



Pirandello and His Muse: The Plays for Marta Abba (Crosscurrents)

Daniela Bini

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"A splendid piece of scholarly work. . . . Scholars of twentieth-century theater, whether Italianists or not, would find this book immensely useful."--Rebecca West, University of Chicago

This study examines the later plays of Luigi Pirandello--those he wrote for his actress and muse Marta Abba--in light of the recent publication of their correspondence. It traces the Nobel Prize winner's entire creative process, revealing how his perception of women shaped his philosophy of art and life, and highlights the structurally necessary shift from the male protagonist of the early and more famous plays and novels to the female protagonist of the late theater.

With sensitive commentary on the letters, Daniela Bini reads the plays the old maestro wrote for the young actress as the sublimation of an erotic impulse he denied throughout his life. From *Diana and Tuda* to *The Mountain Giants*, Bini maintains, Pirandello makes love to Marta in the only way he could, the mystical union of the creator and his muse.

She points out a contrast between the man and the artist--the traditional and conservative son, husband, and father who coexisted with the revolutionary writer who changed the course of 20th-century drama. Pirandello had called theater the art form closest to life, constantly changing and renewing itself on stage. Abba was the catalyst, Bini argues; together, the muse and the maestro gave life to immortal artistic creations.

Daniela Bini is associate professor of Italian at the University of Texas at Austin. Her publications include *Carlo Michelstaedter and the Failure of Language*; *A Fragrance from the Desert: Poetry and Philosophy in Giacomo Leopardi*; and (with Antonella Pease) *Italiano in Diretta: An Introductory Course*.

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