

Book Reviews

Scandinavian Aesthetics Today

Jennette Emt & Goran Hermeren (cd) : *Understanding the Arts : Contemporary Scandinavian Aesthetics*, Lund University Press, 1992, 288 pp.

Ossi Naukkarinen & Olli Immonen (cd) : *Art and Beyond : Finnish Approach to Aesthetics*, International Institute of Applied Aesthetics, Lahti and The Finnish Society of Aesthetics, 1995, 261 pp.

Lars-Olof Ahlberg & Tommie Zaine (cd): *Aesthetic Matters : Essays presented to Goran Sorbom on his 60th birthday*, Uppsala, Uppsala University, 1994, 185 pp.

Subg-Bong Park : *An Aesthetics of the Popular Arts*, Uppsala University, 1993, 188 pp.

One of the most interesting events in the recent history of aesthetics is the growth of this discipline in Scandinavian countries. Although aesthetic thinking in Scandinavia is more than a century old, it is only during the last two decades that the work of its philosophers and aestheticians has made its mark in the international field. Exchange of ideas among scholars in national and international conferences and publication of journals on aesthetics have facilitated debate and discussion on aesthetic matters. The diversities of the concerns of the Scandinavian scholars and the variety of their approaches to theoretical as well as practical aesthetics are well represented in the four publications in review here.

Understanding the Arts is a collection of fifteen papers written in English by scholars from Sweden, Finland and Norway and published for the first time here. The papers differ widely in scope, method and form ; different kinds of problems are discussed by the scholars from different theoretical and philosophical points of view; however, the focus is on literary aesthetics as is evidenced by the large number of papers in this field. The editors are to be congratulated for having maintained a strict standard and quality of the papers as well as their

readability, not only for the experts but for the general reader also. The four sections into which the papers have been grouped are : (a) Art and the Aesthetic; (b) Criticism and Interpretation; (c) Fiction and Metaphor; (d) Art and Theory, each section containing four papers except the third.

In his paper "On the Aesthetic", Wetterstrom sets out to define 'the aesthetic' as a concept with autonomous properties and for that purpose reviews the theories of Beardsley, Dickie, Stolnitz and Mc Gregor and finally proposes a value - dependent aesthetic based on aesthetic object, properties and experiences. In contrast, Mathlein and Tannsjö argue for what they christen as "aesthetic nihilism" in so far as the diversity of people's judgments on art proves that "there are no intrinsic aesthetic values". Two of the papers are devoted to an examination of the concept of beauty: Persson lucidly presents his supervenience theory of sensational beauty as an objective quality and Pitkanen presents a persuasive critique of Kant's theory of art and diagnoses the source of its unsatisfactoriness as the philosopher's concept of beauty.

Prof. Olsen examines the assumptions and procedure of theoretical criticism derived from structuralism and post-structuralism in contrast to the traditional criticism which he calls atheoretical. He shows how this new theoretical concept of criticism is problematic as a critical instrument in so far as it has extended the object of criticism to all texts, literary or otherwise and has insisted that all texts are internally contradictory and can be interpreted to have no meaning. In an interesting paper, Osterberg makes a fresh foray into that much-discussed problem of intention and argues that, fundamentally, the controversy between intentionalists and anti-intentionalists is a normative one, based on different views regarding the proper function of literature, neither view being logically refutable. Petterson speculates about the possibility of constructing a theory of interpretation based on the concept of literary communication and the critic's or scholar's aims of interpretation.

In a masterly paper, "Expression, Meaning and Non-verbal communication", Goran Hermerén argues that the prevalent models of communication can not be applied to contemporary art in an illuminating way. He, therefore, distinguishes between "nonverbal forms of expression" and "non-verbal

communication" and observes that it is the former and not the latter that can be fruitfully applied to visual art. Jeanette Emt's closely argued, perceptive paper, "On the Nature of Fictional Entities", has the thesis that fictional entities are ontologically abstract entities which exemplify the properties ascribed to them by the fictional works in which they occur as well as 'critical' properties outside the internal context of the fictional work provided by such contexts as of the history of their creation and reception. She also distinguishes her abstract entity of fictional characters as well as Wolterstorff's view of fictional entities as eternal kinds.

Pettersson rightly shows that the features of literary realism emanate from the concept of a shared world; those aspects of our existence which can either be perceived by others or can be adequately conveyed to others by verbal means. Brinck's paper on metaphor argues that metaphor combines terms from different semantic fields which normally are not related and that such statements of similarity are open-ended being either objective or subjective. Goran Sorbom approaches the theory of imitation in an original way arguing that Aristotle's theory is a theory of representation and not of art as such. He details out exhaustively the stages through which the original theory came to be conceived as an art theory although art theories originated only from 18th century onwards. Nordstam examines the creative process and the role of convention in it with reference to Mondrian's paintings and Ahlberg studies aspects of post-modernism in art and philosophy. All in all, the papers in the collection evince the originality, perceptiveness and scholarship that are distinctive of Scandinavian aesthetics today.

The thirteen papers of *Art and Beyond* demonstrate a variety of approaches to aesthetics by the Finnish scholars. The collection opens with two detailed surveys; a historical outline of aesthetics as an academic discipline in Finland by Johan Wrede and an overview of the current state of Finnish aesthetics by Naukkarinen. Both the surveys are highly informative and tell us about the enthusiasm and interest in which aesthetics is embraced by scholars and others in Finland today. The section on Art has a paper on future architecture in which Bonsdroff interestingly argues about the two worlds of architecture, the real and the imagined, effecting a balance of nature and culture.

In his paper on "the Fictional in Literature", Haapala provides a detailed critique of Ingarden's theory of intentional objects and proposes that the fictional is an invitation to imagine fictional truths in a work about non-existent people, objects and the like. Rautala's theory of art for art education asserts that works of art are complicated, multidimensional, open entities that convey to us whole worlds of human life with their material gestalt and that there is no major structural difference among the media of different art. Saatekla examines the role of historical knowledge in understanding and evaluating art and reviews the theories of Anita Silvers, Terry Eagleton, Jonathan Culler and Arthur Danto. He suggests that the work of art has an identity in so far as it is part of a tradition and that art does not destroy its past but reappropriates it dynamically for the present.

The papers in the section, "Beyond", are concerned with practical applications of aesthetics and constitute the most interesting feature of this collection. Honkanen discusses everyday values of an aesthetic nature and Kinnunen argues that comedy and humour as such do not belong to aesthetics although calling something bad comedy or bad humour is an aesthetic value judgement. Varto speaks about the significance and influence of technology in the modern world and proposes a meeting of technology and aesthetics in applied aesthetics. Sepänmaa argues that all human acts can be examined in an aesthetic frame of reference, hence it is possible to work on Thomas Munro's concept of the 'practicalization' of aesthetics. It is in this context that he visualises the role of applied aesthetics even beyond the current practice of environmental aesthetics. The picture of Finnish aesthetics that emerges from the book is highly instructive to the non-Finnish readers and the editors deserve congratulation for their choice and presentation of this representative collection to the international readers.

Aesthetic Matters is not designed to be a collection of papers by Scandinavian authors only; it contains essays by scholars and writers from other countries as well. Thus, for example, Frances Berenson writes on imagination of which emotions and feelings are a necessary part and is characterized by the freedom it affords us to follow where our fancy takes us. Goran Hermerén's paper, "Music, Action and Language", rejects the thesis that music is language or even communication and insists that music has an intrinsic value which can not be

replaced by other forms or means of expression. Johannessen enquires into the role of metaphor in scientific understanding and particularly its cognitive function in his paper, "Metaphor and science". He presents a detailed critique of the theories of Black and Kuhn in this context and proposes that the metaphor's principal and subsidiary subjects are like 'examples' on the object level and their juxtaposition brings forth 'new' meaning. Olsen's paper, "The Role of Theory in Literary Studies", in this collection presents a closely - argued refutation of the claim of critical theory to be an independent discipline and shows that such theory has no role to play in literary studies.

In "Aesthetic Reactions", Sattela examines Wittgenstein's ideas about 'aesthetic reaction' in order to oppose "hermeneutic universallism" different versions of which are said to be fathered by Wittgenstein's lectures on aesthetics. Tommie Zaine offers a perceptive critique of Dickie's institutional theory of art from the perspective of literary art. A text becomes an art work only when it is judged to be so; but today there is such a diversity of opinion as to what constitutes the essential properties of art that no one properly could be singled out to reach a definition of literary art in terms of necessary and sufficient properties. Hence, it is the judges and the revisers who turn out to be the core personnel of the literary art world. Ahlberg shows that contemporary theories of art and culture derived from the Anglo-Saxon analytic tradition and the continental deconstructive oppose the essentialism and foundationalism of earlier theories inspired by the classical tradition. The critique of aesthetics which the current theories engender is diagnosed as a "negative essentialism" which can not bring about the end of aesthetics and philosophy of art.

An Aesthetics of the Popular Arts is Park's doctoral dissertation accepted by Uppsala University. Park's approach to his subject is not only original but is backed by wide - ranging scholarship. He develops a unified theory of the aesthetic by defining the aesthetic situation as a life-situation considered to be so from the outset. Such a view makes possible the integration of folk art, popular art and elite art and elite art into the broad field of art in general. Park thus sets out an analysis of the popular from the aesthetic point of view as elaborated by him and observes that entertainment is the primary function of the popular arts. He enumerates five elemental

quantities of the experience of the popular; the comic; the erotic; the sensational; the fantastic and the sentimental and observes that story-telling serves as the proper combination of these qualities. The subtlety of Park's analysis is matched by the lucidity of his presentation. One can safely predict that Park's contribution will remain a standard work in the field.

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Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*. Part III. Vol.4 of The New Cambridge History of India. Ed. Gordon Johnson, Cambridge : Cambridge UP, 1994. 244 pp. ISBN 0-521-39547-X.

The large body of modern research over the last half - century and prospectives on South-Asia's historical evolution justify the publication of *The New Cambridge History of India*, which in a way is an improvement on the original *Cambridge History of India* published between 1922 and 1937. *Ideologies of the Raj* is a part of this with new project comprising four points with several volumes under each. This is, in fact, the fourth volume under part -III entitled *The Indian Empire and the Beginnings of Modern Society*. An isolated volume in the series, the general editor guarantees, is never a handicap for the reader, as each one is self-contained dwelling on a separate theme.

This volume is a study of the complex structures of the British Raj of the manners in which the colonial members tried to legitimise the imperial project. It begins with the British search in the eighteenth century for ideas on the basis of which they could come to terms with their new status as an imperial people, a fact they were made aware of by the conquest of Ireland. The result, the author says, was the formulation of a suitable definition of a civilized people, that included the volumes of the right to property and the rule of law. These attempts to construct the principles of organization of a proper society were intimately connected with an evolving British national identity that integrated the English, Scots and Welsh into a single community. Subsequently British nationalism came to be associated with the growth of empire as British identity was defined in relation to the outer world. The values of

enlightenment were used to proclaim the superiority of Britain as a modern and civilized nation as against the barbarous East. The British construction of an image of the self with the help of the ideas of enlightenment such as rationalism and secularism was dependent on an idea of the 'other' supplied by the non-European world which was thus emptied of all content. The East, an abode of the anti-Christ and an unknown quantity was paradoxically transformed into a part of the known world, as the devil too was an integral part of the medieval world order, a philosophy the Brition found useful for their purpose. This kind of a series of polarities such as masculinity and femininity, honesty and deceit and so on, that went into the shaping of the ideology of the Raj.

To reinforce their arguments the British brought in the idea of oriental despotism linking it with the tropical climate which, according to Alexander Dow, caused a stupor unbeatable by the labour needed for freedom. Romantic ideas, that support a rather personal style of governance, seeped into India further dispelling the possibility of disappearance, in the wake of the despotism as a fitting mode of administration for India. Thus the British emphasized the laziness and the lack of growth of the Indians. The exaggerated importance they attached to the original Indian texts vis-a-vis India's historical experience was meant to underline the timelessness of the Indian society, implied also in James's conception of Hindu law. The British managed to mobilize support for their endeavour from the native populace and culture. The idea of decline in Indian cosmology, important grist to the ideology mill of the Raj, together with the scholarly activities of the Brahmin pandits, who reluctantly participated in the British interpretation of vernacular materials, are instances of native collaboration in the preparation of an important discourse.

Liberalism with its assumptions of European or rather British cultural superiority was pressed into service to devalue the non-European cultures. It was accompanied by the British attempt to effect a liberal transformation of India shifting the locale of cultural value from beauty and dogm to language, experience and hstory. But the events of 1857 and their corollary, the abolition of the East-India comany created space for an alternative vision of empire. Britain's unquestioned authority over India in the late nineteenth century encouraged

authoritarian liberalism which in collaboration with the theories of scientific racism reconstructed its imperial ideology. The theory of 'similarity' advanced by John Stuart Mill, who represented a more human face of British liberalism made way for that of India's persisting difference. On the other hand the imperialists were confronted with an additional problem of justifying their adventures overseas to the British populace knowing fully well that the imperial project commanded limited support among them. All this gave rise to a new vision of India as the 'jewel in the crown' of the British queen, the empress of India, linking British Patriotism with the empire. The idea of conquest was downplayed and positive values were attributed to imperialism, so that it could be a matter of pride for the British citizen.

Back in the colony the ideology of difference drew upon the ideas of the debilitating impact of the tropical climate and the racial degeneration of the Aryans through an intermingling with the Turanians or the Dravidians, which arrested the growth of the Indian civilization and froze it at a medieval, even a feudal stage, thus erasing the significance of the common origin of the Indians and the British and thoroughly emasculating the language of 'similarity'. In this context Medievalism was used to sustain the Raj by invoking the ideas of benevolent paternalism. But in turn, it landed the British in a curious situation where they were faced with opposite tasks of trying to preserve the very thing they were out to abolish.

Further, the 'difference' was conceptualized in terms of gender. India was pronounced as a land of sexuality, disease and degradation, the body of the Indian women being the point of convergence of all these evils. The Indian male was said to have lost his manliness, courage and determination owing to a conspiracy of the climate. Punjabi manliness was acknowledged but was never allowed to affect this theory.

Metcalf's claims of objectivity begin to look shallow when he examines the situation of the white woman in British India. Like Sara Suleri he finds the memsahib in an unenviable position as she is caught between masculine aggression and feminine grace in her identification with both British men and Indian women. Suleri's sympathy with the white woman originates in the latter's 'disadvantage' in relation to the 'freedom' of the Indian courtesan. Of course, they differ on

their approach to the native's relationship with the British household. For Suleri the native is a threat to the domestic peace of the British whereas in Metcalf he is desexualized and cut to size by a benevolent maternalism. There is another example of the authorial bias against the colonial subject. According to Metcalf, Gandhi's strategy of appropriating feminine virtues, attributed to India by the Raj, for the freedom struggle was borrowed from the ideas of white women, particularly Annie Besant and Madame Blavatsky. This could mean a white man's refusal to believe in the capacity of the colonized for original thinking. Furthermore, Metcalf's analysis of the Indian political scenario marks a significant difference from that of Ashis Nandy when the former sees Gandhi's strategies reinforcing the gendered assumptions of the Raj instead of inverting them. This seems to be the wishful thinking of an imperialist not willing to see the emergence of an opposite ideology. Lastly, to think, as the author does, that the British efforts to classify and order the Indian society was not entirely prompted by political intentions is to invite controversy best avoided by an historian.

The subsequent process of ordering the Indian difference, the author observes, involved the perception of the caste system as a symbol of India's degradation, and the creation of a concept of separate Hindu and Muslim communities. Even Indian architectures were subjected to a communal taxonomy, the zenith of Indian not being attributed to the foreign invasions. But all British efforts to reduce India to perfectly ordered segments could not overshadow the contradictions. The arrival of a universalistic medical theory, insisting on equal susceptibility of all bodies to disease, enhanced the uncase of the colonial ideology, which saw India as a place of dirt, disease and sudden death. It was rather a land of dis-ease, from which the British sought an immunity with the help of different forms of distance like the Bungalow, the Civil Lines and the Hill station. The last with its resonance of an idyllic England was a kind of British enclave in India. Offering them at once a protection from the challenges of a new India and keeping them out of the reach of the ills of industrial England. Not satisfied with this they started building constituencies in India in order to check an increasing sense of British vulnerability.

On the other hand, Indian claims of equality gathered momentum with the help of supportive actions from people like

Ripon, J. S. Mill, Hunter and Ilbert, and an Indian participation in the administration could no longer be postponed beyond the early years of the twentieth century. The nationalist upsurge was another and more dangerous thorn in the flesh of the Empire containable, the British thought, only by a communal rhetoric. So community based electorality came up serving as the first step towards the Pakistan movement. But neither these strategies of the imperialists nor the intensely passionate objections of Churchill to the hand over of power could stop the slow and steady progress towards independence. Once India achieved freedom the British lost no time to declare people like Dyer and Churchill exceptions in a long line of liberals, and portrayed the Indian independence as the ultimate fruition of the liberal spirit that characterized all British activities in India for more than a century.

Metcalf sees the same old structures of the Raj operating beneath the liberal rhetorics of the leaders of free India. Communal feelings, he says, are exploited with equal vigour for partisan ends, and the communal constructions of the Raj are not only confined now to the lounges of Delhi but have percolated into the streets and lanes of the provincial towns. He seems to believe that Britain is destined to be always at the head of an empire when he regards the large scale Asian immigration to Britain in the post-colonial period as an example of the Empire coming to Britain's doorstep after she had abandoned it overseas. He finds Britain using the same ideology formulated during the Raj along with its contradictions while trying to tackle multiculturalism in the 1990s.

The selection of illustrations in this volume suggests an intention to highlight the power and majesty, the benevolence and the reforming zeal of the British, and to suppress the seamier side of the Raj. In spite of the lapses it is a commendable work and a valuable reading for the students of South-Asian Studies.

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The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Cambridge University press, Cambridge : Volume I, *Classical Criticism* (Ed. George A. Kennedy), 1989, pp. 378 ; Volume VIII, *From*

Rene Wellek, the most celebrated historian of criticism in our time, observed that "an evolutionary history of criticism must fail" and therefore all the eight volumes of his *A History of Modern Criticism : 1750-1950* are anthologies of critical essays on individual critics rather than any historical account of different critical phases. It does not mean that he was never historical in his critical writings, particularly when he surprises his readers by his rigorous pursuit of the evolution of critical concepts such as Classicism, Romanticism, Realism and Symbolism. Wellek, as against Croce and Auerbach, believes that criticism is a unified subject "because of the multitude of possible problems and crossings of problems, the extreme diversity of its presuppositions, aims and accents", and is content to understand criticism as "any discourse on literature." When W.P.Ker compares the literary historian with a museum guide who points and comments on the pictures, Croce treats the works of art as unique, individual, immediately present without any essential continuity and Arthur Lovejoy adopts the method of the "history of ideas" or tracing of single concepts or "unit ideas". On the other hand, Saintsbury's is an anti-theoretical, impressionistic history of literary taste" and Atkins' method is dull summarising of doctrines without a chronological analysis of specific texts - as Crane comments, a "history without prior commitments as to what criticism is or ought to be" - a history "without a thesis". Wellek, however, does not agree with any one of them. For him, the history of criticism "cannot be simply a discussion of timeless texts and must not be reduced to a branch of general or cultural history". As a historian of criticism, his function has been to select texts and authors according to his own point of view, sense of direction, feeling for the future, ideal and criteria and elucidate the great diversity of views without giving up his own perspective. For Wellek, history of criticism is neither "argumentative" nor "polemical". Instead it is "doxographical"- elucidatory or expository.

It seem *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism* accepts Wellek's views on history of criticism, and in accepting the elucidatory function of this history, accepting selection of authors, texts and schools of the periods in question according to

the historian's own point of view, the series finds no harm in rejecting the concept of a single-handed history running from Saintsbury to Welck through Atkins, Weinberg and others. Each volume is *not written* by a single author, but *edited by one* or more scholars who select topics and their authors as appropriate for the volume concerned. The first volume in its eleven chapters covers the Grecco-Roman tradition ranging from the pre-Socratic periods to the late Latin secular criticism with contributions by as many as seven scholars including the editor himself : G. Nagy, G. R. F. Ferrari, S. Halliwell, E. Fantham, D. Innes and D. A. Russell. The volume has an exhaustive bibliography of both the primary and secondary sources counting the works in even the non-English European languages published till date.

Out of several great merits of the volume one significant one is that it does not view the past as the part of a dead history: the past appears very much alive when it is read through a warm awareness of the present - "Readers who come to this volume from study of modern theory may be interested in the extent to which classical criticism anticipated features of such twentieth-century developments as semiotics, hermeneutics, deconstruction, psychoanalysis and reader-response criticism" (p. XI). But in no way the writers have ignored the genuine classical spirit, its validity in its proper historical context while viewing it through the lens of contemporary developments in critical taste. One example of the objectivity in investigation might be gathered from Kennedy's own chapter on Language and meaning in Archaic and classical Greece where he explores all the possible semantic prospectives of the Greek word *logos* which has become so prominent in our time. Similarly Halliwell's chapter on Aristotle's poetics is much more than any dull summarisation (in Crane's comment on Atkins) of the critic he deals with. Both the information and interpretation the chapter provides are fresh additions to Aristotelian criticism.

The volume VIII of the series is a remarkable achievement both for the vision of the editor and for the authors who have been chosen so judiciously by the editor to contribute to the volume. The most significant aspect of the volume is that the critics who have been the constituent parts of the particular schools of contemporary criticism have written chapters on their own doctrines : Peter Steiner writing on Russian Formalism,

Lubomir Dolzel on Prague Structuralism and Richard Rorty on Deconstruction ! it is as it were, Aristotle writing on the Greek Tragedy or Horace writing on Augustan criticism for the first volume of this series ! It is a matter of great sorrow that Professor Selden is not alive to see his ventures bearing fruits so opulently.

The volume covers all the principal topics of contemporary criticism in its thirteen chapters : Formalism, Structuralism, Semiotics, Narratology, Deconstruction, Psychoanalytic and Marxist theories, Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, Reception theory, Speech act theory and Reader-oriented theories and the reader is undoubtedly inspired to read the authorities writing on their schools - among the others already mentioned Gerald Prince writes on narratology, Robert Holub on reception theory and Annette Lavers on Roland Barthes. The editor, in his introduction, clarifies the chronological complicacy that concerns the period he handles, i.e., the twentieth century : "... this volume returns to the period before the emergence of New Criticism, and, leaping over for the most part the 1940s and 1950s, proceeds to follow the later developments in structuralist criticism during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s."(p.3) The difficulty in dividing the history of twentieth century criticism into coherent groupings is partly due to the fact that in different European countries histories of criticism have not followed the same trajectories : although New Criticism and Russian Formalism emerged simultaneously, the latter outlasted the former, since it moved quickly towards the formulation of structuralism. Similarly, the editor clarifies the chronological crosscurrents among existentialism, phenomenology and deconstructionism.

Coming to the topics themselves - to the expositions or elucidations of the schools and concepts - a reader enjoys them individually without missing their identity as parts of a whole period connected with each other relevantly in a single chronological set-up. The volume is not just another book on contemporary criticism. It is a book which informs the reader what does criticism mean for a twentieth century man and how should a twentieth century man understand and enjoy criticism - a rare achievement in our intellectual pursuit.

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