Editorial Statement

The Spring 2003 issue of the *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* marks the last issue to include traditional book reviews, as has been the case since *JDTC*'s founding. Beginning with the Fall 2003 issue, essay-length reviews focusing on the work(s) of a single author or movement in dramatic theory and/or criticism will be published. Potential contributors are encouraged to be creative in thinking about original approaches to this new conception of the Book Review section of *JDTC*. Submissions, questions, and concerns should be addressed to:

James Fisher
Book Review Editor, *JDTC*
Theater Department
Wabash College
Crawfordsville, IN 47933
(765) 361-6394
e-mail: fisherj@wabash.edu
FAX: (765) 361-6341

Shakespeare and Sexuality edited by Catherine S. Alexander and Stanley Wells. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. ISBN 0-521-80475-2.

With its emphasis on the commodification of desire, most materialist analysis of sex in Shakespeare is anything but sexy. Desire is treated as a phenomenon, rather than as an experience. The resulting level of detachment is often clinical. Recall Susan Sontag's famous statement at the end of her essay "Against Interpretation": "In place of a hermeneutics we need an erotics of art." Readers of much of the recent theorizing of sex on the early modern stage might be tempted to respond, "Do we ever!" As Ann Thompson discusses in her excellent introductory essay to *Shakespeare and Sexuality*, the filters of feminism, gender studies, and post-Freudianism have combined to give us a rather cold and distant view of sex in Shakespeare's time. She remarks wistfully, "it seems almost quaint these days to associate sexuality with pleasure" (2). Following Foucault, sex has been linked so completely to discourses of power that (as Thompson acknowledges) "a new kind of Puritanism" may be in play when we talk and write about sexuality (4).

Michael Hattaway addresses this point in his essay, "Male Sexuality and Misogyny"—one of several pieces in this volume that are reprinted from *Shakespeare Survey*. Hattaway engages the problem of our dual discomfort with (on the one hand) the "appalling attitudes towards women" evident in plays such as *Measure for Measure* and (on the other) a climate of rectitude in which men are expected to read as women and "accept guilt on behalf of one's masculine forebears." The latter has the potential effect "suppressing all that is erotic and enjoyable . . . and embittering all relationships between the sexes" (93). Hattaway deftly negotiates the distance between Shakespeare and his characters with regard to the hatred and fear of women, and he draws some valuable conclusions: " . . . both Renaissance misogyny and our own 'anti-sexism' may well be products of elite cultures" (95).

Some of the other essays are nearly as rewarding as Hattaway's. John Russell Brown's "Representing Sexuality in Shakespeare's Plays" is important because it takes into account circumstances of performance and the audience's response to the representation of passion on stage. Brown is surely correct when he asserts that "Shakespeare expected his actors to show the effects of sexual arousal in their performances" (169), and he offers some wise perspective on the representation of sex in his plays: "The whole truth is seldom presented on the stage: what is placed there is intended to awaken an imaginative response, not to create moments of actuality" (181). As Shakespeare himself makes clear in Henry V, the power of representation is a suggestive power, dependent on the audience's imagination.

The currency of this suggestive power is desire, and "desire"—as Catherine Belsey asserts in her essay "Love in Venice"—"is dangerous" (74). Belsey reads *The Merchant of Venice* (especially Act 5) in the broad context of an "immoderate,

disproportionate" desire that paralyzes language and "threatens identity, arousing fears that subjectivity itself will be unstable" (75). Bassanio's experience in the play, as a character perceptive to desire and driven by it, raises questions for Belsey about the stability of an ideology enforced by festive comic endings, in which "marriage, which includes every imaginable adult relationship, ought to be enough for anyone" (88).

As is immediately evident from Shakespeare's Sonnets, there are varieties of adult relationship that were not accounted for in any early modern conception of marriage. These, of course, are the romanticized or eroticized relationship between men and the obsession with a dark, untrustworthy mistress. Beginning with Benson's notorious tinkering with the texts for his 1640 edition of Shakespeare's poems, Margreta de Grazia establishes that the real scandal of the Sonnets is the "shocking social peril" of the speaker's desire for the dark mistress, which threatens to destabilize and "raze the very distinctions his poems to the fair boy strain to preserve" (162-63). Benson's tinkering, it turns out, was just that—enlarged and endowed with centrality by our own cultural moment, which seeks to uncover and excoriate fables of its own homophobia.

Our current cultural context gets its most thorough scrutiny in one of only two freshly-written essays in this volume, Celia R. Daileader's "Nude Shakespeare in Film and Nineties Popular Feminism." Daileader is correct to examine "the pressure put on cinema by an increasingly educated, increasingly sexually confident, and increasingly salaried female audience" (187). However this examination uncovers (rather than just another peek-a-boo breast or bottom) a kind of ideological scorekeeping that congratulates itself as it seeks to discover "gender parity" and "evidence of a director's feminist sympathies" in each nude scene (186). More worthwhile is Daileader's account of pausing and rewinding her VCR, which constitutes a narrative of the female erotic gaze that would stand comparison to some of Linda Williams's writing.

These summaries should serve to indicate the quality of much of the work in *Shakespeare and Sexuality*. Nevertheless, it's disappointing that editors Alexander and Wells have chosen to reprint so much readily available material; a volume of new essays on this subject would have been even more satisfying. It is also important to note the extent to which many of the contributions are circumscribed by their doctrinaire readings of Foucault. By comparison, *Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, a collection of eclectic and exceptional essays edited by James Grantham Turner and published by Cambridge in 1993, seems positively adventuresome.

Thomas Akstens
Siena College

Pirandello & His Muse. The Plays for Marta Abba by Daniela Bini. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1998. ISBN 0-8130-1548-0.

Understanding Luigi Pirandello by Fiora A. Bassanese. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1997. ISBN 1-57003-081-2.

The Italian theatre of the twentieth century is framed by the achievements of two Nobel Prize-winning dramatists: Luigi Pirandello and Dario Fo. There are obvious and profound differences in their styles and themes, but also many intriguing similarities, especially in aspects of their characters and in the rich Italian theatrical traditions which inspired both of them. One common bond is that both dramatists were significantly influenced by women collaborators: in Fo's case, his wife and acting partner, Franca Rame, and, for Pirandello, the luminous Italian actress Marta Abba. A feminist take on the work of Pirandello is long overdue, and both of these fine studies are by women scholars, although Daniela Bini's *Pirandello & His Muse* is the one which makes a strong feminist argument, while Fiora A. Bassanese's *Understanding Luigi Pirandello*, a more standard study, brings new insights regarding the women characters of Pirandello's plays.

In *Pirandello & His Muse*, Bini focuses almost exclusively on Pirandello's late plays with the goal of illuminating the author's dual nature. Pirandello was, Bini suggests, a traditional, conservative man in real life and, at the same time, a wildly experimental, revolutionary artist who transformed twentieth-century theatre with aggressive vitality. Pirandello's plays make bold transformations from within; sudden changes of direction in the action and conflicts between the play and the play-within-the-play emphasize the illusion of the actors' spontaneous creation, not on the prosaic logic of any realistic happening. In his 1908 essay, "Humor," Pirandello examined the ironies, contradictions, and rhetoric of life and the stage as particularly related to humor, but his conclusions extend beyond humor to examine "a play of contrasts between the poet's ideal and reality." As one of the twentieth century's most philosophical playwrights, Pirandello dealt with the duality of human nature as exemplified by his use of masks and the stage itself as metaphor, his exploration of the close relationship of sanity and madness, illusion versus reality, and the need for compassion in all human matters tied to an understanding of the fundamental absurdity of human existence. Pirandello focuses on a character's complex and contradictory inner emotions which exist, often in conflict, with outer appearances and within the profoundest complexities of contemporary life. Bini efficiently establishes Pirandello's dramatic goals before turning her full attention to the relationship of Abba to Pirandello's work.

Pirandello & His Muse will undoubtedly be embraced by Italianists, as well as anyone interested in twentieth century theatre, for many reasons, not least because it superbly explores Pirandello's comparatively unexamined last plays and novels.

Pirandello & His Muse is masterful in its scholarship, clear in its writing, and compelling in its central themes. Bini explores the intricacies of the playwright's relationship with Abba, who she believes significantly influenced Pirandello's shift from male to female protagonists in his later works and whom, Bini argues, more importantly shaped Pirandello's philosophy of life and art. "In giving voice to women," Bini writes, "Pirandello accomplished the goal of his male characters: the defeat of logical discourse, the unveiling of the fallacy of words" (15). The availability of Pirandello's correspondence with Abba following her recent death allows a fuller exploration of their unique collaboration than has been possible before, and Bini effectively argues that Pirandello made love to Abba via the dramas and novels of his last fifteen years. The interesting notion that Pirandello sublimated his erotic impulses toward Abba and filtered them into his work may or may not be true, but it is clear that she was the catalyst for Pirandello's final attempts to present the intangibles of life—those shifting emotions and contradictory attitudes and fears—bubbling beneath the public mask of every human being. Bini suggests that Eleonora Duse served, in a lesser way, as Pirandello's muse prior to Abba, whose image is examined in regard to Pirandello's work in various stages of womanhood as seen in a Platonic Ideal, as the Earth Mother, as refuser of roles, as creator, and as actress. The works examined closely include *Diana and Tuda*, *The Wives' Friend*, *The New Colony*, *Lazarus*, *As You Desire Me*, and *The Mountain Giants*, with references to others. For Bini, the enduring artistic achievements of Pirandello's last years result from the feelings of the old maestro for the young actress, and, although Bini might be faulted for straining a bit too hard to make Abba the essential element in Pirandello's late work, the actress's contributions have been too long implied without the evidence and cogent argument Bini brings to the task.

The volume is laced with photographs of both Pirandello and Abba at various stages of life, but unfortunately none of scenes from productions of the plays themselves. Bini also provides copious notes and a bibliography in what will certainly be widely viewed as an essential contribution to scholarship on Pirandello.

Bassanese's *Understanding Luigi Pirandello* is a rather different study than Bini's in that it is intended to serve more as an introduction to the breadth of Pirandello's work than to focus on one aspect or phase of his work. As an installment in the University of South Carolina's *Understanding Modern European and Latin American Literature* series, including at least thirty volumes on both novelists and playwrights, with Beckett, Frisch, Grass, Ionesco, Lorca, and Weiss standing out among dramatists, *Understanding Luigi Pirandello* is a solid, well-written, generally thoughtful overview of Pirandello's accomplishments. Although there are a few similar studies of Pirandello available, this reasonably priced, hard-covered volume is a more than ample primer on Pirandello.

Bassanese provides a clear-eyed view of Pirandello's vast achievement, setting his work within the context of the diverse developments of modern drama. As she writes:

> The modernist author faced a world in which confident faith in reason and empirical reality had shattered but no framework for collective belief had been reconstituted. In such a world, what could be communicated by authors to their audience? Pirandello's response was to bear witness to the crisis in literature and, by extension, to the crisis of man in society by analyzing, decomposing, fragmenting, demystifying, and unmaking man himself. (21)

Bassanese devotes single chapters to individual plays, notably *Right You Are (If You Think So)*, "a parable" (51) and *Henry IV*, a play which confronts "the power of madness" (76), while she binds together other works in thematic chapters, such as in Chapter Six, "The Theatre Plays," focusing on *Six Characters in Search of An Author*, *Each in His Own Way*, and *Tonight We Improvise*. Pirandello's first important full-length play, *Right You Are (If You Think So)*, appears to be as loosely constructed as a commedia dell'arte scenario; thus creating the illusion of improvisation in performance, even though he did not intend any actual improvisation. Eric Bentley, who has translated the play, describes *Right You Are*'s central character, Lamberto Laudisi, as a brillante/raisonneur, a "Harlequin in modern dress, a Harlequin who has invaded the realm of philosophy, and who behaves there as he had behaved elsewhere," and Bassanese's exploration of Pirandello's notion of the maschere nude helps the reader understand what caused him to people *Right Your Are* with stock characters recognizable as commedia dell'arte types who, as Bentley suggests, are a way of rendering "human nature in its raw and general state" and depicting the observant outsider.

In the theatre plays, Pirandello's "actors" and "characters" are ordinary people he uses as types, but like the commedia characters they seem to have a freedom of expression and movement even their author did not give them. Pirandello succeeds at the unlikely task of combining various familiar and one-dimensional personas with a high level of emotional realism within these discursive plays on the relationship of reality and illusion. By using theatre as a symbol, he exposes the individual tragedies of his characters, but he breaks through the theatrical metaphor with the illusion of improvisation. As Bassanese underscores, in this bold reinvention of dramatic structure, Pirandello reveals the complex and ever-changing realities always lurking beneath the mask of realism.

Bassanese includes a select bibliography, but there are no illustrations. This is unfortunate, as there are many fascinating and potentially illuminating production

photographs available, both of the original productions, as well as many international stagings of these plays over the decades since they were written.

Understanding Luigi Pirandello offers a solid, basic, wide-ranging introduction, while *Pirandello & His Muse* delves deeper and more idiosyncratically into Pirandello's last phase as a playwright. Both works more than adequately achieve their stated goals and are likely to inspire continued interest in the work of a dramatist who, as Bini writes, learned to "listen to the different" so that we might "accept it in ourselves and in others" (191).

James Fisher
Wabash College

Theatre, History, and National Identities edited by Helka Mkinen, S. E. Wilmer, and W. B. Worthen. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2001. ISBN 951-570-503-7.

Western theatre history has, in a sense, always been concerned with the "national" contexts of representation, whether within the ancient states of Greece and Rome, the early modern European and American nations, or our modern and contemporary inter-national world. However, the past decade has produced a new surge in scholarship on the relations between theatre and nationalism, exploring previously under-represented national theatre traditions, the ideological shortcomings of canonical theatre histories, and philosophical connections between theatrical traditions and the histories of states.

Pirrko Koski, Professor of Theatre Research at the University of Helsinki, first invited Steve Wilmer, William Worthen, Janelle Reinelt, Bruce McConachie, and Freddie Rokem to Helsinki in the summer of 1995. The group met over the following five years as the International Centre for Advanced Theatre Studies, working with Finnish and international graduate students and scholars on projects of national theatre history. *Theatre, History, and National Identities* is a tribute to Koski. The book concludes with a birthday "tabula gratulatoria" to her—and an anthology of research by the Centre's original five senior scholars and Finnish students mentored by them.

The anthology contains six articles on Finnish theatre, one comparing Finnish with Irish theatre, two on American theatre, and one each on British and Israeli theatre. Rather than separate Finnish contributions, however, the editors have opted to organize the articles into three sections according to processes or phases of national identity formation. A first section, "Creating Theatre, Creating the Nation," addresses theatre at moments in Finnish, Irish, and Israeli history when they were allied to nation-building. A second section, "Interrogating National Discourse" includes four case studies of Finnish theatre which trace its defining issues from the 1930s to the 1990s preceded by Bruce McConachie's discussion of historiographical method. The final section, "Borders of National Identity," contains three articles addressing contemporary "post-nationalist" theatre in Britain, Finland, and the United States. The editors explain that they wanted the anthology to be as integrated between foreign/Finnish senior/junior scholars as the Centre itself, but the articles within each section are diverse, materially and methodologically. I found it more coherent to consider the non-Finnish and Finnish pieces separately.

The articles by Worthen, "Staging America: The Subject of History in Chicano/a Theatre," and Reinelt, "Performing Europe: Identity Formation for a 'New' Europe" are both reprint/revisions from *Theatre Journal*. The article by McConachie, "Social Practices and the Nation-State: Paradigms for Writing National Theatre History" is likewise a revision from an article published in *New*

England Theatre Journal. Reinelt looks at 1990s Europe as a scene paradoxically torn between the resurgence of local nationalisms and the emergence of trans-nationalism in the form of the European Union. She sees the struggle over the constitution of the EU defined by the opposing forces of neo-fascists (Austria's Haider and France's Le Pen both loom in the background of the article) and refugees and migrants from the ex-Soviet republics. She examines three British plays about Europe from the mid to late 1990s (Thtrede Complicit's *Mnemonic*, David Edgar's *Pentecost*, and David Grieg's *Europe*) as examples of a new, progressive tradition of European theatre concerned primarily with re-examining the meaning of postnationalist Europe in relation to refugee populations. Worthen's article looks a bit more broadly at the trajectory of Chicano theatre history from the 1960s campesino theatre to its dubious success in breaking into the contemporary American mainstream. He navigates such thorny topics as the politics of Chicano postmodernity, Chicana/o gender dynamics, and the essence-experience ambivalence in Chicano representations of history. McConachie's article sets out as an application of Hayden White's notions of the ideological character of historical narrative to the process of theatre historiography. Using actor John Howard Payne's complex negotiation of the social etiquette and cultural politics of early nineteenth century Boston as a case study, he usefully outlines narratives resulting from nationalist, Marxist, and various "cultural studies" interpretations of the available evidence. Although he persuasively relativizes all these potential results, he settles in the end for a "social practices" approach which, though no more true than the rest, "moves easily beyond monocultural and into multicultural perspectives" (137). I am reminded of Richard Rorty's celebration of American moral pragmatism, whereby we confidently denounce the Hitlers of the world, not because their evil is demonstrable, but because their defeat is desirable.

The inclusion of articles by these three prominent American theatre scholars in such an avowedly international collection raises the question of whether they share a recognizable regional approach to national theatre history. Indeed, as one would expect, all three are extremely sensitive to the underlying ideologies of mainstream theatre histories and champion approaches to historiography that recover minority practices and representations. Reinelt questions post-nationalist theatre according to how close it strays to idealism, whereas McConachie sets multiculturalism as his first principle. In comparison to the Finnish contributors and Rokem (from Israel), the American insistence on the contingency of ideology within each utterance seems obsessive. American criticism has become so dense with the punctuation of the "problematic" that "surely" we are "losing" the "ability" to "see" "it"!

Taken together, the six articles on Finnish theatre stand something like a "Cambridge Companion" to the subject. They only lack a historical overview or timeline, which would have assisted readers unfamiliar with the region. Hanna

Suutela's article, "An Instrument for Changing Nationalist Strategies: The Finnish Theatre Company, 1872-1883" examines the birth of Finnish theatre in terms of class (with theatre seen as proteletarian and democratic in relation to opera), language (Swedish vs. Finnish companies), and politics (nationalists using theatre to their ends). Helka Mäkinen's article, "Against Fascism in Finland in 1933: *Beautiful Germany Burned Poetry*" addresses the resistance of the leftist actress, Elli Tompuri, to Finland's political and cultural allegiance to Nazi Germany in the 1930s as an anecdote omitted from mainstream Finnish theatre history. Hanna Korsberg's "Decade of Political Uncertainty: The Finnish National Theatre in the 1940s" picks up from Suutela and Mäkinen, tracing the unswerving fascist sympathies of the Finnish National Theatre during and after World War II even to the point of fighting the policies of the leftist post-War government. Chad Eric Bergman, in "Two Languages, One Theatre: Cultural Liminality at Lilla Teatern," describes the bi-lingual and cross-lingual experiments of an avant-garde Finnish theatre in the 1960s and 1970s as a negotiation between Swedish and Finnish linguistic cultures. Kaarina Kytömaa's "Between East and West: The Reception of *To Hire a Celebrity* in Two Finnish Language Groups" is a nice companion to Bergman's piece, describing a 1994 Swedish language production of this avant-garde play, directed by a noted Finnish director. Whereas Bergman looks rather optimistically at linguistic liminality, Kytömaa sees the praise and rejection of *To Hire a Celebrity* by Finnish critics and audiences adhering predictably to ethnic biases. Finally, Petri Tervo, in "Disintegration of Theatrical Performance in the Museum of Contemporary Art," describes a post-modern site-specific 1999 production of *Hamlet* in a Helsinki museum, which deconstructs . . . well, everything! Finnish nationalism, classical dramaturgy, mise-en-scene, architecture and urban planning, humanist subjectivity, etc. Perhaps not ethnicity, though.

Steve Wilmer's article, "German Romanticism and its Influence on Finnish and Irish Theatre" is the first in the book and takes a uniquely comparative approach. Wilmer analyzes an ambivalence implicity to many of the other articles. He presents the histories of Finnish and Irish theatre in their most fervent, nationalist periods at the fin-de-siecle as examples of how nationalist theatre can be both revolutionary and proto-fascist. He describes the distinctly revolutionary character of the cultural nationalisms professed by theatre artists in nations dominated by foreign cultural hegemonies (not unlike the cultural pride of American Chicanos). However, Wilmer also points out the debt of this cultural nationalism to the ideas of Johann Gottfried von Herder, who "encouraged German-speaking people to take pride in their own cultural past, their native languages and their peasant culture which, he argued, had remained untainted" (15). Cultural romanticism appears conducive to radical, ethnic identity politics as much as to fascist aesthetics.

Freddie Rokem's article, "The Bible and the Avant-Garde: The Search for a Classical Tradition in the Israeli Theatre," curiously, is the real anomaly of the collection. Whereas the Finnish, American, and British trans-national theatres discussed by the other contributors grapple with inventing and interrogating historical narratives for marginalized ethnicities, the Israeli theatre negotiates Israeli identity in a Jewish state through a sacred, ethnic narrative. For the Israeli avant-garde which Rokem describes, it is not an issue of providing a voice for marginalized ethnicity so much as questioning the nationalist assumptions about the meaning of a uniquely inviolate history.

This anthology incorporates a fascinating glimpse into the defining issues of Finnish theatre historiography, provocatively juxtaposed against issues and case studies which will be familiar to American and Anglophone theatre scholars. Many fundamental issues, such as the struggle between political and cultural nationalism, the challenge of minorities to mainstream nationalisms, and linguistic liminality and hybridity recur throughout. The book assiduously evades positing a single methodology for national theatre historiography, but it does raise old hegemonic spectres. Perhaps the most alarming is the apparently fundamental role of German philosophy to theatrical nationalism. Wilmer traces Finnish and Irish theatre to Herder, Suutela invokes Hegel, McConachie never quite shakes Marx, and Worthen wryly wonders "What does Brecht have to say to Cantinflas, and Cantinflas to Brecht?" (293). I am reminded of a conference on "the future of drama" conducted at UC-Irvine in Spring 2001, in which a panel of senior theatre scholars addressed this topic as if the question were, "Is there anything left to write after Heiner Müller?" This anthology reminds us that history may always have a hegemonic thread (be it German, Anglo, or scriptural), but there are many threads available to many weavers.

Evan Winet
Cornell University