



Pirandello and Scaribas – The “Paradox” in Their Work

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Received: 29 September 2022 ▪ Revised: 8 November 2022 ▪ Accepted: 26 November 2022

Abstract

In this particular article, a parallel reading of the heroes in Pirandello and Scaribas is done and then the interest is focused on the presentation of the “paradox” in their writing. Pirandello and Scaribas use “paradox”, the contradiction in common sense, as a vehicle to engage and activate those who read their works not only in a simple reading of their literature but also in realizing a psychoanalytic inner journey.

Keywords: Pirandello, Scaribas, Sicily, Chalkida, paradox, psychoanalysis.

1. Psychoanalysis and literature

Psychoanalysis as a field of psychology focuses on the investigation of the unconscious in order to free and discharge the inner world of the individual, who is now able to express what he thinks, in order to discover latent situations and discharge his inner world. Freud¹ discovered that the best way to learn how the human mind works is to study precisely the sequence of its expressions, thoughts, feelings, dreams and fantasies, as they emerge in specific phases and moments.

The basic research tool is the free association method² that is often used in the literature. Freud believed that writers are often inspired through a form of self-analysis and insisted that writers are psychoanalysts without method and without patients. Two of the writers who were influenced by his psychoanalytic theories were Pirandello and Skaribas.

1.1 *The characteristics of the writing of Scaribas*

According to Grigoriadis et al. (2014), Skaribas, following the principles of the surrealism movement, created an impressive work in extent and variety. His work was marked by his intense opposition to the established values of life and urban culture. He used language in a non-orthodox, almost anarchic and paradoxical way, breaking up the usual form of narration until his days, breaking the syntax and recording a reality entirely his own as he perceived it. Vitti (2009) characterizes Scaribas’ language as paradoxical and anarchic “causing a dissolution of

¹ Sigmund Freud was a distinguished Austrian physiologist, neurologist and psychiatrist, who was the founder of psychoanalysis.

² https://www.ipa.world/IPA/IPA_Docs/Greek_pschoanalysis.pdf.

narrative institutions”. He identified with Chalkida, and he expresses a profound eroticism about the city through his writing, as if he addressing a woman, with a peculiar language in which hyperrealism³ and criticism of urban society are expressed.

Because of these characteristics, he is considered one of the pioneers of Greek literature. In his works, he expresses his mental mood, through the images he sees, carefully choosing the words, which are reminiscent of song lyrics, and this is because he is interested in relating speech and image in an acoustic melody. Chalkida is not a specific city, after all the landmarks it mentions are few, Chalkida is an idea, they are all cities that speak to people’s hearts, the only thing that matters is that they are symbols and dominate the “being” of each. What characterizes the landscape also characterizes the mental state of the author (Manola et al., 2021).

The absurdity is evident in the work of the Chalkidian writer. According to Tsouprou (2008), in the novel “Holy Tragi”, Skaribas realized his intentions by creating a hero who combined through contrasts “*the logical with the improbable, the crude with the beautiful, the exotic with the human*”, its protagonist reached the surreal point of the spirit where contradictions are abolished. In Ulalum’s prose fiction, the imaginary world is redefined under the gaze of the otherworldly one overwhelmed by a sadness, which is a consequence of the interwar era. In the “Mariamba” the personal style is developed and completed in the “Solo of Figaro” space and time are indeterminate and through irony and parody and the multitude of parallel narratives, they unite imagination and reality, limiting the power of the visible empirical world. According to Nikolopoulou (2014), everything is undefined and unstable, everything is in constant change and redefinition.

Kostiou (1992) characterizes “Mariamba” as the most innovative and daring work of the generation of the ‘30s with characteristic features “the coupling of poetic and prose language, the dissolution of the unity and successive logical sequences of language, the feeling of openness in space of empirical things, the extension of the imagination, which manages to exceed the limits of reality and raise questions and doubts”. All these are the characteristic features of the way of writing of Scaribas, which now in “Mariamba”, reach the peak of their power. Characteristic elements of his work are the complex narrative technique, his personal language, the constant undermining of the temporal sequence, the mixing of narrative levels, satire and irony. “Mariabas” is still today a pioneering novel, either in combination with or independently of the historical context of its creation. The concept of the absurd is also expressed in the work “The Three Empty Chairs” which was published in 1976 and is a collection of novels possessed by the spirit of farce, with inverted and mutually negating terms of reality and fantasy. According to Kostiou (1998), in this work we have the machines as a central part of Scaribas’ creativity, but here they acquire a human nature and through the contrasts and contradictions a society is presented that is regressing at full speed after it has reduced the “appearance” to its supreme value.

1.2 *Psychoanalysis in the work of Scaribas*

In many of his works, Skaribas describes a schizophrenic symptom, the Capgras⁴ Syndrome. According to this, a malevolent stranger has taken the place of a relative or friend, and the sufferer is unable to interpret the situation. So, he cannot draw a conclusion and is forced to watch as a spectator. Something similar happens to Pirandello’s heroes who, according to Asimakopoulos (1988), are “*trapped in a life that was determined for them by others, by their*

³ It began as a literary movement and developed into a broader artistic and political current in France between the wars. Based on Freud’s theories and the ideals of Marxism, he sought the revision of values as a counterweight to the crisis of the Western world.

⁴ In the typical Capgras syndrome – named after the French psychiatrist Joseph Capgras, who first diagnosed it in 1923.

ancestors” by any external agent or by fate itself. They realize it and feel it, that’s why they are always troubled, because they are in a dilemma of what to do. To be left to their own devices or they will rebel even if it means crushing the outer life in order to be free inwardly. The faces of Pirandello, as well as Scaribas’, also include those who are absurd because the madness they exude is from the truth of life, since indeed the Sicilian had the sad privilege of living with a paranoid companion and thus capture the other aspect and dimension that the irrational gives to human existence. As if “*Fate had placed her next to him as a laboratory preparation in his experiments*” (Oikonomidis, 1986).

Many pages of the Scaribas’ book can be read in two ways, either as a real presentation or as a hallucination of a mentally unstable person. In the “Solo of Figaro” the truth dissolves as humans and animals have two forms one mechanical and one animate. According to Papadopoulou (2021), the author follows “*a grotesque technique, seen internally. With the grotesque, he can and does create people-violas and people-robots and people-voices. This is how Scaribas imagines his reality. And the grotesque has a wounded heart as a background.*” In the background there is man, who resists everything, who overturns everything and distorts it. Something similar happens in Pirandello, who has the dramatic peculiarity of showing his heroes in a distorting mirror, who mirror and reflect their inner world. When writing theater, he “*continually digs and searches his own inner world*” (Varvaressou, 1990). Pirandello also in his most dramatic works remains a genuine representative of the “grottesco” under which he “*hides his pessimism about human misery*” (Lygizos, 1980) and through which he laughs, feels sorry for man, makes humor, he mocks and mocks his descent.

According to Asimakopoulos (1988), Pirandello's work is mainly existential. The battle fought by the faces on the stage is the effort of the people, who are anxiously searching to find the causes and the meaning of their pain. In Scariba the reader is given permission to have his own opinion of what is going on as the plot is removed and there is only the central axis around which the case is woven. The protagonists are simply instruments of a fictional reality in a vague time full of inconsistencies and in an undefined place that only formally has the name Chalkida because in essence it is a universal place or rather “the place”. Especially in Figaro as mentioned by Papadopoulou (2021), Scaribas “*uses irony, parody and satire*” and continues “*the hero does not succeed in writing a novel and is driven to madness, unlike the writer who completes his novel. As if he is his inverted image.*” In Pirandello’s work, the characters are willfully incomplete and in order to be complete they require the actor to fill them in with his views, subjecting him to an improvisation as for example in the play “Six Characters in Search of an author,” “*Theater Troup (Thiasarchis): Where is your text? / Father: It is within us sir. The drama is within us. We are the drama and we can't wait to present it as our unbridled passion drives us.*”

2. Psychoanalysis as the axis of Pirandello’s work

According to Dromazos (1966), Pirandello's work “*is continuous acrobatics between the logical and the irrational [...] a multiple system of illusions, maintained in an uncertain oscillation*” While according to Kalo (2019) he is considered the author of the psychological theater which seeks a purification for the family secrets that plague the individual giving us a starting point for the struggle of identification.

More generally, Pirandello pairs the tragic with the comic. According to Manola (2020), the main axes of Pirandello’s theater can be determined in the agony of self-knowledge and in the troubled consciousness that tries to distinguish its true face. The Pirandello’s temperament can also be seen in the very titles of his works, “As first is better than first”, “No one knows how”, etc. Also, characteristic is the alternation in the flow of events with twists and turns, which is continuous because something always happens and all they are reversed, challenged and started on a new basis which will shortly be discarded to be looked at from another angle and so

on. The faces – husbands, wives, lovers – are confused, in the most unpredictable “situations”. The moral consideration of social roles, the paradox of people, the questioning of reality are features that characterize the great Sicilian. The main characteristic of Pirandello and his literary temperament, is his great ability to present everything with their “*double aspect at the same time. Life appears as the human personality divided and torn in two from its root*” (Barlas, 1934). The author’s entire work is a toss-up between truth and dream, the plausible and the real. Grammatas (2020) argues that Luigi Pirandello in his works “Six Characters in Search of an author” and “Tonight we improvise” questions objective reality as not given and creates the appropriate conditions for the appearance of situations that due to the subjectivity in their interpretation can be characterized as absurd.

According to Manola (2020), Pirandello investigates conjugal faith, madness, the subjectivity that exists in the “truth” of each person, the pressure that man suffers from the conditions of a daily life, which he did not choose himself, the alteration of human relations. The results of his analytical writing are multidimensional as he tries to make sense of human behavior. For Luigi Pirandello everything that surrounds man is relevant. He rejects and denies everything about human suffering, human delusions and doubts as he mentions the causes, from which the dramatic plots of his works spring, constantly slicing the “I”, the human essence that can at the same time become ‘one’ as well as “none” or even “a hundred thousand” and to take as many forms as exactly are the positions of the person facing it. That is why Pirandello in “Uno, nessuno e cento mila” emphasizes the individual’s tendency to be at the same time “many people” in the different contexts of everyday life: one, as this is how everyone perceives their uniqueness, no one, because in the world he is only one among six billion people and a hundred thousand because at different moments in contexts the individual takes on many roles. The heroes of the Pirandello’s theatre are led to a moment of explosion, during which they bring to the surface all their thoughts and expectations. In his works there is always something heavy from the past, a trauma, a guilt that runs through the whole work and that makes the heroes suffer. The father-daughter incest in the play “Six Characters in Search of an author”, the expected death of the protagonist in the play “The Man with the Flower in His Mouth”, are characteristic examples of this guilt. “*If you knew what regrets I have for what at first was nothing but a weakness on my part*” Pirandello’s work is problematic because it deals with issues such as similarity and difference, identity, specificity and the multidimensional forms that a single person can take, something that is particularly evident in the work of *Henry IV* where the protagonist’s confusion between into the subjective and the objective while the difference between madness and reason is completely unclear. This confusion, as stated by Zeffirelli (2003) between fantasy and reality derived from his personal experiences and the cultural elements that influenced him, possesses the entire Pirandellian work. The constant violation of the dividing line between reality and fantasy, the annulment of the rules instead of being a brake, in essence liberates the writer. We also find influences of Pirandello’s work in modern Greek drama (Manola, 2020a) and the Sicilian author is a point of reference in modern Greek theatrical reproduction and creation (Manola, 2020b).

3. Conclusion

The success and appeal of the works of Pirandello and Scaribas indicates that the readers are looking to express, through the texts of the two authors, the desires not only of the creators but also their own, as there is a “give and take” between the work and for them it is continuous and invites to inner psychoanalytic searches.

The complexity of emotions, expressed through the absurd, was for the two writers a necessary condition to inspire their creations. They are connected by elements such as the choice of a favorite place, the fragmentation of the identity of the protagonists, everyday language and caustic satire, elements that make their work innovative for their time.

Acknowledgements

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

The author declares no competing interests.

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