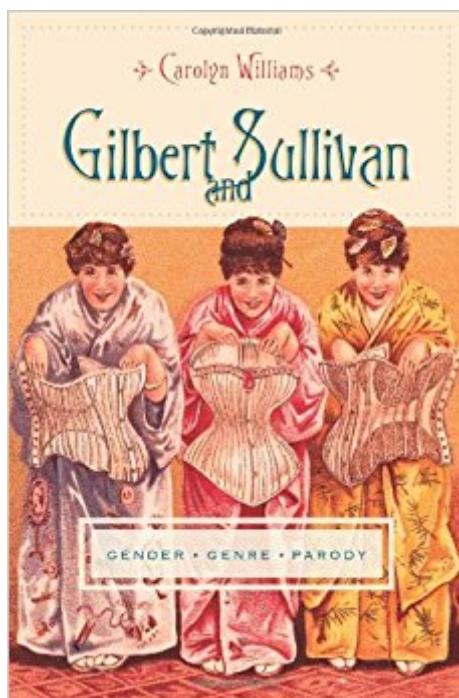


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Gilbert And Sullivan: Gender, Genre, Parody (Gender And Culture Series)



Synopsis

Long before the satirical comedy of *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*, the comic operas of W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan were the hottest send-ups of the day's political and cultural obsessions. Gilbert and Sullivan's productions always rose to the level of social commentary, despite being impertinent, absurd, or inane. Some viewers may take them straight, but what looks like sexism or stereotype was actually a clever strategy of critique. Parody was a powerful weapon in the culture wars of late-nineteenth-century England, and with defiantly in-your-face sophistication, Gilbert and Sullivan proved that popular culture can be intellectually as well as politically challenging. Carolyn Williams underscores Gilbert and Sullivan's creative and acute understanding of cultural formations. Her unique perspective shows how anxiety drives the troubled mind in the Lord Chancellor's "Nightmare Song" in *Iolanthe* and is vividly realized in the sexual and economic phrasing of the song's patter lyrics. The modern body appears automated and performative in the "Junction Song" in *Thespis*, anticipating Charlie Chaplin's factory worker in *Modern Times*. Williams also illuminates the use of magic in *The Sorcerer*, the parody of nautical melodrama in *H.M.S. Pinafore*, the ridicule of Victorian aesthetic and idyllic poetry in *Patience*, the autoethnography of *The Mikado*, the role of gender in *Trial by Jury*, and the theme of illegitimacy in *The Pirates of Penzance*. With her provocative reinterpretation of these artists and their work, Williams recasts our understanding of creativity in the late nineteenth century.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A superb examination of Gilbert and Sullivan's comic operas... Highly recommended. *Library Journal* (Library Journal) Rich, challenging, irritating, inspiring, provocative, just what one wants in a new G&S study, this is a worthwhile albeit tough read. (CHOICE) Williams substantive study is all the more praiseworthy because her biting insights into gender and sexuality, sharpened through the lens of contemporary critical theory, are tucked within what could pass as a much more staid study of Gilbert and Sullivan. (Josephine Lee *Nineteenth Century Gender Studies*) Unmodified rapture should best describe the scholarly response to this exciting contribution to a broad swath of disciplines... (Victorian Studies) this book will be an important reference point for future discussions of Gilbert and Sullivan, gender, and the Victorian stage. (Benjamin D. O'Dell *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*) [A] triumphant cultural history. (Joseph Bristow *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*) An outstanding pick... this is a recommendation for any college-level course in Gilbert and Sullivan, and for readers who would receive a fine reinterpretation of their works and impact. (Midwest Book Review)

Carolyn Williams highlights what ought to have been obvious all along about Gilbert and Sullivan's portrayal of gender: they're just kidding. Williams gives these wonderful works the reading they deserve. (Robyn Warhol-Down, Ohio State University) -- This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book was a revelation. Focusing on the three elements of the subtitle, Professor Williams devotes a chapter to each of the works in the G&S canon. She makes a persuasive case that Gilbert wrote each libretto as a parody of a particular theatrical genre that was popular at the time. She reviews the most salient examples of these genres to illustrate the aspects that Gilbert was parodying -- and makes Gilbert's work seem even more brilliant because we now understand it in the context of the times. That seems like enough for one book, but as it was written as part of the Gender and Culture series, Professor Williams takes on gender as well -- and makes that element far more interesting and integrated into her G&S deconstruction than the necessity for including it might indicate. In fact, show by show, she illustrates how Gilbert's treatment of women (and men) was either a reflection of, or more often, a reaction to, Victorian culture. Having just prepared a multimedia presentation on Gilbert & Sullivan, I can tell you this book was easily my most valuable resource of the many G&S books available.

Full disclosure: the author is a colleague in the field, whom I know & respect. But I had to write this review in reply to the negative customer review by Koko, who despairs that William's analysis of Gilbert & Sullivan's works is not as funny as the comic operas. This is to miss the point and the pleasure of this book! Williams's aim is to illuminate for us how parody works, e.g. that it is "a mode, not a genre"

Very helpful for unpacking the background and context which would have been apparent to a Victorian viewer of the operettas, but not to a contemporary viewer. In order to understand parody, one needs to be aware of that which is parodied. For instance, without knowledge of nautical and gothic melodrama, and how they were used previously in Victorian theatre and literature, Pinafore or Ruddigore will just look like a silly mess, rather than doing something quite specific and witty of which audiences at the time would be aware. As a previous reviewer mentioned, what one might today take for sexism towards elderly ladies, is usually a parody of drag roles in Burlesque. Again, if one views Mikado as a parody of Japan, rather than of English Japonism, one will entirely miss the point. One could go on, or one could simply recommend the book to anyone who is interested in understanding G&S better from a literary/historical perspective. What the book is not doing is giving a history or biography of G&S, or a musical analysis. If one is seeking these, one might look elsewhere.

as a birthday gift to my husband, fast and in time, love it . have a good experience. This is the first "larger product" in our kitchen collection. Thus far (one week), it is sharp, performs well for chopping and slicing, and has excellent balance and weight. Time will tell how it retains its edge and resharpen.

This study has everything concerning the canon of Gilbert and Sullivan. Everything, that is except the one key element -- a sense of humor on the part of the author. Totally misses the fun and greatness of the collaboration. An academic screed, molded to fit a supposed scholarly mold. Save the money; buy a CD.

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