

<FilmTreatment> for Six Characters

An unrealised film, Luigi Pirandello

- This is a working document and is intended as a paper edit of the developing film <Film Treatment> Six Characters in Search of an Author.
- The sequences depicted will feature moving images, although often locked shots or using just pans or tilts. There will be no dolly shots.
- The text is adapted from the original text written by Italian playwright Luigi Pirandello in 1935, and was only discovered in the early 1990's in the archives of German theatre director Max Reinhardt in Vienna. The text was originally written in English for discussions for a Hollywood film, which never happened. Over a ten year period Pirandello tried 39 times to get this film made, without success.
- I have adapted Pirandello's text, making changes I feel useful as well as those already under discussion at the time of his death.
- The imagery in this document are so-called 'plate images', often used in the film industry to record locations or settings for film, which are lit and prepped but the actors are not present. This approach is central to my deliberately oblique approach to Pirandello's ambitions. However, as detailed in the document, the final sections at Teatro Valle will be approached differently, using some actors and lighting.
- There will also be one other parallel work to this one in which Pirandello's film will be visualised only through drawings made by me, presented sequentially to camera.
- Also note that the narrative text will be the basis for a narration of an older Italian actor - the voice of Pirandello - to which will be added sound effects and location sounds. Music will only be used if it already present at the location. The text spoken will be Italian with English subtitles.
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<FilmTreatment> for Six Characters

An unrealised film, Luigi Pirandello, by Anne-Marie Creamer



A famous author is alone in his study, sitting at his desk. There are six high backed Gothic chairs in the room. It is already night. The author's secretary (in an adjoining room) looks at the clock, noticing with anxiety the passage of time. He has been invited to a dinner with the author.

(Note: the text here will be spoken by an Italian actor, 65-70 years old, speaking in Italian, plus sound effects.)



Finally, the Author, followed by a cloud of smoke, enters this room, and hands a manuscript to the Secretary, who reminds him of their dinner engagement. They hastily leave the house.



Two o'clock in the morning. The Author and the Secretary are leaving the home of their host.



The Author decides to walk alone.



He chooses a shortcut, a little dimly lit street and by a lamp notices a young Girl, dressed in black, near the light standing alone.



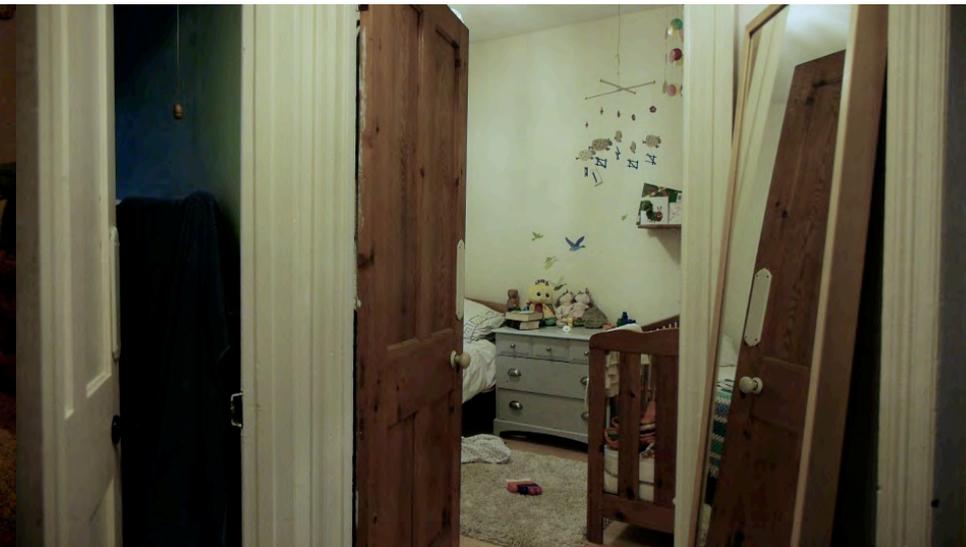
She looks at him invitingly but the Author proceeds on his way



He passes a shabby house in front of which stands an elderly, dolorous woman in morning clothes standing in a doorway. She is apparently waiting.



The Author conceals himself behind a tree and sees the Girl rush to the older woman, evidently her mother, and throw her arms about her. They both enter the house.



The Author moves close to the house so he can peek through the windows. The room is lit by the light from another room, the door between the rooms being open. In a chair in the first room there is a pale adolescent, the brother of the young girl, who jumps up when he hears the door open, and says ‘Mother.’. The mother leaves the girl, goes to the boy, gently tells him to go to bed and shuts the door, leaving the room in darkness. The other room, which is very small, contains only two beds and a sewing machine. A little blond girl, about five years old, evidently another daughter, is asleep in one of the beds.



The Girl empties her purse on the table; the Mother takes the money and places it in a drawer as the girl watches her anxiously.



The Author leaves the little street and continues his way on a wide boulevard leading to his villa.



He is pursued by visions of the scene he has just witnessed; and in the middle of the wide boulevard, he sees superimposed, the narrow street with the lamp-post, the Girl, the Mother and the house. This image is repeated with his every step



The Author arrives in front of his villa. He sees his own long shadow on the pavement. His shadow is now thrown on the house and momentarily takes the form of the girl. Image of the entrance to his villa and the garden with a large fountain. The Author enters the garden.

FADE DOWN

FADE UP



The next morning at 11 o'clock. The same image of the villa and garden in full light.



A elegant car stops in front of the villa. A chauffeur opens the door of the car; a very distinguished woman steps out and rings the bell of the house.



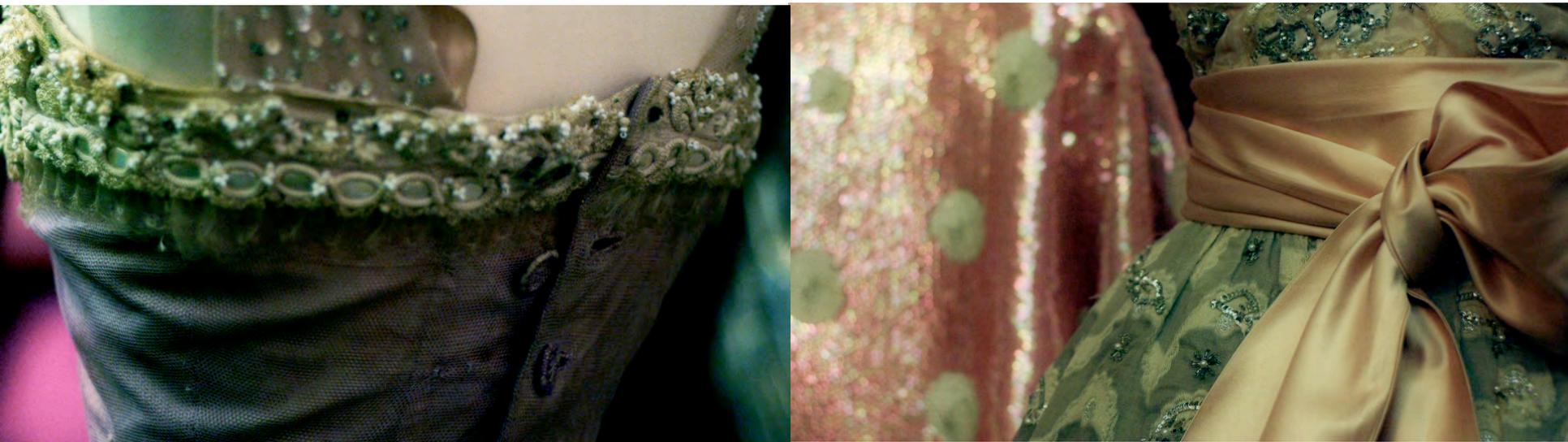
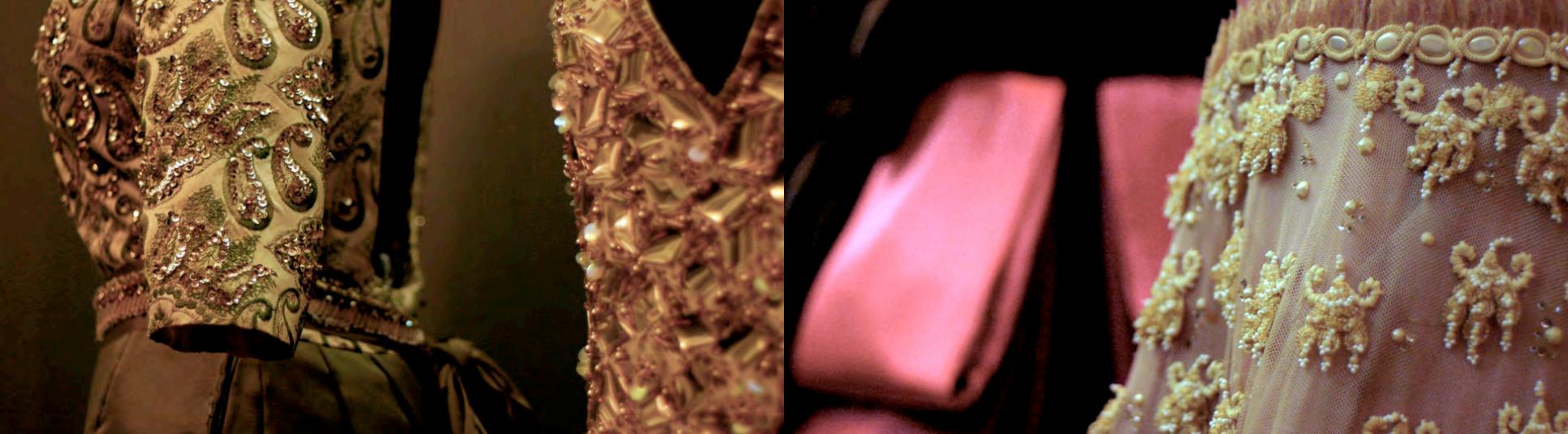
A Butler opens the door and the woman inquires about Madam Melloni. The butler points out a sign on the opposite side of the street reading, “Madam Melloni Robes et Manteaux”.



The Lady then sees a little plaque saying “Pirandello”. Recognising the famous Author’s name she is delighted and asks for an autograph. She is politely declined. She nods and crossed the street to Madame Melloni.



The interior of a fashionable dressmakers apartment, several rooms and an enormous sitting room, where the Lady is introduced. Several ladies are seated while beautiful models are parading on a little dais.



One of these models is the Girl Pirandello briefly encountered the night before under the lamp-post.



Madam Melloni enters: plump, matronly, half-Spanish half-Italian, loquacious and gesticulating. She sits beside the Elegant Lady.



The Lady tells her of her experience at the authors house and her desire for Pirandello the Author's autograph, who lives opposite. Madam Melloni, an adventurous woman, puts on a colourful hat and go the the authors house.



Pirandello is sitting at his desk when Madam Melloni is announced. He is greatly astonished but receives her courteously and gives her the autograph.



As Madame Melloni is about to leave she drops her purse from which several pictures of young girls, her models, fall to the floor.



She seems to be very shocked and seeing Pirandello's interest she holds them up for him to see more clearly.



Pirandello looks at the pictures and recognises one of them as the the Girl he saw the night before. He picks it out, and Madame Melloni explains that she is one of her models. Pirandello's asks if he can see her. Madame Melloni promises to send her at once.



Back in her office Madam Melloni speaks with unexpected sweetness to the Girl saying there is an elderly man who lives on the other side of the road who wants to see her immediately. The Girl at first refuses. After much argument Madam Melloni tells the Girl that the last dress sewn by her Mother was badly made and cannot be accepted. Faced with this threat the Girl finally decides to go to the author.



The Girl stands outside the front door to Pirandello's villa. She is very nervous.



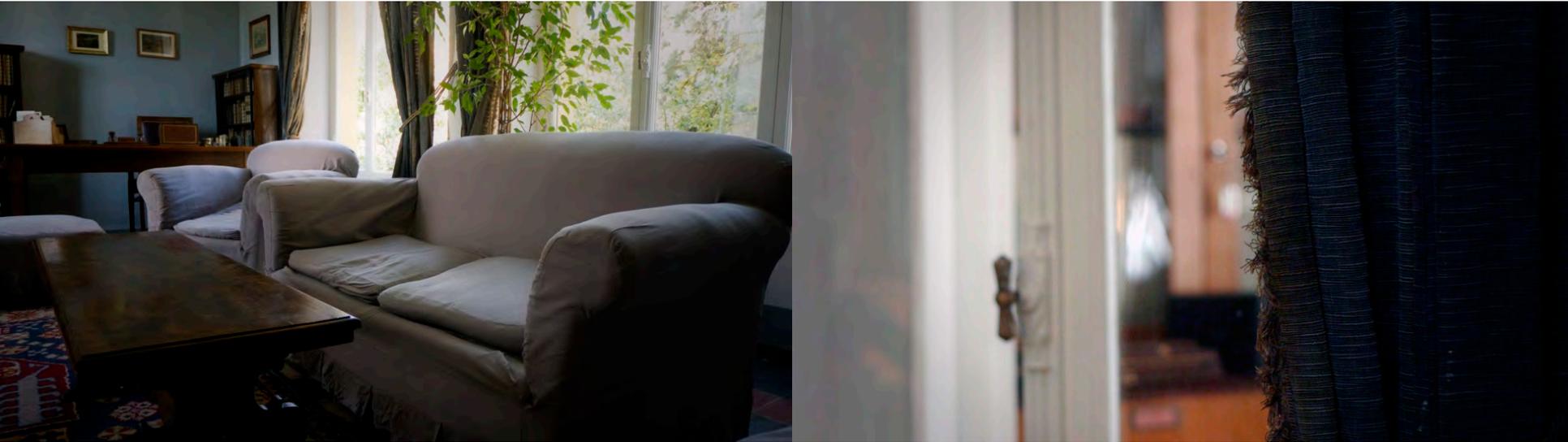
The Author Pirandello's desk. The secretary enters with a sack of mail. Pirandello wishes not to be disturbed.



Pirandello's house. The Secretary and the girl seem to be attracted to one another upon meeting. He shows her into Pirandello's study.



When she is announced Pirandello is very surprised to see her. He offers her a big chair. He asks if she is a couturiere. She explains she is a model but that her Mother sews for Madam Melloni. Suddenly, the Girl forces herself to get up and sit down on the arm of Pirandello's chair, saying that her family depend on Madam Melloni. She seems embarrassed by her actions.



Pirandello asks asks if the Girl has been sent to visit him by Madam Melloni. The girl says that yes she has been sent by Madam Melloni. Pirandello is shocked and disgusted and asks her to leave, which she does quickly with embarrassment.

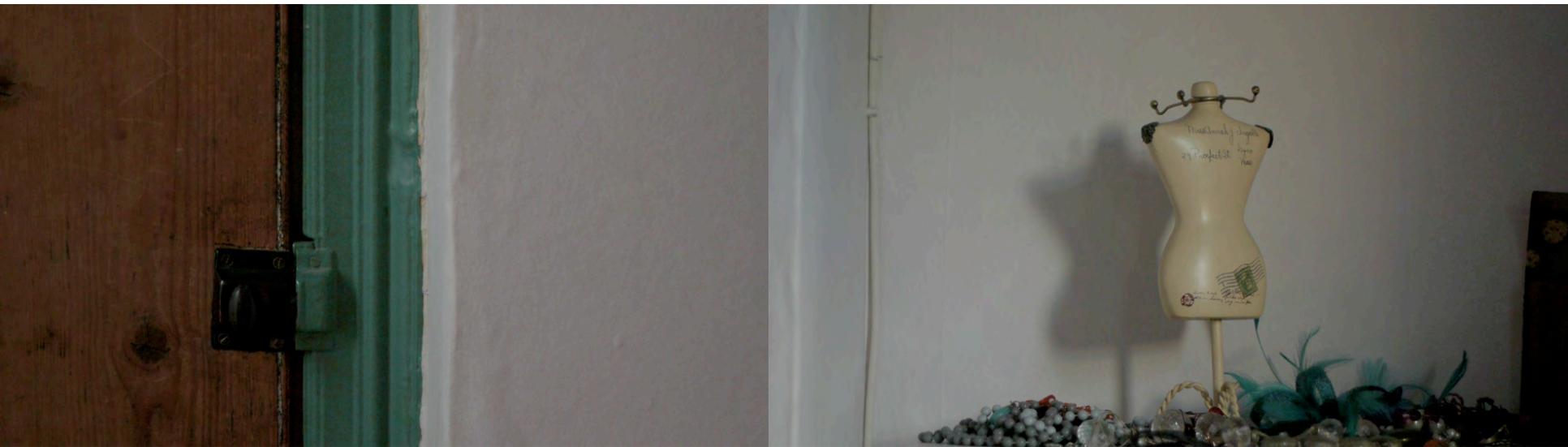


Pirandello watches her leave and his look seems to follow her through the walls. From the window of his study he sees his Secretary talking to her.



He then sits down in one of the six Gothic chairs, which can at this moment only be seen from behind. Suddenly, a form resembling the Girl appears in one of the Gothic chairs opposite him. The form is similar but the bearing is different to the Girl. Pirandello attempts to avoid looking at this vision but it is always in front of him. He also visualises images for the Mother, the Little Girl, Young Boy, and a more eccentric Madam Melloni.

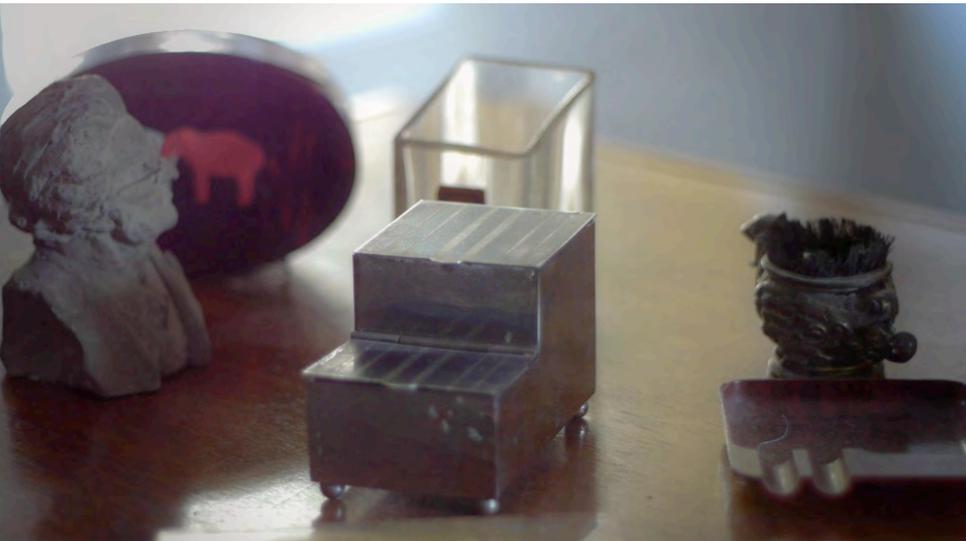
FADE TO BLACK



A few days later inside the interior of the Mother's home. The Mother and the Girl are sewing. Pirandello's Secretary has just arrived with a bunch of flowers, asking the Mother for a meeting with the Author Pirandello. She agrees but is disturbed by the request. She changes her clothes and makes her way to Pirandello's villa with the Secretary.



Inside Pirandello's study the Author tries to find out something about the past of the Mother. She responds telling a little of her previous life: that she was married before and was encouraged to marry her first husband's assistant. They made a life together and she had three children by him. This second husband had recently died, which is why she is wearing morning clothes. Flashbacks to scenes from this earlier life are seen.



As she talks Pirandello imagines, superimposed above her head, images of her first husband as he imagines him. Suddenly, Pirandello asks her if she is aware what kind of woman Madam Melloni is, what kind of 'business' she runs.



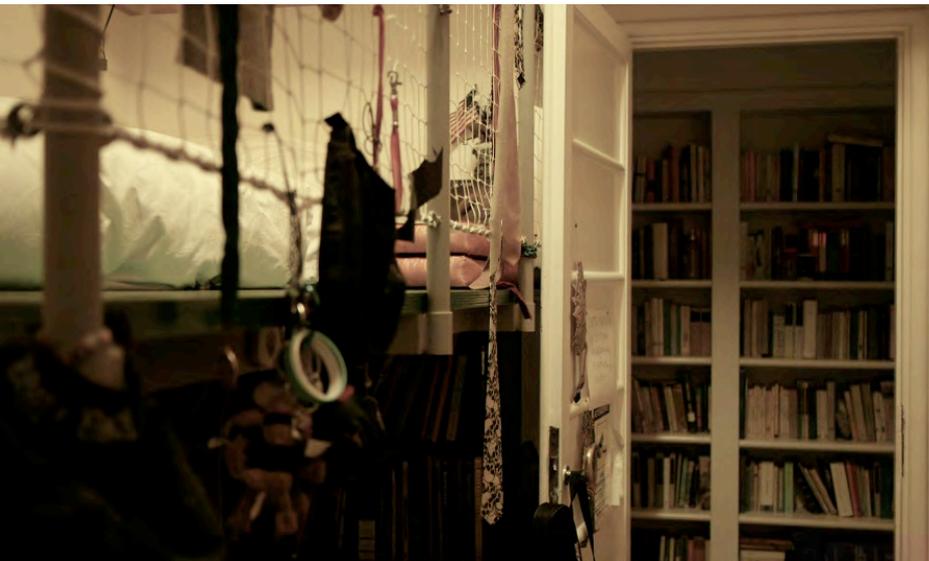
The Mother realising what he means is greatly upset. He tries to convince her of the implications of this for her daughter. Terrified, the Mother runs out.



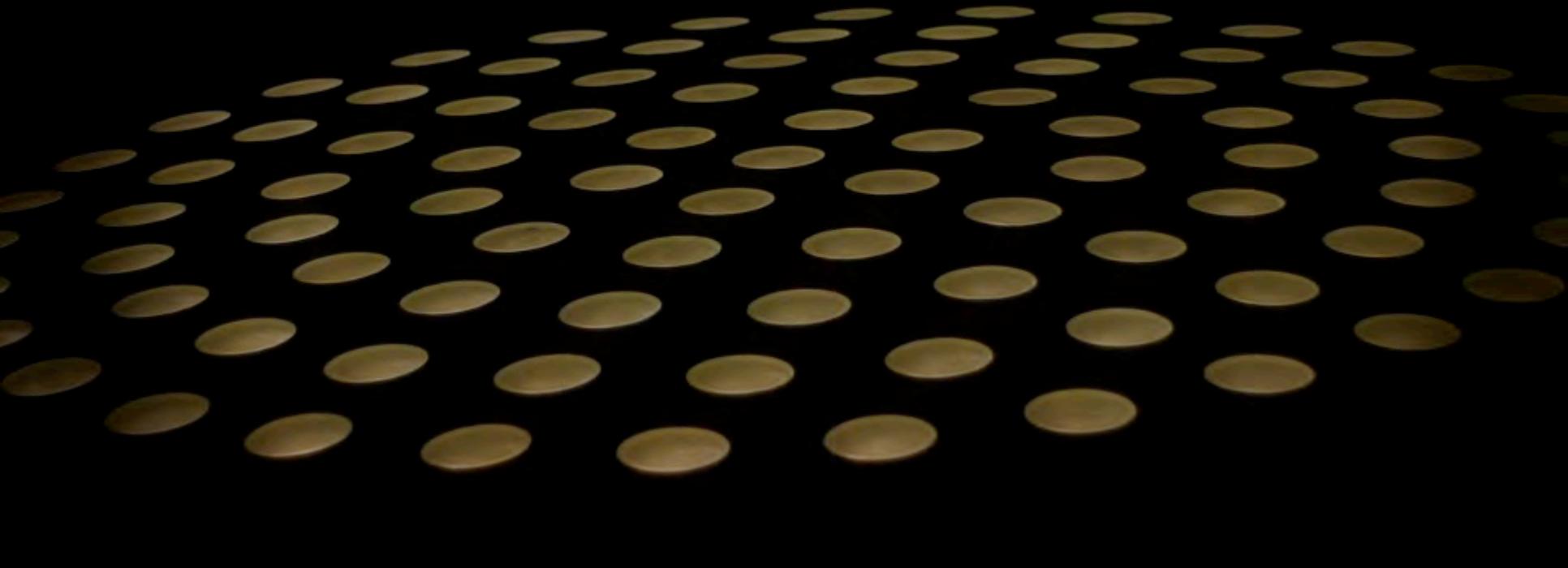
Pirandello remains alone. The characters of the Girl, her Mother, the Family, and Madam Melloni, as Pirandello imagines them, now occupy the Gothic chairs. They stay all evening. The Secretary enters the study and Pirandello asks him to take care of that family, that he is very interested in those poor creatures.



As the Mother walks home she is haunted by images Pirandello has suggested of what her daughter's life might be. She sees her daughter in every girl she meets and imagines her standing at lamp-posts waiting with an elderly man.



The Mother arrives home exhausted. Her anxieties that evening become clear to her daughter. The Mother confronts her Daughter. The Daughter is shocked and denies Pirandello's implications she is a prostitute. Eventually, the Mother believes her and they go to sleep. In the next room the boy has been listening to their conversation with intense horror and suffering.



The same day. Disturbed by the idea of the Girl remaining at Madam Melloni's business Pirandello visits her Mother the next day. The Mother is very rude to him, and tells him that she does not understand why he tries to put false ideas into her head, that her daughter has reassured her that she has never been a prostitute. Pirandello remains concerned and says something has to be done.



The Young Boy overhears the conversation and runs out of the house.



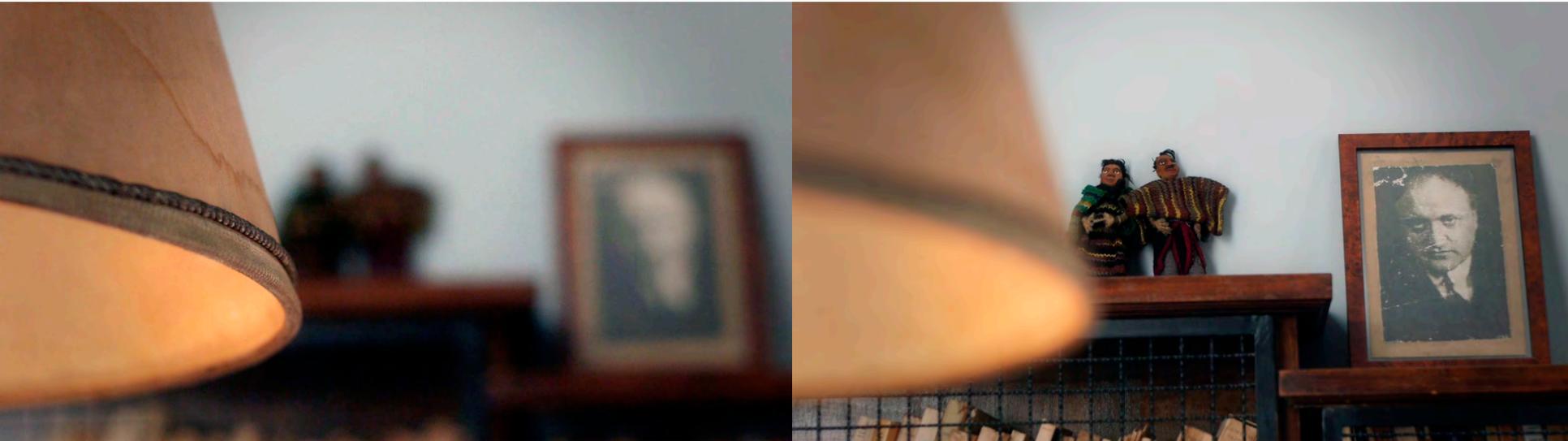
The family has stirred Pirandello's imagination, more so as his influence on the lives of this real family grows. He continues to interfere in the families' lives: the Girl loses her job at Madam Melloni's; the Authors Secretary would like to see the Girl but Pirandello again intervenes, stopping the romance. Pirandello begins to be convinced that the family must be avoided as they are headed for tragedy.



The Girl is terribly unhappy.



The Young Boy decides to visit the Pirandello to plea to him to stop causing his family pain. The Young Boy is alone in Pirandello study waiting to meet the author and finds a pistol hidden in the drawer of Pirandello's desk. When Pirandello comes in he hides it in his pocket.



Pirandello tries to talk to Young Boy, to calm his tormented young soul, but feels he does not have enough the necessary force of character to face life.



As their poverty grows each day it becomes miserable in the family's house. In order to survive and help her family the Girl decides that she must return to Madam Melloni's. The family blame Pirandello for their situation.



Time passes.



The Girl finds romance as she begins a relationship with the Pirandello's Secretary.



They visit an amusement fair and discover in each other their real sentiments. Whilst at the fair the Secretary tries to explain that Pirandello intentions are not bad, but that he is carried away by the force of his imagination. As they do this they are watched by Pirandello, who has gone to relax and forget about his obsession of the characters.



Early the next morning the Secretary finds Pirandello at his desk with a blank sheet of paper before him. Pirandello fears the consequences of a continued friendship between his Secretary and the Girl, and tries to convince him that the girl is not good for him. Pirandello remains convinced the family are headed for a tragedy whose consequences he fears. He feels this tragedy to be a real event predicted by his imagination.



The Girl meanwhile is profoundly happy. She has fallen in love.



The Mother is in the park with the Little Girl and the the boy is alone in his room. The Girl decides to bring the Secretary home to share her good fortune with her Mother. When she arrives the Young Boy in a fevered state misunderstands, thinking his sister is bringing shame to door of their family home. The Mother comes in from the park and listens to the Girl, hearing her news. Suddenly, they hear a gunshot.



The Boy has killed himself in the next room.



Horrified, the Secretary rushes to tell Pirandello this news. Pirandello is in his study.





Pirandello sits limply in his chair. He is tormented by the magnified image of his characters that sit in their Gothic chairs.



They sometimes take on immense dimensions so that they occupy the entire room and sometimes encircle the whole house.



The Secretary runs in and relates everything that occurred, and makes it clear he blames Pirandello for the families misfortune. Pirandello still sits limply in his study. Suddenly, he sits up and writes on one of the blank sheets of paper “Six Characters in Search of an Author”.

FADE DOWN

FADE UP



This same title “Six Characters in Search of an Author” is now written as a poster in a noticeboard. An elegantly dressed woman reads the poster. It is the Girl. An elderly well dressed man passes by and they talk.



On the other side of the street Pirandello's Secretary watches her and is horrified. The Girl and the elderly gentleman leave arm in arm.



The Mothers room, which is neat and tidy. A delivery boy comes in with a package of a large Teddy Bear for the Little Girl, who is delighted.



A theatre, Teatro Valle, where the play Pirandello has written is in rehearsal. Pirandello is present. The actress playing the part of the Mother is on stage with the Little Girl who is exultant with joy when her older sister gives her a gift of a large doll. The actress playing the Mother throws the doll away crying, "Shame!"



The next day. The rehearsal for “Six Characters in Search of an Author” continues focusing on the suicide of the Young Boy.



The Mother is also at the theatre waiting for an interview as an usher. She sits in the box in an empty theatre. As she waits she watches the rehearsal scene of a play. She does not know what the play is.



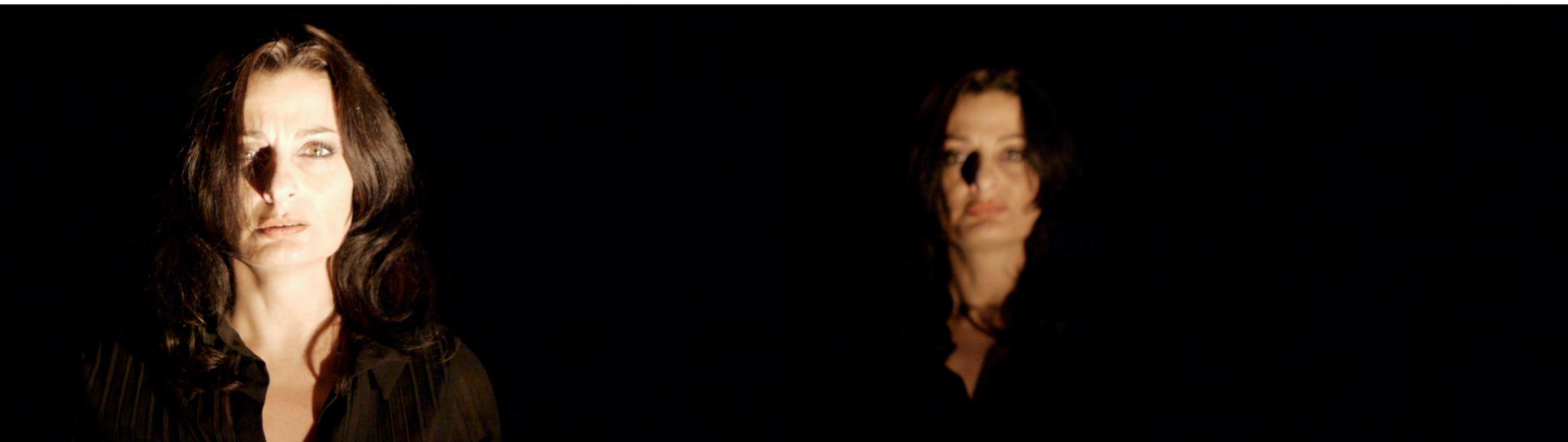
At the climax of the scene of the Young Boy's suicide the actress playing the Mother and the child actors are on stage. The Mother recognises the episode from her own life and rushes on stage, determined to stop the rehearsal.



At the sight of the Mother's despair everyone is breathless.



There is silence.



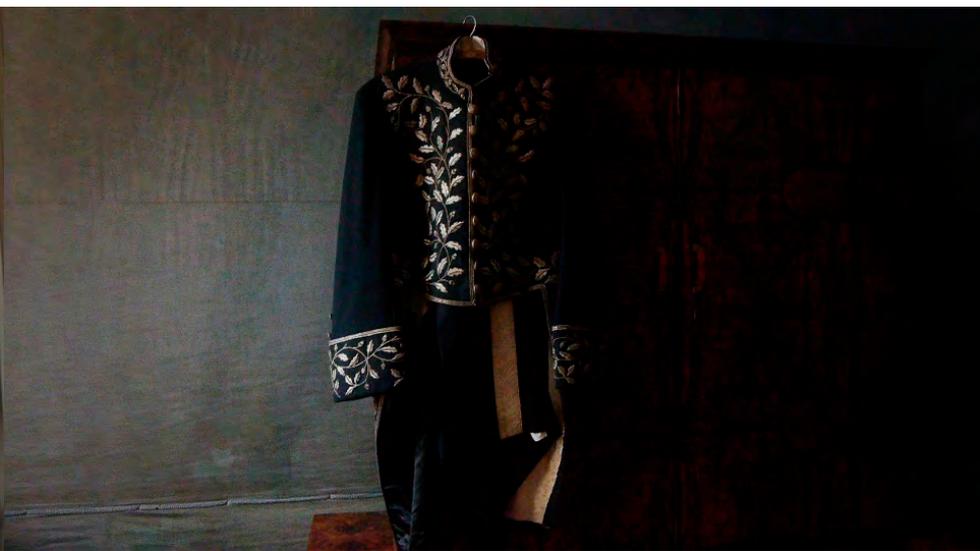
And when the Mother discovers Pirandello is present she rushes towards him screaming “Do you want to take my little girl too?”



The Author is deeply affected.



Pirandello's study. He is at his desk, a broken man. Suddenly, he sees in one of the Gothic chairs an image of the dead Little Girl. Tormented and saddened he decides to stop the play at Teatro Valle.



Pirandello is haunted by his six characters.



Teatro Valle is haunted by the characters.



Teatro Valle is haunted by the characters.



The Manager of Teatro Valle comes to visit Pirandello. He cannot understand why the play should be stopped, even though he is also haunted by characters resembling those Pirandello has invented and is sure he cannot escape them. The Manager is aware of possible economic loss if the show were to close and the next day he is taken ill with stress. Pirandello decides he must continue with the the play.



The characters continue to haunt a melancholy guilty Pirandello, begging him for mercy, to give them life.



The play “Six Characters in Search of an Author” premieres at Teatro Valle. The theatre is crowded. Pirandello still cannot escape the characters. He stands hidden behind the scenes nervously.



In the theatre the Girl sits dressed elegantly and seated beside her is an elderly man.



When the scene of the stepdaughter's seduction by her stepfather is underway the girl becomes shocked by the representation of her and her family and suffers a nervous collapse. The people in the audience of Teatro Valle start clapping, enthusiastically thinking this is part of the play.



The elderly man carries the Girl out of the theatre.



Just then Pirandello appears on stage, bowing to the audience. As he does this he watches the Girl being carried out of the theatre.



The End