

BOOK REVIEWS

Aristotle's Poetics. Translated and with a Commentary by George Whalley. Edited by John Baxter and Patrick Atherton. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 1997. xxxvi, 186 pages. \$19.95 paper.

Footnotes to Plato—that used to be one characterization of Western philosophy. Yet we could, with perhaps greater warrant, call literary theory and criticism addenda to Aristotle. The influence of the *Poetics* has been enormous, almost stifling at times; Horace Walpole joked that had Aristotle written before Homer, we would not have had the *Odyssey*. Yet except among classicists the *Poetics* is now more often alluded to than read. The number of English translations argues as much the difficulty readers have had with the text as its popularity. Contemporary barbarians (i.e. Greekless students of English literature), who are the intended audience for Whalley's translation, are lucky to escape from graduate study warned against taking Aristotle's *hamartia* ("error," as in missing a target) to be the Victorianizing "tragic flaw," or to learn that his "imitation of an action" has nothing to do with lively, realistic staging. It is no great exaggeration to say that for many students nowadays, caught in "the melancholy, long withdrawing roar" of post-structuralism, the *Poetics* is at best a text so full of lacunae, omissions and disputed or ambiguous passages that—like holy writ—it allows endless subjective interpretation; or at worst that it is narrow, old and Greek.

The picture has not always been so dark. In the late fifties Gerald Else's *Aristotle's Poetics: The Argument* persuaded those concerned with literary criticism to take a longer look at Aristotle's major terms and his method. (Bits of the Whalley-Else correspondence are among the fascinating details of the book.) And both before and after Else, the so-called Chicago (or neo-Aristotelian) Critics, notably Richard McKeon, R.S. Crane and Elder Olson, explicated the *Poetics*—not uncritically—and argued that it formed the basis for a comprehensive theory of literature. Olson extended Chicago practice into the lyric, and Jane Austen's *Emma* began another stylish life as the exemplary novel for 'Chicago' analysis of fiction. The Chicago School came at a crucial moment, and Crane's conversion from conventional historical procedures to neo-Aristotelianism seems, to me at least, the beginning of a recognizably modern literary scholarship on this side of the water.

These and other developments were accompanied by the appearance at regular intervals of new translations of the *Poetics*, most of them aimed at undergraduates. Telford sought a thorny precision, Apostle the exploitation of the range of the terms as used elsewhere in Aristotle, others accessibility or

the appearance of smooth development or something else. Whalley, a fine classicist and a gifted, dedicated teacher, saw the limitations of such approaches. His *Aristotle's Poetics* is a complete departure from earlier translations. Whalley's view of the text is that it

includes revisions, additions and afterthoughts by Aristotle ... that a number of spurious glosses have wandered into the text ... [most of which can be identified, but] that the substantial nucleus ... is distinct, coherent and shapely enough to give impressive evidence, at first hand, of Aristotle's intelligence and imagination at work.

What Whalley offers in the commentary on the pages facing his translation is a discussion of the linguistic and intellectual problems the text presents, this, among other things, in an effort to "bring the reader to a vivid sense of the energy and shape of Aristotle's thinking." The compliment and challenge Whalley offers the Greekless is admission to the earliest and most seminal enterprise of humanism, the establishment and consideration of classical texts and their significance. "I want to engage the student in the activity and substance of the Greek at the radical level." The result is a style of translation "tufty" rather than ... 'stylish,' but precisely on that account prompting both an examination *de novo* of Aristotle's method, and the sustained exchange of ideas such an examination requires. Pedagogy could ask for nothing more.

A further effort of Whalley's commentary is to explore both the limitations of Aristotle's work and its implications for literature in general. Hence the book builds on the rigour of Else and on the conviction of the Chicago School that the *Poetics* can suggest a general theory. None of this should imply derivativeness. Significantly, Whalley's important essay, "The Aristotle-Coleridge Axis," is reprinted after the translation.

Some of the questions one might raise about the work are asked—and answered—in John Baxter's excellently argued Preface and in Whalley's own lucid "On Translating Aristotle's *Poetics*" (1970), which is printed in front of the translation. Questions about the interpretation of this or that passage in the commentary, or about the warrant for an Aristotle-Coleridge axis, will no doubt be argued out elsewhere. It is appropriate here to celebrate the daring, the insight and the intellectual generosity of this work. Whalley's translation was almost two decades in the making, almost as many in the publishing—due to the pressure of other work and his later ill health. The editors, John Baxter and Patrick Atherton, are to be greatly thanked. They have given us not only a tribute to a distinguished Canadian teacher-scholar, but his final and perhaps most significant contribution to both lines of endeavour.

Julian of Norwich's Showings: From Vision to Book. By Denise Nowakowski Baker. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994. xi, 215 pages. \$16.95 US, paper.

Towards the end of the fourteenth century, the recluse Julian of Norwich wrote two books on a series of visions she had been granted; the first, shorter *Book of Showings* describes the revelations; the second, longer book incorporates the results of years of thought and meditation on these showings and their meaning. Julian has a very divided readership, with some readers primarily interested in her role as a spiritual conduit, and others eager to claim her as the first English woman of letters, one who puzzlingly ought not to have had the kind of education her work seems to imply, as far as we know the deplorable conditions of education for medieval women in England. Baker sets aside the question of the validity of the showings, and investigates the cultural context that led to their taking the form that they did, and finding in Julian the interpretation that they did. The first two chapters are about the influence of late medieval affective piety on Julian's showings, the first concerning the practices of spirituality, and the second visualizations of the suffering Christ. Only occasionally is Baker on shaky ground in accounting for Julian's theology by placing it against a background of similar contemporary ideas, for example in her claim that "Although Julian's vision of the three heavens is a ghostly rather than a bodily showing, it may well bear an affinity with the iconography of the Throne of Grace" (57). Other than that the Throne of Grace configuration involves the three persons of the trinity, Julian's perception of joy, pleasure, bliss, honour, and delight in them and the three heavens they represent bears no affinity that I can perceive with the Luttrell Psalter Throne of Grace (the illustration used on page 58 of Baker's text), with a mournful-looking God the Father, a sagging crucified God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove. Baker may be quite correct, following Gertrud Schiller, that "this pictorial type confirms the efficacy of the atonement by indicating that Christ is both God and man and by dramatizing the acceptance of his sacrifice by the other persons of the Trinity," but it hardly does so by showing that "the Trinity rejoices" (57). The central three chapters investigate Julian's theodicy—that is, her explanation for the existence of evil in a universe created by a benevolent God. Julian elides the problem by considering, not how God allowed evil to originate (with Augustine, Julian considers evil to be non-being), but rather to what good evil tends. The last chapter is a literary one: after disentangling the threads of Julian's theology and presenting them in a logically connected and culturally explicable way, Baker analyses in chapter 6 how Julian herself presents the material. This reader's impatience with the charts and schemata of themes was fully compensated for by Baker's insight into the point of all that interweaving:

This intrinsic design makes it difficult to read Julian's long text in a linear, chronological fashion; rather, it requires that the reader engage in the process of meditation, tracing the thematic strands throughout their various interlacings both within and among the sixteen revelations. The recursive structure of *A Book of Showings* thus enacts Julian's own process of composition and involves its readers in reenacting the gradual illumination achieved through meditation. (148)

This book will be essential reading for anyone studying Julian of Norwich.

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Malory's Book of Arms. By Andrew Lynch. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997. xx, 169 pages. £35.00.

Andrew Lynch has written an informative, thoughtful, and highly original work. He addresses the most difficult parts of Malory in order to achieve the kind of insight which truly does justice to the work, and this task is considerably more challenging than it might sound, for the order of difficulty in this text is not that of intellectual or stylistic complexity, but of cultural distance and the subtlety of textual phenomena. In addressing the central issue of bearing arms, Lynch is dealing with what is undoubtedly the core of the text, as Malory and his readers conceived it, and what is also most resistant to modern literary criticism.

The vast desert in the middle of the *Morte*, the "Book of Sir Tristram," is the area which best exemplifies this difficulty, and Lynch addresses it in detail. In spite of plenty of evidence that medieval readers found the incessant round of repetitive and apparently trivial battles of vital interest (manuscript marginalia and illustration, as well as the sheer volume of such combat romances testify to this), such material rebuffs critical intervention. The problem is largely that of its unstressed nature—incidents are treated briefly in Malory, sometimes at a rate of up to seven combats or passes of arms in two pages of the Vinaver edition. Such incidents follow a highly conventional pattern, and the sheer repetitiveness makes it difficult to focus on the importance of any one outcome, or to read these stories thematically. By paying close attention to the almost numbing detail here, Lynch is able to develop a complex thesis about the importance of name, the establishment of hierarchy in its tension with knightly fellowship, and the relation of a primary virtue, prowess, to the other virtues which the text asserts. The case he develops about Sir Palomides best illustrates the scope and importance of this thesis. Following a trail of widely spaced evidence in the book, he shows the way in

which an incipient discourse of character emerges from the primary action of combat. Palomides is marked by a completely contradictory relationship to Tristram, by envy and ill will (terms which Lynch develops central definitions of); yet he is also, according to Malory, a noble, virtuous, and well-breathed knight. Lynch shows that it is not possible to derive a judgement on character based on action, even though this is what the *Morte* itself proposes, and is also the path critics have followed, scoring various combatants on the chivalry metre and attempting to organize knights into types or kinds. Lynch's argument is that a discourse of character emerges to bolster and rationalize the more primary discourse of noble actions. There is nothing in Palomides' actions in themselves treacherous or false, for others are praised for the same acts—rather, "Palomides' falsehood is *required* to cover up the process by which military success decides what is loyalty and what treason" (122). In this, we can see subjectivity in what might be called a primitive state, emerging as a supplement to the martial code. In the final chapter of this book, Lynch discusses the implications of this emergent psychological register in the last books of the *Morte*, through the vocabulary of gesture, and "herte."

Lynch's conception of Malory's work is that it is ideological, and he brings a supple notion of ideology to a subject that has needed it. For, frustratingly, the level of reflection on fifteenth-century affairs in this work by an author established as having been an active participant in the affairs of his day is very thin indeed. In what sense does Malory then register his era, and in what sense is his work political? Lynch looks not to verisimilitude, but to the "text's obsessions" (xiv), to that very repetitiveness which is a scandal of the text, and reveals it to be the base of ideology itself, which in its reiterations, enacts an insistent message, for "the *Morte* [is] bound together by the sheer consistency of its discursive habits" (xviii). Lynch provides many informative side-views of late medieval conceptions which enrich his reading, such as the use of medical lore which underlies Sir Gareth's tale. But his most important work is not in the direction of providing a coherent reading of the "hoole book," but in looking to the ideological seams, to "narrative silences, rough edges, gaps and co-existing contradictions which challenge or betray the preferred view" (xv). While such an agenda might seem to simply follow recent critical fashion in generating a counter-reading, it is, to my mind, a task of especial importance in Malory, just because the drive towards coherence and moralizing explanation seems distinctly inadequate to the effects of the text. It is in this sense that the work reveals itself as ideological—by a strong drive to mask its disparate and often contradictory narratives, with 'morals' in the sense that fables have morals. For Lynch, the notion of ideology reveals the *Morte Darthur* as an anxious text.

It would be possible to lament the absence of any sustained reading of one of the books in this larger book (the Grail quest is passed over almost entirely), but these directions have often been taken, while those that Lynch pursues give us all a fresh perspective on Malory. In the strength of its argument and its close attention to the phenomenology of the *Morte*, Lynch's work

is among the best books on Malory. It joins Mark Lambert's work on style (*Malory: Style and Vision in Le Morte Darthur*, 1976) and Felicity Riddy's on the cultural milieu (*Sir Thomas Malory*, 1987) in eloquently addressing a central modality of the text: the rhetoric of battle.

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Discoveries of America: Personal Accounts of British Emigrants to North America during the Revolutionary Era. Edited by Barbara De Wolfe. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 1997. xix, 228 pages. \$54.95 US.

In the introductory essay to his multi-volume study, *The Peopling of British North America* (1986), Bernard Bailyn notes that "despite all the recent writing on early American history, our understanding of this great westward transfer of people is a blur, lacking in structure, scale, and detail. We know only in the vaguest way who the hundreds of thousands of individuals who settled in British North America were, where precisely they came from, why they came, and how they lived out their lives" (8). Barbara De Wolfe is a collaborator with Bailyn in this project, and her collection of personal accounts is culled from their vast researches, an example of how the details of a small corner of the greater canvas can be sketched in. *Discoveries of America* includes accounts by immigrants to diverse regions ranging down the coast from Nova Scotia to Georgia, but in an attempt to build up a detailed sense of how emigration was initiated, organized, and realized, De Wolfe restricts the region of origin to Scotland, and she focuses on letters and descriptive accounts by participants in what she calls emigrant networks, examples of "the countless informal kinship and friendship networks that spanned the Atlantic" (23).

The majority of the authors were tenant farmers of modest means whose intent is to cultivate their own land in America, but there are also letters from a merchant, a schoolteacher, an indentured servant, and a well-to-do young woman coming to join her brother. Most of the letters were not intended for publication, were written to family members or friends, and as private documents they offer us a glimpse of how individuals conceived of their lives in relation to what was still a very great step, even though emigration was commonplace in the regions of Scotland from which these writers originated. Some are to wives and girlfriends intended to follow the male writer; others are to family members who will probably not be seen again in the flesh, as Alexander Thomson opines to his addressee: "I sincerely thank you for your last kind letter ...; I read it over with pleasure, and I thought I was conversing with you, as I used to do I do not know if ever I shall see you again ..." (121). The literacy of these emigrants is responsible for more than just the fact that we are still privy to their thoughts. It is also a crucial

factor in their ability to conceive and execute such a plan as removing themselves and their families across the Atlantic. Accounts of particular experiences and ambitions criss-crossed the ocean as individuals imagined futures other than what were conceivable in their Scottish homes. De Wolfe's volume offers a look into a world view that bridged an ocean with pen and ink.

This volume will surely be of interest to historians of the Americas, but I think, too, that any reader with an interest in how particular persons undertook emigration, and in how they felt about it once they arrived, will find this an engaging book.

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The Contribution of Presbyterianism to the Maritime Provinces of Canada. Edited by Charles H.H. Scobie and G.A. Rawlyk. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 1997. xviii, 267 pages. \$49.95.

This volume contains a number of papers presented to a conference on Presbyterianism in the Atlantic provinces held at Mount Allison University in November, 1994. The theme of the conference is an important one. It is easy to forget today, when Presbyterians comprise a tiny fraction of the population of the region (3.5% in Nova Scotia, 1.4% in New Brunswick and 8.6% in Prince Edward Island according to the 1991 census), how significant they were before 1925, when two-thirds of them joined with the Methodists and Congregationalists to form the United Church of Canada. In 1871, for example, according to the census of that year, 25.5% of Nova Scotia's population of 387,800 defined themselves as Presbyterians. Their commitment to self-discipline, study, frugality, and to public debate has done much to shape the political and social tenor of the Maritime provinces, although that influence is a receding memory in the post-Christian world of the 1990s.

The title of the volume is somewhat misleading. It should really be called "Aspects of the Contribution of Presbyterianism to the Maritime Provinces of Canada," as it consists of thirteen essays by different writers, for the most part on specialized topics. However, the excellent Introduction by Charles H.H. Scobie and the late George Rawlyk does place the work of the various authors in the larger context of the history of Presbyterianism in both Scotland and the Maritimes. Scobie and Rawlyk make clear in a short space the confusing story of the splits or "secessions" in the Church of Scotland that had an important impact on the development of the denomination in North America, even though, ironically enough, the most fundamental issue at stake, the power of civil authorities to appoint ministers, was relevant only to Scotland.

Scobie and Rawlyk's Introduction sets the stage for a wide-ranging essay by William Klempa on "Scottish Presbyterianism Transplanted to the Canadian Wilderness," which examines the connection between religious and

cultural life in Scotland and the Maritimes. He gives the reader a succinct introduction to the history of Scottish Presbyterianism from the time of John Knox, explaining the nature of ecclesiastical government introduced by the Scottish "kirk" and its role in reforming morals; this task it pursued so assiduously that, according to H.T. Buckle, "the Inquisition has only been seen twice in its glory, once in Spain and once in Scotland." Klempa discusses the various cross-currents that shaped the Scottish Presbyterian tradition, particularly conflicts between Church and State and the struggle within the Church itself over questions of civil authority. Not surprisingly, those who stood for ecclesiastical independence tended to be more radical politically than their moderate opponents; it was this tradition that dominated Presbyterianism in the Maritimes, as its earliest missionaries, such as James McGregor, came predominantly from the "secessionist" wing of the Church. Klempa agrees with those scholars who have argued that the Scottish Enlightenment developed at least to some degree out of the Calvinist tradition, and through the work of Thomas McCulloch and others its ideals permeated Scottish immigrant communities in the Maritimes.

The theme of the Presbyterian contribution to education is taken up by Paul Bogaard in an essay entitled "The Presbyterian Contribution to Higher Education: Teaching Science in Maritime Universities." Rather than reviewing the achievements of such figures as McCulloch and his pupil William Dawson, Bogaard attempts to answer the question as to whether their approach to science can be seen to be distinctly "Presbyterian." Bogaard analyses the thesis advanced by Michael Gauvreau in *The Evangelical Century: College and Creed in English Canada from the Great Revival to the Great Depression* that the adherents of evangelical creeds such as Presbyterianism and Methodism approached science from an inductive and practical or "Baconian" viewpoint; according to Gauvreau, evangelicals emphasized the study of "natural history" as opposed to the more theoretical "natural philosophy" of Newton. Bogaard concludes, after examining the activities of McCulloch, and the curricula of Pictou Academy and other Maritime institutions of higher education, that no correlation between "Baconianism" and scientific study at so-called "evangelical" institutions is possible, and that the Newtonian tradition dominated science teaching at all Maritime universities.

If Bogaard is unable to discover a distinctive Presbyterian approach to science teaching, B. Anne Wood argues in her essay, "Schooling/Credentials for Professional Advancement: A Case Study of Pictou Presbyterians," that through the influence of McCulloch and his pupils the strong emphasis placed at Pictou Academy upon examinations leading to an academic or professional qualification spread from that source to the province as a whole. The supremacy of this tradition of testing and evaluation meant that the Nova Scotian school system became rigid and meritocratic, with a heavy reliance upon drill and examinations, placing a premium upon skills rather than less quantifiable forms of knowledge.

One of the best essays in this collection is that by Laurie Stanley-Blackwell on the tradition of open air communions in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Cape Breton. Stanley-Blackwell reveals a world that has disappeared, one of religious observance expressing the whole life of the community. Another interesting piece, by John S. Moir, explores the contribution made by eminent Nova Scotian Presbyterians such as George Monro Grant and Robert Falconer, men who were strong proponents of the union of the Presbyterian churches in 1875, to the developing vision of a Canadian nation in the late nineteenth century. Essays of more limited scope are offered by Gwendolyn Davies on "Thomas McCulloch's Fictional Celebration of the Reverend James McGregor," Barry Cahill on a polemic against slavery written by McGregor in 1788, and Allan Dunlop on McGregor's biographer, the nineteenth-century journalist and clergyman George Patterson.

The collection is rounded off with two essays on Presbyterian missions. The first, by Stewart D. Gill, outlines the career of John Geddie, a Victorian missionary to the New Hebrides who attempted to prevent the exploitation of the natives by traders and seems to have been less heavy-handed in his attitude to indigenous culture and religion than many of his contemporaries. Geoffrey Johnston's contribution provides an overview of the various mission fields served by Maritime Presbyterians, and a profile of the missionaries.

The essays in this volume are written to a high standard, and it is both attractively produced and well edited. It will not only be useful to specialists, but can be read with profit by those with little knowledge of Presbyterianism or the Maritime religious tradition. All those involved in the enterprise are to be commended for helping to illuminate a subject of major importance to the history of this region.

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The Artist in the Modern World: The Conflict Between the Market and Self-Expression. By Oskar Bätschmann. Translated by Eileen Martin. Cologne: DuMont Buchverlag, 1997. 336 pages, illustrated. \$42.00 US.

"*Ausstellungskünstler*" ("Exhibition Artists"), the title of the German edition, conveys a more focused sense of the author's interests than the English title. Bätschmann introduces the book by observing that during the second half of the eighteenth century, "the exhibition artist became established as the new main type, replacing both the court artist and the artist who maintained a commercial workshop or studio, accepting commissions from various patrons or painting for the market. The change only became possible when exhibitions were institutionalized and the public emerged as the new recipient for works of art and the new power in the art world" (9).

Although he does not employ the phrase 'celebrity culture,' Oskar Bätschmann provides in this book a fascinating history of the phenomenon as it has affected the production and presentation of visual art. In 1771, for example, well before the advent of cinema, an enterprising American such as Benjamin West could, with the public exhibition of his painting *The Death of General Wolfe*, acquire the status of a cinematic auteur. West's deployment of pictorial narrative, epic scale and illusionistic rendering, coupled with his understanding of the importance of presentation and distribution, launched the "exhibition piece" and the "*exposition payante*" as new vehicles of public entertainment and, therefore, of artistic renown. In the 1840s, building on the foundation laid by West, the French painter Gustave Courbet deliberately provoked scandals around the exhibitions of his images, conducting himself publicly with the flamboyance of a rock star. For Andy Warhol, the fact of fame constituted the principal content and ironic justification of his production. In the case of the self-styled revolutionary Joseph Beuys, according to Bätschmann, the spectacular performance of his work in the art market must be seen as post-ironic, evidence of the endless ability of the art world to provoke, co-opt and absorb the oppositional gesture.

Rock star, movie star, art star: Bätschmann's tracing of the history of exhibition-oriented artmaking suggests that the currency of these figures of fame began in Enlightenment Europe, with the dissociation of art from daily life and the consequent idealization of the liberated, self-realizing individual in the myth of the artistic genius. This figure, as embodied in the career strategies of professional visual artists since about 1750, is the subject of Bätschmann's chronicle.

I use the term 'chronicle' advisedly, because the wealth of primary documentation and bibliographic citation offered by this book is seldom balanced by useful analysis. The dearth of critical insight is exacerbated by a sloppy translation that renders Conceptual Art as "Concept Art," aboriginal or indigenous as "original," and Nietzsche's *The Gay Science* as "The Joyful Wisdom." One might overlook such *verbal* infelicities were it not for the fact that Bätschmann, who teaches art history at the University of Berne, makes imprecise use of *concepts* such as "modern," "the public" and "the artist," generally treating as natural that which has been shown, in feminist and post-structuralist thought, to be an effect of capitalist ideology. By titling the English edition "The Conflict Between the Market and Self-Expression," and proceeding as if these opposed concepts were not ideologically interdependent, the author misses an opportunity to consider the material conditions under which the art world functions as an institution. Thus, while he is obviously aware that it takes more than talent to succeed as an artist, Bätschmann's limited acquaintance with the requisite theoretical resources leaves him mystified by the continued alienation of art and artists from what Peter Bürger has called "the praxis of life in bourgeois society."

Opera in History: From Monteverdi to Cage. By Herbert Lindenberger. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1998. 364 pages. \$49.50 US.

In the prelude to his book, Mr. Lindenberger takes a stab at explaining its rather confusing title. This is definitely not a history of opera from one of its earliest practitioners to one of its most recent. Instead, the author has chosen eight periods between 1600 and the present, and written about artists central to each. He has a predilection for parallels. Sometimes this works (Weill/Schoenberg), and sometimes it doesn't (Rossini/P.B. Shelley).

In chapter one, "Monteverdi, Caravaggio, Donne: Modernity and Early Baroque," we learn a lot more about Caravaggio and Donne than we do about Monteverdi. In the chapter on Handel we are treated to a bizarre and unconvincing parallel between Handel's *Giulio Cesare* and Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra*. Those who respond to the mindless coloratura jiggling of Rossini's operas won't learn much about their hero in "Rossini, Shelley, and Italy in 1819," and they are almost certain to be confused and indifferent to the virtual lack of connection between the composer and poet.

Mr. Lindenberger seems defeated (not surprisingly) by the ramshackle dramaturgy of Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelungen*, but things begin to improve as we near our own era. Chapter six, "Opera/Orientalism/Otherness," is convincing in its treatment of such exotic ladies as Carmen, Aida, Lakmé and Butterfly. Also in this chapter, we are grateful for his sensitive and sympathetic discussion of Bizet's delightful one-act opera-comique, *Djamileh*, although he misses the important point that the "enchanting musical orientalism dominating Bizet's Opera" is completely abandoned for the work's climactic love duet.

The longest and most successful segment of the book is called "*Moses und Aron, Mabagonny, and Germany in 1930: Seventeen Entries.*" Here the author uses subheadings, lists, genealogies and chronological tables to tell the tale of two problematic twentieth-century masterpieces. Schoenberg felt that his work was setting the foundation for a method of composing which would dominate music for at least a century, when it actually proved, like Debussy's *Pelleas*, to be a great opera without progeny. As for Kurt Weill's *Mabagonny*, the book by Berthold Brecht has rendered the piece almost irrelevant.

The words 'intellectual' and 'high art,' scattered throughout the book, are grating. Those who work in the world of opera rarely have occasion to use them. One remembers that Maria Callas's favourite reading material was *Reader's Digest*, with an occasional movie magazine thrown in to lighten the intellectual load.

The book's focus is more literary than musical. There are no musical quotes, and the author never attempts an explanation of the power of music to move the listener. There is a lumpy stab at humor in the "Finale," in which Mr. Lindenberger divides opera lovers into five categories, all of which he finds equally unattractive. It makes for a rather grumpy final impression.

This is a serious, not to say dull, book of a certain erudition. The problem is that it's not much fun. Opera aficionados are not likely to read anything here they don't already know, and the average opera fan is likely to be annoyed that his favourite repertoire has been skimmed over or ignored completely.

Opera is fun and exciting. Books on opera should be fun and exciting too.

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