

## INTRODUCTION

According to his notes, Luigi Pirandello arrived in Coazze, a small hamlet in the Piedmont in northern Italy, at 10:46 pm on August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1901.<sup>1</sup> He was accompanied by his wife Maria Antonietta Portulano and their three children. They came by train from Rome, where they had been living in financial straits. Although the future Nobel laureate had by then published his first novel, *L'esclusa* (*The Outcast*), along with two collections of poems, several remarkable essays, and a number of well-received short stories, it would be years before he gained worldwide recognition. Nevertheless, for an author in search of inspiration and a creative refuge, the trip was a salutary one. The Pirandellos stayed with Luigi's beloved sister Lina, who wintered in Turin and spent her summers in the Alps. The days were spent eating hearty food, strolling in the woods, and taking in the stunning scenery. Pirandello fell in love with Coazze, staying there until October 11<sup>th</sup>, far longer than expected.<sup>2</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup> The date and time of Pirandello's arrival in Coazze are reported in a telegram the playwright sent from Rome to his brother-in-law Calogero De Castro. The telegram is part of Renata Marsili Antonetti's personal collection and was included in the transcription of the original *Coazze Notebook* curated by Filomena Capobianco for the Biblioteca-Museo Luigi Pirandello in Agrigento, Italy. The original *Notebook* was part of the personal archive of Stefano Pirandello's heirs, which was acquired by Sicily's Regional Administration in 1994 to be made available to scholars and the public.

<sup>2</sup> The date of Pirandello's departure from Coazze is confirmed by a page on Lina's calendar, with a penciled note: "Luigi left for Rome with Antonietta and the kids after spending a month and a half together with us in Coazze." This document is also part of Antonetti's personal collection and included in Capobianco's edition.

his recollections, he would describe the experience as “unforgettable.”<sup>3</sup>

During his sojourn, the Maestro kept a notebook in which he recorded everything that caught his eye, from the natives’ peculiar manners and dialect to the fast-changing scenery on his walks along picturesque trails. These notes and impressions gave way to poems, illustrations, and storylines, all merging into a seemingly experimental text encompassing graphic art, fiction, and autobiography. The *Coazze Notebook*, as it came to be known, is a compendium of literary criticism, illuminating and emotionally charged personal reflections, vernacular expressions, and sharply observed geographical descriptions. The notes are fragmentary, and occasionally embellished, but they shed light on Pirandello’s mode of thought and, in particular, how the ideas he gathered from real life were incorporated into his writing.

The original manuscript consists of twenty-seven pages, eighteen of which are blank and three that were missing until 2001, when one of the torn-out pages, written recto and verso, was found in the archives of Houghton Library at Harvard University. The missing page is now included in this English translation. The handwritten notes in the notebook are interspersed with a total of six drawings in the following order: a sketch of the local bell tower with the sign “Each in His Own Way” (i.e., the inspiration for the 1924 play), an outline of a medieval building, a drawing of a candle and a lamp, a portrait sketch, and a drawing of a miniature jester. Together these illustrations form a visual narrative, capturing not only

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<sup>3</sup> From a letter Pirandello wrote to his sister, dated December 22, 1901. The letter is part of Antonetti’s private collection and is included in the transcription of the *Coazze Notebook*, ed. Capobianco.

Pirandello's experiences but also his habit of thinking visually. The drawings are undated, making it difficult to situate them in time or place, and they appear to have little, if any, intentional design. The remaining eighteen blank pages suggest that Pirandello must have, at some point, stopped using his notepad to jot down his thoughts.

Measuring approximately 5 in. x 3.5 in., the notebook is smaller than a Moleskine, thus more portable but also limited in how much one can write. Pirandello found ways to negotiate these size constraints, as seen on the very last page where a couplet (evoking Coazze's Alpine views and snowy winters) and the beginning of a recipe are written upside-down. It is unclear why the writings are upside-down and separated from the other notes, but their layout does reveal Pirandello's unpremeditated use of his notepad. The notes also show that he alternated between pencil and pen to record his thoughts and make his sketches, using whatever writing instrument was available to him in the moment. This eccentric style suggests not just the spontaneity of Pirandello's reflections, but also the urgency to record what he saw and heard, as if he was afraid of losing his momentum.

The end of the notebook looks like a haphazard ledger, showing expenses and earnings marked down in scattered calculations, along with four lists detailing literary projects (essays, reviews, translations) and academic assignments for which Pirandello was compensated in 1909, 1910, 1905 and 1904. His incomes are not recorded in chronological order, and in some years, they are only partially annotated—emblematic of the unsystematic character of some of the notebook's pages. Nevertheless, these

financial records are useful in charting the trajectory of Pirandello's career. They show his rise from a penniless artist with big literary aspirations—feverishly contributing short stories to journals and magazines—to his arrival as an accomplished author, sought out by the most prestigious publishers of his time. In these early years, we see Pirandello make his theatrical debut, consolidate his theory of humor, and find international acclaim with the publication of his iconic novel, *The Late Mattia Pascal* (1904).

In addition to the financial records, the *Notebook's* final section contains a second set of notes (on two sheets), taken not in Coazze, but in Montepulciano, a small village in the Tuscan countryside between Florence and Siena. Pirandello stayed there briefly in the summer of 1903 following his appointment as examiner at a local school. These writings are commonly referred to by scholars as the *Montepulciano Notes*, as distinct from the Coazze notes. Although short, they exhibit Pirandello's deep interest in local languages and their influence on standard Italian. Indeed, the *Montepulciano Notes* are rife with colorful Tuscan idioms and expressions used by the locals, which the playwright meticulously documented out of both curiosity and a sense of amusement. These notes are as invaluable a display of Pirandello's *modus scribendi* as are the Coazze notes. Like the latter, they would be systematically re-used in the author's narrative patterns and plotlines, shaping the dialogue in his plays and other creative works.

#### ITALIAN EDITIONS AND THE FIRST ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Several editions of the *Coazze Notebook* have been published over the years, not all of them faithful to

the manuscript's original content. The first printed text appeared during Pirandello's lifetime, in 1934, and was curated by Italian writer and film director Lucio D'Ambra, and published (abridged) in the literary journal *Nuova Antologia*, to which Pirandello himself was a prolific contributor. Other publications followed: one in 1938, as part of the *Almanacco Letterario Bompiani*, and another in 1952, in the theater journal *Sipario*, prefaced by an essay written by Pirandello's close friend, Corrado Alvaro. The text as we know it today finally appeared in 1960 as a reference volume, curated by Manlio Lo Vecchio-Musti for the comprehensive Mondadori series. This edition, to the dismay of Pirandello scholars, dispensed with the notebook's visual content and the accounting figures (except for incomes Pirandello reported for the year 1904).

The absence of Pirandello's drawings from some of these publications, especially the Mondadori edition, was likely the catalyst for a new volume published in 2000. This was preceded by an unabridged version that appeared in 1998, which was revised and updated through funding by the Biblioteca-Museo of Luigi Pirandello in Agrigento. This expanded edition contained an appendix with archival findings and documents linked to the *Notebook*, including a copy of a handwritten page, a complete bibliography of the literary and critical works owned or alluded to by Pirandello, and pictures of contemporary Coazze and its landmarks. Moreover, it cited the three missing pages from the manuscript, two of which would be found in the Harvard archive only two years later.

It is also worth mentioning that the 2000 edition curated by Filomena Capobianco preserves Pirandello's fluctuating use of pen and pencil with a type-

script that alternates between black and gray ink. Not only are the notes in their original order, but so are the nonchronological list of incomes, the scattered calculations, and the arrangement of the illustrations. The only oddity that was regularized was the upside-down orientation of the closing notes (i.e., the recipe and the couplet), here turned right-side up to facilitate readability.

Using the 1960 Mondadori edition and the 2000 Agrigento publication as its main source texts, this English-language edition diverges from previous ones in certain ways.<sup>4</sup> Most importantly, the six illustrations in the original manuscript were restored and arranged in their original place and order. The motive behind this decision was twofold: first, to remind readers of the *Notebook's* immense interest as both a textual and visual artifact, and secondly, to show the influence of visuality on Pirandello as a writer, philosopher, and painter. Recent scholarship on the role of imagery in Pirandello's work is beginning to shed light on his life as a painter, which has largely been overshadowed by his son Fausto's artistic career. Numerous articles cited in the bibliography (added only in this English edition) address the subject of Pirandello's visual thought and writing style.

The Mondadori edition served as a reference for the order in which a couplet celebrating the beauty of Coazze appeared. In the manuscript, it is found in the final pages of the manuscript, inverted; here, the couplet is left in the same position as in the Mondadori edition: at the end of the notes taken in Coazze and right before those jotted down in Montepulciano.

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<sup>4</sup> Luigi Pirandello, *Il taccuino di Coazze*, in *Saggi, Poesie e Scritti vari*, edited by Manlio Lo Vecchio-Musti (Milan: Mondadori, 1960) 1237-1246.

Keeping it here helped sustain continuity and foster readability. As for the list of books Pirandello wrote down right before recording his yearly incomes (the list does not appear in the Mondadori edition), this new edition includes the list at the very end of the notes, together with a facsimile of the page found in the Harvard archive.

Another distinguishing feature of this edition is the inclusion of Pirandello's finances as they appear in the 2000 version, leaving out only a short list of expenses related to everyday items (cigarettes, coffee, newspapers, etc.). Though seemingly irrelevant, these tabulations acquaint the reader with the pragmatic side of the Maestro's concerns, while also demonstrating the scope of his literary achievements and collaborations. For instance, the 1902 report provides the English-language reader with information about Pirandello's close connection to the Genoese literary journal *La Riviera Ligure*, a partnership that lasted almost a decade (1900–1909), with the years 1900 to 1905 being the most productive. Around the same time, Pirandello fell into financial difficulties. In 1903, the year he was appointed exam commissioner in Tuscany, his family's sulfur mine was destroyed in a flood. The loss of this main source of income was devastating for Antonietta, who gradually succumbed to mental illness and was permanently hospitalized in a mental asylum in 1918. More than ever, Pirandello was desperate to capitalize on his writing, selling his works to journals and magazines, even those he had previously submitted royalty-free.

Unlike the Mondadori, this edition includes Pirandello's 1909 and 1910 statements (in the notebook, these dates are reversed) in order to show the flowering of his literary career in the years after Coazze. The

year 1909 was a particularly prosperous one. In addition to a short story ("Due letti a due" – "Two Double Beds"), a poem ("Tra castagni e olivi" – "Among Chestnut and Olive Trees"), and several reviews ("Sul Bosforo d'Italia" – "On the Italian Bosphorus" and "La camminante" – "The Walker"), Pirandello published one of his major critical essays, "Teatro siciliano?" ("Sicilian Theater?"), which explored the question of whether Italian dialect could give birth to a thriving regional theater in Italy. In 1910, his novel *The Late Mattia Pascal* received a second printing, just a few years after its German and French publication had won him international fame. (The expenses for foreign translators are among those reported in the *Notebook*.) In that same year, Pirandello debuted his one-act play *La morsa* (*The Vise*), which launched his career as a playwright.

While staking his claim to Italian theater, Pirandello became a staunch advocate of Sicilian-dialect productions, insisting they should be staged on the Italian mainland. We see this borne out in his collaborations with actor Angelo Musco and dramatist Nino Martoglio, as well as in his plays of those years (e.g., *Sicilian Limes*, *Cecè*, *Think it Over*, *Giacomino!*, *Liolà*), which are redolent of *verismo*. Convinced that the vernacular was a livelier form of expression and realism than standard Italian, Pirandello even wrote some of these plays in Sicilian.

Although he later moved away from regional theater, Pirandello never stopped searching for the perfect literary language, one that could vividly illustrate cultural difference. He found inspiration in local vernacular, especially in the Coazze dialect, and incorporated folksy proverbs, idioms, and adages into his fiction. From an early age, he was aware not just of

the role that culture plays in shaping behaviors and traditions, but also of the dialogism between standard language and its dialects, a phenomenon he began exploring in his 1891 dissertation on the Girgenti dialect. The subject recurs throughout his critical and artistic work.

#### GEOGRAPHY AND THE COAZZE NOTEBOOK

Throughout the *Notebook*, Pirandello's fondness for Coazze's local geography grows as he becomes more acquainted with it. In these pages, the Sangone Valley—nestled between the charming crags of Val di Susa and Val Chisone, two of the most famous valleys in the Cottian Alps—is revealed to us impressionistically. We learn about Coazze's residential area, a vast and sunny plateau formed by clay deposits and glacial sediments, delimited by the Sangone River in the south and the Alpine massif of Rocciavrè to the west.

The most striking element of these descriptions, however, is the interlacing pattern of feeling and observation. The imagery is so vivid, one can easily picture the wet meadows and chestnut trees in the lower Alps, the wide grazing lands dotted with conifers and rhododendrons, the majestic snowy summits overhead sheltering the valley from colder winds, the small lakes at the foot of the mountains, and the waterfalls reverberating in Coazze's alleyways. Pirandello's enthusiasm as he scans the horizon from west to east, taking in the Rocciavrè Valley and its landmark talc mine, the Garida, then the Indritto Valley where the Sangonetto stream flows unbroken down to the small village of Giaveno through one of its many picturesque geological courses, is palpable—his sense of wonder, we might suppose, awakened by