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Stefano Giannini

**Pirandello and Satire. The Imaginary Journey of Four Authors in Search of a Character According to Charles Kenneth Scott Moncrieff (1889-1930).**

The precise extent of Luigi Pirandello's influence on the world of letters is difficult to gauge because of its sheer magnitude. From theatrical pieces, to novels and films, during and after Pirandello's life, his work has inspired countless artists who, with more or less success, engaged with his art.<sup>1</sup> In this vast field of artistic conversation, one must mention the name of Charles Kenneth Scott Moncrieff (1889-1930). Scott Moncrieff, translator from French and Italian into English, is mainly known to readers as translator of Pirandello's *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore* (his 1926 translation was published again as recently as 2005<sup>2</sup>). However, the relationship extended beyond what could have been a mechanical process of putting into English a novel of the already famous Pirandello. Scott Moncrieff spent many years in Italy – between Florence, Pisa and Rome – where he moved in 1923 to find a better climate for his ailing health, compromised during his military service in WWI. During his Italian sojourn, he personally met Pirandello in Rome and in Florence, and soon came to admire him without reservations.<sup>3</sup> (Findlay) In one of the many humorous – and often self-deprecating – letters to his friend Vyvyan Holland, Oscar Wilde's son, Scott Moncrieff wrote: "I am going to translate the complete works of Pirandello, in two hundred and eighteen volumes; it will be very difficult, as I do not know any Italian." (June 22, 1924) (Scott Moncrieff Papers) Scott Moncrieff is briefly

mentioned in Pirandello's letters to Marta Abba in the most endearing terms: Pirandello confided to Abba that Scott Moncrieff was the best translator of his works and a "vero amico"<sup>4</sup> (Pirandello, *Lettere a Marta Abba* 352).

Scott Moncrieff's fame as translator is solidly linked to Proust, Stendhal and Pirandello. The standard English translation of Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* is his. Besides *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore*, he successfully translated also Pirandello's *I vecchi e i giovani*, and the play *Lazzaro*.<sup>5</sup> These translations were tasks that, as he wrote to Vyvyan Holland, he accomplished "with great joy" (Pisa, 1925) (Scott Moncrieff Papers).

Captivated by Pirandello's work, in the midst of his translations of *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore*, in 1926 Scott Moncrieff published a 21-page long pamphlet: "*The Strange & Striking Adventures of Four Authors in Search of a Character*" by P. G. Lear & L. O." In the pamphlet he satirizes the Sitwell siblings: Edith, Osbert and Sacheverell, British artists and patrons of the arts, and their friend William Walton, a musical composer. The title of the illustrated pamphlet and the acronyms of the two mysterious authors' names (P. G. Lear & L. O.) are references to Pirandello and to his masterpiece *Six Characters in Search of an Author* while, at the same time, hiding the satire's real author, Scott Moncrieff himself. The play on words is easy, with only the reversal between characters and authors, and a smaller number, four instead of six. The authors of the pamphlet drew some curiosity: P. G. Lear & L. O., a strange list of letters that, in sound, and in their

appearance, evoke a similarity to Pirandello. Despite the puzzling acronyms, Scott Moncrieff did not intend for his pamphlet to remain anonymous. In his letters to Vyvyan Holland first he inquires as to whether his friend has ordered a copy, and, subsequently, if he has given him one.<sup>6</sup>

This title of this short satirical piece tellingly reveals the quick progression of Pirandello's legacy. Already in 1926, a mere 5 years after the opening of *Six Characters in Search of an Author* at the Valle Theater in Rome (May 9, 1921), there was already somebody who, in English, was alluding to that title. *Six Character in Search of an Author* had been staged – to limit the list only to English speaking countries – at the Kingsway Theater in London on February 26, 1922, and at the Princess Theater in New York City on October 30, 1922.<sup>7</sup> What was the reason for publishing the pamphlet? It is an especially telling case to see a work by Pirandello, already a famed novelist and playwright, readily appropriated to satirize British cultural figures. In his 1925 preface to *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, Pirandello stated how pervasively tricky is the goal to achieve reciprocal comprehension, given the multiple personalities contained in each human being (Pirandello, *Six Characters in Search of an Author* xxii). He decided to face this problem by creating the immutable theatrical character. The Sitwells, mainly Edith, had shown fascination for the idea of the exploration of identities, especially its 18<sup>th</sup>-century debates in England, originated by John Locke's reflections and propelled by Alexander

Pope and Jonathan Swift's discussions. Scott Moncrieff perceived the possibility to attack them by exploiting Pirandello's contribution to the long-standing debate.

The *casus belli* for Scott Moncrieff's pamphlet was a quarrel between strong personalities. In 1919, Osbert Sitwell took exception at articles published in *The New Witness*, a periodical to which Scott Moncrieff contributed, that Osbert Sitwell defined a "queer bastard Catholic-Socialist-ultra-Conservative paper" (Pearson 210). The enmity probably arose in that occasion and escalated at the subsequent Sitwell's negative review of an anthology of texts that discussed WWI.<sup>8</sup> Scott Moncrieff, a decorated officer of that war, decried Sitwell's essay from the column of his periodical. Since then, the two developed an animosity that was never quelled. (Findlay 164-166) In 1926, Scott Moncrieff was verbally attacked by Osbert Sitwell when the two met in a London theater. It seems that Scott Moncrieff wanted to shake hands but Osbert refused and explained the reason for his refusal: "Because I have for a long time disliked you, and because you have been impertinent" (Pearson 210). Unfortunately, Osbert, particularly sensitive to all sort of criticism, picked a fight with a fellow of similar temperament. Scott Moncrieff is described as "undoubtedly a prickly character [...] he liked quarreling on every pretext and with every friend of his" (Pearson 211). Other theories have been advanced on the source of this animosity. Maybe it was the tragic fatality that was perceived by the Sitwells as the consequence of the treatment Scott Moncrieff reserved to the poet Wilfred Owen during the years of the war. It is not clear whether Scott Moncrieff and Owen had

a relationship, but Owen died on the WWI front before Scott Moncrieff, seriously wounded in a previous battle, could reach him. Osbert and her sister Edith, friends with Owen, thought Scott Moncrieff could have done more to save him from the dangers of the frontline. Osbert reportedly told one biographer that Scott Moncrieff had 'as good as murdered' Owen (Ziegler 139). Eventually, Scott Moncrieff gets back at the three siblings plus Walton, the younger friend of the Sitwells, with his bitter pamphlet, with which he mocks their lives and artistic accomplishments.

In the following pages, I will first summarize the content of the pamphlet, and then analyze its relevance in the discourse about identity that occupied so much of Pirandello's and Edith Sitwell's art. Besides the summary and the glossing of the Sitwell references – a necessary step in the fruition of any satire – it is central, for the purpose of this essay, to understand Scott Moncrieff's ironic reference to the issue of identity that the four authors in search of a character pursue. Identity was central not only in Pirandello's *Six Character in Search of an Author*, but also for Edith Sitwell's works, and as such it was perceived by Scott Moncrieff.

The story in the pamphlet recounts the implausible adventures of four authors/characters: Frogbert, Sacharissa, Zerubbabel and Lincruston who represent, respectively: Osbert Sitwell (1892-1969), Sacheverell Sitwell (1897-1988), Edith Sitwell (1887-1964) and William Walton (1902-1983). The first three are siblings, the fourth is a younger friend. As soon as the siblings and their friend reach adulthood, grow, the

parents of the three children leave the house and – in reference to Sir George and Lady Ida Sitwell’s property in Montegufoni (a town near Florence) where the older Sitwells often resided after World War I until 1942 – “showing admirable self-effacement, retired simultaneously and along parallel routes to a strategic position in South West-Central Europe” (Scott Moncrieff 8). The only resources left to the four abandoned children are a “half empty bottle of barley water and an illustrated catalogue of the Royal Academy for the previous year.” Frogbert, after a moment of “comparative inanition,” catches a barge that will be used by the four to start their implausible journey, at first by “circumnavigate their dwelling,” (Scott Moncrieff, Scott Moncrieff Papers 9) in reference to a trick the three Sitwells hatched to escape the overbearing presence of their father. They had asked friends to send to him letters from various European locations on their behalf, so to lead him to believe they were really away from home. As the four continue their journey by moving out to sea, where they “steered indifferently northwards,” (Scott Moncrieff 9) Scott Moncrieff begins to insert his textual allusions to the Sitwell enemies in the cultural scene of London. As the four children sail on their barge:

they arrived opposite a chemist’s shop, where with the utmost prodigality they purchased four ounces of delectable lozenges and a demijohn of London Mercury, prepared in the stillroom of the adjoining Squire, a few drops of which were guaranteed to kill at sight even the most hardened adversary” (Scott Moncrieff, Scott Moncrieff Papers 9).

A demijohn of London Mercury symbolized the periodical, *London Mercury*, founded by John Collings Squire in 1919 and directed by him. Squire was a ferocious critic of the

Sitwells, whose review of the fourth issue of Edith's magazine *Wheels* triggered a long-standing animosity (Pearson 146-150).

The authors' sea journey touches places disguised under names of London's toponymy (for example South Belgravia), where they meet destitute people in fictitious churches (for example: Saint Diggory by the Docks – diggory indicates a very slow person; Saint Theobald Trailbaston – it was a special type of itinerant judicial commission first created at the beginning of 1300; Saint Walpurga Wapping – a district in London Docklands, England, in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets; and thirteen more with similar allusive names.<sup>9</sup> They explore seemingly far-away places such as the "shores of Ross," a reference to Robert Ross, friend of Oscar Wilde, who encouraged younger poets including the Sitwells in their artistic pursuits. The short piece goes on to display the same strong mocking tone. As the four leave the "shores of Ross" they touch the Shell Sea where they are asked to recite poems and then invited to make an appearance at the Palace, in reference to Sacheverell's 1918 poetry collection *A People's Palace* (Scott Moncrieff, Scott Moncrieff Papers 14). When they arrive in the Puglian peninsula they "inaugurated an exhibition of contemporary art, which, in the total absence of spectators, was successful in provoking no hostile comment" (Scott Moncrieff, Scott Moncrieff Papers 17). Scott Moncrieff continues with his savage attack: after a few weeks of travel, they reach an island inhabited by "Georgian poets of an unimaginable rusticity" who lived in trees. The four invite the poets to descend from the trees and entertained them



with their poetic compositions. However, “having listened with evident impatience to no fewer than twenty-seven of these compositions, the Georgian poets rescampered with commendable agility to their arboreal residences” from which they started to pelt the four children with fruits and “lampoons” (Scott Moncrieff, *Scott Moncrieff Papers* 18-19). The number twenty-seven is not a random one, as it is a reference to the initial number of poems in *Façades*, Edith’s most famous work, that initially contained twenty-seven pieces. Its public performance created an uproar among the most traditional literary critics and artists – such as the “Georgian poets” abhorred by the Sitwells – who scorned her work in many venues. Even when the four sea-farers reach Caffyroyal (Scott Moncrieff, *Scott Moncrieff Papers* 19), a reference to the Café Royal, a place in London frequented by writers in the 1920s, they cannot escape the attacks: “they were received with a pandemonium befitting their rank and position.” When they left, they “were assailed by a coward of such remarkable ferocity that they were compelled to seek shelter in their barge” (Scott Moncrieff, *Scott Moncrieff Papers* 20). The unnamed coward is Noël Coward, a literary critic and writer who maintained a strongly critical voice against the siblings’ artistic endeavors.

The four children are continually derided for their inabilities to achieve any result, all their adventures turn out to be failures, and they end up being hit by stones thrown from the walls of a castle.

... they were greeted with a shower of boiling oil followed, owing to the difference in the constant acceleration of falling bodies of varying specific gravity, by a

number of large stone balls of remarkable antiquity, the impact of which instantly enabled Frogbert to see stars like parrots, whereas upon every occasion previously recorded he had seen parrots like stars (Scott Moncrieff 21).

The shower of objects against them came from none other than their parents, inside their Montegufoni residence, with whom eventually they decide “to spend the remainder of their days in opulence and inanity” (Scott Moncrieff 21).

The Sitwells, especially Edith and Osbert (and their eccentric behaviors), played a controversial and at the same time powerfully influential role in the renaissance of British literary scene after WWI, and until their disappearance in the sixties. As indicated also in Scott Moncrieff’s pamphlet, they had ties with Italy. Osbert and Sacheverell spent a great deal of time in Amalfi and in Tuscany, in the castle of Montegufoni, between Florence and Certaldo (it is the “strategic position in South West-Central Europe” where also their parents retired) a property acquired in 1909 by their father Sir George, their father. Both Scott Moncrieff and the Sitwells were familiar with Florence. Both knew Giuseppe Orioli, bookseller in Florence, who operated also a small press and acted as a *trait d’union* between the British ex-pat community and many Italian artists. In December 1924, always in Florence, Scott Moncrieff recounts his near miss encounter with his literary enemies: “After the Sitwells had left the other day, in what the Maitre d’Hotel called a ‘magnifico Rolls-Roger’ he told me that they had inquired about me [...] They will probably send a report that I am living under a false name” (Findlay 233-234). In March 1926 in Florence,

Scott Moncrieff also deepened his relationship with Pirandello, during the playwright's stay in the city in occasion of the production of his plays.

As in the case of satires, it is central and relatively easy to look at the literary models that inspired Scott Moncrieff's short piece. Analysis shows that Scott Moncrieff's satire was not a "silly squib" as it was quickly framed, (Ziegler 139) but a rather sophisticated mocking accusation of his enemies' perceived shortcomings. Despite the pamphlet's title, the occasion to satirize the Sitwells might have not been Pirandello's hugely successful play. In fact, it probably was Edith Sitwell's own works, especially *Façade* (1922) and *Bucolic Comedies* (1923), two of her most important collection of poems in which Dame Edith probes the limits of rhythms, rhymes, metric solutions and sound properties of the English language. Both the books and the live performances of her poetry drew attention for what was understood at the time as mixed artistic results: critics loved and hated her works. For example, Noël Coward, one of her harshest critics, mocked Edith and her brothers in his successful sketch "The Swiss Family Whittlebot," in which he derides the accomplishments of Hernia Whittlebot and her brothers Gob and Sago, rather explicit stand-ins for Edith, Osbert and Sacheverell Sitwells during their imagined stage performances of modern poetry recitation (Coward 51-54).

In her *Bucolic Comedies* however, Edith Sitwell delves in the issues of personal identity and moral compass that lay at the core of her artistic investigation. The breaking of the traditional habits of rhythm, rhymes, metrics and sound was only belatedly

understood as her protest against conformity and melancholy (Greene 101). In her own words, the “verbal deadness” is a formal problem that relates directly with the contents of everybody’s lives:

Rhythm is one of the principal translators between dream and reality. Rhythm might be described as, to the world of sound, what light is to the world of sight. It shapes and gives new meaning (Greene 103).

Her exploration of meaning in her poetry, symbolized a fight against hypocrisy that brought her close to the eighteenth-century explorations on the conceptions of personal identity, more precisely to the writings of Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, John Arbuthnot, Thomas Parnell, John Gay and Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford. These friends gathered in a short-lived yet influential club, self-named Scriblerians, whose writings on the problem of identity were published under the pen name of Martinus Scriblerus. He represented a fictitious character who took up the issue of the nature of the personal self with a mocking tone yet displaying the understanding of the complexity of the issue, and its legal and religious importance. The Scriblerians ridiculed “pretentious erudition and scholarly jargon through the person of a fictitious literary hack” (Fox 81-130). However, in this investigation, it is not my intention to explore the group’s philosophical discourse, but rather to identify the literary inspirations behind Scott Moncrieff’s satire of the Sitwell family.

As a matter of fact, the more evident intertextual presence is the classic model of English satire as shown in Jonathan Swift’s ideas: *Gulliver’s Travels* – especially the third

book on Gulliver's travels in Laputa and his encounter with the useless intellectuals of the local academy – and his 1704 satire *A Tale of a Tub*, against pedantry and religion, that employs the discussion around the nature of truth to organize its discourse. But what I see as important, besides the glossing of the Swift presence, is Scott Moncrieff's references to the issue of identity, important not only for Pirandello but also for Edith Sitwell.

Engaged with the idea of appearances that betray dire material and moral poverty (as manifested in her *Façades*), Edith Sitwell studied Pope's vision of personal identity, a matter that Pope and his Scriblerian friends discussed at length in their meetings. She was taken by the 18<sup>th</sup>-century ideas of personal identity as derived by substance (unity of mind and body) that, under Christianity, ensure the existence of a permanent indestructible being, forever existent and therefore forever responsible since they remain the same.<sup>10</sup> When discussing personal identity, scholars point to John Locke who had brought this topic to attention in his Essay "Concerning Human Understanding." For Locke, the concept of selfhood must reside in the identify of consciousness. His statement generated a flurry of controversies, from Hume who expressed skepticism about the existence of a permanent personal identity, to the Scriblerians, whose discourses brought into play the deception that outward appearance causes in relation to identity of consciousness, as in the case of the Houyhnhnms' doubts about Gulliver's identity, first clothed and then seen sleeping without his clothes on.<sup>11</sup> In short, in 18<sup>th</sup>-century England with the words personal identity, the contributors of the debate meant to discuss the idea

of the expression “same person” that originated in the work of Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Can a person be two different persons in two different moments of its life? (Locke offers the example of Socrates awake and Socrates asleep) (Fox 69-78). Pope, in his *Epistle to Cobham* (1734) attempts to reconcile a vision of the self that brings together the transience and inscrutability of the personal self and the unifying element of the ruling passion as the unchangeable core that builds a unity in the personal self.

The quest of a permanent self soon becomes a personal crisis for Edith Sitwell, as was shown in her main work *Façade*. Edith felt very close to Pope’s artistry and his vitriolic attack on society. Maybe unexpected in the pages of a writer that held snobbism and sophistication in so high esteem, Edith did not fail to harshly criticize social differences also in her creative pieces as, for example, in her piece *Freak Parties* where she recounts the frightening lack of moral decency of parties whose guests, in order to attend, mimicked the clothing and the aspect of the poor’s.

Edith Sitwell’s *Façade*, a collection of poetry that enjoyed success and a good deal of criticism, is indeed concerned with the world of appearance, a façade that conceals “desolation and moral emptiness” (Greene 104). In her *Bucolic Comedies* (1923) she describes “The Man with the Green Patch”, an admiral that returned home to die whose utterances serve him only to defend his constructed identity (Greene 105). All day the protagonist sits with

Brobdingnagian asses,  
Talking while the lame time passes

His patch, will never let him see  
The real world, terrible and old,  
Where seraphs in the mart are sold  
And fires from Bedlam's madness flare  
Like the blue palm-leaves in desert air.

In the first quoted line, the reference to Swift is immediately perceived followed by the reference to madness as the justified condition for having a double personality. In *A Tale of a Tub*,<sup>12</sup> Swift takes aim at Locke's theory on the personal self, as understood in his years, that any person can be whomever he wants to be: "When a madman is not himself, whom does he become? [...] It was this aspect of the relationship of consciousness to madness which most interested Swift" (Fox 77-78). The personal identity of individuals, hidden behind façades, ultimately captured the attention of Edith Sitwell.

The theme of appearances to establish identities becomes relevant to the point that, maybe not by coincidence, in March 1926, on the eve of the completion of the translation of *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore*, and having just finished his anti-Sitwell pamphlet,<sup>13</sup> Scott Moncrieff writes to Holland about *Vestire gli ignudi*, [Clothe the Naked], a play that premiered in 1922 and enjoyed great success in the English-speaking world:

Pirandello came to Florence on Thursday, and I shall probably go back there tomorrow night with Wilson and Macfie and stay there till Pirandello's company go away. I have missed two plays already that I particularly wanted to see, *Vestire gli ignudi* and *Lo stesso come colle donne*" (Pisa, March 2, 1926) (Scott Moncrieff Papers).

In *Clothe the Naked* the theme of the clothing, or rather its absence, was the last desperate act of protest to define an identity that was indiscriminately construed by others. Ersilia, the protagonist, loved, abandoned and then scorned by his lover, eventually decides to kill herself to protest against an identity that was created for her by those around her. She remains metaphorically naked as the discordant opinions on her persona come to a tragic end with her suicide, but true to the world that can see her without somebody else's clothes on.<sup>14</sup>

Swift is considered a master of the satirical genre, but I believe Scott Moncrieff's decision to turn to Swift was not determined solely by Swift's authority on the subject matter. Scott Moncrieff was clearly also thinking of what Pirandello wrote about the Irishman in *L'umorismo*. Swift is mentioned about a dozen times in Pirandello's treatise, and is consistently indicated, by Pirandello, as a satirist who embodies "melancholy in the original meaning of the word, that is, full of bile," as probably was Scott Moncrieff at that time (Pirandello, *On Humor* 108). According to Pirandello, Swift is one of the humorists with a "sour disposition to disclose and express the ridiculous aspect of seriousness and the serious aspect of the ridiculous" (Pirandello, *On Humor* 108). As a testimony to Pirandello's closeness to Swift, Pirandello also chose Grildrig as pen name when he published selections of his writing on the roman newspaper *Il messaggero*. Grildrig is the name with which the giants address Gulliver.<sup>15</sup>



Scott Moncrieff quickly picked up on this rush of ideas about identity that he saw central, albeit treated differently, to both Pirandello and Edith Sitwell. He decided to make fun of his enemies by using against them both Swift's model of satire against the pedantry as the greater enemy of culture and literature (as attacked in *A Tale of a Tub*) and by using the means put at his disposal by Edith Sitwell herself and Pirandello. Pirandello's reflections on identity that he had recently revisited as he read *One, No One and One Hundred Thousand*, published between December 1925 and June 1926 in the *Fiera Letteraria*. The historical determination of the unfolding of the concept of identity in a pamphlet that contains more than a superficial reference to Pirandello becomes therefore more important.

I believe that by juxtaposing Swift's concept of self to Pirandello's, Scott Moncrieff told his enemies – the Sitwells – that they were looking at an old model; that Pirandello had taken the more modern steps towards the determination of the “selves;” that also the Sitwells should look at the subconscious level to better estimate the irrationalities of the mind, thoroughly explored by Pirandello, but sorely avoided by his literary enemies, anchored to a crucial, but outdated, 18<sup>th</sup>-century reflections.

It is therefore necessary to return to the title of a play that Pirandello significantly identifies as a drama that contains a “satire,” albeit of an idea, Romanticism, and not of an individual (Pirandello, *Six Characters in Search of an Author* xxix). But Scott Moncrieff focuses on individuals, more precisely authors in search of a character: words that,

despite the inverted order, immediately identify Scott Moncrieff's satire as linked to Pirandello's play. Obviously, the inversion of the two words is not gratuitous. At first, we see the pun, but, in light of Pirandello's reflections in his play, I believe that the word character must be understood in the meaning Pirandello bestows on it when the Father tries to explain his self to the director:

Father [dignified but not haughty]. A character, sir, can always ask a man who he is. Because a character really has his own life, marked with his own characteristics, by virtue of which he is always someone. Whereas, a man – I'm not speaking of you now – a *man* can be no one. (Pirandello, *Six Characters in Search of an Author* 60)

In keeping with this reasoning, Scott Moncrieff accuses the Sitwells of being not only without character, but, I believe more correctly, that they are mere authors: human beings and therefore they can be no one. More obviously, he also accuses them of being authors of poor qualities because they are mono-dimensional and tragically predictable. In addition to this deplorable status, they do not have even the satisfaction of being characters, because they are searching for one. Not even characters, Scott Moncrieff mercilessly goes on in his attack, they do not even have their own lives.

What is lacking in the Sitwells, if we follow Scott Moncrieff's reasoning, is the idea of the subconscious self with which Pirandello was dealing. The Sitwells' fascination with the 18<sup>th</sup>-century discussions on personal identity blocked them from moving forward in the direction of an appreciation of the existential crisis of the individual as interpreted by the paramount arrival of psychoanalysis in the philosophical arena.

Scott Moncrieff's satire, rather than a "silly squib," should instead be reevaluated as a clever – albeit cruel – attack that took advantage of considerations that go beyond the recycling of Swift's texts, to chart instead the crisis of the modernity. When Scott Moncrieff decided to call in the satirical game of authorship Pirandello's play, he was well aware of Pirandello's views. According to the Sicilian, the only viable path towards an acceptable life consists of the individual's ability to create one's own reality. However human beings cannot stop at creating one reality only: they need to change it, to alter it so keep it alive and able to sustain life's illusion (Borsellino 55-58). It is quite likely that Scott Moncrieff felt an affinity for such a vision. According to his biographer Jean Findlay, Scott Moncrieff wore, with admirable dignity, many hats: "the literary man [...]; the family man to his mother, brother and relatives; the spy [...] to the Secret Intelligence Service; and the Rabelaisian homosexual to Vyvyan Holland alone" (Findlay 295). There is, therefore, the strong possibility that an unspoken affinity brought Scott Moncrieff closer to Pirandello's works, in which he saw the reassurance on the possibility to create and maintain his own reality. Pirandello had a good sensation when he described Scott Moncrieff to Marta Abba with generous words about his quality as writer and translator and, in the last letter to Marta that mentions Scott Moncrieff, that Pirandello was going to miss, most of all, his intelligent friendship (Pirandello, *Lettere a Marta Abba* 352).

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<sup>1</sup> For Pirandello's influence on the visual imagination, see Lisa Sarti and Michael Subialka eds., *Pirandello's Visual Philosophy. Imagination and Thought Across Media* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson U. P., 2017).

<sup>2</sup> See Luigi Pirandello, *Shoot!: the Notebooks of Serafino Gubbio, Cinematograph Operator* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1926; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

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<sup>3</sup> According to Jean Findlay, Scott Moncrieff was also a British secret agent sent to Italy to spy on Mussolini's political ambitions, see Jean Findlay, *Chasing Lost Time. The Life of C.K. Scott Moncrieff: Soldier, Spy and Translator* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> The feeling of friendship was mutual. In his letters Scott Moncrieff wrote that he "has built up a pretty fair degree of intimacy with Pirandello [...] [he was] a little excited, a little warm from P's embrace." (Findlay 251) Marta Abba (1900-1988) was Luigi Pirandello's favorite actress. Many consider her his artistic muse. See P. Frassica *Her Maestro's Echo. Pirandello and the Actress Who Conquered Broadway in One Evening* (Leicester, UK: Troubador Italian Studies, 2010); D. Bini, *Pirandello and His Muse* (University Press of Florida, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> Pirandello, *The Old and the Young* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1928). Scott Moncrieff also translated *Lazzaro* as *Though One Rose*, which premiered on July 9, 1929 in Huddersfield, U.K.

<sup>6</sup> Scott Moncrieff to Holland, respectively 11 February 1926 and 11 August, 1926 (Scott Moncrieff, Scott Moncrieff Papers).

<sup>7</sup> For an exhaustive study at the history of the play's productions see Jennifer Lorch, *Pirandello. Six Characters in Search of an Author* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P. 2005).

<sup>8</sup> Charles Graves, *Mr. Punch's History of the Great War* (New York: Frederick Stokes, 1919).

<sup>9</sup> They are: Saint Paul in the Pantry, Saint Katherine Kittermaster, Saint Diggory by the Docks, Saint Mary Quartermary, Saint Theobald Trailbaston, Saint Walpurga Wapping, Saint Christopher Creepmouse, Saint Francis Fossitwell, Saint Lucy Locket, Saint Mary Mutterings, Saint Clement Colefax, Saint Raphael Tuckery, Saint Gabriel Atkinson, Saint Michael Arlington, Saint Roderick Demijohn, Saint Peter Popinjay.

<sup>10</sup> It was an issue challenged by Locke: when he says that identity derives by identity of consciousness (an idea that the Scriblerians – and also Swift -- mocked but investigated nonetheless). Consciousness was described, by Locke's critics, as transient (Fox 17).

<sup>11</sup> The presence/absence of clothes as factor to determine identity is crucial in Swift. In the fourth book of *Gulliver's Travels*, the master of the Houyhnhnms has doubts about the nature of Gulliver because he is told that Gulliver is different from day to night: during daylight he is clothed, but during his sleep he undresses. A servant tells his master about this striking difference, but once he undresses in front of the Houyhnhnm, Gulliver is asked by the master of the Houyhnhnms to put his clothes back on because his identity is no longer in doubt. The master concludes that Gulliver is a perfect Yahoo. Yahoo is the name that defines the brute animals that served the sophisticated Houyhnhnms, but they are human beings (Swift 206).

<sup>12</sup> The title that has a proverbial meaning, that is: an idle or pointless tale.

<sup>13</sup> "I hope you have ordered a copy of *Four Authors in Search of a Character*," Scott Moncrieff to Holland, Pisa, February 11, 1926 (Scott Moncrieff Papers).

<sup>14</sup> See note 11.

<sup>15</sup> "[His Majesty] taking to me into his hands [...] delivered himself in these words, which I shall never forget [...] 'My little friend Gildrig...'" (Swift, 117).