

## Luigi Pirandello: A Study in his Plays and Influences

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### Abstract

Modern drama has witnessed a powerful individualistic tendency coming from Italy represented by its significant dramatist Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936). Pirandello's drama is greatly affected by his personal agony. Nevertheless, his plays represent a new tendency in twentieth century drama that depict the condition of the modern man, or more precisely the inner pain of the modern man. The present study is an attempt to trace the Nobel Winner of Arts (1934) and the author of "the Naked Masks" themes, techniques, and contributions through which he added much not only to Italian drama but also to modern drama in general.

Key Words: Agony; Modern Drama; Nobel Prize; Pirandello.

### الملخص

شهدت الدراما الحديثة نزعة فردية قوية قادمة من إيطاليا، متمثلة بالكاتب المسرحي الكبير لويجي بيرانديللو (١٨٦٧-١٩٣٦). وقد تأثرت دراما بيرانديللو بشكل كبير بمعاناته الشخصية ، ومع ذلك فإن مسرحياته تمثل اتجاهاً جديداً في دراما القرن العشرين التي تصور حالة الإنسان الحديث، أو بشكل أدق الألم الداخلي للإنسان الحديث. والدراسة الحالية هي محاولة لتتبع الحائز على جائزة نوبل في الآداب (١٩٣٤) ومؤلف موضوعات وتقنيات ومساهمات "الأقنعة العارية" التي أضاف من خلالها كثيراً ليس فقط إلى الدراما الإيطالية ، ولكن أيضاً إلى الدراما الحديثة بشكل عام. الكلمات المفتاحية: المعاناة ، الدراما الحديثة ، بيرانديللو ، جائزة نوبل

In considering a Pirandellian play, it is necessary to trace the development of Pirandello's literary career as a playwright to understand what kind of drama he intended to introduce. The line of dramatic progress followed by Luigi Pirandello in his plays goes from a somewhat

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external and even picturesque naturalism to an introspective and tormented individualism. The two stages are not separated by a clear-cut line for if one looks beyond the surface, he/she will discover that the early naturalism shows traces of the latter individualism. Both phases reflect the Realistic attitude of Pirandello as he tries to encompass within the scope of his art the basic instinct needs of Man combined with the secret torment of his soul and the mobile life of his intellect. (Vittorini, 1935: 43)

The naturalistic tendency which Pirandello has adopted in his early plays and novels is that of Southern Sicily. The themes of these plays reflect the humble themes of Sicilian life of the Southern part, which differs from the naturalism of the North since the latter has tackled intellectual themes. In his early plays, Pirandello translates the intensity of his emotions and intimacy to Sicily into lively images. (Heffner, 1965: 266) In his short play *In A Sanctuary* (1913), Pirandello relies on a pictorial technique in drawing a tumult of a festival in a city of Southern Italy where people, have been miraculously saved from the wrath of the sea, go to condense their thanks to a prominent image of Christ. The play is full of noises, strength and violence of life. Pirandello transports in this play the vividness of old Italian affairs. A slight episode is inserted on this primitive and colorful festival. Among this crowd, some people are seated at the table to eat a fresh-killed pig. Through this, a discussion is raised about the intelligence of the pig that allows itself to be fattened and then to be slaughtered. This notion of the pig's intelligence is attacked by a young pedagogue who defines his incorruptible faith in the values of life and above all in human dignity against the irony of long fasting and against the ugly brutality of daily experience. Pirandello in this play intends to be ironic to contrast this young teacher with the violent and bloody life surrounds him. This young man can not understand what is the relationship between a religious festival and heavy eating and drinking. What is more ironic is that he tries to find those who slaughtered and prepared the pig. He grows pale and trembles when the men take a fast hold of a huge pig and slaughter it with a long knife. (Vittorini, 1935: 50-1)

The young man is a teacher of humanities who believes of what is a pig and its intellect compared to the divine intelligence of Man. Eventually; he becomes convinced by the idea that the actions of Man are not superior to that of a pig when he looks at the people around him, brutalized by wine and heavy eating. This is the bitter conclusion that Pirandello reaches to by

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the end of the play: he mixes Naturalism with Irony to give his own attitude of life that from the beginning of his literary career to study and analyze very closely. (Cambon, 1972:4)

Through the primitive people and passions in this play and mostly in all Pirandello's plays such as *Liola* (1916), *Limes of Sicily* (1920), and *the Man with Flower in his Mouth* (1923), Pirandello places himself before the odd figures that he noticed and lived in old Sicily, describing their outward characteristics and wore a slight dramatic action on them. In *Liola*, for instance, there is no sense of the author's presence in the elementary and sensuality of the play nor in the sketches which reveal charming but external naturalism. The most essential matter in this stage of Pirandellian Naturalism is the way Pirandello often encloses big problems in ordinary people, with the result that they are too small for the task that he assigns to them.

After this objective attitude towards reality, shown in the plays of Sicilian Naturalism, Pirandello's mind flashed irrational thoughts and his heart was agitated by a feeling of a powerless revolt. His writings started thus to give space to that tormented inner life that weaves inside him to the extent he envied the mad man who can shout of what he wants. Of course, no one can deny the continuative miseries in the dramatist's life at that time represented by his wife's madness, his son's death, his daughter's attempt of suicide. Add to this the slips he faced in his literary career, the matter that led him to a lurid life of hopelessness. (Styan, 1981: 78) Because of such torment, Pirandello was able to learn the comforting power of illusion which is according to him represents reality. This power of illusion appears in a mood that he describes as "humorous" or "grotesque"; Humour (as he declares in his essay "*On Humour*" (1908) is the feeling of contrast determined by the potential clash of experience and thought. Ironically, humor provides Pirandello with the ability to laugh at sadness, at misconceptions in life, or more particularly, at life repeated disappointments and absurdities just to have the ability to "accommodate with life". Add to this the fact that Pirandello has represented any individual lived in Europe through a horrible century that is the twentieth century. Thus, Pirandello's "philosophy springs from deep personal experience...he worked on picturing the drama of humanity as he sees it and feels it. His characters attempt to fulfill their self seeking roles but they are defeated by life itself that's why, in appearance they smile but grieving in reality" (Heffner, 1965:271). According to Pirandello if the humourist laughs, there is a vein of grieve in his laughter.

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This philosophy of humour is directly applied in Pirandello's most famous and most known play *Six Characters in Search for an Author* (1921). The conflict in this play is highly melodramatic and sensational, dealing life, art, and illusion from a typically Pirandellian point of view. Agreeing with Shakespeare, Pirandello views life as theatrical by making the stage dramatizes itself. In other words, Pirandello believes that stage fiction sometimes can have a higher degree of reality than ordinary existence and this is the Pirandellian Metafiction. (Williams, 1964: 206-9)

The story the six characters interrelate in this play is a strange mixture of despair and shame, that is the six characters form a family, the Father, the Mother, the Stepdaughter, the Son, the Boy and the Child. They have taken a life of their own because their failed to complete the story. They interrupt a rehearsal of a Pirandellian play and insist on playing out their life. The comic aspect of the play is that these characters have independent existence. Apart from their author, they demand to act out their fragmentary story and argue with real human being (Cambon, 1972: 6):

“The Father (coming forward a little, followed by the others who seem embarrassed). As a matter of fact . . . we have come here in search of an author . . .  
 The Manager (half angry, half amazed). An author?  
 What author?  
 The Father. Any author, sir.  
 The Manager. But there's no author here. We are not rehearsing a new piece.  
 The Step-Daughter (vivaciously) . So much the better, so much the better! We can be your new piece.  
 .....  
 The Father. No, for Heaven's sake, what are you saying?  
 We bring you a drama, sir. (Pirandello, *Six Characters*, 1921:Act 1: n.p.)

On the surface, it seems to be a drama of a divided family which includes a woman (the Mother) who first lived with her husband (the Father) by whom she had a son. Then she encountered with another man and thus had three other children by him. Curiosity of the theater company arises as they know that all misfortunes of this family are caused by the tortuous mental thinking of the Father who lacks the fluidity of feelings and sincerity of purpose that bring about a quiet life. He informs that he has always "aspiration for certain moral character

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in life"(Act 1: n.p.). This moral aspiration causes him to marry a woman rather less intellectual than him, but she is the personification of goodness and plainness and lives devoted for her home and son. The Father, obeying his customary moral aspiration, takes the child from her and sends him away to be raised by a peasant in order to develop strong contact with mother earth. In their wealthy house, the Father's secretary seems to be a silent shadow just like a wife. Both (even without the thought of evil) understand each other because they are kindred souls. The Father, affected again by his moral sense, makes himself believe that his wife cannot be happy with him due to the way he assess his subjective intellect as completely superior to her spontaneous mind. He feels his wife to be the real mate of his secretary. He provides a home for the two to live together. (Tilgher, 1972: 30-31)

Pirandello's trick of reality and illusion starts here. The Father is determined by the sense of real sentiment or his "tortuous reasoning". The question that should be raised at this particular point is "how can this man who says that he feels sorry for his wife's loneliness but he sends her away with his secretary as the best solution instead of comforting such loneliness? Does he mix truths, lies, and believes them all true? (Brustein, 1972: 129) He has urged his wife to go and live with his secretary, continuously watching over her in a sense of responsibility. He starts to be interested in the new family; his new wife and her three children. He considers them to be his. The crisis in his life occurs when the family suddenly disappears from the town. They do not come back until after the secretary's death. The Father's torment and loneliness becomes greater. His son is but a stranger. He begins to suffer the products of his philosophies of human acts as Pirandello declares throughout the voice of the Step-daughter (Ibid: 130)

“...Oh, all these intellectual complications make me sick, disgust me -- all this philosophy that uncovers the beast in man, and then seeks to save him, excuse him . . . I can't stand it, sir. When a man seeks to "simplify" life bestially, throwing aside every relic of humanity, every chaste aspiration, every pure feeling, all sense of ideality, duty, modesty, shame . . . then nothing is more revolting and nauseous than a certain kind of remorse -- crocodiles' tears, that's what it is”. (Act I: n.p.)

Several years later, the father visits a bawdy house where he finds himself face to face with the stepdaughter whom he does not recognize. The sudden arrival of the mother saves them from the greater disgrace. After the identification stamps their faces and hearts with

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burning shame, the father takes the new family to his house and there they live under an evil spell, in a light of tragic exasperation. (Vittorini, 1935: 296)

Now each member of the family has his own tragedy and all their tragedies form one tragedy. The father refuses to have his life caught in that shameful moment. It seems as if his whole life depends on that act. He protests in vain the Stepdaughter who in turn sees in him the cause of all her shame and misfortunes. The adolescent is lost in that tormented life. The Son sees in them all as intruders. He looks at them in cold and indifferent eyes especially his mother whom he believes that she belongs to another man because of his father's liberty. The mother's tragedy is that of any mother who feels estranged from her son. All this shame and misfortune is summarized in that moment in which the father and the step-daughter find themselves face to face as a man and woman; he a man approaching sixty and she is a young eighteen years old. Now, the characters are gathered in a tragic huddle around that scene. This scene is a flame kept alive by hatred, rebellion and remorse. Yet, it is still absurd as Hubert C. Heffner views it:

“The elder son of the mother and the first husband is surely in this absurd and supercilious disdain of the mother and her second family entirely comic, even absurd. The elder daughter, with all her loathing of the actions that fate has thrust upon her, is nevertheless absurdly shrill in her desires to tell her story and to bring remorse to the father. Even the mother, pathetic as she is made, has a large mixture of absurdity in her character especially in her reaction to the elder son.” (Heffner, 1965: 255)

All six characters put in such absurd situation as a result of the absurd intellectual thinking of the father. It is the discrepancy between the levels of artifice. The action of the play it to take the stage. The analysis of the play is opened to many questions about the creation of the artist: what is the type of reality in art? And what reality is there in life? Does art differ from life and how much illusion differs from reality? The father cries at the Manger when the latter talks about reality (Dashwood, 2017: 14):

“The Manager. But everyone knows it can change. It is always changing, the same as anyone else's.  
The Father [with a cry]. No, sir, not ours! Look here! That is the very difference! Our reality doesn't change: it can't change! It can't be other than what it is, because it is already fixed for ever. It's terrible. Ours is an immutable reality which should make you shudder when you approach us if you are really conscious of the

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fact that your reality is a mere transitory and fleeting illusion, taking this form today and that tomorrow, according to the conditions, according to your will, your sentiments, which in turn are controlled by an intellect that shows them to you today in one manner and tomorrow... who knows how?... Illusions of reality represented in this fatuous comedy of life that never ends, nor can ever end! Because if tomorrow it were to end... then why, all would be finished." (Act III: n.p.)

Through the character of the Father, Pirandello tackles an essential problem; if the reality of the character is an illusion, any reality will turn out to be an illusion once the animating feeling change. The one who is born a character then has more life than the reality of man. Man is changing everyday, born and die, whereas the fictional character has his own incorruptible life as being eternally fixed in his unchangeable essential traits. Once the character is created, he separates himself from his author, lives by his own self and forces his own will on the author who in turn must follow and obey his character and to do as he pleases. As a result, this character will be more realistic than his creator. The problem of the illusion and reality shown in this play is the problem of the whole humanity that take its part in the comedy of illusion, which will never be finished. (Tilgher, 1972: 23)

Another essential theme that Pirandello tackles in this play as well as in all other plays is the problem of identity. Pirandello published all his plays in one collective title *The Naked Masks*. This title is programmatic since Pirandello has been obsessed with the problem of identity. He is struck by the fact that one is born a plant, a beast, or man by mere chance and he is fatally engaged in that form for the span of one's earthly existence. The only difference between Man and beast is that Man cannot entrust himself to instinct with the same subconscious and happy abandonment as lower beings can. Once Man yields to instinct, sets in motions of the intellect which have no value at all anymore from Pirandello's point of view:

"The Father: I seem to be philosophizing only for those who do not think what they feel, because they blind themselves with their own sentiment. I know that for many people this self-blinding seems much more "human"; but the contrary is really true. For man never reasons so much and becomes so introspective as when he suffers; since he is anxious to get at the cause of his sufferings, to learn who has produced them, and whether it is just or unjust that he should have to bear them. On the other hand, when he is happy, he takes his happiness as it comes and doesn't analyze it, just as if happiness were his right. The animals suffer without reasoning about their

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sufferings. But take the case of a man who suffers and begins to reason about it. Oh no! it can't be allowed! Let him suffer like an animal, and then -- ah yet, he is "human"!

The Manager. Look here! Look here! You're off again, philosophizing worse than ever." (Act III)

Pirandello's drama is that of ideas based on a single underlying concept that life is beyond reason and is only reflected through Man's spontaneous actions or instincts. Man is endowed with reason that distinguishes him from all other creatures in nature. Man lives and feels himself alive, whereas other beings of nature just live purely and simply. Man's life is full of complications, consciousness, and thoughts. It is the inner feeling of life that lies in the first cause of human misery. As such, he uses reason to fix his dilemmas. In order to escape from this horrible and complicated condition, Pirandello suggests humour. To give the feeling of the opposite, to laugh in grief at illusion that is more real than reality itself. (Brustein, 1972:107)

The same theme, which is related to the duality between reality and illusion, mask and truth, and life and form, reappears in Pirandello's *Enrico IV* (*Henry IV* 1922). The story of Henry is so strange. One day, twenty years ago, during a masquerade in which Henry has been in disguise as the German Emperor of the Eleventh Century was struck by his rival. He fell from the horse striking the back of his head on the pavement and lost conscious. Upon waking up, he declared himself Henry IV. (Young, : 13) Henry's wealthy sister places him in a castle where everything is arranged to make his illusion true. People wear masks and disguise in historical customs to meet Henry. Twelve years after this accident, Henry recovers his sanity but he chooses to continue in his illusionary life. He goes on living inside his illusionary world. (Kareem, 2008: 16)

For twenty years, Henry lives protected from the outside world. Eventually, his beloved and rival decide to visit him in an attempt to recover his senses (which he already restored eight years ago). The reason of his pain appears in front of him out of a sudden. Seeing his rival, Belcredi, and his beloved, Dona Matilda, together increases despair and deep hatred: "Life flows away from us and the man of yesterday stands before us men of today immobilized in such hideous form that we cannot bear to look at" (Pirandello, 1922: Act I)

### The "Pirandellian Influence" on Modern Drama



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Many literary critics almost agree that the chief contribution of Pirandello lies in his Philosophy of the nature of Man with the conception of reality around him. This Pirandellian way of thinking has a tremendous impact on Modern Drama in general and French drama in particular. This is attributed to the way that Pirandello's plays emphasize a new tendency that suits the modern spirit.

Joseph Wood Krutch places Pirandello among the chief four or five modern dramatists and among the foremost contributors to Modernism because his plays are dealing with the desolation of the age and its negative effect on Man. All Pirandello's characters are mirrors of what a modern man thinks himself and the world around him to be. Understanding Pirandello's characterization is not important only to understand the dramatist's plays but it is also important to understand his contribution to the concept of Modern thought and Modern literature.

Due to the effect of science and different philosophies and tendencies that emerged in Modern age; especially the Naturalistic theory of art, Pirandello comes to realize that Man in life represents a variety of roles. The role that is he himself taking and the role imposed on him by others or by the Society that attempts to imprison this man in its fictitious concepts. Pirandello views that all social institutions and systems of thought; religion, law, science, philosophy, and even language, all are means by which society creates masks, trying to catch the sly face of Man, fixing him in that fictitious role and hence, the difference between illusion and reality ebbs. Sometimes both illusion and reality are to be one unit when man lives in that world of illusion as a refugee from the bitter reality. (Heffner, 1965: 261).

This theme has influenced many world stages and one of which is the French stage. Jean Anouilh (1910-1987), the French leading playwright, is the one who reflects most clearly the influence of Pirandello on French drama. Anouilh's characters, just like Pirandello's, are engaged in the search for an escape from life's sordidness. They choose illusion as the perfect solution for their problems. Moreover, the Pirandellian influence on Anouilh extends to the multiplicity of personality in the pattern of *Henry IV*. In Anouilh's play *Le Voyageur Sans Bagage (The Baggageless Traveler)* (1937), the hero Gaston – Jacques suffers Amnesia (which seems a convenient means to study the multiplicity of man's personality). In his recovery, Gaston reaches precisely that moment in his life when his past reappears in direct opposition to his new self. The grown Gaston is completely different from the young Jacques

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who disappears in war. The difference between them is not an ordinary one. It is very much similar to the difference between two stages of Man's life or the difference between two people. The young Jacques has committed horrible deeds in the past such as cheating, stealing, lyric, crippling his best friend, and stealing his brother's wife. Now, the past is unavailable in the view of Gaston gentle nature as a grown man. He reaches a difficult decision of deserting his family and isolating himself in order to be true to himself as now he is. (Bishop, 1960: 43-44) Like Henry IV, Gaston –Jacques has totally two different personalities. In both cases, the split happens as a result to Amnesia. Anouilh's basic concept of his characters Gaston is typically Pirandellian but the difference between the two is the refusal of Henry IV to accept his reality, whereas Gaston accepts his past in satisfactory resolution by accepting his new role in life. The main problem for Gaston is not madness or outside world but rather it is himself what he cannot stand to be.

Pirandello's Mask Motif reappears in Anouilh's *Antigone* (1942), a version of Sophocles classical drama *Antigone*. Antigone is a woman who appears to the world in two contradictory manners; her instinctive love for life and her non-surrender drives to justice even though the latter necessarily involves her death and the destruction of her city. She is bending on her self-destruction but the mask of participation in life is not solid enough to ward off her basic nihilism. Antigone epitomizes what Anouilh has succeeded in capturing so well the heroine of his drama, the tragic flaw. The tragic flaw is not a personality trait exploited by an impassionate fatality. It is inherent in the personality structure through which she proves to be stronger than her antagonist is:

**“Creon:** Be happy. Life flows like water, and you young people let it run away through your fingers. Shut your hands; hold on to it, Antigone. Life is not what you think it is. Life is a child playing around your feet, a tool you hold firmly in your grip, a bench you sit down upon in the evening, in your garden. People will tell you that that's not life, that life is something else. They will tell you that because they need your strength and your fire, and they will want to make use of you...Life is nothing more than the happiness that you get out of it...

**Antigone:** What kind of happiness do you foresee for me? Paint me the picture of your happy Antigone. What are the unimportant little sins that I shall have to commit before I am allowed to sink my teeth into life and tear happiness from it? Tell me: to whom shall I have to lie? Upon whom must I sell myself? Whom do you want me to leave dying, while I turn away my eyes?” (Anouilh, *Antigone*: p. 13)

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Another Pirandellian theme that Anouilh has tackled in his plays is the problem of relativity to truth, which is mostly brought to stage through the situations of peoples' private worlds, the same theme that Pirandello has adopted. The only difference between Pirandello and Anouilh is that the former has shown this theme through dark pessimism and outrageous tone against Man's stupidity. Whereas the latter has elaborated the same theme through sadness and savage irony to show that happiness, at its best rate, is very difficult to be attained, and that most human beings move in a mutual exclusive sphere. In his play *Ardele ou la Marguerite* (*Ardele or Marguerite*) (1948), for instance, Anouilh deals with the theme of illusion and reality. The play deals with generals' households living in pretense. The marriages in Ardele's family are pretenses. The husbands and wives lack the courage to confess that there is no longer love between them. All of them are concerned with their lovers and mistresses, but they pretend to others that they love each other and that they have happy marriages. They all try to force their illusions on Ardele, the hunchback sister who falls in love with hunchback tutor. The family, in a condition of confusion, does not recognize Ardele's true love, aware only that the tutor's social position does not allow any contact to Ardele. Thus, their attempts to break up the couple's Romance continue until they drive the deformed couple to commit suicide. The children in this play, of the two families, are also victims of their parents. They are tortured by the bad examples of family relationships that are exposed to them. They suffer from the heavy and painful products of respecting appearances and the way they hide their ill relations and scandals from the world surrounding them. (Bishop, 1972: 47)

Anouilh's theatre is thus thoroughly linked to that of Pirandello since both works range from serious drama to absurd farce. Meaning, both make balance between farce and seriousness, a style of writing that is initiated by Pirandello and adopted by Anouilh. Anouilh in turn does not copy Pirandello blindly; rather the French flavor is so obvious and evident in his works the matter which has made of him a prominent figure among the French dramatists. (Ibid, 47-8)

Pirandellian drama has also a significant impact on Existential drama. Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), an acknowledged leader of Existential Theater is another prominent figure who was deeply affected by Pirandello. Sartre has left no doubt of what he considers the

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Pirandellian influence on Modern drama in general and French drama in particular. Sartre's plays are direct attacks to all pretense in human behaviour that turns Man away from the full acceptance of his responsibilities. This concept resembles Pirandello's concerning the way pretense might be destructive when it harms other people. Sartre's play *Huis Clos (No Exit)* (1944) is an imitation of Pirandello's concept of illusion. The heroine, Inez, is the only unholy character in the play who can see clearly her own and others' realities. She scolds the other two characters Gracin and Estelle until all their illusions are unmasked. Inez possess the keen insight and sharp tongue required to make Gracin and Estelle realize what they really are and what they have done because both hide a hideous reality behind the pretense of respectability. Inez leaves off the illusion that life is still available in the infernal Second Emperor drawing room. She faces them both that their visions on earth are fading away. Now they have to stay together forever, and the absurdity of their co-existence is complete because they are dead. It is no use even if they killed each other. The three characters have no choice but to accept their reality. (Bentley, 1946: 200-2)

“INEZ: Yes, I see. Look here! What' s the point of play-acting, trying to throw dust in each other's eyes? We're all tarred with the same brush.

ESTELLE: How dare you!

INEZ: Yes, we are criminals-- murderers-- all three of us. We're in hell, my pets; they never make mistakes, and people aren't damned for nothing.

ESTELLE: Stop! For heaven's sake--

INEZ: In hell! Damned souls-- that's us, all three!

ESTELLE: Keep quiet! I forbid you to use such disgusting words.

INEZ: A damned soul-- that's you, my little plaster saint. And ditto our friend there, the noble pacifist. We've had our hour of pleasure, haven't we? There have been people who burned their lives out for our sakes-- and we chuckled over it. So now we have to pay the reckoning”. (Sartre, *No Exit* , 1944: 16)

The major theme of this one act play is that illusion should be replaced by reality since it causes harm for other people. Pirandello has tackled this theme in *Six Characters in Search for an Author*. Gracin and the father express the same objection for being judged based on one act. The anguished situation of tormented spirits reflected in Pirandello's *Six Characters* is common to Sartre's plays. Sartre's heroes realize themselves the same as Pirandello's partially constructed characters. Sartre's resistant fighters are placed in a situation of deep stress and

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torture. The moment of revealing the truth is bitter whether for heroes or for cowards. They find themselves deprived of true human emotions, which is typically the Pirandellian method. Thomas Bishop comments on this connection between Pirandello and Sartre saying: "Sartre shares two elements with Pirandello: the absurdity both men discern in life and the frequent repetition of illusion-reality theme" (Bishop, 1960: 53)

Pirandello's tragic farces that mix reality and illusion are very often seen in the forerunners of the Theatre of the Absurd. Pirandello has portrayed absurdity in personal terms. That is why there is a definite bond between Pirandello's absurdism of Samuel Beckett (1906- 1989), the Avant guard of Absurdism. Beckett, along with all absurd dramatists, presents the theme of purposelessness of Man's condition in this universe. This concept has deep roots in Pirandello's philosophy:

"Beckett was certainly not the first playwright to rupture realist conventions or to highlight the fictive nature of the theatre. As early as the twenties, Luigi Pirandello was writing plays that eschewed the comforts of illusion or the willing suspension of disbelief, with for instance supposed audience members walking onto stage and participating in the action". (Macdonald, 2006: 27)

The description of absurdity as the dominated aspects in life in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1949) is so tremendous and heart rendering because it is seen in a profoundly human light tempered with the compassion for the victims are caught in its web. Vladimir and Estragon represent human in general. They are trying to survive the agony of waiting , may e to find a motivation for their existence as Estragon says: "We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist?" (Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, Act Two: 65) Their pathetic attempts to destroy each other in their never ending process of waiting for salvation are only means to create an illusion that they really exist:

"After all, Godot gives Estragon and Vladimir a sense of direction and purpose in their lives (however misplaced), in a manner analogous to religious belief. Written in the shadow of the Second World War, God/Godot seems to have deserted a world mutilated by barbarism, mass destruction and genocide. His absence has left a hole which unavailing desire and expectation vainly try to fill". (Ibid, 29)

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The hope for discovering the identity of Godot is a matter of repeated disappointments. Any attempt to reach to a clear and definite interpretation to know the identity of Godot is something impossible since it is unknown for Beckett himself. (Bishop, 1972: 56)

Arthur Adamov (1908-1970), a major Absurdist figure, reduces absurdity to the every day life of ordinary people. The Pirandellian influence upon Adamov can be seen in the ideas that Adamov has adopted; life is a mere illusion and it is the heritage of absurdity. Adamov depicts the anguish and senseless terror of the police-state age. His pessimism is the product of his belief that the life of any individual is only the illusion of reason until total absurdity destroys it. (Ibid: 56-7)

In his play *L'Invasion (the Invasion, 1950)*, Adamov exposes the theme of inability to attain truth in this world and the hopeless search for meaning in it. Adamov portrays in this play real characters in real human relationships. The play is about a family consists of lonely individuals who are unable to communicate with each other. The only link between them is the loyalty to a dead hero; a writer who has left masses of unfinished papers and manuscripts full of intrusions to the life of his family and friends. Those people are thus struggling to understand and clarify these manuscripts. Gradually, every individual finds different interpretations for each word until they reach a condition of uncertainty of the real meaning of the dead writer. The most striking feature of the play is the unreality of the dead hero. His message turns simply to be nothing or meaningless to emphasize the fact that it is impossible to determine the truth. Again, the Pirandellian theme of illusion and reality that is elaborated by Adamov. (Esslin, 1968: 99-100)

Jean Genet (1910-1986), another Absurdist playwright, has also adopted Pirandello's Drama of Mirrors. Pirandello comments on this type of drama as:

“An exaggerated view of a situation that exists in many of my plays,...if we present ourselves to others as artificial constructions in relation to what we really are, it is logical that upon looking at ourselves in a mirror, we see our falseness reflected there...that is all that I mean by placing my characters before a mirror and make them say that they would like to spit at themselves.” (Cited in Vittorini, 1935: 370)

Genet's ritual argument on stage is a form of a Pirandellian Theatre game. The main device for him is to involve the audience in the illusionary action of the play. Genet has explored the ways of reflecting and implicating his audience through using the stage as a

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mirror where social roles can be played, interchanged, and mocked. Following Pirandello, Genet's theatricality does not use the stage to give a picture of life but to show that life is itself an illusion as the theatre stage. (Styan, 1981: 147-150)

In his play *The Balcony* (1957), Genet presents "the house of illusion" on stage which is itself a conscious stage of a brothel where the performances of the play take place. Outside this illusionary world and in the real world there is a social revolution that is taking place. The revolutionaries have adopted one of the brothel girls as their symbolic figure for freedom. Gradually, the power structure of the society is seen to be based on fantasies that are outrageous as those in the brothel. Those who are in the brothel become images of familiar social institution. As a result, the society itself is seen as another house of illusion:

"The Chief of Police (Forcefully): My image is growing bigger and bigger. It's becoming colossal. Everything around me repeats and reflects it. And you've never seen it represented in this place?"

Irma: In any case, even if it were celebrated here, I wouldn't see anything. The ceremonies are secret

The Chief of Police: You liar. You've got secret peep-holes in every wall. Every partition, every mirror, is rigged. In one place, you can hear the sighs, in another the echo of the moans. You don't need me to tell you that brothel tricks are mainly mirror tricks. (Very sadly) Nobody yet! But I'll make my image detach itself from me. I'll make it penetrate into your studios, force its way in, reflect and multiply itself. Irma, my function weighs me down. Here, it will appear to me in the blazing light of pleasure and death. (Musingly) Of death.

Irma: You must keep killing, my dear George.

The Chief of Police: I do what I can, I assure you. People fear me more and more." (Genet, 1957: Sce. Five, p. 48)

Genet mixes reality with illusion. Man can play different roles in his life and not sticking to one role. Genet after all intends to make the stage a reflection of the pretense of his audience. Through setting rituals and ceremonies on stage, the audience are to be shocked by the sharp contrasts. The American director Herbert Blau views Genet's contribution to the theatre that: "Genet gives us the most direct sensation of the experience of modern drama that has been declining since the more rationalistic dualities of Pirandello: that of rationality of illusion" (Styan, 1981: 155-6)

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Pirandello in his preface to six characters describes fantasy as the source of his inspiration. Though he declared that he hated symbolic, his plays prove that he is a symbolist in his method of writing. He starts with an appropriate images on stage. Those images have the ability to remain active and free, combined to create a harmonious combination of fantastic and realistic products. This is the essence of Pirandello's works and the message that he has tried to transform for his audience. Pirandello was unaware that his dramatic influence is going to extend to affect Modern Drama whether in theme or in technique.

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