Indexes reviewed

Edited by Christine Shuttleworth

These extracts from reviews do not pretend to represent a complete survey of all reviews in journals and newspapers. We offer only a selection from quotations that members have sent in. Our reproduction of comments is not a stamp of approval from the Society of Indexers upon the reviewer’s assessment of an index.

Extracts are arranged alphabetically under the names of publishers, within the sections: Indexes praised; Two cheers!; Indexes censured; Indexes omitted; Obiter dicta.

Indexes praised


This anthology is superior to the two previous Allen Lane collections in other respects. It contains competent annotations and a useful index. . .


A pronunciation guide, list of amazing facts and combination glossary and index are valuable additions to the text.


[Despite some criticisms] this volume is a monumental achievement for which the editor and his contributors deserve thanks. The bibliographies, maps and index are excellent. . .


The book’s happenstance methodology [is] redeemed somewhat by a top-notch index...


Admirably, there is a thorough and effective index. [Index by SI members Paul Nash and Jane Angus.]


The best introduction to the subject of The Faber Book of Utopias is not the contents page or the index, though both are useful and send one (me, anyway) scuttling forwards or backwards into the book.

No, the best is Professor Carey’s own introduction. . .


All the titles appearing among principal writings and all the authors and editors of works appearing among further reading are separately indexed, the index of the latter thus covering a very large span of historical literature and enabling the reader to pursue the work of a considerable number of historians who do not have a personal entry—a faintly forlorn band of spearbearers, this last, but some of whom will be contending for full recognition in a subsequent edition.


There’s a good index and glossary.


It is topped off with a good index . . .


Aron . . . has produced a comprehensive and painstakingly well-researched – and indexed – study that will be definitive when the obituary columns allow him to add a final chapter. [Could this perhaps have been put more sensitively?]

[see also Obiter dicta, below]


There is a useful glossary and an adequate index. . .


It works very well, making the book suitable for both cover to cover reading and as a reference tool (its role here enhanced by a comprehensive index).


On the plus side there are useful indexes listing sequels, series, read-on authors and titles. So as a finding aid it has some worth . . . it provides a comprehensive index of a very good swathe of its three genres.


In addition to her interesting perspective, Anderson has provided extensive author, title, and subject indexes that any librarian or scholar will appreciate. These indexes are invaluable to the researcher at any level. If you are vaguely familiar with a plagiarism case, the subject index allows you to find it if you know any of the key players or details. The subject index also aids in drawing together areas of interest, such as plagiarism and art. The title index is less valuable, but with 610 annotated citations it can be helpful.


The ‘Appendix,’ which is a relatively short list of abbreviations (why not just label it ‘Abbreviations’?) is followed by an adequate index.


. . . the index is easy to use and has common and Latin names.

There is a bibliographical essay of thirteen pages (though an alphabetical listing would have been better) and a fifty-page index with some 2,000 entries.


There is a good index.


A well illustrated glossary (as in all volumes) and extensive indexes are a great aid to effective use of the work.


One minor flaw is that the key to the background colors used for the various types of text boxes is buried on the Acknowledgments page. Placing this key in the table of contents or in the index might better serve those who are searching for a particular category, such as Quizzes and Quotes. . . . However, the carefully prepared index does reference the material inside the boxes, thereby permitting readers to locate information by subject.


The index lists, in alphabetical order, every VC recipient and gives the date of the London Gazette citation. It also names the books in which the recipients are mentioned significantly, enabling the researcher to quickly identify key works.


Like many Yale University Press books this one is immaculately produced, with over 50 pages of notes and index.

Two cheers!


Most of the entries in an ambitious glossary give only a bare synonym. Not being keyed to the texts, these run the risk of misleading. Without getting into lexicography, Vickers might have supplied more analysis: ‘conceit’, for example, is glossed as ‘idea, thought, mental conception, invention’. He treats several hard words perfunctorily, or omits them altogether, like ‘poesy’ (i.e., fiction); ‘move’; ‘image’; ‘wit’; ‘decorum’; ‘allegory’. The index is admirably efficient as regards rhetorical figures and other brief entries; but the longer entries again needed subdivision.

Indexes censured


It is . . . an informal study with some large pretensions, and no apology can excuse its multiplicity of errors, its loose thinking, or clichéd ripostes. The errors multiply at every level. Inaccuracies and inconsistencies mar the text . . . Throughout the index there are omissions and false inclusions: there is confusion between the Dublin University Magazine and the Dublin University Review; Maclise, Flood, Burton, Bentham, F. D. Maurice, Gladstone, Henry Brougham, David Brewster, Denis Johnston and Samuel Beckett appear in the text but not in the index; many others appear in the text more often than the index allows. ‘Feelings’ and ‘trivial’, however, are both indexed, with a single entry apiece.

Perhaps a distinguished publishing house can treat these mistakes and inconsistencies as incidental, but the carelessness finds its way into what some still consider the higher levels of argument and definition . . .


To make matters even worse (if that is in fact possible), the publishers need to bear responsibility for a truly appalling index and careless copy-editing.


If I had any complaint about the way the book is assembled, it would be that things you know must be there are not always easy to find. But here the general bibliography is mixed up with the index of sources, which in turn covers both the works cited, and the reference books and authorities consulted by the compilers, and the excellent glossary gives no references. So the reader has to guess where to find what further information he may desire.


There is also a major problem for the reader trying to retrace references: the book needs either running heads or sections for its lengthy chapters (fifty to eighty pages), or again a much fuller index, to help track down ideas which provoke interest. Jenkyns’s index lists Hitler, Napoleon, de Gaulle and de Valera (all on page 105), mere frills on his argument, but ignores Apollo, and Hercules; Austin Farrer has two entries: religion and myth none. On the other hand, major motifs, like the pathetic fallacy (recurring many times, and with multiple index entries) would have been better treated once and for all as an element of organization.

Jenkyns’s structure is chiefly that of a lecture series on a set text, not one of topic or argument. (It is organization by topic, combined with a full index that makes, for example, Gordon Williams’s 800-page Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry, 1969, relatively accessible.)


I have only two regrets about this book. One is that the index is so sparse, as seems to be the case for so many books nowadays. The other is that, although human promiscuity and its consequences are discussed, ‘human’ does not appear in the index, not even in the special index of animal species mentioned in the text. The omission is a pity. The book not only corrects some misapprehensions about human promiscuity, but is engagingly enough written for many readers initially interested only in humans to carry on reading.


. . . her care for the technicalities of literary production is agreeably illustrated by a list of stern injunctions to the publishers of her translation of the Purgatorio. All these rules are faithfully observed in the present volume – all save one. Miss Sayers abhorred ‘indexes consisting of mere strings of page numbers, without classification’. If we look in the index here for ‘Reynolds, Barbara’, we find 70 page numbers but nothing to tell us which of them refers, for example, to ‘Reynolds, Barbara, baptism of’.


The editor’s only fault is one that many could be accused of: that, in compiling the index, he refers us to pages which do not mention the
subject we wanted to investigate. [But was it the editor who compiled the index?]


Michèle Guinness has taken on a mammoth task in describing her husband’s huge clan. I counted 145 Guinnesses in the (wholly inadequate) index, many of them with the same christian name, and 15 of them clergy.


This work deserves a decent index, but regrettably, the one which is provided falls quite short of the mark. However, it should be feasible to devise a replacement in a new printing.

Among instances of inadequate indexing and referencing, DDC is indexed and has a ‘see also’ reference to the full name; the full name entry has a ‘see also’ to the abbreviated form; to obtain the total range the user must add up the two lists of locators (some of which are common to both). Similar problems occur with LCSH and with BT. There is no access under the full name of AACR, nor under the full name for UDC and the latter has a locator error. [Of all books, it is particularly unfortunate that this one should have a faulty index.]


The book has a relatively small index, but a fairly good list of further reading and resources.


The book would benefit from some illustrations, perhaps some screen dumps; a good index; guidance on more complex searching; and the use of the various search engines.


The only absent improvement is an expanded index, a minor flaw in the first edition. Such observations are trivial, however, compared with the book’s achievements. Crime in Early Modern England is important not just as a functional vade-mecum, but because it suggests directions in which the subject might be developed in the future. [But how functional is a book with a poor index?]


Flowerdew, excellent at confrontational writing if not discourse, does not like [Chris] Patten’s style: ‘His use of metaphor, for example, shows up his ethnocentrism . . .’ It is hard to know what he means by this. There are two references to metaphor in the index, neither of them helpful. Perhaps he means that using metaphors is a British rather than Chinese habit.


A niggle: there are some infuriating disconnections between the index and the main text. Even OUP nods, apparently. [And not for the first time.]


The book is well produced, with excellent illustrations. But for future editions I hope it will be given a proper index, with itemised entries. A list of names followed by a string of numerals is not worth having – though too often all that we get.


This diary, which reveals much about Trevor Beeson [a former canon at Westminster Abbey], has revelations which may shock old colleagues. The inadequate index means that they will have to read the entire book – but like many books which should not have been published it is very enjoyable.


None of this [a series of criticisms] would matter if there were an adequate index, but there is not. Here we are not only in the realm of hard slog, but worse, that of spoiling the ship for a ha’porth of tar. This is my only substantive criticism of the bibliography, but it is a serious one. Perhaps an inadequate index reduces the use of a bibliography by about a third or even one half. What the compilers are unwittingly saying is: ‘If you aren’t devoted to the works of V. Sackville-West, you don’t deserve to find the information you’re looking for.’ Secondhand book-sellers and others seem to delight in stating ‘Not in . . .’ and I foresee ‘Not in Cross and Ravenscroft-Hulme’ becoming a refrain. There are two indexes: a ‘Main Index’ and a ‘Poetry Index’. The latter is more thorough than the former which concentrates on Section A. Here is a perfectly reasonable question: ‘Did VSW ever review any of Virginia Woolf’s works?’ This bibliography will not tell you – unless you check the 1176 entries in Section E. There are seven references to Woolf in the ‘Main Index’, all but one referring to Section A. To aid Woolfians, here are another twenty-one: A21, 29; B23, 50; C7; E163, 306, 321, 431–2, 786, 817; G7–8, 11, 14, a2; J16, 23; K6. And how will you find Michael Stevens’ biography, by the way? Only by trial and error, but I’ll put you out of your misery – it’s at J15. The lack of adequate indexes is presumably Mr Cross’s responsibility, for he is not only the principal compiler but also the publisher. The index to the same publisher’s Leonard Woolf: a Bibliography was even worse, and was obviously the result of publishing policy. The compilers anticipate future electronic publication – ‘e-commerce’ as we must learn to call it. When that occurs, this criticism will be vieux chapeau. Until then, the lack of adequate indexes cannot be regretted enough. [A footnote adds, with reference to Leonard Woolf: a Bibliography, ‘This bibliography is more straightforward than VSW’s, but with 1566 periodical items and a worse index, it is even more inaccessible.’]


. . . the index is woefully inadequate . . .

Indexes omitted


Just this selection of topics is further evidence of the breadth of the survey; it highlights the need for an index.


Though this book was first published in French in 1997, the quality of the translation of this English version is poor and there is no subject index. These deficiencies would suggest that it was rather rushed into print for the English-speaking market in anticipation of the publication of John Cornwell’s biographical memoir of Pius XII, Hitler’s Pope.


Most will learn a lot, but may be irritated by the lack of an index, or even reference from the text to the extensive bibliography. HarperCollins, please note.

It was a worthwhile idea to assemble a book on this subject, and its organization – into chapters headed ‘Initium’, ‘Momenta’, ‘Minutae’, ‘Horae’, ‘Dies’, etc. – is reader-friendly. But it is hardly a reference book for the student’s shelf, lacking as it does both index and bibliography.


This is, emphatically, not a scholarly book – there are no references and no index – but it is occasionally entertaining.


The list for further reading could be more extensive, and an index would have added to its worth.


Like other reviewers of *The Third Woman*, I was originally sent a ring-bound proof copy of the book to work from. This provisional (as I thought) text carried several errors (wrong spellings, misdatings, as well as straightforward grammatical absurdties). There were also some questionable ‘facts’ which I assumed would be footnoted in the finished product.

As a result, I held back my review until I’d seen the final text. Well, now I’ve seen the bound version, and as far as I can tell from a necessarily high-speed inspection, it is the same book that I struggled through in proof. The errors I noted are intact, the bad writing is still just as bad, and there are no footnotes. Nor is there an index.

The general impression is of shoddiness and haste, and for this, presumably, we have to blame the publisher’s eagerness to – so to speak – cash in on the current film-link. . . . As readers, all we can do is to hope that Little, Brown get what they deserve. But what do they deserve? Is there a book-world equivalent of ‘straight to video’?


The book has no index and no bibliography.


The new publication makes no acknowledgement of its illustrious origins [the *Statesman’s Yearbook*]; it offers no preliminaries or index . . .


Here then are two volumes bursting with information. Unfortunately, it is hard to retrieve and understand. A few weeks ago a newspaper from 1791 turned up, which contains *Sunday Schools*, a poem attributed to Johnson; but the bibliography has no index enabling the user to ascertain whether such items have been published.

Nor does it contain an index of the hundreds of abbreviations used: one is referred to a key in the US National Union Catalogue.


It is a shame that such a wide-ranging book as Enright’s should lack, following its 509 pages, that most elementary aid for the reader, an index. Oxford is pleased to honor its poet by proclaiming on the jacket copy that he has received the Queen’s Gold Medal for Poetry; but a better honor would have been to enable his interested readers to find, by means of an index, that elusive poem they would like to read again.


Some will regret the absence of an index, but all should celebrate the inclusion of a comprehensive bibliography.


Another gripe is the lack of an index.


There is no index to this 650-page volume, dealing with hundreds of persons, books and events. For this we must await the fourth volume, though best practice calls for provisional indexes for individual volumes pending completion of a long-term project. Since this first volume has been several years in the making, the likelihood of an index becoming available within a reasonable time seems small.


By its very format this survey book is virtually an index of itself. Even so, a selective index would have proved a useful aid to anyone wanting to compare and contrast or to form links among individual artists.


The book ends with another innovation, if that is the right term: there is no index. Whether this is deliberate, and the author is saying that in a book like this where everything is laid out logically, there is no point in having an index, I do not know.


. . . the book lacks an index or a proper contents page. True, the page numbers for each section are given at the beginning, but a more detailed listing would help the interested reader to find out precisely where the great experiments described in this book are to be found. However, these are minor quibbles concerning an otherwise magnificent book. [Why must reviewers so often apologize for complaints about the poor quality or absence of an index by calling them ‘minor quibbles’?]


. . . it will be essential material for some future biographer of her second husband, Michael Frayn. Something that writer will certainly deplore, as I do, is the lack of an index.


There is no index . . .

**Obiter dicta**


Even for an Englishman, Amis had terrible teeth. . . . (In the index, under ‘dental problems’, there are twenty-six sub-entries, including ‘sexual potency and’, ‘suicide and’, ‘war effort and’.) [Index by ASI member Nancy Wolff.]

To me, the most darkly fascinating part of the book is the ‘Health’ section, with its conscientiously compiled Index listing facts and rumours about the state of Yeltsin’s health:

... hand injury, broken nose, typhoid fever, quinsy, tonsillectomy, collapse, heart trouble, spinal operation, nasal septum operation, depression, insomnia, back and leg problems, heart attacks, heart by-pass operation, illness after election, flu and pneumonia, ‘acute viral infection’, stroke rumours...


Most of the pieces are warmed-over anecdotes, helpfully marked with asterisks in the index.


Instead of an index, this book – an anthology of ‘critical assaults’ upon composers from Beethoven through Stravinsky – has an aptly named ‘Invecticon,’ in which composers are referenced by the insulting adjectives that have been heaped upon them in the reviews collected between these covers. For example:

- PIGS (grunting of) Strauss, 193
- PIGS (ringed) Schoenberg, 156
- PITIFUL INSANITY Milhaud, 124
- PLAGUE OF INSECTS Rachmaninoff, 137

The body of the Lexicon, arranged alphabetically by composer, quotes generously from ‘biased, unfair, ill-tempered, and singularly unprophetic judgments’ which the editor has culled from the musical files of the past. An incredibly funny feat of scholarship.


Unfortunately, this review is based on page proofs, which did not contain the bibliography or the completed author and subject indexes, but I am assured that the bibliography alone will contain over 600 citations, and the academic diligence shown in the rest of the book will undoubtedly be reflected in the most comprehensive index to date of work in this area. [We can but hope! How common is it for books to be reviewed on the basis of page proofs only?]

Complaint from a stationery buyer

But [Antonia France’s] main complaint is that finding one’s way around stationery catalogues is no easy task. ‘They are not always very clear. For example, if you want to look for staples you won’t always find them under “S” in the index, you’ll find them under the name of the make. Equally, my dictionary was under “C” for Collins. They do have a page colour-coding system, which groups names of the make. Equally, my dictionary was under “S” in the index, you’ll find them under the


Depressing index

What I find most depressing in this book [Business @ the speed of thought by Bill Gates, Warner Books, 1999] is epitomized when you turn to the index and look up ‘education’. You find: Education see Schools.

But this isn’t just laziness on the part of the lexicographer [lexicographer?]. For Gates’ book, like so many others in this mode, is intended to compile the index himself, but delayed so long that the

James Tooley in Reclaiming education, Cassell, 2000

Pulped for lack of an index

Shakespeare scholar Jonathan Bate, meanwhile, is still waiting for coverage of his critical study, The Song of the Earth. This is not going to happen soon. The first edition (collectors note) was printed without an index and has now been pulped . . . [Publisher’s name not given.]

‘The Browser’, The Observer, 9 April 2000

Smallweed’s complaint

Why do serious publishers of serious books skimp on the indexes? Here is an entry from a book I have just been reading:

Law, Charles Bonar, 4, 221, 275, 281, 297, 343, 381, 392–4, 399, 400, 403, 407, 412, 413 . . . and so on. There are 34 references, all undifferentiated. What is the use of that? What the reader needs is much more specific guidance, as in: birth, 4; education, 221; employed as a trapeze artist, 275; fights duel with Alma-Tadema, 281. In any case, this may be the wrong Bonar Law. I was looking for the Tory prime minister, whose first name, all other reference books claim, was Andrew.

Lord J of H (Oxford University) writes: Do you have any details of Bonar Law’s duel with Alma-Tadema? I can find no mention of this in any biography.

Smallweed retorts with a knowing smirk: Hushed up, I expect. I bet it was over a woman.

‘Smallweed’, The Guardian, 29 April 2000

Sleepless nights for a millionaire classifier

[Srinija Srinivasan, a recent graduate of Stanford University] considers herself successful, not because of what she is worth, she says, but because she loves what she does. As vice president and editor in chief of Yahoo, she leads a team that sorts the ever-expanding constellation of Web sites into categories that will make sense to subscribers. When tough calls arise at work – like whether messianic Jews should be listed under Judaism or Christianity – she has stomachaches that keep her awake at night. [And yet] ‘I honestly spend my days in ways that I feel are engaging, compelling and fulfilling and rewarding,’ she said. [Ms Srinivasan, now a millionaire, apparently has no editorial, indexing or information science credentials at all, except for the creation of the site itself. Not even her immense wealth can ensure that she gets a good night’s sleep.]


Who indexed Tolkien?

In response to this query, which appeared in this section in the April 1999 issue of The Indexer (p. 149), Rayner Unwin, in a verbal communication to Hazel Bell, revealed the identity of the first indexer of The Lord of the Rings, who compiled the index that appeared in the second edition of the novel sequence. She was Nancy Smith, a Radcliffe graduate who was married to a friend of Christopher Tolkien, J. R. R. Tolkien’s son. Tolkien senior had intended to compile the index himself, but delayed so long that the publishers were compelled to bring out the first edition without it.

Acknowledgements

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Jane Angus (Ballater); Ken Bakewell (Liverpool); Hazel K. Bell (Hatfield); Philip Bradley (Dundee); Caroline Barlow (Bedford); Susan Bosanko (London); Erika Buku (Berkeley, CA); Drusilla Calvert (Blaydon); Liz Cook, Chester-le-Street; Jill Evans (Newent); Dorothy Frame (London); Ann and Tim Hudson (Chichester); Brian Hunter (London); Clare Imholtz (Beltsville, MD); Mary Kirkness (Worcester); Cherry Lavell

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Sir James Frazer’s history of myth and religion, *The golden bough*, was first published in two volumes in 1890, then in three volumes in 1900 and in twelve during 1911–15. The 756-page single volume abridged by Frazer himself was published in 1922 by Macmillan & Co. (reissued by Chancellor Press, 1994). I quote below sample entries from its 42-page index as an example of an index that makes one long to read the text, and of a type that may make indexers of technological texts wish that they might do likewise.

Africa, magicians, especially rain-makers, as chiefs and kings in; human gods in; rules of life or taboos observed by kings in; reluctance of people to tell their own names in; seclusion of girls at puberty in; dread and seclusion of menstrual women in; birth-trees in
North, charms to render bridegroom impotent in
South, disposal of cut hair and nails in; magic use of spittle in; story of the external soul in
West, magical functions of chiefs in; reverence for silk-cotton trees in; kings forced to accept office in; fetish kings in; traps set for souls in; custom as to blood shed on the ground; propitiation of dead leopard in
Animals, homeoepathic magic of; association of ideas common to the; rain-making by means of; injured through their shadows; propitiation of the spirits of the slain; torn to pieces and devoured in religious rites; so-called unclean, originally sacred; belief in the descent of men from; two forms of the worship of; as scapegoats; perhaps deemed embodiments of witches; external soul in
Anointing stones, in order to avert bullets from absent warriors; in a rain-charm
Ants, bites of, used in purification ceremonies; for leprosy patients
Apple-tree, barren women roll under, to obtain offspring; straw man placed on oldest; torches thrown at; as life-index of boys
Bag, souls of persons deposited in a
Bavaria, saying as to crossed legs in
Beating a man’s garments instead of the man; frogs, as a rain-charm
Bedclothes, contagious magic of bodily impressions on
Beer, continence observed at brewing
Birds, cause headache through clipped hair; absent warriors called
Burglars, charms employed by
Cat’s cradle, forbidden to boys among the Esquimaux
Cattle, magical stones for increase of; influence of tree-spirits on; crowned; Yule Boar given to the; lighted brands carried round
Charms, to prevent the sun from going down
Chastity observed for sake of absent persons; as a virtue not understood by savages
Cheese, the Beltan
Clothes, magic sympathy between a person and his
Columbia, British, use of magic instruments to procure fish in; taboos imposed on parents of twins in; belief regarding a physician and his patient’s soul; rites of initiation in

Conception in women caused by trees
Continence, required during search for sacred cactus; enjoined on people during rounds of sacred pontiff; by hunters and fishermen; by workers in salt-pans
Departmental kings of nature
Dogs crowned
“Drink, Black”, an emetic
East Indies, pregnant women forbidden to tie knots; reluctance of people to tell their own names; bringing back the Soul of the Rice; the Rice-mother in the
Epilepsy transferred to leaves
Faries, averse to iron
Feet of enemies eaten
Fish, magical image to procure; sacred; treated with respect by fishing tribes; external soul in a golden
Foreshanks used in rainmaking
Gorillas, lives of persons bound up with those of
Gout, transferred to trees
Grandmother, name given to last sheaf
Gunputty, elephant-headed god
Holiness, and pollution not differentiated by savages; conceived as a dangerous virus; as a dangerous physical substance which needs to be insulated
Hooks used in magic; to catch souls
Hyaenias, supposed power over men’s shadows
Impregnation of women by the sun
Jar, the evil of a whole year shut up in a
St. Michael, ill-treated in drought
St. Denys, his seven heads
St. Michael, ill-treated in drought
Salmon, twins thought to be
Sardines worshipped by Indians of Peru
Standing on one foot, custom of
St. Denys, his seven heads
Peeptree used in magic; to catch souls
Parrots’ eggs, a signal of death
Personification of abstract ideas not primitive
Departamental kings of nature
Children forced to accept office in; fetish kings in; traps set for souls in; as life-index of a girl

Hazel K. Bell, Hatfield

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Contributions of review extracts welcomed by the editor of this section, Christine Shuttleworth (please see inside front cover for further details). Closing dates for the next two issues: 30 November 2000 and 30 May 2001.