossibility of interpreting the "real." The humoristic strategy is no longer able to create meaning. Even the word "logic" used several times by the young teacher in the short story disappears completely in the play. There is no longer a logic in the very texture of the universe, and even the allegorical process for the creation of signification has been forfeited."

The "raissonneur" is instead dragged into an endless conversation with Mr. Lavaccara on the "humanity of pigs." This sub plot was the main focus of the short story. Yet, here, in light of our discussion of the loss of a collective memory of the meaning of the killing of the pigs and of the contemporary celebration of Our Lord of the Ships, this same
sub plot emphasizes the main point of the play as it measures the general crisis of a "world out of joint." According to Pirandello, in today's world "l'uomo è fuori chiave," that is, literally, "man is out of tune," with the universe, that is. The Schoolteacher is unable to understand and/or create meaning for his surroundings and life. In fact, Mr. Lavaccara, who has sold his pig to a butcher, regrets it immensely, and he states that the pig, named Nicola, was more human than many of the people attending the feast. At first the young teacher, with snobbish flair, tries to explain to Mr. Lavaccara the absurdity of his theses. His firm conviction on the absurdity of Mr. Lavaccara's presumption however slowly vacillates as the crowd around him begins to disarticulate. The fumes of the alcohol consumed, the erratic behavior of the feast goers, the cries and the confusion seem to support Mr. Lavaccara's assumption.

The mythical origin of the word "maiale" is evoked. As if a philological understanding of the "word" could dissolve all mysteries. This course will also fail. Soon after the young teacher's speculations, there is yet another shift in the play. The discourse again moves towards the economical implications of the feast. The tavern keeper complains of the space he has been given in the square because it is too
far from the church and exclaims: "non avremo molta baldoria." Promptly, however, another vender, Norcino, reassures him: "venderemo anche noi, non dubitate."

The reiterated utilization of reflection, which is, as in the previous plays discussed, at the base of the Sagra del Signore della Nave, pertains to the state of the theatre in Pirandello's time. A time when the economic implications of a staging were becoming the most important factor in the realization of a mise en scène. This was particularly true in Italy where drama was relegated to a secondary role in the world of performing arts. In fact the better days, that is, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, were usually dedicated to the production of operas.

As the Sagra continues with the appearance of a scribe together with his family and a friend Pirandello introduces yet another theme, that of the vulgarity of memory. Just as at the beginning of the play, with the introduction of the slut, the physical description of the family is degrading, to say the least. In fact the author writes that "...la moglie [è] grassa e le figlie [sono] grassotelle," just like the pigs which are going to be slaughtered.

Another interesting factor is that the scribe is able to recollect the past, and one feels that perhaps the collective memory is not completely lost. However his
memories will evoke only vulgar and scandalous things as if to say that the only possibility of remembrance is indecent.

LO SCRIVANO
Eh, avesse veduto quanta più polvere per lo stradone, quando le sottane delle donne usavano lunghe e frullavano tutte, con l'insaldatura da piedi

and then in confidence to his friend,

E anche loro sotto la polvere! Ih ih ih.

Yet, this apparent digression continues the economy of the play as a metaphor for the theatre. Just as memory is in fact impossible if not vulgar, the theatre is, in the same manner, unable to recollect the values of the past. It cannot emanate neither the certainties nor the lessons any longer. The legacy between the past and the present cannot be recovered. The universe is now the temple in which smell, sounds and colour correspond along a network of analogies; rather it presents itself in the misery of its disintegration to which it superimposes, in its emptiness of a distant-judgment of the subject, its need for signification.

The young teacher then pursues his need for an understanding of a link between the Christian and the pagan feast.
Ma certo ci dev'essere, se questo signore è chiamato così, "della Nave", una leggenda, io penso, nella quale probabilmente i suini avranno qualche parte."

The elder sailor hearing what the young teacher says exclaims, "Il Signore della Nave è nostro; di noi marinaj, che non siamo suini." And he goes on reproving the sacred element of the feast, in fact he describes the image of Christ which is in the church. The image of Christ is however "frightening." What remains is only the formal aspect of the image as the sailor states that the sculpturer was skillful but he does not evoke any story about Christ himself. Again there is no explanation on the link between Christ and the slaughtering of the pigs. Furthermore, the sailor's devotion to Christ is purely formal. He has experienced a miracle but no other explanation nor reason is given to believe.

At this point the doctor tries to give an explanation to the dilemma of finding a link between the Christian celebration and the butchering of the pigs. He says that the link can be found in the fact that to eat pork is unhealthy during the summer months, and concludes that the killing of the pigs is performed during the feast of our Lord of the Ship which is held on the first Sunday of September, when the weather is cool. However even this, seemingly rational
explanation, is immediately contradicted as it is instantly stressed that it is extremely hot, rendering futile the explanation.

And yet when the butchering begins and provokes consternation in the young teacher, another attempt is made to recover the sacredness of the feast. The accent is placed on the necessity of the "public act of the sacrifice". It is with the last tentative of recovering the sacredness of the feast that one finds the progressive and definite loss of its religious meaning. What is left is only its exterior aspect: the spectacle. The primitive and private sense of the feast has been forfeited forever. This is similarly the state of the theatre in Pirandello's times. At the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth the theatre in Italy had experienced a progressive increment of the rituality, but this was linked only to its formal aspects. It had lost any possibility of being a means of acquiring knowledge or a means of interpreting the real. Significantly the young teacher states,

E' proprio vero che col progredire della civiltà l'uomo si fa sempre più debole; e sempre va perdendo pur cercando di acquistarlo meglio, l'antico sentimento religioso.\textsuperscript{70}
At the end of the play, with the progressive carnivalization and degradation of the participants of the feast, in the exchange between the young teacher and Mr. Lavaccara, a paradoxical situation develops. In fact as the young teacher tries to convince Mr. Lavaccara of his error, the crowd becomes more and more beastly.

IL SIGNOR LAVACCARA
[...] Finisca di difendere codesta umanità! Preferisco a questi bizzochi chi viene qua per dimostrarsi più porco dei porci! Ma guarda qua, là! Non sente come gridano

IL GIOVANE PEDAGOGO
Ma le sembrano grida di festa, giulive?

[...]

IL SIGNOR LAVACCARA
Più bestiali mi sembrano, di quelle dei porci che scannano!  

The crowd's progressive loss of humane traits corresponds to the loss of certainty in the young school teacher. An enormous riot breaks out amidst the feast goers and the young schoolteacher, who tried to give meaning to the feast, is disgusted by the crowd's actions. A triumphant Mr. Lavaccara shouts out to him, "La sua umanità! Eccola! eccola! La sua umanità la riconosce ancora?" Just as the disheartened young teacher is ready to give up any hope on his belief of the superiority of the humane condition over that of the pigs, the church bells announce the sacred
procession. The crazed crowd's cries and bawls suddenly cease as a priest exits the church. The people kneel down and weep desperately in front of the bloodstained crucifix. The young teacher's closing utterance is yet another attempt to unveil the meaning of the feast. He cries out his excitement over what he believes to be the resolution to the signifying impasse and claims triumphant the superiority of humans over pigs.

No, no, vede? piangono, piangono! Si sono ubriacati, si sono imbestialiti; ma eccoli qua ora che piangono dietro al loro Cristo insanguinato. E vuole una tragedia più tragedia di questa?:

It is at the ending of the Sagra del Signore della Nave, at the recovery of the religious ritual moment through the syntheses between the sacred (Christ) and the profane (the pigs being butchered) that the true meaning of the play is to be found. Theatre is presented as a conciliatory act between the sacred and the profane. The Sagra del Signore della Nave emphasizes Pirandello's strive at recovering the ancient theatre's totality and oneness. He suggests that there is only one manner of restoring the theatre's ancient and important social function. The theatre must reclaim its purpose by reconnecting with the theatre of ancient Greece. In that theatrical tradition, the priest/actor performed
certain actions which simulated the intimate and personal aspects of reality rather than the obvious external ones. With the Sagra del Signore della Nave, Pirandello advocated a conciliatory gesture between the text and the staging, between the Characters and the actors, and between the mise en scène and the spectators. He urges the shaping of a theatre which will no longer be exclusively an extrinsic and superficial experience but, finally, liberated from the conventions and shortcomings of his time, will produce that "mystical" moment, as it was for the ancient Greeks, of "real" reality.

In Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore, Enrico IV and Ciascuno a suo modo Pirandello investigated the possibilities of the theatre by dissecting it. He investigated its potential and expanded its horizons. Each and every aspect of the theatre was tackled with. In Sagra del Signore della Nave, which is not commonly considered a play about theatre, he realized the need to take his investigation beyond theatre itself. He understood, perhaps not fully at this stage of his career, that it was necessary to lay the foundation for a new theatre, or better return to an ancient one. The complexities he unsuccessfully tried to untangle in Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore, Enrico IV and Ciascuno a suo modo, by sabotaging the basis of traditional
theatre, lead him to search for the solution on the stage itself and to the production of Sagra del Signore della Nave.

It will take Pirandello three years as capocomico of the Teatro d'Arte to realize that the theatre he longed for was not possible, at least without undertaking a drastic change of course. The real problems were not whether or not the text should prevail over the mise en scène, or if the actor was capable or not of impersonating the characters, or even how to reconcile the "flux of life" to "motionless art," but rather to find a new manner, an "other" stage, where there would not be conflict. A theatre where its various components could subsist harmoniously together. Having explored the inadequacy of the symbolic and/or allegoric mode, and having exposed the ineptitude of the audiences to recapture the rituality of the stage, both on paper with the Sagra del Signore della Nave, and on stage as "capocomico," Pirandello had to either abandon theatre altogether or gradually veer towards a different formula for representing theatre as mythical experience. He opted for the latter as with the staging of Sagra del Signore della Nave, Pirandello had brought back the "ancient mystery of tragedy" to the theatre.
Preceeded only by the "translation" into Sicilian of Tutto per bene, that is, Cuu'nguanti gialli.
The play was staged at the Teatro Manzoni in Milan on February 24, 1922.
Pirandello will use the term "tragedy" later for La vita che ti diedi and Diana e la Tuda.

See Robert Dombroski, "Follia come metafora in Enrico IV" and Leon Klem, "La teatralità di Enrico IV" both in Pirandello e il teatro (Milano: Mursia, 1993).

In the 1923 revision of the play two short passages are in square brackets, [ ]. See Pirandello, Enrico IV in Maschere Nude, Vol. II (Milan: Mondadori, 1993): 780.

Ibid, 820.

See also Luigi Pirandello, "Teatro nuovo e teatro vecchio" in which he affirms that the mise en scène is only a copy of the original, i.e. the author's text. The essay was first published in 1923 in Comoedia, January 1. Now in Saggi, poesie, scritti varii, ed., Manilo Lo Vecchio-Musti (Milan: Mondadori, 1960): 227-243.


Ibid, 1024.

In the final 1933 revision, he will keep only one passage in []. The second passage can be found in Enrico IV in Maschere nude, Vol. II (1993): 863.

Ibid, 781.
Ibid, 781.
Ibid, 787.
Ibid, 789.
Ibid, 848.
Ibid, 785.
Ibid, 782.
Ibid, 786.


Ibid, 802.
Corriere della sera, February 28, 1920.

Ibid, 849.

Ugo Fracchia, "Una prova dell'Enrico IV" in Il Messaggero, Rome, February 21, 1922.


31 Ibid, 121.
32 Ibid, 121.
33 Ibid, 122.
34 Ibid, 123.

37 Ibid, 156.
38 For Pirandello's activity at the Teatro d'Arte, see Alessandro D'Amico and Alessandro Tinterri, eds., Pirandello capocomico. La compagnia del Teatro d'Arte di Roma. 1925-28 (Palermo: Sellerio, 1987).
39 Pirandello, "Il Signore della Nave" in Noi e il Mondo (January 1916).
40 Mario Matteucci, Pirandello ci presenta il Teatro d'Arte" in Il Giornale d'Italia, January 31, 1925.
42 Sogliuzzo, Pirandello Director, 50.
43 Interestingly, once again Edward Gordon Craig's theory on the theatre seems to be echoed in Pirandello's text.
44 "La Sagra del Signore della Nave". Corriere d'Italia, April 4, 1925.
45 Ibid; see also, Adriano Tilgher, "La Sagra" in Il Mondo (April 4, 1925) and Guido Ruberti's "L'inaugurazione del Teatro d'Arte" in Il Giornale d'Italia (April 4, 1925).
47 Ruberti, "L'inaugurazione del Teatro dell'Arte di Pirandello."
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid, 481.
51 Ibid, 484.
52 It is interesting to note that, in the short story published in 1916 which constitutes the literary source of the play, the market like atmosphere is barely described, while it is predominant in the play itself.
55 Ibid, 485.
56 Ibid, 485.
57 Ibid, 486.
59 Ibid, 132.
60 Ibid, 127.
61 Ibid, 132-3.
62 For an accurate and engaging account of the possibility of creating signification through allegorical discourse, see Romano Luperini,
L'allegoria del moderno. Saggi sull'allegorismo come forma artistica del moderno e come metodo di conoscenza (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1990), and specifically, see also Luperini, "L'atto del significare allegorico in Sei Personaggi e in Enrico IV" in Rivista di Studi Pirandelliani 3 :6/7 (June-December 1991): 9-19.

64 Ibid.
66 Puppa significantly writes that the names of the characters in the Sagra del Signore della Nave seem "un bestiario medievale" ("a Medieval bestiary"). See Puppa, Dalle parti di Pirandello, p.107.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid, 492.
71 Ibid, 501.
72 Ibid, 502.
73 Ibid, 503.
74 Tilgher, "La Sagra" in Il Mondo (April 4, 1925).
Chapter III
The theatre rewrites Pirandello

3.1 From text to stage from stage to text

Pirandello's three year experience as capocomico at the Teatro d'Arte would have a great impact on his drama. Not only will his plays, from 1925 onwards, show traits of his "hands-on" experience with the stage, but the practice would urge him to return to some of his earlier theatrical creations and make numerous and substantial changes to them. During his tenure at the Teatro d'Arte Pirandello directed and produced over forty different plays, both in Italy and abroad which would influence his own work. Along with many of his own plays, he staged some of the most significant playwrights of his time: Benjamin Cremieux (Here One Dances), Nikolai Evreinov (The Merry Death and What really Matters), Arthur Schnitzler (The Girlfriend), Henrik Ibsen (The lady from the sea and Hedda Gabber) Yaeger Schmidt (The French Doll) and as mentioned earlier, Lord Dunsany (The Mountain Gods).

Pirandello's vision of the theatre in general and of his plays in particular was also influenced by certain
stagings of his plays by other directors which he attended. Especially important are those mise en scènes produced abroad, where the figure of the director was more advanced than in Italy at that time.\textsuperscript{2}

One production in particular which had a notable sway over Pirandello was Georges Pitoëff's staging of Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore at the Comédie des Champs Elysées in Paris. Pirandello, together with Niccodemi, two years before becoming capocomico at the Teatro d'Arte, attended the dress rehearsal and opening night of Pitoëff's staging in April 1923. It was an enormous success and it gave Pirandello even greater international acclaim.\textsuperscript{3}

Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore was directed by Pitöeff only because it had been turned down by Jacques Copeau. In fact, Benjamin Crémieux, who had translated the play into French, offered it initially to Le Vieux Colombier.\textsuperscript{4} Interestingly Le Vieux Colombier folded the following year in 1924 "for insurmountable economic problems" and its founder and director, Copeau, left Paris for Burgundy.\textsuperscript{5}

Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore, however, was not the first production of one of Pirandello's plays in France. In 1922, Charles Dullin was seeking to stage an Italian play and asked Madame Camille Mallarmé, considered an authority
in Italian things, to suggest a play. She contacted Pirandello who proposed *Cosi è (se vi pare)*, but this play was considered unsuitable for the French stage. Finally *Il piacere dell'onestà* was selected and staged on December 20, 1922, at the Théâtre de l'Atelier. Even though *Il piacere dell'onestà* was very successful, as critics raved over the performance,⁶ *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* was the play that truly revealed Pirandello to the French audiences.⁷ It opened on April 10, 1923.

Pitëoff's direction of the play certainly contributed greatly to its success in France. His interpretation, which stressed the expressionistic aspects of *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore*,⁸ is still regarded as one of the most important stagings of the century. The novelties of the French *mise en scène* in relation to the Pirandellian text were numerous: a) the ghostly aspect of the Characters; b) the "unnatural", almost super-terrestrial diction used by the actors, particularly by the Father; c) the limpid and rhythmic translation by Crémieux.⁹

These innovations all contributed to the plays enormous success. However, the most original and thought provoking novelty was Pitëoff's utilization of an elevator, normally used to bring the stage prompts down from the upper floor, to carry the Characters onto the stage.¹⁰ The Characters at
the end of the play would exit by using the elevator again. This stratagem, utilized by Piteòff, emphasized the inhumane traits of the Characters who descended, in an non-naturalistic manner, from the "sky", and who returned to the "sky" at the end of the play.

Interestingly Pirandello initially disliked the changes made by the French director but subsequently approved of them. Yet, he set out to avenge his text and reclaim "control" over his creation. When Pirandello staged Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore, at the Odescalchi Theatre on May 18, 1925, two years after seeing the Parisian production, he had already directed ten plays. It would be the second time he was capocomico of one of his own plays, having opened the company's repertoire with the Sagra del Signore della Nave. Before Pirandello started to work on the actual staging of Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore, he took into consideration all the variations which had been introduced by the different stagings of the play. Virgilio Marchi, the Teatro d'Arte's set designer, writes that

*tutte le variazioni registiche delle rappresentazioni avvenute fino a quel momento, anche all'estero, furono vagliate.*
The staging of *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* at the Teatro d'Arte is fundamental as it is considered crucial for an understanding of the text's final version.\textsuperscript{13} The most important changes brought about by Pirandello were five:

1) There is no longer a fourth wall. In the 1921 version the complete action of the play takes place on the stage. In the 1925 version the stage is connected to the orchestra with a stairway. The actors gain the stage from the back of the theatre hall by climbing the stairway. The Director continuously uses the stairway to get from the stage to the orchestra and vice versa. The Stepdaughter, at the end of the play, exits by using the stairs, and thus runs into the orchestra.

2) Changes are made to the Characters. In the first version the references to the Characters are scarce and ambiguous. In the 1925 edition the Actors and the Characters are said to belong to two different worlds. The opposition is not, however, between the reality of the Actors and the unreality of the Characters but rather that between a daily reality--that of the Actors, and a hyper-reality--that of the Characters. Extremely important is Pirandello's suggestion that the Characters wear masks for the *mise en scène* so that they,
Moreover the Characters have now become "created" figures; in the "new" text Pirandello abandons the "ambiguity" and the "weirdness" of the Characters. He builds a sort of magical aura around them. The Characters will no longer scare the spectators but mesmerize them. The audience will accept what it sees as the Characters cast their spell. Moreover from the very arrival of the Characters the Actors never leave the stage. In the 1921 version, at the beginning of the third act, there are no Actors on stage but only the Mother, the Stepdaughter and the Son.

3) A brand new ending. An extremely long stage direction is added at the end of the 1925 version in which the Father, the Mother and the Son re-appear on stage and the Stepdaughter rushes into the orchestra. The first vision instead ended with the director exclaiming "Non mi è mai capitata una cosa simile! E mi hanno fatto perdere una giornata!" Furthermore in the 1925 version the Characters' shadows haunt the stage even after the director's last utterance, when the play is virtually over. In this manner the Characters are "threatening" the spectators they may re-appear at any time.
4) Pirandello amplifies the metaphorical aspect of the play within a play. Many more lines are given to the "capocomico" in the later edition. The opening scene between the "direttore di scena" with the "macchinista," and the entire scene of the actress who arrives late for rehearsal are also added in 1925. Moreover the beginning of the third act, the so called "garden act," which in the first version was already set when the actors appeared on stage, is instead built in front of the audience's eyes in the 1925 version. In fact the director himself asks a technician to prepare the stage for the re-enactment of the Characters' scene.

IL CAPOCOMICO
Su, Su signori! Ci siamo tutti?
Attenzione, attenzione. Si comincia! -
Macchinista!

IL MACCHINISTA
Eccomi qua!

IL CAPOCOMICO
Disponga subito la scena della saletta.
Basteranno due fiancate e un fondalino
con la porta. Subito, mi raccomando.16

5) Two sections are cut. Pirandello cut two long sections that were to be uttered by the Stepdaughter and the Father. Both sections would indeed weigh down noticeably the action
on stage. It seems that they were cut to keep the pace of the mise en scène.17

Extremely important, even though not directly linked to Pirandello's experience as "capocomico" because published before his debut at the Teatro d'Arte, is "Come e perché ho scritto i Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore," published in Comeodia in January 1925. In fact this essay would later become the play's preface and in it Pirandello explains his vision of the drama to be.

All these novelties introduced by Pirandello to the 1921 text are all very significant both formally and aesthetically. By eliminating the fourth wall in the 1925 version of the play he dilated the range of the mise en scène. If in the play's first version, one finds the mirroring of a performance unfolding in front of the audience, in the later version, the boundaries of the theatrical experience expand to include the audience. Even though there is no direct participation on behalf of the spectators in the action of the play, there is a sense of the sweeping and overwhelming power of the performance as it embraces the entire theatre house. In fact, the action of the play expands and threatens to invade the audience's secure space: the orchestra. In the 1925 version Pirandello adds a new level to the play by having dramatic action in
the orchestra. This is designed to intimidate the spectators as it eliminates the distance between the presumably real - the spectators - and the presumably fictitious - the stage. In this manner, Pirandello usurps what traditionally did not "belong" neither to the playwright nor to the stage: the orchestra. By introducing yet another level of representation to those present in the first version of the play, he multiplies the conflicts between the real and the fictitious.

The changes made to the Characters are equally important. In the preface added in 1925 their place of origin is explicitly stated as being "otherness." They are no longer "naturally" unrealistic. In fact, Pirandello suggests the Characters wear masks in order to emphasize their past, present and future everlasting static nature,

I Personaggi non dovranno infatti apparire come fantasmi, ma come realtà create, costruzioni della fantasia immutabili: e dunque più reali e consistenti della volubile naturalità degli Attori.19

The Characters now also have a completely new trait: a sort of "mystical" condition which is directly produced by the masks and by their "unnatural behavior." The Mother, Pirandello writes in one of the stage directions, should resemble the sculptures and paintings of the Mater dolorosa.
that one can find in many churches.\textsuperscript{20} More evidence of the Characters' new condition is that, in the 1925 version, the director is unable to send them away because he is "...come trattenuto da uno strano sgomento."\textsuperscript{21}

The insistence on the Characters being "artificial" is an attempt, on Pirandello's behalf, to separate the theatre from nature. And yet, by invading the "reality" of the audience, he strives, at the same time, to make the spectators themselves aware of their alienation from nature. He thus claims the entire spectrum of the living.

Furthermore, another huge modification of the text brought about by Pirandello was to confine one of the most important themes of the 1921 version of \textit{Sei Personaggi in cerca d'autore}, and one which may have inspired the play itself--incest--to a marginal place in the 1925 re-writing of the play. It was one of the main issues of the initial text because Pirandello's wife was obsessed with the idea he was having an incestuous affair with their daughter.\textsuperscript{22}

Additional changes were made directly on the performance of the play. As capocomico of the Teatro d'Arte, Pirandello intervened on the amalgamation of the various elements of the \textit{mise-en-scène}: the lighting, the choreography, the scenery and the acting.
Tribute and testimonial to Pirandello's competence and originality in the handling of lighting and scenery is well accounted for. The praise given to him, specifically to his direction, in the many reviews of the *Sagra del Signore della Nave*, are maintained in almost all of his stage productions. However, there is very little written on the techniques used by the actors he directed at the Teatro d'Arte.

Yet, the scrutiny of certain distinct stagings of Pirandello's plays, together with specific references to acting techniques Pirandello himself makes in his texts, can shed some light on this little known aspect of his work. Already in 1922, before he began to direct the Teatro d'Arte he wrote *Enrico IV*, which is a play, as mentioned earlier, which dwells greatly on the complexities of acting. In the play itself, Pirandello addressed the necessity of creating new acting techniques, thus making it a cornerstone in the playwright's effort to find an acting method which would be in synch with his play writing.

A very important assertion of his involvement in the dynamics of the theatre and specifically in the actors' acting strategies is a letter Pirandello wrote to Enrico Ruggeri. In this letter he offers insight and observations on how to interpret the character of Enrico IV. Pirandello
submits the play to Ruggeri and asks that he and his company stage it. Even though Enrico IV has yet to be completed, he gives Ruggeri a summary of the action in the play, and then writes how Ruggeri, who was the leading actor of the company, should interpret the role.

...colui che tutti credono pazzo, in realtà da anni non lo è più pazzo, ma simula filosoficamente la pazzia per ridersi entro di sè degli altri che lo credono pazzo e perché si piace in quella carnevalesca rappresentazione che dà a sè a agli altri della sua "imperialità" e "quando a insaputa di lui, è messo in opera il trucco del medico alienista, egli, finto pazzo, tra spaventosi brividi, crede per un momento d'essere pazzo davvero e sta per scoprire la sua finzione ma poi riesce a riprendersi e sì vendica [...] 23

In 1922, when Ruggeri's theatre company was preparing for the staging of Enrico IV, Pirandello attended the rehearsals in Milan. His presence was not passive, on the contrary, he participated actively by giving precise instructions on how to interpret the various roles. 24 However, Ruggeri's staging of the play would be extremely personal and self-gratifying. Stefano Landi, Pirandello's son, after witnessing half empty theatres during Ruggeri's performance of Enrico IV wrote,

Ma se Ruggeri, che è il più grande Enrico IV che si possa immaginare, recita Enrico IV con la sua Compagnia e il pubblico non gli
risponde, il pubblico ha ragione, perché è vero che Ruggeri, pur con tutta la sua impareggiabile bravura personale, lo ha fatto assistere a uno spettacolo sconcertante, ibrido, assolutamente inamabile.  

By October of 1922 Pirandello is attending the rehearsals of most of his plays. In a letter to his daughter, he writes:

Provo mattina a sera! La mattina al Quirino, il dopopranzo all'Argentina. Esco la mattina alle nove e rincaso la sera alle sette e mezzo che non mi reggo più in piedi. [...] All'Argentina proseguono le prove dell'Enrico IV, ancora nuovo per Roma, con la compagnia Palmarini: compagnia mediocre! Spero che Palmarini, attore intelligente e studioso, riuscirà a comporre discretamente sulla scena il personaggio di Enrico IV. Sto sputando i polmoni per insegnare la parte agli altri attori della sua compagnia: non so che risultato otterrò.

Pirandello was annoyed with the actors who were either unable or unwilling to follow his stage directions. He was obviously not attaining the results he had expected and he was concerned with the outcome. Only ten days later he wrote to his daughter again and said: "Sono oppresso dalle prove teatrali." Pirandello was so absorbed by the rehearsal that he resigned his position at the university that same year.

When in 1925, Pirandello decided to stage as "capocomico" Enrico IV, he called Ruggeri to interpret the
leading role. The staging was brought on tournée throughout Europe, where it was very successful. However Pirandello's main goal as capocomico was to unify all the aspects of the play and give a comprehensive togetherness of the mise en scène. As capocomico he demanded total unity of the mise en scène without privileging any aspect of it, not even the text.

In an interview given to critic Leopole Lacour for the French edition of Comoedia in 1925, Pirandello described his "vision" of the mise en scène as follows:

LACOUR
I have seen your Six Characters in search of an Author and have admired the flexibility, the life, the passionate intensity of the protagonists, Mr. Lamberto Picasso and Miss Marta Abba: the naturalness of Mr. Olivieri: the interplay of characters, so true, so amusing or poignant; of actors who participate in the action by their attitudes, their gestures, or here and there by an exclamation, a cry; and I would like to know right now your secret for arriving at this sort of general perfection...

PIRANDELLO
That which you describe as my secret is not magic. It is the method of a playwright. It is generally assumed that playwrights are incapable of directing their own plays.

LACOUR
Two or three French directors have assured me of this.

PIRANDELLO
I am not going to contradict them. But if a playwright thinks he knows how to perform his work, he has a better chance of success because he has more thorough knowledge of his own play than any other professional director, actor or not. And if the playwright has the good fortune of having at his disposal a company of actors he has even a greater advantage, certainly, of following a method. Here in two phrases is mine: don't have the actors perform but the characters; let me explain; don't begin the rehearsals until each actor has gone through the personal work of exploring in depth the character he is to perform. I assist in this work with personal conferences in which I explain the spirit of the play, the spirit of his role. And when all these artists have assimilated these two levels of the acting process, when they have, I say, accomplished according to their own ability, by themselves, this necessary miracle of spiritual transubstantiation, I bring them together, convinced that they will interact, utilizing the correct movements and vocal inflections. 29

The key words of the interview are "[acting] method," "movements" and "vocal inflections." Pirandello systematically instructed the actors on how to "breathe" the characters they were to perform. He acknowledges, in the interview, that movement, vocal intonation and acting technique, which do not exist on the page, or better may
only be described bi-dimensionally, and have no tangible existence on paper, have become fundamental for his vision of a *mise en scène*. Pirandello accordingly, directed his actors on how to voice the lines he had written. It was not to be a simple utterance but a precise "meaningful" intonation. In fact, emphasis, inflection, rhythm are elevated to signifieds. The playwright spent hours materially illustrating how he wanted the actors to speak his words. He physically showed them the manner in which he wanted them to move on stage. Pirandello was praised by the actors of the Teatro d'Arte for how clearly he explained what he wanted from their acting.\(^3\)

Pirandello was aware of the various acting techniques which were being used throughout Europe. Guido Salvini, who collaborated with Pirandello on many projects, stated in a television interview that the Maestro often lectured the actors on Stanislavski's acting method.\(^4\)

Pirandello himself gave the actors a physical demonstration on how to act. Niccodemi describes in his memoir, *Tempo Passato*, that, during rehearsals, Pirandello's face

...è d'una mobilità incredibile. Fa pensare a una folla di visi in azione. Ripete, rifà le contrazioni del viso degli attori...la bocca
Pitoëff himself was extremely affected by Pirandello's directing and wrote that he would invite his friends to watch Pirandello at rehearsals so they could see, on his face, the various moods of the play.\textsuperscript{33}

If on the one hand Pirandello did not address or comment directly on his experience as "capocomico," on the other some significant traces of his experience can be found in brief comments made by many actors who worked with him, comments on how Pirandello wanted them to perform in the mise en scènes.

By the time he became director of the Teatro d'Arte, his attitude toward acting and actors had changed drastically from his early writings on the art of performing. In fact, at this point in his career, he stated that sometimes the actor is able to represent the character as the author had created it. This modification in his views on acting did not go unnoticed by the theatre critics of his time. In an article published in \textit{Comoedia}, in 1926, Silvio D'Amico writes that the actor,
Therefore, Pirandello as director, had found a resolution to his previous theoretical writings in which he stated the uselessness of the mise en scène and consequently of the actors. He accomplished this by applying strategies which seemingly were irrelevant to acting techniques but proved to be the key for achieving an acting method which would satisfy him as capo-comico. The modus operandi of the actor was to be "umoristico." This would allow the actor to have total control over himself/herself being, by distancing himself/herself as characters from their "natural humanity." Lamberto Picasso, who took over Ruggeri's part as Enrico IV, (Ruggeri was guest actor with the Teatro d'Arte), created, according to the reviews of Pirandello's company's production of Enrico IV, a "bloody, exasperated and ironic" interpretation of the protagonist under Pirandello's direction."

The word "irony" here is extremely important and even though it is not explained, one can easily infer it refers
to that same "humoristic" technique Pirandello required his raisonner to apply. The use of irony implies that the actor had to have some sort of distance between himself and the character he was impersonating. Distance which is necessary, as Pirandello stated in his 1908 essay On Humor, for control over the precarious: life.37

By creating this "critical distance between the character and themselves the actors could arrive at the abolition of clichés which compromise the artistic realization of the mise en scène."38 As director of the Teatro d'Arte, Pirandello "capocomico" pursued the actors' depersonalization. In order to achieve art in theatre the actors had to get rid of their "natural" being, and thus purge themselves. In order to achieve control over the character the actor had to view himself/herself, be the character and yet still envision him/herself.

The most extensive account of Pirandello's experience as director, one which sheds light on the playwrights vision of the mise en scène in general, is John Grein's comment on the 1925 Teatro d'Arte's staging of Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore and Enrico IV in London:

His is the great gift of seeing the characters within; of examining the état d'âme, the physical constitution of the
people set to embody certain phrases of life, and to play, as it were, the double part of a taskmaster and a free impersonator. In plain words, he propounds a question and lets the actor work out the response - not in a hide bound way, but as he would answer it, spontaneously, swayed by rules, regulations, directions, and all the rest of technical demands of the stage. The result is something that the ethereal becomes concrete. It is exceedingly subtle art, and it accounts for the opinion often expressed by readers when the Six Characters and Henry IV appeared in print they saw nothing in it.39

Paradoxically this critic subverts Pirandello's earlier notion of the superiority of the written word over the staging. The greatness of Pirandello, according to the critic and to many who had read his plays, is in the playwright's mise en scènes and not on the page.

3.2 The close of Pirandello's experience as capocomico

The Teatro d'Arte Company was not very fortunate in Italy, and the enormous success Pirandello and his company attained abroad was not sufficient to keep the company afloat. The funds which had been promised by the State were never fully received. By 1927 the Italian newspapers often
ignored his triumphs in foreign countries, and Pirandello gradually became more and more bitter towards the nation which had given him birth; a nation which was not ready to celebrate his greatness.

Still in 1927, in a long letter to Ugo Ojetti, director of the Corriere della sera Pirandello complains:

Mio caro Ugo, dovevo scriverti da Milano; ho voluto aspettare che il giusto risentimento per quanto mi è stato fatto, posandosi in fondo all'animo, non mi desse più il turbamento che m'ha dato e non turbasse neanch'è te e la nostra fraterna amicizia di tanti anni.

Ti scrivo ora con perfetta calma. Mi è stato fatto questo dal "Corriere della sera", a tua insaputa. Ricevetti, nel mio ultimo giro a Praga, a Vienna, a Budapest, onori trionfali che tanto più erano da far notare al pubblico italiano in quanto ottenuti in paesi copertamente o apertamente nemici, come Praga e Vienna. A Budapest ebbi finanche un banchetto dal Governo ungherese, con un discorso, a nome del Governo, del Ministro della P.I. che, com'ebbe a dirmi S.E. il conte Durini di Monza, nostro Ministro colà, aveva veramente carattere e valore politico.

Nota che, questi giri artistici che io compio con la mia Compagnia, a Londra, a Parigi, a Berlino e in altre 18 città della Germania, ora a Praga, a Vienna, a Budapest, non servono affatto a far conoscere la mia opera di scrittore, perché vi rappresento lavori miei già conosciuti e giudicati; servono assolutamente per propaganda d'italianità, per far conoscere come si recita e si mettono in scena le opere di teatro in Italia [...] Orbene, arrivò al "Corriere" da Budapest una
corrispondenza nella quale si parlava degli onori che m'erano stati resi, e si riportava per volontà del Ministro Conte Durini il discorso del Ministro della P.I. a nome del Governo ungherese, e si riferivano i giudizii della stampa, entusiastici, sui singoli attori e su tutto il complesso della Compagnia: la corrispondenza fu cestinata.  

Pirandello then laments the fact that the Corriere della sera had not picked up on his success in Budapest. In the same letter Pirandello remarks on the unfavorable and unfair review given to Diana e la Tuda by Renato Simoni on the pages of the Corriere.

Veniamo ora alla critica dopo la prima rappresentazione di "Diana e la Tuda". Giornalisticamente, per intendere tutta la perfidia, bisogna paragonarla a quella fatta, poco dopo, al lavoro del Forzano e all'altra fatta al lavoro di Niccodemi. Nella mia, tutte le riserve e i disappunti in principio: una colonna e mezzo di riserve, per poi in venire in fine a quattro lodi generiche a me e agli attori della Compagnia. Nelle altre due, al contrario, una colonna e mezzo di lodi e di consensi in principio, e le riserve in fine. [...] Tutto questo, lasciamelo dire, caro Ugo, è vile.

Only two years after the triumphal celebration of the opening of the Teatro d'Arte Pirandello is isolated. Many have speculated on the reasons which led to his isolation. Documents show that at least one "competitor," Enrico
Corradini (aspiring to become National Playwright), had been collecting "material" on Pirandello which would put him in bad light with the Fascist Party. In an interview to a South American newspaper while on tour in Brazil, Pirandello had stated,

all'estero non ci sono né antifascisti né fascisti ma siamo tutti italiani\textsuperscript{42}

The article was promptly sent by Corradini to the Fascist officials who questioned Pirandello about it as soon as he returned to Italy.\textsuperscript{43}

Between 1925 and 1928, Pirandello wrote several plays: \textit{La giara} in 1925, \textit{Diana e la Tuda} and \textit{L'amica delle mogli} in 1926, and \textit{La nuova colonia} and \textit{Lazzaro} in 1928.\textsuperscript{44} However, it is relevant to note that after completing and staging the \textit{Sagra del Signore della Nave}, he left three plays unfinished. This is extremely anomalous and unprecedented in the history of Pirandello as a playwright. The unfinished plays are \textit{Pari}, \textit{Commedia senza titolo} and \textit{La moglie di prima}. Pirandello's inability to continue and produce dramatic works is a clear indicator of a creative impasse subsequent to his exploration of the stage.
With *La nuova colonia*, Pirandello opened new horizons to his theatrical career. For the first time, in fact, he defines one of his plays a myth. The play is based on a short story he had written in 1911 entitled *Suo marito*. The titling itself of the two works indicates a relevant shift upward from the narrative to the dramatic text, a formal shift which is also paralleled in the content of the theatrical work.

Structurally, the play presents a great novelty in relation to Pirandello's previous drama. It has a prologue which anticipates and sets the ground for the dramatic action. Thus, in this anticipatory function, such a prologue acts as the chorus in ancient Greek drama. The opening stage directions of the prologue set the apocalyptic mode of the entire play. In fact, the tavern in which the first action unfolds is "illuminata scarsamente [...] ed è sporca e lugubre." Thus, the set design contains forebodings not only of the subsequent action of the drama but also of the spectators' reception of such drama. Pirandello closes these opening stage directions with "Fuori, il mare è agitato da un vento furioso." With such words, the playwright places the inside and the outside in a mirroring relationship as they both contain a premonition of what is going to happen. This technique was quite common in classical Greek tragedy.
to make the spectators aware of what preceded the action unfolding onto the stage and to warn of future catastrophes. In this sense, Pirandello reconnects with the Greek tradition both structurally and thematically.

The prologue centers around a band of thieves, smugglers, ex-convicts and a prostitute who decide to create a new life for themselves by founding their own society. They plan to move to an abandoned island which was formally a penal colony. The prisoners of the colony had been transferred, years earlier, to another prison because the island was frequently hit by earthquakes. Almost at the outset of the prologue, Tobia, an ex-convict, laments he was better off when he was a prisoner on the island. When the owner of the tavern, Padron Nocio, exhorts him to return to the island, he states, "Magari potessi! Non si può, lo sapete. Sgombrata dopo l'ultimo terremoto, per ordine superiore."\(^{47}\) Nocio who seems to have forgotten of the dangers on the island suddenly remembers, "Già. Dicono - anche di recente i miei uomini me l'hanno detto - che s'abbassa sempre più."\(^{48}\) Again, there is a premonition of the tragic ending to come.

This bleak scenario is however overturned by the appearance of Padron Nocio's daughter, Mita, who is "florida, bionda come una spiga."\(^{49}\) Yet, notwithstanding her
stunning beauty, her arrival does not create opposition to the bleakness of the previous scene because she enters the action screaming and frightened. To further deny any whatsoever chance for "lightness," she is followed onto the stage by La Spera, the prostitute.\textsuperscript{50} La Spera's eyes are "foschi e disperati," and she is wearing so much make-up that her face looks like a mask. Her clothes mirror the gloom of the set design.

Suddenly and with no apparent reason, Dorò, Padron Nocio's son, re-introduces the topic of the island in the dialogue by asking "Ma di, un po' - com'è che l'isola dicono scomparerà un giorno dalle acque? Non m'hai detto che la terra ha scoperchiato le acque per volontà di Dio?"\textsuperscript{51} The introduction of God who controls the fate of the living is yet another novelty on the Pirandellian stage. At the same time, it constitutes a further motif of similitude with the ancient Greek tragedy. As it usually happens on Pirandello's haunted stage, humans have no control over both their lives and the action; yet, the playwright seems here to place the chaos in the hands of an all controlling and powerful God. In fact, Tobba replies to Dorò,  

\begin{quote}
Eh, devi pensare, che non c'è solo il coraggio. Dio, con esso, to concede di vincere il mare. Ma l'uomo è anche cattivo,
\end{quote}
Caro mio. E allora Dio, seppure ti stai sulla cima della più alta montagna, te la fa inghiottire dal mare come niente.52

After a misunderstanding at the tavern, La Spera proposes they all move to the island. She is so confident that when the others suggest that one day it may be swallowed by the sea, she states that their condition on the mainland is worse. The others are not easily convinced but soon they witness a miracle as La Spera is suddenly and unexpectedly able to nurse her son with her breast.

LA SPERA
Oh Dio, che cosa ... che cosa ... Oh Dio, oh Dio che cosa!

TRE DEGLI ASTANTI
Che ha? - Che dice? - Che t'è avvenuto?

CURRAO
Il bambino?

LA SPERA
No! Io! io! - Posso allattarlo - Io! io!

CURRAO
Tu, allattarlo? Che dici?

LA SPERA
Miracolo! Miracolo!

ALTRI DEGLI ASTANTI
Com'è? - E'impazzita?

LA SPERA
Un miracolo, un miracolo, ti dico! Posso allattare il mio bambino! io! io!

CURRAO
Tu, da te? E come? Dopo cinque mesi?

[...]

TOBBA
Il segno di Dio, per tutti noi: che ci guiderà Lui! - Ora si, si deve partire. Questa notte stessa. - Inginocchiamoci!53

The miraculous intervention of God leads the dramatic action out of the prologue and well into the utopian and mythical core of the play as our travellers seek to found their alternative life on the island. Yet, the spectator will eventually discover that the "sign" of God's will, just as it often happened in Greek drama, has been misread and will lead to tragedy. This counterfeits the religious readings of the play, and allow one to interpret La nuova colonia as yet another meta-theatrical work where the island sinking is nothing but Pirandello's theatrical company.

Once the characters arrive onto the island they are able to live peacefully and happily for a brief period of time. Crocco, one of the ex-convicts, however, is soon banned from the island for attempting to rape La Spera. He then steals the boat he and the others had arrived on, and returns to the mainland. Soon afterwords, Padron Nico, who had not followed the others to the island at first, arrives with his beautiful daughter, Mita, Crocco and a band of women. The tavern owner decided to go on the island to rescue his son Dorò. With the arrival of the newcomers, La
Spera, who in the meantime had become well respected by the men on the island, is again considered and treated like a slut. When one of the men, Crocco, tries to take her son, the earth suddenly begins to shake, and the island is swallowed by the sea. Everyone is killed except for La Spera and her child who find refuge on a promontory which "miraculously" appears. La Spera's utterance, "Ah, Dio, io qua, sola, con te figlio, sulle acque," closes the play.

While it is certainly true that the opening and the ending of the play could induce one to linger into a religious reading of La nuova colonia, Pirandello's personal and artistic history does not allow us to follow such an inclination. On the other hand, a far more intriguing path is suggested by those readings that identify in the play a political metaphor. In fact, most of his contemporary reviewers were inclined to read the play as an apologia of Fascism. Yet, firstly it would be troublesome to identify La Spera, a prostitute, with her child as a metaphor for Fascism and its children even though she seems to redeem herself on the island. Secondly, by 1928 the year in which Pirandello completed and staged the play, he was unquestionably disillusioned with Fascism. So much so that in the same year he went into a "voluntary exile."
It may be interesting to note that he began writing the play in 1926 when his position towards the Regime was certainly more hopeful. Or at least there may have been an initial intent to celebrate Fascism as a reformatory or even revolutionary force in which many Italians believed. Instead, by 1928 Pirandello experienced, most importantly, the greatest of his disillusionments, that is, the failure of his project to built a National Theatre. Such a necessary consideration legitimates a reading of *La nuova colonia* as a meta-theatrical work in which Pirandello once again staged the problems of the Italian theatre in general and of his company in particular. Thus, for instance, the hopeful journey of the beginning of the play may be taken as parallel to the journey of the Teatro dei Dodici into new avenues for the Italian stage. The transformation of the men's attitude towards La Spera can be seen as parallel to Pirandello's destiny in Italy's theatrical entourage, as he was at first ignored and then glorified only to be ignored again. Consequently, the island may be interpreted as the Italian stage which must be destroyed totally in order to experience a re-birth.

Before *La nuova colonia* opened at the Teatro Argentina in Rome on March 24, 1928, there were great expectations for
the performance. In the Corriere della sera, Luigi Bottazzi writes,

Sul palcoscenico dell'Argentina, Luigi Pirandello prova da alcuni giorni il nuovo lavoro che sarà rappresentato venerdì prossimo. S'intitolerà "La nuova colonia" e consta di un prologo e tre atti. Una tragedia o una commedia? Né l'una né l'altra. Tanto per scegliere la via di mezzo, sarà un dramma? No. Luigi Pirandello l'ha voluta chiamare "mito" e certo ha avuto le sue buone ragioni. [...] Ci sono Marta Abba, Picasso, e gli altri attori che prendono parte all'opera. [...] sul palcoscenico c'è anche l'autore, il quale forma una persona sola col capocomico e con lui divide la fatica di dare un volto, la voce e i gesti alle figure create dalla sua fantasia. [...] si tratta di un'opera veramente originale.56

One of the novelties of this mise en scène, which certainly highlights Pirandello's engagement in the non-literary qualities of drama, is given by the extremely complicated theatrical devices needed for the production. Virgilio Marchi, the set designer, was indeed highly praised for the scenography. Many machines were used to recreate the sounds and the movements of the sea and the hearthquake.57

In La nuova colonia Pirandello attempted to bring together as one reality and fiction through myth. It was his last option as he tried to discover new avenues which would allow for the creation of signification in the theatre. It was a utopian project as Pirandello at this point was
completely isolated from the Italian stage. Only a year after the staging of La nuova colonia, he writes to the director of the cultural page of the Corriere della sera, Renato Simoni:

Mio caro Renato, permettimi di far noto per tuo mezzo ciò che m'avviene. Ora è un mese, il Corriere della sera, informava i suoi lettori della somma di lavoro da me preparato per le scene: quattro commedie: Lazzaro, Questa sera si recita a soggetto, O di uno o di nessuno, Come tu mi vuoi. Di questi quattro lavori, il primo, Lazzaro, è pronto da più di un anno; il secondo Questa sera si recita a soggetto, da circa otto mesi. E' naturale che, aspettando la rappresentazione di questi due lavori, io abbia avuto tempo di scriverne altri due. Non è naturale, al contrario che nelle presenti miserevoli condizioni del teatro in Italia, un autore del mio nome abbia dovuto aspettare tanto tempo per la rappresentazione dei suoi lavori. Mi si è voluto far credere che, per il fatto ch'io abbia avuto per tre anni una mia compagnia, mi sia alienati tanto i proprietari quanto le attrici e gli attori di tutte le altre compagnie, cosicchè sia stato difficilissimo collocare adesso i miei lavori. Non voglio entrare in pettegolezzi di questo genere. Sta di fatto che, ritornato nello scorso agosto in Italia trovai annunciato il Lazzaro al Teatro Olimpia di Milano e O di uno o di nessuno al Politeama Chiarella di Torino. Tu capisci, d'agosto! Non mi restava da fare altro che impedire le due rappresentazioni così fuor di luogo e di stagione. [...] Il Lazzaro, prima che in Italia, è stato rappresentato in Inghilterra e ora sarà rappresentato a New York in America e a Lipsia in Germania; Questa sera si recita
a soggetto, prima che in Italia dovrà essere per forza rappresentato all'estero per poter sperare che poi si decidano a rappresentarlo nel mio paese. [...] Dopo tutto questo non aspetto altro che mi si dica che io mi glorio d'esser prima rappresentato all'estero e che sdegno o non mi curo di presentare al giudizio del pubblico e della critica della mia Patria i miei lavori. Profondamente amareggiato ti prego di pubblicare questa mia lettera; e credimi sempre con affetto tuo.  

The letter was not published.  

The "mito" Lazzaro was finally staged in Turin by Marta Abba's theatre company on December 17, 1929. It had become extremely difficult for Pirandello to see his plays produced in Italy. By this time most of his plays were being translated into other languages at staged abroad before being staged in Italy. Lazzaro, as the title clearly suggests, is about "miracles" - two of which are resurrections and the play parallels Pirandello's effort to resuscitate the Italian theatre. Lazzaro is a metaphor for the recovery of a true religious belief and the condemnation of superficial conventional faith. The play opens with the "miracle" of the resurrection of a crippled young girl's pet rabbit. Her father Diego La Spina, a religious man who has decided to donate his land in order to accommodate less fortunate people, is upheld by the presumption that his daughter's dead rabbit has been brought back to life. He
asks the doctor, who had brought the rabbit back, to take it away. He accuses the doctor of blasphemy.

However, soon La Spina falls and dies only to be resurrected himself. He remembers nothing no one tells him what had happened because they fear he might commit suicide because by not having experienced anything while dead it would prove to him that God does not exist. In the mean time his son has returned to town having left priesthood. His former wife lives on the land he is about to donate with another man, from whom she has had two other children. She left La Spina because she believes his is responsible for their child's crippling disease.

Once La Spina finds out he had been dead he tries to kill his wife's companion because he does not believe in the existence of God any longer. Consequently he is not afraid of eternal punishment as it is no longer possible. He is brought back to his senses by his son who decides to go back to the church. As the play comes to a close Lia, the young crippled girl gets up off her wheelchair and walks into her mother's arms.

Pirandello himself defined this play as a "mito". The religious content of the play serves an important purpose. It stresses the reliability of unconventional beliefs and it proposes the restoration of religion to its supernatural
forces. For Pirandello this was an essential characteristic for the realization of the "resurrection" of theatre itself.

"Capocomico" literally means actor-manager or stage manager. When Pirandello headed the Teatro d'Arte as "capocomico" neither the concept nor the practice of what we today consider director was established in Italy. The theoretical and practical practice of having a "unifying" director for the stage would only be formalized in Italy in the 1930s.

Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore had triumphed the year before in London and New York. Max Reinhardt also staged Sei Personaggi in cerca d'autore a year later at the Deutsches Theatre in Berlin on December 30. However several changes were made to the text so much that his staging has been defined as the representation of "symbolic existence." See Micheal Rosner "La fortuna di Pirandello in Germania." in *Quaderni di teatro*, November 1986 pp. 40-53.


The Father was played by Georges Pitëoff, the Stepdaughter by Ludmilla Pitëoff, Marie Kalff the Mother and Michel Simon played the Director.


Niccodemi's letter was published in *La Repubblica*, January 13, 1990.


The actual last version of the play was printed in 1933. However there are practically no changes made to the 1925 text. The two differ only in some changes to punctuation. Some differences exist in the 1925 and 1933 prefaces to the play.
Even though the Futurists pursued the spectators' involvement into the action of a play, the situation was quite different. Mainly the performance was a happening, and everything became undoubtedly "real."

For the textual genesis of Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore I am particularly indebted to Claudio Vicentini, "Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore. Il testo."

A detailed account of the various mise en scènes of Enrico IV, see Franca Angelini, Serafino e la tigre. Pirandello tra scrittura, teatro e cinema (Venice: Marsilio, 1990): 137-50.

Picasso himself commented on his experience as actor in the Teatro d'Arte Company in a long interview in Aemanno Contini, "Il teatro d'arte di Roma diretto da Luigi Pirandello" in Epoca (December 1924), p.5.

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43 Giudice, Pirandello, 452.
44 He also translated from the Sicilian into Italian Liolà in 1927.
46 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid, 1068.
50 Ibid, 1069. The prostitute's name clearly anticipates her position of heroin as "sperare" in Italian means to hope.
51 Ibid, 1072.
52 Ibid, 1072.
54 Ibid, 1158.
55 See for instance Alberto Cecchi, "Un'intervista con l'autore della Nuova Colonia" in Il Tevere (March 16, 1928) and Piero Fornaciari, "La nuova colonia" in Il Solco Fascista (April 6, 1928). Fornaciari saw the play as a metaphor of Fascism. La Spera, according to the journalist represents the triumph of Fascism over the other deadly social forces.
56 Luigi Bottazzi, "La nuova colonia" in Corriere della sera (March 20, 1928).
57 Virgilio Marchi, "Il mio voluntariato teatrale e La nuova colonia" in Rivista di Livorno (May 1960). The article was published posthumously.
59 The letter was never published by Simoni and the Corriere della sera. It appeared over a month later in Il Tevere (December 12, 1929).
60 Pirandello, Lazzaro in Maschere nude, Vol. II.
61 Lazzarus is the young man resuscitated by Christ.
Chapter IV

The Dissolution of the Boundaries Between Reality and Fiction

4.1 Sogno, ma forse no: the hallucinated stage

By 1929 Pirandello's experience as "capocomico" was over, and he had moved abroad. Soon after the dissolution of his theatre company, he wrote two plays Sogno (ma forse no) and Questa sera si recita a soggetto. These theatrical works play an important role in the last stage of Pirandello's career as playwright. In fact, they can be considered an additional step towards the author's attempt to find a resolution to the questions he had raised in relation to dramatic writing and its mise en scène. The complex relationship between text and performance as means for the creation of signification, which had been central to his speculation since Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore comes to a new crossroad.

Indeed, the one act play Sogno (ma forse no) and Questa sera si recita a soggetto both investigate, on different
levels, the possibilities of representation. Interestingly he wrote the two plays simultaneously between December 1928 and January 1929. While the latter has been studied as a metaphor of the theatre, Sogno (ma forse no) has not been fully investigated in this sense.

The play, unlike most of Pirandello's theatrical pièces, is not the elaboration of a previous written narrative. There is, however, a short story which Pirandello had published in 1914, entitled La realtà del sogno, which deals with the relationship between the dream world and reality.

The 1914 novella investigates the supremacy of the dream world over daily life as the former unveils true identities and realities. The title clearly asserts and professes that the "real" is to be found in the realm of the dream world. With La realtà del sogno, Pirandello clearly took a stance in favor of dreams' ability to reveal intimate and unspeakable desires. Dreams, the short story suggests, ultimately unveil the true identity of humankind through an epiphany.

In the short story, a woman is confronted by a male visitor who argues that timid and shy women are really extremely sensuous, and he states that their shyness is only due to the fact that they are unable to control their
"impure" thoughts. The woman fiercely rebuts that she thinks the visitor is speaking non-sense. After the visitor leaves she argues with her husband because he did not defend her. That same night she dreams of making love to the visitor. The description of the dream is realistic and uncommonly erotic.

Le passava prima lievemente una mano sul volto. Al tocco di quella mano ella faceva uno sforzo violento su se stessa per nascondere il brivido che le correva per tutta la persona, e non svelare lo sguardo e tener fermi e impassibili gli occhi e appena sorridente la bocca. Ed ecco, ora egli le accostava le dita alla bocca; le rovesciava delicatamente il labbro inferiore e annegava li, nell'interno umidore, un bacio caldo, lungo, d'infinita dolcezza. Ella serrava i denti; s'interdiva tutta per dominare il tremito, il fremito del corpo; e allora egli prendeva a denudarle il seno. [...] Vinta e perduta, dapprima senza concedere, cominciava a cedere, non per forza di lui, no, ma per il languore spasimoso del suo stesso corpo.  

The extremely detailed erotic experience of the dream, quite unusual in Pirandello's work, has a specific aesthetic value. The paragraph comes across to the reader as a sensorial experience making it generally "more real" than the rest of the short story. The abundance of adjectives and past participles used as adjectives, scrutinizes the
encounter thoroughly, thus rendering the images created vividly real.

When the woman awakes, she is horrified and, at the same time, unable to forget the experience. Through the dream she has brought to light her true self. A few days later the male friend returns. She tries to persuade her husband to send him away but he does not listen to her. She is then overcome by erotic convulsions and asks the visitor to touch her as he had in the dream. Both men are surprised as she loses consciousness. When the visitor leaves, she confesses to her puzzled husband her "betrayal."

Even though La realtà del sogno deals directly with the relationship between reality and dream world, it differs greatly from Sogno (ma forse no). The short story can be divided into three distinct parts. In the first, one finds the woman's argument with the visitor (presumably reality); in the second, a detailed description of the dream (presumably the fictitious); and in the third, the return of the visitor after the woman's dream (consequences of the dream onto "reality"). In the play, on the contrary, ambiguity between dream world and reality prevails throughout.

Another important difference is that in the short story the first and the second part are even divided by Pirandello
"structurally." The first narrative segment of the short story ends with the woman reflecting on the "horrid things" the visitor had said, and believing he had been speaking about her. But the narration is suddenly interrupted by an authorial intervention which reads:

Eppure...

Fu nel sogno la rivelazione.⁶

The structural division within the short story is extremely significant as it divides the two worlds. It also performs an anticipatory function on the action, and thus serves as an anticlimax to what will follow, as it clearly forewarns the reader that the woman's dream will be revealing.

The following oneiric segment exposes the woman's subconscious. Her dream is, thus, as the title suggests, reality. Her inability to realize her unconscious desires had prevented her from actualizing her "real" self. The dream is authentic while life is illusory. In La realtà del sogno, Pirandello clearly opts for the reality of the dream world, and establishes it as detector of truth. The protagonist's "painful epiphany" is produced by her dream which manifests the woman as she could have never imagined herself. In La realtà del sogno, the two worlds remain distinctly separate up to the third section where, thanks to
the epiphanic moment, the so-called "unreal" dream world molds and re-models the "real world."

Sogno (ma forse no), instead, presents itself in ambiguous terms as the title immediately introduces a juxtaposition of opposites: an affirmation, "sogno," followed by a dubitative clause, "ma forse no." The title immediately sets the tone of the entire play. The ambiguity of the title does not allow for the production of definite meaning nor for the identification of the site of truth. The nature of the theatrical medium multiplies the ambiguities as the stage itself, the artificial space par excellence, becomes a "zona fantasma" in which hallucination is a form of the real.7

The ambiguities continue throughout the play on various levels. Right from the start, in the first stage directions, Pirandello writes:

Una camera: ma forse no: un salotto. Certo, una giovane signora vi giace su un letto: ma forse no: sembra piuttosto un divano, a cui per qualche molla si sia abbattuta l'alta spalliera.8

Again Pirandello proceeds by oppositions marked by affirmative clauses immediately followed by dubitative ones. As in many other Pirandellian plays, the stage setting is "double" from the very outset. In Sogno (ma forse no),
however, the duplication of what is and of what seems is a theatrical strategy. What "is" is not juxtaposed to what "seems" in a dialectic manner, but rather the opposition of the two is expressed by visual prompts, stage design and the very action of the play. Furthermore, even the distinction between "real" and "dream" worlds is never clear cut, as they continuously fade into and contaminate one another. In fact the action of Sogno (ma forse no) takes place without the dormeuse knowing which is which.

In the same stage directions mentioned previously, Pirandello writes that there is an enormous mirror on stage which "per ora sembra una finestra." Thus, the play of levels expands to include an outside and an inside. Yet, what is considered a window to the outside is actually a mirror which in turn is reproducing an inside. The sites of creation of truth have become interchangeable and yet undistinguishable in a play of multiple reflections.

E anche lo specchio per ora sembra piuttosto una finestra. La ragione di quest'inganno è semplice: nello specchio si riflette la finestra che gli sta di rimpetto, nella parete sinistra: e naturalmente, per la giovane signora che sogna, la finestra è là dov'è lo specchio che la riflette: e questa finestra di sogno sarà difatti paerta più tardi, dall 'uomo che verrà.
It is indeed possible to detect four loci of signification. The first level is represented by what is exposed as the "real world"; the second level, can be identified in what is staged as the "dream world"; the third can be taken to be the window and its opening to the outdoors; and, ultimately, the fourth may be recognized in the mirror which denies the previous level - the window. All the above sites are entrapped by the stage itself as the locus of the supreme artifice, the place in which the entire action of the play unfolds but also the threshold between dream and reality, the place of their meeting, their fading into one another and constant contamination.

From a purely theatrical stand point, the pièce presents another major novelty within the larger text of Pirandello's entire dramatic opus: the introduction of long stage directions in which the characters produce meaning through movement and long pauses. Contrarily to previous plays, here there is no longer total reliance on the utterance of a written/uttered text.

In Sogno (ma forse no), Pirandello introduces a new theatrical strategy: no longer does the stage direction explain the utterance of a text, but it is the uttered text that explains the stage direction. The enormous role thus
played by the stage directions, which ultimately come to substitute the uttered text itself as site of signification, is emphasized by the importance given to the characters' gestures and movements rather than from their "words". In this way the stage and not the uttered text is the dominant feature of the mise en scène.

E s'allontana dalla finestra: si muove guardingo per il salotto in direzione dell'uscio chiuso: vi giunge: torna a guardare circospetto come uno che voglia cogliere il momento opportuno per aprire quell'uscio: lo apre: esce.12

The emphasis on the "seeing" rather than the "hearing" indicates Pirandello's shift, in this play, towards a "visual" creation of meaning. The stage direction, similarly to many in the text, is not merely descriptive; on the contrary, it visualizes the action by imposing a syntactic rhythm to movement.13

Sogno (ma forse no) is Pirandello's last attempt to find a "new" space and an alternative way for the creation of signification before fully exploring the possibilities of the mythic. From the labyrinths of Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore to the multi-leveled world of Enrico IV, from the limitless mise en abîme of Ciascuno a suo modo to the initiatory "rite," La nuova colonia, Pirandello had spent almost ten years searching for a possible place of
representation and truth in art. The theatre played the most important role in this search as its multiple levels facilitate the presentation of the complexities of the real. His experience as "capocomico" was an economic failure and it had not received the praise it deserved. In Sogno (ma forse no) Pirandello takes his research to the extreme, that is, to a place of representation which is the threshold between the real and the unreal. More than a stance on the truthfullness of dreams Pirandello presents a true discourse on dreams.

In this play, Pirandello investigated the sphere of the psyche as he took us onto a journey into "otherness," the realm of his haunting characters. By seizing the cosmos of the unreal, he brings the spectator, and more importantly, the actor, to the place of origin of his characters.

If in his previous plays the elimination of the "fourth wall" provoked a widening of the theatrical space as a site of signification, in Sogno (ma forse no) Pirandello eliminates another wall, the one between the conscious and the unconscious.

Interestingly Pirandello wrote a short story which was clearly inspired by Sogno (ma forse no), that is, Effetti di un sogno interrotto, published in 1936. Quite significantly, in this narrative text, ambiguity between
"real" and "dream" worlds prevails as much as it did in the play. One invades the other but, as the title suggests, the two worlds are seen as separate. The dream world effects the real world, and the ambiguity between the actions taking place in the dream world and those unfolding in reality is never truly untangled. It is relevant to note, though, that the first short story, La realtà del sogno, does not originate directly a dramatic adaptation, and the play is simply a subsequent step in Pirandello's speculation on the complex relationship between dream and wake life. Yet, it is also pertinent to observe that both Sogno (ma forse no) and Effetti di un sogno interrotto appear to be meta-discoursive stages in Pirandello's relentless search for an alternative place of signification. Approaching the end of his career, Pirandello was unquestionably conceiving a stage that was no longer a material space, but a true threshold between dream and reality and at the same time secular and divine. A space in which the reciprocal contamination of the real/secular and the dream/divine would allow "myth" to gain subsistence.
4.2 *I giganti della montagna*: staging the threshold

Pirandello's last play, *I giganti della montagna*, immediately presents one with a strenuous problem: the author was unable to complete it as he was hindered by death. As mentioned earlier, during the last year of his activity as "capocomico," Pirandello left two works incomplete as a testimonial to his poetic and creative crisis right after his experience at the Teatro d'Arte. Yet, the case of *I giganti della montagna* is quite different. Pirandello's son, Stefano, writes that only two days before his death, Pirandello stated that he had resolved a central problem relating to *I giganti della montagna*.

Io seppi da Lui, quella mattina, soltanto questo: che aveva trovato un olivo saraceno. "C'è" mi disse sorridendo "un olivo saraceno, grande, in mezzo alla scena: con cui ho risolto tutto." E poiché io non comprendevo bene, soggiunse: "Per tirarvi il tendone..." Così capii che Egli si occupava, forse da qualche giorno, a risolvere questo particolare di fatto. Era molto contento d'averlo trovato.18

Notwithstanding Stefano Landi's reconstruction of his father's intentions, the work is unfinished and therefore
flawed. Another problem is that Pirandello did not personally supervise the play's first edition, and thus did not directly classify *I giganti della montagna* as a "mito." The only other two plays which do not have some sort of definition are *Sogno (ma forse no)* and *Questa sera si recita a soggetto.*

Unquestionably, the lack of a specific definition of the play on Pirandello's part amplifies the problems. Two other plays were defined "myths" by Pirandello, *La nuova colonia* and *Lazzaro.* However, important analogies between the three plays justify the assumption that *I giganti della montagna* would have been defined a "myth" by Pirandello, had he completed it.

Another testimony which allows for such a speculation is Marta Abba's appendix and comment to the first staging of *I giganti della montagna* in Florence, less than a year after Pirandello's death, in which she writes:

Questo "Mito dell'Arte", messo in scena dopo pochi mesi dalla morte di Luigi Pirandello al teatro all'aperto del Giardino di Boboli di Firenze, nel maggio fiorentino del 1937, da Renato Simoni, ebbe un enorme successo, rappresentato come fu lasciato dall'Autore "incompiuto". [...] Luigi Pirandello chiamò *I giganti della montagna* "Mito dell'Arte".
More importantly in a note to the publication of I fantasi, which is the first and second part of the "mito," I giganti della montagna, the playwright himself writes:

Questo lavoro è stato scritto nei primi mesi del 1931. Un solo accenno verso la fine fa arguire che l'azione proseguirà, ma del resto è compiuto, e può stare a sè. Fa parte dei Giganti della montagna che è il terzo dei miei miti moderni. Il primo (religioso) è il Lazzaro, il secondo (sociale) è La nuova colonia; questo è il mito dell'arte.\(^{21}\)

Thus Pirandello himself defined the three works as "myths," as La nuova colonia deals with the myth of the supernatural, Lazzaro with the myth of the super-human and I giganti della montagna with the myth of the super-artistic.\(^{22}\)

Pirandello's desire of reviving myth in order to establish theatre as the schoolmistress of humanity is three fold. Only with revived ancient mythology - religious, social and artistic - can art re-acquire the character of a public institution and develop the power to regenerate the ethical totality of theatre. Reason can no longer, for Pirandello, take possession of itself in its own medium of self-refection. The three "myths" are the playwright's attempt to recover, without the interference of Judaic/Christian beliefs, the wholeness and truthfulness of
theatre and restore its "inner authenticity." The religious, social and artistic represent the three aspects of ancient society which Pirandello believes must be reinstated in the theatre and consequently in modern society itself. The degradation of theatre, for the Playwright, mirrors that of society and only through the redemption of the later, by reviving its religious, social and artistic values, can the former re-acquire its lost integrity.

The relation between Pirandello's earlier production and *I giganti della montagna* has already been woven by many critics. Several scholars have indeed highlighted the numerous important sources of this last theatrical pièce, and have contributed greatly to the understanding of this remarkable unfinished work. Yet, an investigation of *I giganti della montagna* as a modern "mito dell'arte" in general and as a meta-theatrical play in particular will shed light on Pirandello's exegesis of theatre.

The characters of the play are divided into three groups on the page of the *dramatis personae*: Ilse, the Countess, and the actors of her theatre company, the Scalognanti, who inhabit the Villa, and "Fantocci, Apparizioni" and "L'Angelo Centuno." Finally a character, Cotrone, who will prove to be central to the play, called "the magician," is isolated from all the others.
Immediately one encounters a great novelty: the explicit presence of supernatural characters. In fact amongst the characters one finds Puppets, apparitions of spirits and Angels.

I giganti della montagna is also set in an undetermined time and place: "al limite fra la favola e la realtà." The location is thus between fabula and reality. The two words are in opposition as fable – Italian, favola – Latin, fabula – indicates something which is "untrue" and "unreal". The place of representation is no longer a stage, as in Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore, nor a reconstructed historical setting as in Enrico IV, nor is it purely a mental space as in Sogno ma forse no. It has become an enchanted land: namely the Villa.

This is apparent right from the first appearance of the Contessa and her friends as they approach the Villa where the Scalognati live. As soon as the frightened inhabitants of the Villa see the unexpected visitors they call Cotrone.

COTRONE

Cos'è? O non vi vergognate? Avete paura e vorreste farne?

MILORDINO

Salgono in frotta! Sono più di dieci!

QUAQUEO
No sono otto, sono otto: li ho contati! Con la donna!

COTRONE

E allegri! C'è anche una donna? Sarà una regina spodestata. E' nuda?

QUAQUEO (sbalordito)

Nuda? No, nuda non mi è parsà.

COTRONE

Nuda, sciocco! Su un carretto di fieno, una donna nuda; coi seni all'aria e i capelli rossi sparsi come un sangue di tragedia! I suoi ministri in bando la tirano, per sudar meno in manica di camicia. Sù svegli, immaginazione! Non mi vorrete mica diventar ragionevoli! Pensate che per noi non c'è pericolo, e vigliacco chi ragiona! Perbacco, ora che vien la sera, il regno è nostro.²⁸

Cotrone's first substantial dialogue sets the mode of the entire play. He is clearly in charge of the Scalognati, but more importantly, he immediately dismisses the material world in favour of the imaginary one. The oxymoron "wake-up, use your imagination!" inverts the generally accepted correlation between being awake and comprehending. The exhortation, "you're not going to become reasonable on me" and "whoever reasons is a coward", emphasize his complete distrust in the rationalization of the tangible. In fact he
concludes by stating that the night, thus darkness, is their reign.\textsuperscript{29} The domain of the dream-world, without being asleep, but awake, as conscious participants of experience is their condition of being.

Cotrone is not surprised to see the company of actors as he seems to be expecting them. In fact, he suddenly states "Forse son loro". This utterance has a significant purpose as it implies that Cotrone is awaiting the arrival of a group of people of whom the other inhabitants of the Villa are unaware. It also hints immediately, at the outset, to the extent of Cotrone's magical powers. His power to anticipate events underlines his hegemony over the others and their surroundings.

Once Ilse arrives Cotrone explicitly acknowledges he was expecting them.\textsuperscript{30}

As soon as the Contessa and her friends arrive at the Villa they believe to have witnessed a mise en scène as the Villa itself was "artificially" lighted by lightning. The Scalognati, on the other hand, think Cotrone has invited a theatre company to entertain them. In fact, the Contessa and her friends are actually actors and belong "more or less to the same family"\textsuperscript{31} of the Scalognati and Cotrone.

The Villa and its surroundings is the "stage" on which the action of \textit{I giganti della montagna} will unfold. It plays a
central role in the overall scheme of the meta-theatrical component of *I giganti della montagna*. In fact, the Villa is seen as a stage by the people in the theatre company and the Scalognati believe that the visitors are actors who have been invited to perform a play at the Villa. It instead will be the site of "magical" events.\(^\text{32}\)

The theatre company headed by Ilse has been wandering looking for an audience. The only play they perform is *La favola del figlio cambiato*, a play written by Pirandello himself between 1930 and 1932. Surprisingly Pirandello wrote *La favola del figlio cambiato* after he had begun to write *I giganti della montagna*.

Il poema che in parte viene recitato davanti ai giganti della montagna [...] s'intitola *La favola del figlio cambiato*. Orbene, io ho pensato di riprendere questa medesima favola e di creare un'altra opera drammatica con lo stesso titolo.\(^\text{33}\)

By writing *La favola del figlio cambiato* afterwards Pirandello is identifying completely with the dead poet present in the *I giganti della montagna*.\(^\text{34}\) The "Fable" was written in preparation for *I giganti della montagna* but it was itself the elaboration of a short story, *Il figlio cambiato*, which Pirandello had published in 1902.\(^\text{35}\) The short story and the play present several differences but the
story line is identical: a child has been kidnapped by "nocturnal women" and has been substituted with another child. The child's mother sets out to salvage her son and succeeds.36 Significantly, the nocturnal women, supernatural forces, are only mentioned in these texts, but never appear. As mentioned earlier in _I giganti della montagna_ "unnatural" characters take an integral part in the action of the play and are physically present on the stage. This difference between the short story _Il figlio cambiato_ and the _La favola del figlio cambiato_, on the one hand, and _I giganti della montagna_ on the other, is crucial for an understanding of Pirandello's new theatrical exegesis. In fact, the three "miti" all introduce and elaborate supernatural events on the stage as the nature of the myth allows, according to Pirandello, for the "impossible" to become believable and "real."

Ilse often gives performances of _La favola del figlio cambiato_ within _I giganti della montagna_. She has spent her life performing this play written by her lover. A love she never physically returned but which has taken up the better part of her life. In fact the first lines uttered by Ilse, while in trance, are those of the beginning of _La favola del figlio cambiato_.


ILSE

Se volete ascoltare
questa favola nuova,
credete a questa mia veste
di povera donna;
ma credete di più
a questo mio pianto di madre
per una sciagura
per una sciagura,

And just as the Mother is interrupted in La favola del figlio cambiato by the chorus, so is Ilse by her fellow actors who laugh loudly. She continues,

Ne ridono tutti così,
la gente istruita
che pure lo vede
che piango,
e non se ne commuove...37

The Contessa and her theatre company, unlike the six characters of the homonymous play, are not in search of an author, but rather of an audience. Moreover the Actors in Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore are rehearsing Il giuoco delle parti a rehearsal which once interrupted will never be resumed. In I giganti della montagna, instead, La favola del figlio cambiato not only plays an important role in the economy of this "mito" but is in actuality a play within a play.38 Its purpose is to point out the divide between "favola" and "mito." A divide which defines the limits between being and living.
Since the actors' staging of *La favola del figlio cambiato* has been disastrous from the very first performance, not withstanding the "spectacular set design" and the "lighting". Ilse and the other actors have decided to leave the "civilized world" and have come to the Villa. Cotrone admits he too has left civilization because of the unwillingness of people to recognize true art. In fact, he states "...ero cristiano, mi son fatto turco!" and he readily explains,

COTRONE

...Ma no, cara, niente da veder con Maometto! Turco, per il fallimento della poesia della cristianità."

and soon after

COTRONE

Le cose che ci stanno attorno parlano e hanno senso soltanto nell'arbitrario in cui per disperazione ci viene di cangiare. Disperazione a modo nostro, badiamo! Siamo pittosto placidi e pigri, seduti, concepiamo enormità, come potrei dire? mitologiche, naturalissime, dato il genere della nostra esistenza. Non si può campare di niente; e allora è una continua sborniatura celeste. Respiriamo aria favolosa."

He and the Scalognati concieve mythological and yet natural greatness.
The fable is knowingly false and untrue whereas, as incredible as some events in the Villa and its surroundings may seem, they are instead accepted as real because of their mythic quality.

Cotrone, the magician, creates the dark, illuminates the villa and ultimately has puppets perform. All these "incredible" events are accepted as real because of the mythical space in which they come to life. He acts as if he were the director of a staging. He supervises, gives orders and ultimately orchestrates everything that happens in and around the villa throughout the play.

What was confined to the realm of dreams in *Sogno (mai forse no)* comes to "life" in *I giganti della montagna*.

COTRONE

...Siamo qua come agli orli della vita, Contessa. Gli orli, a un comando, si distaccano; entra l'invisibile: vaporano i fantasmi. E' così naturale. Avviene, ciò che di solito nel sogno. Io lo faccio avvenire anche nella veglia. Ecco tutto. I sogni, la musica, la preghiera, l'amore... tutto l'infinito ch'è negli uomini, lei lo troverà dentro e intorno a questa villa.32

The Villa is infinity, the threshold between reality and fable: that is myth. It is the place where anything is possible and yet everything is real. The place which links
the secular with the divine. The Countess and her troupe, in fact, are mundane figures, while the giants, which never appear, but to whom Ilse and the actors would perform, live on the mountain and are divine. The mountain is the place which the Greek gods inhabited. They represent the divine aspect of the theatre. But the place of representation of signification cannot be either earthly nor divine but only mythic, the place of true reality is the Villa which belongs to the realm of the magician/director Cotrone.

The mix of desperation and ecstasy of which Cotrone speaks of is the condition of the theatre. He represents theatre in its utmost form when he states that the inhabitants of the mountain breath, literally, "fabulous air."

The position in which he and the other inhabitants find themselves in is one of difference, as they are pure essence and thus the opposite of life, of nature. Their place is that of which dreams are made with. Cotrone eloquently explicates the difference between himself and the Countess, the Scalognati and the actors, that is, between acting and being:

Voi attori date corpo ai fantasmi perché vivano - e vivono! Noi facciamo al contrario: dei nostri corpi, fantasmi: e li facciamo
The Countess and her actors may have reached the mountain but they will not be able to stage the play, as they are still linked to the real world and are unable to "live" the theatre in the only possible space for signification yet to be created: the threshold between reality and fiction. By defining Lazzaro, La nuova colonia and I giganti della montagna myths, Pirandello overcame the impasse to which his investigations on theatre and theatricality had brought him. He had realized that it was necessary to recover major functions of ancient tragedy. Yet, he was also aware that the only way to surmount the limits of the traditional boundaries of theatre was to re-invent and re-invest in its ancient mythical character. In fact "mythos" can be defined as "structure plus history," and also as "traditional tale applied." It is precisely because myth is traditional that the Greeks thought it to be true. Moreover, Pirandello was likely influence by Gianbattista Vico's definition of myth. The Neapolitan philosopher defined myth as "vera narratio." Therefore, Pirandello, by qualifying Lazzaro a "religious myth", La nuova colonia a "social myth" and I giganti della montagna as an "artistic myth," was
attempting to recover the truthfulness of the theatre which "i Greci considerarono la suprema e più matura espressione d'arte". Art of the theatre which Pirandello had striven for his entire life.

1See: Claudio Vicentini, " Il problema del teatro nell'opera di Pirandello; Giorgio Barberi Squarotti, " La trilogia pirandelliana e il rinnovamento del teatro; Jennifer Lorch, Testo e teatro: la teoria e la pratica di Pirandello and particulary Lucio Lugnani, " Teatro dello straniamento ed estraniazione del teatro in Questa sera si recita a soggetto". All the above are in Enzo Lauretta, Ed., Pirandello e il teatro (Palermo: Palumbo, 1985). See also Franca Angelini, " Dall'arazzo alla scena: Pirandello e la messa in scena" and Alessandro Tinterri, " Le prime messe in scene di Questa sera si recita a soggetto." E. Lauretta Ed., Testo e messa in scena in Pirandello ( Urbino: La Nuova Italia Scientifica, 1986).

2One must note however that Pirandello wrote thirty three one act plays and only a hand full are derived from previous short stories. For an acount of Pirandello's one act plays see Paolo Puppa, "Gli atti unici pirandelliani: inventario per una drammaturgia al plurale" in Enzo Lauretta Ed. Pirandello e il teatro, (Milano: Mursia, 1993): 41-52


5Pirandello, Sogno (ma forse no) in Maschere Nude, Vol II. ( Milan: Mondadori, 1958): 486-7
It is noteworthy to point out that there is actually a line-space between "Eppure ..." and "Fu nel sogno...."

Luigi Pirandello, ibid, 486. It is noteworthy to point out that there is actually a line-space between "Eppure ..." and "Fu nel sogno...."

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1For a stimulating comment of the significance of "Scologna" see Antonio Illiano, Metapsichica e letteratura in Piranello Rome: Vallecchi, 1982, pp. 112-113.


-Interestingly the Latin "fabula" is very often used with "ficta", fiction. However "fabula" has also been attested to mean staging and discourse. Enrico Bianchi, Dizionario della Lingua Latina (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1972).

-Interestingly Pirandello uses the expression "Perbacco" which in an English translation would be rendered with "By Jove". However literary it is "by Bacchus", who was the Roman version of the Greek god Dionysus, god of wine and inspiration. Dionysus was worshipped in processions which some believe to have evolved into theatre.

-Anna Meda sees the villa as a symbol of the unconscious. Anna Meda, "La villa della Scologna come simbolo e rappresentazione dell'inconscio nei Giganti della montagna" in Pirandello e il teatro E. Lauretta ed. (Mursia: Milan, 1993): 259-76.

-Mario Corsi, "La valigia di Pirandello", in Comedia, July-August 1930, p. 33.

-Pirandello, La favola del figlio cambiato in Maschere nude, Vol. II, pp. 1225-1304.

-Pirandello wrote the first three parts of La favola del figlio cambiato it was completed by composer Malipiero, who also put it to music.

-Pirandello, I giganti della montagna in Maschere nude, Vol. II, p. 1318

-Significantly there is a short story within the play. In fact in I giganti della montagna one finds the retelling of a novella Pirandello wrote in 1910 entitled Lo storno e l'angelo Centuno. (The short story was revised by Pirandello in 1914, 1920 and 1925). Now in Luigi Pirandello, Novelle per un annoII ed., Mario Costanzo (Milan: Mondadori, 1987) pp. 502-512.

-Pirandello, I giganti della montagna in Maschere nude, Vol. II, p. 1328

-Not only did Pirandello know ancient Greek, he was also very familiar with ancient Greek tragedy. He, in fact, translated Euripides' Cyclops into Sicilian in 1918.


Pirandello's attitude towards the crisis of art in general and of the theatre in particular is extremely important for an understanding of the development of the theories on and around theatre in the Twentieth century. His initial position was very conservative as he theorized the extreme importance of the text over the staging. Surely his academic background, a doctorate in philology, contributed to his initial stance on the supremacy of the "written word" over the mise en scène. His first plays were closely tied to the traditional notion of theatre and his energy was above all geared towards his narrative and essayistical productions.

At the beginning of the century he wrote several short stories which would later serve as bases to many theatrical works, and what is considered his narrative masterpiece Il fu Mattia Pascal. Simultaneously he published numerous critical essays on Italian authors - ranging from interpretations of Dante's Divine Comedy to Giovanni Verga's Malavoglia - and he published what is regarded his aesthetic creed L'umorismo. His essays on the relationship between literature and theatre of the period are both stimulating and controversial as they all favor the text
over the staging. In L'azione parlata, Illustratori, attori e traduttori and later in Teatro e letteratura he undertook the task of defending the author's work over the metteur en scène's. Pirandello's first plays, up to and including Il giuoco delle parti, focused fully on the aesthetic stance he had developed previously in both his narrative and essayistical work.

However, he soon after moved to medium which could represent the complexities of the "real." He understood that the only manner express the multiple degrees of Being was to overcome the limits of narrative creation which was two dimensional. He, thus, concentrated on the multidimensional theatre.

As discussed the great divide between his narrative opus and initial traditional theatrical works is his innovative and to a great extent experimental play Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore. The immense success of the play throughout Europe and the Americas played an important part in promoting discussions on and around the theatrical event. The fact that major directors such as Georges Pitoëff and Max Reinhardt decided to tackle this text, directors who are considered today the forerunners of Twentieth century theatre theory, surely accentuates the importance of the pièce and of Pirandello's role in the aesthetic debate. Sei
personaggi in cerca d'autore, in fact, confronts traditional theatrical space and acting techniques and proposes, through the Characters, new possibilities of representation. Pirandello, who demonstrated great courage for his time, moved further and further away from the major theatrical poetics of the second part of the nineteenth century, naturalism and symbolism. He realized that it was necessary to pursue a different avenue in order to express, if not an absolute truth, at least a journey which, in an epistemological manner, would be coherent.

Edward Gordon Craig, one of the forefathers of modern and contemporary theatre theory, has been seen, by many, as Pirandello's counterpart in the debate on the theatre. After our investigation, at the end, he is not far from the Italian playwrights theoretical positions. In fact, the necessity of the actors to find acting techniques which would allow them to move away from the nineteenth century acting agenda is at the centre of both Craig's and Pirandello's theory on acting. Specifically, the need for the actor to control his/her emotions is shared by both Pirandello and Craig. More importantly they both strongly opposed naturalism on the stage. It is true that differences exist between the two, but they both addressed the same
problems and often came up with the same results. Their main concern was to stage the idea, fixed and one, rather than personal and uncontrollable emotions. The real great difference between the two is their different aesthetic approach. While Craig believed in the symbolic possibility of creating signification, Pirandello, instead, dismissed it and opted for a hermeneutic approach.

Pirandello dissected the theatre like a doctor would a cadaver, inspecting each and every part searching for the cause of it "mortal" sickness. His interests widened as he became more familiar with the theatrical medium and went as far as taking on the task of founding and directing a theatre company. Interestingly, many of the problems relating to directing and acting had already been confronted by Pirandello on the page before his hands on experience with the Teatro d'Arte. In this sense *Enrico IV* can be read as the playwrights principal understanding of the working of the theatre. The directorial, acting and stage designing issues are all dealt with in the pièce, on the page. Thus, his knowledge of the entire apparatus of the theatre is evident even before he sets up to be capocomico. This experience would however be important as Pirandello realized that the task of renewing, or better to put it in the
playwright's words, "aging" the theatre would prove to be an impossible task in Italy at that time.

Pirandello's search for a "true" theatrical space, present in many of his plays and central in Ciascuno a suo modo and I giganti della montagna is prophetic as it anticipated one of the most important issues of this century's theory and practice of representation.

His realization of the need for the theatre to recover its religious, social and artistic function, at the basis of his Myth trilogy, has been a major concern of many post-world war two directors and playwrights.

Pirandello, more than any other playwright of his time, was aware of the decline and distress of the theatre. He tried in many ways to revive it but ultimately his goal was to renew theatre's function of educator and Pirandello strove to restore the stage as the place for the production of truth.

Pirandello's search for truth does not however presuppose its acquisition, but rather he, more than truth itself, pursued the tension towards that indispensable acquisition. Pirandello's main concern in theatre is not in choice, will or duty, as it had been prior to his investigations, but rather, in the authenticity of the action itself on stage.
His voluntary exile and the unsuccessful debut of his final plays in Italy tell us how far he had come from conventional theatre.

Pirandello thus can be considered one of the forefathers of contemporary theatre theory. In many ways he anticipated playwrights and directors who followed him such as Antonin Artaud, Bertolt Brecht and in a contemporary Italian context, Carmelo Bene. He set the frame work for theatre research which developed much later this century by theatre companies such as the Living Theatre, a company which, incidentally, debuted with one of his plays - *Tonight we improvise* - Eugenio Barba's Odin Theatre and many other theatre companies to find, discover and invent theatrical spaces which could give dignity to the stage again.

Too often Pirandello the playwright has been considered a cerebral mind boggling author who was unable to untangle himself from total dependence on the written word and has often been accused of being an opportunist, someone who despised the theatre but who wrote plays only for the financial gain. Instead Pirandello's research and his play writing make him, by far, the most important figure of theatre Italy has ever produced. His contribution the theory and praxis of the theatre are fundamental for an understanding of the history of theatre.
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