

## L. Pirandello as A Refreshing Element of Modern Greek Drama. Characteristics of The Style and Content of His Works in N. Kazantzakis and P. Matesis

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### ABSTRACT

This study deals with the Italian Nobel Laureate Luigi Pirandello as there is a constant and unabated interest in him in the Greek theatrical scene since his ideas and philosophy have concerned, and continue to concern, the theatrical and literary audience. The aim of the research is to examine whether this effect reached Greek primary production and how certain Greek writers adopted the style of the Italian playwright. The research focuses on the relationships between three authors. The themes that Pirandello deals with in his plays, Kazantzakis in the play "Othello Returns" and Matesis in the play "The Station" that seem to function as portrayals of a common perception of the three authors about the world, and the identification of the behaviour of the characters in their literary texts.

**Three authors: Pirandello, Kazantzakis and Matesis** as the nineteenth century was coming to its end a major change characterized the theatrical production due to the fact that a communication of social and psychological messages that provoked the spectator to see behind the original meanings in the very essence of the themes presented on stage, began. Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936) became a pioneer in Italian letters at this very moment. He was described as a literary genius, a modernist and a "sui generis" author of books and plays. The dynamics of his dialogues was so intense that it shook the data of the time owing to its unconventionality. In man, as he himself states, "the feeling of life has been parted with and is opposed to it." He met great success analyzing issues related to psychology, which at the time emerged as a science<sup>1</sup>, perhaps because of his personal experience. He dealt with the confusion of his characters-protagonists between the "appearing" and the "being" while maintaining a realistic narrative. The European wind renewed the circumstances of the Greek literary scenery as well. Nikos Kazantzakis (1883-1957) was one of the authors who broke the conservative cord. From a young age he seemed to be a writer by nature because he came to life from the study and writing and in fact, as Kostalenos (1977: 220) also states, he can be described as "a professional writer who earned his living by similar professions such as journalism or translations". A contradictory and extreme character, he loved long and uphill walks because he connected them with a constant struggle to fulfill the debt. He wrote his play "Othello" influenced by Pirandello's style, maybe because at the same time he was translating "Tonight we improvise" for the Royal Theatre<sup>2</sup>. Pavlos Matesis (1933-2013), was also influenced by the Italian Nobel Prize winner. From the beginning of his literary production he was considered special as a writer because of the way he wrote which was very direct and witty. He left in the field of Greek letters a piece of work that disturbed both with his upheavals the usual order of things and with his speech because in his works and interviews he strongly argued that "there is intellectual terrorism" as well as "damage to the ethics of the Greek citizen." In an interview in "To Vima"<sup>3</sup> he stated that "The speech

1 According to De Sousa A.(2011) it was Sigmund Freud that changed the psychology, proposing a theory of personality that emphasized the importance of the unconscious mind

2 According to Zoras G. (2016) although the translation of the play had been completed and submitted to the Royal Theater and the rehearsals were started, the play was cancelled, perhaps because it was judged that it would be very innovative for the Greek public

3 "To Vima" is a Greek daily newspaper first published in 1922. Pavlos Matesis has given an interview

serves the work, the myth [...] I consider the works of this time phase that preceded their time to be pioneer[...]. They (the works) have established the dreamy and the imaginary inside the real. Elements that the spectator now accepts as part of the real. »As detailed below, the common elements of the authors that harmoniously compose a coordinated image of an attempt to disrupt the structure of a work, creating plays that have their own autonomous logic, will be studied, some more distinct and others less.

### **I. IDIOSYNCRASY OF L. PIRANDELLO**

According to Politis (2015), L. Pirandello's theatre and the ideas and philosophy in general, expressed through it, have found, and still find, suitable response in the Greek audience, over time but also for different reasons in each era.

Grammatas (1990) states that Pirandello's idiosyncratic development of the subjects due to which the technique of drama and the theatre of the 20th century progressed is summarized in the following points:

- The ability to show in a distorting mirror the heroes mirroring and reflecting their inner world.
- The ability to combine the most "ridiculous" with the most "heart-breaking".
- The success of presenting everything from both sides at once.
- in trying to express through unpredictable situations and with an unexpected alternation in the flow of events, infinite hovering between "the appearance and the essence", "the reality and the dream", "life and theatre", "the funny and the tragic", "the mask and the person". He presents all this in a "multiple system of illusions", which he manages to maintain in a continuous and "uncertain oscillation".
- The author's refusal to be positive.

The solution the answer to the problem posed by Pirandello's theatre is expected by the spectators and is relevant, subjective, and different for everyone. It may not exist. What is certain is that the trial of man before life, which is a constant "enigma" for Pirandello.

Another feature of Pirandello's temperament is the "intellectuality" of his heroes and their overall acrobatics as he presents a constant existential, psychological, and social impasse for them. The stress of their time is expressed in sarcasm and tragedy. The viewer's attention is focused on the instability and fluidity of the characters of his heroes.

Pirandello likes to analyse the human entity, to investigate the origins of its soul, to search its family environment, its childhood experiences so that he manages to lead his heroes to a moment of explosion against human pain, which then in the form of guilt or trauma from the past makes them suffer. In their lives misfortune rarely lets them feel happy. However, these are elements that we also find in Greek writers.

**Conceptual Analysis Between Pirandello-Kazantzakis-Matesis :** The conceptual analyses of the research in the specific works of Pirandello-Kazantzakis-Matesis focus on two subject areas, communication, and consciousness of the individual. The development of these topics reveals the cognitive and experiential process that the three authors apply when composing their works. The cognitive process provides the three authors with the opportunity to identify themselves as common owners of dimensions and nuances of the issues that concern them. Especially for Pirandello, the experiential process is about his direct relationship with all aspects of human conditions, that his themes represent. Pirandello deals with his topics not in order and independently in each narrative, but in a "circular" correlation. In this way, the topics intersect, complement each other, and support each other. Pirandello's theatrical creation is recognized as a closed, integrated system. This creation gives his work the character of philosophical literature. In Pirandello's literature and in the specific reference works of Nikos Kazantzakis and Pavlos Matesis, two large sections of topics are detected, the first of which represents the communication of the individual and the second its consciousness. These two sections are complemented by the irrational as a third distinct thematic axis. Human relationships, the person's confrontation with himself and his environment, the reciprocal attraction-aversion relationship, the outstanding presence, the exceptional person, the isolation of the individual, the obligation-right dilemma and murder are some of the issues represented in the section regarding communication. The fact that these issues regarding human relations, in the context of communication, that concern all three authors, are classified into vertical and horizontal relationships, based on a fixed focus point each time is extremely interesting. The vertical relationships are ascending blood relations, such as those to the father and mother, and descending, such as the relationship to the child. The horizontal ones are

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named as "This is my apology" on 27/01/2013

blood ties, such as the brother-sister relationship, and external ones, such as the love / sex relationship. In the context of these correlations, as evidenced by the behaviour of the characters, the relationship with the father has a negative charge, while the relationship with the mother appears positively charged. The relationship with the child enhances the uniqueness of the individual because with the existence of the child the individual continuity and prospect is strengthened. The sibling relationship is primarily of a biological nature, and in this dimension, it represents a bond, denoting the closed circuit of the common blood free from foreign elements, but above all it then has a cognitive character. In this dimension, the sister appears as a dynamic factor or energy transmitter, while the brother is presented as a passive factor or recipient of energy. In N. Kazantzakis' reference work "Othello Returns", and in L. Pirandello's works "Six Characters in Search for an Author", "The Man with the Flower in His Mouth", "Henry IV", the major theme of the relationship between man and woman is also raised. This relationship is a dynamic one, but its erotic character is almost always determined by the irrational. The woman brings to the surface the man's psychological balance while the man acts as a powerful agent. In this way, however, the power of women is essentially manifested and therefore women also function equally as a powerful agent.

The process of self-knowledge is manifested through a confrontation of the individual with himself and his environment. The two-way attraction-aversion relationship conveys the combination of two opposing tendencies, which make up a system of polysemous behaviour of the characters of Pirandello - Kazantzakis - Matesis and thus the authors' intention to create polysemous dimensions within their mythical universe. The human dynamic is rendered through the outstanding presence or rather the anthropocentric point of the author's mythical universe. The exceptional person expresses the uniqueness of the individual. The isolation of the individual expresses the self-sufficiency but also the distance that the individual maintains from the environment.

The obligation-right dilemma represents the opposing forces that determine human behaviour in the procedures of the world, where obligation is considered as the forced participation and at the same time submission of the individual to these procedures, while the right is projected as the domination of the individual in the world from these exact procedures. In the mythical universe of Pirandello - Kazantzakis - Matesis, obligation seems to prevail, which does not indicate the submission of the individual to the world but constitutes a necessary and exploitable conduit for the domination of the individual in the world. The murder does not have a common criminal, but a pre-moral absolute character and manifests the absolute dominance of the individual in the environment. It also manifests the absolute intensity of human action in the context of an absolutely intense human existence. Furthermore, the recognition of the process, which leads the person to self-knowledge, transformations, death, and the sudden unexpected event belong in the subject matter which is represented by the consciousness of the individual. The process that leads the individual to self-knowledge is essentially the process of self-realization of the individual. Transformations show the ability of a person to go beyond the particular form or situation. This possibility expresses the absolute dynamic of the individual. Death in the literary works of Pirandello - Kazantzakis - Matesis is a subject that is treated with a powerful perception. Death acts either as proof of the individual's distinguished presence in life, or as a dimension to exceed for the liberation of absolute human dynamics. The sudden unexpected event produces the constant changes that contribute to the mythical world of writers and bind the behaviour of the characters.

The elaboration on the subject areas in the reference works of Pirandello - Kazantzakis - Matesis based on these two, large subject matters, is determined by a very important factor which is the theme, sudden / unexpected element, which produces the constant changes that apply in the mythical universe of the writers, binding the behaviour of their characters at the level of both the inner and outer world. Based on the area taken up by the elaboration on the topics in the specific reference works of Pirandello - Kazantzakis - Matesis, certain topics can be considered essential to the work of the authors as they cover major areas for development. These basic topics are human relationships, the confrontation of the individual with himself and the environment. Other key issues are self-awareness, the sudden unexpected event, and transformations. Each of these issues constitutes a dominant factor in the composition of a narrative and has timeless power. The rest of the topics could be described as "partial" because they are specialisations of the main topics. However, partial topics also serve as key factors in the composition of certain projects. The set of all themes, basic and partial, as revealed by their combination and complementarity, covers the parameters that define man as a completely dynamic dimension and distinguished centre of the mythical universe of Pirandello - Kazantzakis - Matesis, that is, the absolute dynamic of man, as it is emphasized by transcending all common and conventional states.

## II. CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS FINDINGS

Through the codification of the literary production of the specific works of the three authors and the decipherment of their roles, issues were identified such as the way in which the devastation of the individual is declared by impersonal forces, the isolation of the individual, the transfer of the present to some distant future, the observation of the life of others, the imagination and the daydreaming and the alternation of comedy-tragedy. In the examples of mechanisms of conceptual analyses, the horizontal relations of the spherical characters, which exist in the two single acts, "The Man with the Flower in His Mouth" and "The Station", are stylistically similarly abnormal. One of the two heroes, in the pairs of horizontal relationships in both plays, has fantasies and delusions from the beginning to the end. "Man" has a disturbed relationship with his wife in the Pirandello text, as in Matesi's work, B is anxiously trying to communicate with A and when his wish begins to come true, he cannot respond. The impasse in "Man" is the expected biological death, in B the loneliness. The above findings regarding the thematic and structural affinity of Pirandello's works on the one hand, and the specific reference works of Kazantzakis and Matesis according to Grammatas (1990) are due to Pirandello's direct influence on the work of the two Greek writers. The functionality of man as an absolutely dynamic dimension and distinguished centre of the mythical universe of Pirandello - Kazantzakis - Matesis gives their literature a character of anthropological and anthropocentric literature with a philosophical content. The correlation of these elements in literature, however, gives the texts a great didactic character.

The above findings regarding the thematic and structural affinity of the plays allow us to say that Pirandello's characteristics have been identified in Greek texts, and to conclude that the Nobel Prize winner is a refreshing element of Greek drama, mainly on two levels. In Greek literature and theatrical production, we find Pirandello at a collective level of influence, which can be seen either in the impact of the translations of his works or in the theatrical performances that are being staged repeatedly and always succeed, but also on an individual level of influence, which is presented in the primary Greek drama and in specific theatrical texts, in which characteristics of his style and content were identified. Therefore, the much-translated Italian playwright constitutes a refreshing element of modern Greek literature.

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