altered or invented for dramatic effect. Helfgott did win an award for performing Rachmaninoff, for example, but his "breakdown" came later, in Australia.

Helfgott is not the first eccentric or even mentally ill musician to be widely acclaimed, Jennifer Judkins, of the University of California, Los Angeles, and Canadian musicologist Kevin Bazzana independently observe in *Philosophy and Literature*. Rachmaninoff himself had symptoms of manic-depression. Glenn Gould, Bazzana points out, "wore gloves in summer and had a Linus-blanket obsession with his favorite piano chair and played with hands flailing, nose to keys, with obbligato croaks and hums." What is new about the Helfgott phenomenon, he says, is that "never has such a successful musical career been built on performances of such transparent and undisputed inadequacy."

Helfgott's playing has "moments of virtuosity and beauty," writes Renée Cox Lorraine, who teaches at the University of Tennessee. What is often missing (besides many of the inscripted notes) is "a sense of continuity, a meaningful relation of present to past and future, any sense of the work as an integrated whole." Descriptions of his playing, she points out in *Philosophy and Literature*, "are quite similar to descriptions of Helfgott's psyche or consciousness—splintered, erratic, chaotic, fragmented." His performances could be regarded as the work of "an extreme example of a postmodern consciousness"—which, given today's "cultural *zeitgeist*," may be part of their appeal.

The Real Meaning of Oz

"Silver Slippers and a Golden Cap: L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and Historical Memory in American Politics" by Gretchen Ritter, in *Journal of American Studies* (Aug. 1997), Cambridge Univ. Press, Journals Dept., 40 W. 20th St., New York, N.Y. 10011–4211.

L. Frank Baum's *Wonderful Wizard of Oz* has enjoyed a century of popularity. But few of today's fans, introduced to the story by the classic 1939 movie, even guess at the rich cultural and political satire readers found in it when it was a best seller in 1900, writes Ritter, a political scientist at the University of Texas, Austin.

The young heroine, Dorothy, part of a struggling farm family, begins her journey in Kansas, the nation's heartland. When she arrives in Oz, Ritter writes, she finds it has a sectionalist geography that bears a striking resemblance to the late-19th-century Populists' America: "the North and South are lands with good rulers, while, in the East and West, the people may be good, but their leaders are oppressive." The strongest power resides in the East—until the cyclone brings Dorothy's house down on the Wicked Witch of the East.

As Dorothy travels west toward the Emerald City (read: Washington, D.C.), she is joined first by the Scarecrow, an agrarian figure (no accident here) in quest of brains who eventually learns that real intelligence comes from experience, which he has in abundance. Then the Tin Woodman falls in with them. A worker from the East, he has been turned into a heartless machine by the Wicked Witch of the East. Next comes the Cowardly Lion, who may represent William Jennings Bryan, the failed Populist (and Democratic) candidate in the 1896 presidential contest.

The Populists bitterly opposed the gold standard—Bryan's famous Cross of Gold—and favored a silver standard to ease the flow of money and credit in rural America. "Oz is an abbreviation for ounces, one measure of the worth of gold and silver bullion," Ritter points out. "In the land of Oz, gold and silver are often the arbiters of power." In Oz, a brick road the color of gold leads to the Emerald City. Ruled by the Wizard of Oz, who turns out to be a fraud, the Emerald City, Ritter notes, "is made out to be a place of illusions where deception and aloof behavior provide the basis for authority."

In the book, Dorothy dons silver slippers (not ruby ones, as in the movie) that had belonged to the Wicked Witch of the East. When she travels in them along the yellow brick road to the Emerald City, Ritter says, she is in effect practicing the bimetallism (a standard that mixes gold and silver) favored by some reformers.

Only at the book's end does Glinda, the Good Witch of the South, reveal to Dorothy that the slippers "'can carry you anyplace in the world in three steps.'" With this knowledge, Dorothy is able to return to Kansas. On

the trip, however, she loses the slippers. "The mysterious power of silver has disappeared before it was ever broadly tested," writes Ritter. Just as the hidden meaning of Baum's tale was lost by the time Hollywood put it on the big screen in 1939.

Updike's Christian Slant

"While one can be a Christian and a writer, the phrase 'Christian writer' feels somewhat reductive, and most writers so called have resisted it," notes novelist John Updike, in accepting the Campion Award to a "distinguished Christian person of letters" from the Jesuit magazine *America* (Oct. 4, 1997).

Is not Christian fiction, insofar as it exists, a description of the bewilderment and panic, the sense of hollowness and futility, which afflicts those whose search for God is not successful? And are we not all, within the churches and temples or not, more searcher than finder in this regard?

I ask, while gratefully accepting this award, to be absolved from any duty to provide orthodox morals and consolations in my fiction. Fiction holds the mirror up to this world and cannot show more than this world contains. But I do admit that there are different angles at which to hold the mirror, and that the reading I did in my twenties and thirties, to prop up my faith, also gave me ideas and a slant that shaped my stories and, especially, my novels.

The first, The Poorhouse Fair, *carries an epigraph from the Gospel of St. Luke; the next,* Rabbit, Run, *from Pascal; the third,* The Centaur, *from Karl Barth; and the fifth,* Couples, *from Paul Tillich. I thought of my novels as illustrations for texts from Kierkegaard and Barth; the hero of* Rabbit, Run *was meant to be a representative Kierkegaardian man, as his name, Angstrom, hints. Man in a state of fear and trembling, separated from God, haunted by dread, twisted by the conflicting demands of his animal biology and his human intelligence, of the social contract and the inner imperatives, condemned as if by otherworldly origins to perpetual restlessness—such was, and to some extent remains, my conception.*

Is Photography an Art?

"From *The World Is Beautiful* to *The Family of Man*: The Plight of Photography as a Modern Art" by Roger Seamon, in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* (Summer 1997), American Society for Aesthetics, Haggerty Museum of Art, 404 Cudahy Hall, Marquette Univ., Milwaukee, Wis. 53201–1881.

Since its beginnings more than a century ago, photography has remained something of a stepchild to the art world. The poet Charles Baudelaire bitterly attacked its earliest aspirations to high-art status in 1859, calling it an intrusion of "industry" into art that had "greatly contributed to the impoverishment of French artistic genius."

There have been a number of very different attempts to explain the low status of photography, notes Seamon, a professor of English at the University of British Columbia. In the 1960s, French social scientist Pierre Bourdieu asserted that photography was considered a middlebrow form because it depicted, or appealed to, ordinary people, whereas "high" modern art "systematically refuses . . . the passions, emotions and feelings which ordinary people put into their ordinary existence." Recently, Kendall Walton and Roger Scruton, professors of philosophy at the University of Michigan and England's Birkbeck College, respectively, have stirred fresh debate. They claim that photography is entirely devoid of an aesthetic dimension. The photograph is not an interpretation of reality but merely a representation of it, they say.

Seamon believes that none of these arguments get to the heart of the matter. Although it was a product of modern technology, he argues, photography was a creature of