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A DAUGHTER INTERVENES: PARRICIDE ON HOLD IN PIRANDELLO'S
IL FU MATTIA PASCAL

Any study of Luigi Pirandello's *Il fu Mattia Pascal* must, in some way, confront the complex issue of paternity as portrayed in the work. The appropriation and reappropriation of the roles of father and son are pivotal points in the problems the novel engages. Engagement here indicates something of an entanglement, rather than a confrontation followed by a neat resolution. One can hardly, when discussing Pirandello's work, speak of a true solution to any problem. The problems themselves are the machinery of Pirandello's universe, and disentanglement from them is generally revealed to be an impossibility. But this universe does allow, if not for solutions, at least for momentary holds in the process. These holds, or moments of peace, are achieved through human compassion, and, it will be argued here, particularly through one form of compassion, that of the bond between parent and daughter. To explore the power of this bond in *Il fu Mattia Pascal*, I will set the Oedipal conflict presented in that novel against one of Pirandello's short stories, entitled "La morta e la viva." The inverted configuration of relationships and the alternative outcome offered in the short story serve to underscore the privileged role of the daughter in effecting a temporary transformation of the generational and gendered roles that propagate violence.

Several scholars, particularly Stocchi-Perucchio and Ferrario, have attested to the importance of the Oedipal drama in *Il fu Mattia Pascal*. The most recent and complete investigation of Oedipal elements in the work is Thomas Harrison's "Regicide, Parricide, and Tyrannicide in *Il fu Mattia Pascal*." Harrison suggests that although Orestes and Hamlet are referenced within the novel, Mattia is best identified with Oedipus himself. While Orestes and Hamlet restore the correct patrilinear order by destroying an usurper, and thus fall into the category of "restoration" myths, the Oedipal story is one of "the vicious and inescapable battle within the patrilinear order" (Harrison 190-191). Harrison claims that issues of tyranny are grappled with here because Mattia recognizes, like Oedipus, that *he* is the tyrant and the disrupter of families. He therefore, like Oedipus,

realizes his crime and tries to make amends. But, Harrison notes, while Mattia does not destroy the family formed by his wife who thought herself a widow, he does indicate that he might once again take up his affair with the married Oliva, who already has one child by him. Furthermore, Mattia has abandoned his former love interest Adriana and left her in the bonds of a tyrannical struggle. The cycle of patrilinear violence continues. While I do not dispute the continuity of Oedipal conflict in *Il fu Mattia Pascal*, I would like to suggest that the temporary transformations in the pattern, which occur at moments of daughterly interventions, are crucial to an understanding of the complexity of the narrative.

Giovanni Macchia, in his introduction to the *Novelle per un anno*, states that in Pirandello “una sorta d’intercomunicabilità a vasto raggio scorreva nella sua opera come fosse un terreno attraversato da continui canali d’irrigazione” (Macchia xiv). An examination of one of the *novelle* alongside *Il fu Mattia Pascal* may profit from this flow of ideas, structures and relationships between Pirandello’s works in order to obtain a set of possible implications for a given plot scenario. *Il fu Mattia Pascal* was published first, in 1904, while the *novella* in question was published six years later, in 1910. This chronology threatens the usual pattern of a short story developing into a longer work, but does not problematize a connection between the works, as the striking similarity between their plots indicates that Pirandello most likely remained interested in the configuration of relationships the two works depict.

The *novella* is entitled “La morta e la viva” and recounts the story of a man with two wives rather than a woman with two husbands. In *Il fu Mattia Pascal*, when Mattia is presumed dead, his wife Romilda takes another husband and has a child. When Mattia returns from his interlude of living as another man, his asserted existence threatens the new husband’s position. In the end, through a sequence of events we will discuss later in greater detail, Mattia chooses not to take action to disrupt the marriage. Though Romilda technically has two husbands, she goes on living as if she had only one.

“La morta e la viva,” on the other hand, presents a completely different outcome. Nino Mo’s wife is pronounced dead. He takes another wife, not coincidentally the sister of his “dead” wife, who takes care of Nino Mo’s son by his first wife and is soon pregnant herself. Much to Nino Mo’s surprise, his first wife returns. He therefore

decides to live with one wife half the time and the other wife the other half of the time, fathering children with both. The community, desperately hoping for some sort of dramatic conflict within the family, is much dismayed by the calm manner in which all three accept this rather unorthodox arrangement.

The two stories share the same fundamental plot outlines: an apparent death, involving two spouses and children. But while *Il fu Mattia Pascal* is marked by conflict, with only a very tenuous break in this conflict, “La morta e la viva” makes an impression with its central serenity. In the novel, the tension comes from the main characters themselves, who fight for their own identity and place in the world. In the short story, the pressure comes from society while the characters are, for the most part, unflinchingly sure of their course.

Both the novel and the short story are concerned with working through and hierarchizing a number of standards according to which the problem of multiple spouses may be judged. The first is the law. Mattia and Nino Mo ensure that the familial situations they choose are somehow justified under the letter of the law. When Romilda’s new husband Pomino asks in terror if his marriage will be annulled, Mattia responds:

- E tu lascialo annullare! - gli dissi. - Si annullerà pro forma, se mai: non farò valere i miei diritti e non mi farò neppure riconoscer vivo ufficialmente, se proprio non mi costringono. Mi basta che tutti mi rivedano e mi risappiano vivo di fatto, per uscir da questa morte, che è morte vera, credetelo! Già lo vedi: Romilda, qua, ha potuto divenir tua moglie ... il resto non m'importa! Tu hai contratto pubblicamente il matrimonio; è noto a tutti che lei è, da un anno, tua moglie, e tale rimarrà. Chi vuoi che si curi più del valor legale del suo primo matrimonio? Acqua passata.... (*Mattia Pascal* 221)

Mattia offers to remain dead in the eyes of the law. For him, it is much more important to be alive in the eyes of society and to have everyone realize that he is alive. According to him, it is society that gives life. By remaining dead in the eyes of the law, Romilda and Pomino’s marriage is legal. Of course, it was the law that kept him from truly living his second life as Adriano Meis. He could not authenticate himself before society as anyone but Mattia Pascal

because the law would not allow him to wed again, or to even to press charges when he was robbed.

Nino Mo makes use of the same solution that Mattia does, more or less. After consulting a lawyer, he responds to the accusation of bigamy in the following manner:

nel suo caso, non si poteva parlare di bigamia perché la prima moglie figurava ancora in atti e avrebbe seguito a figurare sempre come morta, sicché dunque davanti alla legge egli non aveva che una sola moglie, la seconda. (“La morta” 90)

So again in this case, the first spouse, upon her return, never declared herself living under the law. Like Mattia, Nino Mo’s first wife, Filippa, is content to be alive only to those around her. The legal title is not a threat to her status. And in this way, her sister, Rose, is the legal wife of Nino Mo.

The second standard for judging these trios, as has already come to our notice, is society. For Mattia, being recognized in society is the necessity for life. He claims, as we have cited before, that when believed dead, he was dead. The law prevented him, in his second life, from participating socially, i.e., getting married, going to court, etc. In his third incarnation, as Mattia (more or less) once more, he places all importance on being seen alive, as being recognized as alive by society. He asserts to Pomino that since no one will bother about an old marriage, and since Pomino was married before the public, he needn’t be concerned. In other words, public witness to the wedding ensured its authenticity. Society is seen here as a benign presence, a neutral register for the main characters’ actions.

In the short story, on the other hand, society is where tension is created. The main characters resolve everything amongst themselves without any real difficulty, while it is the crowd, anxiously watching at all moments, that seeks to create strife. And unlike Mattia, these characters are not tremendously concerned about society’s view of their situation. Filippa expresses very little in the story, but she certainly does not express any particular desire to be recognized as alive. Her concern is only for her sister and her husband.

The third standard that displaced characters must reckon with is religion. For Mattia, only the perceptions of his fellow humans can

validate his existence. For the three main characters of “La morta e la viva,” instead, it is God’s view of their situation that is most important. As Nino Mo says, “Sopra la legge degli uomini, poi,... signore pretore, c’è quella di Dio, a cui mi sono sempre attenuto, obbediente” (“La morta” 90). He and his two wives both refer to God’s will when people question them about the propriety of their situation. The wives always respond that if God has willed it this way, then it is right. It is from their belief in God’s approval that they gain their surprising serenity. The community’s frustration with this response is expressed in the figure of the official to whom Nino Mo goes to declare the birth of his son by his “dead” wife, too soon after the birth of another son by his wife who is recognized by the law. When he justifies himself saying “E che ci ho da fare io, se Dio permette così?” (“La morta” 91) The official responds:

- Uno muore; è Dio! Non muore; è Dio! Nasce un figlio; è Dio! State con due mogli; è Dio! E finitela con questo Dio! Che il diavolo vi porti, venite a ogni nove mesi almeno; salvate la decenza, gabbate la legge; e ve li schiaffo tutti qua legittimi uno dopo l’altro! (“La morta” 91-92)

Here we clearly see the view of society: “decency,” that value designed to maintain the mandated structures of authority, must be upheld above all. The law is second in this scheme of priorities and God is pushed out of the picture altogether, in that this would mean simply accepting things as they are. Nino Mo, of course, refuses this request.

None of three main characters feels responsible for what has taken place. They all claim to have followed God’s will in all regards. There is no moment of an Oedipal realization of culpability for these characters. While both Mattia and the Nino Mo trio recognize that they are caught in a chain of inevitability of some kind, and that they have played a part in an unavoidable sequence of events, the two camps attribute this vision of life and their actions in it to different sources of agency. While the Oedipal chain is one of unending violence that replicates itself in the genetic code from father to son, the characters in “La morta e la viva” see their strange story simply as a part of God’s infallible plan.

Compassion proves to be more compelling than law, society or religion in offering a proposed solution to the problem of disrupted

family structure in both works. One might argue that compassion is emphasized even further in *Il fu Mattia Pascal*, since the factor of religion is mostly absent. Lacking religion, the only possible salvation for humanity against the terrors of violence is compassion. In the final confrontation with his former mother-in-law, Mattia clearly indicates the importance of compassion in his decision:

- Zitta, vi ripeto! Statevene zitta, voi, perché, se vi sento fiatare, perdo la pietà che m'ispira codesto imbecille di vostro genero e quella creaturina là, e faccio valer la legge! Sapete che dice la legge? Ch'io ora devo riprendermi Romilda....
(*Mattia Pascal* 219)

We see the prioritization of Mattia's values here. His decision is based above all on his pity for Pomino and the baby. In stating that if he loses his pity for the two unfortunate creatures he will put the law into action, he shows the diverse levels of importance the two factors have in his decision. Compassion is of a higher importance than the law. It can hold together what all other forces would tear apart. This compassion that Mattia feels here is based on a father's love for his daughter. The small, female child strikes a chord in Mattia, as we see almost immediately when he enters the house. As soon as Pomino reveals that he has a daughter, Mattia's resolution to destroy the new marriage begins to fail:

- Per carità... gemette Pomino, levandosi in fretta. - La piccina... ho paura... il latte....
Lo afferrai per un braccio, restando io, ora, a mia volta:
- Che piccina?
- Mia... mia figlia... balbettò Pomino.
- Ah che assassinio! - gridò la Pescatore.
Non potei rispondere ancora sotto l'impressione di questa nuova notizia.
- Tua figlia?... - mormorai. - Una figlia, per giunta?... E questa, ora.... (*Mattia Pascal* 217)

Mattia, upon hearing the news, falls swiftly out of his planned role as avenging spirit. He is left speechless and hurt. At the moment, the news of a daughter merely adds to his losses, to the crimes against him, but soon after, the physical presence of the baby robs him completely

of his anger. As he holds her in his arms, his priorities begin to change. Upon his arrival, he was intent on destruction, now, holding this small helpless child so similar to his own, he is concerned largely with protecting this small life. When Pomino calls for the child, Mattia responds:

- Sta' zitto! L'ho qua, - gli risposi.
- E che fai ?
- Me la mangio.... Che faccio! ... L'avete buttata in braccio a me.... Ora lasciamela stare! S'è quietata. (*Mattia Pascal* 218)

He warns Pomino not to disturb the child. He has changed roles, from avenger to nurturer. The joke that he is eating the child is not far from the symbolic truth of the tyrannical cycle he has been involved in up to this point. The ancient prototype of the father/son conflict is the myth of Cronos who ate his young to prevent them from growing stronger than him. Mattia indicates that he is at least temporarily removed from this killing/eating conflict between father and son, by virtue of the fact that this *is* a joke, and that he is concerned with the child's well-being and tranquility. From this moment on, Mattia's actions are continually interrupted and finally determined by this concern for the child. When he tries to threaten destruction of the bond formed by Romilda and Pomino, the thought of the child brings him out of his resolve:

- Il tuo matrimonio s'annulla.
- Come... che dici? E la piccina?
- La piccina... la piccina... - masticai. - Svergognati! In due anni, marito e moglie, e una figliuola! Zitta, carina, zitta! Andiamo dalla mamma... Sù, conducimi! (*Mattia Pascal* 218)

His threats are immediately stalled by mention of the child. When he further tries to scold Pomino for the birth of the child, so soon after Mattia's "death" and so disruptive to his plans of revenge, the child begins to cry, to assert its presence once more. To this he responds as a father would to his own child, calming her with endearing words. There is great tragedy in these lines; all the sorrow of a father's loss is contained in them. When he says "dalla mamma," he refers to the mother of this child, who is not his, and simultaneously to the mother

of his dead adored daughter. The word “mamma” contains this double signification of motherhood for him.¹

We may recall that Mattia’s role in the cycle of male violence is largely based on erotic, rather than physical attack. But we see how the intercession of the daughter manages to halt his desires for any attack on this family. He muses on the reawakened beauty of Romilda:

- Sì, mi pare un sogno, mi pare quella di tant’anni fa...
ricordi, eh, Romilda?... Non piangere! ti rimetti a piangere?
Ah, bei tempi... sì, non tornano più!... Via, via: voi ora avete
una figliuola, e dunque non se ne parli più! Vi lascio in pace,
che diamine! (*Mattia Pascal* 221)

Now that they have a daughter, he says, he can think no more of the old days and the old bond he had with Romilda, the bond that would license him to attempt to seduce her. Since she has a child with her new husband, Mattia gives up his rights to Romilda’s body:

- Romilda fu mia moglie: ora, da un anno, è tua, madre
d’una tua bambina. Dopo un mese non se ne parlerà più.
(*Mattia Pascal* 221)

What is it about this child that has such power over Mattia, and in its power over Mattia, over the whole cycle of violence? The gender of the child has the power to create change. Mattia had a particular bond with his own daughter—the sort of bond that is never possible, in this universe, between father and son. While the father/son relationship is fraught with danger for both parties, the father/daughter relationship is a redemptive one. One cannot generalize this to mean the male/female relationship is necessarily redemptive, as women in the position of lovers or wives are merely pawns in the male domination and appropriation games that rule this Pirandellian cosmos.² But the daughter is completely outside this cycle.³ Therefore, even though the girl he holds in his arms in this scene under discussion is not his own, she still encompasses the same non-threatening and redemptive power that his own daughter did. This female child is a pause in the chain of violence between the male child and its father or assumed father. While doubts may remain about the

father of female children as well (we may recall Mattia's musings about Romilda's father),⁴ they never pose a serious problem in the way that such doubts do for male children. The violence among males is propagated by this never ending suspicion about the true paternal origins of any child.

Compassion is likewise the decisive element in creating peace where society calls for war in "La morta e la viva." It is through a parent/daughter relationship that this compassion comes to life. As in Mattia Pascal's situation, this is not a literal parent/daughter relationship. The child that actually causes his decision to at least momentarily break the cycle of violence is not his own. In "La morta e la viva," there are no literal daughters. But there is one character who is strongly characterized in this fashion, and whose characterization in this manner determines the outcome of the story. This relationship is drawn out early in the story:

Perché quelle due mogli erano tra loro sorelle, due sorelle inseparabili, anzi tra loro quasi madre e figlia, avendo sempre la maggiore, Filippa, fatto da madre a Rosa, che anche lui, sposando, aveva dovuto accogliere in casa come una figliola; finché, scomparsa Filippa, dovendo seguitare a vivere insieme con lei e considerando che nessun'altra donna avrebbe potuto far meglio da madre al piccino che quella gli aveva lasciato ancor quasi in fasce, l'aveva sposata, onestamente. ("La morta" 84-85)

In this passage, the lines of relationships in the story are re-traced. These are not genetic relationships; they are formed of another material. While Filippa is Rosa's sister, she acts as her mother. While Nino Mo is currently Rosa's husband, he was previously, and perhaps still is, in the role of her father. For some reason, desire seems to be unproblematic in this relationship. Rosa is established as a metaphorical daughter figure but also functions as a mother to the following generation.

The motherly attitude of Filippa, just returned to find her sister married to her husband, is demonstrated in described action as well: "ecco Filippa ... con un braccio gli fa cenni, come per dargli coraggio; con l'altro, si regge sul petto Rosa, la povera incinta che trema tutta e piange" ("La morta" 85). Holding Rosa to her breast is a motherly

instinct, the same one that Mattia displays when Romilda's new baby is thrown into his arms:

Restai al bujo, là, nella sala d'ingresso, con quella gracile bimbeta in braccio, che vagiva con la vocina agra di latte. Costernato, sconvolto, sentivo ancora negli orecchi il grido della donna ch'era stata mia, e che ora, ecco, era madre di questa bimba non mia, non mia! mentre la mia, ah, non la aveva amata, lei, allora! E dunque, no, io ora, no, perdio! non dovevo aver pietà di questa, né di loro. S'era rimaritata? E io ora... Ma seguitava a vagire quella piccina, a vagire; e allora... che fare? per quietarla, me l'adagai sul petto e cominciai a batterle pian pianino una mano su le spallucce e a dondolarla passeggiando. L'odio mi sbollì, l'impeto cedette. E a poco a poco la bimba si tacque. (*Mattia Pascal* 217-8)

If Mattia is a mother figure in this scene, as Harrison suggests (200), we find a correlation in the double-gendering of Filippa. She is described in the following terms: “lo superava di tutta la testa, donnone ossuto, dalla faccia nera e fiera, maschile nei gesti, nella voce, nel passo” (“La morta” 85). Linguistically, one may even note that the characterization of Filippa as a “donnone” rather than a “donna” makes this noun that describes her masculine and reinforces her masculinity by making the adjectives that follow it masculine in gender. So while Mattia is symbolically both mother and father of a daughter, Filippa becomes symbolically both mother and father to Rosa. We may note as well that Filippa is a name deriving from a masculine one, Filippo, while Rosa is always feminine and has no male equivalent. Rosa, therefore, is the eternal feminine, the everlasting daughter/mother, the figure that must always inspire compassion. On the other half of the equation, it is in some way understood to be masculine and paternal to offer compassion to the corresponding feminine.

Rosa, while remaining part-time wife to Nino Mo and taking turns with her sister, is still figured as daughter to both in configurations of the three. When they are described all together that first night, the small son is sleeping on the bed, while Rosa sleeps seated with her head on the bed. She is nearest to the sleeping privileges of the child. At the same time, Filippa and Nino Mo sit at the two heads of the table, the symbolic power positions of parents (“La morta” 87).

Filippa, on the other hand, exemplifies the transformation of Mattia through the following description: “Filippa con un braccio su le spalle di Rosa, la teneva come sotto l’ala, la sorreggeva, la proteggeva ... si chinava verso la sorella e le gridava: Non piangere, scioccona! Il pianto ti fa male! Su, su, dritta, buona! Su, zitta!” (“La morta” 86). If we recall that before his arrival, Mattia wanted to “piombar come un nibbio là sul nido di Pomino” (*Mattia Pascal* 214), the image of the “ala” or wing is strangely resonant. While Mattia intended to attack like an eagle, he ends up cradling the young life in Pomino’s nest, acting more like a mother bird than a bird of prey.⁵

The short story is figured as the anti-Oedipal myth. While *Il fu Mattia Pascal* places the compassionate moment within a larger context of disorder and disaccord, the short story places this trio of characters as a continuous and unbreakable bond of compassion in the midst of a disordered and unharmonious public. They are a mythically peaceful family:

vedendo ora che non c’era sacrificio per nessuna delle due... non essendoci stato inganno né colpa da nessuna parte, né da pretendere perciò la condanna o il sacrificio dell’una o dell’altra moglie ... comprendevano che Rosa, la sorella minore, non poteva aver gelosia dell’altra, a cui doveva tutto, a cui—senza volerlo, è vero—aveva preso il marito. Gelosia tutt’al più avrebbe potuto aver Filippa di lei; ma no, comprendevano che neanche Filippa poteva averne, sapendo che Rosa aveva agito senz’inganno e non aveva colpa. (“La morta” 89-90)

As opposed to the Oedipal family model, there is no sacrifice here and no guilt. No one is condemned and there is no jealousy between the two figures which otherwise might have competed for the single spouse. This is simply because Rosa owes “everything” to Filippa and is herself a complete innocent. A son’s innocence, on the other hand, is lost through his desire for a woman, who, according to the Oedipal model, always stands for his mother.

The only possible redemption in this situation is the daughter, who can serve to refigure the mother. Linking daughter and mother removes the mother from the impure role of lover or wife and places her in the realm of innocence of the daughter. In “La morta e la

viva,” the roles of mother and daughter intermingle in the figure of Rosa, forming a pure, yet fertile figure. In the novel, Mattia’s mother and daughter are closely connected in the scene of their deaths:

Mi morì contemporaneamente alla mamma mia, nello stesso giorno e quasi alla stess’ora. Non sapevo più come spartire le mie cure e la mia pena. Lasciavo la piccina mia che riposava, e scappavo dalla mamma, che non si curava di sé, della sua morte, e mi domandava di lei, della nipotina, struggendosi di non poterla più rivedere, baciare per l’ultima volta. E durò nove giorni, questo strazio! ... Poi, sì, quando mi destai, il dolore m’assalì rabbioso, feroce, per la figlietta mia, per la mamma mia, che non erano più.... E fui quasi per impazzire ... so che, alla fine, mi ritrovai nel podere della Stia, presso alla gora del molino, e che un tal Filippo, vecchio mugnajo, lì di guardia, mi prese con sé, mi fece sedere più là, sotto gli alberi, e mi parlò a lungo, a lungo della mamma e anche di mio padre e de’ bei tempi lontani; e mi disse che non dovevo piangere e disperarmi così, perché per attendere alla figlioletta mia, nel mondo di là, era accorsa la nonna, la nonnina buona, che la avrebbe tenuta sulle ginocchia e le avrebbe parlato di me sempre e non me la avrebbe lasciata mai sola, mai. (*Mattia Pascal* 51-2)

Mattia’s mother’s concern for her grandchild, and the story told by Filippo both serve to link Mattia’s mother and his daughter forever in his mind. Their deaths at the same hour effectively deprive him of the possibility for innocent love. This double event throws him back into a world where love is an erotic tool to gain dominance over competitors. Only at the moment when Romilda and Pomino’s daughter is thrown into his arms is the man who had remained “senza più il conforto che mi veniva dalla mia dolce bambina” (*Mattia Pascal* 53), able to feel once more the sort of compassion that can temporarily overrule even the most “ineluctable” patterns of history.

In conclusion, we may briefly cite a model for this interlude in the usual course of events. If the general pattern of Pirandello’s universe finds its model in *Oedipus Rex*, I suggest we look to *Oedipus at Colonus* for the archetype of the interlude to violence. *Oedipus at Colonus* itself functions as a respite from the terrible tyrannical and tyrannicidal actions in the two plays that frame it in the trilogy, *Oedipus Rex* and

Antigone. *Oedipus at Colonus* is, however, the last play that Sophocles wrote and therefore we may conclude that it holds his final and fondest hope for society. Like Pirandello, he can offer no permanent solution. The action in *Antigone*, chronologically the final play in the trilogy, is once again devastatingly violent. But there is a tenuous peace in *Oedipus at Colonus*, encapsulated in the relationship between Oedipus and his daughter Antigone. Like the daughters in the works we have been examining, Antigone represents Oedipus' last chance at rescue from the generational machinery of violence.

When the Chorus threatens to throw Oedipus out of the country where he has taken refuge, Antigone intercedes for him: "Take pity still on my unhappiness/ And let me intercede with you for him./ Not with lost eyes, but looking in your eyes/ As if I were I child of yours, I beg/ Mercy for him, the beaten man!" (Sophocles 139). This statement might be the verbal expression of the roles of Romilda and Pomino's daughter and of Rosa. All three claim pity, interceding in a potential moment of violence. "Lost eyes" may be read as a description of Oedipus' guilt in opposition to the innocence and purity of Antigone, who looks directly, without shame, into the eyes of her addressee. The three daughter figures are unfailingly innocent, and this is where their strength lies. Antigone then states the most important part of her plea: "as if I were a child of yours, I beg / Mercy for him, the beaten man." Though Antigone is not a child of those she addresses, she calls for their compassion as such. The female child has the power to redraw relationships, to create new and not necessarily genetic familial bonds through her appeal for pity. Likewise, Mattia is moved to treat the baby girl "as if" she was his and both Nino Mo and Filippa treat Rosa "as if" she was their daughter.

When Oedipus calls to his daughter "come to your father, child, and let me touch you/ Whom I had thought never to touch again" (Sophocles 139), he asks to touch both his mother and his daughter, in that his daughter is in fact his mother's child. But Antigone is somehow a redemption of all this, a purity within the bloody Oedipal cycle. Mattia and Filippa, like Oedipus, are saved by the fact that they can touch something they thought never to touch again, whether it is a refiguration of the dead daughter or a long-lost daughter figure. A momentary reprieve resides in that physical contact with the daughter who bridges generations, utterly apart from the violent divisions of the patrilinear struggle.

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NOTES

¹See Bini, *Pirandello and His Muse* for a discussion of Pirandello's interest in mothers and women understood as mothers, as creators of biological, spiritual and artistic life.

²Martinelli draws out the complicated and difficult relationships between male and female characters in Pirandello's work. I have found it useful to make distinctions between the varied roles that women have in relation to men in these particular works.

³Bini's "Enacting the Dissolution of the Self" examines the challenging language of a "daughter" who is not adequately isolated from the realm of the father's desire—the Stepdaughter in *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore*. The only character that evokes the Stepdaughter's pity is the Little Girl, who, as I see it, functions as the figural daughter in this work, while the Stepdaughter's "step" status leaves her at one remove from familial relationships within this set of characters.

⁴See particularly Stocchi-Perucchio 62-63.

⁵Bini's "Enacting the Dissolution of the Self" describes Pirandello as "a true androgynous artist" who felt the "eternal and absolute value of maternity" in himself (184).

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