

**The Role-within-the-Role: Two Pirandellian Novellas  
and their Dramatic Adaptation.**

by

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## ABSTRACT

Luigi Pirandello's two short stories La verità and Certi obblighi and the play derived from them Il berretto a sonagli seem to be, at least on the surface, about adultery. The three male protagonists' dilemmas come about as a result of their wives' sexual transgressions, which consequently impose certain "obligations" upon them. The themes of adultery and betrayal, however, are merely surface elements, used to explore the theatrical nature of identity and of all social experience. Specifically, the three works show how role-playing-within-roles safeguards the identity of the betrayed husbands, by protecting them from social humiliation.

Since all Pirandellian characters role-play, and as a consequence portray and assume multiple identities, this thesis examines the function and significance of this technique in both narrative and theatrical contexts. It attempts to show that while the device is a feature common to all three works, it is in the dramatic adaptation that role-playing in relation to identity acquires its more visible and effective treatment.

## ABSTRAIT

Les deux nouvelles de Pirandello, La verità e Certi obblighi, et la pièce de théâtre, Il berretto a sonagli, qu'il en a dérivée, semblent traiter le thème de l'adultère. Les dilemmes des trois protagonistes sont le résultat des transgressions sexuelles de leurs femmes, qui leur imposent, à leur tour, certains "obligations." Pourtant, les thèmes de l'adultère et de la trahison ne sont que des éléments de surface, dont Pirandello se sert afin d'examiner la nature théâtrale de l'identité, ainsi que de toute expérience sociale. Plus proprement dit, les trois oeuvres en question montrent comment le rôle-dans-le-rôle aide à conserver l'identité des trois maris, en les protégeant contre l'humiliation sociale.

Puisque tous les personnages de Pirandello jouent des rôles et, par conséquent, épousent de multiples identités, cette thèse étudie la fonction et la signification de cette technique soit dans un contexte narratif, soit dans un contexte théâtral. Elle essaie de montrer que, tout en étant une caractéristique commune aux trois oeuvres, cependant c'est dans l'adaptation théâtrale que le rôle-dans-le-rôle par rapport à l'identité acquiert un traitement plus visible et efficace.

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All the world's a stage,  
And all men and women merely  
players. They have their exits and  
their entrances, And one man  
in his time plays many parts, ...  
As You Like It. II.7

## Introduction

### Pirandello and the role-within-the-role technique.

In his book Drama, Metadrama and Perception Richard Hornby affirms that "all great drama is parody, but it is a parody of a complex and serious nature."<sup>1</sup> He further goes on to write that "the serious playwright is attacking and ultimately altering the means by which people think, behave, and decide."<sup>2</sup> For those who have experienced Luigi Pirandello's theatre Hornby's comments seem particularly pertinent.

When Luigi Pirandello's Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore was first staged in the "Teatro Valle" on 10 May 1921 the audience was outraged because of its provocative stance and the unconventional way it portrayed life and theatre.<sup>3</sup> The play was not intended as a passive experience. Indeed it was unlike any previous theatrical production. According to Gaspare Giudice's account, it precipitated a full scale riot among Pirandello's supporters and adversaries.<sup>4</sup>

The play, an artistic systematization of the author's views on art and life, succeeds in parodying the conventional way people perceive both themselves and the theatrical experience. The audience is forced to acknowledge what is taking place on stage not as reality, but rather as a theatrical rehearsal. The audience is expecting action, but all it gets are actors attempting to rehearse a play that will be performed at a later

date.<sup>5</sup> So, while Pirandello acknowledges actors as actors, he completely ignores the presence of an audience presumably there to see a play.<sup>6</sup> He thus places the spectators in a paradoxical situation in which they feel cheated.<sup>7</sup> They want to see a play, but what they are in fact seeing is an attempt at a play that flaunts the fact that it is merely a rehearsal.

With this play Pirandello was challenging not only the optimistic doctrine of positivism which claimed that there is an order to life, but also theatre at an aesthetic level: the play is a parody of traditional theatre's claim to fully interpret human passions such as love, hate, betrayal, envy and so forth. In viewing the play for the first time the audience members don't experience the Aristotelian "catharsis" or the purging effect. The issues regarding the relativity of "truth" raised between the fictional six characters and the cast members remain unsolved, and the audience's expectations of a satisfying "dénouement" are completely frustrated.

In challenging theatre as a socio-cultural phenomenon, and the conventional relationship between actor-character-audience, Pirandello draws a parallel with the way we perceive our social existence and function. By acknowledging theatre as an artificial tool, where "the stage is acknowledged as stage", and "actors actually leave the proscenium frame and enter the

auditorium", Pirandello reveals that the arrival at a unified "truth", or the objective representation of it is not possible.<sup>8</sup> What is possible is only an attempt -(in fact the whole play is a collective attempt at organizing a coherent artistic structure)- to represent "reality" in its multi-faceted artificiality. If one accepts Hornby's belief that "the serious playwright is attacking and ultimately altering the means by which people think, behave, and decide," then Pirandello's conscious portrayal of the artificiality of theatre establishes the notion of the artificiality of life.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, by portraying characters as self-proclaimed fictional entities in vain search of an organizing principle Pirandello draws a parallel with how people perceive themselves. Like the "six characters" on stage we, too, cannot perceive anything outside our own reality. For instance, the constant conflicts between the "capocomico" and characters brought on by their mutual inability to understand each other reflects a certain narrowness of vision on both sides: Pirandello is challenging our perception of who we are by forcing us to see an extension of ourselves on stage, as characters in search of meaning. Commenting on this point Roger W. Oliver writes: "They [audience] paradoxically wanted realism in order to escape, Pirandello on the other hand, gave them reality in order to



confront them with insights about themselves and their lives."<sup>10</sup>

Throughout his career as a playwright and a dramatist Pirandello seems to oscillate between aversion to and praise for the theatre. In his Illustratori, attori e traduttori the author states:

Altro è il dramma, opera d'arte già espressa e vivente nella sua idealità essenziale e caratteristica; altro è la rappresentazione scenica di essa, copia più o meno somigliante che vive in una realtà materiale e più fittizia e illusoria. <sup>11</sup>

According to Rachel Haim, - Le origini Del teatro pirandelliano - this attitude is owed to the fact that drama as literature, according to Pirandello, is rendered superficial when it is represented. Representation presupposes order and structure where actors portray characters according to, and within a set of prescribed theatrical devices and rules. Such coherence doesn't exist for Pirandello, whose art stands for the very opposite. Haim writes:

...scopriamo che le ragioni della sua riluttanza a scrivere per esso si possono ricondurre agli inconvenienti tipici del teatro, o meglio a quelli che egli considera tali, all'interferenza inevitabile ma inopportuna degli attori e alla maniera diffusa fra i drammaturghi di adattare i personaggi e delle idee drammaturgiche astratte. <sup>12</sup>

In view of Pirandello's arrival at Six Characters with basically the same themes he treated in his early works,

(altered only by his explicit polemic against the theatre) one could argue that the author's vocation as a playwright was motivated by a desire to question the medium itself. In challenging the way traditional theatre represented life, Pirandello ultimately questioned the way we perceive both theatre and the world.

Within Pirandello's view of the artificiality of human experience his theatre overtly calls attention to a device that personifies artificiality: the technique of role-playing-within-the-role that occurs "within the action" of a story or play whenever a character, for some reason or other, assumes a role different from his usual self.<sup>13</sup> It is in the overt use of this metadramatic device that we see how the "true playwright" succeeds in making society re-evaluate itself by bringing it face to face with its true nature.<sup>14</sup>

Hornby maintains that "all great playwrights" employ a variety of metadramatic techniques either consciously or unconsciously in order to "attack the norms and standards by which [their] audience[s] view the world."<sup>15</sup> According to Hornby's "drama/culture complex" theory, all drama is in a general sense "metadramatic" because of its self-referentiality.<sup>16</sup> Put simply, drama thematically refers to itself because the audience "always relates what it sees and

hears to the play as a whole, and beyond that to other plays it has already seen and heard."<sup>17</sup>

As a culturally-defined art form, drama operates within the context of culture and thus provides society, through its incorporation of "standard plots," "situations," "ideas" and "phrasings" with a way to perceive itself, and ultimately evaluate and come to terms with its nature. With regard to the role-within the-role technique, Pirandellian theatre portrays characters who often theatricalize through role-playing and are consequently forced to come to terms with the theatrical nature of their identity and social function. In this context, the role-playing technique acquires an existential significance, as that which facilitates the arrival at a consciousness of "self" and of function in a social setting.

Pirandello was interested in uncovering the multilayered "constructs" with which individuals define the "self" through his theatre and narrative. It was his belief that life is basically a "sham," or as he called it a "buffoneria." His art, in order to portray this, had to reflect this in the daily and normal functioning of human affairs. For example, Così è (se vi pare) examines the artificiality of human behaviour by calling attention to how role-playing and constructed identity, however false, constitute the essence of many lives. The newly-arrived

Ponza/Frola/ family have chosen to live within a rigid closed system of daily existence that doesn't permit any outside interference. This arrangement, however, is threatened because they fail to perform the standard social ritual of introducing themselves to their neighbours as newcomers, thus raising curiosity. As a result, the trio are subjected to a series of interrogations under the hypocritical guise of friendly social gatherings. As the interrogations proceed, their neighbours become increasingly perplexed because they cannot ascertain the true nature of the trio's relationship. The play ends with the famous last words of signora Ponza, echoing Pirandello's doctrine of the unknowability of truth: "Che cosa? la verita? e solo questa: sono la figlia della signora Frola/ E la seconda moglie del signor Ponza/ E per me nessuna, nessuna." (III,vii.p.214) (1st ed Milano: Mondadori, 1970.) In an interesting article, Mary Ann Frese Witt has shown how the "veiled" Signora Ponza's last remarks reflect the essential "mobility" of human identity, as the character's awareness of the "self" is clearly defined by the roles she has to play in order to secure the delicate fabric upon which her two family members base their existence.<sup>18</sup>

The play conveys its bitter message by portraying characters who are conscious of the fact that they have assumed

roles with which to confront life and each other. The "theatrical efficacy" of portraying role-playing-within-a-role is attested to by the successive scenes in which each member of the trio is confronted by the Agazzi family and their friends, who in turn assume the roles of social parasites seeking to determine which version of the "truth" is credible. With each successive confrontation a piece of the puzzle seems to surface. But that which is exposed only adds to the confusion because each member of the trio later contradicts and discredits the previous revelations. Thus the play depicts a situation where characters successively discredit each other to others, while maintaining their illusions for themselves. Pirandello is thus drawing a distinction between the portrayal of identity in public, and the portrayal of identity in private. In terms of role-playing and identity, Signora Ponza's last words suggest that she has forfeited her own identity and has chosen to play certain roles to satisfy the other two members of her family.

In his notorious "anti-novel" Uno, nessuno e centomila Pirandello delves even more deeply into the artificial and precarious nature of human identity by revealing the plurality of identities upon which the "self" is constructed. As with the play, this novel's story begins as a "normal" situation that soon becomes the root of an identity crisis and an existential

dilemma.

Vitangelo Moscarda's wife informs her husband that one of his nostrils is more prominent than the other. This never-before-noticed characteristic leads him to interpret his wife's remark as a sign that he must appear to be and ultimately mean different things to different people while for himself he is "no one," for the simple reason that he can't possibly come to terms with all his unknown identities. To remedy this situation he undertakes the systematic destruction of every role that he has unwittingly assumed, and arrives at the conclusion that he has to live outside society's constructs. By committing himself to this particular action, the character stands as a symbol of Pirandello's belief that life is a continuous role-playing ritual.

Since identity is a constructed facade maintained by role-playing, then it stands that theatre, the art form that explores role-playing by having actors impersonate characters, and characters other roles, is essentially rooted in Pirandello's vision of life. As Roger W. Oliver writes: "The theater is the perfect medium for Pirandello's artistic expression. What better place to deal with illusion, pretense, and role-playing than in the theater, where actors assume a role for an audience that accepts them as those characters and yet is also aware of their

existence as actors?"<sup>19</sup>

Pirandello's experimentation with the play-within-a-play and role-within-a-role devices was not innovative. Indeed all cultures since the Ancient Greeks at some time or another have adopted these techniques. But their goal was primarily to make a distinction between illusion and reality, which optimistically concluded with man's triumph over falsity.<sup>20</sup> Hornby states that the widespread use of this metadramatic technique usually indicates how society views itself: "Whenever the play-within-the-play is used, it is both reflective and expressive of its society's deep cynicism about life. When the prevalent view is that the world is in some way illusory or false, then the play-within-the-play becomes a metaphor for life itself."<sup>21</sup> By contrast, when a society views itself optimistically, this technique is not used as much. Hornby explains this phenomenon in the light of his argument that drama is a "means of thinking about life". Whenever society views itself optimistically, drama, as a cultural link, portrays situations that reflect this optimism. On the other hand, when a society similar to that of Renaissance England is plagued by social and political strife, the play-within-a-play device is used so as to awaken human awareness to the fact that everything is ephemeral.<sup>22</sup>

As previously stated, Pirandello's use of this technique

was not innovative. What was new, however, was the way the playwright integrated the device within his plays: Hornby writes: "What is truly original and striking about Pirandello was that he was the first playwright to amalgamate the framed and inset type of play within a play."<sup>23</sup> In other words, (referring to Six Characters) Pirandello broke the "boundaries between inner and outer play," causing the spectator to be unable to distinguish between reality and fiction. In plays where the device is used in a clearly conventional manner the spectator witnesses a play claiming to mirror itself consciously. That is, the embedded play is taken to be illusory, while the frame play is believed to be "reality". Perception is not distorted, allowing the spectator to experience temporary illusion, while still being allowed "to indulge in withdrawal and objective appraisal."<sup>24</sup>

In Pirandello's use of the play-within-a-play and role-within-a-role techniques the outer, framed play and inner one are usually fused and overlap, creating a visual distortion, and reflecting the modern cultural anxiety "that there is nothing framing our illusory lives at all."<sup>25</sup> To confuse things further, the audience members are asked at times to participate as actors in the embedded play. In Ciascuno a suo modo, for instance, an actor, assuming the role of spectator, warns the other



spectators that they will be provoked into participating.<sup>26</sup> Thus the actors on stage not only assume other roles, but they demand role-shifting from the audience members as well.

The fusion of action on stage and action in the audience, enacted within a self-conscious theatrical framework where actors are aware that they are acting, thus becomes the social metaphor of the theatricality in life: human experience and identity, are essentially role-defined. Thus it becomes clear that Pirandello's use of the device is not only a technical means by which the playwright attempted "to instill new life into the theatre,"<sup>27</sup> but a further expression with which he expressed a particular vision of his culture.

The examples of Six Characters, Così è (se vi pare), and Uno, nessuno e centomila clearly suggest that no matter what genre Pirandello wrote in, the twin issues of role-playing and identity were a central focus. By introducing metadramatic techniques such as role-playing and play-within-a-play in a distorted fashion that offers no conventional understanding of the action on stage, Pirandello not only challenges the traditional way of portraying reality, but puts forth the notion of the theatrical specificity and mobility of human behaviour and identity.

This being said, this thesis will focus on how the twin

issues of role-playing-within-the-role and identity function in three of Pirandello's works: two short stories Certi obblighi and La verità, and Il berretto a sonagli, the play Pirandello derived from the two "novellas." In light of the fact that the three works are thematically connected (each exploring the betrayed husband's necessity to role-play) it will be interesting to see if the twin issues undergo a transformation in the passage from narrative to play: does the dramatic adaptation effectuate a change in the way role-playing-within-the-role in relation to identity is portrayed? In other words, does the play further enhance Pirandello's notion of the theatrical nature of human identity and existence, and if so, how?

I will not attempt to directly address the larger issue of the relationship between Pirandello's short stories and plays. In dealing with only three works my research does not presume to be exhaustive. On the other hand, since Pirandello did dramatically re-work many short story plots, and since the three works under discussion fall under this category, an attempt will be made to verify the prevalent critical notion that Pirandello's dramatic adaptation of short story themes was motivated by the author's increasing search for "dramaticity," evident in his short stories and in his novels.

## Chapter 1

### Certi Obblighi: The Roles-Within-the-Role .

Of the two short stories under examination Certi obblighi shows how role-playing-within-a-role is a social ritual that secures human identity and preserves appearances. It portrays the situation of a character who, despite his knowledge that he is a betrayed husband, maintains the appearance of an unaware individual exercising his duty as "lampanaio". As long as he performs his role of light-giver, he can avoid coming into contact with his wife, and her lover, and consequently is able to maintain his role of unaware husband. One night a series of provocations from the townspeople, along with a shortage of fuel, force the protagonist to return home and confront the adultery, and he consequently assumes the role of "enraged husband." When he finds that his wife's lover is his employer, the "importance" of his job (his pretext for avoiding the adultery) provides an excuse to assume the additional role of "passive observer" who accepts the private humiliation of being a cuckolded husband. In the course of the narrative the character has assumed three additional roles within the role of "lampanaio": unaware husband/enraged husband/passive observer.

Pirandello chooses the figure of the "marito tradito" in order to illustrate the necessary role-playing-within-roles that must be assumed when social identity is threatened. The short story is divided into three parts, each of which employs a somewhat different narrative technique to portray the role-within-role technique. The last part employs the distinctively dramatic technique of direct discourse and fast-paced action in order to capture the actual role-within-role process as it unfolds.

The short story's informative introduction provides an example of a recurring narrative technique which has been singled out as typical of certain "traditional" Pirandellian short stories. In the first paragraph the reader is informed of Quaqueo's personality and habits: the daily ritual of work, the dedication to alcohol and the tendency to analyze. The narrator evokes the important characteristics of the protagonist without directly describing the character himself. Any character traits are thus made evident through a portrayal of external surroundings.<sup>1</sup> In the passage below the emphasis is primarily on how a society imposes painful circumstances that the character must endure:

Quando la civiltà, ancora in ritardo,  
condanna un uomo a portare una lunga  
scala in collo da un lampione all'altro  
e a salire e a scendere questa scala a

ogni lampione tre volte al giorno,  
la mattina per spegnerlo, il dopo pranzo  
per rigovernarlo, la sera per accenderlo;  
quest'uomo, per forza, quantunque duro di  
mente e dedito al vino, deve contrarre la  
cattiva abitudine di ragionar con se  
stesso, assorgendo anche a considerazioni  
alte per lo meno quanto quella sua scala.<sup>2</sup>

By focusing on the social context and the mechanical ritual of work, the narrator also establishes the pessimistic mood of the story. When in the second descriptive paragraph the narrator says "Quaqueo, lampanaio..." he is identifying the character through the painful function society imposes on him.

The omniscient narrator's presence is important to the extent that it provides us with all the intimate details about the character. This is another technique frequently encountered in the traditional short stories: "La novella di stampo [tradizionale] viene narrata in terza persona da un narratore che si stabilisce subito come entità a parte, onnisciente presenza che conosce ogni aspetto della storia che racconta."<sup>3</sup>

Further evidence of the character's socially determined circumstances is given by the description of his marital situation: "Un marito può benissimo in cuor suo non curarsi affatto dei torti della moglie. Ebbene, nossignori, ha l'obbligo di curarsene. Se non se ne cura, tutti gli altri uomini e finanche i ragazzi glielo rinfacciano e gli danno la baja."<sup>4</sup>

The narrator suggests that Quaqueo dissociates himself from his "conjugal obligation": the obligation of any Sicilian male to socially avenge himself by killing both wife and lover. The way the character exercises this option of denial is through his work/role as "lampanaio". Let's examine a passage:

-Il becco, Quaqueo! Quando li mettono,  
 Quaqueo, questi becchi? Muso di cane!  
 -Quaqueo dall'alto del lampione:  
 -Ora me lo dici? Che debbo illuminare  
 la città?<sup>5</sup>

The character assumes the role of "lampanaio" to avoid confronting the public insults that clearly are of a provocative nature. He makes it clear to the public that he isn't aware of the adultery because he is performing his duty as "lampanaio". The narrator on the other hand, who knows more than the character, informs us that Quaqueo's job is an excuse: "Bella scusa, l'illuminazione della città, per sottrarsi all'obbligo di badare ai torti della moglie."<sup>6</sup> The character is playing the role of unaware husband within the protective role of "lampanaio" in order to safeguard his identity and avoid confronting his "duty." In fact, when he approaches his employer to complain, far from disclosing any information that might reveal his awareness that he is a "cuckolded" husband, he emphasizes the fact that his job prevents him from discovering a possible adultery:

M'insultano, Eccellenza, quando illumino  
 la città, quando sto su la scala appoggiato  
 al lampione e sfrego al muro il fiammifero  
 per accendere il lume, cioè, quando sanno  
 che non posso lasciare al bujo la città,  
 per correre a casa a vedere che fa e con  
 chi e mia moglie e, all'occorrenza, fare  
 un macello, signor Cavaliere!<sup>7</sup>

Other examples suggesting the role-within-role ritual are evident in the second part of the story. The use of the free indirect style captures the characters' peace of mind when assuming the role of "lampanaio":

Ma che bella lumineria! E pensa che  
 una notte sognò che toccava a lui  
 d'accenderla, tutta quella lumineria  
 nel cielo, con una scala di cui non vedeva  
 la fine, e che non sapeva dove appoggiare,  
 e i cui staggi gli brandivano[...] Sogni!  
 Ma che ambascia e che sgomento nel sogno!<sup>8</sup>

In the solitude of nature, within his sheltering role as "lampanaio", the character reveals his desire to escape social obligations, while aware that this is only a dream. Social dissociation is obtained only through an intimate relationship with nature, which is made possible by the assumed role of "lampanaio". The image of the "**natura consolatrice**" is a frequent motif in Pirandello's works, revealing a character's need to detach himself from the harsh reality of life. Daniela Bini, in an article entitled "Pirandello's Philosophy and Philosophers" writes: "The sight of the starry sky helps

Berecche to detach himself from life, to cool his emotions by placing everything in perspective."<sup>9</sup> Like Berecche, Quaqueo achieves detachment through the contemplation of nature.

This ability to dream of escape, while acknowledging life's limitations, makes him aware of the need to maintain roles and illusions to achieve spiritual tranquillity amidst caos and obligations. Anthony Caputi, in Pirandello and the crisis of modern consciousness, writes, "The obverse of recognizing the instability of consciousness, of course, is recognizing the absolute necessity of self-conscious pretense (la finzione consapevole). From the teeming possibilities within, we must choose a form, or mask."<sup>10</sup>

While the first two parts of the story focus primarily on the character's partial awareness of role-playing, the last part shows how role-playing actually saves social face. The character assumes two additional roles, each directed towards a different audience, and each necessary for securing his identity of unaware husband. In the third part, fast-paced dialogue and dramatic interplay replace indirect discourse so as to focus more on the actual process of role-playing.

At a certain point, the narrator informs us that there is no more petroleum for Quaqueo to perform his duties: "Ma che deve accendere, se non c'è petrolio?" This simple lack of



material instigates the second role assumed by the character. Having been provoked by public insults at a time when he cannot use his role as light-giver as an excuse, Quaqueo assumes the role of "enraged husband" in order to exercise the ritual of killing as prescribed by the Sicilian code of conduct.<sup>11</sup> The assumption of this role is entirely involuntary, showing how society forces individuals to assume roles entirely foreign to their nature. The dramatic interplay between the character and the public reveals how Quaqueo has changed, assuming a completely different role from the one assumed when he was in contact with nature. As always the narrator prepares the scene:

Tre, quattro, ridendo, gli rimettono  
la scala sotto i piedi, e tutti,  
pigliandoselo a godere, a coro, lo  
cimentano: - Il coltello ce l'hai?  
- Ce l'ho. Eccolo.- Sangue della madonna,  
e' buono questo? La scanni?  
- La scanno, e lo scanno, se li trovo  
insieme! Testimoni tutti! Venitemi  
dietro!<sup>12</sup>

The whole scene is reminiscent of a dramatic interplay between characters. The protagonist is no longer the passive "lampanaio" and the "unaware" husband: he has now been unwittingly transformed into a "killer." The assumption of this role is clearly provoked by the public watching him and accompanying him. The narrator, speaking as if he were actually present at the scene, implies that the character's excuses have

just run out, and thus focuses on the critical moment: "Lo hanno accolto al laccio, giusto quella sera che non può gridare la scusa dell'illuminazione della città? Ebbene: gli ridiano la scala, e sia fatta la loro volontà! La scala! La scala! Lo facciano descendere, corpo di Dio, e vedranno cio che egli saprà fare."<sup>13</sup> The narrator's reference to "vedranno" as it relates to the public's longing to perceive what is unfolding, in addition to the fact that its expectations dictate the character's actions, suggest that Quaqueo is about to put on a "show." In fact, Quaqueo impersonates the role of "scannatore" as if he were an actor performing for an audience. The difference is that Quaqueo also draws strength from his spectators by assigning them the role of witnessess ("testimoni") to his display of vengeance: "La scanno, e lo scanno, se li trovo insieme! Testimoni tutti!".<sup>14</sup> It is as if the character wants his tormenters there to see for themselves that he is performing a much-delayed duty. He in fact becomes angry when he feels that he is being abandoned by them: "Ah ve ne pentite? Ora che m'avete preso, perdio, e sono qua armato per fare l'obbligo mio, dovete starci tutti! tutti, perdio."<sup>15</sup> This need to be seen confirms that Quaqueo's role as "enraged-husband-killer" is not only socially imposed, but is moreover acted out for public consumption. He continues to play the role

of "enraged husband" once he has arrived in front of his door, so that everyone can witness the slaughter: "- Apri, mala femmina! Apri! Questa è la volta che la paghi per tutte!"<sup>16</sup> In the presence of his neighbours Quaqueo's tone of voice becomes increasingly hostile so as to fit the role of killer. He later shouts to one of the people who try to hold him back - "lasciatemi! Lasciatemi, o vi spacco la faccia!" While searching for his wife's alleged lover, he still maintains the role of "enraged husband." Despite the fact that he is now actually in the house, Quaqueo still shouts: "Carneficina! Carneficina!- urla Quaqueo, col coltello in pugno." He is assured by the outside noises ("folla accorsa") that the public is attempting to ascertain what is happening inside. The ritual of preparing for murder has been transferred inside the house, to ensure the public that he is serious. In all probability the character is very serious, but the way he chooses to go about it reveals how important it is for him to theatricalize his anger. As he continues his search he finds that his wife's lover is Cavalier Bissi, his employer. At this point he immediately assumes a third role: he abandons the role of "killer" and takes on the role of passive cuckolded husband. Let's examine the scene:

Me lo potevo mai figurare? Lassù,  
col rischio di rompersi il collo per  
una donnaccia come questa, Lei un

Cavaliere! Ma dice sul serio, Vostra  
Eccellenza?<sup>17</sup>

The sudden shift from potential killer and enraged husband to passive observer of his wife's adultery is indicative of Quaqueo's role-within-role-playing. He addresses the Cavaliere with the polite Lei form, further emphasizing the dramatic role-shift. His performance in front of Bissi is a clear indication of his unwillingness to give up the role of light-giver that offers him a social escape. Only through role-playing does Quaqueo manage to save face. His subsequent actions clearly reflect this. After having adopted the role of passive husband vis-a-vis Bissi, the protagonist feels the need to inform the public that there is no evidence of adultery. He thus goes outside and shouts: "Non c'è nessuno! Apro la porta...chi vuol salire, salga; se volete accertarvene. Ma non c'è nessuno." His need to reassure the witnesses and, to an extreme extent, subject himself to public scrutiny, reveals once again how important role-playing is in human social behaviour. By assuming the role of unaware husband within the role of light-giver he continuously avoids his conjugal duty; by publicly taking on the role of enraged husband within the role of light-giver the character ostensibly performs his social obligation, erasing all suspicion regarding his possible knowledge of the adultery, and thus securing his social identity as unaware husband; and

finally, by assuming the role of passive observer within the role of enraged husband in the presence of Bissi, Quaqueo assures his continuous employment and excuse to "look the other way."

The twin issues of role-within-role-playing and identity in relation to society are thus a prime focus of this story, which demonstrates how important the former is to secure the latter: appearance is all. Despite its traditional narrative structure, the inclusion of dramatic interplay between characters which reveals actual role-shifting shows how "theatricalizing" the emotions is an essential facet of social interaction. By "performing" in front of a public designated as "witnesses," the character creates his own theatre in which he controls and manipulates the situation to his advantage as much as possible. It is thus clear how human experience resembles a theatrical production where actors assume roles in order to portray another reality and another identity.

## Chapter 2

### La verità: Role-playing and the Control of Distance

After having illustrated the importance of role-within-role playing with regards to human behaviour, Pirandello examines the social consequences of not respecting others' roles. La verità explores specifically the negative effects resulting from external interference in the private lives of others.

What happens to the "povero sciagurato" Tararà is a result of Beatrice Fiorica's "unwarranted" interference in his affairs. Briefly, the story centers around Tararà's attempt to explain in a court of law his reasons for having killed his wife. He is charged and subsequently found guilty of murder because the jury doesn't give credit to his testimony that he was forced to kill as a result of the public scandal caused by Beatrice Fiorica's "arbitrary" decision to expose her husband's adulterous affair with Tararà's wife.

As with the previous story, Pirandello makes use of the "marito tradito" figure who wants to be respected. Other points common to the two novellas have to do with both characters' adherence to the Sicilian code of conduct. Commenting on this aspect, André Rochon writes, "Il n'est pas infamant d'être

trompe, de le savoir, ni que les autres le sachent; mais il est infamant que les autre sachent que vous le savez."<sup>1</sup> The belief in this cultural convention compels them to save social face at any cost. Quaqueo sacrifices his self-respect, and Tarara, as will be shown, his civil liberty. The desire to save and maintain appearances is the life force governing both characters. Moreover, both characters resort to defending their "social roles" by reciting "parts." Quaqueo proclaims himself a killer both outside and inside his home; Tararà resorts to a similar kind of theatricality when defending his actions in the courtroom.

As for the differences, the evidence of role-playing here is not revealed in the character's attempt to consciously assume a different "role," but rather in the omniscient narrator's sympathetic attitude as he relates Tararà's experiences. As the reader increasingly sympathizes with Tarara, he/she realizes that the character's revenge against his wife (as well as his hypothetical one against Beatrice) is really an attempt to show society that he committed a justifiable act in order to maintain his illusory "role" of unsuspecting husband. Moreover, by doing away with omniscient narration and shifting to first person narration at the point where the character has to defend himself, Pirandello focuses on the point of view of the

character, who dramatically comments on his own behalf under the assumed role of narrator, and thus arrives at the role-playing issue which is at the centre of his discourse. In replacing omniscient narration by objective speech Pirandello transforms the protagonist into what Wayne Booth, in his Rhetoric of Fiction, calls the "dramatic narrator," or what Cornelia Van Der Voort ("La novella 'La verità e il racconto nel racconto") refers to as "personaggio-narratore."<sup>2</sup>

The tale is told by a narrator who, like in so many of Pirandello's short stories, is not involved in the actual plot, but rather reserves the right to comment and intrude on the character's dilemma in order to manipulate the emotional distance between character and reader. With regard to this short story, the narrator's comments are of a sympathetic nature, drawing a distinction between the insensitive jury and public, and Tararà. For instance, the opening paragraphs are indicative of the narrator's positive bias with regards to the character:

Sarù Argentu, inteso Tararà, appena  
 introdotto nella gabbia della squallida  
 Corte d'Assise, per prima cosa cavò di  
 tasca un ampio fazzoletto rosso di  
 cotone a fiorami gialli, e lo stese  
 accuratamente su uno dei gradini della  
 panca, per non sporcarsi, sedendo, l'abito  
 delle feste, di greve panno turchino.  
 Nuovo l'abito, e nuovo il fazzoletto.<sup>3</sup>

As with the previous short story, the initial paragraph



informs the reader of the character's name and the setting in which the story will unfold. The naming of this character is important because it forces the reader to acknowledge the character as the narrator - who could be mirroring social opinion - sees him. Even though he initially refers to him by his official name "Sarù Argentu," he qualifies it with the reference "inteso Tararà," implying that the second name is really the significant one. Further on when the "presidente" asks the character what his name is, the latter responds with "Tararà." When asked to give his "real" name he explains: "Ah signore. Argentu, Sarù Argentu. Ma tutti mi conoscono per Tararà." Identity is determined by social perception. Society imposes roles and names that people come to identify with, just as Tararà identifies with the nickname "Tararà". Right from the start of the story, the reader is confronted with the fact that the main character has identified with a social perception of himself for the greater part of his life.

Coming back to the narrator's positive bias towards the character as a factor which decreases the emotional distance between character and reader, the following paragraph offers a good example of this function:

Seduto, volse la faccia e sorrise  
a tutti i contadini che gremivano,  
dalla ringhiera in giù, la parte  
dell'aula riservata al pubblico.

L'irto grugno raschioso, raso di fresco, gli dava l'aspetto d'uno scimmione. Gli pendevano dagli orecchi due catenaccetti d'oro.<sup>4</sup>

By pointing out the "sorriso" of the character, the narrator focuses on Tararà's good nature. His subsequent description of Tararà as a "scimmione" might seem negative, but in fact it points to the tragic dimension of his situation, by suggesting that Tararà is on display like an animal in a zoo. The narrator's references to "Tararà nella gabbia," along with his vivid descriptions of the public with words such as "folla/ammorbante/bestie inzafardate" help distinguish between the tragic position of the character and the mob-like characteristics of the public:

Dalla folla di tutti quei contadini si levava denso, ammorante, un sito di stalla e di sudore, un lezzo caprino, un tanfo di bestie inzafardate, che accorava.<sup>5</sup>

The use of omniscient narration in the introduction of the story increases our emotional sensitivity towards the character, even though he is presented in a somewhat compromising situation. The creation of sympathy in the reader is thus a direct result of the narrator's ability to create a distinction between victim and victimizers. In another sympathetic comment, the narrator explains that the character is poor, "tanto che non aveva potuto neanche pagarsi un avvocato, e ne aveva uno

d'ufficio." When asked when he was born, the character responds: "Eccellenza non lo so. Abito in campagna, chi ci pensa." At this point the public laughs: "Risero tutti." When the character is told that he was born in 1873 he responds with "Come comanda Vostra Eccellenza." Again the narrator intrudes to inform us that this response could potentially instigate laughter: "Per non provocare nuove risate, il presidente fece le altre interrogazioni, rispondendo da se a ognuna." The character's direct speech has the same function as the previous narrative descriptions: that is, it serves to create sympathy in the reader by pointing out his alienation. By his responses to the judge the character demonstrates clearly that he cannot defend himself. The reader thus comes to understand the emotional abyss that exists between public and accused.

Another way that omniscient narration can control the reader's emotions is by focusing on the character's perspective: it is a process in which the narrator exposes the character's thoughts and emotions by adopting the latter's visual or emotional perspective.<sup>6</sup> In describing for instance how Tararà feels at the moment of the interrogation, the narrator adopts the character's daily experiences as "contadino" in order to make a comparison between how Tararà felt in accepting the "grano versato con rassegnazione" and how he accepts "con la

stessa diffidenza, ma pure con la stessa rassegnazione l'ingranaggio della giustizia."

By the time the reader finds out that Tararà has killed his wife, he/she has come to sympathize with him. Even though we are informed that he is a killer, we cannot help but feel affection for him. Our emotions have been controlled by the narrator's ability to portray Tararà as a victim who is being judged harshly despite his crime. The suffocating atmosphere, the total lack of sensitivity from the public compared to the comically tragic figure of the protagonist, and the latter's "rassegnazione" all serve to create a sympathetic portrayal.

The way in which the narrator discloses information concerning the killing also heightens our sensitivity towards the character. Again the narrative voice speaks from the viewpoint of the character:

Per conto suo, sapeva che aveva spaccato la testa alla moglie con un colpo d'accetta, perché, ritornato a casa fradicio e inzaccherato, una sera di sabato, dalla campagna sotto il borgo di Montaperto nella quale lavorava tutta la settimana da garzone, aveva trovato uno scandalo grosso nel vicolo dell'Arco di Spoto, ove abitava, su le alture di san Gerlando. Poche ore avanti, sua moglie era stata sorpresa in flagrante adulterio insieme col cavaliere Fiorica.<sup>7</sup>

"Per conto suo" reveals that what we are hearing are the

character's own thoughts through the technique of free indirect speech.<sup>8</sup> This gives the illusion of reported or indirect speech while expressing in greater detail the actual emotions of the character at the time of his experience. "Per conto suo" also suggests that Tararà is aware of what he is being charged with. He knows that he killed his wife. But, as the narrator has previously suggested "perché dovesse rispondere di ciò che aveva fatto, di una cosa, cioè, che non riguardava altri che lui, non capiva." Thus the character fits not the image of the unrepentant killer, but of the person who cannot come to terms with what is happening to him.

The fact that Tararà is conscious of his actions should have the opposite effect on the reader. That is, we should feel antipathy instead of sympathy. This reversal of emotional response is, in part, owed to the initial sympathetic portrayal of the character, coupled with the unsympathetic portrayal of the "contadini".

Another reason why the reader sympathizes with him lies in Tararà's unwillingness to disclose the information required of him by the jury members.<sup>9</sup> The only information regarding the killing of his wife and his own sense of innocence has been thus far disclosed by the character via the narrator ("Per conto suo"). That is, to the reader situated outside the imaginary

world of the text, not to the jury members in the story. This technique of revealing facts to the reader while refusing to disclose them to the characters further distances Tararà from them, and, as a result, brings him closer to the reader.

As the story leads up to the moment when Tararà must divulge the necessary information, the narrator's presence slowly diminishes, and Tararà is forced to disclose the information required of him: "Su, dite, insomma,- lo esortò il presidente.- Dite ai signori giurati quel che avete da dire": Tararà: "Ecco, Eccellenza, Loro signori sono alletterati, e quello che sta scritto in codeste carte, lo avranno capito. Ma se in codeste carte sta scritto, che ho ammazzato mia moglie, e la verità. E non se ne parla più."<sup>10</sup> After another request by the judge that he speak on his own behalf, Tararà answers: "l'ho fatto propriamente, signori giurati perchè non ne ho potuto far di meno, ecco; e basta." And in a further display of evasive responses: "Intendo dire, Eccellenza, che la colpa non è stata mia"/ "La colpa non è stata neanche di quella povera disgraziata". It is as if the protagonist doesn't consider it necessary to explain why he killed, the only important fact being that he committed the murder.

In a final attempt to arrive at the "truth" the judge asks whether or not Tararà was aware of the adulterous relationship,

the inference being that Tararà had planned the murder. The protagonist answers in a manner indicative of his ignorance and alienation: "Tararà, smarrito, combattuto, guardò l'avvocato, guardò l'uditorio, e alla fine: 'Debbo...debbo dire di no'? 'Ah broccolo!'- "grido un vecchio contadino dal fondo dell'aula." The old man's remark is moreover another response to the character that creates sympathy in the reader by mirroring the collective characteristics of the "contadini," who, socially similar to Tarara, ought to identify with his dilemma, but are instead unsupportive and negative towards him.

Finally, Tararà is ordered to defend himself: "Dite la verità, nel vostro interesse." At this point Tararà takes advantage of his right to speak and defends himself by outlining the reason behind his action. He blames Beatrice for not having respected the fact that "nessuno poteva venirmi a sostenere in faccia che io la sapevo." In his monologue he elaborately points out that his intentions were always good: "e io, a ogni buon fine, se mi capitava qualche volta di dover ritornare al paese in mezzo della settimana, mandavo avanti qualcuno per avvertirne mia moglie. Questo, per far vedere a Vostra Eccellenza che la mia intenzione era di non far danno."<sup>11</sup> In finally disclosing that which has been hidden even from the reader (the fact that he knew of the adulterous relationship but always avoided it)

Tararà becomes even more sympathetic in the reader's eyes. In becoming a kind of narrator, the character acquires the ability to condemn Beatrice Fiorica "in absentia": "...Vostra Eccellenza dovrebbe farla venire qua, questa signora, di fronte a me, che saprei parlarci io! [...] non c'è peggio delle donne cimentose."<sup>12</sup> Finally Tararà manages to give the court what it has wanted, the "verità." However, the notion of truth for Tararà is opposed to the notion of truth for the court. He is therefore condemned "a tredici anni di reclusione" for having told the "truth."

Apart from the message that there is no universally valid truth, the short story also points to how an individual with good intentions can be unwillingly transformed into a killer if certain socially ascribed "roles" are threatened. It is after all why Tararà felt it necessary to kill his wife. Tararà blames neither his wife (p.639), nor Cavalier Fiorica ("il cavalier Fiorica, che sappiamo tutti che signore è"), but blames Beatrice for having publicly exposed a fact that he did not want known. Beatrice's lack of respect for Tararà's constructed role of respected husband makes her the real antagonist in his eyes and in ours. Tararà actually becomes a narrator to the extent that he "tells" stories in which he condemns Beatrice as if she were present.<sup>13</sup> He creates scenarios, acting out essentially what he



would have said had he had the opportunity. As a result, the monologue contains potential stories concerning a possible confrontation between Tararà and Beatrice.<sup>14</sup>

In creating a sympathetic character who is condemned for a crime that according to him was the result of someone else's social short-sightedness, Pirandello again draws attention to the importance of role-playing and constructed identity. Tararà claims that he was always "quieto; ... non c'entravo nè punto nè poco; ... non avevo voluto nè sentire nè vedere nulla". Once Beatrice made it impossible for him to continue in this manner, Tararà was forced to kill his wife so as to be permitted at least to save social face: to kill so as to be perceived as the unknowing betrayed husband.

Despite the thematic similarities with the previous short story La verità departs radically from Certi obblighi both in plot and narrative structure. Quaqueo saves face by avoiding a killing, whereas Tararà saves it through killing. In Certi obblighi the action develops slowly, as compared to the fast-paced dialogue-type action we find in La verità; the setting of Certi obblighi is a rural-type environment befitting the contemplative nature of the character. While the court-room setting of La verità creates a predominantly "noisy" and confrontational ambience in order to emphasize the conflict

between the accused and the accusers.

In contrast to the predominantly omniscient narrative structure of Certi obblighi, there is an increasing emphasis on direct speech in La verità, ultimately leading to a dramatic-type resolution in Tararà's monologue. The increased use of direct discourse in La verità makes the reader progressively more aware of the importance of role-playing, despite the fact that no explicit or actual role-within-role-playing has taken place.

Furthermore, the acknowledged presence of an audience ("Seduto, volse la faccia a tutti che gremivano la parte dell'aula riservata al pubblico") adds a theatrical element to the short story. For instance, the narrator focuses on how Tararà's responses provoke or elicit reaction from the public: the reaction of the old man; the constant displays of aversion towards Tararà; the laughter both provoked and anticipated ("per non provocare nuove risate"). As such, Tararà provides a kind of spectacle, or as the narrator initially points out, "s'era parato come di domenica, per far buona comparsa."

While Pirandello's concern with role-playing and identity is clear in both texts, in La verità, the increased emphasis on first person narration is a way of creating dramatic intensity. It is, after all, through direct discourse that Tarara condemns

Beatrice, calling attention to the dangers of publicly exposing constructed social roles. And even Certi obblighi, to a lesser extent, adopts direct speech in order to intensify the roles assumed by Quaugeo. According to Dorothea Stewans, in Pirandello Scrittura e Scena, Pirandellian characters are usually defined by their attempts to impose through recital their own "messinscena" as an ultimate expression of power acquisition.<sup>15</sup> Applied to our short stories, this notion seems quite valid in light of the fact that both characters attempt to impose a subjective interpretation of the facts, and to control a situation through direct speech.

Pirandello finds different ways to express the notion that human identity is fragile. The relationship between individual and society is defined as the former's attempt to constantly maintain and safeguard his/her social identity through role-playing. It is no wonder that most of his short stories, even the most traditional ones, adopt some kind of dramatic technique (direct speech, dramatic interplay between characters, a narrator who addresses both reader and characters as if he were a spectator, etc.) through which Pirandello explores all the possible ways his characters somehow role-play.

### Chapter 3.

#### Il berretto a sonagli: Role-playing and the Theatrical Origin of Identity.

This chapter will focus on how the drama explores the twin issues of role-playing and identity. Considering Richard Hornby's interpretation of theatre "as a kind of identity laboratory, in which social roles can be examined vicariously,"<sup>1</sup> I will show that the significance of the role-playing technique in this play consists in its overt expression of Luigi Pirandello's notion of the "polymorphic" side of human identity.

The drama's plot is simple; its linear development does not present the complex structure frequently encountered in some of Pirandello's later plays. Briefly, the action centres around Beatrice Fiorica's intention to publicly discredit her husband by exposing his adulterous affair with Ciampa's wife, Nina. In so doing, Beatrice unbalances the fragile existential equilibrium of Ciampa's well-ordered social life. Without realizing it, she transgresses a fundamental rule concerning the necessity of appearances. Ciampa, outraged and "smascherato," threatens to kill. But as luck ("caso") would have it, he gets an idea that would secure everyone's social roles, and even avoid a killing. He publicly proclaims Beatrice "crazy" and has her act out the role of madwoman, thus avoiding the killing, and

securing his social identity as "marito rispettato." Once Beatrice is labelled as demented, the scandal will be interpreted as an irrational display of madness undeserving of any scrutiny.

Theatrical discourse in relation to social role-playing and identity is examined by Dortehea Stewans in Pirandello scrittura e scena. Referring to the present play she writes, "Uno degli esempi piu impressionanti e dato ne Il berretto a sonagli: certo, la sola realta di cui nella circostanza si tratta e nell'ordine del discorso', ma questo discorso finisce con la stigmatizzazione di un personaggio che viene dichiarato pazzo (Beatrice Fiorica)."<sup>2</sup> Society with its rules and conventions tends to assign social roles with which individuals identify. According to Stewans, who cites Gramsci's views on the matter, theatre can best examine social role-playing because it draws a parallel between itself and society by portraying characters in a particular context who, in the presence of each other, create roles. Gramsci says: "In realta ognuno tende, a suo modo, a crearsi un carattere, a dominare certi impulsi ed istinti, ad acquistare certe forme sociali."<sup>3</sup>

Discourse in Pirandello's theatre according to Stewans is usually defined as the power of one character to control and "distribui[re] agli altri le loro parti."<sup>4</sup> Stewans further

comments on the play by writing that "Beatrice ha la possibilità di tentare una sua messinscena, ma alla fine deve rassegnarsi alla parte che le impone la società tramite Ciampa che riesce ad imporsi come regista a sua volta."<sup>5</sup> The word "regista" (director) refers to Ciampa's overt attempt to "theatricalize" his experience as revengeful husband by assigning roles, and openly stating that only through a public display of madness can social order be restored. As a result, Ciampa's final action of role-assignment draws attention to the fact that social behaviour is a conscious role-playing act, reflecting the notion proposed by Hornby that "human identity is a social phenomenon, which has to be learned."<sup>6</sup>

Whereas the play-within-the-play device examines "existential" concerns, such as in Six Characters, the role-within-role technique, according to Hornby, "explores concerns of the individual in relation to his society."<sup>7</sup> The dramatic conflict in Il berretto a sonagli in fact comes about as a result of Ciampa's concerns about the loss of his social identity as "marito rispettato." Beatrice's concerns, which bring about the conflict, are about socially discrediting her husband by "unmasking" the truth about him. Like La verità, the play is basically concerned with the dangers of not realizing the importance of role-playing in society.

The place to start an analysis of role-playing and identity is in the way the characters are constructed. Apart from the complex and well-developed characters of Donna Beatrice and Ciampa, all the others portray not individual characters, but general social stereotypes or personalities, which, according to Renate Matthaei reflect "typical patterns of social behaviour."<sup>8</sup> La Saracena for instance personifies the typical "donnaccia," or the social trouble-maker. It is she who provokes Beatrice to take action against her husband. There is no development in her character apart from her function of "donna maligna."

The maid, La Fana, is also a stereotype. She represents the moral values of society which urge the woman to support her husband, and not rebel against him. These two female characters each represent the specific roles between which Beatrice must choose. The first scene demonstrates how each one attempts to impose upon Beatrice a different social behaviour:

LA SARACENA. Oh, signora, ma non si ponga in mente - e neanche voi, oh! che qua debba nascere per forza una tragedia. Vossignoria una lezioncina deve dare, e basterà. [...] Una lezioncina, dunque... Si riducono con la coda tra le gambe, che è un piacere.<sup>9</sup>

LA FANA. No. Io dico che dobbiamo offrirlo a Dio, signora mia! Ma quando gli uomini, mi scusi, si sono presi così di fronte, a petto? Usar la forza con chi è più forte di noi? Piano piano, signora mia, d'accordo e non di fronte, col garbo e la buona maniera si riportano gli uomini a casa.<sup>10</sup>

While La Saracena is provoking reaction, La Fana is trying to elicit a passive response from Beatrice. What is interesting is that the subject of discussion is how men should be treated, and what roles women should assume in confronting them. The opposed ideologies of La Saracena and La Fana reveal the type of social structure that Pirandello is portraying. Social relations between men and women are clearly role-defined, as La Fana's remarks point out. According to her, women must assume a passive role in confronting their husband's adulterous affairs. In contrast, according to La Saracena, women should assume a more aggressive and vindictive role. In both approaches, role-playing is the central focus of the discussion. Thus the issue of the play, at least initially, is not so much Beatrice wanting to teach a lesson to her husband, but rather, in doing so or in choosing not to do so, what role to assume. With this type of opening Pirandello sets the stage for an examination of the socially right and wrong way to behave when confronting delicate private issues such as marital relations.

The character of donna Beatrice is more complex than the other female figures. Her neurotic-type personality, coupled with her justified desire for revenge against her husband, add purpose to her character. Furthermore, in her failed attempt to



vindicate her role of betrayed wife, she personifies role-playing and the mobility of female identity: the involuntary role of "pazza" imposed on her by Ciampa as a punishment for her transgression temporarily extinguishes her previous roles of wife/sister/daughter. Ultimately, Beatrice is forced to play and learn the role of "mad-woman" in order to be re-accepted in society, and to secure Ciampa's identity as "respected husband."

Ciampa is unquestionably the most important character in that he voices what Beatrice is not aware of: the importance of role-playing in relation to identity and society. The play's message about the necessity of appearances rests on this character's argumentative ability to draw attention to the fact that only through role-playing can one assure identity. In what is a much quoted passage mirroring Pirandello's theatrical definition of life, Ciampa says:

Pupi siamo, caro signor Fifi! lo spirito divino entra in noi e si fa pupo. Pupo io, pupo lei, pupi tutti. Dovrebbe bastare, santo Dio, essere nati pupi così per volontà divina. Nossignori! Ognuno poi si fa pupo per conto suo: quel pupo che può essere o che si crede d'essere. E allora cominciano le liti! Perchè ogni pupo, signora mia, vuole portato il suo rispetto, tanto per quello che dentro di sé si crede, quanto per la parte che **dove rappresentare fuori.**" (emphasis added)

Ciampa doesn't appear until the fourth scene of the first act. Despite this, his presence is nevertheless felt

immediately, as La Fana's inferences indicate in the first scene. After having learned of Beatrice's plan to instigate a scandal, La Fana says: "Un momento... un momento... Signora mia, ma a lui, mi perdoni, al marito di questa buona donna (se è vero) a lui, a Ciampa, Vossignoria ci ha pensato?"(I,i) Her apparent hesitation in arriving at the name Ciampa creates dramatic tension, portraying the absent protagonist as someone to be reckoned with, and even foreshadowing future events. Donna Beatrice's response to this is: "A tutto, a tutto ho pensato, anche a lui, non v'immischiate! So dove debbo mandarlo."(I,i) By referring to Ciampa "in absentia" Pirandello prepares the reader/spectator for the character's possible reactions to the scandal Beatrice wishes to provoke.

As the scene progresses more information about Ciampa is disclosed. In the first scene for instance, La Fana says: "Chi Ciampa? Voi siete pazza! Che volete dare a intendere alla signora, che Ciampa sa tutto e si sta zitto?".(I,i) Fana's remark suggests that Ciampa plays the role of unsuspecting husband, while in fact being aware of the adulterous relationship.

Up until this point the play has not dealt with actual role-within-role-playing. Discourse seems to be the way in which Pirandello suggests the necessity to role-play. The first three

scenes involving the female characters serve the function of emphasizing the importance of social role-playing, while alluding to the foreseeable consequences of Beatrice's plan through the reference to Ciampa. As such, their importance also lies in creating anticipation by preparing for the subsequent confrontation scenes between Ciampa and Beatrice.

The reader-spectator already has an idea formed about Ciampa's personality: that quite possibly a scandal could bring to the surface the character's well-hidden secret, alluded to by La Saracena in the previous scenes. The anticipated conflict between Beatrice and Ciampa immediately unfolds as both characters engage in a rhetorical battle. Beatrice, unable to effectively hide her resentment towards Ciampa's wife, (Beatrice obviously blames his wife for the affair) resorts to what Paolo Puppa Dalle parti di Pirandello calls "un linguaggio allusivo-enigmatico":

La lingua di Beatrice si attarda nei registri dell'allusivo con toni strascicanti, cantilenati, che richiedono un colore, insomma un'accentuazione sul piano non del messaggio ma dell'enunciazione. In pratica, l'eloquio di Beatrice coagula intorno al fantasma della moglie dello scrivano.<sup>12</sup>

To further add to the rising dramatic tension, Ciampa's language is no less "enigmatic" as it is laced with complex philosophical concepts of a dissuasive nature. Commenting on

Ciampa's language, Paolo Puppo writes: "Ciampa s'è conquistato il diritto a tenere discorsi impegnativi, assunti filosofici, che potrebbero agevolmente essere firmati dal suo creatore."<sup>13</sup> Ciampa's humble attitude towards Beatrice in the opening scenes of the confrontation - "Bacio le mani alla mia signora. Esposto ai comandi della signora"- offers an opportunity for the female protagonist to engage in her own "enigmatic" type attack: "E via servitore, voi? Padroni tutti siamo qua, caro Ciampa, senza distinzione: voi, Fifi, mio marito, io...vostra moglie."(I,iii) And further on: "Ah, non tutte, no: certe donne! Perché cert'altre poi ce n'è, che sanno prendervi con le buone a farsi manse manse, che vi sanno lisciare...così e queste, eh! queste stanno sopra tutte, anche se vengono dalla strada."(I,iv) Ciampa, as one critic has pointed out,<sup>14</sup> is clearly aware of Beatrice's oscillation between telling the truth and hiding it, and engages in a similar attempt himself to dissuade Beatrice from pursuing this line of conversation: "Oh Dio mio, non sono le parole, signora! Non siamo ragazzini! Lei vuol farmi intendere sotto le parole qualche cosa che la parola non dice." (I,iv) Ciampa further engages in a metaphorical-type discourse in which he alludes to role-playing: "L'uomo considera la donna che ha bisogno di prender aria alla finestra; la donna considera l'uomo che ha l'obbligo di chiudere la porta."(I,iv) The

"obligation" to close the door, while allowing temporary freedom through the window, ensures the role of respected husband fulfilling a marital duty. Beatrice, though, does not understand any of Ciampa's allusions.

Her lack of understanding could be partly owed to the cryptic nature of Ciampa's reasoning. But it could also be owed to her desire to acquire her own identity. In Act.1 sc.1 she says for instance: "Per voi altri tutto lo studio e di tenermi qua zitta e all'oscuro d'ogni cosa!" Her remark in this instance is directed towards her brother. The "voi altri" refers to all the male members of her family, including her brother and husband, who control her. Further along in Act 1 scene 2, she shouts: "Non me n'importa nulla! Stavo a prepararmi per andar via! Mi preparavo da jersera." And again, believing that the scandal will free her, she shouts: "Sì, sì, lo scandalo! la vergogna addosso a lui! (II,i)/ E che gli ho dato la lezione che si meritava - Sono libera! sono libera!" (II,i) Understood in context, Beatrice's discourse reveals a deeply-rooted desire to detach herself from the traditional submissive wife-role, and assert her female autonomy without male influence. This particular aspect, though, will be discussed further on in relation to role-playing, and will reveal how this female character best represents Pirandello's role-playing view of

human identity.

As the play progresses the conflict between Ciampa and Beatrice intensifies, and Ciampa engages in another long speech on the role-playing nature of human behaviour:

Deve sapere che abbiamo tutti come tre corde d'orologio in testa. La seria, la civile, la pazza. Soprattutto, dovendo vivere in società, ci serve la civile; per cui sta qua, in mezzo alla fronte.[...] Ma può venire il momento che le acque s'intorbidano. E allora...allora io cerco, prima, di girare qua la corda seria, per chiarire, rimettere le cose a posto. [...] Che se poi non mi riesce in nessun modo, sferro, signora, la corda pazza, perdo la vista degli occhi e non so più che faccio.<sup>15</sup>

According to Ciampa, who at this particular moment emphatically echoes Pirandello's notion of theatricality, human behaviour is ruled by "three chords," each of which represents a certain role to be played out by an individual. As Ciampa's discourse applies to Beatrice, it serves not only as a warning, but also as an acknowledgment that life is essentially a "theatre" where people are actors, each playing an assigned role. Ciampa, like any individual is basically an actor whose role at this point is threatened by Beatrice's "enigmatic" discourse. He thus stresses his point by drawing attention to his particular "philosophy" of life in the hope of preventing

the opening of the "corda seria" which ultimately leads to the role of "murderer."

From this point until the end of the first act, the conflict between Ciampa and Beatrice continues to intensify. Dramatic tension is created by Beatrice's lack of understanding on the one hand, and Ciampa's relentless attempts to make her understand on the other. In fact, the main focus of the play is the verbal "match" between the characters, each one attempting to impose upon the other a certain role. In plotting her scandal, Beatrice assigns Ciampa the role of foolish husband who can be dealt with -"Ciampa ce lo leviamo dai piedi: lo farò partire questa sera stessa"(I,i) - while Ciampa, for his part, wants Beatrice to understand the use of the "corda civile": in other words, to play the role of passive wife.

All this role-assigning up until this point has been theoretically alluded to through word-playing. Towards the middle of the fourth scene, however, Ciampa's theories regarding role-playing assume a more practical nature as the character consciously draws attention to the fact that he and Beatrice must role-play and adopt the serious chord in private so as to clear any misunderstandings:

Dia ascolto a me; la chiuda. Mandi  
via subito il Signor Fifi... La prego  
anch'io signor Fifi: se ne vada.  
BEATRICE. Ma no, perchè? Lasciatelo

stare.

FIFI. Volete levarmi il piacere di starvi a sentire?  
 CIAMPA (con intenzione). Perchè lei, signora, qua -  
 permette? - su la tempia destra, dovrebbe dare una  
 giratina alla corda seria per parlare con me a  
 quattr'occhi, seriamente: per il suo bene e  
 per il mio!

BEATRICE: Non sto mica parlando per ischerzo, io. Vi  
 voglio appunto parlare seriamente.<sup>16</sup>

Instead of warning her, now Ciampa actually insists that the chords must be turned on, and that role-playing must begin in earnest. In fact, Ciampa is attempting to persuade Beatrice to tell the truth and stop oscillating between exposing it or concealing it. But far from grasping Ciampa's intentions, she further displays her inability to understand by saying: "Già, pare da un pezzo anche a me... Non capisco.." (I,iv) Interpreting her reaction as a further indication of her ignorance, Ciampa says, or rather acts out the motions of turning on the "corda civile": "Chiudo la corda seria, e riapro la civile." (I,iv) The stage direction - *s'inchina* - emphasizes the acting part accompanying Ciampa's discourse. By bowing and re-assuming the "civil" role, Ciampa draws attention overtly to his attempt to role-play-within-a-role, while instructing Beatrice on how to role-play herself.

In a final attempt to make Beatrice realize the necessity of role-within-role-playing Ciampa says:

La guerra è dei pupi: il pupo-marito  
 e la pupa-moglie. Dentro si strappano



capelli, si vanno con le dita negli  
occhi: appena fuori pero, si mettono  
a braccetto: corda civile lei, corda  
civile lui.<sup>17</sup>

The reference to the "pupo" or the marionette has since "ancient times" been the "mirror of man's precarious adventure in [the] world."<sup>18</sup> However, as Douglas Radcliff-Umstead has pointed out in his book, The Mirror of our Anguish. A Study of Luigi Pirandello's Narrative Writings, Pirandello's use of the "marionette" (reflecting twentieth-century culture and society) serves to underscore the fragility of human identity.<sup>19</sup> Man and "marionette" have undergone a reversal of roles in the twentieth century, especially in Pirandello's conception of society: "Instead of puppets serving to represent human actions, men of flesh and blood have seemingly turned to wood and taken the characteristics of puppets."<sup>20</sup>

Ciampa's reference to the "pupo" and the three chords as they apply to Beatrice and her husband reveal his awareness that human behaviour is a rigidly-controlled ritual governed by role-playing. According to Ciampa, Beatrice has no choice other than to realize that she is a puppet destined to role-play, and therefore must respect Ciampa's "role." Since the "pupo" is traditionally a theatrical prop controlled by a puppet-master, assuming a variety of roles with no identity of its own,

Ciampa's application of it to human behaviour implies that humanity is "impotent" and powerless, sharing the same role-playing characteristics as a lifeless puppet. In other words, Ciampa is attributing theatrical characteristics to human beings by drawing a parallel between "marionette" and persons.

In the second act, however, the nature and function of Ciampa's discourse undergoes a transformation, as a result of the scandal. Whereas in the first act his discourse has a dissuasive function, in the second act it acquires a persuasive function as Beatrice is forced to relinquish her identity as wife/daughter/sister, and assume the role of madwoman.

By having Ciampa claim that human beings are essentially meaningless "pupi," and in order to show this, assumes the role of "regista," assigning other characters additional roles to play in Beatrice's tragedy, this play clearly reinforces the elusive nature of identity as it consciously and continuously refers back to itself through the metadramatic technique of role-within-role-playing. What we have in fact in Ciampa's "messinscena" is a conscious attempt to create a theatre in which characters assume other roles in order to re-establish the previously upset social order. Ciampa's provocative discourse, which makes this possible, reveals his awareness that a theatrical-like performance can resolve a social problem, while

the social perception of madness cancels out identity and "reality."

The begining of the second act is of little interest as it only portrays the effects of the scandal on the Fiorica family. What is of interest, however, is Beatrice's reaction. Here the issue of Pirandello's female characters shall be raised in relation to the larger problem of female identity as reflecting the author's "purest form of Pirandellian theatricality."<sup>21</sup>

The second act starts off with Beatrice yelling at the maid: "Non importa! Subito, prendete e portate qua! Come vien viene! Voglio esser fuori prima di sera! Via da questa casa maledetta!" (II,i) Her initial discourse reveals that the scandal has taken place "fuori scena." The first three scenes of the second act include, among others who appeared in the first act, characters like Assunta (Beatrice's mother), and the police lieutenant Spanò. Their purpose is to show Beatrice that her scandal is foolish and shameful. Her brother says for instance: "E addosso a te, pazza! Che ti figuri d'aver guadagnato con codesta follia che hai commessa?" (II,ii) The mother further says: "Non dirne niente a me! Buttarsi così allo sbaraglio, senza dirne a nessuno!" (I,ii) And further on in the second scene: "Ah, quando mai, simili vergogne, le donne di casa nostra!" (I,ii)

The family's reaction to Beatrice's scandal is indicative of how important it is to maintain appearances. The mother's reference to the "vergogna" reveals the social humiliation of the scandal. Furthermore, when Ciampa enters he constantly makes references to how society judges what's true or false: "Lei deve provarmi che uno, uno solo, signora, in tutto il paese potesse sospettare di me quello che lei ha creduto." (I,vi) When Ciampa threatens to assume the role of killer, he informs everyone that he is forced to do this because he has been humiliated in front of the townspeople: "Mi ci hanno buttato in questo fosso! Con questo sfregio in faccia, davanti al paese - se lo scrivano bene in mente - io non resto." (I,vi) And further along in the fifth scene he says: "Ma davanti a tutto il paese, lei signora, non ha bollato con un marchio d'infamia tre persone?" (II,vi)

It is significant that nobody, not even the mother, is concerned with Beatrice as an individual who is suffering. What everyone seems to be concerned with, especially the male characters like Fifi and Ciampa, are the social consequences of her act: the fact that the family names of Fiorica and Ciampa will be discredited. This particular reaction sheds light on the "feminine condition" in Pirandello's theatre. In an article entitled "Woman or Mother? Feminine Conditions in Pirandello's Theater" Mary Ann Frese Witt has shown how Pirandellian

heroines are often portrayed as "objects" that are controlled "by the male characters in their lives." <sup>22</sup> This control comes about in the form of assigning the women roles that can "be broadly defined as those of madre/moglie/figlia/donna."<sup>23</sup> Though Beatrice is not categorized as a "madre," she does, however, struggle against the categorization of submissive wife, and obbedient sister/daughter through her attempt to rebel, however misguidedly, against all those who control her.

A couple of examples will shed light on how and why this particular female character illustrates Pirandello's notion of role-playing and elusive identity. The first indication that Beatrice is assigned social roles is given by the maid when she informs Assunta that Beatrice, as an obedient sister, should have sought help from her brother: "Ma se volle far tutto da se, senza dare ascolto a nessuno! Glielo dissi tante volte, povera me! - Parli lei signora, per carità! - Le dissi: 'Si rivolga a suo fratello, che è uomo!'" (II,ii) The brother-figure is traditionally obliged to defend the sister's reputation. But in the first act when Fifi (the corrupt brother) warns Beatrice that her relationship with La Saracena compromises her reputation, - ("E non sai che una signora per bene non può riceverla senza pericolo di compromettersi") - she tells him that when he needed money to pay off his gambling debts, it was

La Saracena who lent it to him, revealing the "hypocrisy of the patriarchal social order."<sup>24</sup> Thus the brother, who has a moral obligation towards his sister, is at the same time, the negation of the family values he is supposed to represent, and becomes a symbol of the decadence of the authoritative "brother-role."

La Fana's discourse further reveals how Beatrice is identified only as a component of a family: "Ne chiedo consiglio, prima alla sua mamma." (I,ii) The inference is that Beatrice is also a daughter, and thus should seek advice from her mother. But Beatrice aspires to freedom. She wants to acquire her own identity by committing an action that is truly her own. After the speech in which she proclaims her liberty, -(Sono libera ...) her brother says: "Libera, dice! Senza più stato..." (I,ii) The inference here is that Beatrice is no longer part of society as she has rebelled against husband and family, and against her assigned roles of sister, daughter and wife. Without all of the above roles she is essentially without an identity of her own. Her rebellion can therefore be viewed as an attempt to acquire a sense of self by going against the social roles assigned to her. However, after discovering evidence that the adultery might not even have occurred, ("Flagranza vera non c'è" says Spanò in II,iv) Beatrice seeks the comfort of her mother: "Sarà bene che mi ritiri, con la

mamma, è vero?" (II,iii) To which the mother replies: "Andiamo, andiamo, figliuola mia. Lasciamoli soli, tra loro uomini." (II,iii) This particular response, at this specific time, suggests that Beatrice is falling back into the previous roles of daughter/wife/sister. In seeking help from those who are associated with her husband, and in leaving everything up to the men of her family and community, Beatrice shows that her temporary sense of self is gone, and that the attempt to acquire an identity of her own has ended in failure.

The female protagonist has not realized, however, the gravity of her situation. She has publicly denounced a male figure as a "cuckolded" husband. She has not understood the role-playing nature of social behaviour, despite her attempt to rid herself of all the roles assigned to her by family and community. Ciampa on the other hand is caught in the middle and is very aware of the relationship between role-playing and social identity. As Witt points out in her article, "Ciampa, one of Pirandello's great roles, understands at a level beyond the grasp of other (primarily female) characters the nature of social hypocrisy and the inevitability of theatrical 'masking'"<sup>25</sup>

When speaking to Fifi, he says: "Sua sorella non ha fatto altro che prendere il mio nome - il mio pupo... - si ricordi che jeri qua parlai di pupi? - il mio pupo; buttarlo a terra, e, sopra -

una calcagnata - così!" (II,iv) He further goes on to say that even Beatrice is a puppet, referring to the similarity of their situations as cuckolded spouses. "Perchè la signora - povera pupa-. [...] La nostra posizione - la mia e la sua- in fondo, sono uguali."(II,iv)

When Ciampa threatens to turn on the "corda seria" in the form of killing, everyone justifies Beatrice's action as an act of thoughtless "follia": "Ma se lo scandalo è stato per una pazzia." This reasoning suddenly offers Ciampa the opportunity to clear his position: if Beatrice is publicly denounced as "mad," her accusations, however probable, will also be discredited. It is not so much that Beatrice feigns madness that reveals how theatre portrays role-playing, but it is rather the theatrical method Ciampa adopts in arriving at the point where even Beatrice, however unwillingly, accepts to take on a new identity in order to re-establish social order.

The scene is controlled by Ciampa. He at once draws upon his knowledge of role-playing and convinces everyone that Beatrice should pretend madness. Everyone shouts in unison "Una pazzia! sì, una pazzia." But they are misguided in the belief that it is enough just to say that she is mad. According to Ciampa Beatrice must publicly act out the role of madwoman by "allowing herself" to be committed to an insane asylum: "Deve



dimostrare d'essere pazza - pazza davvero - da chiudere!"(II,v)  
 And further on "E lo sappiamo tutti qua, che lei è pazza. E ora  
 deve saperlo anche tutto il paese." (II,v) Ciampa's insistence  
 that the town must know of Beatrice's madness indicates a  
 conscious attempt to show everyone that role-playing is vital in  
 order to maintain not only his role of respected husband, but  
 the equally important role of respected husband regarding the  
 "cavaliere":

Anche lei, signor Fifi? Non comprende  
 che questo è l'unico rimedio? Per lei  
 stessa! Per il signor cavalier! Per  
 tutti! Non capisce che sua sorella ha  
 svergognato anche il signor cavalier,  
 e che deve dare anche a lui una riparazione  
 di fronte al paese? Si dice: E' pazza! -  
 e non se ne parla più! - Si spiega tutto!  
 - Pazza, pazza da chiudere e da legare! -  
 E solo così io non ho più niente da vendicare!  
 Mi disarmo. Dico: - E' pazza! posso più farmene  
 d'una pazza? E basta così! Il cavalier  
 non avrà più da mortificarsi, domani,  
 comparando tra i suoi amici; e la signora  
 va a farsi tre mesi di villeggiatura! -  
 Via, via, sbrighiamoci, che meglio di  
 così non si potrebbe fare! Ma deve partire  
 assolutamente questa sera stessa! <sup>26</sup>

Through provocative rhetoric Ciampa succeeds in turning  
 around a situation that was seemingly beyond his control a few  
 minutes ago. At once, everyone who stands to lose from  
 Beatrice's unwillingness to accept her situation, convinces her  
 to be mad "per tre mesi." Her mother and Spanò both say: "Figlia

mia, è per rimedio, non senti?/Per rimedio, signora! Sembra anche a me la risoluzione migliore! Pensi anche al signor cavalier, signora..." Thus the other characters themselves, just like Ciampa, willingly assume the roles of "provocatori" who attempt to persuade Beatrice to replace her social identities of wife/sister/daughter with a new one. <sup>27</sup>

After having convinced the family members of the "rimedio," Ciampa demonstrates to Beatrice how to act out her newly-acquired role. "Basta che lei si metta a gridare a tutti la verità. Nessuno ci crede, e tutti la prendono per pazza!" Ciampa applies the "corda pazza" to Beatrice. The "corda pazza," like both other chords (serious/civil) is a role or a social part which is assumed when the situation demands it. Instead of assuming the role of killer, Ciampa assumes the role of director, assigning Beatrice a secondary role that doesn't simply replace her previous roles of daughter/sister/wife, but rather cancels them out. From now on the townspeople will refer to Beatrice as crazy, basing themselves on what they witnessed near the Fiorica household. Though Beatrice accepts the role assigned by Ciampa, she does so unwillingly, "under the control of the absent one-out of duty to her husband."<sup>28</sup> We can infer as much from Spanò's earlier reference to her husband, in which he urges her to think "anche al cavalier, signora..." Beatrice

thus assumes a role similar to that of an actress on stage performing for an audience. The scene where Beatrice actually assumes the role of madness is quite significant in that she completely denies all other previous roles and identifies exclusively with the one assigned by Ciampa:

BEATRICE. E allora, sì: Beee!... ve lo  
grido in faccia, sì: beee! beee!  
FIFI. (cercando di trattenerla).  
Beatrice!  
SPANO. (cercando di trattenerla).  
Signora!  
ASSUNTA (cercando di trattenerla). Figlia mia!  
BEATRICE. No! sono pazza? E debbo gridarglielo:  
Beee! beee! beee!  
CIAMPA. E' pazza! - Ecco la prova: E pazza: Oh che  
bellezza! - Bisogna chiuderla! bisogna  
chiudere. <sup>29</sup>

Neither Assunta's calling out to her, nor Spano's or even her brother's are recognized by Beatrice, as she has assumed the role of "pazza." She does not therefore recognize herself as a daughter/friend/sister/wife at this point, identifying herself only within the "theatrical matrix" of her newly-acquired identity. Madness and theatre are fused together in the role-playing of Beatrice to show how drama can directly express the theatrical specificity of the human condition.

Pirandello's Henry IV also postulates the idea that madness is a way to escape the "volgarità della vita" through acting. In choosing madness over sanity, the character makes a choice to

live in a well-ordered and controlled "reality" rather than face the uncertainty and precariousness of the "real" world. Similarly, Beatrice's unwilling recital also offers her a sense of freedom and stability: the freedom to shout the "truth" to everyone: Paolo Puppa writes that "la pazzia è altresì salvezza, libertà a gridare la verità impensabile".<sup>30</sup> But at the end of the play the "truth" has become a parody of itself, mirroring the hypocritical society in which it lies.<sup>31</sup>

Pirandello's concerns with role-playing and identity and with "theatre as a metaphor for life" are thus the main issues raised in this play. It is not a lighthearted comedy, but a deeply cynical one. Cynical because it accentuates the fragility of human consciousness and the elusive nature of identity. In addition, behind the role-playing of Beatrice, Ciampa and the family members, a deeper social truth seems to surface: the importance of our social masks should never be trivialized, lest we lose our sense of identity and humanity and slip into anonymity. Beatrice's final performance not only suggests how mobile and fragile female identity is, but how easily it can be lost: a woman who tries to acquire an identity of her own ends up with a socially marginal identity assigned to her by a male protagonist. Similarly, Ciampa reflects Pirandello's idea that all human identity is "learned".

In summation, three points have been raised in this chapter. Firstly, that role-playing is vital to human behaviour because it protects and constitutes identity. Secondly, that Beatrice as the female figure best exemplifies role-playing due to her many assigned roles. The third point is that Pirandello's notion of role-playing and identity are suited for the theatre because through theatre we become aware of the many "roles" that characters can assume once they are forced to acknowledge another side of their social personality. This particular drama rests heavily on its male protagonist's rhetorical ability. Without his theatrical reasoning we would not arrive at a conscious understanding of role-playing as a learned process.

Though this play does not present itself as a play-within-a-play, it does, however, powerfully portray role-within-role-playing: Ciampa assumes the metaphorical role of "regista"; the family members unconsciously assume the roles of "spettatori-provocatori"; and Beatrice assumes the role of madwoman. The suitability of this play to examine role-playing in all its facets is made evident by the physical presence of characters who struggle against each other, and whose conflict reflects a desire to impose their own interpretation of the facts on each other. Thus Ciampa's struggle with Beatrice, as Dorteia Stewans has already pointed out, is essentially a fight to see who will

assign the ultimate role: Beatrice's attempt to assign the role of "cuckolded husband" ends in failure due to her inability to perceive the importance of role-playing. She is thus assigned the role of "madwoman" as a punishment for having transgressed the Sicilian code of proper conduct, itself an essentially theatrical-type of social behaviour.

In addition to this, Ciampa's speech is laced with allusions concerning the relationship between life and theatre. When he tells Beatrice that he will teach her to act, he is explicitly stating that proper social behaviour is a theatrically learned process similar to learning a new "part" for an actor, and not an innate ability. Society teaches the individual what role to assume in the same way an actor is instructed by the director on how to act in a particular scene. When in Act II, Scene iv Ciampa informs Beatrice (intentionally alluding to himself) that people often swallow their pride and accept situations otherwise unbearable, he is referring to his painfully constructed identity, revealing an inner truth about himself that is constantly hidden. When he accuses her of destroying his "pupo" he is drawing added attention to the fact "all human roles are relative, that identities are learned" and can easily crumble. And when he finally assigns her the role of "pazza" he puts on a theatrical performance that reveals, on the

one hand, the human necessity to socially role-play, and on the other, the theatrical origin of Beatrice's identity. Thus the effectiveness of this drama's portrayal of role-playing is the result of its mirroring itself through the process of assigning roles and new identities, calling attention to the relationship between theatre and identity.

By focusing on role-playing as the ultimate human necessity Pirandello clearly makes a bold statement regarding the nature of his theatre and its ability to portray culture and society. The playwright seems to be conveying the message that since social experience is essentially a "theatrical" one where people frequently "mask" their intentions and assume roles and other identities, drama, with the added fascination of characters consciously recognizing themselves as such or "pupi" who assume and assign other roles, is best suited to examine human identity in its dynamic and theatrical structure. The spectators witnessing such a self-conscious theatre cannot help but reach a new level of consciousness themselves as Pirandello encourages us all to re-evaluate and come to terms with our own social roles, limitations and possibilities.

## Chapter 4.

### From short story to play: Innate vs Learned Identity.

The aim of this chapter is to determine the significance of role-playing and identity in light of the passage from short story to drama. The preceding chapters have illustrated the fact that Pirandello adopts the metadramatic device of role-within-role-playing in two literary genres. Each work adopts the technique in order to show that human behaviour and identity are characteristically theatrical. The human condition is defined as a constant maintenance of roles which safeguard social position. But despite the fact that role-playing is adopted in the short stories, the protagonists don't consciously draw attention to it. In other words, neither of the narrative texts explicitly reveals the "thematic reference" to role-playing-within-the-role.<sup>1</sup> The protagonists' role-playing-within-the-role is evident insofar as it is indirectly implied by their unconscious performance of it. As a result, role-playing-within-the-role as it relates to the question of identity is subordinate to the explicit "theme" of adultery and its social ramifications. Thus one can argue that both short story characters portray role-playing as an "innate" characteristic in an effort to safeguard their identities of respected



husbands.

In the play, however, provocative discourse along with a self-conscious character who acknowledges himself as a puppet and creates, according to one critic, a "messinscena,"<sup>2</sup> illustrates how role-playing can be a process whereby identities come to be consciously "learned" and applied.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the dramatic text offers an explicit examination of the role-playing theme, which raises the awareness of the viewer-reader that human identity is essentially theatrical. Ciampa not only draws attention to the fact that we are all "pupi," but brings about for Beatrice the creation of an identity that has to be embraced through acting. Thus "innate" role-playing versus "learned" role-playing is what distinguishes play from short stories. In the play, role-playing acquires a greater level of "visibility," indicative of Pirandello's basic and fundamental concerns about the plurality of human identity.

In Pirandello's fiction and drama, there almost always seem to be two parallel levels of action, one comprising the central plot, and the other contained within the context of a "distinct," yet "self-contained performance". Richard Hornby maintains that the one contained within the performance frequently shows "who the character wants to be." <sup>4</sup> Thus Quaqueo's role-shifting towards the end of the narrative reveals

his longing to be a respected husband. Similarly, Ciampa's impersonation of a "regista" suggests how important a power position role in society really is to him. Furthermore, his desire to take on the role of "pazzo" - "Potessi farlo io, come piacerebbe a me!" (II,v) - reveals his aspiration to dissociate himself from social conventions and ultimately acquire the freedom to "cacciarmi fino agli orecchi il berretto a sonagli della pazzia e scendere in piazza a sputare in faccia alla gente la verità." (II,v) The inference is that only the mad, as social outcasts with no socially credible identity, have the liberty to do anything and get away with it, while the rest of us functioning within society's conventions, have to role-play in order to maintain a sense of identity and security.

Pirandello critics have delved relentlessly into the relationship between the playwright and the short story writer.<sup>5</sup> Their inquiry is geared towards understanding why Pirandello felt the need to turn to the theatre as a further means of expression when his short stories basically focus on the same themes, and often enough, are written in a dramatic style. To illustrate the varied critical responses to this question would be beyond the scope of this thesis. It is, however, necessary to stress the fact that all critics are bound together by one common notion: that Pirandello's choice to re-work his short

story themes in the drama is a result of his "search for greater dramaticity." But how does one define "dramaticity"? Even in the short stories one senses dramaticity in the form of direct discourse and frequent dramatic exchanges between characters, as in the swift and dramatic resolutions of both La verità and Certi obblighi. As one informative article states, "compression, dramatic dialogue and monologue, the focusing on vice-like situations which leave no room for arbitrary events, the swift rise to a climax and inevitable resolution - the essential features of drama - are already present in many of Pirandello's short stories."<sup>6</sup>

In light of the above comment, and as far as the present discussion is concerned, to state that Il berretto a sonagli explores the issues of role-playing and "identity" more "dramatically" than the short stories because it is drama, is clearly too simplistic and obvious. Nor does it address the question of what constitutes "greater dramaticity": with regard to the role-playing theme, what advantages does the dramatic form offer that effectuate a change in the way role-playing in relation to identity comes to acquire "greater dramaticity"? I propose to answer this question by demonstrating that "greater dramaticity" is obtained by the confrontational structure of drama, which leads to explicit, provocative and argumentative

encounters between characters who attempt to impose role-playing on each other, thus drawing attention to the dramatic process of consciously assigning and assuming roles as a means to secure and learn a given identity.

The relationship between Certi obblighi and Il berretto a sonagli offers no specific insight into how Pirandello goes about transforming narrative into drama. The reason for this is that the two works are connected exclusively at the level of theme. Despite this, however, the thematic relation between the two works offers the opportunity to see how closely connected they are at the level of role-playing in relation to identity. Firstly, both characters are contemplative and articulate. Licastro has rightly pointed out that "Ciampa e Quaqueo sono accomunati dalla loro capacita dialettica."<sup>7</sup> The narrator, for instance, says of Quaqueo that he has acquired "la cattiva abitudine di ragionare." And Ciampa, as Licastro points out, says in reference to himself in Act 2, "Signora, badi che di comprendonio, io sono fino, sa?"<sup>8</sup> Moreover, both characters share the ability to role-play within their social roles of respected husbands. The scene in which Quaqueo assumes his roles in order to convince the town that the adultery is false depicts an instinctual grasp of role-playing for the purpose of social survival. When Ciampa-director instructs Beatrice to role-play

he is also performing a ritual that will ensure his social re-integration.

Quaqueo's awareness that "certi obblighi si hanno" coincides with his acute perception of the situation at hand. He knows that as much as he has an obligation to his own sense of honor as a betrayed husband, he nevertheless has to "swallow his pride," avoid killing, and ultimately role-play in order to maintain a job that offers him a social escape. Accordingly, when he says to Cavalier Bissi - "Sente come gridano giù per istrada? Si hanno certi obblighi" - he is suggesting that as a last obligation to his social identity he must pretend that nothing has happened.

Ciampa's situation is not that different from Quaqueo's, with the exception that the former's role-playing-within-the-role ultimately causes other characters to assume roles, and as a result reinforces the notion that role-playing is a consciously governed social ritual. The central plot focuses on Ciampa's dilemma of maintaining the painful mask of a respected husband while being forced to acknowledge the contrary in light of the scandal. When he openly speaks to Beatrice about constructed identities he makes a point of revealing his own personal dilemma:

Io ora parlo... non per me...parlo  
in generale...-E che può saper lei,

perchè uno, tante volte, ruba; perchè tante volte uno, ammazza; perchè uno, tante volte - poniamo, brutto, vecchio, povero - per l'amore d'una donna che gli tiene il cuore stretto come in una morsa, ma che intanto gli fa dire: - ah!- che subito glielo spegne in bocca con un bacio, per cui questo povero vecchio si strugge e s'ubriaca - che puo saper lei, signora, con quale doglia in corpo, con quale supplizio questo vecchio puo sottomettersi fino al punto di spartirsi l'amore di quella donna con un altro uomo...<sup>9</sup>

When he assumes the role of director and assigns Beatrice and company certain roles, he reveals another drama unfolding: he calls attention to the fact that identities are painfully "learned," just as he has learned to uphold the painful one of respected husband while sharing his wife's love with someone else. In short, Ciampa puts into practice what for him is a way of life: to exist is to learn to adapt to constructed identities. Thus Beatrice is forced to learn a new identity. Like his short story counterpart, Ciampa acknowledges the importance of maintaining illusions. But whereas the short story focuses on Quaqueo's role playing at an implicit level, the drama goes further by examining the explicit theatrical nature of role-playing and identity.

Quaqueo's remarks only shed light on the fact that he must perform an innate duty to fulfill his obligations. As such, the

performance of his job as lamplighter is an obligation; the performance of his role as potential killer is a further obligation; and again, his performance in front of Bissi can be interpreted as fulfilling an obligation. Nevertheless, in fulfilling his obligations, the character is doing so in a role-playing manner. We can infer as much in light of the last scene where he assumes two roles, one of enraged husband in front of a public that he considers important, and one of passive husband in front of Bissi, who is considered equally important. Nonetheless, the character is not conscious that he is actually role-playing or that he is putting on a show. He simply performs a social duty and a personal duty without drawing attention to the theatrical nature of his actions. Quaqueo is only conscious of his obligations, in which, as the narrator points out "è così profondamente compenetrato." As such, his role-playing as it applies to his situation is a necessary condition for social survival.

Ciampa's remarks, however, openly draw attention to the fact that role-playing is a theatrical means to maintain identity, and is therefore an integral part of human experience. This results from his confrontation with a number of characters to whom he must justify forcing Beatrice to role-play. In addition, all the characters undergo role-assigning by Ciampa.

This factor enables us to consider another element which demonstrates the "theatrical efficacy" of role-playing: the drama's ability to show that identities are learned by having characters interact.

When Quaueo confronts the town, he does so collectively. That is, he does not engage in personal confrontations. The narrator refers to the town in collective terms such as "massa," "parecchi allora s'impauriscono" or "tutti gli altri"; And the character refers to them as "ladri svergognati," or makes references to the way they have amassed around him, such as "Ah ve ne pentite?" Even when direct discourse expresses an opinion supposedly uttered by a single character, it is that of a general consensus: "Ci vogliono i becchi" or "Il coltello ce l'hai?" The only individual character with whom Quaueo interacts is Bissi. But even then, their conversation is limited, as it only demonstrates Quaueo's deference towards his superior. The lack of direct confrontation creates a situation in which there is no need to talk. He is compelled only to act in an attempt to clear his social position.

In the play, on the other hand, the "masses" become individuals. Each character speaks on his own behalf, consequently confronting other characters. For instance, when Ciampa announces that he will eventually kill his wife and her



lover (Beatrice's husband), everyone attempts to discourage him. For example, Fifi says, "Voi non ammazzate nessuno". And Spanò together with Fifi say, "Che è ? Che avete detto? Voi siete pazzo! Chi ammazzate?" (II,v) Even before this declaration, characters attempt to make Ciampa understand that what has happened is of no consequence: Spanò says for instance, - "La signora non voleva colpir voi, caro Ciampa! Tant'è vero che vi volle allontanare, mandandovi a Palermo."<sup>10</sup> (II,iv) And Fifi further attempts dissuasion - "V'assicuro, Ciampa, che voi non le potreste dir piu di quanto le ho detto io!"- (II,iv) This talk provokes reaction from Ciampa because he sees that nobody really understands the social implications of crumbled identities. He thus outlines his theatrical conception of life as it applies to himself, Beatrice, and to everyone involved. In doing so, he draws attention to the fact that what has happened is a result of not respecting the "pupo" of others. In completely disregarding Ciampa's previous speech (I,iv) regarding role-playing, Beatrice demonstrates lack of respect for Ciampa's feigned identity as an unaware "cuckolded" husband. In fact Ciampa's lament is that Beatrice "non ha fatto altro che prendere il mio nome - il mio pupo.. [...] buttarlo a terra..."<sup>11</sup>

The play draws attention to the theatrical nature of social behaviour more effectively than the short story because of its

explicit portrayal of characters talking to, and coming into direct contact with each other, thus reinforcing the role-playing aspect of human social interaction. Ciampa for example tells everyone that they all share in the common destiny of being "pupi", and then proceeds to show Beatrice how to feign madness. He informs everyone that the remedy is theatre, and then shows Beatrice how to act, and in the process forces her to learn a role, a new identity. Role-playing is not only a question of social survival, but a conscious means by which one acquires a sense of self and purpose, and hence, power. So, when Ciampa assigns Beatrice the identity of "pazza" he clearly tells her that she is fortunate to be able to shout the truth without reproach from anyone. She has acquired the freedom to shout the truth. In so doing, Beatrice will feign madness, and will accordingly act within the matrix of her newly found identity. The play in fact ends with Beatrice totally embracing madness: "E allora, si: Beee..ve lo grido in faccia, si: beee!/Sono pazza? E debbo gridarglielo."<sup>12</sup>

In the previous discussion of La verità a part of the analysis focused on the technique of evoking sympathy as a way of raising awareness that role-playing is essential in society. Indeed, it was shown that the narrator's sympathetic remarks,

along with Tararà's convincing monologue, revealed the importance of socially-constructed appearances. Commenting on the monologue part of the short story, Jorn Moestrup writes that it constitutes "the most important part of this impressive story."<sup>13</sup>

Independently, the short story's inclusion of the monologue indicates how Pirandello's concern lay mainly in adding an element of dramatic tension to his tales. Tararà's monologue comes at a point in the narrative where the tension between himself and the jury members has reached a critical point. He must defend himself so as to allow them to arrive at a verdict. Thus the monologue provides a swift resolution. The tale ends, however pessimistically, in a dramatic way, leaving no room for further questions. Tararà is condemned and that is the end of it.

The monologue however raises an issue that foreshadows the play. Tararà explicitly states that he would have wanted to meet Beatrice so as to show her the destructiveness of the scandal and question her motives for causing it. The reader on his/her part has come to identify and sympathize with Tararà. Consequently, Beatrice has been portrayed as an antagonist. Tararà's discourse and the use of the free indirect style which mirrors the character's inner thoughts, has succeeded in evoking

antipathy in the reader towards the female character. As a result, we dislike Beatrice and feel admiration for Tararà who has withstood the harassment and humiliation inflicted on him by the jury public. This response creates emotional discomfort in the reader at the closure of the narrative. Even though we accept Tararà's fate, there still remains, however, his unanswered question: "Con quale diritto vossignoria è venuta a inquietare me?" Accordingly, our sympathies towards Tararà require that Beatrice be held accountable for the crime of destroying the character's role of unsuspecting husband. As such, the short story raises the yet-to-be-dealt-with issue of a possible encounter between the betrayed husband and the trouble-making vindictive Beatrice.

In fact the narrative antecedent - the scandal referred to by the narrator through free indirect style - constitutes the plot of the play. The play "re-works" the narrative antecedent by dramatizing the hypothetical encounter mentioned in the monologue, in the final dramatic encounter between Ciampa and Beatrice, where he assigns her the role of madwoman as a paradoxical form of punishment and reward. Thus Tararà's condemnation of the woman "in absentia" occurs "in praesentia" through Ciampa.

There are four parts in Ciampa's speech to Beatrice that

have a discursive antecedent in Tararà's monologue. The first one is when Ciampa engages in his own monologue to explain how important his role of unsuspecting husband is: "E' come una piaga, questa, signora: una piaga vergognosa, nascosta. E lei che fa? Stende la mano e la scopre così pubblicamente".<sup>14</sup> Now let's compare it to Tararà's discourse in his monologue: "perchè la cosa, signori giurati, era tacita, e nessuno poteva venirmi a sostenere in faccia che la sapevo." Both characters employ the same kind of reasoning in raising the issue that appearances should be respected. Furthermore, both their speeches are directed toward an audience, Tararà's towards a jury, and Ciampa's towards Beatrice and family members.

In the second similarity we see how both character's employment of a hypothetical situation involves themselves and Beatrice. Ciampa's goes as follows: "Se lei avesse parlato seriamente con me, io me ne sarei tornato a casa e avrei detto a mia moglie: 'Pst. Fagotto, e via!...'".<sup>15</sup> Tararà's is strikingly similar: "Se vossignoria fosse venuta da me, ad avvertirmi io le avrei detto: 'Lasci andare, signora! Uomini siamo...'".<sup>16</sup> Again, both attempt to make Beatrice aware that when dealing with compromising situations the respect of other's roles is vital. That is why they both express the desire to have avoided a scandal through the disclosure of information under the pretext

of a warning, in Tararà's case, and within the "chord" of seriousness, in Ciampa's case.

The third parallel indicates how important role-playing is, particularly to the male. Ciampa says: "Lei signora poteva prendersi questo piacere, se credeva che suo marito si fosse messo con qualche ragazza, senza però, - badiamo - né padre, né fratelli. Dava una lezione a suo marito - non c'erano altri uomini di mezzo - e tutto si sarebbe accomodato alla meglio."<sup>17</sup> Tararà's again is strikingly similar: "Se suo marito si fosse messo con una zitella, vossignoria si poteva prendere il gusto di fare questo scandalo, che non avrebbe portato nessuna conseguenza, perchè non ci sarebbe stato un marito di mezzo."<sup>18</sup> Here we enter into the discussion raised in chapter four, regarding the male-dominated social structure with which Beatrice is forced to identify. Both characters' inference is that men cannot have their social roles and identities compromised by female plotting. According to Tararà and Ciampa, women are allowed to instigate scandals of this nature only if men are not involved.

The final similarity is as follows. Ciampa says: "Come non pensa a me, lei? O che ero niente, io? -Lei ha scherzato; s'è passato questo piacere; ha fatto ridere tutto un paese, domani rifara pace con suo marito."<sup>19</sup> Tararà says: "le direi se l'avessi

qua davanti questa signora. 'Che cosa è stato lo scandalo per vossignoria? Niente! Uno scherzo! Dopo due giorni ha rifatto pace col marito. Ma non ha pensato vossignoria, che c'era un altro uomo di mezzo?"<sup>20</sup> Both characters overtly condemn Beatrice for not respecting their roles as men. They both pass off the scandal as a "scherzo" or a thoughtless joke.

Clearly, both characters resort to similar rhetoric in their attitude towards Beatrice. They are both proceeding from the assumption that appearances are important, and should accordingly be respected by others. Beatrice's transgression is thus viewed as a type of crime, for which she should be held accountable. However, Tararà's hypothetical speech to the woman has no practical function, as Beatrice is not present. The play on the other hand, condemns Beatrice "in praesentia" thus complementing the narrative by portraying Beatrice's deserved punishment in a way which was not possible in the short story. The play can therefore be considered as a sort of "sequel" in which "justice" is obtained and the male protagonist's dilemma is resolved.

Role-within-role-playing is not Ciampa's idea. Beatrice's brother shouts out the word "pazzia" so as to show that Beatrice was not thinking clearly at the time of the scandal. Hence, her brother is only attempting a justification tactic. However, in

accordance with his notion that life is essentially theatre and people puppets with no proper identity other than the one externally assigned to them, Ciampa then assigns Beatrice the role of madwoman. The scene in which he gets this particular idea is significant as it shows his sudden joy at the prospect of instructing Beatrice on how to learn a new identity:

CIAMPA( in mezzo a tutti che gridano  
'una pazzia! una pazzia!' all'improvviso,  
assorto in una idea che gli balena lì  
per lì, raggianti) Oh Dio! che bellezza!  
signori, pacificamente! Oh che bellezza!  
Sissignori... sissignori... Sì può  
aggiustare tutto... Ah che respiro  
Mi metterei a ballare...a saltare... <sup>21</sup>

Equally important is the speech in which he convinces everyone how simple it is to acquire a new identity if society perceives it and recognizes it:

A me? Nossignora! Ha dato a lei  
il cervello, signora mia! Scusi,  
l'ha riconosciuto suo fratello  
Fifi; lo riconosce il delegato;  
la sua mamma; lo riconosciamo tutti:  
e dunque lei e pazza! Pazza, e se ne  
va al manicomio! E' semplicissimo. <sup>22</sup>

The family members are persuaded to accept Beatrice's performance as the only remedy. Fifi for instance says: "Sì, sì è giusto! Capisci è per finta!". (II,v) However false it is to the family members and Ciampa, it will nonetheless be interpreted as real by society. With this the play radically



departs from the narrative text in its ability to further accentuate the difference between what is and what seems simply by having characters interact with, and provoke one another to respond and act. For instance, in openly stating that Beatrice has to feign madness Ciampa is drawing attention to the process of acquiring a new identity and to the importance of external social perception.

The presence of the family members facilitates Ciampa's attempts because the effectiveness of his discourse depends on their being able to understand his theatrical point of view. When Ciampa tells Beatrice that she must be committed to an insane asylum, she refuses. But again his discourse, unlike Tararà's, effectively provokes everyone to convince her that feigning madness is the only way. When Beatrice assumes her new identity it constitutes a veritable theatre where everyone is actually witnessing the formation of a theatrically arrived-at identity.

The play therefore adds a predominantly theatrical perspective, in which convincing rhetoric provokes, elicits, and ultimately convinces that role-playing is a conscious, and at times, painful process. Hence, the new meaning offered in the dramatic adaptation of the short story.

Moreover, while both Tararà and Ciampa equally maintain

that appearances are important in relation to society, it is only through Ciampa's "messinscena" and his many theatrical allusions and comments that one acquires an understanding of the painful process of maintaining, assigning and ultimately re-acquiring identities, which is clearly the "theatrical matrix" of human "experience."<sup>23</sup> As a result of her having learned a new identity through role-playing within her former roles, Beatrice represents in a visibly conscious manner the mobility and relativity of human identity. This greater dramatic "visibility" is obtained by the play's use of dialogue and character interaction, demonstrating that role-playing-within-the-role is an explicit aspect of Pirandello's dramatic writings, as well as an implicit and central concern of the short story writer.

## Conclusion.

In summation, the findings of this thesis have stressed two interrelated points: that according to Pirandello, theatre is a metaphor for life, and that his concern with this metaphor is revealed through the role-within-the-role-playing technique, the predominant theatrical feature of his fiction. At first reading it seems that these three works deal with the theme of adultery. That, as I have shown, is secondary. All three texts, whether implicitly or explicitly, relate to the theme of role-playing-within-the-role.

As short fiction, the two tales of La verità and Certi obblighi testify to the fact that Pirandello always wrote with dramatic intent. As theatre, Il berretto a sonagli points to the fact that Pirandello made use of the technique of role-playing-within-the-role as a metaphor for the theatrical "masking" in life. His passage from narrative to drama - which is not a passage but rather an extension - reveals how interrelated all his fiction is by the common notion that life is similar to theatre.

Luigi Pirandello's subject matter is theatrical. His role-playing approach to identity reveals how the latter is shaped by the many roles assigned to it. With regard to the short stories

discussed in this thesis, they contain a variety of dramatic techniques which seems to suggest that Pirandello, both short story writer and playwright, never ceased in experimenting with dramatic techniques as he always found new means with which to express role-playing.

So, in light of this, does the play attain a higher level of expression with respect to the playwright's pluralistic notion of identity? The particular re-working of the role-playing theme shows that it does. Ciampa's overt attempts to impose upon Beatrice a role, and to have her act it out, and his constant references to the appropriate uses of social "chords" demonstrates how the play explicitly portrays role-playing as a socially-conscious ritual which is able to create, reveal, and mask a variety of human identities and "truths."

## ENDNOTES

### INTRODUCTION

- <sup>1</sup> Richard Hornby, Drama, Metadrama, and Perception (London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1986), p.25.
- <sup>2</sup> Richard Hornby, Drama, Metadrama, and Perception, p.25.
- <sup>3</sup> Gaspare Giudice, Pirandello: A Biography (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p.115.
- <sup>4</sup> Giudice 115.
- <sup>5</sup> Rosetta Pulice, Stage and Audience in Contemporary Theatre: Pirandello and Wilder, diss., McGill University, 1982, p.17.
- <sup>6</sup> Pulice 18.
- <sup>7</sup> Pulice 18.
- <sup>8</sup> Roger W. Oliver, Dreams of Passion: The Theater of Luigi Pirandello, (New York: New York University Press and L London, 1979), p.52.
- <sup>9</sup> Hornby 25.
- <sup>10</sup> Oliver 52.
- <sup>11</sup> Luigi Pirandello, "Illustratori, attori e traduttori," in Saggi, Poesie, Scritti varii, 2 ed. (Milano: Mondadori, 1965), p.224
- <sup>12</sup> Rachel Haim, Le origini del teatro di Pirandello, diss., McGill University, 1969., p.94.
- <sup>13</sup> Hornby 67.
- <sup>14</sup> Hornby 26.

- <sup>15</sup> Hornby 32.
- <sup>16</sup> Hornby 22.
- <sup>17</sup> Hornby 31.
- <sup>18</sup> Mary Ann Frese Witt, "Women or Mother? Feminine Conditions in Pirandello's Theater," in A Companion to Pirandello Studies ed. John Louis DiGaetani (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1991), p.66.
- <sup>19</sup> Oliver 47.
- <sup>20</sup> Hornby 45.
- <sup>21</sup> Hornby 45.
- <sup>22</sup> Hornby 46.
- <sup>23</sup> Hornby 43.
- <sup>24</sup> Pulice 10.
- <sup>25</sup> Hornby 47.
- <sup>26</sup> Pulice 10-11.
- <sup>27</sup> Pulice 8.

## CHAPTER 1

- <sup>1</sup> In Tecniche Narrative in 'Novelle Per un Anno', (University of Michigan, 1983), p.22, Vitti outlines the most typical techniques of the "novelle tradizionali". The most predominant one is that of having a narrator who describes the character by situating him in a particular context that reflects his state of mind, or circumstance: "L'apertura della novella tradizionale fa sempre mostra di lunghe e dettagliate e spesso prolisse descrizioni, siano esse di luoghi, di stati d'animo, di personaggi, che poi verranno presentati nello sviluppo del racconto. L'importanza primaria di tutte le aperture in genere, e più specificamente di quella della novella tradizionale, sta nel creare uno scenario sul quale la storia

si possa inserire, come vedremo negli esempi ch eseguono; mentre allo stesso tempo provvede il lettore con un retroscena esplicativo sul luogo, sul soggetto o sui personaggi che popolano l'azione." This type of introduction facilitates a better understanding of character and setting, as well as setting the mood (pessimistic) which the narrator wishes to evoke.

- <sup>2</sup> Luigi Pirandello, Certi obblighi, in Novelle per un anno, Vol 1: (Milano: Mondadori, 1949, p.1187.
- <sup>3</sup> Vitti-Alexander 42.
- <sup>4</sup> Certi obblighi 1187.
- <sup>5</sup> Certi obblighi 1187.
- <sup>6</sup> Certi obblighi 1187.
- <sup>7</sup> Certi obblighi 1188-1189.
- <sup>8</sup> Certi obblighi 1189-1190.
- <sup>9</sup> Daniela Bini, "Pirandello's Philosophy and Philosophers", in A Companion to Pirandello Studies, ed. John Louis DiGaetani (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1991), p.31.
- <sup>10</sup> Anthony Caputi, Pirandello and the Crisis of Modern Consciousness (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1988), p.88.
- <sup>11</sup> Regarding the Sicilian male's attitude towards proper marital conduct, I refer the reader to Leonardo Sciascia's Pirandello e la Sicilia, (Roma: Salvatore Sciascia Editore, 1961). Briefly, Sciascia defines the Sicilian code of conduct as the "morale sessuale", a social belief espoused by the male maintaining that improper sexual conduct ought to be the knowledge of the parties involved, and not be publicly disclosed. Once the male is socially humiliated by his spouse, he must, in accordance with the code, publicly avenge his honor by killing her in an effort to avoid being labeled a "cuckolded" husband.
- <sup>12</sup> Certi obblighi 1192.
- <sup>13</sup> Certi obblighi 1192.

- <sup>14</sup> Certi obblighi 1192.
- <sup>15</sup> Certi obblighi 1192.
- <sup>16</sup> Certi obblighi 1193.
- <sup>17</sup> Certi obblighi 1194.

## CHAPTER 2

- <sup>1</sup> André Rochon, "Pirandello Adapteur de Pirandello. Le Bonnet du Fou", in Revue des sciences humaines, (586-606: 1961), p.587.
- <sup>2</sup> Cornelia Van Der Voort, "La novella 'La verita' e il racconto nel racconto," in Le novelle di Pirandello, Agrigento: Centro Nazionale di Studi Pirandelliani 1980) pp.81-84.
- <sup>3</sup> Luigi Pirandello, La verita, in Novelle per un anno, Vol 1: (Milano: Mondadori, 1949), p.634.
- <sup>4</sup> La verita 634.
- <sup>5</sup> La verita 634.
- <sup>6</sup> Wayne C Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), p.245
- <sup>7</sup> La verita 636-637.
- <sup>8</sup> Van Der Voort 87.
- <sup>9</sup> In addition to Van Der Voort's, "meccanismo di rifiuto" as a technique which delays the disclosure of information until the last moment so as to allow the character to effectively speak on his behalf, I suggest that Tararà's unwillingness to speak relates to both inner and outer audience's emotional



response. With regard to the manipulation of emotional distance, we as readers (outer audience) who have been thus far positively influenced by a sympathetic narrator, are more inclined to sympathize with Tararà, and emotionally detach ourselves from the inner audience which has not been positively conditioned and is thus unsympathetic towards the character.

<sup>10</sup> La verità 638.

<sup>11</sup> La verità 640-641.

<sup>12</sup> La verità 641.

<sup>13</sup> Van Der Voort 87-88, isolates four levels of narratives in the character's final speech.

<sup>14</sup> Van Der Voort 88, maintains that "entambi i colloqui imaginari tra Tarara e la signora si realizzeranno nella commedia ll berretto a sonagli."

<sup>15</sup> Dorothea Stewans, Pirandello: scrittura e scena (Agrigento: Edizione del Centro Nazionale di Studi Pirandelliani, 1983), p.32, attributes this quality exclusively to theatrical characters. But the fact that both Tararà and Quaquo struggle against society in order to uphold and impose appearances seems to suggest that this characteristic is also typical of the short stories under discussion.

### CHAPTER 3

<sup>1</sup> Hornby 71.

<sup>2</sup> Stewans 33.

<sup>3</sup> Stewans 27.

<sup>4</sup> Stewans 32.

<sup>5</sup> Stewans 32.

<sup>6</sup> Hornby 85.

- <sup>7</sup> Hornby 85.
- <sup>8</sup> Renate Matthaei, Luigi Pirandello (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1973), p.37.
- <sup>9</sup> Luigi Pirandello, Il berretto a sonagli in Maschere Nude, Vol 3: (Mondadori, 1949), p.337.
- <sup>10</sup> Il berretto a sonagli 334.
- <sup>11</sup> Il berretto a sonagli 347.
- <sup>12</sup> Paolo Puppa, Dalle Parti di Pirandello, (Rome: Bulzoni, 1987), p.78.
- <sup>13</sup> Puppa 77.
- <sup>14</sup> Domenico Vittorini, The Drama of Luigi Pirandello, (New York: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1935), p.98.
- <sup>15</sup> Il berretto a sonagli 334.
- <sup>16</sup> Il berretto a sonagli 344-345.
- <sup>17</sup> Il berretto a sonagli 347.
- <sup>18</sup> Douglas Radcliff-Umstead, The Mirror of our Anguish: A study of Luigi Pirandello's Narrative Writings (New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1978), p.15.
- <sup>19</sup> Radcliff-Umstead 22.
- <sup>20</sup> Radcliff-Umstead 16.
- <sup>21</sup> Mary Ann Frese Witt, "Woman or Mother? Feminine Conditions in Pirandello's Theater", in A Companion to Pirandello studies, ed. John Louis Di Gaetani (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1991), p.70.
- <sup>22</sup> Frese Witt 66.
- <sup>23</sup> Frese Witt 58.
- <sup>24</sup> Frese Witt 66.
- <sup>25</sup> Frese Witt 66.

<sup>26</sup> Il berretto a sonagli 380.

<sup>27</sup> On this point I refer the reader to Sarah Zappulla-Muscarà, Odissea di Maschere A'birritta cu'i ciancianeddi di Luigi Pirandello, p.199, who proposes that Beatrice's family, while ostensibly demonstrating affection towards her, actually convince her to assume the role of madness so as to save the family's reputation: "Tutti insieme alla madre, il fratello, la gnà Momma, il delegato Spanò finiscono con il manipolare in maniera concertata il comportamento di Biatrici, orientandola nella direzione del tipo di risposta che vogliono ottenere ri-proiettando su di lei l'identità sociale di moglie appartenente ad una famiglia 'elevata' che ha un ruolo, ad essa connesso, da giuocare, da rispettare, e da far rispettare."

<sup>28</sup> Frese Witt 66.

<sup>29</sup> Il berretto a sonagli 381-382.

<sup>30</sup> Puppa 81.

<sup>31</sup> Renate Matthaei, Luigi Pirandello (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1973), p.25.

#### CHAPTER 4

<sup>1</sup> T.K Seung, Semiotics and Thematics in Hermeneutics (Columbia University Press, 1982), p.142. Seung argues that any text conveys "thematic content" either "directly" or "indirectly." These two approaches to conveying meaning coincide with what is being said by direct reference, and what is implicitly understood from the stand point of a deeper message.

<sup>2</sup> Stewans 31-32. Here Stewans is associating "messinscena" with the term director on order to show that the latter creates the former. Once Ciampa assumes the role of director, he creates a distinct performance in which he attributes roles and directs the action towards its conclusion: "Si può pero utilizzare il termine regista anche metaforicamente per designare all'interno della struttura di un testo teatrale il

personaggio che organizza l'avvenimento drammatico, distribuisce o impone agli altri le loro parti.

- <sup>3</sup> Hornby 85.
- <sup>4</sup> Hornby 67.
- <sup>5</sup> Stewans (pp.10-11) maintains that critics deal with the thematic aspects of Pirandello's theatre and narrative writings, and adopt thematic approaches in considering the transformation from play to "novella." She, on the other hand, studies this transformation from the standpoint of technical aspects.
- <sup>6</sup> Anne Paolucci, "From the Mind's Stage to the Theater: Alternating Currents of Dramatic and Narrative Inspiration in the Short Stories and One-act Plays of Pirandello", Rivista di studi pirandelliani (New York: St John's University, January-April, anno 11. n.1, 1979), p.80.
- <sup>7</sup> Emmanuele Licastro, Luigi Pirandello: Dalle novelle alle commedie (Verona: Fiorini, 1974), p.18.
- <sup>8</sup> Licastro 19.
- <sup>9</sup> Il berretto a sonagli 335-337.
- <sup>10</sup> Il berretto a sonagli 374.
- <sup>11</sup> Il berretto a sonagli 373.
- <sup>12</sup> Il berretto a sonagli 381-382.
- <sup>13</sup> Jorn Moestrup, The Structural Patterns of Pirandello's Work (Odense: Odense University Press, 1972), p.103.
- <sup>14</sup> Il berretto a sonagli 376.
- <sup>15</sup> Il berretto a sonagli 376.
- <sup>16</sup> La verità 641.
- <sup>17</sup> Il berretto a sonagli 377.
- <sup>18</sup> La verità 641.

<sup>19</sup> Il berretto a sonagli 377.

<sup>20</sup> Il berretto a sonagli 641.

<sup>21</sup> Il berretto a sonagli 379.

<sup>22</sup> Il berretto a sonagli 379.

<sup>23</sup> Caputi 111.

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