
*Le passioni di Pirandello* offers a miscellaneous corpus of study focusing on the theme of passion in the Sicilian author’s. This book consists of seventeen papers, each adopting a particular approach, and is divided into two sections. The relevance of the research is clearly expressed by Costantino Maeder in his interesting contribution to this collection, where he states that: “Parlare delle passioni in Pirandello è anche un modo per interrogarsi sul significato di un termine ombrello in cui confluiscono le più disparate accezioni, assiologizzazioni e interpretazioni” (p. 87).

The first essay, written by Natale Tedesco and entitled “Pirandello e le passioni” announces the leading theme of the first part *Passioni e
ragioni: literature is the author’s main passion. It is the only passion with gnoseological value as it allows the writer fully understand the illusion of life. Tedesco’s analysis starts from the theme of illusion that is regarded as a synonym of passion, and summarises how Pirandello has represented the human consciousness through the “finzioni coscienti” since the first novels.

In the essay “Passioni e passività nel personaggio pirandelliano”, Michael Rössner emphasises the tragic effects of passions represented in Pirandello’s works and shows the double position assumed by the characters: an active and rational attempt to control and a passive irrational disposition.

Joseph Farrell holds a different view in the essay “L’onore, la gelosia e il duello”. By thoroughly analysing the so-called “delitto d’onore”, he demonstrates how passions and irrational reactions to passion are nothing but a rational assumption of the social rules, in which emotional reasons are absent.

“Le prime novelle di Pirandello (1884-1909): un invito alla razionalità” by Gian Paolo Giudicetti indicates that at least the first pirandellian short stories reveal a less pessimistic attitude of the writer. Indeed, Pirandello criticizes subjectivism and solipsism through paradoxical stories with an ironical and auto-ironical tone. There are clear traces of a surviving hope in Pirandello’s first works and the key for the reconstruction of his first philosophy presumably lies in the “Dialoghi tra il Gran Me e il piccolo me”.

The following study by Natalie Dupré is entitled “Passioni a confronto: ‘L’Esclusa’ e ‘Effi Briest’ di Theodor Fontane”. As is clear from this title, the essay explores the analogical relation between Effi Briest and L’Esclusa, basing the comparative approach on the model proposed by Greimas and Fontanille in “The Semiotics of Passion: From States of Affairs to States of Feeling”.

Rosario Gennaro adopts a similar contrastive approach in “Il riso in Bergson e l’umorismo di Pirandello’, where he draws the fundamental analogy between Bergson and Pirandello in the anti-passional and rational function of “umorismo”. However, as for Bergson art is an intuitive and deep understanding (or perception) of life, the rational and “umoristica” art of Pirandello represents a deconstructive approach to reality. This approach cannot be passionate and will not lead to a more intense or complete perception of life but to a terrifying, meaningless perception.
Costantino Macer further analyses the pirandellian “Umorismo in ‘Formalità’ ossia Metastasio e Pirandello in un match d’improvvisazione fra dialogo, incomunicabilità e massime di Grice”. By analyzing the concept and the themes of Formalità, he demonstrates that in Pirandello’s works passions result from a failure of the communicative acts. This process involves a Umorismus of second level, a “sentimento del contrario”, which cannot belong to the extradietgetic narrator nor to the characters. Therefore, reality can only be understood by external observers, such as a reader, whose act of reading is the only act rationally possible.

Bart Van den Bossche focuses on the relation between the individual “passion system” and the “interpersonal system” “‘Il buffo spattacolo degli atti impensati’: passione e ragione in ‘Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore’. Interpersonal relations”, says Van den Bossche, imply the assimilation of a subject to his social and professional status, in contrast to passions as a source of individual differentiation.

In “L’ironia delle passioni in Pirandello”, Franco Musarra exemplifies his interpretation of irony as essential constituent of Pirandello’s writings (interpretation previously settled in a considerable amount of contributions). According to Musarra, Pirandello’s irony represents a rational defense against passions, a principle of order with which we can face the inexpressible chaos of mutability. This means that Pirandello’s works express or constrain the mutability of life (passions) in fixity (the literary text).

In the final essay of the first part, “Pirandello: la passione a rischio”, Lia Fava Guzzetta contextualizes the leitmotiv of passion in the two principal articulations of Pirandello’s philosophy: the pursuit of identity and the “exclusion”. In this context, Fava Guzzetta analyzes how passions are deeply related to life and often confused with life and with its free course. The natural stream, hence our passion, is compelled, constrained and finally annihilated by modern life and by reality.

Whereas the first part of the collection focuses on the passions in Pirandello’s poetic, the second part, Lo spettacolo delle passioni, presents Pirandello as a playwright. The opening essay is written by Paolo Puppa and carries the title “Pirandello: la passione dell’attrice”. It describes the evolution of the problematic yet passionate relation between Pirandello, the Italian actress Marta Abba. Anna Frabetti addresses the same issue in “Pirandello, Pitoëff: un’amicizia in scena”,...
directing the reader’s attention to the intense professional and personal relation with Georges Pitoëff. With the essay “Le passioni sul palcoscenico della vita”, Cezary Bronowski reads the cinematographic transposition of Il fu Mattia Pascal and Il viaggio as rewriting in a new genre the main pirandellian themes.

Monica Jansen examines the subtle, complex and stratified line that leads “Da ‘Come tu mi vuoi’ a ‘Va savoir’: l’impostura come salvezza”, on the border between modernity and post-modernity. Laura Schutgens also compares a contemporary film with a short story by Pirandello: “La balia: le passioni e la famiglia, un confronto tra la novella di Pirandello e il film de Bellochio”. However, the comparison is made from the point of view of a Freudian interpretation.

In “Passioni e trasgressioni in Pirandello”, Daragh O’Connel focuses on the piece Sagra del signore della Neve, in which she argues that passion becomes transgression. Likewise, Inge Lanslots considers one dramatic work of Pirandello, namely “L’uomo, la bestia, la virtù”, in the final paper “Le passioni di Pirandello: di succhi, calori e amori”.

As pointed out thorough the words of Costantino Maeder the volume offers a synthetic, systematic and at the same time multifocal overview, thanks to the specific topic, which allows complex, intertextual and multi-methodological analysis of the broad Pirandellian production. This approach emphasises the miscellaneous identity of the book and leads to an interesting double overview: on the topic itself and on the critic, presented in its different instances, some rather innovative, some more traditional; even thought few isolated perspectives offer a less convincing contribution they don’t affect the relevant scientific value of the whole.

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L’œuvre philologique du très regretté Paul Gorceix (1930-2007), un éminent comparatiste, membre de l’Académie royale de langue et de littérature françaises de Belgique, ne cesse de surprendre par son ampleur. Le symbolisme belge était son sujet de prédilection : une thèse