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**Translating Sicily for the German and French Stage:  
Modern Europe, its Periphery and the Archaic in Luigi Pirandello's *Questa sera si recita a soggetto* (1929-1935)**

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**Introduction**

In the last two decades, the task of the translator for the theater has been frequently discussed. Scholars such as Sirkku Aaltonen, David Johnston, Cristina Marinetti have claimed for drama translators the status of co-authors and have stressed the ethical responsibilities involved in their tasks; concurrently, postcolonial scholarship has highlighted the role of translation in constructing cultural identities (Tymoczko 1999; Tymoczko and Gentzler 2002; Cronin 2006). In 2013, Bigliuzzi, Kofler and Ambrosi suggested that, after years of emphasis on performativity, it is time to re-consider the relation between text and performance, and for “renewed attention to form and the resurgence of textual orientation” (3). In light of these developments, and keeping in mind that a translation, as a “politically and ideologically charged creative process of rewriting” (Krebs and Minier, 2009: 66), is always shaped by constrictions that go beyond linguistic and semantic criteria, I examine and compare the Italian, German and French dramatic texts of Luigi Pirandello's *Questa sera si recita a soggetto* and their relation to the first productions in Germany and France, within the time frame of 1929-1935. My aim is to investigate strategies for drama translation in the context of the late 1920-early 30s ideology and to examine how translators' choices affected the representations of regional, national, translational identities in a European context.

In what follows, after illustrating the context and the origin of *Questa sera si recita a soggetto*, I will focus on how specific intertexts and descriptions of regional and national features are rendered in the version by Harry Kahn (1929), and on the impact of this translation on the productions by Hans Carl Müller and Gustave Hartung. Subsequently, I will consider the very different approach of Pirandello's French translator, Benjamin Cremieux, Cremieux's collaboration with Georg Pitoëff and the audience's responses to the Parisian production. With this analysis, I aim to contribute to Pirandello scholarship, particularly on issues of reception, and to shed light on drama translation as well as on the role of the translator in the process of play productions. In doing so, I also aim to question the porous boundaries between translations and adaptations, as well as the hierarchy according to which scholars have often read the “original” in relation to subsequent versions.

**Origins and Context of *Questa sera si recita a soggetto***

Luigi Pirandello wrote *Questa Sera si recita a soggetto* – a play that Michele Cometa describes as one of Pirandello's “most significant dramas for his personal evolution and for the western theater” (1986: 279)— in Berlin in 1929. The Sicilian author had moved to the German capital a year earlier, when, disillusioned with the possibility of creating a modern state theater in Fascist Italy and planning to find great profits in the cinema industry, he embarked in what scholars often describe as a

“voluntary exile” in Germany and France.<sup>i</sup> From the daily letters to the actress Marta Abba, we know that *Questa sera si recita a soggetto* was from the outset written for the German stage and consequently tailored for a non-Italian audience.<sup>ii</sup>

*Questa sera si recita a soggetto* is the third part of the trilogy of the theater within the theater, and like the first part, the *Sei personaggi in cerca di autore*, it functions on two levels. It first presents the story of Dr. Hinkfuss, a boastful and assertive German director, and of the crew of actors he has hired to improvise; this level examines the issue of adaptation from text to the stage and focuses on the conflict between the actors and the director. The second level concerns the play that the actors are improvising under Hinkfuss’s direction: a jealousy drama set in an inner town in Sicily at the beginning of the twentieth century, that revolves around the love of Rico Verri, a Sicilian officer, for Mommina, the wisest daughter of an unusual family. As Hinkfuss makes a point of explaining, this play is based on a short story by Luigi Pirandello (“Leonora, addio!” 1910), a text that addresses the contrast between the way of life in Sicily as opposed to life on the mainland, with particular reference to the condition of women.

The scholarship on *Questa sera si recita a soggetto* is vast; however, the issue of translation has not been thoroughly examined.<sup>iii</sup> A comparative analysis offers an insight into the way in which the Italian, German and French versions engage with the representation of the archaic and delineate boundaries between modern Europe, its periphery and zones of internal difference. These changes affect the directors’ interpretations during the first European productions.

### **Pirandello and Translation**

Michael Rössner and Alessandra Sorrentino have recently noted that cultural translation, as a process of negotiation between different cultural contexts, runs as a thread throughout Pirandello’s fiction (Rössner and Sorrentino, 2012). From the essay “Illustratri, autori e traduttori” that Pirandello published in 1908, we know that, while considering translation a poor copy of the original – in keeping with the philosophy of Benedetto Croce— he had the intuition of identifying a parallel between interlingual and intersemiotic translation (Pirandello 2006b).<sup>iv</sup> But Pirandello’s interest in translation goes beyond translation as metaphor. Gabriella Corsinovi (1997) and Alfredo Barbina (1998) have documented his activity as a translator of European writers. After his stay in Bonn, Pirandello was particularly interested in German authors, and among his endeavors as a translator we note Goethe’s *Roman Elegies*, excerpts from the *Conversations with Eckermann* and Chamisso’s *Wundersame Geschichte*.<sup>v</sup> We also know that he translated several plays for the stage, including, curiously, a play by his own French translator, Benjamin Crémieux’s *Ici on dance*, performed in 1926 as *Qui si balla* for the *Teatro d’arte* (D’Amico and Tinterri, 1987: 198-9 and Frabetti, 2010: 76). In addition, Pirandello was also very active as a self-translator, and the experience of re-writing plays from Sicilian in Italian, and vice versa, led him to consider the implication of translating from and into a minor language.<sup>vi</sup> In the context of the genesis of *Questa Sera si recita a soggetto*, in 1928, the same year in which he began working on the play, he had just completed an adaptation of *Liola* – originally written in Sicilian— into standard Italian.

Overall, during Pirandello’s stay in Berlin, issues of translation were very much in his mind. It is at this time that he became embroiled in a dispute over fees and payments with his German translator, Hans Feist, a disagreement that soon degenerates into a fierce

legal battle.<sup>vii</sup> The series of trials that ensued resulted in a delay of the publication of *Heute abend wird aus dem Stegreif gespielt*— the German version of *Questa sera si recita a soggetto*. In his letters to Marta Abba of April 28 and June 28 1929, Pirandello complains of the poor quality of Feist’s translation, indulges in systematic slandering and repeatedly compares Feist to “un’anguilla che non si lascia prendere e sguscia dalle mani” [an eel that does not allow itself be caught and wiggles out of one’s hands] (Pirandello and Ortolani 1995: 161; 212). The metaphor refers to the difficulty he experienced in tracking down Feist for the trial, but is a particularly apt expression for the invisibility of the theatre translator, as well as for the difficulty entailed in assessing his impact.<sup>viii</sup> When, in the initial monologue of *Questa sera si recita a soggetto*, Dr. Hinkfuss takes care to enumerate all the elements that contribute to a play production—the dramatic text provided by the author, the director’s interpretation, the actors, the audience, the stage designer and light technician—the role of the drama translator and its impact on the stage script is simply omitted. If, as Pirandello explained to Guido Salvini in a letter dated March 30th, 1930, the play illustrates the necessary balance between the work of the author, the actors and the director (D’Amico, 2007a: 247-295), the conflict/collaboration between author and translator is not even mentioned. However, although Hinkfuss declares to directly adapt the short story by the Sicilian playwright Luigi Pirandello, Hans Carl Müller and Gustave Hartung, the first directors who staged “Tonight to Improve” in Königsberg and Berlin, relied on an intermediate step, the dramatic version by Harry Kahn, the translator with whom Pirandello, after some hesitation, chose to replace Hans Feist.

### **Harry Kahn’s dramatic version**

Harry Kahn was the director of Berlin’s *Deutsches Theater* and a translator for the enterprise Felix Bloch-Erben. His translation of Pirandello’s text, *Heute Abend wird aus dem Stegreif gespielt*, was announced as approved by Pirandello (Büdel, 1961:106) and published in Berlin by Reimar Hobbing in 1929. It therefore appeared before the Italian version, which was published only in 1930, and it is the version on which the *mises en scène* in Königsberg and Berlin were based.<sup>ix</sup> The text is from the outset labeled as adaptation and, although published as dramatic literature, the concern with intelligibility and the detailed stage notes suggest that it was conceived as a text for theatrical productions.

Kahn’s choices are mainly tailored to making the text intelligible to the target culture. This concern leads him to translate idiomatic expressions, nicknames, and insults into German (the nickname of Mommina’s father, “Sampognetta” becomes “Pffifikus;” “povero digraziato” becomes “Pechvogel“ etc). He eliminates linguistic constructs and idioms reminiscent of the source culture and renders them with a German equivalent – “Passò quel tempo Enea..”, [“Those times have gone, Aeneas”] (317)<sup>x</sup> becomes, for example, a plain “Das ist vorbei” [it is over] (34).<sup>xi</sup> As a result, the characters speak as if they were for all intents and purposes German.

Complications arise in the treatment of the musical intertext. In fact, throughout the text, references to melodrama play an important symbolic role. Allusions to opera such as Verdi’s *Trovatore* reinforce the emphasis on the archaic notion of honor, while the series of references to gypsies and gypsiness both in Verdi’s opera and in Bizet’s *Carmen* underscore the difference of the women of the La Croce family in respect to

values of the small town, their status as outsiders and potential threats within the town's close system of values.<sup>xiii</sup> Kahn translates the musical intertext with the corresponding excerpts in the German librettos. The imprecise quotation from Cammarano, "Ah! Quell'infame l'onore ha venduto" [that ignoble sold her honor] (318) becomes „Oh Himmel! Und diesem Engel konnt fluchen ich...." [Oh God! And I cursed this angel] (35), an allusion that underlines the injustice of the accusation but omits the reference to honor. Instead, when Mommina's sister, Nené, sings the opening lines of the Habanera in *Carmen* "È l'amore uno strano augello/ Che non si può domesticar..."(318) these lines are replaced by better known ones within the same aria "Die Liebe von Zigeunern stammet,/ Fragt nach Rechten nicht, Gesetz und Macht" (35). The substitution does not affect the symbolic meaning of the intertext; on the contrary, by underlining the reference to gipsyness, it stresses Nené's comparison with Carmen and her provocative behavior. In contrast, the allusions to texts for which there is no official German translation, such as the litany recited at the religious procession (323), find no equivalent and are simply omitted.

While Kahn's version erases difference at the level of linguistic expression, it capitalizes on the exoticism of the drama, both in the frame and in the play-within-the-play, by emphasizing the allusions to the *Commedia dell'arte*, the stereotypes attributed Italians as creative, unruly and irrational and the confusion brought about by improvisation. The stage directions, already detailed in the Italian version, now include further instructions to the actors, especially when their movements affect the action's rhythm. For example, whenever the Italian version indicates surprise, the German text specifies that the characters will "freeze" on stage.<sup>xiii</sup> The large bag with which Ignazia threatens to hit her husband, "una borsona" (p. 319), is now compared to a huge suitcase ("riesekofferähnliche tasche", 36). When Rico Verri pushes the young officer Pomàrici from the piano ("lo strappa al seggiolino del pianoforte e lo scaraventa a terra, gridando", p. 356), in order to emphasize the violence inherent in the movement Kahn describes how one actor should grab the other in the course of the action ("reißt ihn beim Kragen vom Klaviersessel herunter" p.85). Overall, the stage notes underline the quick anger and violent temper of the Sicilian protagonist and exaggerate the reactions of the other characters.

In the Italian version the German director, Dr. Hinkfuss, decides to stage a religious procession to add a folkloristic note to the representation of the Sicilian town: "Sarà bene dare una rappresentazione sintetica della Sicilia con una processioncina religiosa. Farà colore" [ It will be good to give a synthetic representation of Sicily with a little religious procession. It will bring color] (p. 322). As I underlined elsewhere,<sup>xiv</sup> with such comments Hinkfuss echoes the commonplaces through which German authors, following the example of the *veristi*, tended to represent Sicily.<sup>xv</sup> Perhaps considering that the German audience would be unlikely to detect the irony, Kahn translates it as: "durch eine kleine Prozession zunächst einmal einen allgemeinen Eindruck von Sizilien zu vermitteln" [to give through a little religious procession an overall impression of Sicily] (40), omitting the reference to the folkloristic effect ("Farà colore"). A simplification also occurs in the description of the complex social mechanisms that operate in the Sicilian town and the position of the La Croce family:

...tra la clausura quasi ermetica di tutte le altre, è l'unica della città aperta ai	...diese Familie, geradezu hermetisch von allen anderen abgeschlossen, die einzige
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<p>forestieri, con un'ospitalità eccessiva, praticata com'è di proposito, <b>a sfida delle maldicenze e per bravar lo scandalo</b> che le altre se ne fanno. (208)<sup>xvi</sup></p>	<p>in der Stadt ist, die, sogar mit einen übertriebenen Gastlichkeit den Fremden offenstehet und daher nur ausersehen ist, die <b>Zielscheibe des Klatsches und des Skandals</b> zu sein, den die andern Familien gegen sie anzetteln. (22)</p>
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Whereas in the Italian version, insularity and being closed off are part of the town's ethos and the La Croce family, by welcoming the mainland officers, deliberately challenges local customs, in the German version the family is described as isolated ("geradezu hermetisch von allen anderen abgeschlossen" [almost hermetically sealed off from all other]) and as the object of mockery ("Zielscheibe des Klatsches und des Skandals" [target of gossip and scandal]). It follows that the emphasis is no longer on the family's unusual behavior, but rather on the specific, backward customs of the townsmen.

Pirandello's play revolves around the conflict between the island's way of life versus the mainland's culture: Mommina's mother, Ignazia, comes from Naples and feels a strong sense of superiority to her Sicilian townspeople. In the first act, Ignazia introduces the actor who will play Rico Verri and anticipates the characters' sudden transformations from a supporter of the "continental way of life" to a "savage":

<p>L'attrice caratteristica: [...] Dico, come vero, che prima non se ne vantava: era anzi con tutti noi a tener testa a <b>questi selvaggi dell'isola che si recano quasi a onta il nostro innocente vivere alla continentale, l'accogliere in casa un po' di giovanotti</b>, e permettere che si scherzi come, Dio mio, è proprio della gioventù, senza malizia. (319)</p>	<p>Ignazia: [...] Ich sage nur, was wahr ist, dass er zuerst nicht stolz darauf war, dass er im Gegenteil mir uns allen gemeinsame Sache machte gegenüber <b>den ungebildeten Menschen dieser Insel, die unsere unschuldige europäische Art zu leben geradezu als eine Schmach betrachten</b>; dass wir in unserm Haus <b>ein paar junge Leute</b> empfangen und erlaubten, dass darin ein bisschen harmlos gescherzt wird, wie es, mein Gott, die Art der Jugend ist. (37)</p>
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Kahn renders "Questi selvaggi dell'isola" [these primitive people on the island] as "ungebildeten Menschen dieser Insel" [these uneducated people on the island], with "Bildung," education in the sense of cultivation and self development, replacing the reference to savagery. Moreover, the expression "vivere alla continentale" [to live as one does on the mainland] becomes "europäische Art zu leben," [European way of life]. These choices underline a geographical shift: if, in the Italian version, the way of life in the Sicilian town appears an anachronism within united Italy, the German version emphasizes the difference of the Italian South within a European context. It follows that, for the German audience, the reference for civilization is not mainland Italy, but Europe.

In the second act, when Ignazia, her daughters and the officers show up late to the local theater and, in doing so, provoke the protests of the spectators, Europe again substitutes mainland Italy, while the reference to the island's backwardness takes on a different connotation:

<p>SIGNORA IGNAZIA: „<b>Cannibali!</b> Non è</p>	<p>IGNAZIA: <b>Pöbel!</b> Es ist doch nicht unsere</p>
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colpa nostra se siamo arrivati così tardi! Oh vedete <b>se questo dev'esser considerato come un paese civile!</b> Prima un'aggressione sulla strada, e aggredite ora anche a teatro! <b>Cannibali!</b> TOTINA: <b>Nel Continente si fa così!</b> DORINA: <b>Si viene a teatro quando si vuole!</b> (333)	Schuld, daß wir zu spät gekommen sind! <b>Kann man das noch Kultur nennen?</b> Erst wird man auf der Straße angepöbelt und dann auch noch im Theater! <b>Pöbelfolk!</b> TOTINA: <b>In Europa kann man ins Theater kommen, wenn man will!</b> (54)
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Consistent with their previous geographic shift, Totina and Dorina's comments "Nel Continente si fa così!" and "Si viene a teatro quando si vuole!" [On the continent one acts this way— one comes to the theatre when one wants] are merged in a single line: "In Europa kann man ins Theater kommen, wenn man will!" [in Europe one comes to the theater when one wants]. In translating Ignatia's insult to the local, "Cannibals!" (233), with „Pöbel“ (54), Kahn chooses to underline class difference, rather than savagery. On the other hand, "Vedete se questo dev'esser considerato come un paese civile" [see if this can still be considered a civil country] becomes "Kann man das noch Kultur nennen?" [can one still call this a culture?].<sup>xvii</sup>

If, in the previous examples, lack of civility had been rendered in terms of lack of "Bildung" [education], the sentence that questions Sicily's degree of civilization is now rendered through the term "Kultur". This is in line with Kahn's choice, since "Kultur" and "Bildung", in German, are closely associated. In fact, as Norbert Elias noted in his 1939 essay "The Civilizing Process," the German notion of "Kultur" addresses "intellectual, artistic and religious facts", the cultural products through which a people or of a nation expresses itself, and therefore underlines difference and specificity and contributes to establish the uniqueness of a group (Elias 2000: 6; see also Gaughan, 2007: 16).

In Kahn's text, the word "Kultur" is often used to address the officers' mission in the context of differences between the island and the mainland, which, as noted, concern mostly the behavior that is expected of women. When the officers chat with Nenè and Totina in the foyer, Kahn emphasizes the girls' provocation in such a way that it can immediately be grasped by the target audience:

NENÈ: Ed è proprio sicuro che <b>nel Continente si fa così?</b> POMÀRICI: Come no? <b>Imboccare, dice, una caramella, alle belle signorine?</b> Sicurissimo! SARELLI: Questo, e ben altro. POMÀRICI: Eh, se volessimo proprio fare in tutto come nel Continente! TOTINA: (provocante) Ma per esempio? SARELLI: <b>Non possiamo portarglielo qua, l'esempio.</b> NENÈ: E Allora domani tutt'e quattro prenderemo d'assalto il campo d'aviazione! TOTINA: E guai a voi se non ci prendete	NÉNÉ: Wissen Sei genau, ob <b>man das in Europa so macht?</b> SARELLI: Warum denn nicht? <b>Hübschen jungen Damen etwas in den Mund stecken?...</b> ein Bonbon; selbstverständlich... SARELLI: Das und...anderes. TOTINA: (herausfordernd): Zum Beispiel? SARELLI: <b>Das können wir Ihnen hier nicht sagen.</b> NÉNÉ: Wissen Sie was? Morgen werden wir eine Sturmangriff auf den Flugplatz unternehmen. TOTO [sic]: <b>Und wehe Ihnen, wenn Sie</b>
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in volo! (336)	<b>uns dann nicht im Flug—erobern. Ich meine: im Flugzeug...(58)</b>
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Coherently with previous choices, Kahn makes the officers justify their transgression by referencing the European way of life, rather than the customs of the mainland. On the other hand, the preoccupation with making the provocation inherent in the girls' behavior evident for the target audience leads him to turn sexual innuendo into obvious statements. In order to do so, he substitutes a few worlds and changes the word order: for example, Totina's comment "E guai a voi se non ci prendete in volo!", which in Italian can be interpreted both as "you'll get in trouble if you don't take us on the flight" and "you'll get in trouble if you don't take us while flying" is rendered with a more explicit and provocative "Und wehe Ihnen, wenn Sie uns dann nicht im Flug—erobern. Ich meine: im Flugzeug..." [and you will regret, if you don't conquer us in flight. I mean: on the airplane] (58).

A similar emphasis on the girl's provocative behavior can be traced in Verri's conversation with Mommina, in which an allusion to the officers' liberties as "certi atti, certe confidenze" [certain acts, certain confidences] (340) is rendered more concretely as "gewisse Handgreiflichkeiten und Vertraulichkeiten" [certain grasping and intimacies] (64). Overall, in Kahn's version female characters are more active in responding to the officers: for instance, while in the Italian version it is Nardi who hugs and kisses Dorina ("Al bujo, Nardi abbraccia forte forte Dorina e le dà un bacio in bocca" [In the darkness, Nardi hugs passionately Dorina and gives her a kiss on the mouth p. 350], in the German text Dorina is no longer an object but a subject in the action ("Dabei umarmen und küssen sie beiden ausgiebig" [here, they hug and kiss extensively] p. 77).

The juxtaposition of the way of life in Italy and on the mainland and the differences in the degrees of development of the two regions play an important role also in the discussion that Ignazia and the officers have during the interlude in the foyer:

<p>LASIGNORA IGNAZIA: Ah voi dovrete acquistare una grande benemerenza, una grande <b>benemerenza</b>, cari miei, <b>verso la civiltà!</b> [...] MANGINI: Lezione di che? POMETTI: <b>Di creanza?</b> LA SIGNORA IGNAZIA: No no, dimostrativa, dimostrativa. <b>Una lezioncina al giorno, d'un ora, che li informi di come si vive nelle grandi città del Continente.</b> Lei di dov'è, caro Mangini? MANGINI: Io? Di Venezia, signora. LA SIGNORA IGNAZIA: Venezia? Ah Dio, Venezia, il mio sogno! E lei, lei, Pometti? Pometti: Di Milano, io. LA SIGNORA IGNAZIA: Ah, Milano! Milan.... Figuriamoci! <b>El nost Milan...</b>E</p>	<p>IGNAZIA: Die könnten sicher in großes Verdienst, ein sehr großes <b>Verdienst um die Kultur</b> erwerben, meine Herren! [...] MANGINI: Was für Stunden? POMETTI: <b>Bildung?</b> IGNAZIA: Nein, nein, <b>Anschauungsunterricht!</b> Jeden tag ein Stündchen, um ihnen beizubringen, <b>wie man in den europäischen Großstädten lebt.</b> Von von wo sind sie, Mangini? MANGINI: Ich? Aus Venedig, gnädige Frau. IGNAZIA: Aus Venedig? O Gott, Venedig, der Traum eines Lebens! Und Sie, Pometti? POMETTI: Aus Mailand. IGNAZIA: Aus Mailand! <b>Denken Sie!</b>... Und ich in aus Neapel; aus Neapel, das, ohne Mailand nahe treten zu wollen, ich</p>
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<p>io sono di Napoli; di Napoli che—senza fare offesa a Milano— dico, come popolazione è più grande; e anche salvando i meriti di Venezia<sup>xviii</sup>— come natura, dico..un paradiso! Chiaja! Posillipo! Mi viene...mi viene da piangere se ci penso. ...Cose! Cose!....Quel Vesuvio, Capri...E voi ci avete il Duomo, la Galleria, la Scala..... E voi, già, piazza San Marco, Il Canal Grande..... Cose! Cose!Mentre qua, tutte queste <i>fetenzierie</i>...E fossero soltanto fuori, nelle strade!</p> <p>MANGINI: non lo dica loro in faccia così forte, per carità!</p> <p>LA SIGNORA IGNAZIA: No no, io parlo forte. Santa Chiara di Napoli, cari miei. Ce l'hanno anche dentro, la <i>fetenziera</i>. Nel cuore, nel sangue, ce l'hanno. Arrabbiati sempre tutti! (341-342)</p>	<p>meine an Einwohnerzahl, größer ist; da auch— ohne Venedig Schmälern zu wollen- nach Lage und Umgebung ein Paradies ist! Die Chiaia! Der Posillipo! Ich muß- ich muß weinen, wenn ich daran denke!.. Da sind Sachen, Sachen!.... Dieser Vesuv, Capri.....Aber sie haben ihren Dom, die Galleria, die Scala....und sie den Markusplatz, den Canal Grande....Was für Dinge!....hier dagegen: lauter <b>Bockmißt!</b>...Und wenn es wenigstens bloß auf der Straße läge!</p> <p>Mangini: Das dürfen Sie aber den Leuten nicht so ins Gesicht sagen...</p> <p>IGNAZIA: "<b>Ich werde mich genießen...?! Das ist ja wie in Neapel am Hafen!</b> Sie haben den <b>Schweinerei</b> auch innerlich. Im Herzen, im Blut haben sie Dreck! Immer sind sie wütend!" (67)</p>
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Here the Neapolitan “*fetenziera/ fetenzierie*”, a dialect term that has the connotation of dirtiness, is rendered alternatively with the colloquial expressions “Bockmißt!” and „Schweinerei“; while the reference to „El nost Milan“ (an 1893 play written in *Milanese* by Carlo Bertolazzi ) is omitted. In line with the previous choices, Kahn replaces “civiltà” with “Kultur”. “Creanza”, in Italian associated with good manners, is now rendered with the very different notion of “Bildung,” [education].<sup>xix</sup> If, in the Italian version, “le grandi città del continente” refers to Milan and Venice, the cities where Pometti and Mangini are from, in Kahn’s version the same cities become “Europäische Großstädten,” examples of large European cities. And if, in the Italian version, Ignatia is suggesting that the officers, through their presence, can demonstrate to the locals the way of life of the mainland, and therefore make a contribution to their codes of conduct, in the German text she is rather suggesting that, by demonstrating the way of life in European cities, they can contribute to shaping local culture by injecting it with acceptable (and foreign) values. Moreover, the German version adds a line— nowhere to be found in the Italian text— in which Ignazia complains that the situation on the island is “wie Neapel am Hafen” [like in Naples at the harbor] (67). With this comment, Ignatia conflates Sicily once more with Italy’s south, as echoing the tradition of travelogue that, throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century, had described the island “not as a distinct entity but rather as the southernmost part of Italy, the ‘deep south,’ where the southern characteristics not only of the *mezzogiorno* but of all Italy as a whole manifest themselves in their most powerful, essential form” (Moe 37).

### Harry Kahn’s text and the Königsberg première

“Heute abend wird aus dem Stegreif gespielt” premièred at the *Neues Schauspielhaus* in Königsberg on January 25 1930, under the direction of Hans Carl

Müller. As the capital of East Prussia, Königsberg had been an important city, however, by 1930 it was considered remote and backward. Nevertheless, the *Neues Schauspielhaus* enjoyed a good reputation: from 1915-1919, it had been directed by Leonard Jessner, one of the most influential directors in Germany (see House, 1995: 2). Pirandello did not attend rehearsals at the *Schauspielhaus*, but, from the letters written to Marta Abba on March 1st and March 10, we know that he traveled to East Prussia to see Müller's *mise en scène* between March 4-6, at a time in which the play had already been in the repertory for five weeks (Pirandello and Ortolani, 1995: 311).

From Pirandello's correspondence and from the reviews of the play in contemporary periodicals, we know that Müller dedicated equal attention to the Sicilian story as to the vicissitudes of the actors, that he used the arias of Verdi's *Il Trovatore* as a red thread to mark the story's dramatic moments (the family's visit to the local theater, Ignatia's recitation of the *Ave Maria*, Mommina's final performance) and placed a strong emphasis on folkloric elements. Jane House (1995), Steen Jansen (1987) and Roberto Alonge (1997) suggest that Müller may have used these aspects of the play to make the Sicilian story interesting for a German audience, and Jansen in particular stresses the emphasis on the folkloric and the exotic.

In light of the analysis of the first German translation, I would like to suggest that Kahn's interpretation, on which the *Schauspielhaus* production was based, significantly influenced Müller's *mise en scène*. In fact, the analysis of Kahn's text sheds light on several aspects of the performance. As we can see from an analysis of the reviews published on local and national papers, Müller's interpretation, in line with Kahn's, emphasized references to the *Commedia dell'arte* and to the Italian spirit of the play. Ulrich Baltzer, in a review for the *Königsberger Allgemeine Zeitung*, describes Italians as "an innocent people that still finds natural pleasure in seeing the mime on stage with more or less exaggerated gestures, and who preserves a taste and sensitivity for true theatricality" (*Königsberger Allgemeine Zeitung*) and stresses that "this time he [Müller] has been able to illustrate the clashing colors, the screaming of Sicily, that for us is almost part of the Orient: gestures, voices, excitement, religious superstition, cabaret, in brief all that exercises such charm on the Nord" ("*Königsberger Allgemeine Zeitung*").<sup>xx</sup> Other reviewers emphasize the exaggerated tones of the Sicilian narrative: H. H. B. speaks of "bewußt Kitschige, scheußlich blutrünstige sizilianische Eifersuchtstragödie" [deliberately kitsch, horrible bloodthirsty Sicilian jealousy tragedy] (*Der Tag*); Herbert Gerigk of "Gespenstersonnate mit gebrochener Frau, bestialischem Mann, engelreinen Kindern" [*Gespenstersonnate* with a broken woman, a bestial man, and angelic-pure children] (*Dresdner Anzeiger*). Goldstein writes of a "Sizilianische Räubergeschichte" [Sicilian robber story] (*Berliner Börsen-Curier*) and, in a different article, remarks that "Die Fabeln spielt in Sizilien, notabene Pirandello's Heimat, und hat eine Familie zum Mittelpunkt deren weibliche Mitglieder in erotische Gastfreundlichkeit bis an die äußerste Grenze gehen" [The story plays in Sicily, *nota bene* Pirandello's home, and is focused on a family whose female members push their erotic hospitality to the utmost limits] (*Berliner Tageblatt*).

Kahn's and Müller's stress on Verri's *Sicilianness* was in tune with the previous German productions of Pirandello's plays, in which the emphasis on the "Italian spirit" had contributed to the plays' success (see Büdel, 1961:102). In the case of "Heute abend wird aus dem Stegreif gespielt", reviewers of Müller's *mise en scène* praised Jungbauer,

who interpreted the role of Verri, for the “Sicilian” look; while other actors were considered talented but “not Latin” (Pfeiffer Belli, *Königsberger Hartungsche Zeitung*).<sup>xxi</sup> In light of Kahn’s translation choices, some of the details that Steen Jansen, in his analysis of play’s press reviews, underlines as puzzling also acquire a new meaning. The first concerns the stage design by Friedrich Kalbfuss, that Dr. F., recalling the opening scene, describes as “the smoking Vesuvio [sic] and the map of the Italian boot” (*Königsberger Volkszeitung*, now in Jansen 1990: 70-71 ).<sup>xxii</sup> The replacement of Mount Etna with the Vesuvio is reminiscent of Kahn’s conflation of Sicily and the mainland: the close-up of Naples with the Vesuvius had been a typical illustration for travel narratives to the south, and “just as Naples was synecdoche for the south, so Vesuvius was synecdoche for Naples and the south” (Moe 45). In addition, Dr. F’s use of the term “fascist” to describe the officers that flirt with Mommina and her sisters suggest an additional conflation. Like F., most critics tended to ignore the time difference between the setting of “Leonora, addio!” (the beginning of the twentieth century) and of Hinkfuss’s play (Germany in the 1930s): Sicily continued to be represented as a frozen in time. We can add that, if the officers are associated with the modern cities of the north, and these cities are characterized as “European”, at least in the eyes of F., Fascism is also represented (perhaps mocked) as the “modern” side of Italy.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that reviews of the Königsberg première underline that the “erotic hospitality” (Goldstein, *Berliner Tageblatt*) of Mommina and her sisters did not provoke much reaction among the audience. The reviews mention, instead, the spectators’ negative response to the final scene, which foregrounds Verri’s abusive behavior towards his wife and Mommina’s physical decay. The audience protested that two children—the actors interpreting Mommina’s daughters— should be involved in representing such a scene. Even in the fiction of the play-within-the-play, women’s confinement and domestic violence remained difficult subjects for the German stage.<sup>xxiii</sup>

### **Adjustments for the Italian *première***

In a letter written to Guido Salvini on March 30, 1930, Pirandello praised the way in which Müller had underlined the contrast between modernity and the archaic, as well as the director’s use of the theatrical space; he instructed Salvini, who was in charge of the Turin *mise en scène*, to shorten Hinkfuss’s monologue and indicated that the ending should reestablish a balance between the director, the actors and the playwright (D’amico and Tinterri 2007a: 258-263). To emphasize this point, Pirandello removed from the 1930 Italian script Hinkfuss’ final comments concerning the role of the director and added some lines dedicated to the experience of the actors, as well as few comments on the implications of an acting style in which the actors “live” their characters, merging with the roles they are interpreting. These recommendations eventually became the base for the 1933 Italian text, which demonstrates that Müller’s adaptation influenced not only the Turin *mise en scène*, but also the final dramatic version.<sup>xxiv</sup>

One of the issues raised by fascist censorship in view of the Italian *première*, which was scheduled for April 14 1930, was that the young men that flirted with Mommina and her sisters, including the violent Rico Verri, were to be represented as Italian officers – and that they should therefore indirectly represent the state’s authority. Pirandello’s solution was to transform the officers into Belgian engineers. In this version, the engineers were working for a Belgian company that owned a mining enterprise in

Sicily, and Rico Verri was a local apprentice in the same company (D'Amico and Tinterri, 2007a: 263). By representing the officers as European, rather than as northern Italians, Pirandello used a strategy similar to the one employed by Harry Kahn in his translation for the German stage. The contrast between the jovial character of the officers and Verri's "serious intentions", his violent temper, had thus the effect of stressing the commonplaces associated with Sicily and the contrast with "modern" European culture. On the other hand, whereas Kahn's translation conflated Sicily and the Italian south, Pirandello and Salvini deliberately chose to underline regional difference. By suggesting that the "Ave Maria" that Ignazia sings in Latin to calm her toothache be substituted by a prayer to San Gennaro, the patron of Naples, Pirandello and Salvini stressed her Neapolitan origins and distance from her townsmen. In tune with these variations, Bella Storace Sainati, who played Ignazia at the *Teatro di Torino* in April 1930, underlined Ignazia's Neapolitan traits, while Carlo Ninchi, the leading actor, emphasized Verri's Sicilianness (D'Amico 1963 and Simoni 1955). Following Pirandello's indications, Salvini therefore stressed the contrast between modern Europe and its periphery, rather than between northern and southern Italy, just as Kahn and Müller had done; however, in emphasizing regional traits, he also re-established the tripartite contrast between insular, peripheral and modern Europe.

#### **A Few Notes on the Berlin *Première***

The Berlin *première* took place on May 31, 1930 at the *Lessingtheater*, under the direction of Gustave Hartung. From the letters to Marta Abba, we know that Pirandello followed rehearsals closely, intervening to give suggestions to the actors and observing Hartung's work. In his correspondence, Pirandello is initially very positive about the production; in a letter from May 1, 1930, he comments: "the play is magnificently coming out of these rehearsals." However, the letters also show that he became less enthusiastic as the show approached. On May 25, he writes: "Noto nelle prove alcuni difetti d'incomprensione da parte dell'Hartung, che m'affanno a correggere" [I notice some faults of comprehension on Hartung's side, that I am hurrying to correct] (Pirandello and Ortolani, 1995: 483). On May 30th, he expresses his disappointment: "Il lavoro ha fatto a tutti coloro che assistevano alla prova generale un'enorme impressione. Ma io non sono rimasto contento" [the work greatly impressed all those who were attending the dress rehearsal, but I was not happy] (493), and, on the next day, he criticizes Hartung's work as "una inscenatura pretenziosa e pedante" [a pretentious and pedantic *mise en scène*] (495).

We do not know what Pirandello means when he speaks of "faults of comprehension," nor can we determine to what extent Kahn's translation, on which the production at the *Lessing Theatre* was based, played a role in Hartung's interpretation. However, we do know that Pirandello continued to work in close collaboration with his translator, Harry Kahn. A letter from May 22nd describes how, as he wrote a new scene for the actress Asta Nielson<sup>xxv</sup>, who in Hartung's production interpreted the role of the *chanteuse*, Kahn was with him translating page after page as Pirandello was writing (Pirandello 1995:475). The same letter indicates that Kahn accompanied Pirandello to rehearsal at the *Lessingtheather* (p. 476).

Pirandello had not hesitated to criticize the translations of Hans Feist, but he curiously never complained about the quality of Kahn's work. Paradoxically, he blamed

Feist for the fiasco of *Questa sera si recita a soggetto*, a performance in which he had no input as a translator.<sup>xxvi</sup> Most scholars who have written on the Berlin première (see Alonge 1997, Cometa 1986, Tinterri 2009 and Jansen 1987) hold Hartung responsible for the fiasco. Others, like Büdel (1961) and Sahlfeld (2004), interpret it as a sign that Pirandello's popularity in Germany was waning. Jane House is alone in suggesting that problems of translation may have played a role, and that the "Italian spirit" of the play was misrepresented (1995:18). In contrast, Steen Jansen argues that there was no representation of the "Italian spirit" (1987: 225). We cannot establish to what extent Pirandello, who was fluent in German and had experience translating for the theater, was involved in the variations contained in Kahn's version. As translation scholars remind us, a variation that occurs once is a mistake, but a variation that is consistently repeated throughout a text must be considered a strategy, and Kahn's interpretation was unlikely to go unnoticed in the context of a performance. Even in the improbable case that Pirandello was not aware of the changes in the dramatic text that he allegedly supervised, he must have noticed them as he attended rehearsals in the company of his translator. This leads to two possible conclusions: either Pirandello supported Kahn's choices, or he strove to correct them in Hartung's production. It is possible that the attempt to bring the play back to its original complexity had the opposite effect, and complicated it for the German audience. But it is also possible that the Berlin audience related differently to the play than the Königsberg public. Königsberg had been an important and vibrant city in the past, and Prussia's main city in the eighteenth century. By 1930, it was a minor city separated from the rest of Germany from the Polish corridor. A "peripheral" audience may have been more sensitive to a text that had as its core the conflict between modern Europe and its outskirts.

#### ***“Un véritable collaborateur”*: Benjamin Crémieux**

After the scandal of the Berlin première, Pirandello left Berlin and moved to Paris. From his letters to Marta Abba, we know that his French translator, Benjamin Crémieux, had been working on a translation of *Questa sera* since 1930, when an agreement had been arranged with the Russian director Georges Pitoëff.<sup>xxvii</sup> However, the production at the *Théâtre des Mathurins* did not take place until January 18, 1935.

An influential scholar and translator of Italian literature, Crémieux had been in charge of the Italian rubric of *La Nouvelle Revue Française* for almost 20 years. He had introduced authors such as Italo Svevo and Luigi Pirandello to French audiences, and was a very close friend of the Sicilian author, who considered him "a real collaborator" (Dauven 1934).<sup>xxviii</sup> For many years, Crémieux had lived between Italy and France, but in 1928, Mussolini had listed him among the enemies of the regime for his anti-fascist stance, and this had led to the interruption of his visits (see Trice 124). In the same year, in Paris, he published a collection of essays entitled *Panorama de la littérature italienne contemporaine*. Among other issues, Crémieux was in this book concerned with defining Italian national and regional character against the background of European culture. He explains how, since 1870, Italy had striven to acquire a position within Europe, to absorb European values and to translate them into a national tradition—all, in his view, with moderate success: "son européisme n'a jamais été qu'un moyen de se révéler à elle-même, de se moderniser sans se trahir" ["its Europeanism has never been but a way to reveal Italy to itself, to modernize itself without betraying itself"] (Crémieux, 1928: 274).

For Crémieux, the “Italian soul” was represented at its best in regional literature, often written in dialect, while national literature remained contrite and artificial. Taking an opposite stance to the German critics who praised Pirandello’s “cerebral, northern” reasoning (see Büdel, 1961:103), Crémieux argues that the work of the Sicilian author is “par ses racines et dans son essence toute méridionale” [in its roots and essence entirely southern] (274). He defines Sicilian character as built upon “impulsiveness, intelligence and mobility” then and adds a fourth feature, “insularity” (274). To define the latter, he quotes the speech that Pirandello, eight years earlier, had written in honor of Giovanni Verga: “Dès que la passion s’empare de lui”, he writes, “le Sicilien devient sourd et aveugle à tout ce qui concerne autrui, il se mure, s’isole, dans son idée fixe le reste de l’univers n’existe plus pour lui.” [From the moment in which passion takes over the Sicilian becomes deaf and blind to all that concerns the others, he shuts himself up, he isolates himself in his obsession and the rest of the universe does not exist any more] (275).

### **Crémieux and Pitoëff’s “Ce Soir On Improvise”**

Crémieux’s reflection on the Italian and Sicilian character, his concern with the intersection of regional, the national and the European left several traces in his adaptation of “Questa sera si recita a soggetto”, which he wrote specifically for Georges Pitoëff’s production at the *Théâtre de Mathurins* (1935).<sup>xxxix</sup> In addition, an analysis of the text suggests that Crémieux took into account the instructions that Pirandello had given to Salvini after seeing the production in Königsberg. Other choices were dictated by practical reasons: the *Théâtre des Mathurins* was a small theater; it relied on limited resources, and could not count on the number of extras and on the elaborate settings foreseen by the German productions. Considering these factors, Crémieux simplified the choreography: he cut the religious procession and the scene in which Hinkfuss, to display his technical ability, sets up the aviation camp, he also shortened Hinkfuss’ monologue and shifted the scene that, in the Italian version, takes place in the local theatre to the cabaret. Through these changes, he managed to condense the play into 2 acts: thus in Crémieux’s text, the beginning of the second act becomes the second scene of Act I, while the end of the first act corresponds to the end of act II.<sup>xxx</sup> The consequence was that Crémieux gave up using the totality of the theatrical space: the conversations between Ignazia, her daughters and the officers, that in the Italian and German versions take place simultaneously in the foyer while Hinkfuss is setting up his aviation camp, are now shifted to the cabaret, where the group lingers to listen to the jazz performance.

A new dynamic is set between the author, the director and the actors. In fact, while the name of the author is absent from the advertisement of the Italian and the German versions, Crémieux introduces the play as “CE SOIR ON IMPROVISE—*Sur un thème de Pirandello*”. In other instances, he stresses the uniqueness of the theatrical production, “cet X que couramment on appelle theater” [this x that one commonly calls the theatre] (134).<sup>xxx</sup> In contrast to the Italian and German versions, in which the artists are referred to by their roles – “the leading actress” “The leading actor etc.”— the actors are now addressed by their real names, a device that calls attention to the theatrical system of the receiving culture.

In Kahn’s version and in Müller’s and Hartung’s *mise en scène*, Dr. Hinkfuss was a director with a German name played by a German actor: as such, his presence

emphasized the gap between the target audience and the source culture presented in the play-within-the play. In Crémieux's version, Hinkfuss is instead played by Pitoëff, a Russian director who takes on the role of mediator between the French audience and the exotic story that the actors are about to play ("Mesdames et messieurs, je ne suis plus Pitoëff, voyez en moi le prologue à la manière antique, le meneur de jeu médiéval. Je vais vous dire ce qui va arriver" [Ladies and gentlemen, I am no longer Pitoëff, what you see in me is the prologue performed in the ancient way, the leader of medieval game. I am going tell you what happens.] (134).

As in Kahn's text, the process of adapting the play to the target audience entails a significant geographical shift. "L'action se passe dans une île de la Méditerranée" explains Hinkfuss/ Pitoëff to the audience, "Pirandello a situé l'action de son conte en Sicile. Nous la situerons en Corse, à Ajaccio" [The action takes place on an island in the Mediterranean. Pirandello set the action of the Story in Sicily. We will set it in Corsica, in Ajaccio] (134). In explicitly addressing this shift, Hinkfuss/ Pitoëff emphasizes the parallel between two imaginary geographies. In fact, as Hinkfuss makes a point of explaining, the change of setting does not prove problematic for translating the "Sicilian spirit", as Corsica is characterized by the same violent passions: "Les passions ne sont pas moins excessives en Corse qu'en Sicile ; elles couvent sombrement, puis éclatent avec violence. De ces passions, la plus forte est la jalousie" [ Passions are no less excessive in Corsica in Sicily; they smolder darkly, then erupt with violence. Jealousy is the strongest of these passions] (134). Hinkfuss/Pitoëff even remarks that, in view of the similarities between the two islands, there is no need to modify the La Croce's name: "noms italiens, noms corses, c'est la même consonance" [Italian names, Corsican names, they sound alike] (135).

If, in the German version, the La Croce family was described as a victim of the idiosyncratic social mechanisms of the town, in Crémieux's text, the family's attitude and the conflicts that this behavior triggers are explained through the introduction of modernity in an archaic system of values: the La Croce family becomes "une famille moderne" [A modern family] (133). In his description of Ignatia's daughters, Kahn omitted the reference to the girls' plumpness; in Crémieux's version, Mimi, Titine, Fifine and Nénette become instead "grasses comme des cailles" [fat as quails] (135)—a term that in argot also refers to prostitutes. To stress their provocative appearance, Crémieux adds a reference to their artificial blondness ("Cheveux platiné naturellement" [Platinum hair, of course] (135). The father, Palmiro, who in the Italian version is a mining engineer, a typical profession in Sicily at the beginning of the twentieth century, becomes now a traffic supervisor, while the officers are turned into pilots sporting bright white uniforms. Most importantly, if the German version had conflated Sicily and the mainland, juxtaposing modern Europe to its backward south, Crémieux introduces a contrast between insular culture and the south of France, the Mediterranean harbor of Marseille. To mark this contrast, Hinkfuss reminds us that the Ignatia will speak with a southern accent: "dans le conte, elle est Napolitaine, elle parle avec l'accent; pour lui conserver un accent, nous en faisons une Marseillaise" [in the tale, she is Neapolitan, she speaks with an accent; to keep her accent, we will make her a *Marseillaise*] (135).<sup>xxxii</sup>

Crémieux's implicit parallel between Naples and Marseille, Sicily and Corsica stresses the difference of these regions within a national context; however, in so doing, it also emphasizes their comparability. This parallelism echoes the discourses on

Mediterranean character, which, in the Italian context, had been used by fascist authorities to justify imperial ambitions.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Such discourses went hand in hand with the celebration of “Latinity” that, since the 1920s, had been frequently mentioned in conjunction with attempts of reconciliation between Italy and France (Frabetti 144). In the French context, references to Mediterranean identity usually entailed a focus on the periphery, on the margins of France as opposed to its capital.<sup>xxxiv</sup> But just as Pirandello had juxtaposed the southern mainland to Milan and Venice, rather than to Rome, Crémieux avoids the reference to Paris and makes the officers from Lyon and Nancy.

We have seen that the concern with intelligibility led Kahn to translate most intertexts with the available German translation. Crémieux similarly aims at domestication, but translates the exotic within the national dimension: for example, while in the Italian texts Ignazia, bragging about her daughter’s virtues, stresses her skills in the kitchen (317), Crémieux adds a reference to her talent in preparing Marseille specialties: “Elle vous fera de ces bouillabaisse, et les paquets de Marseille, c’est son triomphe” [Mimi will prepare for you some *bouillabaisse*, and Marseille packets are her triumph] (140). In other instances, when he cannot find an equivalent (such as the play *El nost Milan*, that Ignazia evokes to underline Milan’s cultural achievements), he simply omits the intertext.

By shifting most of the action from the foyer of the local theater to the cabaret, Crémieux’s version gives wider space was to jazz as opposed to 19th century melodrama, and emphasizes the “European” background against the town’s honor code. In addition, he substitutes most musical references with allusions to works immediately recognizable by the French audience: “il vecchio melodrama” becomes “l’opera-comique” (141), the waltz that Ignazia’s daughters dance with the officers turns into a tango. Instead of the gipsy choir in Verdi’s *Trovatore*, Ignazia and her daughters play a waltz from Gounod. The frequent references to *Il Trovatore* are substituted by Verdi’s *La Traviata* and Puccini’s *Manon*; Bizet’s *Carmen* is replaced with Debussy’s *Pelléas et Melisande* (139-140). In the end of the play, Mommina no longer interprets the gipsy Azucena in Verdi’s *Trovatore*, but the deceived Marguerite in Gounod’s *Faust*: “Marguerite, c’est moi, voudrait tellement être heureuse qu’elle ne peut pas deviner tout le mal qui lui viendra de lui et du diable. Elle chante tout ce qu’elle espère.” [Marguerite – that is, myself – would like so much to be happy that she can not guess all the evil that will come to her from him and the devil. She sings about all her hopes.] (191). With these variations, Crémieux mitigates the difference of Mommina and her sisters in respect to the customs around them – conjured in the Italian and German versions through references to *gypsiness*— and shifts the emphasis on the loss of honor. In fact Violetta – the protagonist of “La Traviata”— and Manon Lescaut are both courtesans. Similarly to Leonora—the heroine of Verdi’s *Trovatore*—Debussy’s *Melisande* is unjustly suspected of betrayal, and just like Mommina, she dies tormented by her jealous husband.

If Pirandello’s play engages—not without a dose of irony—with commonplaces associated with Sicily, in Crémieux’s version Corsica is described as a place in which violent actions take place in everyday life, private authority takes over public norms, and one is in constant danger of being attacked by robbers,<sup>xxxv</sup> drug dealing,<sup>xxxvi</sup> or the target of a vendetta. In describing the town’s inhabitants, Crémieux, like Khan, underlines references to savagery: he substitutes “l’humeur noire des Corses...leur caractère sauvage” for “sanguaccio nero dei siciliani” [thick black Sicilian blood] (142) and,



implicitly comparing Corsica's situation to other territories associated with colonial history, makes Ignazia insult her townsmen as "une population arriérée et sauvage, plus barbares que des nègres" (148).

<p>LASIGNORA IGNAZIA: Ah voi dovrete acquistare una grande benemerenza, una grande <b>benemerenza</b>, cari miei, <b>verso la civiltà!</b></p> <p>MANGINI: Noi? E come, signora Ignazia?</p> <p>LA SIGNORA IGNAZIA: Come?</p> <p>Mettendovi a dar lezione, al vostro circolo!</p> <p>MANGINI: Lezione di che?</p> <p>POMETTI: <b>Di creanza?</b></p> <p>LA SIGNORA IGNAZIA: No no, dimostrativa, dimostrativa. <b>Una lezioncina al giorno, d'un ora, che li informi di come si vive nelle grandi città del Continente.</b> Lei di dov'è, caro Mangini?</p> <p>MANGINI: Io? Di Venezia, signora.</p> <p>LA SIGNORA IGNAZIA: Venezia? Ah Dio, Venezia, il mio sogno! E lei, lei, Pometti?</p> <p>Pometti: Di Milano, io.</p> <p>LA SIGNORA IGNAZIA: Ah, Milano! Milan.... Figuriamoci! <b>El nost Milan...</b>E io sono di Napoli; di Napoli che—senza fare offesa a Milano— dico, come popolazione è più grande; e anche salvando i meriti di Venezia<sup>xxxvii</sup> — <b>come natura, dico..un paradiso! Chiaja! Posillipo!</b> Mi viene...mi viene da piangere se ci penso. ...Cose! Cose!....<b>Quel Vesuvio, Capri...</b>E voi ci avete il Duomo, la Galleria, la Scala..... E voi, già, piazza San Marco, Il Canal Grande..... Cose! Cose!Mentre qua, tutte queste <i>fetenzierie</i>...E fossero soltanto fuori, nelle strade!</p> <p>MANGINI: non lo dica loro in faccia così forte, per carità!</p> <p>LA SIGNORA IGNAZIA: No no, io parlo forte. Santa Chiara di Napoli, cari miei. Ce l'hanno anche dentro, la <i>fetenzierà</i>. Nel cuore, nel sangue, ce l'hanno. Arrabbiati sempre tutti! (341-342)</p>	<p>LA MÈRE – Vous devriez un peu <b>travailler pour la civilisation.</b></p> <p>MANGIN – en quoi faisant ?</p> <p>LA MÈRE – En donnant des leçons à votre cercle.</p> <p>POMEL – Des leçons ? Et à qui ?</p> <p>LA MÈRE – A toutes les brutes de ce pays... Au moins une heure par jour...</p> <p>MANGIN. –Et de leçons de quoi ?</p> <p>POMEL.— <b>De civilité puérite et honnête ?</b></p> <p>LA MÈRE – Non, non, pas de théorie, de la pratique. <b>Leur montrer comment on vit dans les grandes villes du continent.</b></p> <p>Vous, Mangin, d'où êtes-vous ?</p> <p>MANGIN— Moi, madame, <b>de Nancy....</b></p> <p>LA MÈRE – Et vous, Pomel ?</p> <p>POMEL.—Moi, <b>de Lyon....</b></p> <p>LA MÈRE – <b>Et moi, de Marseille...</b> de Marseille.....la seconde ville de la France...Comme population...<b>Notre-Dame de la Garde, la Major et la Canebière...</b>J'en pleurerais rien ? que d'y penser....<b>Tu peux faire ce que tu veux à Marseille que le gens ne s'en occupent point...</b> Ici, tu ne peux pas lever le doigt sans que tous te regardent faire... Mais vous n'avez pas remarqué qu'ils sont tous <b>enragés</b> dans cette île ?</p> <p>MANGIN –Enragés ?</p> <p>LA MÈRE – Il sont <b>enragés...</b>Que ce soit la politique ou autre chose, ils se détestent, ils sont tout le temps à s'observer, à se surveiller...s'ils en voient un qui rit, ils sont persuadés qu'il rit d'eux : si quelqu'un passe près d'eux sans les regarder, c'est par mépris.... Ils passent leur vie à se croire méprisés et <b>à vouloir se venger.. La vendetta ! Quels sauvages !</b> (Musique). Ouf ! (149)</p>
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Whereas Khan rendered “*civiltà*” with “*Kultur*”, thereby underlining the specificity of the region, Crémieux translates “*civiltà*” with “*civilisation*”. As Elias underlines, in contrast to the German notion of *Kultur*, which applies to cultural achievements, the French notion of *civilisation* can refer to people’s “attitudes and behavior”. Additionally, while *Kultur* refers to values that underline a nation’s specificity, the concept of *civilisation* is associated with a stage of development that goes hand in hand with modernization, and thereby stresses a potential inherent in all people (2000:6).<sup>xxxviii</sup> In line with this definition, “*creanza*” the acceptable way of behaving that in the German version is substituted by “*Bildung*” [self development and education] becomes in Crémieux’s version “*civilté puérile et honnête*” [childish and honest civility]. Overall, while in other instances Crémieux goes out of hand to establish the local dimension, in the dialogue between Ignazia and the officers the cultural achievements of Naples, Venice and Milan play a limited role and do not always find an equivalent, while the focus is shifted to matters of conduct. The islanders’ character continues to be characterized in negative terms, but these features are explained as the result of the hardness of life and of local politics.

In translating questions of gender, Kahn had stressed the provocative behavior of Mommina and her sisters, making them more actively complicit with the officers. Crémieux emphasizes instead the way in which the officers take advantage of the girls’ naiveté. For example, in the scenes in which they feed them with candies and chocolates, the generic “gelati” becomes a more suggestive “esquimaux” (vanilla ice cream coated with chocolate); and “non possiamo portarglielo, qua, l’empio” [we cannot bring you the example here] (336) turns into a more explicit “Ça ne se dit pas en public” [one does not say it in public] (150). On the other hand, Nenè’s comment “e guai a voi se non ci prendete in volo”, which in the German version had taken on an obvious sexual meaning, is here rendered with an innocent “nous voulons voler” [we would like to fly] (150):

NENÈ: Non c’è **gelati**? Peccato! Mi dia allora una bibita. Fresca, mi raccomando. Una menta, sì.  
 TOTINA: A me una limonata.  
 POMÀRICI: **Un sacchetto di cioccolatini; e caramelle**, anche.  
 NENÈ: No, non le prenda. Pomàrici! Grazie.  
 TOTINA Non saranno buone. Sono buone? E allora sì, comprare, comprare! È una delle più grandi soddisfazioni-  
 POMÀRICI: **il cioccolatino?** [335-336]  
 NENÈ: Ed è proprio sicuro che **nel Continente si fa così?**  
 POMÀRICI: Come no? **Imboccare, dice, una caramella, alle belle signorine?** Sicurissimo!  
 SARELLI: Questo, e ben altro.  
 POMÀRICI: Eh, se volessimo proprio fare in tutto come nel Continente!  
 TOTINA: (provocante) Ma per esempio?

LA MÈRE.—Un demi bien tiré.  
 NÉNETTE. – Une glace.  
 GARÇON.— Nous n’avons plus de glaces.  
 NÉNETTE. –Oh ! il n’y a pas de glaces...Alors **une menthe à l’eau, l’eau bien fraîche..**  
 POMARET.—Apportez-nous des **esquimaux...Et de caramels !**  
 NÉNETTE. –Mais non, merci.... Il n’y a pas besoin.  
 TITINE.—Mais si, mais si...**Huit esquimaux...**  
 POMARET.—**Vous aimez tant que ça les esquimaux ?** [148 ]  
 NÉNETTE. – **Vous croyez vraiment que sur le continent on fait comme ça!**  
 POMARET.— **Mais bien sûr...**  
 SAUREL.— **On fait même mieux que ça !**  
 POMARET.— Ah ! **si nous faisons tout ce qui se fait sur le continent!**  
 TITINE.—Quoi, par exemple ?

<p>SARELLI: <b>Non possiamo portarglielo qua, l'esempio.</b>  NENÈ: E Allora domani tutt'e quattro prenderemo d'assalto il campo d'aviazione!  TOTINA: E guai a voi se non ci prendete in volo!  (336)</p>	<p>SAUREL.—<b>Ca ne se dit pas en public.</b>  NÉNETTE.— Demain, toutes les quatre, nous donnons l'assaut au camp d'aviation !  TITINE.— <b>Nous voulons voler... (150)</b></p>
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In the second part of the play, which takes place after Mommina's wedding, the downfall of the women in the La Croce family is more explicitly addressed. For example, Verri's memory of how the La Croce family kept their house open to visits ("...con la casa aperta a tutti" [... with the house open to anyone] (388) is replaced with "cette maison ouverte à tous comme une maison publique" [this house open to everybody like a brothel]; Verri's reproach to Mommina's sisters "Vi siete vendute! Disonorate!" [you sold yourselves! You dishonored yourselves!] becomes "Vous vous êtes prostituées, déshonorées..." [you prostituted yourself, you dishonored yourselves..]. With a detail absent in the Italian text, Verri specifies that Mommina's sisters, Titine, who has become a singer, "mène la vie la plus dégoûtante. Ta mère et tes sœurs la suivent... d'orgie en orgie... de déchéance en déchéance..." [leads the most disgusting life. Your mother and sisters follow her... from orgy to orgy.. from debauchery to debauchery] (186). In other passages, the la Croce family is described as an "harem ambulante" [travelling harem] (155).

In the Italian and German version, Dr. Hinkfuss explains that he can afford to add a stabbing scene because, not being Sicilian, he has no qualms about repeating the stereotypes associated with the island. In the French version, Hinkfuss/Pitoëff, himself an immigrant for the target audience, skips this statement. However, he contributes to reinforcing the stereotype associated with Corsica by moving the onset of the brawl and the knifing onstage:

UN SPECTATEUR.—Gare au couteau ! Gare au couteau !  
HINKFUSS.— non, non, halte. Pas de couteau sur la scène...  
[UN SPECTATEUR : « Watch out for knives ! Watch out for knives ! »  
HINKFUSS : « No, no, stop. No knives on scène... »] (156).

Finally, a degree of simplification occurs in the explanation of why Verri marries Mommina. Whereas the Italian version stresses the pact between Verri, his father and the rest of the community, thereby emphasizing his ties with the local, patriarchal culture, the French version gives a more straightforward explanation according to which Verri marries Mommina simply to prove his intention to the officers:

<p>"[...] i Patti, I patti a cui Rico Verri, sposandola per la picca di spuntarla contro quei suoi compagni ufficiali, si sarà arreso con quel padre geloso e usurajo, e quali patti avrà on se stesso stabiliti, non solo per</p>	<p>Rico Verri l'épouse uniquement pour prouver à ses camarades officiers qu'il est plus sérieux qu'eux » (173)</p>
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compensarsi del sacrificio che gli costa quel puntiglio, ma anche per rialzarsi di fronte ai suoi compaesani a cui è ben nota la fama che gode la famiglia della moglie” (369).

Mimi’s life before the wedding is described as “libre et insouciant” [free and careless], her situation is compared to that of a slave (“Rico se promet d’exiger de Mimi une soumission d’esclave” 173). However, it is important to note that, while emphasizing her hardship, Crémieux chooses to omit all references to her physical decay. For example, the conversation between Verri and Mommina that eventually leads to Verri’s abuse “E ora a che pensi?” [...] “D’andare a buttare a letto questa mia carne sfatta” [And now what are you thinking about? ... “of going through on the bed, this shabby flesh” (280) the latter becomes a neutral “À me jeter sur mon lit et à tout oublier” [“ of throwing myself into bed and forgetting everything”] (182).

Finally, most probably aware of the audience’s protests during the German productions, Crémieux also modifies the brutality of the final scene, which closes with Verri and the women of the La Croce family finding Mommina’s body, and makes Verri mourn Mimi and justify his jealousy as a consequence of passion:

VERRI Che cos’è ?  
 LA SIGNORA IGNAZIA Morta ?  
 DORINA Faceva il teatro alle bambine !  
 TOTINA Mommina !  
 NENÈ Mommina !

VERRI.— Que se passe-t-il ? Que fais-tu là ?  
 TITINE.— Elle ne répond pas.  
 NÉNETTE.— Elle ne bouge pas.  
 FIFINE : .— Mimi, tu n’est pas morte.  
 Non, non, je ne veux pas.  
 LA MÈRE.— Si, elle est morte....C’est vous qui l’avez assassinée.... Pauvre Mimi, pauvres enfants...  
 VERRI.— non, non, ce n’est pas possible...Mimi, ne m’abandonne pas. Ne me laisse pas. Je ne pouvais pas... Tout seul, tout seul... Non, je ne veux pas.  
 LA MÈRE.— Laissez-là, laissez-lui la paix que vous lui avez refusée quand elle vivait.  
 VERRI.—Si, si, elle est à moi, elle est toujours à moi... Et je saurai, il faut que le sache. Vous ne pouvez comprendre. Je voulais la posséder tout entière, ses pensées le plus secrètes, ses rêves, même ceux dont elle ne se souvenait plus... Elle n’est pas morte. Il faut qu’elle vive pour que je souffre. (192)

### Two texts juxtaposed

Next to the list of the characters, the program distributed at the *Théâtre de Mathurins* during the 1934-1935 season included the clarification that the scenario on which the actors improvised was drafted from one of Pirandello's short stories, "Leonora, addio!". This announcement was followed by an abridged version of the short story, translated by Benjamin Crémieux.<sup>xxxix</sup> With similar strategies to the ones used in the play, in this abridged text Crémieux removed from the short story all information unfamiliar or distracting to French readers, rendered all names and nicknames with French equivalents, and omitted the description of Mommina's physical decay. In addition, he condensed the operatic intertext—the numerous operas mentioned are reduced to *Faust* and *Il Trovatore*—and simplified Mommina's feelings towards Verri. In the translation of the short story Sicily, however, does not become Corsica. Moreover, the original sadism of the Italian short story is exacerbated, rather than mitigated.

Unlike the play, "Leonora, addio!" concludes with a very strong scene, as Verri, coming home and finding his wife's body on the floor, does not even touch her but rolls the body over with his foot. Adapting the short story for the stage, Pirandello had softened Verri's sadism: in both the Italian and the German dramatic texts, Mommina's body is found by her more compassionate mother and sisters. We have seen that Crémieux, in translating the play, further softens the ending elaborating on Verri's grief and love for his wife. In contrast, the ending in the novella printed in the program of "Ce soir on improvise" emphasizes Verri's violent, sadistic temper: "...Enrico Verri, hurlant de rage, se jeta sur sa femme et lui lança un coup de pied" [Enrico Verri, screaming in rage, threw himself on his wife and kicked her"].

If, in the *mise en scène*, the geographical shift from Sicily to Corsica suggests that the Italian and the French settings are to a certain extent comparable, the short story printed on the program establishes a distance between the source and the target culture. Moreover, although Pitoëff, in the play, concludes by asserting the importance of the director and the independence of the theatrical spectacle, by printing the short story in the program, Crémieux encouraged spectators to reflect on the mechanisms of inter-semiotic translation, as well on the implications of adapting a Sicilian story for the Parisian audience. In doing so, he also drew attention to his own role as a translator and cultural mediator.

### **Reception of *Ce soir on improvise***

The dress rehearsal for *Ce soir on improvise* took place on January 17th 1935 and was accompanied by an official reception. All Parisian actors who had had a role in the productions of Pirandello's plays were invited, and the Sicilian author, who had recently received the Nobel price, was now celebrated for the *Légion d'honneur*. The event happened to follow shortly an agreement between Italy and France which marked a reconciliation after a period of tension: in this climate, "Latinity", the unifying element stressed in Crémieux's version, was celebrated as the feature that would guarantee the two countries' friendship. As Jacques Copeau notes in his review of the play, in the eyes of critics the performance of *Ce soir on improvise* also assumed a political meaning. Copeau, who had not appreciated the play, describes how Camille Mallarmé, Pirandello's first French translator and a fascist sympathizer, embraced the Sicilian author after the performance, commenting that his spirit "n'avait point peu contribué au rapprochement

des deux pays” [had contributed not a little in bringing the two countries together] (*Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, 26 ).<sup>xi</sup>

A month and a half earlier, in an interview for *Le Journal de Paris*, Pirandello had stressed that he had followed rehearsals from a distance (“en curieux, ou en ami”) [for curiosity, as a friend], leaving to Crémieux and Pitoëff the liberty to adapt the play according to their vision (*Le Journal de Paris* 1.12.34 ). Through their collaboration, Crémieux and Pitoëff had stressed the process of inter-media translation; in particular, the shift from Sicily to Corsica was geared to a reflection on cultural appropriation. Most of the reviewers, however, expressed confusion about the change of setting.<sup>xli</sup> “M. Pirandello a choisi un décor latin pour son drame. Ce décor devient la Corse, pour le public français; il était, je crois, la Sicile dans la version primitive.” [Mr. Pirandello has chosen a Latin setting for his drama. The setting is Corsica, for the French audience; it was, I believe, Sicily in the early version] writes Marcel Bel Vianes *Le ménestrel* . “Il s’agit d’une famille sicilienne ou corse, aux choix” [It’s a Sicilian or Corsican family, at choice], comments Lucien Dubec in *Action*. “L’histoire est tirée d’une nouvelle de M. Pirandello, ‘ Leonore, adieu !’ Dans le texte italien elle se passe en Sicile, en Corse, dans la traduction. Pourquoi ? ” [The story is taken from a story by Mr. Pirandello, ‘Leonora, addio!’ In the Italian text it is set in Sicily, in the translation in Corsica. Why?] asks André Bellessort ( *La semaine dramatique*). In his own article, Gérard d’Houville provides an answer to this question “Ces personnages vivent en Corse. Nous ne savons pas pourquoi, puisque Pirandello les avait faire naître en Sicile. [...] L’important est qu’on ait d’une part une population assez peu hospitalière, [...] des gens simples, un peu sauvages au beau sens du mot, que les mœurs faciles heurtent avec violence ” “These characters live in Corsica. We do not know why, since Pirandello had them born in Sicily. [...] The important thing is that we have on the one hand a rather inhospitable population [...] simple souls, a little savage in the good sense of the word, easily upset by promiscuous customs” ] (*Le Petit Parisien*).

Léon Treich responds to the critics who blamed Crémieux for the lacking success of the play by underlining that the geographical shift had absolutely no consequence “Sicile, Corse, Terre de feu, etc. détail !!!!”. [Sicily, Corsica, Tierra del Fuego, etc. It is a detail!!!!] (*Vendémiaire*). Finally, an anonymous reviewer from *Le cri de Paris* wonders why Pirandello chose to portray a French officer so negatively:

Le Français moyen [...] se demandera pourquoi M. Pirandello, Italien, a tenu à mettre à la scène le personnage d’un officier français brutal, jaloux et violent, et à le présenter sous un nom italien. Et le Français moyen ne comprendra pas où comprendra mal. Cependant [...] dans l’original italien, l’action se passait en Sicile, et il [Le Français moyen] en sera soulagé.

Pourquoi M. Benjamin Crémieux l’a-t-il transportée en Corse ? Serait-ce parce que nos amis italiens auraient pu se froisser de voir jouer sur une scène française, en ces temps, de rapprochement, une pièce construite autour d’un officier italien brutal, jaloux et violent ?

[The average person in France [...] will wonder why Mr. Pirandello, Italian, wanted to bring on stage the character of a brutal,

jealous and violent French officer, and present him under an Italian name. And the average French person will not understand or will misunderstand.

However [...] in the Italian original, the action took place in Sicily, and he [the average French] will be relieved.

Why did Mr. Benjamin Crémieux transpose the action to Corsica?

Could it be that our Italian friends would be offended to see acting on a French stage, in these times of reconciliation, a play built around a brutal, jealous and violent Italian officer? ] (Anonyme, *Le cri de Paris*)

Not all critics were fascinated by meta-theatrical reflections: Robert Brasillach, for example, regrets that the Sicilian story was not treated more in detail (*Critique Théâtrale* 23.1.35). Another anonymous reviewer, who had clearly not seen the show, summarized it by referencing the version of “Leonora, addio!” printed on the program: “Un soir, il [Verri] trouve sa femme chantant devant ses deux enfants assis sur de grandes chaises. Elle chantait pour se souvenir du passé, de sa liberté ancienne. Fou de rage, il lui lance un coup de pied et la tue.” [One evening he [Verri] finds his wife singing to her two children, who are sitting on large chairs. She was singing to remember the past, her former freedom. Mad with rage, Verri kicks her and kills her] (*anonymous*, 23.1.35). With this summary, the reviewer exaggerates Verri’s brutality even further than Crémieux in his own translation, exposing the Parisian audience’s reaction to the uncomfortable facets of the “Sicilian” story.

Other distortions underline the difficulty critics and audiences encountered in understanding the tripartite contrast between the insular and the “peripheral centralities” at the core of the play. One of the reviewers, for example, did not resist substituting Lyon and Nancy with Paris and summarized the situation of the La Croce family as follows: “quatre filles acceptent de commettre mille excentricités scandaleuses en compagnie des jeunes gens, pour faire comme à Paris.” [Four girls willing to commit a thousand outrageous eccentricities in the company of young men, to do as one does in Paris.] (*Anonymous*, 21.1.35).

Despite these misunderstandings, Marcel Bel Vianes’s review in *Le ménestrel* proves that Crémieux and Pitoëff succeeded at least in one of their objectives, as they effectively drew attention to the role of the theatre translator:

M. Pirandello, [...] veut nous faire croire que le thème seul de nouveau spectacle du théâtre du *Théâtre des Mathurins* est de lui, et que tout le reste est Comedia del Arte [sic]. Mais nous savons qu’il n’en est rien. À quoi bon, d’ailleurs, se serait-il adressé à M. Benjamin Crémieux si, une fois le canevas fourni, les acteurs avaient en toute licence pour le broder, l’enrichir, le modifier selon leur personnalité ?...

Mr. Pirandello, [...] wants us to believe that the only theme of the new theatrical show at the *Mathurins* is his, and that everything else is Comedia del Arte [sic]. But we know it is not. For what purpose, indeed, would he have contacted Mr. Benjamin Crémieux if, once the canvas was supplied, the actors had overall the license to embroider, enrich, modify it according to their personality? ...

(Marcel Bel Vianes, *Le ménestrel*. 25.1.35.)

## Conclusions

Jansen has described Kahn's translation a "faithful" rendition of the original text (1987: 219). Conversely, scholars interested in the reception of Pirandello's theatre in France have taken for granted that, as "adaptation", Crémieux's text could not be examined or compared to the corpus of French translation. However, the comparison of Kahn and Crémieux's texts has shown that both translators either emphasize difference or reshape diversity into the familiar for the benefit of the target audience.

As David Johnston notes, translations for the theater produce texts that "move between and across different histories and geographies, locating and uprooting the historical and cultural imagination of the spectator" (19). In the case of *Questa sera si recita a soggetto*, the borders of modern Europe and its periphery are modified and re-drawn as the play, in the years between 1929 and 1935, is adapted and staged in different geographical and political contexts. In the Italian text, the way of life in the Sicilian town appears as an anachronism in united Italy. The German version conflates Sicily with Italy's south and underlines the difference of this region within a European context. Through this geographical shift, Kahn underlines the cultural specificity of the European periphery, its distance from the way of life of the cities of the north. Shifting the action to Corsica, Crémieux sacrifices the aspect of the play that refers to the Italian issues that developed after the unification, but draws attention to the process of translation and the implications of cultural appropriation. Moreover, by constructing a comparison between Corsica, Marseille and Lyon and Nancy, he emphasizes the tripartite contrast between the island, the mainland's south and its modern cities. In both the German and the French versions, zones of difference within Europe are represented as frozen in time and function as a site of the atavistic and the archaic. On the verge of the Ethiopian war – which would start few months after the Paris première of "Ce soir on improvise"— Crémieux makes Ignazia protest that the Corsicans are "plus sauvage que des nègres" [more savage than Negroes] (148), drawing an implicit parallel with other civilizing missions, but is careful to soften cultural difference in the moment in which it becomes uncomfortable: Corsica may be backwards and marginal, but is not completely other. Lastly, in both texts, the juxtaposition of modern Europe to its zones of inner difference emphasizes the gap between the way of life represented on stage and the very different way of life of the audience.

The comparison between Kahn's and Crémieux's text has also emphasized two different approaches to translation for the stage: both worked closely with the author, but whereas Kahn adapted the drama for a generic German audience, Crémieux collaborated with Pitoëff and wrote with a specific production in mind. The analysis has also assessed that earlier translations had an impact on the strategies undertaken by subsequent ones, and that questions of translations played a relevant role in the directors' interpretation and consequently affected the process of production.



In an interview released in the occasion of the opening of “Ce soir on improvise”, Pirandello confirmed the statements made in 1908 in the essay “Autori, attori, illustratori” and declared that any *mise en scène* is always an interpretation, a “translation” and, consequently, a distortion of the original text: “Je n’ai jamais dissimulé ma pensée sur ces interprétations scéniques. Par la force des choses, ce sont des déformations de l’œuvre écrite, comme celle-ci est une déformation de l’œuvre rêvée” [ I have never concealed my thoughts on interpretations for the stage. By necessity, they are deformations of the written work, just like the latter is a deformation of the dreamt work] (*Excelsior* 12.1.35. p.4). Around the same time Pirandello declared that, as a director, he had not hesitated to alter his own plays: “Je me suis ingénié, en les mettant en scène, à diminuer et à gâter mes propres œuvres.” [I took care, in staging them, to decrease and spoil my own work.] (“En confidence par Luigi Pirandello. Avant le Gala du 17 aux Mathurins 15-1-31”). Scholars have often pointed out that, notwithstanding these declarations, *Questa sera si recita a soggetto* demonstrates exactly the opposite: Pirandello’s awareness of the autonomy of the *mise en scène* and of the complex relation between text and performance.<sup>xlii</sup> In the case of the first productions of *Questa sera si recita a soggetto*, this awareness entailed, if not exactly an appreciation, at least an understanding of the role of the translator.

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<sup>i</sup> On Pirandello's experience in Berlin, see Cometa 1986, Rössner 1998 and Sahlfeld 2004. On his stay in Paris, see Frabetti 2010.

<sup>ii</sup> In a letter written on April 7, 1929, Pirandello warns Marta to read the manuscript “senza pensare affatto di rappresentarlo TU, [...]; ho scritto il lavoro in vista dei teatri di qua e degli attori e attrici di qua.” [without thinking of acting in it; I wrote the work for the German theater and with German actors and actresses in mind] (Pirandello and Ortolani, 1995: 120). On April 8, he adds “... è una commedia per fuori” [“it is a play conceived to be staged abroad”] (122).

<sup>iii</sup> On *Questa Sera si recita a soggetto* and its first productions see, among numerous contributions, Boussy 1985; Callaghan 1992; Corsinovi 1992; Alonge 1993; Bassnett 1993; Bisicchia 2007; Tinterri 2009;

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Bernardi 2010; Jansen 1990; House 1995. Alonge, House, Callaghan, Tinterri and Jansen all emphasize the “folkloric” elements of the *Prima assoluta* in Königsberg. Steen Jansen goes as far as examining Kahn’s dramatic text, but concludes that, overall, “the translation follows very faithfully the original text” (1987): 219.

<sup>iv</sup> See Wood 2013 for a recent comment on this essay.

<sup>v</sup> On Pirandello’s engagement with Goethe, see Corsinovi 1997. On other translations see Barbina 1998.

<sup>vi</sup> “Pensaci, Giacuminu”, “Liolà”, “A birrita cu’ i ciancineddi” and “A giarra” were originally written in dialect and then re-written in Italian. “Lumie di Sicilia”, “La morsa”, “La patente”, “Tutto per bene” were first written in Italian and then translated into Sicilian. For more details on Pirandello and self-translation see Lespchy, 2009. For a recent essay on Pirandello’s representation of Sicilian character within the dialect plays see Santuccio 2014.

<sup>vii</sup> Pirandello had a particularly close relationship to Hans Feist, who had organized the Zurich *première* of “Diana e la Tuda” (1926) and sat next to Pirandello in the conference he held on the “Six characters” at the Tonhalle (Cometa, 1986: 265). Hans Feist was Jewish, and as a consequence, after 1933 his translations were banned from the German stage (see Rössner 1988: 149-58).

<sup>viii</sup> Venuti (1995) has written extensively about the question of the translator’s invisibility; in the case of dramatic text, this question is further complicated by the different roles played by translators in the process of play production. A comprehensive view of the implications of translating for the stage is given by Jean Graham-Jones in his introduction to the special number of the Theatre Journal, *Theatre and Translation* (2007).

<sup>ix</sup> Only the prologue had been published in April 1929 in the journal *Pègaso* ( See D’Amico, 2007b:1023). The first edition in Italian was published in February 1930. The 1933 edition presents a few variations.

<sup>x</sup> All quotation from the Italian text refer to the 2007 Mondadori edition, which is based on the version published in 1933. Since the 1930 version is closer to Kahn’s text, when appropriate, I have reported the variants indicated by D’Amico and Tinterri (2007b:1018-1027). For the English translations, I have used Campbell and Sbrocchi’s 1987 translation, modifying it to render the literal meaning when necessary.

<sup>xi</sup> All quotation from the German text, unless otherwise indicated, refer to the Reimar Hobbing edition (1929). The translations into English of the German text are my own.

<sup>xii</sup> On the symbolic role of the musical intertext, see Segnini 2015: 29.

<sup>xiii</sup> If the Italian text underlines Verri’s astonishment by comparing his emotional reaction to the experience of looking into a precipice (“Resta dapprima sospeso, come se lo sbalordimento spalanchi davanti alla sua ira un precipizio” 356) the German text notes that he is paralyzed by horror („als wenn ihn das Entsetzten versteinerte“ 84). Similarly, „Succede un primo sbalordimento in tutti“ becomes „Zuerst sind alle wie versteinert“ (85).

<sup>xiv</sup> See Segnini 2015:30

<sup>xv</sup> See Pirandello’s critical and ironic review of Telmann’s collection of Sicilian stories (2006a: 337-345.)

<sup>xvi</sup> The text as published in *Pègaso* in 1929 reads: “tra la clausura quasi ermetica di tutte le altre, è l’**unica** aperta ai forestieri, con un’ospitalità **anche eccessiva**, praticata com’è di proposito, **quasi a sfida** delle maldicenze e per bravar lo scandalo che le altre se ne fanno” (see “Note ai testi e varianti”, 1025)

<sup>xvii</sup> In the 1997 translation, Michael Rössner renders “paese civile” as “Zivilisiertes Land” (211)

<sup>xviii</sup> I am following the 1930 edition in Mondadori 2007.

<sup>xix</sup> The German term to define personal conduct is rather “Kultiviert”.

<sup>xx</sup> As this newspaper is no longer available in Germany, I am refereeing the text provided by Jansen (1987: 221). It is curious that Baltzer interprets the cabaret as a “Southern” phenomenon.

<sup>xxi</sup> As this issue of the *Königsberger Hartungssche Zeitung* is no longer available in Germany, I am quoting from the translation of Pfeiffer- Belli’s article as cited in Jansen 1990:78-80.

<sup>xxii</sup> Other critics, unlike Dr. F., interpret the mountain as Etna; See “Der Neue Pirandello” *Vossische Zeitung*, 26.1.30 : “Eine Novelle von sizilianische Eifersucht- dort, wo den Aetna entflicht” [a story of Sicilian jealousy-there, where the Etna sparkles]

<sup>xxiii</sup> Non Italian scholars have similarly express bewilderment about this ending: Ann Callaghan, in 1992, wrote that “While I find that Verri’s sudden *volte face* in the play stretches credibility, the raw brutality of the story’s ending is grotesque. [...] A theatre audience would have been uncomfortable with the savagery of such a scene on stage” (88).

<sup>xxiv</sup> There are, in fact, three Italian versions: the dramatic version by Luigi Pirandello published in 1930, the annotated script on which Salvini based the 1930 *mise en scène*, and the 1933 edition, which is very similar

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to the second one. Tinterri and Alonge have analyzed these variants in light of the discussion that was current at the time in Italian theatre (see Tinterri 2009 and Alonge 1997, also D'Amico and Tinterri 2007b). Here, I will limit my focus to the details relevant to the analysis of Kahn's translation and Müller's *mise en scène*.

<sup>xxv</sup> This scene can now be found in Pirandello 2007, 1018- 1022. In it, Pirandello stresses the "Sicilian" themes of jealousy and honor.

<sup>xxvi</sup> See the letters from June 3<sup>rd</sup>, June 5<sup>th</sup> and especially June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1930, in which Pirandello rails against Feist and stresses that he is being targeted and accused because he is a foreigner. Pirandello was convinced that Feist was responsible for spreading the rumor that Hinkfuss represented a caricature of Max Reinhardt. According to Pirandello, Reinhardt's followers reacted by sabotaging the Berlin première (Pirandello and Ortolani, 1995: 502-511). Sahlfeld notes that Pirandello's reconstruction is hardly credible (2004: 37).

<sup>xxvii</sup> In a letter from March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1930, Pirandello writes: "Ho ricevuto una lunghissima lettera di Crémieux, piena di buone notizie [...] è decisa la rappresentazione, oltre che della "Vita che ti diedi", anche di "Questa sera si recita a soggetto" con Pitoëff." [I received a very long letter from Crémieux, full of good news [...]. The representation of "Questa sera si recita a soggetto", in addition to "Vita che ti diedi" is decided with Pitoëff"] (Pirandello and Ortolani 1995: 315). See also the letter from March 10, 1930 "Vado [a Parigi] soltanto per assistere alla prima della "vita che ti diedi" e per intendermi con Crémieux e con Pitoëff per "Questa sera si recita a soggetto" [I am going only to assist to the première of "vita che ti diedi" and to discuss with Crémieux and Pitoëff "Questa sera si recita a soggetto" ](1995: 325). Pitoëff had already directed the *mise en scène* of "Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore" in 1923, "Henry IV" in 1925 and "Ciascuno a suo modo" in 1926.

<sup>xxviii</sup> On Crémieux's activity as a scholar, journalist and translator see the works of Frabetti and Trice. Like Hans Feist, Crémieux was Jewish—this did not affect the friendship with Pirandello, who in other instances does not hesitate to use anti-Semitic comments.

<sup>xxix</sup> The stage script was published in 1935 by the *Mathurins Theatre*. The original manuscript, however, has not been preserved. Here, I refer to Crémieux's version as reprinted in Pirandello 1953 (132-194).

<sup>xxx</sup> A detailed description of these variations and of the choreography of Pitoëff's *mise en scène* can be found in Jomaron (66-71). See also see Lelièvre (525-529), Juvet (35), Boussy (1472-1513), Frabetti (241-263). Frabetti notes that "Les coupures opérés dans le texte par Crémieux concernant tous les éléments liés à la pratique du théâtre telle qu'on la connaissait en Italie entre 1928 et 1929" [The cuts made in the text by Crémieux concern the elements related to the practice of theater as it was known in Italy between 1928 and 1929] (12)

<sup>xxxi</sup> Most scholars agree that Crémieux's adaptation neglects the author to underline the role of the director and the actor. See, for example, Frabetti 12. I would instead like to point out that, while Crémieux and Pitoëff emphasize the role of the actors, the author does not disappear and remains an important presence.

<sup>xxxii</sup> In Pitoëff's production, the actress Mady Berry was specifically selected for her accent and maternal appearance. On Berry's performance see De Jomaron 69.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Mediterranean character was particularly praised by intellectuals gathered around the group *Strapaese*, who called for a return to an "authentic traditional Italy" and described Italians as "unsuitable to become modern and Europeans" (see Patriarca 135: 155)

<sup>xxxiv</sup> However authors such as Albert Camus, a few years later, would use the discourse of Mediterranean identity to identify features of resistance to totalitarianism. See Albert Camus's "La nouvelle culture méditerranéenne" (The New Mediterranean culture). For an English translation and more information of Camus' stance in this text, see Foxlee.

<sup>xxxv</sup> See Ignatia's comment: "Il ne rencontrera pas dans ses tournées un bandit qui se trompe et qui m'en débarrasse ... " [he could meet on his journeys a bandit who, by mistake, gets rid of him for me" (137-38)

<sup>xxxvi</sup> "Nénette... Elle a été dernièrement compromise dans une affaire de drogues..." [Nénette... she was lately compromised in a drug business] (186)

<sup>xxxvii</sup> I am following the 1930 edition as noted in D'Amico and Tinterri 2007b.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> In his essay, Elias links this understanding of *civilisation* to "the self-assurance of peoples whose national boundaries and national identities have for centuries been so fully established that they have ceased to be the subject of any particular discussion, peoples which have long expanded outside their borders and colonized beyond them" (2000:6).

<sup>xxxix</sup> A copy of the program is held at the *Bibliothèque nationale de France*: 4- COL- 17 (29)



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<sup>xl</sup> On this episode and on the historical circumstances of the *mise en scène* of *Ce soir on improvise* see the analysis by Frabetti (241-262).

<sup>xli</sup> The collection of 104 newspaper clippings on *Ce Soir on improvise* is held at the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* in the Pitoëff collection (4 COL 17). The author's name or the title of the journal are not always noted.

<sup>xlii</sup> “Ritenuta per lungo tempo una inevitabile degradazione del testo scritto [...] la rappresentazione viene ad essere riconsiderata nell'ambito di una nuova e più consapevole visione del rapporto tra testo e messa in scena.” [Considered for a long time an inevitable degradation of the written text [...] the “*rappresentazione*” is now considered as part of a new and more informed view of the relationship between text and *mise en scène*.] (Corsinovi 1992: 7).