Play and Pirandello's *Il giuoco delle parti*

Jerome Mazzaro

Comparative Drama, Volume 27, Number 4, Winter 1993-1994, pp. 453-467 (Article)

Published by Western Michigan University
DOI: *https://doi.org/10.1353/cdr.1993.0038*

Play and Pirandello's *Il giuoco delle parti*

Jerome Mazzaro

Audiences of Luigi Pirandello's major dramas are invariably faced with the word *giuoco* or "play" in the course of dramatic actions. In *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* (1921), *Enrico IV* (1922), and *I giganti della montagna* (1937), for instance, *giuoco* is used to refer to the ability of children to externalize the wonder within them and to believe in its reality at the same time that they recognize its disguises. The word is also used to oppose theatrical acting and illusion that, for various reasons, do not always succeed in enlisting the same degree of belief which children at play possess and which can border on madness. *Il giuoco delle parti* (1918) and *Come tu mi vuoi* (1930) add to these uses the idea that games involve risk. They are played to decide winners and losers, and one ought to be careful not to become an actor or pawn in another's personal construct. In *On Humor* (1908), *giuoco* becomes what Friedrich Schiller calls *Spieltrieb* in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795). It is that blending of man's sensuous nature and material impulse with his reason and formal impulse, considered by Schiller to be the goal of humanity. In acknowledging Schiller's concept, Pirandello dismisses Friedrich Schlegel's exaggeration of its divorces from necessity into "irony" or play-for-its-own-sake. He cites Johann Fichte's belief that, in creating universes "by the spirit, by the Self," individuals do not seek isolation but "submit to the will of the whole" and "strive for the highest degree of moral harmony." Opposed in the process is Schlegel's sense of one's never allowing these creations to have the whole-hearted identifications which children or the Father of *Sei personaggi* and Cotrone in *I giganti* demand. The individual remains "fully aware, even in the moments of pathos, of the unreality of his creations" and laughs at those who are drawn into the deception as well as those who, like Salter in *Come tu mi vuoi*, devote their lives to playing.[1]

Nowhere are these differences between Schiller and Schlegel more fully explored and exposed by Pirandello than in *Il giuoco delle parti* and the two short stories from which it evolves. All three examine the social conventions of marriage, honor, and dueling from the vantage point of a surplus of food, shelter, income, and leisure, and, in doing so, they not only exhibit Schiller's belief that "as long as necessity dictates and want impels, imagination is bound with strong chains to the actual" but also test popular literary conventions by which audiences know that what they are experiencing is fiction rather than reality. Historians point out, for example, that by the turn of the century the dueling on which all three works turn had become more common in novels and dramas than in life—despite the nearly three thousand duels which had been fought in Italy during the decade from 1879 to 1889.[2] Similarly, the liberated wives and battles of the sexes which occur are more typical of literary high comedy than of Italian life and law. So, too, despite being perhaps closest to life, the questions of honor involving their husbands and their challengers are so exaggerated as to feed into contemporary efforts to outlaw dueling. In the earliest of the treatments, "Acqua amara" (1903), events which lead to the end of Bernardo and Carlotta Cambiè's marriage are recounted. As told by Bernardo, Carlotta resembles her counterparts in "Quando s'è capito il giuoco" (1913) and *Il giuoco*. She is liberated and, if not the equal, the wealthier and more forceful of the pair, and her efforts to secure Dr. Loero as a lover are expressed in theatrical terms ("commedia"). However, in the doctor's military background, her insistences on a challenge, the husband's complete unfamiliarity with dueling, and the contrived offense triggering the challenge there are indications of the same conspiratorial effects as *giuoco* in the other works.

"Acqua amara" is told in first person after a distance of thirteen years and the formation of a defensive armor from years of domination, marital discord, and gossip. It depicts marriage medicinally, as a kind of illness for which a spa provides a cure. Like the duel which comprises its crisis, marriage is based not so much on love as on desire and propriety. Only when surplus money and leisure allow the imaginations of its principals to develop in unconventional directions are they able to disregard others and—as distinct from the model of high comedy and its narrowing of differences into union or reunion—to accept instinct, scandal, and separation. The imaginations which the story externalizes are expressly sexual. Both principals feel strong

attractions to members of the opposite sex which they wish to indulge, and the challenge and duel result from these feelings. The challenge follows a shove which the husband gives the doctor in seeing him out after an insulting, drunken, late-night visit in which the latter expresses his desire for the wife. In the duel, the husband unexpectedly wounds the doctor, whose recovery is aided by the wife. While capable of perceiving and expressing irony concerning these events, the narrator is incapable of the singular, isolating, and moralizing distance that the husband of "Quando s'è capito il giuoco" displays. He is proud of his notoriety in the spa community, and his telling the story to a newcomer is itself continued evidence of a socializing nature and submission "to the will of the whole." So, too, is his compassion for the doctor whom he feels did not deserve the cruel blow of having to put up with the wife since he had already suffered a bullet wound to the forehead. In a final irony that again plays on medicine, he knows that the lover's quick medical recovery will never compensate for his inability ever to recover psychologically from the wife.

A third-person, limited narrator becomes the filter for the revised views of "Quando s'è capito il giuoco," and, while sympathetic to the husband, renamed Memmo Viola, the narrator is not always in agreement. For example, he expresses his wish for luck in the opening sentence directly and positively: "All good fortune to Memmo Viola" ("Tutte le fortune a Memmo Viola!"). Viola's wish of luck for the lover, Gigi Venanzi, in contrast, is ironic and antiphrastic: "In the mouth of the wolf" ("In bocca al lupo"). Similarly, the narrator indicates an indifference to justice on Memmo's part which Memmo counters in the concluding statement forcing Venanzi to replace him: "Siamo giusti" ("We're even"). Likewise, the distinct but joined environmental or natural ("mosche") and social ("moglie") worlds of the narrator transform into Memmo's figurative use of a natural or environmental image ("lupo") to convey luck for a social situation (the duel). One might, however, argue in the first instance the application of Schiller's view of play as leading to morality and, in the second, Schlegel's individualized rebellion against social norms, noted by critics in discussions of both the revised story and the drama.[3] Certainly, there is in Memmo's isolation a shift from Cambiè's sociability and Fichte's and Schiller's beliefs that what is externalized be concordant with a general will. There is also reflected in Memmo's interest in gourmet eating an existence beyond necessity and want and in his interest in philoso-

phy and his wife's preoccupations with the sensuous and the material evidence of the conditions and the two fundamental impulses which Schiller sees united in the aesthetic impulse, once play is possible and habitual. With the increased element of risk in the revised story, there is indication as well of a possible link of *giuoco* to Pascal's notions of gaming and play. Unquestionably, as critics have argued, the story implicitly and explicitly contains the basic elements of the eventual drama.

The narrator moves from an account of Memmo's stretch of good luck, which in this version includes *his* inheriting money and moving out as well as his now being immune to joy and sorrow, to the interruption of this "lucky" state by the estranged wife. She has come to tell him of an insult which she has received and which, as her husband, he must redress. Her dinner the previous evening had been spoiled by the intrusion of four half-drunken men looking for Pepita and mistaking her home for a brothel. Their behavior brings down the neighbors and creates a public embarrassment. In the course of the account, it is revealed that her lover, Venanzi, had been present as well and that he, upon her rejection of an apology, refused to accept Aldo Miglioriti's offer of satisfaction by means of a duel. At Venanzi's, Memmo discovers that Miglioriti is an accomplished duelist. He enlists Venanzi's aid in setting up the duel and in acting as his second. He tells Venanzi that he also must accept his part in the matter. A brief digression into philosophy follows, and Memmo leaves. Going to Memmo's residence that evening to inform him of the completed arrangements, Venanzi finds him quarreling with his housekeeper over a matter of three cents. Venanzi tells him that the duel is set for the next morning and that he will return then to collect him. When Venanzi returns the next morning, Memmo is not ready. He tells Venanzi that, as the husband, it was his duty only to offer the challenge, but as the lover it is Venanzi's duty to fight the duel. Venanzi leaves, and the story ends with Memmo's wishing him luck.

With its focus on infinite and finite being, the brief philosophical digression anticipates many of the distinctions which James P. Carse makes in his discussion of finite and infinite games. For Carse, finite games are "played for the purpose of winning" and infinite games "for the purpose of continuing the play." The rules of finite games like those of dueling "may not change in the course of play," whereas the roles of infinite games must. Finite games play *within* boundaries, and infinite games *with* boundaries. Since "seriousness" involves movement

toward "a specified conclusion," it can occur only in finite games and their scripted and "theatrical" actions.[4] Thus what Pirandello means by Memmo's having "understood the game" is his ability to separate these kinds of play: he is able to keep games concerning his household accounts finite at the same time that he reconceives Venanzi's and his wife's conventional and finite approaches to marriage and honor in non-finite terms. His reasoning in the process mirrors that of thirteenth-century Conventual Franciscans in regard to poverty and property. By claiming "use" rather than ownership, they were able to enjoy luxury while maintaining compliance with their vows of poverty, aware that "use" implied the protection and preservation of what was lent.[5] In the story, it is the wife who is "used" and the husband who "owns" and, as owner, is obliged to demand satisfaction. As user, Venanzi is obliged to keep in repair what is lent. The denial of instinct which allows Memmo to move from finite to non-finite models leaves him open to the same criticism that, in *Il giuoco*, Filippo registers against its husband, Leone Gala. Gala's emphasis on intellect and rejection of intuition impairs his mental faculties so that he approaches the harsh judgments and isolation though not the madness of Henry in *Enrico IV*. Immune to "the reality of time" and "the secret of the life force," he cannot admit what is "fluid, alive, inconstant, and mysterious" just as the sensuous impulses of Venanzi and his wife prevent their admission of what is abstract and infinite.

In *Il giuoco*, many of these issues are expanded and clarified. The husband and wife have again been renamed. They have become Leone and Silia Gala, and the lover has changed from Gigi to Guido Venanzi. Memmo's housekeeper is now Filippo, and other new characters have been introduced. The core of the action, however, remains little altered. There are the contending and separated husband and wife, the wife's lover, and, as in the revised story, the drunken gentlemen led by Miglioriti looking for Pepita, offering apologies, and, in being turned down, agreeing to have their insults satisfied in a duel. Likewise present are the husband's interests in gourmet cooking and philosophy as well as his recourse to the same logic that allowed Memmo to transfer the fighting of the duel to the lover. Nonetheless, elements which had been latent or inert are now linked and energized into coherent if not deliberate plots. Introduced, for instance, is the wife's conscious seizing upon the accident of the drunken visit to involve the husband in a duel in which he will be killed as a way of exacting revenge. Audiences, moreover,

have in the husband a more finely delineated embodiment of the ironic Pirandellian hero, the man who has looked "truly into the essence of things" and seen their absurdity as well as the absurdity of social conventions and who conceives of imaginative recreation or art as "a saving sorceress," as alone knowing how to turn "nauseous thoughts about the horror of existence into notions with which one can live."[6] His emergence prompts Filippo's use of Henri Bergson's philosophy to defend instinct against rationality and the "stable and determinate forms within and outside of ourselves" which man misuses to arrest or fix the continuing flux of life. But, unlike Bergson, Pirandello emphasizes not the difference but its consequences on the kinds of lives that result and the ways one devises in order to continue living.[7]

Il giuoco opens on an upper-middle-class living room. Guido Venanzi is dressed in evening clothes and Mrs. Gala in a low-cut negligee. His familiarity with the quarters immediately establishes an intimacy in which he appears to have no control. Mrs. Gala seems to dominate. Her mental immersion in imagined but actually existing places causes him to cite her husband's belief "that what we seek outside is really within ourselves." From the ranges of her imaginings, she concludes that she is in prison—a prison of her woman's body from which, like Mrs. Cambiè in "Acqua amara," she wishes to escape. She cannot do so with the "freedom" or "independence" that her husband has given her, for his continued existence enslaves her. His air of superiority and removal from life's struggles prompt her to contemplate his destruction. His arrival for one of their agreed-upon evening half-hour visits leads her to invite him up as a "punishment" for Venanzi, who must entertain him, and a "test" for his ability to acknowledge her infidelity. She, in the meantime, retires. An initial awkwardness between the men turns into a philosophical discussion as Gala explains that he exists "as little as possible" and that in doing so he is still imprisoned by facts which, despite his separation from Mrs. Gala, include his being "the husband." He explains that he has understood "the game of life." The way to win is to know how to defend oneself, and to do that, like the soul approaching Dante's Hell, one must give up all hope since hope leads to compromise. He has drained himself of every emotion and learned to take pleasure in "seeing how others live"—not acting for himself but watching himself in action and having clearly outlined by his intellect the chaos of his passions. Food offers him a ballast and balance to this drainage which he compares to an egg that, drained of its content, retains only the

empty shell.

At this point Mrs. Gala returns and objects to being compared to an empty shell. She fetches an eggshell of her own and tosses it to Gala, who, as he leaves, presents it to Venanzi. Thereafter she snatches the shell back and, throwing it out the window, hopes to hit him as he exits the house. The shell, missing its intended target, alights instead among a group of gentlemen who mistake it for an invitation to call. They do so, and with the maid's knock Venanzi retreats into the bedroom. The gentlemen burst in. They are drunk and think they are entering the residence of Pepita. Among them is the Marquis Miglioriti. Mrs. Gala is able to stall their insults and demands until her maid returns with a group of neighbors who assist in driving them out. Their belated attempts at apology are refused, and, after thanking the neighbors, Mrs. Gala returns to Venanzi who has remained in hiding. She will pass Miglioriti's card on to her husband who, having left her with a lover who was incapable of protecting her, must now seek satisfaction. Having resolved this and determined that his doing so might also rid her of him, she becomes more affectionate toward Venanzi.

The drama's action shifts to the husband's house where he is arguing the next morning with his cook Filippo while preparing an egg sauce. Filippo is proposing the superiority of Bergson's instinct to Gala's intellect. He is concerned that "all this talk about the intellect is driving [his employer] out of his mind." Venanzi is present but silent until the doorbell rings and Mrs. Gala arrives. Much as in "Quando s'è capito il giuoco," she has come to tell him about the insults. Before she enters, however, Venanzi, as if by design, warns Gala, and the latter responds that, like last evening's egg, he will quash the effort by catching it, punching a hole in each end, and sucking up its content. Entering, she tells him that he has either challenged Miglioriti or been challenged by him to a duel, and she gives him Miglioriti's card. Venanzi informs Gala that Miglioriti is one of the country's best swordsmen and, in doing so, as in the revised story, again inadvertently reveals that he was present at the time of the insults. Mrs. Gala, immediately defending him, attacks the husband for abandoning her "to the brutal advances of a gang of sex maniacs" and adds that had Venanzi come to her aid, her reputation would have been ruined by his presence. Intrigued by the situation's delicacy, Gala acknowledges that he must do what is expected of him. He will issue the challenge. Venanzi suggests that the intruders' drunkenness and willingness

to apologize could be used by Gala to avoid a duel, but Mrs. Gala insists on ritual satisfaction. Gala is delighted that she, for the first time in her life, has found a concept to defend. She has understood his socially defined role of husband in the matter, harking back perhaps in Pirandello's mind to the Cambiès' disputes about gender and social roles as well as to her own earlier frustrations at being imprisoned in a woman's body.

Gala persuades Venanzi to be his second, and the lover, pretending to be reconciled to the duel, demands that it be genuine. Gala concurs, comparing the situation to a game in which each must play his part to the end. He instructs Venanzi to make the proper arrangements, and, just as Venanzi is leaving, another friend, Dr. Spiga, arrives. He will serve as physician. Enraged by the absurdity which Gala's reasoning has generated, Filippo goes into the kitchen. Gala bids Spiga follow him and appeases Filippo with support for Bergson. Left alone with the wife, Gala tells her that Venanzi's insistence on a real duel is a response to and escalation of her exaggeration of the incident. He has gone along with their foolishness because he inhabits a climate where nothing can touch him, where life and death have no significance because he understands "the game." Unable to mollify Filippo, Spiga returns. Another new character, Barelli, arrives, carrying with him a large sword case and a brace of pistols. He had been contacted by Venanzi, and he is shocked to learn from him that an "unconditional challenge" has been issued. He says that "no one fights that kind of duel any more" since it is illegal and immoral. Like Gala's "game," it does not allow hope for a settlement or compromise. Barelli mentions that Miglioriti is an excellent marksman as well as an excellent swordsman, and Mrs. Gala, wishing not to be perceived as having deliberately contrived her husband's death, begins to object to the duel as a kind of murder. Barelli adds that Venanzi's current behavior has shocked everyone, especially Miglioriti, who knows that he was present when the insults occurred. The time and place of the duel are specified, and Mrs. Gala expresses anger at the events having gotten out of her control.

Left alone with her husband, she learns, as if in consolation, that earlier his own strong feelings of love and then hatred had been suppressed so that he would not have destroyed *her*. Life, he insists, is a game which to submit to—that is, to win by destroying one's opponent—deprives one of the pleasure of continuing play. She answers that her real love has always been sleep. Sleep has rescued her by allowing her to dream—an indi-

cation that her "game" has been between "dream" and "reality," establishing her and the husband within the range of Pirandello's works as the opposites of "hope" and "irony." Spiga appears the next morning on schedule to escort Gala to the duel. Gala, however, is still asleep. Venanzi and Barelli arrive and join in awakening him. Described as a "haul from the bottom of a well," the awakening echoes the initiating image of Pirandello's earlier *Così è (se vi pare)* (1917) and that image's absence of certainty. Finally, as in the revised story, the husband does awaken and informs Venanzi that, as husband, it was his obligation only to issue the challenge. The actual defense lies with the lover who has let the insults go unchallenged. Once more, invoking "the rules of the game," he adds that he is aware of Venanzi's and his wife's efforts to be rid of him. To Barelli's warning of damaging gossip, he responds that "the game" has immunized him to others' opinions. As Venanzi and the others leave, Mrs. Gala arrives and asks if their departure means that the duel has been called off, that he has capitulated. He answers that he has not, and he responds to her immediate efforts to transfer guilt for the consequences of the escalation with "the scorn and majesty of a judge." Just as she would punish Venanzi by making him entertain Gala, he is punishing her. Spiga returns to tell them that Venanzi is dead, and Filippo, in keeping with his emphasis on survival, brings on a breakfast tray and calls. Gala does not appear to hear.

Gala's seizing upon "the game" as a finite model to compensate for a loss of certainty demonstrates how play is to be incorporated into drama. It provides a completed pattern within a larger mimetic pattern (drama) for what appears to have no pattern (life). It is analogous to the finite models used by mathematicians after David Hilbert's questioning of geometry's absolute truths, and it has analogues in Friedrich Nietzsche's going to Apollonian art in the face of "the horror of existence" and, in the collapse of accepted religious models of history, Matthew Arnold's prediction of an increased turning to poetry to interpret life. Relying on a long-held belief in discontinuity or separation between serious and non-serious activity, the seizure affirms this division on a different basis and sets up the purposes and interactions of illusion and reality and of art and life that occur in *Sei personaggi*, *Enrico IV*, *Come tu mi vuoi*, and *I giganti*. Seriousness conveys not only the "specified conclusions" of Carse's finite play, but it must likewise reinforce the actual. It thus blurs the functional shifts in what Søren Kierkegaard calls ethical,

moral, and immediate, aesthetic, or no choice. Decisions made in and for the moment and bounded by the closures of play need to return to life. By their return they avoid both the complete separations of aestheticism and a modern skepticism which Oswald Spengler describes as "obliged to be historical through and through. Its solutions are got by treating everything as relative, as a historical phenomenon, and its procedure is psychological."[8] Like Schiller, Pirandello sees the discontinuities as temporary and as enhancing and improving by illustration life and the order of the community. In *Il giuoco*, these prefigurative functions are suggested in an implied similarity in the negative outcomes of the work's finite duel and the Galas' ongoing battle.

Pirandello's going to finite models for greater comprehension is specifically interpreted—or perhaps misinterpreted—by the Manager of *Sei personaggi* in derivative terms. He characterizes the drama's principals as representing Schiller's material (Mrs. Gala) and formal (Gala) impulses, and he sees the plot as resembling the action of "Acqua amara" in its being a "commedia" in the French manner.[9] There can be no doubt of Schiller's influence nor, in following the sources and evolutions of Pirandello's works, of the playwright's reliance on literary antecedents, including his own previous offerings. The conformity to and variations on French comedy's conventional configurations of husband, lover, and wife and strategies of deception betray a need to attack the follies of social manners and inconsistencies and incongruities of human nature in a recognizable language. But, more modestly, the reworkings of incidents and characters within the body of Pirandello's work suggest an effort to re-employ a limited number of issues illustrating in the process the same rhythms of discontinuity and reincorporation that his texts articulate. The antagonistic love relationships of *Il giuoco* are, for example, defined and redefined in the likenesses of Cambiè's actions in "Acqua amara," and, within *Il giuoco*, the ruthlessness with which Gala destroys his own attachment to Mrs. Gala is echoed in his behavior toward Venanzi. In addition, characters in one Pirandello drama assist in defining those of another. Laudisi, for instance, in *Così è (se vi pare)* contributes to the formation of Gala, and both Gala and Laudisi include hints of the distancing play of Henry in *Enrico IV*. Mrs. Gala's intellectual efforts to escape the eroticism of Venanzi find similar repetition in L'Ignota's more successful struggles in *Come tu mi vuoi*.

Apparent as well, according to Gaspare Giudice's biography of the playwright, are Pirandello's going to closed life episodes

for finite models in fleshing out character and plot. The writer's troubled relationship with his wife, Antonietta, for example, appears to influence the shape of some of the arguments between the stories' and play's various husbands and wives, and the subsequent sense of gained distance or indifference owes its beneficial aspects to Pirandello's ability to turn the events into an ongoing commitment to writing. No doubt Antonietta conceived of these distancings as neglect or indifference, and for the writer her resulting jealousies, unfounded accusations, and schemes became efforts to reduce him to a puppet. Giudice reports as well that the writer was twice involved in near duels. One was with the actor Flavio Andò, and the other, very early in the century, with a Girgentian lawyer named Gallo. In the latter instance, seconds were named, and only the efforts of mutual friends prevented its occurrence. Giudice ventures that these involvements along with the writer's lifelong regard for "points of honor" and failures openly to oppose dueling may well derive from his father or his father's generation. By the time of *Il giuoco*'s presentation, dueling was generally considered an archaic holdover from the late Victorian Age even in drama, and he hazards that Pirandello's clinging to it delayed his move into a more modern theatrical idiom.[10] Still, by examining what Pirandello's protagonists achieve by dueling, one finds no strong endorsements. By winning, Cambiè loses his wife to his opponent, and, while a "happy" consequence, it is not what the action intended. In *Il giuoco*, Barelli tells Gala that allowing Venanzi to replace him will cost him his reputation, and Venanzi's death makes no one happy. Rather, both results signal escalation out of control.

This resorting to a device of finite models is indicative of the playwright's interest in what critics call consciousness, and it has led to their viewing his works in relation to philosophical issues, self-formation, and a theater of ideas. In consciousness, experience is distinguished (isolated) and then integrated by memory into a subjective stream or ego by means of similarity, contrast, contiguity, and cause and effect. Models aid this integration by recognizing and giving a shape and a significance to the incoming impressions. In the Renaissance, Francesco Patrizzi assigned the action of its division and reincorporation to "the highest intellect." Led to separate and confront its states as objects of contemplation, this intellect overcame division through love and knowledge.[11] For Bergson, whose philosophy more directly colors these dramas, this division and reincorporation aids in moving from instinct or life's natural unreflective and unadaptive

organizing power to intellect or conventional and individual interested action. It is part of a process of change based on displacement. Relying on "precoded patterns of the social norms," it brings "out something that was not in the code." It threatens thereby "to destroy the code itself" by bestowing "a fresh vision of a hitherto concealed reality, a vision that may either be enlightenment or . . . delusion."[12] Its presence is manifested individually in Pirandello's concepts of *costruzione* or self invention and *umorismo* or coeval and sequential perceptions of contrary situations (*avvertimenti del contrario*) and opposing deeper sentiments (*sentimenti del contrario*), leading on reflection to sympathy.[13] In employing aspects of this process, play seeks to achieve a correlative to that "worthiness" or usable morality which Aristotle early claimed for drama (*Poetics* 1451b) and which Schiller's aesthetic impulse, Gala's concluding judicial manner, and L'Ignota's return to Berlin variously reaffirm.

The choice of play as the dominant inner model for the larger fixed model of drama carries with it a number of implications in addition to the debt to Schiller. First, as serious action, it and ultimately theater see themselves as creative rather than repetitive. They present something like little worlds which are governed by rules or conventions so that all elements hold and move together, though, like Schiller's English dance,[14] there can be differences between the rules of one little world and another. These little worlds educate men to life's contradictions, alterations, and apparent aimlessness or introduce them to the consequences of change and novelty. Play thus offers a social equivalent to Pirandello's individual mask (*maschera*) and its options of being either self-made (*costruirsi*) or constructed by others. Willingness to accept roles in this self- or other-initiated play is not itself damaging, as Mrs. Ponza demonstrates in *Così è (se vi pare)*, but the determination to force a role upon another (as society, Mrs. Gala, and Venanzi try to do in *Il giuoco*) is. Second, as an action, play and theater must be incorporable into nature and thus themselves be natural in origin. As early as the *Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle is offering play as a natural opposite to work, based upon man's inability to attend continuously (X.vi), and even before Aristotle, Plato is linking drama to man's natural impulse to imitate. Nonetheless, the bringing of these impulses into consciousness involves the superimposition of conventional matter. Just as such matter renders unknowable man's individual inner core, it renders unknowable in play man's real social nature. One clue, however, is certain. No naturally better-

ing *Geist* or creative spirit exists. The dramas make clear that the benefits gained in these superimpositions do not transfer biologically to new generations.

As already indicated, in a number of dramas Pirandello adds to these concepts of change and play Pascal's notions of risk in deciding what to choose. However, for Pirandello risk is predicated not on salvation or damnation but on a difference between impulse and external manifestation as well as differences in present and past external manifestations. What is risked is a comfort one feels with the known as one moves to a second known or to an imagined or unexpected unknown. The movement is necessary for self-expression and indicative of a constantly changing inner human core. Movements from one point in history to another, like Henry's in *Enrico IV*, or from one stage in staged action to the next, as in dueling or acting, involve little or no risk and allow normally little or no inner growth. It is the second manner of movement—from the known to the probable or fantastic—that Pirandello favors, knowing that its end cannot be accomplished without belief and that, even when its end is accomplished, a lack of mimetic objective confirmation can spell madness. In each of these two movements something like Schiller's ambiguous *Schein* ("a shining through" or "a seeming") is sought, though Pirandello is aware that, when not in a role (*parte*) or when not being applauded, some people are completely at a loss. He is also aware that only what is conceived of as external as an impulse (a role) can be truly realized objectively, though, in the case of Gala's decision not to duel or the performance of "Il figlio cambiato" in *I giganti*, others may reject the effort. Critics have proposed that Pirandello seeks to lessen this risk and possibility of rejection while at the same time strengthening the cases for wonder and imagination by accelerating the speed of the shifts.[15] The resulting blur mimes time's relentless process rather than a fixed historical objective.

Like the French comedies to which it is linked, *Il giuoco* emphasizes not individual character but social roles and plot complications. Wrapped in "the accretions of civilization," its principals are less indicative of independent active inner cores than representative of and judgments on upper-middle-class behavior, and being so, as Giudice indicates, they suffer perhaps more than the principals of Pirandello's other major dramas in appearing shallow and dated. Humors rather than "human archetypes" dominate as individual characters quarrel not with their inner natures but with social expectations in circumstances—

gender, marriage, "the game," and dueling—which are repeatedly termed imprisoning or "hopeless." Reaction to this feeling is play: to redraw boundaries by proceeding without understanding (Mrs. Gala), existing "as little as possible" (Gala), dreaming (Mrs. Gala), or, as Gala's account in Act II of a need to reshape himself suggests, inventing a different being (*costruirsi*). These reactions by people belonging to a common class have induced critics to misread the drama in terms entirely of high comedy or of "social satire" and to group it with the writer's other early bourgeois efforts.[16] However, coming as they do out of a sense of boundaries, the reactions as importantly define Pirandello's central concept of play and (indirectly) of theater. Arising as play does in hopeless conditions, it affirms both man's natural impulse to go on and man's natural self-interest. Moreover, as a response whose action evokes *punire* ("to punish"), play appears to be payback for the pain of consciousness and tends to differ from game and theater by being less subject to rules. In bringing play into an understandable language, game and theater—like Bergson's intellect—divorce and distort what it is they communicate coevally as, by according with "the voices of the past," they become, as Schiller and Fichte earlier proposed, prophetic of the world to come.[17]

State University of New York at Buffalo

NOTES

[1] Luigi Pirandello, *On Humor*, trans. Antonio Illiano and Daniel P. Testa (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1974), pp. 7–8.

[2] Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, trans. Reginald Snell (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1965), p. 125; V. G. Kiernan, *The Duel in European History* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1988), pp. 260–61.

[3] Roberto Alonge and Emanuele Licastro, in particular, see the tale and the drama concerning to different degrees "the tension between society and the individual who rebels." See Roberto Alonge, *Pirandello tra realismo e mistificazione* (Naples: Guida Editori, 1972), pp. 206–17, and Emanuele Licastro, *Luigi Pirandello dalle novelle alle commedie* (Verona: Fiorini, 1974), pp. 153–62. Neither, however, sees the tension in terms of the differences between Schlegel and Fichte, cited by Pirandello in *On Humor*.

[4] James P. Carse, *Finite and Infinite Games* (New York: Ballantine, 1987), pp. 3, 10–12, 19–20.

[5] John Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968). Historically marriage and property have had close ties.

[6] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1967), p. 60.

[7] Anthony Caputi, *Pirandello and the Crisis of Modern Consciousness* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1988), pp. 85–86.

[8] Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 35. The allusions to Hilbert, Nietzsche, Arnold, and Kierkegaard are meant more to convey the pervasiveness of the sense of lost truths and need to go to finite models than to argue Pirandello's close knowledge of their works.

[9] Luigi Pirandello, *Maschere nude*, 2nd ed. (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1962), I, 75.

[10] Gaspare Giudice, *Luigi Pirandello* (Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1963), pp. 322–23. These particular paragraphs were cut from the English translation of the work.

[11] Ernst Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, trans. Mario Domandi (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 134. See also Caputi, *Pirandello and the Crisis of Modern Consciousness*, pp. 48–65.

[12] Charles Segal, *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1982), pp. 15, 25.

[13] Luigi Pirandello, *On Humor*, p. 113.

[14] Friedrich Schiller as cited in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, ed. Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 300.

[15] See, for example, Giovanni Sinicropi, "The Later Phase: Towards Myth," in *Pirandello*, ed. Glauco Cambon (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1967), p. 81.

[16] Eric Bentley, *The Pirandello Commentaries* (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1986), pp. 31, 34, 35; Alonge, *Pirandello tra realismo e mistificazione*, pp. 206, 216; and Licastro, *Luigi Pirandello dalle novelle alle commedie*, p. 155.

[17] George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society*, ed. Charles W. Morris (Chicago: Phoenix Books, 1967), p. 168. Although in Italian "play" and "game" are both rendered *giuoco*, in English they have slightly different meanings. See Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society*, pp. 150–64. This poses certain complications which Umberto Eco discusses in *Sugli specchi e altri saggi* (Milan: Bompiani, 1985), pp. 292–93. For this paper I have used "game" to mean mainly what Carse calls "finite game" and "play" for less formal and ongoing action. In "George H. Mead and Luigi Pirandello," *Social Research*, 24 (1967), 563–607, Bedrich Baumann notes similarities in the two writers' approaches to play.