Candidate 2 evidence

Analyse how Pirandello explores the contrast between reality and fiction in '*Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore*'

Luigi Pirandello's *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* is an experimental play written in 1921 that makes the audience question what's real and what's fictional. In this play, Pirandello writes about six fictional Characters who suddenly appear in the middle of a theatre rehearsal. The Characters disrupts the Actors' work as they ask if they can be represented in the play. The Actors try and ultimately fail to do so as the Characters are unsatisfied with the results. The play follows a metatheatrical structure which Pirandello uses to explore the contrast between reality and fiction.

One of the ways that Pirandello shows the difference between reality and fiction is through the unexpected arrival of the six Characters at the beginning of the play. When the Director asks who they are, the Father replies "Siamo qua in cerca d'un autore."[1] The Actors and Director are confused and unsure of what to believe. This moment introduces the focus of the play, which is that the Characters have been abandoned by their author and are now in search for someone who can tell their story for them.

Pirandello develops this idea further as the Father argues that characters can be more real than human beings because a character's identity never changes as he says they have a "realtà immutabile"[2] . Once a fictional character is written, they become fixed and stuck in their story whereas real life is unstable and constantly evolving. The Characters can't escape their tragic story, and they are forced to relive it every day, which is why they are in search for an author who can realise their story. The Father explains this as he says, "chi ha la ventura di nascere personaggio vivo, può ridersi anche della morte."[3] This emphasises that they will never be able to escape their story, not even through death, as they are fictional characters and therefore cannot die. In a way, the Characters are more real than the Actors as their identity will always stay the same.

The conflict between the Characters and the Actors is one of the main ways Pirandello explores how the Characters feel misrepresented. The Actors try to imitate the Characters, but they aren't able to capture their raw emotions. When the Actors rehearse the scene in Madame Pace's shop, the Stepdaughter complains about the actress who's playing her. She says she doesn't feel represented by her and states: "non mi vedo affatto in lei"[4]. She refuses to accept any interpretation of her story as she doesn't feel that anyone fully

[1] Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore p21
[2] Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore p64
[3] Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore p24
[4] Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore p44

understands her and therefore are not able to convey her emotions properly. This moment shows that the Characters are too raw and too real to be turned into a performance, only the Characters would be able to convincingly portray their own story. The Stepdaughter insists that she should play herself so she can tell her story properly: "io voglio rappresentare il mio dramma! Il mio!"[5] The repetition emphasises how attached she is to her story and how she feels that she should be the only one who gets to tell it. This demonstrates how the Characters are not content with any version or interpretation of their story unless they are the ones performing it.

Pirandello uses this conflict to question the purpose of theatre itself. If theatre is meant to represent life and the human experience, why are the Actors not able to represent the Characters? The Father famously says "come possiamo intenderci, signore, se nelle parole ch'io dico metto il senso e il valore delle cose come sono dentro di me; mentre chi le ascolta, inevitabilmente le assume col senso e col valore che hanno per sé."[6] This reinforces the idea that we don't all think the same because we all have different life experiences, therefore we interpret things differently based on our personal experiences. It's hard for the Actors to play the Characters and their sufferings exactly as they want them to because the Actors interpret them in another way, which makes the Characters feel as though they are not being represented properly. It doesn't mean that the Actors are bad at their job, but instead it showcases how the Characters are deeply connected to their stories and how any other version of it feels inaccurate due to how many times they've relived it.

This is further demonstrated in an article written by Anna Maria Bonfiglio, in this article *L'impossibile verità dei "Sei personaggi" pirandelliani*, she says that the play is based on "il contrasto fra la Vita e la Forma,"[7] which is shown through the Characters' fixed identity in contrast to the Actors' everchanging reality. Bonfiglio suggests that the Characters represent something too painful that cannot be recreated properly without losing its authenticity. She also describes the play as an unresolved struggle between "dell'Essere e dell'Apparire"[8] which is strategically used to change the audience's way of viewing reality and fiction entirely.

Another important way Pirandello explores the contrast between reality and fiction is through the play's structure. *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* is a play within a play, and Pirandello constantly reminds the audience of this. The Actors try to act out the story but at

[5] Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore p57
[6] Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore p30
[7] L'impossibile verita dei "Sei personaggi" pirandelliani, Anna Maria Bonfiglio, PirandelloWeb, Oct 2020
[8] L'impossibile verita dei "Sei personaggi" pirandelliani, Anna Maria Bonfiglio, PirandelloWeb, Oct 2020

the same time the Characters are continuously interrupting the rehearsal to share more of their drama or just complain about feeling misrepresented by the Actors. Pirandello deliberately blurs the lines between the Actors' reality on stage and the Characters' fictional reality. This instability forces the audience to understand that reality isn't fixed.

The rehearsal setting also allows Pirandello to explore the process of how art is created. The Director tries to take control and bring some order to the chaos that the Characters are inflicting, but they refuse any change to their story. The Characters insist that their tragedy can't be altered, and they refuse to let the Actors perform their story. This reflects Pirandello's belief that once a character is created, it takes on a life of its own.

The ending of the play is one of the most important examples that establishes the distinction between reality and fiction. The deaths of the little Girl and the Boy create confusion and panic on stage. The Director, frustrated, can't tell if their deaths are real or whether they're part of the Characters' fictional story as he yells: "Finzione! Realtà! Andate al diavolo tutti quanti!"[9] The Director gives up on trying to represent the Characters through the play as he can't separate fiction from reality anymore. The Actors are also unsure, as well as the audience, on whether the deaths are real or not. Pirandello intentionally leaves the ending ambiguous, which makes the audience wonder if what happened was reality or fiction. Confusion is the core of metatheatre, forcing the audience to come up with their own explanation of the ending. This links back to the Father's quote "come possiamo intenderci, signore, se nelle parole ch'io dico metto il senso e il valore delle cose come sono dentro di me; mentre chi le ascolta, inevitabilmente le assume col senso e col valore che hanno per sé"[10] which illustrates how everyone's interpretation of the ending will be different based on their personal beliefs.

Overall, Pirandello effectively explores the contrast between reality and fiction in *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* through the Characters' experience being misinterpreted and the play's innovative structure. By blurring the lines between real life and fantasy, he challenges the audience to reflect on the nature of truth itself. The Characters' insistence on being portrayed correctly combined with the Actors' inability to do so, shows that fiction can sometimes be more real than reality.

Bibliography

[9] Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore p73
[10] Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore p30