
Research Papers



Exploring difference between 'Art' and 'Life' in Pirandello's Six Characters in Search of an Author

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Abstract

Six Characters in Search of an Author is the most famous and celebrated play by the Italian writer Luigi Pirandello. In this play, a group of actors are preparing to rehearse for a Pirandello play. While starting the rehearsal, they are interrupted by the arrival of six characters. The leader of the characters, the father, informs the manager that they are looking for an author. He explains that the author who created them did not finish their story, and that they therefore are unrealized characters who have not been fully brought to life. The manager tries to throw them out of the theater, but becomes more intrigued when they start to describe their story. After their story, the manager agrees to become author for them. But several artistic difficulties come in his ways. Characters do not like his play as they have different perceptions which don't match with author's vision. Fed up with the whole thing, he calls for the end of the rehearsal. This paper tries to analyze difference between "Art" and "Life" in Pirandello's Six Character in Search of an Author

Introduction :

Pirandello's Six Characters in Search of an Author is a subtle philosophical question about human identity, human existence and what it means to be a sentient, living person. Desperate to come to life, the characters interrupt the rehearsal of one play and demand the director to stage their story. Each character sees events and the other characters differently. Their readings of reality do not match up. No one character is more correct than the other. There are as many versions of the story as there are characters in the play. Each character is in fact many characters; each has a sense of who he or she is, but each also is what the others believe he or she is. Pirandello shows the differences between the characters and the real actors who try to imitate them. The play is a story of Father, Mother and Stepdaughter. All three accuse one another and all three find it difficult to rise above situation.

Art and Reality of Life :

Six Characters in Search of an Author is a modern experimental play. An experimental writing is type of writing wherein author does not know where to stand in his own work. In the modernist play, the playwright is bound to be innovative and creative in his treatment of the subject-matter, stage and characters. Here Pirandello tries to be innovative about the characters and the stage. Pirandello is highly interested in human personality. Pirandello explores human personality and thereby makes conscious and deliberate effort to come to terms with the environment. Thus on the one hand, he is concerned with the human personality and on the other, he examines self-efforts to come to terms with the environment.

Now the other modern writers try to examine the capacity of language as a tool of communicative and conveying message and they feel that language is not an appropriate medium for communicating and conveying human emotion and human personality. As a modern playwright,

Pirandello probes into the nature of theatre as medium. According to Pirandello, "Drama is a continuum – a tool for constant becoming." In the end of 19th century, the writer's main problem was how to acquire complete knowledge of reality. In the 20th Century, the writer's problems are ontological. They are concerned with the questions of being man.

In Six Characters in Search of an Author, Pirandello illustrates the point that in art, there is no reality, only perceptions. Art is one perception, held by the one artist, who brings this perception to an audience. To illustrate this principle, Pirandello uses many staging approaches and techniques to merge art and theatre into real life, while highlighting the shortcoming of drama and art in imitating life.

Difference between "Art" and "Life":

When the theatre manager puts their story on the stage, the characters begin to see difference between life and art.

(1) When the theatre manager puts their story on the stage, he says that these actors will play the roles. The family members do not like this because they think that the professional actors would not be able to create the equivalent of their emotions, feelings and sufferings.

(2) When the theatre manager arranges the stage property, the stepdaughter disagrees with the outlook of room and the matching of furniture.

The Stepdaughter : **"No no ! Green won't do. It was yellow, ornamented with flowers...very large! Arid most comfortable !"**

The Manager : "It doesn't matter. Use the one we've got"

The Step-Daughter : "Doesn't matter ! It's most important" (Act-II)

She realizes that their story is being reduced to the story of miserable middle class or lower middle class people.

(3) The family members find that the professional actors have very shock responses, stereotypical responses, reaction to real life situation. Owing to this feature, Father very quickly hits upon the notion that in the work of art, we have the word of make belief that is artificial world.

(4) When the theatre manager is directing the actors, he continuously makes selection and change in the story, the father feels if one is allowed to make changes like this, then nothing of reality remains. Once again, he blames the manager for creating artificiality and for making

their story completely fictional. The manager replies that in the final analysis, entire human life is fictional.

(5) Father says,

"A Character, sir may always ask a man who he is. Because a character has really a life of his own, marked with his especial characteristics, for which reason he is always "somebody". But a man may very well be "nobody."

(Act-II)

The Father believes that while the character's reality is real, the Actor's reality is not real ; while the character is somebody, man is nobody because he is subject to time : his reality is fleeting, always ready to reveal itself as illusion whereas the Character's reality remains fixed for eternity.

(6) Father talks with the manager that there is a difference between reality in life and reality in art. In art, reality is idealized by the author whereas in real life, there is no scope for idealization. Father calls art a game because art does not create reality but an illusion of reality which can never match with reality of life.

(7) Finally, when the manager puts the entire story, it becomes the story of father's life. Both the stepdaughter and mother do not agree with the final form of the story because they also have done lot for the family. Life gives everyone equal footage whereas the art divides them into major and minor characters.

(8) At the end of the story, the young child of the family is supposed to die but in the play, the child remains alive. The family members do not know how to react to this change in the story. The implication is thus that real life is about what has been whereas literature is always concerned with what might have been.

Conclusion :

Before Pirandello, there were writers of art for art's sake and the symbolist who try to find out the difference between art and life. Not only that, they always raise question about who imitates whom and who is superior than whom. Following that tradition, Pirandello also writes a play like Six Characters and says that life imitates art and art is better than life because it gives us the chance to reflect our past and our present experience of life. To this extent, art is superior to life.

The play arouses fair amount of feelings because it is about crucial phenomenon of middle class. It suggests that man must learn to make his own world and must learn to make room for him in that world. The world is imperfect and everyone is full of limitations. So, we must develop the sense of

tolerance for weaknesses and demerits of the people as well as the world. Only that way, we can make this world a better place and ourselves a better human being.

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