



Pirandello and Film

Nina da Vinci Nichols, Jana O'Keefe Bazzoni

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Italian playwright Luigi Pirandello (1867–1936) is one of the preeminent figures of the modern European theater. His masterpiece, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, set loose a riot during its first performance in Rome in 1921. This play about six unfortunate characters abandoned by their author in the middle of a tawdry drama, is an unsettling, supremely self-conscious work that is ultimately about theatrical artifice and artistic creation itself.

Pirandello and Film examines Pirandello's many efforts—none of them finally successful—to transform *Six Characters* into a movie. The authors examine Pirandello's views on film and its relation to theater, his varying approaches to creating a film adaptation of *Six Characters*, and the efforts of directors and film moguls in Germany and Hollywood to fashion a cinematic version of the play.

The book also presents an array of important documents, including some that have never before appeared in English: a Prologue (or prose sketch) for a 1926 film; a Scenario (a more detailed prose sketch) prepared by Pirandello and Adolph Lantz in the late 1920s for a German film version of *Six Characters*; an English-language film sketch written in 1935 by Pirandello and Saul Colin; and a letter from Max Reinhardt and the German emigré Hollywood film director Joseph von Sternberg to Saul Colin regarding the proposed film treatment of the play. These documents, together with the authors' critical text, provide a detailed portrait of Pirandello's developing view of film as an appropriate medium for his revolutionary dramatic innovations.

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