

BOOK REVIEWS

GENERAL

MIEDER, WOLFGANG, Editor. *Proverbs and Their Lessons: Richard Chenevix Trench*. (Supplement Series of "Proverbium," Volume 13). Burlington: The University of Vermont, 2003. viii + 179 pages. Paper, n. p.; ISBN 0-9710223-4-8.

Proverbs and Their Lessons is a collection of six lectures given by the nineteenth-century British clergyman and philologist Richard Chenevix Trench. The first three chapters discuss the definition, characteristics, and distribution of proverbs; the last three chapters treat proverbial wisdom and its uses. In the appendix are lists of medieval Latin proverbs, "The Precepts of Ptah-hotep" (3440 BC), and "Proverbs of Alfred" (British, thirteenth century).

In the first chapter Trench calls attention to the "amusement, instruction, and insight" that proverbs have in addition to the usually recognized "wit, wisdom, and imagination" (1). This pointing toward instruction and insight becomes the major concern of the second half of the book. Thus the purpose of the book seems to be to convince readers that proverbs are pithy expressions of wisdom, passed on through great writers and popular approval from antiquity, that can well be used as aids in moral instruction. Rhyme, alliteration, and hyperbole are factors that help a proverb gain and maintain popularity.

Chapter Two discusses the existence of proverbs. Though many seem to be contemporary, they were known centuries ago. Some current forms are translations of classical sayings. Others are lines made famous by literature or sayings stemming from an important person or event that have been passed down and applied by later generations. In discussing these matters, Trench often provides an interesting contrast between the original meaning and what its application eventually came to be. In later chapters, based on these observations, he encourages readers to look for the more lofty teachings latent in long-accepted proverbs.

Chapter Three compares proverbs of various countries to discern the common humanity as well as what may have arisen out of circumstances peculiar to that age and nation. For instance, Trench argues that Greek and Roman proverbs are in general inferior to later ones in higher ideals, yet they possess their own merits. The Roman tend to be "business-like and practical;" many center on agriculture (50). Spanish is rich in proverbs, full of humor and chivalry, well aware of its own faults (52–53). Italian proverbs are focused on "personal interests" (54) and "glorification of revenge" (55), but also speak highly of friendship and honor (56–57). The Arabic proverbs collected in Egypt refer to strong overbearing rulers and their bad effects on the people. Some proverbs by their situation or wording give evidence of their country of origin, such as "Make hay while the sun shines" must be English and not from Southern climates where every day is fine (59–60).

Mieder's claim in the Introduction that Trench "warns against the dangers of looking for national traits in proverbs" (iii) is stated too explicitly. Trench does refer to what is held in common but he also says "I am convinced that we *may* learn from the proverbs current among a people, what is nearest and dearest to their hearts, the aspects under which they contemplate life, how honour and dishonour are distributed among them, what is of good, what of evil report is in their eyes, with very much more which it can never be unprofitable to know" (48).

In the next three chapters Trench comes into his own sphere as moral teacher. Chapter Four, “The Poetry, Wit, and Wisdom of Proverbs,” describes how the moral insight of the proverbs is enhanced/made attractive by clever and colorful expression. The stories behind the proverbs, a tactic introduced in Chapter Two, become more frequent and longer in the final two chapters, “The Morality of Proverbs” and “The Theology of Proverbs,” as Trench surges to his conclusion that proverbs, so full of good sense and teaching, should be used more in preaching and other public situations (136–37). Despite the existence of some coarse proverbs, Trench stresses that by far the larger number are capable of undergoing more intensive scrutiny to perceive deeper meanings. (“This method of looking in proverbs for an higher meaning than any which lies on their surface...” [130]. His suggestion here is like the several layers of interpretation that medieval scholars of the Bible pursued: the literal, the allegorical, the moral, and the anagogical.)

With its emphasis on the power of proverbs to instruct, *Proverbs and Their Lessons* becomes a companion to an earlier work in the supplement series: “*Children and Proverbs Speak the Truth*”: *Teaching Proverbial Truth to Fourth Graders*.

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VAN TONGEREN, MARK C. *Overtone Singing: Physics and Metaphysics of Harmonics in East and West*. The Harmonic Series No. 1. Amsterdam: Fusica, 2002. xxiv + 271 pages. Musical examples, maps, photos, line drawings, graphs, bibliography, index, notes to CD, 33-track CD. Paper €29.50, US\$34.95; ISBN 90-807163-2-4. Hardcover €42.50, US\$44.95; ISBN 90-807163-1-6.

Using overtone singing as both a music genre and a performance technique, Mark van Tongeren weaves a successful musical ethnography that pivots on sound to engage in a cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary study of music. Van Tongeren’s style of writing is jargon-free; technical terms are adequately explained through the clever use of margin space, which also contains references to CD tracks and lists additional sources. This book strategically intersperses ethnographic description with a personal field journal. Perhaps more importantly, the book brims with varying information drawn from van Tongeren’s experiences as both a researcher and a performer of overtone singing. In this way, van Tongeren takes his readers through the physics of overtones to the technicalities of sound production, from the musical cultures of the Tuvans and Sardinians to the use of overtones by contemporary European-American music practitioners.

Overtone Singing contains seven chapters organized into five parts. Part 1 outlines the physics of sound and the harmonic series, in which van Tongeren carefully explains the techniques of producing vocal overtones through detailed description and graphic representations, borrowing ideas from ethnomusicologists, such as Hugo Zemp and Trần Quang Hai; Track 15 on the accompanying CD features van Tongeren in a demonstration of the five elementary techniques described in Chapter 1 (18–23). Acknowledging that existing vocabulary used to describe the organization of multiple sounds (such as heterophony) reveals an underlying emphasis on audible sounds at the expense of minimizing the harmonic spectrum of a single sound, van Tongeren introduces the important concept of “paraphony.” Paraphony points toward a way of thinking about and describing sounds that takes into account both “the harmony and the melody that is potentially present in a tone or periodic sound, as well