**Question #4**

*Which image(s) of the “Author” can be found in the play? (Not just of the absent author of the Characters, but also the role of authors / the authorial function in general)*

**Reading Notes**

Which image(s) of the “Author” can be found in the play? (Not just of the absent author of the Characters, but also the role of authors / the authorial function in general)

* Reference to Pirandello, page 8 (Author of *The Rules of the Game)…* Described as someone who puts on hard to understand plays (“And if you can understand them you must be very clever”)
* Characters looking for author on page 11… But Author only comes for new plays (suggesting he is absent most of the time possibly).. Also, Father seem almost helpless for a second without “Author”
* Father’s comments about truth and reality page 12
* Page 12… New writers (authors) have given them uninteresting works
* Author creates life, though unfinished through neglect (14)
* Page 28, “it was him” 🡪 is this a reference to the author?
* Author as dramatist
* Son has not been fully developed dramatically (page 31)
* “he” page 32… Author?
* Father talks to Producer about becoming Author… Author is imaginative (33)
* Authors are never satisfied (54)
* “[Authors!] They’re never satisfied”:
* The relationship between Author and Producer in Pirandello’s Six Characters in Search of an Author
* Jestrovic, Silvija. *Performances of Authorial Presence and Absence: The Author Dies Hard*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

🡪 “Pirandello’s Six Characters in Search of an Author depicts the tensions behind having various authorial presences and potentials; the playwright, the director, and the actors all try to author the six characters in search of their author, and in a one way or another they all fail” (Jestrovic 17).

🡪 “Pirandello […] [was] right: the author is a search, a process of finding clues in the meta layers of narrative and theatricality. In short, detective work. The notion of disguise, in a theatrical sense, is at the heart of this search. The author’s presence and elusiveness both depend on it, be it through hints planted and hidden in his characters’ lines, through theatrical costumes and impersonations, or through the idea of a mask that the somewhat generic expression in his portraits suggests” (Jestrovic 15).

* SECOND ARTICLE

🡪 “It has also been argued that Pirandello's attack on theatre in ‘Illustratori, attori e traduttori' was triggered by the fact that his early theatrical works had all been turned down by producers and directors, and that his disposition towards the theatre was a personal vendetta against the theatrical entourage that had refused to stage his plays. It is important to note, however, that even in 1925, after he had received international acclaim, he reiterated everything he had written in ‘Illustratori, attori e traduttori.' While in Paris for the staging of *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* [*Six Characters in Search of an Author*, 1921], in an interview given to the daily newspaper *Le Temps*, he explained that he still believed that the staging of a play is always a betrayal of the original – that is, of the text as the author conceived it – and that the *mise en scene* is not in itself a work of art. What is extremely startling is that Pirandello, from 1916 onwards, had devoted practically his entire artistic production to the theatre and he would continue to do so until his death” (Santeramo 39-40).

🡪“As a matter of fact, at the beginning of this century, all the various theories of the stage investigate and reveal the contrast between three aesthetic domains: the artistic elaboration of the text by the author, the interpretation of the director, and the interpretation of the actor” (Santeramo 40).

🡪“The Characters are in search of a universal truth which no longer exists, a truth that even the author is unable to assert” (Santeramo 42).

🡪”In fact, the Characters are not able to find the author they are looking for – an author in the etymological sense of the word: authority. Thus their play is not performed. What is instead are their useless attempts to find a producer of such an unequivocal and definite text. When the capocomico asks the Father where the script is, the answer is ‘E in noi, signore. II dramma e in noi’’ [It is in us, Sir. The drama is in us]. The Father, from his first appearance, insistently attempts to become simultaneously character, actor, and, most importantly, author of what he believes to be the true play. He strives to impose his narrative account of what happened and is, in this, opposed by everybody else in the play: the other five Characters, the actors who were rehearsing I/ giuoco delle parti, the stage director, and most importantly, Pirandello himself, the author of *Sei personaggi in cerca d’autore*. According to the Sicilian playwright, not only can the author no longer be *auctor*, but also, the existence of any *auctor* whatsoever has been forfeited as the unity of interpretation has collapsed. In this play the characters’ independence and autonomy from the writer and the text are absolute, since Pirandello is aware that a single source for the creation of signification cannot portray reality” (Santeramo 45-46).

READING NOTES:

* “Historical writers are broadly storytellers, who tell a tale for the sheer delight of telling it and who ask no more of a reader than that they engross themselves in the characterization, setting, action and unfolding events of that one plot. Pirandello, however, belongs to the ‘philosophical category’, that is, he stands with those writers who ‘feel a more profound spiritual need’ and who will only relate characters, events, affairs which have been ‘soaked, so to speak, in a particular sense of life and acquire from it a universal value’ (p. 206). The term ‘philosophical’ can be misleading, since Pirandello emphasizes that he has no sympathy for symbolism or allegory, where the unfolding storyline relies on an image deliberately devised to point to a moral or to illustrate a previously held conviction. Orwell’s Animal Farm, for example, would have drawn Pirandello’s strictures on this score. In Pirandello’s view, philosophical writing should ‘seek in an image, which must remain alive and free throughout, a meaning to give it value’. The ‘freedom and life’ are vital, and he wrote later in the same Preface that ‘nothing in this play exists as given and preconceived. Everything is in the making’ (p. 215). Crucially for him, he could not detect meaning in the story of the six characters. The light they presented to him seemed to him no more than a dramatic tale, fit as such for ‘historical’ writers, perhaps even appealing to realist writers, but not to post¬ realist or ‘philosophical’ Pirandello. For that reason, he left the story unwritten, and denied the characters the level of life which was their due.”
* “The six characters are playthings in the hands of their God, the author who creates them then cuts them adrift, yet the Father insists that they are Gullivers compared to the human beings. The Father, with his awareness of the fragility of the life of human beings, is the figure who most strongly embodies the humorist vision, and it is he too who appeals most strongly for pity and understanding of his own predicament, even if the others, the victims of his conduct, have a stronger claim to it. Cruelty and the plea for compassion are continually offset one against the other. The laughter of the actors is answered by the tears of the characters.”
* “If Pirandello failed to find in the characters’ story the ‘universal value’ he required of a work of theatre, he did nonetheless, as he writes in the Preface, locate that value in their quest for an author and hence for life, and in their ability as a group to ‘express as their own living passion’ the questions which had tormented him, questions on Life and Form, on multiple personality and on communication.”
* (NOTE 14): *Yes, that’s right, we’ve been neglected.* ..: the Father is still the leading spokesperson for the six characters, and in this, the first of his philosophical monologues, he expatiates on the superiority of characters over human beings, since characters can never die
* (NOTE 15): *It’s in us, sir*: the characters are the play, and the play is the only life they can have, which explains their desperation to find an author to give them the prospect of living that life.
* (NOTE 19): *comfort in a word:* in a strange way, the Father is in agreement, but in his view words are indispensable for finding relief from unease of spirit. On this point, communication between the family is strained, as is all communication between human beings. As Pirandello had explained in his Preface, every human being uses words which refer to his own experience but these may not concur with the experience of others using identical terms
* (NOTE 31): *not fully developed dramatically:* Pirandello writes in the Preface that the Son ‘denies the drama which makes him a character’, and ‘lives solely as a “character in search of an author” ’ (p. 216). He strives to distance himself from the other members of his family.
* (NOTE 35): *That woman is me?*: the Stepdaughter is voicing the same incredulity that the Father had just’ expressed with his line – ‘what do you mean, a rehearsal?’ Theatre and life clash, but the Stepdaughter is also expressing doubts Pirandello had expressed in 1908 in his essay ‘Illustrators, Actors and Translators’. ‘No matter how much an actor tries to enter into the author’s intentions, it will be hard for him to succeed in seeing as the author saw, in feeling as the author felt and in transferring on to a stage as the author would have wished’ (Basnett and Torch, p. 27). The Father and Stepdaughter are here in the place of the author, but the former is disconcerted to find that their life is about to be transferred into another medium by others, whatever their skills, and the latter simply baffled at the disparity between her and the actress who would play her. The point will be repeated by both as the actors start to perform. The actors are not inadequate as actors, but they are an intrusion to the main business of portraying an author’s vision to his public.

However, with the intrusion of the Characters, this role is fundamentally obfuscated. By being persuaded to simultaneously “[take] on the authorial task of completing [the Characters] stories” (Jestrovic 12), the Producer is looked to for both textual closure and theatrical direction, muddling the relationship (and independence) between the text and the stage.

As Farrell notes, the Producer’s “account of the nature and appeal of theatre and acting is deeply felt and well turned” (Ixvii); a sentiment clearly displayed in his – comic yet thoughtful – interpretation of the cook’s hat.

Though the Father desperately believes anyone can be an author, the Producer’s journey shows a lack of desire for authorship as the Characters see it, which results in their chaotic unfinishing.

“what is a lived scene for [the Characters] is in the Producer’s eyes only the provisional run-through of a fiction” (Farrell xviii).

The Father says to the Producer,

*Question 3: How is the Producer (Capocomico) represented? Which evolution is there in his reactions to the Characters’ story, and how do the Characters react to his comments and interventions? You may choose one (or a couple of) the quotes from the Characters or Producer that seem(s) more relevant to you.*

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**Producer-Author? Examining the Producer’s Authorial Motivations in Pirandello’s *Six Characters in Search of an Author***

I. INTRODUCTION

In the early 20th century, the image of the producer (*capocomico)* as a key figure of authority on the stage who functioned separately from the actors was new for the Italian theatre.[[1]](#footnote-1) While previous *capocomici* were the “lead actor,”[[2]](#footnote-2) this new producer became an “organising spirit and interpreter behind the entire production” who “overs[aw] rehearsal and the production process.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Out of this, critics such as Luigi Pirandello who closely examined the relationship between a script and its performance noticed an evolving tension in interpretation: there was “theatre as spectacle” (lead by the producer) versus “theatre as dramatic text” (lead by the author).[[4]](#footnote-4) In *Six Characters in Search of an Author,* Pirandello brings this tension to the forefront by dramatizing the question of whether or not a producer can objectively “[take] on the authorial task of completing [the Characters’] stories.”[[5]](#footnote-5) In this essay, I examine how the Producer’s proclivity for theatrical performances influences his perception of authorship, jeopardizing any chances of finishing or *translating[[6]](#footnote-6)* the Character’s incomplete text. In my view, is it this inclination for the stage that leads to his failure as a Producer-Author.

II. THE PRODUCER AS TRANSLATOR

Before the Characters arrive, the Producer displays a strong predilection for the stage by preparing *The Rules of the Game* for performance. At the rehearsal, he demonstrates a “respect for the integrity of the author’s script”[[7]](#footnote-7) by refusing to omit minor details, such as the cook’s hat. This commitment to textual absoluteness represents a sense of separateness between the text and the *mise en scène*; the author has authority over the text while the Producer has authority of the performance. Importantly, this does not imply a univocal interpretation of the text’s story. As Pirandello says in 'Illustratori, attori, traduttori,’ “No matter how much the actor tries to penetrate into the writer's intentions, he will unlikely be able to see as the writer did, to feel the character as the author did, to realize the character on the stage as the author wanted.”[[8]](#footnote-8) Thus the Producer ultimately is a theatrical *translator*. Using his his stage-based authority, it is his responsibility totransform pre-existing texts into performances according to his *own interpretation.*

III. AUTHORSHIP FOR PERFORMANCE SAKE

Without a completed text, the Producer is incapable of *translating* it to the stage. When the Character’s arrive without their author nor a finished script, their story – as well as any hypothetical performance of it – is fundamentally incomplete and unstable. Out of desperation, the Characters believe anyone can take up the authorial position and plead the Producer for closure. Intimately knowing the traditional structures of separation and authority set up for theatrical stability, the Producer is weary towards this idea at first and dismisses the Characters as interrupters.[[9]](#footnote-9) Interestingly, the only way the Characters are eventually able to convince him to authorially take up their story is by invoking theatrical language. “You’ll see what wonderful scenes will come right out of it!” the Father says; “It’ll be enough to sketch it out simply first and then run through it.”[[10]](#footnote-10) With this in mind, it is my view that the Producer does not actually wish to inherently become an author for authorship’s sake. Instead, taking up the Character’s text should be perceived as a means to an end for him, a solution to the lack of a script for a story he now wishes to *translate* to the stage.

More evidence for the Producer’s lack of tangible interest for authorial labels occurs after a basic (but incomplete) outline of the Character’s story has been written. In preparing to stage a rehearsal of the outline, the Producer quickly dissociates from authorial responsibilities and titles. The Characters who were just warmly invited into his office are now misunderstood as they attempt to express their concerns about representation on the stage. By being more interested in their potential performability, the Producer fails to see them as embodied creations – “What is a lived scene for them is in [his] eyes only the provisional run-through of a fiction.”[[11]](#footnote-11) Simultaneously, the Producer begins to lightly make fun of the Characters and authorship in general by associated them with negatively with pedantry. In regards to their complaints about representation, he says, “Right then. That’s enough of that. […] We’ll [The Producer and Actors] rehearse this later on our own, as we usually do. It’s always a bad idea to have rehearsals *with authors there*! They’re never satisfied.”[[12]](#footnote-12) In the midst of the stage, the Producer returns to the clear dichotomy of text and performance. The Characters are perceived as interrupters again.[[13]](#footnote-13)

IV. CONCLUSION: THE PRODUCER’S VANITY

Because the Producer neglects the authorial responsibilities he promised to take up, the Characters are left “prey to their conflicts.”[[14]](#footnote-14) While the Producer has a clear sense of authority over the stage, he cannot obtain the needed authority over the text; any hopes of textual closure or theatrical performance slowly dissipate. As the younger actor points out, the Producer’s fatal flaw that causes such a demise is his vanity.[[15]](#footnote-15) The Producer wishes to become the Character’s author, but only with the stage in mind. If the Characters’ original author is a “criminal” for abandoning them, the Producer is a “criminal” for approaching their authorship for the sake of performance.[[16]](#footnote-16)

By having the Producer attempt and fail as a Producer-Author, Pirandello brings the tension between text and performance individuality to the forefront. The Producer’s authority belongs to the stage, the author’s in the text, and neither is inherently interchangeable with the other. If the Producer is a *translator* between the text and it performance, the author must be understood as the *translator* between the Character’s and the written text. By assuming he can act as a translator of both realms, the Producer ultimately gives the Character’s a false hope of having their desired closure.

1. See Farrell; See Santeramo [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. (Farrell lxvii). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. (Jestrovic 12), [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Farrell lxvii [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Producer shows a commitment to the stage by asking, “where is your script?” [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)