

## Relative Identity and Ideal Art: The Pirandello Conflict and Its Political Analogy

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Pirandello's work has been generally acknowledged, at least since the commentaries of Bentley and Esslin, to provide the most complete and convincing modern statement of role-playing as a theory of behavior:

Pirandello more than any other playwright has been responsible for a revolution in men's attitude to the world that is comparable to the revolution caused by Einstein's discovery of the concept of relativity in physics: Pirandello has transformed our attitude to human personality and the whole concept of *reality* in human relations by showing that the personality--the character in stage terms--is not a fixed entity but an infinitely fluid, blurred and *relative* concept.<sup>1</sup>

Social psychologists such as Erving Goffman have referred to Pirandello as a source for their charts of the dynamics of reality and appearance, self and role, person and performance.<sup>2</sup> And through his relativism, perceived as a statement about the self in relation to systems of difference, Pirandello has been seen to thematize most of the major problems of modern philosophy.<sup>3</sup> Most criticism of Pirandello has itself been relational, seeking to fortify his work with philosophical precedent while using external structures to establish his artistic significance.<sup>4</sup> Relativism is not, however, either pervasive or dominant in Pirandello's work; only in the case of his theory of human identity is Pirandello consistently skeptical.

Tensions between relativism and a desire for order and ideality have been succinctly described in several periods of Pirandello's career by writers such as John Moestrup, who concludes that "Pirandello's fundamental creative view of

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life is a synthesis of a 'positive' and a 'neutral' element; a passionate desire for an explanation of life or for some system of values is united with a clear-sighted intellectual control of this desire."<sup>5</sup> During the period of his famous dramas of role-playing Pirandello's relativist, analytical themes are perhaps dominant in the focus on resolutions between life and social roles; later, in the period of the theatrical and mythic plays, Moestrup notes that the "irrational takes on an absolute value."<sup>6</sup> In his own major theoretical text, *Humorism*, which some critics have treated as a kind of self-analysis-in-advance, Pirandello posits something called the "sentiment of a contrary," i.e. the individual feeling caused when pure existence seems to be at odds with a system of difference that tries to contain it.<sup>7</sup> An appearance in a role in this view partakes of something like a paradigmatic axis of selection, so that the appearance implies all that it resembles and excludes (Interestingly, there appears to be no equivalent for the syntagmatic axis of combination in Pirandello's essay, though his work includes a temporal sequence something like Sartre's phenomenology of the look and the glance).<sup>8</sup> Human identity is for Pirandello a kind of lack of correspondence, or lacuna, motivating a movement through social roles which finally results in an appeal to authority that has unpleasant political ramifications.

Identity in Pirandello is played within two relatively discreet contexts, the social and the theatrical. Both contexts are explored in characteristic texts, revealing how the play of identity and politics combines. The theories of role and personality, role and actor, role and author all cohere in a basic confrontation between relativism and idealism that distinguishes Pirandello's drama, and condemns the political philosophy that it analogically produces.<sup>9</sup>

The psychological aspect of social identity involves characters' attempts to achieve self-perception without sacrificing the uniqueness and presence of emotional life. Yet even in this most personal situation, identity depends upon some comparative object, some self-created image of the self. In *To Clothe the Naked* the central character is Ersilia, a woman who has attempted suicide before the dramatic action begins and eventually succeeds in poisoning herself at the play's end. Ersilia attracts some attention because she publishes her own life-story (life-lie), a narrative of self-definition, in a Rome newspaper. Her story generates two kinds of responses. A writer, Ludovico Nota, confesses that "the moment I started to read about you in that newspaper, the novel began to take shape in my head, all of it, from beginning to end."<sup>10</sup> His response to her narrative of legitimation is to recognize, appropriate and seek to exploit the selective, aesthetic, even fictive aspect of her tale--aspects of writing that are part of any personal history. The second kind of response to Ersilia is from those who recognize themselves as real characters in her narrative--people from her past whose identities are threatened by the distorting omissions of her story. Her former lover, Grotti, tells how he "rushed to the newspaper to deny everything."<sup>11</sup> Her story is challenged by those it involves, her constructed past penetrated just as the men in the story

have penetrated her body. The narrative that she created as a text containing her image of identity, the object which allowed her self-conception, collapses under critical scrutiny. And in a curtain monologue, Ersilia compares that lost object to a garment, to the clothing that dresses the body and establishes it as a social object:

I only wanted to make myself a decent little dress to die in. There, you see why I lied? . . . My whole life I'd never been able to wear one, to make some sort of impression on anyone. It was always torn away from me by all the dogs--the dogs who waited for me everywhere, in every street--no dress that wasn't immediately soiled by all the filth of the streets--and so I wanted a nice one--one beautiful one--to die in--the most beautiful of all--the one I'd dreamed of back there--a bridal gown--but only to die in, to die in, that's all--you see--a few tears shed over me, nothing more. Well, I couldn't have it, not even to die in! Torn off my back, stripped off my body! No! I had to die naked! Exposed, disgraced, scorned! So here I am at last. Are you all satisfied? And now leave me alone. . . . Go away and let me die in silence--naked.<sup>12</sup>

Ersilia is a woman, sought after by others in order to prove themselves and able to establish legitimate identity only through assuming the social role of bride--assuming a relation to a male dominant. And the play holds, even after this reduction of self to unmarked, undistinguishable object, one more fairly obvious irony: when Ersilia asks that the men finally go and tell her story, the audience realizes that her story will be told only if she becomes a supporting character in the personal narratives of her mostly male listeners.

The use of narrative in *To Clothe the Naked* demonstrates that there is no absolute identity, residing either in the body or in the psyche of the character. Rather, identity includes both the production and the reception of social signs. A naked body has no sense without a context, no meaning beyond its situations, and a naked mind is even more ineffable. The body is the locus for a semiotic identity that cannot express the "heaviness" of individual being-in-itself, and yet isolation becomes equivalent to nothingness.

The other object that allows self-perception in Pirandello's work is the mirror, an object so pervasive that mirrors are seen as somehow Pirandellian whenever they have appeared in subsequent dramas. Pirandello encourages us to read the last word in Lacan's "mirror stage" formulation of self-discovery as a pun--not mirror as phase but mirror as *stage*, as a platform for the theatrical representation of the self.<sup>13</sup> Laudisi's monologue in *It Is So! (If You Think So)* provides a succinct dramatic presentation of the mirror stage in operation:

(Laudisi, left alone. . . . draws up in front of the big mirror that is hanging over the mantelpiece. He sees himself in the glass, stops, and addresses his image.)

*Laudisi.* So there you are! (He bows to himself and salutes, touching his forehead with his fingers.) I say, old man, who is mad, you or I? (He levels a finger menacingly at his image in the glass: and of course the image in turn levels a finger at him. As he smiles, his image smiles.) Of course, I understand! I say it's you, and you say it's me. You--you are mad! No? It's me? Very well! It's me! Have it *your* way. Between you and me, we get along very well, don't we? But the trouble is, others don't think of you just as I do; and that being the case, old man, what a fix you're in!<sup>14</sup>

The image of doubleness allows the self to imagine its appearance as an object. It also poses the question of madness, which would threaten this new notion of objectivity that the mirror provides. Surprisingly, then, Pirandello never seems to have dramatized twins, a lack which suggests a kind of metaphysical analogue to his use of the mirror. Though doubleness appears, it is not real but illusory, not absolute (which would throw a system of roles into crisis) but formal and perhaps even mystical. Like the narrative, the mirrored image of the body is mostly an external object, like a name or some other trace of the self, which allows self-consciousness to take place within a social field of differences. The mirror in Pirandello's discourse formulates a paradox of semiotic identity but refuses to account for the real breakdown of semiosis, the cases of genuine doubleness and exact resemblance that emphasize the inadequacy of language to name objects absolutely.

A single name or single role throws the body and individual being into a state of nothingness, into the gap between signifier and signified that indicates the lack of absolute correspondence. Two roles that contradict one another are thematized by Pirandello by effacing the body, creating a being without features. *It Is So! (If You Think So)* presents this problematic relation of the body with semiotic systems of identity. The main conflict of the play involves the apparent discrepancy between the narratives of Ponza and Sra. Frola, his mother-in-law, concerning the identity of Ponza's present wife. The normal social systems of identity have been eliminated by Pirandello in his creation of a completely liminal (and uncharacterized) human: occupation, birth, family upbringing, public records--all are thrown into doubt, disrupted or destroyed through such extreme contrivances as earthquakes and supposed madness. When the wife/daughter appears "in the flesh," the characteristics of the body, too, are rendered inadequate for identification: "A LADY has appeared at the door in back. She is dressed in deep mourning and her face is concealed with a thick, black, impenetrable veil."<sup>15</sup> She is identified with different names by her husband and mother, but when asked to choose a single identity, she insists that she is the woman in *both* stories; i.e. her identity is entirely social,

and she maintains that "for myself, I am nobody!"<sup>16</sup> Yet in order to allow these social identities to overpower any body-related criteria of relation, such as resemblance to the mother, Pirandello must efface the features of the woman. Her stage figure has no personal aspect. This decision to eliminate features in order to create a generic woman contradicts Pirandello's acclaimed relativism. Why must he erase the features of the figure to insist on her duality? Does he merely wish to avoid the audience's likely tendency to judge character relations by comparing possible hereditary features? Or does he betray, in this example, some doubt about the truth of his relativist stance toward identity--some suggested correspondence between appearance and identity, between features and the historical part of individuality, might contradict the arbitrary assignment of bodies to significant roles?

Pirandello's psychological attempts to stage social identity suggest that for him body (heredity, race, gender, etc.) and semiotic system tend toward a kind of antinomy, a continuum between the sense of personal being and the spectacle of social roles within which the process of identity is played. There is no recourse to an absolute of identity in this case, but such a prohibition of absolutes must also, in Pirandello's thought, require the corollary exclusion of any recourse to an absolute relativism.

Pirandello's characters have identities imposed upon them; they also choose identities, locate themselves within particular identity systems. And Pirandello's characters do not merely have binary identities, do not simply choose between a mask and a face; they have plural identities--several masks, more than one face, and the opportunity to wear a number of them at a given time. One example of this will to social identity can be seen in the case of a character's self-imposed identification with a role that is inadequate in scope and specificity, which occurs in Pirandello's *The Pleasure of Honesty*. Angelo Baldovino agrees not only to pose as a husband, but to take on the role in reality, in order to extricate a young woman from a dishonorable pregnancy. Baldovino has already experienced a crisis of the relative self when the play begins, and so he plays the spousal role that is offered to him as a kind of game. Even when his role is betrayed later by those who arranged it, Angelo clings to this chosen identity rather than yield again to the stigma of a spoiled identity. As Angelo says at the outset, "To want to be one thing or another is easy . . . The whole problem lies in succeeding," and he warns others that ". . . if I'm to succeed in the interests of all concerned, you must respect me, and it won't be easy for you. You'll have to respect not me but the form, the form I represent: the honest husband of a respectable woman."<sup>17</sup> By frankly admitting the social situation and demanding an adherence to standard social practices, Angelo not only becomes a husband, he assumes power in the family. His strategy of respecting appearances creates an illusion in which the family is united, the lover estranged, and a successful family business constructed. The illusion of stability is finally so attractive, so convincing and emotionally affective that Angelo and his wife choose to embrace their

contrived arrangement as fact, to allow his performance as a faithful husband to efface the biological facts of the child's paternity.

Through his performance Angelo makes of himself a kind of stable signifier, the phallic center of a structure of roles that can then assume the illusion of absolute presence. The word he uses, the "form" of a husband, provides a key concept for Pirandello's version of idealism. The notion of husband is a kind of ideal that exists outside time and space, like a Platonic form that can be imitated but never exhausted. The idea of a husband provides a formal matrix through which the "awareness of a contrary" and its accompanying "sentiment," from Pirandello's *Humorism*, can be suppressed and controlled. The illusory self is made actual through social agreement in *The Pleasure of Honesty*, as the couple pledges to live together faithfully at the play's end.

This rather tidy, optimistic resolution of roles contrasts with the similar manipulations of situation and power in another Pirandello play, *The Rules of the Game*. Here the central character, Leone Gala, refuses to perform the role of a conventional husband, though he retains his legal standing as spouse. He lives alone, where he cooks and philosophizes with his fellows. His wife, Silia, takes his friend Guido as a lover, and Guido must then occupy an uneasy space between two roles in his relations with both people. When Silia's honor is impugned by outsiders in a drunken mistake, she tries to force Leone to act the part of an outraged husband, hoping he will either assume the role in earnest and restore their marriage, or else be killed to clear the way for Guido. Instead, Leone arranges a duel, drafts Guido as his second, then refuses to fight. Guido, the lover, must stand in at the duel according to "the rules of the game," and he is sacrificed. Leone manipulates the system of social roles so that he has both freedom and power; unlike earlier Pirandello heroes, who might assume that if identity is relative then all roles are equal, Leone chooses which parts to play very carefully so as not to be trapped by the social order inscribed in the structure of roles. Angelo in *The Pleasure of Honesty* explains at one point how he hopes to "construct himself" in the role of a good husband; in *The Rules of the Game* Leone reverses that strategy:

Leone. (After a long pause, then vaguely and sadly) I . . . abstract myself. (Another pause) Do you think I have no feelings, no emotions? Of course I do. But I never let them get away from me. Have you ever seen a trainer at work in a cage full of wild beasts? That's what I am, Silia: A lion tamer. But even as I play this part, I can stand aside and laugh at myself in my chosen role. And I confess that sometimes I have a terrible temptation to give in, to let myself be torn apart by one of these savage beasts. Even as I stand here now and look at you, so gentle and so sad . . . But I can't! I won't! Because, you see, it's all a game. And to give in is to put an end to it, to deprive you forever of the one pleasure life affords.<sup>18</sup>

That one pleasure is mastery, the exercise of relative power through the manipulation of hierarchical social relations. The final scene of *The Rules of the Game*, interestingly, equates power with freedom--freedom from the commitment to a particular role.

The process of self "abstraction" that Leone refers to betrays, once again, Pirandello's consistent commitment to a certain level of ideal stasis in the typology of social roles. Though bodies and individuals are interchangeably relative, the roles that they inhabit are of a different, more stable, metaphysical order. Pirandello's notion of roles is finally anti-humanist, one in which individuality is regularly sacrificed to ideality. Pirandello's plots of relative identity, in its social context, explore ways to resolve identity problems that repeatedly confirm the social order rather than throw it into doubt. Liminal characters like Ersilia and Guido are sacrificed, while sophisticated role players like Angelo and Leone prosper. The lady in black, veiled, with no essential self, becomes an emblematic figure for the undefined individual in the system of identity.

Few critics of Pirandello have remaked upon the aesthetic and political structures in his work that parallel his stance toward role-playing. Possibly this gap exists because Pirandello frequently allowed his relativism to disperse into a kind of mystical pool, so that aesthetics, political thought and dramatic themes appear to be fairly separate. For example, the novel *One, No One and a Hundred Thousand* charts the progress of the self as it dissolves into an undifferentiated, unified pool of being. Pirandello's manipulation of the confusion between fiction and reality, sanity and madness, personality and mask has tended to overwhelm or otherwise occupy discussions of the political or artistic aspects of his relative vitalism. Yet the notion of life and art as a contest between form and movement, the primary assumption of Pirandello's "Humorism," has inscribed within it a certain commitment to absolute categories. This spiritual absolutism is particularly evident in Pirandello's views on the relations of dramatic text to performance and dramatic character to acting. Pirandello admits the value of art that is temporally stable, the "statue, picture, book," but suspects ephemeral theatrical performances in the same way that he suspects the ephemerality of behavior:

The literary work is the drama and the comedy conceived and written by the poet; what will be seen in the theatre is not and cannot be anything but a scenic translation. So many actors, so many translations, more or less faithful, more or less fortunate, but like any translation, always and necessarily inferior to the original.<sup>19</sup>

Pirandello rehearses the same argument used by the Romantics in defense of the closet drama: Charles Lamb, for example, preferred the performance of his imagination during reading to the performance on stage of a Shakespearean play, not admitting that both, being performances were equally

authentic.<sup>20</sup> The closet drama argument idealizes the literary mind, but ignores the play of mind that occurs during the perception of performance. The material of the stage is confused with aesthetic experience, while the signs on the page are supposed to provide a translucent bridge to a higher, aesthetic order. The metaphysical implications of this position are perfectly clear in Pirandello's remarks about the spiritual debasement of acting:

For if we think about it, the actor must do and does of necessity the opposite of what the poet has done. He renders the character created by the poet more real and yet less true; that is, he takes from him as much of that ideal, superior truth as he gives back to him of that material, common reality; and he makes him less true too because he translates him into the conventional and fictitious reality of a stage. The actor, in sum, necessarily gives an artificial consistency in a false and illusory environment to persons and actions who have already had an expression of ideal life, which is that of art, and who live and breathe in a higher reality.<sup>21</sup>

While real behavior dissolves for Pirandello into a level pool of absolute differences, the literary character is a kind of timeless, essential form--not a debased imitation but an intuited truth, something like the universal social role enacted by "husbands" in the plays discussed above.

This insistence by Pirandello on the absolute truth of the artistic creation, of the subjective process of ordering, requires some modifications of normal idealism that can be traced in the playing of theatrical identity. At the end of *Tonight We Improvise*, the call of the actors is for the order of an author, not for the compromises of stage direction. Only the authority of the poet, which combines vision with language, can produce for Pirandello the true forms that life will seek to inhabit. As Pirandello explained in *Humorism*,

It is the poet who must draw from language the individual form, i.e. style. Language is knowledge, objectification; style is subjectivizing this objectification. In this sense style is the *creation* of form, i.e. is the hollow word being invested and animated, in us, by a particular feeling and moved by a particular will . . .<sup>22</sup>

The particulars are authorial; while Pirandello maintains his belief in a kind of idealist hierarchy of phenomena, he also implies a progressive tendency on the ideal level. As the life force advances or changes, the man of genius will create new forms to contain it. Tilgher, Pirandello's most famous early interpreter, was correct in describing his philosophy as an idealism written in terms of time.<sup>23</sup> That constant forms and constant change are irreconcilable as philosophic categories only increases the ability of the two to generate conflict.



This conflict between ideal character and the living actor--a metaphysical conflict with political overtones based in a hierarchical aesthetic--becomes for Pirandello the primary source of conflict in his theatrical plays of identity. In *Six Characters in Search of an Author* Pirandello first dramatizes the confrontation of the eternal literary character with the time-bound human actor. In the first place, the search for an author (from the standpoint of Pirandello's Romantic theory of creation) is also the search for authority, the search by a character for the status of an absolute, ideal form that can only be conferred upon objects through an imaginative act that gains access to the noumenon. As the Father says, "nature uses the instrument of human fantasy in order to pursue her high creative purpose."<sup>24</sup> And so the premise of the play becomes the inter-relation of the actors with characters who are supposedly "beings more alive than those who breathe and wear clothes: beings less real, perhaps, but truer!" The insistence of the characters upon an independent spiritual essence, created by their fictional status, leads to a critical examination of the means of a theater based on illusion, which must nevertheless use conventions of representation that bend and distort real behavior. The actors are abused by the characters as they try to re-enact the scene in Madame Pace's establishment, and the stock settings and scene change methods are inadequate to express the locations of the story. Yet Pirandello does not attempt to resolve the conflict of the play; rather, he creates in the stage figures of the six characters traces of the main opposition in his work, the difference between spiritual forms and temporal objects. The characters have archetypal family roles that their story violates; they also have an eternal literary aspect that cannot be realized until authorized. The actors and director, because their work is temporal, have no formal status at all (Pirandello ignores the roles of labor organization as formal ideals in the construction of role systems). Pirandello views the problematic presence of the actor in character as the trace of a *spiritual*, rather than a fictive, absence. His quarrel with acting is not much different from the traditional idealist critique, which has since Augustine rejected the actor because his claims to *fictional* identity can never be *real*. Pirandello suggests that the actor can never be ideal, because he is *too* real, can never achieve the perfection of fiction because his body is too earthbound. Both attitudes are examples of what Jonas Barish has called the "anti-theatrical prejudice."<sup>25</sup>

The only time Pirandello seems to be able to escape this dissatisfaction with the theater in the play of identity comes in the last plays, when he adopted the practice of writing leading roles for the woman he loved, Marta Abba. One might well argue that in her case he created both actress and character, elevating the material actor to the level of spirit rather than accepting the loss of a metaphysical aspect in his written characters. One of those late plays, often described as "myths," is *The Mountain Giants*. In this last play by Pirandello, Ilse, the Abba character, is the manager of an impoverished troupe of actors. They are sheltered by Cotrone, a magician who

keeps an enchanted villa where art comes alive--doubtless a Prospero-type embodiment of the author, who dictated the story of the play from his death bed much like Ersilia dictated her newspaper story in *To Clothe the Naked*. Ilse, determined to perform a play written by her actor/lover, takes her company from the villa to perform for the "mountain giants," characters who never appear on stage but seem to personify noumenal forces. The giants decline to hear the troupe, which instead plays to a wild mob, an angry audience too corrupted by trivial performances like dancing and puppetry to appreciate poetry. The mood rises against the little company, and Ilse defies the murderous crowd, sacrificing her life in the defense of high art. The mountain giants send an apology, and the survivors pledge to build an eternal monument to the dead actress. In this final scenario the metaphysical tensions in the early, apparently relativist plays are presented almost allegorically. Pirandello's acclaimed discovery of role-playing is revealed as a nihilism that exists as such only because all life fails to achieve absolute spiritual ideality; all performances of roles are equivalent only in the context of their categorical inadequacy.

The notion that humans, apart from their roles, are equal in their relative insignificance developed for Pirandello into an analogous political philosophy, a philosophy that enlarged the authority of the author/creator into that of the visionary spiritual political leader. This need for a leader with a spiritual vision that would form a national population into the shape of an art work provided the basis for Pirandello's rejection of democracy, a relativist form of government taken to the extreme:

The basic error on which the whole of American life is based is, in my opinion, the democratic concept of life. I am anti-democratic par excellence. The masses need someone to form them. Their needs and aspirations do not go beyond practical necessities. Well-being for the sake of well-being, riches for the sake of riches, have no significance or value.<sup>26</sup>

Into the Lacanian system of lack, difference and deferral that describes our post-modern theory of relative identity, Pirandello sought to introduce a stable signifier that would cement the system, the phallic "I" of the author/dictator. And even though there was an awareness of the expedience of such a power-generated form of government, Pirandello's political loyalty was offered to and accepted by the Italian Fascist party on just those terms. A contemporaneous editorial interpretation of Pirandello's political position reads this way:

Fascism creates for itself, and imposes on those who are unable to create for themselves, a new reality towards which we must strive and which we must overtake as soon as we reach it. This implacable striving toward new forms, this process of becoming, is the life of

the people, is Life. And what adversaries and weak minds call normalization is nothing other than death, the submission to a tomb from which it would be impossible to escape. In this sense Pirandello sees Mussolini as a formidable creator of contingent realities, a superb animator and architect of life. Not all human beings are capable of creating an illusion to aim at: the spirit is not equally distributed amongst these human forms which we men are. Some people have such a minute quantity of it that they cannot create for themselves the slightest reality on which to rest their feet before leaping forward. They need someone to impose his own reality on them. And the people is the sum of the many beings incapable of creating their own reality: they require it from a great leader. Mussolini's task is to impose his own reality on the Italian people: and that reality, today, is Fascism.<sup>27</sup>

The value that Pirandello places on authority in the constitution of the stage work and the conduct of his characters' lives is translated directly into a political philosophy that would treat living humans like actors in search of roles, and political leaders like authors capable of creating truth from the wellsprings of a personal genius. Pirandello may have often reconsidered his commitment to Fascism, as his apologists have suggested, yet the damage done by his conversion was great, never reversed, and of the kind that his analogy would imply: a great artist, capable of deep insight and cultural expression, endorses a leader who will bring the same talent to bear on problems of government.

The problematic oversight in Pirandello's political analogy from author to authoritarian is the importance of the idea of fiction. Characters can never be real; they are products of the imagination but they also live in the imagination. People, on the other hand, cannot be conceived of as fictions in a humane form of government. Pirandello's confusion reformulates the critical theoretical debate of the current era, the confrontation between traditional poetics of illusion and deconstruction.<sup>27</sup> The illusion of presence may well explain the wonderful power of art, but the presence of illusion must always be deconstructed when it allows the abuse of political power.

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## Notes

1. Martin Esslin, *Reflections*, quoted in Eric Bentley, "The Life and Works of Luigi Pirandello," *The Pirandello Commentaries* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1986) 85. See also Esslin, "Pirandello Einstein of Drama," *Pirandello 1986*, ed. G. P. Biasin and N.J. Perella (Rome: Buzoni, 1987) 9-18. Robert Corrigan might also be included, with a different and even more exaggerated reading, in "The Disavowal of Identity in the Contemporary Theatre," *The New Theatre of Europe 2* (New York: Dell, 1964) 9-27.

2. See Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1959) for specific relations to Pirandello, though any of the later books might also serve for comparison. More recently and incisively, see Bruce Wilshire, *Role Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theatre as Metaphor* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1982), which is more philosophically circumspect.

3. See, for example, David McDonald's tracing of a deconstructive pattern in "Derrida and Pirandello: A Post-Structuralist Analysis of Six Characters in Search of an Author," *Modern Drama* 20, 4 (1977): 421-36. More recently see Anthony Caputi, *Pirandello and the Crisis of Modern Consciousness* (Champaign/Urbana: Illinois UP, 1987).

4. Adriano Tilgher was the first to do this (1923) in the celebrated vitalist interpretation that Pirandello endorsed; see, for example, "Life Versus Form," in *Pirandello: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Glauco Cambon (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967) 19-34. Later critics, while reading differently, have continued this critical practice in such fine books as Anne Paolucci, *Pirandello's Theater: The Recovery of the Modern Stage for Dramatic Art* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1972), or Susan Basnett-McGuire, Luigi Pirandello (London: MacMillan, 1983).

5. Moestrup *The Structural Patterns of Pirandello's Work* (Odense UP, 1972) 276.

6. 279.

7. Roger Oliver uses the *Humorism* text to authorize his analysis in *Dreams of Passion: The Theater of Luigi Pirandello* (New York: New York UP, 1979). A more balanced view of the philosophical background of the plays can be found in Maurice Valency, "Pirandello," *The End of the World* (New York: Oxford UP, 1982).

8. And the gaze is typically a male one, something like that described in Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Film Theory and Criticism*, 3rd ed, eds. Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford UP, 1985) 803-16.

9. Very little has been written to connect Pirandello's aesthetics with his politics, especially in English criticism of the plays is so personally compelling, tend to either avoid political discussion or to view Pirandello's Fascism as an aberration; see, for example, Olga Ragusa, *Luigi Pirandello: An Approach to His Theatre* (Edinburgh UP, 1980), which devotes a chapter to Pirandello's "world view" without discussing his political conversion. My own analysis is similar to the suggestion of Robert S. Dombroski, still somewhat apologetic, in "Laudisi's Laughter and the Social Dimension of *Right You Are (If You Think So)*," *Modern Drama* 16: (1973) 337-46, which reads:

If *Right You Are (If You Think So)* reflects, as I believe it does, a crisis of values and the consciousness society has of the crisis, I should like to suggest going a step farther to note how the evolution of Pirandello's theater from *Right You Are* to the later plays is analogous to the political and social revolution that took place in Italy in the aftermath of the First World War. The movement from a dialectics of crisis (i.e. Pirandello's relativism) to the compensations offered by existence apart from the social group parallels the movement from the state of uncertainty and confusion of the post-war society to the acceptance of a new, mystical form of civic life embodied in the 'Fascist revolution' which, as it is known, presented itself as a substitute for the inadequacies of political reason. Pirandello's acceptance of Fascism should be viewed within the context of this historical crisis and the irrational solutions which the regime glorified." [345]

For a thorough treatment of the political problems see Gian Franco Vene, *Pirandello Fascista: La coscienza borghese tra ribellione e rivoluzione* (Venezia: Marsilio Editori, 1981).

10. Luigi Pirandello, "To Clothe the Naked," in *To Clothe the Naked and Two Other Plays*, trans. William Murray (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1962) 8-9.

11. 57.

12. 75.

13. Jacques Lacan, "The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I," *Ecrits*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977) 1-7.

14. Luigi Pirandello, "It Is So! (If You Think So)," *Naked Masks: Five Plays by Luigi Pirandello*, trans. Arthur Livingstone, ed. Eric Bentley (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1952) 101-102.

15. 136.

16. 138.

17. Pirandello, "The Pleasure of Honesty," *To Clothe the Naked and Two Other Plays*, trans. William Murray 158 and 163.

18. Pirandello, "The Rules of the Game," *To Clothe The Naked and Two Other Plays* 128-29.

19. Pirandello, "Theatre and Literature," trans. A.M. Webb, in *The Creative Vision: Modern European Writers on their Art*, eds. Haskell Block and Herman Salinger (New York: Grove, 1960) 111.

20. Charles Lamb, "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage Representation," *Works*, Vol. 1, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (Oxford UP, 1924).

21. Pirandello, "Theater and Literature," trans. Webb, in *The Creative Vision*, see note 19. Similar remarks may be found throughout Richard Scogliuzzo, *Pirandello as Director* (Metuchen NJ: Scarecrow, 1982).

22. Pirandello, *On Humor*, trans. and ed. Antonio Illiano and Daniel Testa (Chapel Hill NC: North Carolina UP, 1975).

23. Tilgher, see note 4.

24. Pirandello, "Six Characters in Search of an Author," adapt. Edward Stores, in *Naked Masks, Five Plays by Luigi Pirandello*, ed. Eric Bentley (New York: Dutton, 1952) 217.

25. See Jonas Barish, *The Anti-Theatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: California UP, 1980), which discusses Augustine, Pirandello and many others.

26. Quoted in Gaspare Guidice, *Pirandello: A Biography*, abridged English edition (Oxford UP, 1971).

27. See Murray Krieger's discussion of Jacques Derrida in *Theory of Criticism: A Tradition and Its System* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1976) 207-47.

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