

SICILY'S HISTORICAL TRAUMAS: LUIGI PIRANDELLO'S "L'ALTRO FIGLIO" AND ITS CINEMATIC RENDITION BY PAOLO AND VITTORIO TAVIANI IN KAOS (1984)

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Sommario

Il saggio prende in esame una novella pirandelliana e la sua resa cinematografica. In "L'altro figlio", Maragrazia, la protagonista, vive completamente e tragicamente emarginata dagli abitanti di Farnia (Sicilia) che la considerano una vecchia pazza. Causa della sua apparente pazzia sembra essere la lontananza dei suoi amati figli, emigrati da anni in America come tanti concittadini, con i quali ha perso ogni contatto. Un giovane medico appena arrivato a Farnia ha pena di Maragrazia e, interessandosi del suo stato mentale, decide di farsi raccontare la storia della sua vita. Viene così a scoprire che il marito della povera donna era stato ucciso da una banda di briganti, usciti di prigione grazie ad un decreto di Garibaldi, e che lei stessa è stata violentata e tenuta prigioniera per mesi da uno dei briganti dal quale avrà un figlio che però non riuscirà mai ad accettare. Attraverso l'analisi 'transmediale' della novella, il saggio si concentra sull'esame della narrativizzazione e resa cinematografica del trauma storico collettivo Siciliano.

Keywords: Historical trauma, Garibaldi, emigration, mafia, Italy's unification

The short story "L'altro figlio" (1902), in *Novelle per un anno*, stands out within the corpus of Pirandello's work for the brutality of its drama and for evoking a world very different to the mostly bourgeois reality presented in the author's best-known short stories, plays, and novels; it is a natural and agrarian world marked by destitution and degradation (Concolino, 2016:98-99). In writing the *Novelle*, Pirandello's literary goal was that of writing a story for each day of the year, however, his death ended the project prematurely (Radcliff-

Umstead, 1991:344). Thus, the *Novelle* are collected according to the sole principle of the daily passing of time and of “una unitaria espressione della totalità del mondo pirandelliano dolorosa e non certo gaia” (Salsano, 2016:51). As for many other short stories of the collection, Pirandello transformed “L’altro figlio” into a one-act play, much later in 1923; nevertheless, neither the short story nor the play has attracted much attention from critics, and they both remain marginal within the critical studies on Pirandello’s art. For comparison and contrast, I, then, turn to the Taviani brothers’ cinematic rendition of the story in *Kaos* (1984), where Pirandello’s oneiric and symbolic return to his dead mother is “paralleled to by an etymological and historical return to Sicily’s primeval past” (Marcus, 1993:183).

This return is well expressed by the film’s epigraphic words, “I therefore, am son of Kàos, and not allegorically, but in reality, because I was born in our countryside that is located near an intricate forest, called Càvusu by the inhabitants of Agrigento — a dialectal corruption of the genuine and ancient Greek word Kàos” (Marcus, 1993:183). Pirandello’s return is to the Greek colonisation of Sicily which is paralleled by his journey into his personal chaos, guided by his mother’s words, “Learn to see with the eyes of those who no longer see” (Marcus, 1993:184-85). Thus, “*Kàos* can be read as a lesson in seeing, in the healthy, open, chaotic vision of the authorial consciousness, and the closed, fixed, pathological, *in malo* vision of the imaginatively impaired” (Marcus, 1993:185). The lesson in seeing is indeed the *leitmotif* that threads the proem and the four stories: “Il corvo di Mizzaro”, “L’altro figlio”, “Mal di luna”, “La giara”, and “Requiem”. Hence, I contend that in “L’altro figlio” the Tavianis are inviting us to see the *Risorgimento* “with the eyes of those who no longer see”, and whose voice was not heard during those historical years.

The story centers on Maragrazia’s traumatic life. As Garibaldi arrives in Sicily, he orders the release of all prisoners. Bandits are freed, too, causing horrible violence; Maragrazia’s husband is killed, she is raped, and gives birth to a son who she cannot accept, while her beloved sons emigrate to America. In 1895, Sigmund Freud published *Studies in Hysteria*, where he linked neurosis to past traumatic

experiences (now 1963:36-38), and Pirandello, like many intellectuals of his time, was very much influenced by Freud's trauma theories (Stone, 1989:101). Etymologically, the word "trauma" comes from the Ancient Greek word "πῶς να σημάνει τραύμα" and means "wound", and Maria Antonietta Grignani already highlighted how Pirandello's characters tend to have "a wounded subjectivity" (1999:77). The image of the wounded subject is central in my study, as I contend that Pirandello describes both the national unification and Sicilian emigration as a wound, separating – instead of joining – Italians, as national subject, who twice missed the historic chance to become one people. My argument is that Maragrazia's multiple traumas represent Sicily's historical traumas rooted in Italy's unification and the consequent massive emigration. As Pasquale Verdicchio observes, "[Italian] emigration is part and parcel of the oppressive process of nation building" (1997:98), which created the colonial subjugation of Sicily (Sorrentino, 2013:97). As any colonisation inevitably causes trauma (Kalayjian & Eugene, 2010:212), in this work, I intend to apply trauma theories to explicate Sicily's position as subaltern "Otherness" within Italy's national project. My research's scope is not completely new, as Norma Bouchard, writing about the *Risorgimento* and its aftermath in Sicily, argues that, "*Risorgimento* truly emerges as that transgenerational specter described by Abraham as a trauma that is transmitted and repeated from earlier to later generations" (2006:76). In her groundbreaking article, Bouchard outlines how historical trauma is a leitmotif in the works of Sicilian writers such as Verga, Pirandello, Lampedusa, and Consolo.

Historical traumas relate to historic events involving losses of both the lives and the cultures of the affected people (LaCapra, 2011:49), while trauma narratives centre on the reconstruction of and recuperation from the traumatic event through accounts of the traumatised who need to tell their experiences to make them real both for themselves and for the community (Tal, 1996:137). As a trauma text, this story is a way to reconstruct and recover historical memories, which have been neglected or suppressed by post-unification Italian mainstream culture and rhetoric. To 'right' national history, Pirandello metaphorically inscribes post-unification Sicily's

historical traumas in the personal traumas of the story's protagonist Maragrazia, her husband, and her son Rocco. Pirandello's rhetorical move is a well-codified narrative strategy in trauma literature, as traditional languages cannot adequately convey the horror of the survivors' experiences. As Tal comments: "As it is spoken by survivors, the traumatic experience is re-inscribed as metaphor" (1996:16).

The story begins with Maragrazia asking, "C'è Ninfarosa?" Ninfarosa is a fictitious and allusive name. In Greek mythology, nymphs are famous for being perennially young, beautiful, and, consequently, the natural target of men's sexual desires. The name points to the woman's young and provocative beauty, "Bruna e colorita, dagli occhi neri, sfavillanti, dalle labbra accese, da tutto il corpo solido e svelto, spirava una allegra fierezza (Pirandello, 1957:928). For Maragrazia, though, Ninfarosa's real seductive power is her ability to write letters to her sons in America. Just like Ninfarosa, the name Maragrazia is also fictitious and highly allusive to "Mala Grazia" – carrying an ominous fate. As Maragrazia drops down on the steps of Ninfarosa's house to wait for her, the narrator describes her as "un mucchio di cenci [...] unti e grevi [...] e impregnati di sudor puzzolente e di tutto il sudicio delle strade [...] le palpebre sanguinavano [...] bruciate dal continuo lacrimare [...] gli occhi chiari apparivano come lontani, quelli d'un'infanzia senza memorie" (926).

Maragrazia lost the ability to take care of herself, and, as a result, she also lost all human traits, becoming a heap of dirt and grease. As Giuseppe Barone noticed, Maragrazia's tragic existence is rooted in her "trauma affettivo del distacco" – due to her sons' emigration to America – that becomes a metaphor of Sicily's massive emigration during the years 1892–1920 (1987:206). Although between 1881 and 1913 Italian industrial production increased by a staggering annual rate of 4.2 percent, during almost the same period (1901-1914), 28 percent of Southern Italians emigrated to the Americas (Daniele & Malanima, 2001:72; Barone, 1987:201). Paradoxically, that increase in industrial production was sustained also by Southern workers' remittance money, even if Sicily, and the South in general, did not

benefit from the government's industrial development plans (Barone, 1987:205).

Every time people from her village, Farnia, leave for America, Maragrazia follows and scrutinises them to see to whom she can entrust the letter that Ninfarosa wrote for her. For fourteen years, Maragrazia has repeated the same actions: having Ninfarosa write a letter and then finding a person to whom to entrust its delivery. The letter that she dictates to Ninfarosa follows the same script, "Cari figli [...] io non ho più occhi per piangere [...] perché gli occhi miei sono abbruciati di vedervi almeno per l'ultima volta" (Pirandello, 1957:930). Ruggero Jacobbi argues for Maragrazia's agency in choosing her life style – since she refused *l'atro figlio*'s support – and writes, "Maragrazia sceglie l'emarginazione, una vita da stracciona; quelli che gli altri ritengono la sua abiezione è, invece, la sua dignità" (Alonge, 1993:xxix). On the contrary, I contend that her inability to take care of herself, her being lost with "gli occhi chiari [che] apparivano come lontano d'un'infanzia senza memorie" (Pirandello, 1957:930), and her obsessively repetitive behaviour in writing letters to her sons are all characteristics that point to trauma.

As Laurie Vickroy writes, "Trauma disrupts our notions of fixed personality traits and draws attention to reactive behaviour"; consequently, to avoid pain victims separate or dissociate themselves from physical and emotional self-awareness. In other words, trauma victims' "splitting off from one's body or awareness can reduce the victim's immediate sense of violation and help the person to endure and survive the situation" (2015:8). What I find intriguing here is the idea that a trauma survivor needs to split off from her own body or awareness – hence, Maragrazia's apparent apathy about her filthy living conditions. In such splitting, the trauma survivor acts very similarly to the subaltern occupying the "third space", as described by Homi Bhabha (1990:211). Ultimately, trauma is an experience of both displacement and dislocation, although with different results. Whereas in the "third space" a new hybrid identity is created, in the case of a trauma the splitting of the personality leads only to "dysphoria and a numbness that takes the meaning out of life and makes it hard to relate to other people" (Tal, 1996:135).

Unlike the short story, where the plot develops over a few days and in many locations, in the Tavianis' cinematic rendition, Maragrazia's trauma is narrated only in one day and in one location: the dirt road that takes the emigrants away by carriage. The Tavianis' choice of the unity of place and time creates a tightened and pressing rhythm, dramatising the epiphany of Maragrazia's trauma and the doctor's involvement in it. In the first scenes, however, the most significant difference between the text and the film lies in the script of the letter, "Cari figli miei è vostra madre che scrive a voi, nella vostra bella terra d'oro, da questa nostra terra di pianto." The image of the "terra d'oro" works as the polar opposite to the "terra del pianto", both politically and economically. Thus, "la terra di pianto" and "la terra d'oro" live in symbiosis, determining not only how Sicilians envision their land but also how much they are invested in believing in the myth of "la terra d'oro". Each image needs the other to survive (Marcus, 1993:200). By making a comparison between "la nostra terra di pianto" and "la vostra bella terra d'oro", the Tavianis are describing America as a viable and concrete form of escape for Sicilian emigrants.

In 1984, when the film was released, reference to Sicily as "la terra del pianto" had acquired a new meaning, as Sicily was living through the most brutal, bloodiest, and most traumatising of Mafia families' wars. Between 1979 and 1986, the Corleonese family single mindedly transformed the Sicilian Mafia's structure from a multi-family criminal organisation to a single-family one by physically eliminating its competitors (Calabrò, 2016:23). In those years, Sicily witnessed a level of violence without precedent: 500 people were killed, and 500 went missing in Palermo alone. The list of victims included Mafiosi but also 'clean' politicians, policemen, judges, and bystanders — the collateral damage in any war. Totò Riina, the ruthless head of the Corleoneses, described this war's victims, "Diventarono come tonni [...] e noi li uccidemmo [...] ci fu una mattanza" (Calabrò, 2016:12). In the Tavianis' cinematic rendition, Pirandello's Sicily is necessarily intertwined with the Sicily of "gli anni della mattanza."

In Pirandello's story, the "trauma affettivo del distacco" (Barone, 1987:206) is a collective experience, and everyone in Farnia is touched by it; even the letters are only "un inganno" (Salsano,

2016:56). As Jaco Spina admonishes, “S’io fossi re – disse, e sputò – s’io fossi re, nemmeno una lettera farei più arrivare a Farnia da laggiù”. The letters are deceiving, since “solo il bene dicono, e ogni lettera è per questi ragazzacci ignoranti come la chioccia – pïo pïo pïo – se li chiama e porta via tutti quanti! Dove son più le braccia per lavorare le nostre terre?” (Pirandello, 1957:928). Through the words of Jaco Spina, who claims that the letters seduce and steal young men from their families and their lands, Pirandello seems to support the theory of many *anti-emigrazionisti* who considered emigration a real calamity for the South and were highly skeptical of its benefits. Above all, they protested the government’s inactivity and incompetence in alleviating the South’s economic problems that made emigration so alluring and necessary for its population (Wong, 2006:118). Conversely, in the film, America is described as a mistress one can possess for personal enjoyment, as a father reminds his son who is leaving, “Fai l’uomo con le donne, ma non sposare una straniera” (Marcus, 1993:202). By gendering America as a female and constructing the emigrants as “l’uomo”, the film, unlike the story, is empowering Sicilian immigrants with the agency to possess and enjoy the New World, further suggesting America’s availability for their own personal use.

In the story, thanks to Farnia’s new doctor, Maragrazia finds out that Ninfarosa has been deceiving her by writing only scribbles over the last fourteen years, “E perché m’ha ingannata così? Ah, per questo, dunque, i miei figli non mi rispondono! [...] mai nulla ha scritto loro di tutto quello che io le ho dettato [...]. Dunque non ne sanno niente i figli miei, del mio stato? Che io sto morendo per loro?” (Pirandello, 1957:933). The act of writing letters in Farnia is unreliable, as it defies its own purpose, which should be making communication possible.

The letters should have been the in-between space linking the separated families, where each other’s needs and desires could have been expressed and hopefully met. Hence, Maragrazia’s final and agonising question, “E perché m’ha ingannata così?”, refers not only to Ninfarosa’s betrayal, in not writing what she said she would, but to Maragrazia’s own isolation, resulting from that betrayal. Maragrazia’s sons’ unwillingness to write to their mother, then, further underscores

the wound separating the two parts of the family. As the emigrants make their homes in America, they may lose interest in keeping ties with a homeland that ultimately forced them into exile.

In the film, the wound bleeds more profusely, as the emigrants, walking on the dusty dirt road to the carriage that will take them away, realise that those are the last moments they can spend with their loved ones accompanying them, and some of them cannot stop weeping. When they find out that their departure is delayed by three hours because of a broken wheel, one of them shouts in joy, "Abbiamo ancora tre ore da passare insieme", revealing the anguish that each one of them is carrying inside. It is during that time that the doctor tells Maragrazia about her letter, "Sono solo sgorbi". Although she is ridiculed by the others on account of the letter, she shouts out her own victory, "I figli miei non mi dimenticarono. [...] Non mi risposero perchè no ricevettero niente da me". However, her shout of joy alienates her even more from the others, who start making gestures with their hands, signaling her insanity.

In Pirandello's rendition, instead, Ninfarosa is the only one reporting about Maragrazia's insanity, when she is confronted by the doctor's reproach, "lei s'affligge sul serio per quella vecchia matta?" (1957:936). In both versions, the doctor is motivated to discover Maragrazia's real story because of the way the village people construct her as a madwoman. His human interest is naturally intertwined with his professional duty to probe her mind. In pursuing the truth about Maragrazia's mental health, the doctor conducts an interview similar to medical anamnesis, through which the patient history is revealed (Marcus, 1993:195). However, in Maragrazia's case, her personal anamnesis reveals the history of another patient: the newly formed Italy.

Both Pirandello and the Tavianis make the doctor into a very crucial character, as he is the one who corrects Ninfarosa's wrongdoing. From Pirandello's description, we find out that the new doctor is young and not originally from Farnia; rather, "è venuto da poco" (Pirandello, 1957:932). The text does not give us more information about his geographical provenance. In the film, though, the doctor's accent clearly situates him outside of Sicily and the South, possibly from central Italy. Consequently, the doctor is

removed from Maragrazia both in time and, at least in the film, in space. His temporal and spatial distancing is important in the narrative because he becomes the witness to Maragrazia's secret trauma, taking place in a time and space appropriated by the national myth of Italy's unification. The doctor is moved by Maragrazia's situation of alienation, bordering on madness, and decides to dig into her mind and memory that have stored "Cose nere! cose nere! Vossignoria non era allora neanche nella mente di Dio, e io le ho viste con questi occhi che hanno pianto da allora lagrime di sangue. Ha sentito parlare vossignoria d'un certo Canebardo?". The doctor is taken aback by her words and briefly perplexed by the name "Canebardo", which, nonetheless, he recognises and exclaims, "Ma come c'entra Garibaldi?" (Pirandello, 1957:941). By concocting a name that evokes the idea of a dog and that of a patriotic poet, Pirandello is clearly ridiculing Italy's national hero through humour, one of the *leitmotif* of the *Novelle* (Salsano, 2016:51).

Finally, Maragrazia tells him her story, and how it crossed with Garibaldi's coming to Sicily and ordering the release of all prisoners from jails, "Ora, si figuri vossignoria che ira di Dio si scatenò allora per le nostre campagne! I peggiori ladri, i peggiori assassini, bestie selvagge, sanguinarie, arrabbiate da tanti anni di catena". Although Maragrazia has difficulty in telling her story, she continues, "Tra gli altri ce n'era uno, il più feroce, un certo Cola Camizzi, capobrigante, che ammazzava le povere creature di Dio, così, per piacere, come fossero mosche" (Pirandello, 1957:941). Maragrazia recounts how the bandits would take men from the fields and force them to join in their most horrific actions. Her young husband was taken, too. After three days, he was able to escape and return home, but he came back as a changed man, "Ma egli, zitto, sedette vicino al fuoco, sempre con le mani nascoste così, sotto la giaccia, gli occhi da insensato, e stette un pezzo a guardare verso terra; poi disse: 'Meglio morto!' " (942). Her husband, Nino, is the first to be traumatised. To examine Pirandello's representation of Nino's trauma, I will use Lawrence Langer's work describing the Holocaust victims' need to adapt to new ethical categories to survive such an ordeal. Although we do not know exactly what the bandits forced Nino to do, we know that he must have done something horrible with his hands, which he keeps hiding

under his jacket. In those three days, he had to repudiate his ethical categories of 'good' and 'evil', 'guilt' and 'responsibility' to be able to commit whatever he was coerced to do, to survive. Nonetheless, once he was home again, he had to reacquire and live by his old moral categories. Whereas in those three days his ability to suppress his sense of responsibility and guilt allowed him to sustain his life and spirit, in his house their crushing weight was too much for him to bear, making him loathe his own life, 'Meglio morto' (1985:122-23).

As Langer asserts, "The survivor does not travel a road from the normal to the bizarre back to the normal, but from the normal to the bizarre back to a normalcy so permeated by the bizarre encounter with atrocity, that it can never be purified again. The two worlds haunt each other" (1985:88). Nino's trauma – resulting from the awareness of a forced complicity with an oppressive power that "destroys those *over* whom and *with* whom it seeks domination" (Vickroy, 2002:167) – becomes a metaphor for Sicily's historical trauma, rooted in the unification. As Anna Cento Bull reports, "The government worried about brigandage turning into an organised political revolt in favour of the deposed southern monarchy, and decided to intervene with drastic measures, including the imposition of martial law" (2001:41). To that end, the government often relied on repressive, corrupt, and violent local power-holders, who used up the resources brought into the island without generating any wealth and who "succeeded in influencing the evolution of the process of political and social modernisation over the last two centuries by playing the weakness of the state against its own persistent autonomy" (Pezzino, 1997:54-56). Moreover, Sorrentino underlines how Caterina in *I vecchi e i giovani* (1909) "è indignata del *modus operandi* del nuovo stato italiano nell'isola trattata come terra di conquista. Caterina si fa portavoce delle rimostranze di un'intera generazione di patrioti che, dopo il 1860 si unisce nell'idea che fosse 'Meglio prima!'. Una generazione che vede infranti i propri ideali dalle politiche di sfruttamento della Sicilia del neonato Regno" (2013:61-62).

Pointedly, Kali Tal observes trauma victims' inability to communicate their witnessed horrors through language, as the words of Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor, testify: "The word has deserted the meaning it was intended to convey – impossible to make them

coincide.... We all knew that we could never, never say what had to be said, that we could never express in words, coherent, intelligible words our experience of madness on an absolute scale” (Tal, 1996:122). Nino is unable to articulate his horrific experience, involving not only his hands but also his eyes, which he keeps on the ground in a sign of shame. After spending three days in this condition, he leaves the house to go to work and never comes back.

In the film, as Maragrazia recounts her story to the doctor, the camera moves away from them to show us Garibaldi liberating a Sicilian village. He is easily recognisable by his iconic marks: red shirt and a blue cloak, blonde hair and beard. As he trots on his white horse in the background, he passes in front of a palace, easily recognizable as Donnafugata's in Luchino Visconti's *The Leopard* (Bonsaver, 2007:106). As he proceeds, a carriage full of *garibaldini* follows him, distributing rice to the village people who are coming out of their houses. As Garibaldi and his men leave the scene, we see Cola Camizzi, dressed in black on a black ox, going in the opposite direction. Marco Trupia, Camizzi's second in command, follows him on foot. As Bonsaver observes, with this scene the Tavianis enter into a dialogical conversation with Visconti's retelling of the Italian *Risorgimento* as a failure: indeed, in Sicily nothing has changed, as Tancredi had prophesied, and violence keeps hurting and traumatising its people (2007:107).

After Nino's disappearance, Maragrazia decides to look for him, and as she arrives at the gate of the bandits' hideout, “Ah, che vidi!”, Maragrazia's recounting of what she witnessed is so horrific that “con gli occhi sanguigni sbarrati, allungò una mano con le dita artigliate dal ribrezzo. Le mancò la voce”. She finally finds the strength to continue, “Giocavano [...] là, in quel cortile [...] alle bocce [...] ma con teste d'uomini [...] nere, piene di terra [...], le tenevano acciuffate pei capelli [...] e una, quella di mio marito [...] la teneva lui, Cola Camizzi [...] e me la mostrò. Gettai un grido che mi stracciò la gola e il petto”. Her screams scare the bandits and, as she reports, “Cola Camizzi mi mise le mani al collo per farmi tacere, uno di loro gli saltò addosso, furioso; e allora, quattro, cinque, dieci, prendendo ardire da quello, gli s'avventarono contro [...]. Erano sazii, rivoltati anche loro della tirannia feroce di quel mostro”. At last, Maragrazia

has the satisfaction to see Camizzi killed by “i suoi stessi compagni”. Then the old woman falls onto the chair exhausted, panting, and shaking (Pirandello, 1957:943).

The doctor's curiosity about her story makes her relive it. The horror she witnessed remains in her memory and, in reliving it, her body contorts in torment. The heads that the bandits are playing with belong to those men who refused to be part of an unlawful and oppressive power, like Nino. In the film's *bocce* scene, while some men are shown to be totally indifferent to the atrocity of that game, others cannot even raise their eyes up. Those latter men have their backs turned away from the game, and their eyes implore pity and compassion from the viewers, the film's intended interlocutor. Dominick LaCapra underscores the importance of empathy in historical trauma as “a desirable affective dimension of inquiry which complements and supplements empirical research and analysis. Empathy is important in attempting to understand traumatic events and victims” (2011:78). In other words, the viewer must have an affective involvement to fully understand historical traumas.

In producing a devastatingly brutal scene like that of the *bocce*, the Tavianis force the viewers to disavow any recuperation of the past through uplifting or optimistic messages of national rhetoric. The *bocce* scene is central to Maragrazia's recounting of her trauma in the cinematic rendition. Voyeuristically, we become part of that scene's horror to better empathise with those who, just like us, are forced to participate in that psychopathic drama. However, Maragrazia's trauma does not stop at that. Marco Trupia, the man who first attacked Cola Camizzi, takes her by force and keeps her imprisoned for three months, “[D]opo tre mesi, la giustizia venne a scovarlo là e lo richiuse in galera, dove morì poco dopo” (Pirandello, 1957:943). The rape of a woman as a metaphor for the taking of land is a well-established topos, going back to the Romans' legend of the Sabine women's capture. In Maragrazia's story, though, her rape was not actualised by Garibaldi or one of his men; instead, a local brigand was the culprit. However, Marco Trupia carried out his violence because of Garibaldi's order. Once again, the story brings to the fore the complicity of the two powers, the revolutionary and the local, acting to the detriment of the peasantry.

It is important to notice the Tavianis' cinematic depiction of Maragrazia's rape differs from Pirandello's. Unlike the *bocce* scene, the film does not show her imprisonment, rape, and liberation, instead, Maragrazia narrates this to the doctor. In Maragrazia's recounting, the events concerning the police's arrival, her liberation, and Marco Trupia's incarceration are missing; she only states, "dopo tre mesi vennero a liberarmi". The subject of the sentence is not specified. Consequently, there is no sense of judicial closure, as there is in the original story. Pirandello seems to convey that, after all, the Italian state has enough power to at least carry out justice, thereby inviting Sicilians not to maroon their own homeland by crossing the Atlantic toward America. By denying America as a concrete possibility for Sicilian masses to live with dignity and prosperity, he is left with only the choice of believing in the new nation-state, albeit very lukewarmly.

In contrast, the Tavianis seem not to share Pirandello's trust in the government. In 1980, Piersanti Mattarella, Sicily's governor, was gunned down while going to church with his wife. Mattarella was a 'clean' Christian-Democratic (DC) politician who was intent on fighting *Cosa Nostra* and the politicians who were supporting it — first and foremost, Palermo's mayor Vito Ciancimino (DC). His death seemed to be linked to a deal between the Mafia leader Stefano Bontade and then-Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti (DC) (Calabrò, 2016:60). In 1982, Sicilian and Communist *Deputato* Pio La Torre, who had been trying with little success to pass special laws in Parliament to deal with the Mafia, was also killed. A few months later, his special appointee General Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa had the same fate (Calabrò, 2016:114; 117; 119).

The Italian state seemed unable and unwilling to effectively deal with *Cosa Nostra* and its oppressive power. Only by the end of 1982 did the state start to organise its response to this new wave of violence, through special laws and special police corps. Even then, its response was hesitant and ambiguous. Since many of its politicians were colluding with Mafia leaders, the war continued well into the early 1990s (Calabrò, 2016:119; 234). The Tavianis' stance on emigration is the point of most divergence from Pirandello's, as they seem to construe Sicilian emigration as a safety valve for its people,

as supported by many *emigrazionisti*, like Francesco Nitti (Wong, 2006:116-18).

During the period of her imprisonment, Maragrazia becomes pregnant, “Le giuro che mi sarei strappate le viscere: mi pareva che stessi a covarci un mostro! Sentivo che non me lo sarei potuto vedere tra le braccia. Al solo pensiero che avrei dovuto attaccarmelo al petto, gridavo come una pazza”. Almost immediately after his birth, Maragrazia’s child is taken to his father’s relatives to be cared for because she rejects him. Even in her rejection, she cannot deny being his mother, “Ora non Le pare, signor dottore ch’io possa dire davvero ch’egli non è figlio mio?” (Pirandello, 1957:944). Maragrazia’s trauma has grown exponentially, from her husband’s death, and his head used as *boccia*, to her rape and her total detachment from the son growing inside her. How could she ever go back to a normalcy, even one “so permeated by the bizarre encounter with atrocity”? How can rehabilitation be possible?

In genocide studies, which deal with massive traumas, the ability to forgive the perpetrator is considered paramount for the victim’s rehabilitation. Jennifer Vanderheyden points to the paradox of forgiveness, being at the heart of reconciliation even when confronted with the extreme evil of genocide, and asks: “How can forgiveness be possible, yet in many ways a requisite for reconciliation?” (forthcoming 2019). Even Nelson Mandela, who served 27 long years in prison, adopted forgiveness as the cornerstone of his presidency and legacy in South Africa. Famously, upon leaving prison, he stated, “I knew that if I didn’t leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I’d still be in prison” (as quoted in Vanderheyden). However, Maragrazia cannot forgive Marco Trupia, and, thus, she is stuck in her metaphoric prison, having to live in a condition of liminality. Tal argues that the anthropological concept of liminality can be successfully applied in trauma studies, as the trauma survivor finds herself living between two disjunctive worlds: that of her traumatic event and that of her post-traumatic life (1996:117). Not being able to forgive Marco Trupia, who is part of her trauma, Maragrazia cannot transition to her ‘post-liminality’ state, which would include her acceptance of her son Rocco.

To better interpret Maragrazia's inability to forgive, I turn to Hannah Arendt's conceptualisation and definition of punishment and forgiveness, especially *vis-à-vis* radical evil, "The alternative to forgiveness, but by no means its opposite, is punishment, and both have in common that they attempt to put an end to something that without interference could go on endlessly" (1958:241). Hence, Maragrazia, once confronted with extreme evil, has two possibilities to come to a closure: She can either forgive, or she can punish her abuser. Eventually, the law punishes Marco Trupia; however, Arendt's words seem to suggest that punishment must be performed by the victim. Arendt, then, states that there exists what "we call a 'radical evil' and about whose nature so little is known. [...] All we know is that we can neither punish nor forgive such offenses and, therefore, they transcend the realm of human affairs and the potentialities of human power" (1958:241). What we know, though, is that these offenses are unpunishable and unforgivable because they go beyond the human ability to forgive or punish. How can Maragrazia forgive the killing of her already traumatised husband, the cruel mutilation of his body, and her three-month-long sexual abuse? What would a fit penalty be? How can an evil of such devastating proportions be measured and codified into a punishment? Maragrazia's inability to forgive her perpetrator impedes her acceptance of her son Rocco, who becomes the last victim of the domino effect of Maragrazia's traumas.

The doctor tries to reason with her and asks her, "Ma lui, in fondo, vostro figlio, che colpa ha?". Without hesitating, she answers, "Nessuna! [...] E quando mai, difatti, le mie labbra hanno detto una parola sola contro di lui? Mai, signor dottore! Anzi ... Ma che ci posso fare, se non resisto a vederlo neanche da lontano! È tutto suo padre, signorino mio; nelle fattezze, nella corporatura finanche nella voce". Then, she adds, "Mi metto a tremare, appena lo vedo, e sudo freddo! Non sono io; si ribella il sangue, ecco! Che ci posso fare?" (Pirandello, 1957:944). Although she admits that he has no culpability, Rocco's resemblance to his father triggers Maragrazia's memories of her abuse, which she re-experiences every time she looks at him. She is, thus, confronted with two irreconcilable demands: being a mother to him or avoiding her traumatic memories.

Vickroy describes the difficult relationship between trauma and remembrance: “Fundamental to traumatic experience is that the past lingers unresolved, not remembered in a conventional sense, because it is not processed like nontraumatic information, either cognitively or emotionally”. Traumatic experiences are, thus, re-experienced repetitively and without change (2002:12). By a cruel twist of nature, Rocco is for his mother “the past that lingers unresolved”. It is only human, and a matter of survival, for Maragrazia to avoid him. Nonetheless, her rejection results in his trauma of not being accepted by her and being forced to live in exile from his own mother, who sent him to live with his father’s relatives. Maragrazia becomes for him the site of not belonging, and not being able to feel the safety and security of the *heim*, ultimately displacing him both physically and emotionally.

Pirandello’s and the Tavianis’ dealing of Rocco’s trauma differ greatly. In the story, the doctor decides to go and reproach him for not taking care of his mother. As he reaches Rocco’s house, the doctor meets Rocco’s wife, his children, and his animals. Rocco is working on the land, and when questioned by the doctor he shows him that his mother has a place in his house, but she prefers the street, “non dovrei rispettarla come madre, perché essa è sempre stata dura con me; eppure l’ho rispettata e le ho voluto bene” (Pirandello, 1957:939). Rocco, while admitting to her un-maternal behaviour toward him, has been able to move beyond that and forgive her. Ultimately, he was able to work through his trauma and find coping mechanisms that allowed him to move toward a state of closure and ego identity (LaCapra, 2011: 22). The story seems to disavow the possibility for the older generation to work through its trauma as it ends with Maragrazia dictating the same letter to the doctor, “Cari figli ...” (Pirandello, 1957:944). Nevertheless, it suggests the possibility that – personified by Rocco – the new generation, born from the rape of Sicily, has a chance to rehabilitate. As Teresa Fiore argues, “L’emigrazione nel racconto di Pirandello appare come male minore rispetto ai mali portati dall’unificazione”, and in depicting Sicilian emigration, Pirandello is intent in portraying also “la resistenza granitica di certi siciliani di fronte alle assurdità della vita (2008:270).

The film shows a contrasting picture of Rocco. As the emigrants are waiting for the wheel to be fixed, Ninfarosa points him out to the others, saying, “qui non c'è erba per pascolare, ma portò qui le sue vacche perchè sapeva che qua sua madre sarebbe venuta. Come fa sempre, la segue”. As we hear her words, we see him milking a cow, pouring the milk in a bowl, and bringing it to his mother. As Maragrazia sees him approaching her, she covers her face with her ragged shawl and turns her face away. Rocco, then, leaves the bowl on a rock, where the doctor, confused by her behaviour, takes it and tries unsuccessfully to have Maragrazia drink it.

The next scene shows Maragrazia sitting on the ground, with her back leaning on a wall of stones, telling the doctor her story. As she says, “ma è tutto suo padre, che ci posso fare se mi metto a tremare appena lo vedo”, we hear Rocco weeping from behind the wall. Then, he starts sobbing hard and looks at his mother, who looks back at him, emotionless and un-empathic toward his sorrow. This scene is a powerful cinematic representation of what Caruth defines as the “wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available” (1996:4). The survivor's cry addresses the perpetrator, asking her to have compassion on her victim (2). However, in the case of Maragrazia, compassion is unattainable, because her trauma broke down any dimension of security. Thus, she employs and redirects all of her energy toward defensive mechanisms that destroy any form of empathy (Vickroy, 2015:10–11).

After this encounter with her son, Maragrazia, realising that the emigrants have already left without her letter, starts panicking. The doctor reassures her, reminding her that another group will leave the following week; “Ma è sicura che vuole scrivere quella lettera?”, Maragrazia does not answer. She looks intently at Rocco, and he looks back at her, nodding his head as a sign of hopeful approval. Instead, Maragrazia, her facial expression displaying disgust, grabs a pumpkin nearby, throws it at him, in the typical *bocce* style, and turns away from him. In the film, just like his mother, Rocco acts out of his trauma, not being able to work through it. He has no family around him and is not leading a productive life. For both son and mother, “the past returns and the future is blocked or fatalistically caught up in a

melancholic loop [...]. Any duality [...] of time (past, present, and future) is experientially collapsed” (LaCapra, 2011:21). Neither of them can transition to a post-liminality state that would allow them to escape the “melancholic loop”. Thus, the cinematic version of Maragrazia’s drama displays the impossibility for the new generation to work through its trauma, since Sicily’s violence has not abated, and, therefore, the future is unattainable or “blocked.” Consequently, emigration is the only possible rehabilitation from a history of violence. As Millecent Marcus acutely observed, Maragrazia embodies the motherland (1993:220). However, as she refuses to accept her good son and venerates the ones who abandoned her, she allegorically represents Sicily’s inability to mother. Marcus argues, “Maria Grazia sees only with the eyes of the past [...] unable to move, change, or open herself out to a future of emotional progress. Like Maria Grazia, Sicily turned inward and refused history, choosing instead to nurse its millennial wounds” (1993:201). The stones Maragrazia leans against are the metaphor of both “the material building blocks of Sicily and the key to Maria Grazia’s petrified mode of thought” (1993:201). Ultimately, Sicily’s inability to mother, and thus to nurture, forces its people to emigrate as the only way to survive.

Trauma as a literary strategy works well for Pirandello for two reasons. Firstly, because any traumatic experience is a story needing to be told to become real. As Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman observe, “Massive trauma precludes its registration; the observing and recording mechanisms are temporarily knocked out. [...] The victim’s narrative [...] does indeed begin with someone who testifies to an [...] event that has not yet come into existence” (1991:57). Although Maragrazia lived her trauma in her body and mind, her psyche did not register it. Hence, the importance of the listener who is, then, in charge of inscribing the event. As Vickroy states, to survive, trauma victims need to dissociate from the event (2015:8). It is only through Maragrazia reporting it to the doctor that her trauma is given birth and is articulated, and, thus, she becomes cognitively aware of it. This explains her physical discomfort in telling her story, which, at times, prevented her from proceeding. As a trauma survivor, Maragrazia lives not with memories of the past but with an event that has no

completion or closure, and, thus, continues in the present and is current, for her, in every respect (Laub & Felman, 1991:69).

The doctor becomes a co-owner of such a trauma and through his very listening becomes part of it, living Maragrazia's disorientation, grievances, and confusion (Laub & Felman, 1991:58), "Il giovane medico stette a guardarla, raccapricciato, col volto atteggiato di pietà, di ribrezzo e di orrore" (Pirandello, 1957:943). The reader and viewer become witnesses, too, of course, adding another layer of recording. We record the doctor recording, through his presence and ears, Maragrazia's articulation of her trauma, thus activating two different historical canvases. In the first canvas, we observe Maragrazia's trauma, rooted in Garibaldi's coming to Sicily and its continuation throughout the post-unification years. In the second, we observe the doctor, who is estranged from that historic event because of his young age and geographical origin. The doctor is, thus, forced to confront the myth of Italy's unification through Maragrazia's traumas.

This brings us to the second reason for Pirandello's literary choice – trauma's capacity to shatter national and personal myths. As Tal writes, "only trauma can accomplish that kind of destruction [...], the tragic shattering of old myths" (1996:122). National myths are part of the official history, and they do not belong to one individual; rather "individuals borrow from them and buy into them in varying degrees". They are collective myths that help us create our ideas of a nation and of its "character" (115). Personal myths, conversely, are an individual's sets of beliefs, expectations, and reasons through which circumstances and actions take form, usually as schemas, which become the paradigms through which we make sense of the world. Trauma forces the listener/writer of the story to revise his myths; "crucial [...] is the ability to consider the author as *survivor*, to bring to bear the tools of sociology, psychology, and psychiatry [...] to the task of reading the literature of survivors. If we begin here, we can start to examine the process of writing as an act of personal revision" (116). Personal revision would lead us, the readers, to consider some important questions: What changes in Pirandello's representation of his personal myths have occurred, and how do they affect his conceptualisation of national myths?

Although Garibaldi was a hero in Pirandello's family, Pirandello witnessed the betrayal and defeat of those ideals at the hands of the moderate liberals, who took charge of Italy's unification (Providenti, 2000:13). This dramatic revision of his personal myths brought him, first, to sarcastically describe Garibaldi as "Canebardo" and, then, to describe Garibaldi's revolution as leading to the rape of Sicily with the complicity of Southern 'bandits'. This complicity produced and reproduced Sicily's wound, with an ensuing bleeding out of its own people. Consequently, the text's brutal, collective traumas seem to foreground Pirandello's disenchantment with the national myth of Italy's unification as a tale of heroic freedom for all.

Conclusion

Adopting a lens that combines both post-colonial and trauma studies allowed me to bring to the fore both Pirandello's and the Tavianis' ideological positioning within Italy's unification. The three artists are critical about the nation-building process that ultimately separated its people, as many left the island to survive its historical traumas. For Pirandello, emigration is a bleeding wound, affecting not just Maragrazia but the whole nation, as trauma blocks any opening to the future. As emigration is not an acceptable option, Pirandello is left with the only choice of theorising that Sicily can work through its trauma and find coping and adapting mechanisms that will enable it to survive its post-unification evils. In contrast, the Tavianis' filmic rendition disavows Pirandello's position, as it points to emigration as the only way for the Sicilian rural masses to survive Sicily's traumatic history. At the time the Tavianis released their movie, Sicily's bloodiest Mafia war worked as a reminder that trauma had not left that land, and emigration continued to remain the only viable solution.

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