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Stefano Giannini

Hidden Sentiments, Unfinished Project: Pirandello's Film 'La Nuova Colonia'

Luigi Pirandello's attention to cinema predates by many years his famous and controversial 1929 article on the relationship between film and theater.¹ In the early years of the twentieth century, at the beginning of the Italian adventure into the film industry—the first film studio opened in Rome in 1905—Pirandello showed interest in the artistic and technological innovation, which is made manifest in the novel, *Si gira...* [Shoot! The Notebooks of Serafino Gubbio, Cinematographer Operator], whose beginnings can be traced to a 1904 project entitled *Filàuri*.² In 1910 he started to visit the Cines Film Studios in Rome, and during 1913 and 1914 he was almost a regular at the *Film d'Arte Italiana* studios near his home in Via Alessandro Torlonia, in Rome, where he showed interest in director Carmine Gallone's first two films—inspired by Henry Bataille's plays—*La donna nuda* and *Marcia nuziale*, released in 1914 and 1915 respectively.³ His visits were not mere courtesy to a neighbor. In fact, Pirandello devoted a great deal of energy to the film industry, seeing in it the possibility of expanding his artistic discourse and benefiting financially. Despite all the doubts about Pirandello's supposedly negative

¹ Luigi Pirandello, "Se il film parlante abolirà il teatro" [If Talking Pictures Will Abolish Theater], *Anglo-American Newspaper Service*, London-New York, June 1929.

² Timeline for *Si gira...*: 1904 *Filàuri* (project); 1913 *La tigre* (not published); 1915 *Si gira...* (published in episodes in *Nuova Antologia*); 1916-1917 *Si gira...* (published as a novel); 1925 *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio, operatore* (published as a novel). Cf. Francesco Càllari, "Pirandello soggettista e sceneggiatore di cinema," in Stefano Milioto and Enzo Scrivano eds. *Pirandello e la cultura del suo tempo* (Milano: Mursia, 1984) 177-246.

³ Càllari, cit., p. 193. Henry Bataille, *La femme nue*, 1908; *La marche nuptiale*, 1905.

relationship to cinema, it comes as no surprise that his work is marked by the precociousness and intensity of this relationship.⁴

In 1913 and again in 1914 Pirandello wrote to his friend Nino Martoglio, playwright and artistic director of two producing companies, seeking support for his ideas: “My dear Nino, Verga, Bracco, Salvatore di Giacomo... their film projects are doing very well! Couldn’t I do something as well? I have all kinds of ideas, and you know it!”⁵ In this instance Martoglio could not help Pirandello, but his friend’s inability to help did not deter him. Shortly after this letter, he wrote the treatment for *I due eroi* [Two Heroes].⁶

In the following years Pirandello’s interest in cinema persisted: in the late 1910s and in the 1920s eight silent films inspired by his works were completed: *Il lume dell’altra casa* [The Light of the Other House, 1918], *Lo scaldino* [1919], *Il crollo* [The Fall, 1919], *Ma non è una cosa seria* [1920]; *La rosa* [The Rose, 1920-21], *Il viaggio* [The Journey, 1921-22], *Feu Mathias Pascal* [The Late Mattia Pascal, 1924-25], *Die Flucht in die Nacht* [Flight in the Night, but Henry IV, 1926]. In the 1930s six talking films, all inspired by his fiction, were released: *La canzone dell’amore* [1930], *As You Desire Me* [1932], *Ma non è una cosa seria* [1935], *Pensaci, Giacomino!* [1936], *Il Fu Mattia Pascal* [1936-37], *Terra di nessuno* [1938]. Pirandello also wrote numerous film-

⁴ The idea of cinema is also ever-present in the rich correspondence, spanning eleven years of artistic collaboration, between Pirandello and Marta Abba. Many of Pirandello’s letters to his favorite actress anticipate her rise to film stardom in Europe and in the United States: “...my dear Marta—[Pirandello writes]—we will go over there [United States]! And over there You will build Your fortune; and then away, far away from all these miseries and acts of cowardice. You will open the gates to your great success.” Pirandello to Marta Abba, January 31, 1931, in Luigi Pirandello, *Pirandello's love letters to Marta Abba*, Benito Ortolani ed. (Princeton: Princeton U. P. 1994).

⁵ Pirandello to Martoglio, February 5, 1914, in Sarah Zappulla ed., *Pirandello Martoglio. Carteggio inedito* (Milano: Pan, 1979) 22. My translation.

⁶ Pirandello, *I due eroi*, ms., Nino Martoglio Papers, Fondazione Museo dell’Attore e Biblioteca Teatrale, Genova, Italy.

treatments, inspired by his short-stories and plays, that were not completed as films: *Nel segno* [1913], *Lontano* [1914], *I due eroi* [1914], *L'altro figlio* [1915], *Il pipistrello* [The Bat, 1925, and 1928]; *Sei Personaggi in cerca d'autore* [Six Characters in Search of an Author, 1926, 1928, and 1935]; and eight adaptations from the short story *Ignare* [Unsuspecting] between 1928 and 1936 [*Heilige Liebe, Vergine madre, Brand in Western, Mai figlio nacque invano, Fuga in Egitto, L'oscuro richiamo, La via del perdono, Il figlio dell'uomo cattivo*]; *Trovarsi I* or *I due mari* [1933]; *Trovarsi II* [1936].

Among the never completed films is *La Nuova Colonia* [The New Colony]. The history of the film-project *La Nuova Colonia* is important for a further understanding of Pirandello's poetics. *La Nuova Colonia* was born as a project for a play conceived by Silvia Roncella, the protagonist of Pirandello's novel *Suo marito* [Her Husband], published in 1911 but begun in 1909. Nestled in the plot of Pirandello's novel, *La Nuova Colonia* took on independent life in 1926 as the play of the same name that premiered in Rome, at the Theater Argentina, two years later in March 1928. The two dates indicated for the beginning of the writing of the play and its debut are not the chronological limits for the idea *La Nuova Colonia*, and fail to convey how intricate its history is.

Set in an unidentified town in Southern Italy, *La Nuova Colonia*, according to the 1911 version, is the story of marginal individuals who decide to leave their misery to settle on an abandoned island off the coast of Otranto. They are determined to start a new life free of the social stigmas that have marred their existences. A devastating earthquake hits the island and kills nearly everybody. The plot as sketched in the novel surfaces at other times as a project soon to be completed and undergoes numerous changes. The earliest information on the composition of a play using the idea from the book dates to

1921.⁷ In 1926 the title is “La Nuova Colonia”; in 1928 the play premieres at the Theater Argentina in Rome with the Luigi Pirandello Company, Marta Abba and Lamberto Picasso in the leading roles. After its 1911 release, *Suo marito* was never reprinted: Pirandello had decided not to reprint because of the uproar that ensued after the discovery of the similarities between his novel and a famous colleague’s life. He eventually resolved to rewrite it but never finished. It was published posthumously, in 1941, under a new title—*Giustino Roncella nato Boggiòlo* [Giustino Roncella born Boggiòlo]—and the plot within the novel changes title as well, from “La Nuova Colonia,” which we have seen before, to “L’Isola Nuova” [The New Island].

In parallel with the play, a cinematographic adaptation inspired by the same plot as that of “La nuova colonia” is known to exist. The work, written in German, is believed to have been started in the same year as the detailed theater project: 1926. The story as sketched in the film-treatment is similar to the story outlined in the novel but with less definite geographical coordinates and with a different ending. It was published for the first time only in 1982 by Antonio Illiano and Giovanni Bussino and translated into English and Italian, republished in 1983 and 1984.⁸ The twenty-page-long typed document entitled *Die Neue Kolonie* [The New Colony,] is housed in the Max Reinhardt Archive of the Glenn G. Bartle Library of the State University of New York at Binghamton. It is the only evidence of a manuscript prepared for the never-realized film, written in German, probably by Pirandello with help from Hans Feist, the main translator

⁷ Cf. Mario Corsi, “Cinque commedie d’un autore. (Quello che prepara Luigi Pirandello)”, interview with Luigi Pirandello, *La Tribuna*, 5-6 ottobre 1921; now in Ivan Pupo, *Interviste a Pirandello* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2002) 137-38 and notes.

⁸ Giovanni Bussino; Antonio Illiano. “Pirandello’s Filmprojekt *Die neue Kolonie*”, *Filmkritik*, 26, 311 (1982) 527-40; “Pirandello’s Film Project for *La nuova colonia*”, *Canadian Journal of Italian Studies*, 6 (1983) 111-30, “Sceneggiatura cinematografica de *La nuova colonia*”, *Rivista di studi pirandelliani*, IV, 2 (1984) 63-80.

of Pirandello's work in that language. The genesis of the film-project is intriguing. Pirandello had contacts in the German film industry (where he looked for support to produce *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* [Six Characters in Search of an Author])⁹: in 1926 he looked in Germany for the first potential director for his *La Nuova Colonia*: Robert Wiene, of Pan Film. That project was not completed, and in 1928 and 1929 respectively Pirandello found another producer, Lothar Starck, and a new director, the Italian Gennaro Righelli, for the film under the new title *Die Insel der Hoffnung* [The Island of Hope]. But the attempts to make the film failed again. In 1935, during his second trip to the United States, Pirandello very likely showed to Max Reinhardt – Austrian director of the well-received Berlin debut of *Six Characters in Search of an Author* in 1924 – the *Die Neue Kolonie* film treatment and discussed with him the possibility of producing the film; this third attempt failed as well.¹⁰ In his detailed reconstruction, Francesco Càllari states that it is impossible to know if there ever was a copy of the film-treatment written in Italian, and if so, it has probably been destroyed.¹¹ The uncertainty about the existence of such a document is resolved by a letter from Giuseppe Prezzolini to Arthur Livingston, dated March 14, 1923, housed in the Livingston Archive of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin. In that letter there is proof of the existence of a treatment entitled “La

⁹ *Six Characters in Search of an Author* was not produced but the effort lead Pirandello to his writing, with Adolf Lantz, the Film-Novelle *Sechs Personen Suchen Einen Auktor*, published in 1929. Cf. Luigi Pirandello, Adolf Lantz. *Sechs Personen Suchen Einen Auktor* (Berlino: Verlag Von Reimar Hobbing: 1929). For the history of the film project *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* cf. Rossano Vittori, *Il trattamento cinematografico dei Sei Personaggi* (Firenze: Liberoscambio, 1984).

¹⁰ On Pirandello's visits to the United States, cf. Giuseppe Faustini, “Luigi Pirandello's Two American Sojourns: Reception and Representation of America,” *PSA*, XVIII (2005): 47-61.

¹¹ Francesco Càllari, *Pirandello e il cinema*, (Venezia: Marsilio, 1991) 260-62.

nuova colonia,” written in Italian and predating by at least three years the text in German.¹²

The one-and-a-half-page-long typed document is a business letter on the “Foreign Press Service” letterhead written in Italian and sent from Rome, where Prezzolini worked, to New York to the attention of Arthur Livingston, co-founder and director with Paul Kennaday of “Foreign Press Service”. Livingston was a professor of Italian at Columbia University, a translator, and an active cultural promoter.¹³ With his business, “Foreign Press Service”, he meant to spread texts in translation between Europe and the United States. An esteemed translator of Italian and Spanish into English, he produced one of the most acclaimed translations of Pirandello’s plays: *Each in His Own Way and Two Other Plays* (Dutton, 1923). In the letter, Prezzolini informs Livingston of the novelty of the Italian market and pays particular attention to the plot for the film “La Nuova Colonia” that Pirandello has completed upon request from Carmine Gallone.

With these data, the chronology of the genesis of *La Nuova Colonia* must be updated, making 1923 rather than 1926 the earliest known date for the outset of the film-project. The chronology continues: 1929 (the year that marks Gennaro Righelli’s involvement in the German film production, Carmine Gallone having disappeared from this project); and 1935 (when Pirandello discussed with Max Reinhardt the possibility of his directing the film). Nineteen-twenty-three is not a premature date to confirm Pirandello’s early interest in cinema, given the already-mentioned 1918, 1919, and 1920

¹² Cf. Stefano Giannini, “Un nuovo dato per la cronologia della versione cinematografica della *Nuova colonia* di Luigi Pirandello,” *Annali d’Italianistica*, 23 (2005): 233-40.

¹³ On Arthur Livingston cf. Roberto Severino, “Dr. Livingston, I presume! Or the Stormy Saga of Pirandello’s Diffusion in America,” *Pirandello in America*, Mario B. Mignone ed. (Roma: Bulzoni, 1988) 61-74; Juliet K. Viola, “Arthur Livingston: Knight Errant of the American Anti-Fascist Movement,” unpublished master’s thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1986.

productions, and the uncompleted projects dating to 1913, 1914, and 1915 (*L'altro figlio*). The trajectory of *La Nuova Colonia* is therefore a testament to Pirandello's tireless labor on a project that had consumed him since 1909. From a sketch for a play nestled in a narrative, to film, to play, the plot variations suggest a continuous reflection on a theme that brings Pirandello to consider different solutions for the finale: the cruel ending of the first rendering, where the mother, to punish her partner, kills their son; the bright ending of the film project where mother, son, and all the characters "pure in spirit"¹⁴ are spared by the disastrous earthquake; the salvation only for mother and son of the play. Titles vary as well: *La Nuova Colonia* in 1911, in the 1923 letter, and in the 1928 play; *Die Insel der Hoffnung* for the 1929 film project; *Die Neue Kolonie* for the 1935 film project; and "L'isola nuova" in the 1941 edition of the novel.¹⁵ For a quarter of a century Pirandello persevered, exploring different solutions to achieve a result that ultimately did not fully convince him. Through the different experiences he was able to catch glimpses of the possibility of attaining the higher level of artistic expression to which he incessantly aspired: a level where, he believed, art could become the continuous exploration of different potentials of creation, and creation could, in turn, defeat the fixed, sterile real.

Pirandello's vast body of work—from novels to poems, from short stories to plays, to translation, essays, and movie scripts—shows common elements rearranged in different sequences according to the artist's needs. Pirandello is constantly in search of improvement, as in the cases of *Si gira...* and *La Nuova Colonia* and their many title

¹⁴ Giovanni Bussino; Antonio Illiano, "Pirandello's Film Project for *La nuova colonia*", cit., p. 130.

¹⁵ *La nascita del mito* [The Birth of the Myth] is another title Pirandello mentions in interviews; cf. "Pirandello parla a R. De Flers," *Corriere della Sera*, July 15, 1925; now in Pupo, cit., p. 305.

changes. The review of the complex history of *La Nuova Colonia* also confirms the need to consider all of Pirandello's works as a whole, whose elements often intersect and mix. In this specific case it is possible to identify common elements that surround the play, which tie it to other Pirandello works: the winding line of anarchism that links the Sicilian *fasci* of Pirandello's 1909 novel *I Vecchi e i Giovani* and the colonizers of the play;¹⁶ the migration of the myth of a new beginning from the fragments of the uncompleted novel *Adamo ed Eva*—dated in its earliest incarnation to the end of the nineteenth century¹⁷—to the new society that Currao wants to found in the play;¹⁸ the archetypal function of Tuta—protagonist of the 1903 short story “Il ventaglino”—that displays features that inform both the ultimately divergent *La nuova colonia* characters of Spera and Mita.¹⁹ Pirandello is not afraid of repetition; in fact he exploits repetitions and variations as a way to achieve ultimate perfection in his art. These elements—textual and thematic intersections, combining a work with another written years earlier—illuminate the history of the reception of Pirandello's poetics, even if, paradoxically, they strengthen the doubts about the origin of many works. These doubts surround *La Nuova Colonia*, a work with—as shown above—a tormented polygenesis that prompted Giovanni Macchia,

¹⁶ Robert Perroud, “Rivolta, poteri e potenza nella ‘Nuova colonia’ di Pirandello,” *Rassegna Lucchese* 57 (1976): 1-21. On the anarchic essence of the Sicilian *fasci* cf. Leonardo Sciascia, *Pirandello e la Sicilia* (Palermo: Salvatore Sciascia, 1961) 15.

¹⁷ “Mi porto dentro questo mondo da circa trent’anni” is Pirandello's answer to Fortunio's (Stefano Pirandello) interview (Fortunio, “Se Pirandello scrivesse il romanzo di ‘Adamo ed Eva,’” *Il Tevere*, July 31, 1926). Cf. Ivan Pupo, *Interviste a Pirandello*, cit., pp. 331-34; Alfredo Barbina, “Le ‘incompiute’ di Pirandello,” *Ariel* 2 (1997) 165-75.

¹⁸ Leonardo Sciascia, *Alfabeto pirandelliano* (Milano: Adelphi, 1989) 25. Cf. also Luigi Mazzacurati's introduction to Pirandello's *Uno, nessuno e centomila* (Torino: Einaudi, 1994) v-xxxiv.

¹⁹ Luigi Pirandello, “Il ventaglino,” *La Riviera ligure*, 48 (July 1903); now in Giovanni Macchia ed. *Novelle per un anno* I, 1 (Milano: Mondadori, 1985) pp. 168-75.

the editor of the main edition of Pirandello's works, to wonder when he really began to write the play.²⁰

The question is relevant; but first we should agree on what constitutes a beginning for *La Nuova Colonia*: the plot shown in *Suo marito*? The film-project? The play?

Another question is as crucial as the provocative previous one: was *La Nuova Colonia* ever completed? If we consider—as accepted by the scholarly community—Pirandello's work as a whole, we accept that the core of *La Nuova Colonia* can be traced to the episode narrated in the 1911 novel but that the play that premiered in 1928 was only one of the attempts that reached fruition: the cinematographic attempts did not, and the rewriting of *Suo marito*, which still contained the plot *L'isola nuova*, was not completed either.²¹ Despite the efforts Pirandello devoted to the film project “La Nuova Colonia”, starting in 1923, and continuing until the eve of his death, in 1935, when in New York he met with Max Reinhardt, Pirandello never found the means to have his *La Nuova Colonia* produced. Several reasons can be advanced. Pirandello never rid himself of the skepticism about the use of sound in films, and retained a low opinion of Italian filmmakers who, in his experience, were intent on exploiting the technical means without paying attention to the artistic message.²²

It is, however, difficult to believe that philosophical stances like opposing sound in films and technical difficulties could have prevented the realization of *La Nuova Colonia*. In 1930, from Pirandello's short story *In silenzio*, Gennaro Righelli directed *La*

²⁰ Luigi Pirandello, *Tutti i romanzi*, Giovanni Macchia ed. (Milano: Mondadori, 1973) xv.

²¹ For a rationale to explain the incomplete rewriting of the novel see Nino Borsellino, “L'Arte come gestazione: *Suo marito*,” *Ritratto e immagini di Pirandello* (Bari: Laterza, 1991) 47-49.

²² Pirandello, interview by Testor, in *La Stampa*, December 9, 1932; now in Francesco Cällari, *Pirandello e il cinema*, cit., pp. 127-28. For resistance to the use of sound in films cf. also René Clair's objections to the novelty, in George Bluestone, *Novel into Film* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U. P., 1957), 27 et passim.

canzone dell'amore, with screenplay by Giorgio C. Simonelli, ironically the first Italian “talking film”. And in 1932 he agreed to the Hollywood production based on his *Come tu mi vuoi*, entitled *As you desire me*, directed by George Fitzmaurice, and starring Greta Garbo. The challenging scene of *La Nuova Colonia*—an earthquake that destroys the island—was no longer an insurmountable obstacle for the rapidly improving special effects industry (moreover, technical difficulties did not stop the theater debut of *La Nuova Colonia*). Carmine Gallone, the director mentioned in the 1923 letter, had distinguished himself as the skillful director of *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei* [The last days of Pompei, 1926], a colossal production recently rediscovered by critics as a good example of the catastrophic genre.

The third element, and the one that contributes more effectively to the understanding of Pirandello’s impasse, is found in the genesis and the motifs that inform *I Giganti della Montagna* [The Mountain Giants], Pirandello’s unfinished work *par excellence*. *I Giganti della Montagna* is the story of a company of actors who are ready to perform a play in front of an uneducated and violent audience. The play is interrupted on the eve of the performance that will very likely turn into tragedy. Comparative examinations of both *La Nuova Colonia* and *I Giganti della Montagna* elucidate the comprehension of the other, adding another possible explanation for why the two chronologically overlapping projects were not completed. *I Giganti della Montagna* is traditionally presented as Pirandello’s last work probably because, as the story goes, on his deathbed Pirandello told his son Stefano how to bring to an end the still unfinished

play. While there is no doubt about this information, it is also necessary to reconsider Pirandello's willingness and ability to complete it.²³

The times coincided for the development of the film-project *La Nuova Colonia* and of the play *I Giganti della Montagna*. The idea for *I Giganti della Montagna* had already been conceived by October 1928: Pirandello started working on it after the staging of the play *La Nuova Colonia* and then slowly, between 1929 and 1933, he completed its first two acts. Reasons for the arduous and long project can be found in the fathering function *I Giganti della Montagna* took on soon after its inception.²⁴ From the idea of *I Giganti della Montagna* he laboriously extracted the play *Come tu mi vuoi* [As you desire me] in 1929, which premiered in 1930; and, with comparable efforts, he wrote between 1930 and 1932 *La favola del figlio cambiato* [The Fable of the Changeling] that was presented in 1934. Given the vastness of Pirandello's work, and his known productivity, it is difficult to believe in a lack of inspiration on his part at this stage of the writing. In the path toward completion of *I Giganti della Montagna*, Pirandello had enriched its significance to include denunciation of power, rejection of society and materialism,²⁵ and appreciation for the praxis and magic of theater to the point of realizing that his art, as pure creation, could not be embodied in a completed play without

²³ Claudio Vicentini, *Pirandello. Il disagio del teatro* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1993); Pietro Frassica, "I Giganti e la poetica dell'incompiuta," *Le fonti di Pirandello*, Antonio Alessio and Giuliana Sanguinetti Katz eds. (Palermo: Palumbo, 1996) 121-33. For an extensive bibliographical study on Pirandello's many unfinished projects cf. Alfredo Barbina, "Le 'incompiute' di Pirandello," series of several articles in *Ariel* (1997-2001).

²⁴ Cf. Stefano Giannini, "La passionale genesi di *Come tu mi vuoi*," *Rivista di letteratura italiana*, XX, 2 (2002): 217-34.

²⁵ Traces of his attacks against the inhumane modern technical society unable to appreciate arts and their natural bond with life—as it happens in *I Giganti della montagna*, manifestations of his apocalyptic post-Darwinism—can be seen already in his novel *Uno, nessuno e centomila* [One, Nobody, and One Hundred-Thousand] published in 1926. Cf. for example book VIII, ch. 4 and the comment by Mazzacurati, cit., p. 48.

risking its vitality and that of theater itself. What sparked the emergence of *I Giganti della Montagna* worked against the completion of the project *La Nuova Colonia*.

In 1925 Pirandello had accepted with great enthusiasm the leadership of a state-funded theater to perform plays without the necessity of immediate economic success. After many efforts, his attempt to gain steady financial support from the regime failed and in August 1928 he was forced to dissolve the company. Frustration arose probably less from the financial failure than from the hostility he encountered in the theater scene from theater owners, managers, directors, and actors who favored commercial plays over his more experimental choices.²⁶ Frustration also brought a desire to escape from his nation—realized in his choice to live in Berlin—and from society to devote himself to writing²⁷. The failure of his theater company—five months after the production of the play *La Nuova Colonia*—spurred him to reflect on the relationship between art and society, which was soon developed in a work that became *I Giganti della Montagna*, where he questions the possibility of existence for art and theater, both besieged by crass public ignorance.

The same episode postulates a rejection of society altogether while Pirandello simultaneously praised it in the film-project *La Nuova Colonia*. One aspect from the encompassing reasons that prevented the completion of *I Giganti della Montagna* helps to explain the obstacles that filled the road to the completion of the project *La Nuova Colonia*. *I Giganti della Montagna*, through its passionate, yet desperate declaration of love for the pervasive power of the arts, asserts the non-communicative positions of the

²⁶ Pietro Frassica, “*I Giganti e la poetica dell’incompiuta*,” cit., p. 125.

²⁷ The desire to flee is reflected in many of his plays, e.g. *Come tu mi vuoi* [As You Desire Me] act I: “I must get away from here—away from all of them—all of them—even from myself—get away—away—away!”

world of art (the spiritual world) and of the material world, which Pirandello cannot bridge. But *La Nuova Colonia* was born, according to Pirandello, as the play that declares a time to build a new society to bridge differences.²⁸ The development of *I Giganti della Montagna* covers years that coincide with the second part of what I propose to call *La Nuova Colonia* project, which is considered to be such after its theatrical debut in 1928 and its attempted cinematographic realizations of 1929 and 1935. Pirandello's realization that it was impossible to convey his artistic message to a dismally barbarized audience as set forth in *I Giganti della Montagna* clashed artistically and chronologically with the optimistic view about the birth of a new society free of baseness that Pirandello had theorized in the film-project *La Nuova Colonia*.

Therefore the contradictions and the overcharged meaning that led Pirandello to be unable to complete *I Giganti della Montagna* also undercut his effort in *La Nuova Colonia*.²⁹ The optimistic ending of the film-project contradicts the political criticism of the first act of *I Giganti della Montagna* — the giants are described as arid industrialists, technocrats, harvesters, land-reclaimers, a self-explanatory iconography for times under Fascist oppression, and one that had irritated members of the party.³⁰ Pirandello

²⁸ Borsellino, *Ritratto e immagini di Pirandello*, cit, p. 230.

²⁹ Other factors can be included on the inability to complete the project. Marta Abba added one: “Se Luigi Pirandello accantonò continuamente *I giganti* rimandando di scriverli è perché alla prima lettura che ne fece, io rimasi attonita e fredda. Abituato com'era a vedere le mie reazioni entusiastiche alla lettura dei suoi nuovi drammi e qualche volta col volto bagnato di lacrime, rimase male—diciamolo pure—a questa mia incomprensione e freddezza,” Luigi Pirandello, *I giganti della montagna*, Marta Abba ed. (Milano: Mursia, 1972), cit. in Frassica, “*I Giganti* e la poetica dell'incompiuta,” cit., p. 133.

³⁰ Vittore Branca recalls the anger that *I Giganti della Montagna* sparked in the Fascist party and in members of the Roman *curia*: “L'ultimo dramma *I Giganti della montagna*, così allusivamente severo contro totalitarismi e dittature, lo sconcertante testamento di Pirandello senza una parola per il Regime col divieto di ogni celebrazione nazionale, avevano offeso il Partito fascista che si sentiva creditore col grande drammaturgo. Quel testamento aveva in certo modo spiacevolmente impressionato anche la Chiesa con la disposizione della cremazione allora proibita per i battezzati, come lo scrittore. [...] La ripresa di rigore nelle condanne all'*Indice* [...] faceva richiedere da vari prelati insistentemente un provvedimento analogo per Pirandello.” Vittore Branca, “Luigi Pirandello sulla soglia dell'*Indice dei libri proibiti*” *Protagonisti del*

denounces the vicious force of power and the consequent exigency to distance art from society in *I Giganti della Montagna*, but he states the nobility of the mission of founding a new society in *La Nuova Colonia*. Furthermore, Pirandello could not reconcile the acknowledgment of the fragility of theater because of the disappearance of individuals capable of appreciating its nobility as shown in *I Giganti della Montagna*, with the image of an increasing number of individuals “pure in spirit” as the ones who survive the disaster in the island of *La Nuova Colonia*.

The political and artistic experiences bring to a halt the intellectual solution proposed by *La Nuova Colonia*: the creation of a new society that some in the political system wanted to see depicted in it. Adoption of the new artistic medium could not help, even if, given the enchanted atmosphere of Pirandello’s last myth (*The time and place are undetermined, / bordering between fable and reality* reads the initial stage directions), a completed *I giganti della montagna* could have benefited from a filmic version organized around his ideas on film.³¹ So, paradoxically, the apolitical Pirandello finds himself entangled in politics, and in need of pulling himself out of it, not because of fear of retaliation from the regime but because of his moral tenets: he could not reconcile two such positions without artistically contradicting himself.³² Despite his attempts to erase

Novecento (Torino: Arago, 2004) 303. For reactions of the regime cf. also Gaspare Giudice, *Pirandello: a Biography* (Oxford: Oxford U. P., 1975) 164-65.

³¹ According to Pirandello, if cinema finds its own language to assert and manifest its artistic value (neither the language of literature nor the language of theater can be the language of choice for cinema), it will reveal itself as the most effective artistic medium to convey emotions of the unconscious. Pirandello’s suggestion for the new language of cinema is “cinemelografia” that is: the association of images and music. On the screen, he says, we do not see bodies but images; images do not speak but can conjure up allusions, and allow the secrets of our mind to surface more effectively than theater can because of the powerful possibilities offered by the editing process. The association of images with the international language of music will evoke more clearly the ideas the director wants to stir up in the audience. Cf. Luigi Pirandello, “Se il film parlante abolirà il teatro” [If Talking Pictures Will Abolish Theater], cit.

³² For Pirandello and his attitude towards politics cf. Gaspare Giudice, *Luigi Pirandello* (Torino: UTET, 1963): Pirandello’s written opinion “hanno mantenuto un percepibile carattere di indifferenza” on social and political problems, p. 200. According to Dominique Budor, Pirandello’s tendency is “de dissoudre tous

traces of his presence from the creation process of his works, in the name of the utopian idea of art that creates itself (as in his *Six Characters in Search of an Author*), in not completing his two last works Pirandello confirms to his readers the centrality of his existential experience—the need to probe the limits of artistic representation that he explored with lucid desperation.

The film *La Nuova Colonia* was therefore never produced. Should we however accept this fact as the final word? Can inspirations conveyed by the magnitude of the intellectual effort of this project be found in other directors' works? Such an exploration should be pursued with great caution so as to avoid easy enthusiasms, but keeping in mind the different readings directors can decide to stress, according to their systems of adaptation or transcodification—unfaithful adaptations that, ultimately, would prove the vitality of Pirandello's art.

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les problèmes politiques dans un climat symbolique, idéaliste et individuel, de réduire le patriotisme à un état affectif," cf. Dominique Budor, "Les romans de Pirandello," in *Pirandello 1867-1967*, Gérard Genot ed. (Paris: Lettres modernes, 1968) 45.

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