hoisted up the mast to view the carnage caused by escaping lions on a Moorish ship. From there they are swung down into the enemy ship to join in the mayhem (5.385–496). Columbus tumbles into the sea grappling with the Moorish admiral, Anthaeus, they surface, Columbus stabs, the sea becomes bloody, the Moor slides from view; the sea swallows the Moor with more than its usual greed, a great corpse for stuffing whales (5.521–48). In the same battle, a crisis for a host of Spanish Amazons, subjected to a barrage of poisonous snakes, ends when one of the snakes, on striking Philandria, recognizes a fellow African who has defected to Spain, lovingly licks the limbs of its countrywoman, embraces her, and kisses both her eyes with its double forked tongue (5.759–70). Auria, the Indian princess, destined to become Mrs America when Vespucci arrives in the Indies, and the icon for the new continent, but for the moment exposed as sacrifice to the sea monster of ancient pagan religion, has the mannerisms of the heroine from a silent movie as she gazes on the new Perseus, Columbus:

> cui dicere muta videtur
> 'Sum tua, crine tuo sim non indigna reponi'. (7.478–9)

The psychology of the poem is engaging. Ferdinand, son of Columbus, is hauled from a cannibal mantrap, a cave of poisonous vapours, by Vasilinda, a black and beautiful cannibal princess, and her band of Amazons (10.544–612). Ferdinand, desperate to kill Alvarus, the imagined killer of his father, says that he will be glad to be roasted on the fire, cut up into pieces, and served on their dishes if only she will help him beforehand to taste the joys of longed-for revenge (10.755–8). She had earlier revived him with a cup of foaming hot chocolate ('a cocolatis pulvere firmior', 10.713), cooked in her portable pot ('vase'), leading to one of the many magical moments in this poem:

> accipit ille
> spumantem pateram, quam vix admoverat ori,
> delinitus oderiferi dulcedine roris,
> non cito deglutit, sed sorbillare perita
> quod sapit, in longum gustus patientia differt,
> gaudeat utque magis, piger est ad gaudia sensus. (10.705–10)

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CLASSICAL HEROINES IN OPERA

MARIANNE MCDONALD: *Sing Sorrow: Classics, History, and Heroines in Opera*. Pp. ix + 344, pls. Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 2001. Cased. ISBN: 0-313-31567-1.

This is an enthusiastic study of eight operas on classical themes, in which the female rôle is the dominant issue. An encouraging subtext of the lively analyses is that classical myth and history continue to this day to be 'good to sing': the twentieth century saw almost as many operas on classical themes as any previous one. But M. focuses upon the heroines and, as she states in her prelude, aims to strike a balance. Earlier studies looked at women as vehicles of suffering (usually at the hands of men), whereas she aims to consider as well those who triumph: Monteverdi's Penelope, Mozart's Ilia, Strauss's Elektra, and Theodorakis's Medea. M. is surely

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right to express personal regret on p. 6 for not dealing with Gluck (those of us lucky enough to have been at Glyndebourne's recent *Iphigénie en Aulide* will appreciate the gap). I feel too that Offenbach's Helen deserved attention; a more subversive view of women's position in contemporary society could hardly be imagined.

M.'s breathless prose exacts a considerable price from the reader; it often left me in a fog of unfollowed-up hints, allusions, and references. The most baffling of the allusions were to the Virgin Mary and/or the Roman Catholic Mass, which, on M.'s analysis, figure in Monteverdi (p. 35), Strauss (p. 118), and Stravinsky (p. 152). Argument is sacrificed to a sort of telegraphic list of propositions (M. is ferociously well read). Here is an example from p. 128:

> Clément and McClary might say that to eliminate a female heroine in this way is hardly the politically correct thing to do. They juxtapose Elektra with Tosca, Mélisande, and the heroine of *Erwartung* singing her mad chromatics. Others simply see Elektra as neurotic. I agree with Abbate who sees Elektra as more than this; she is a heroine triumphant in her song.

The last two sentences are footnoted, and the notes provide not only extended quotations, but, in the second of them, two further substantial references. My feeling is that all of this should have been gathered together into a more coherently argued paragraph (from which a copy editor [what ever became of them?] might have deleted the redundant 'female' before 'heroine').

M. provides a list of operas based on classical myth or history on pp. 243–338. I question the presence in it of Wagner's *Rienzi*, and also wonder why, since the Ezios of many composers are included, Verdi's *Attila* is omitted from it (this opera, by the way, celebrates one of his feistiest heroines, the eye-rolling Odabella). Useful as the list is in principle, it is laid out by composers, who appear in chronological order of date of birth. If, however, you want to track down versions of, say, the tale of Ariadne, you have to trawl through the list yourself, there being no thematic catalogue.

I might mention in concluding, for those interested in Strauss's *Elektra*, that Simon Goldhill has a fascinating chapter on the early reception of this opera in his new book, *Who Needs Greek?* (Cambridge, 2002).

King's College London ROLAND MAYER

AN EAST GERMAN CASSANDRA

K. Glau: *Christa Wolf's 'Kassandra' und Aischylos' 'Orestie': Zur Rezeption der griechischen Tragödie in der deutschen Literatur der Gegenwart*. Pp. 398. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1996. DM 98/Sw. frs. 89/öS 715. ISBN: 3-8253-0407-8.

This book, a modified version of the author's Ph.D. dissertation, argues that a comparative study of C. Wolf's *Kassandra* and Aeschylus' *Oresteia* can enhance our understanding not only of Wolf's *Erzählung* but also of Aeschylus' trilogy. G. suggests that Wolf and Aeschylus both conceptualize history as *Aufklärung*, a movement away from archaic myth and its matriarchal structures towards the *logos*-centred world of patriarchal society. Whereas Wolf uses the *Oresteia* myth to denounce this process as violent and corrupting, Aeschylus focuses on its inherent self-contradictions. The book divides into five chapters. After a brief introduction (pp. 11–15), Chapter 2 looks at recent developments in reception studies (pp. 16–38).

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