

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 readers have sent in. Our reproduction of comments is not a stamp of approval from The Indexer 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

British Library: *St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury: 13 (Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues)*, 3 vols, ed. by B. C. Barker-Benfield (2008, 2,356 pp, £175). Rev. by James Carley, *Times Literary Supplement*, 21 May 2010.

When, in 1903, M. R. James published his editions of some of the most important library catalogues to survive from medieval England under the title *The Ancient Libraries of Canterbury and Dover*, he was well aware of what a major undertaking this project had been both for himself and for the publisher . . . Given the immensity of the task, he decided not to include an index, and he realized that this constituted a serious gap: 'The first remark that the reviewer of this book is likely to make is that there is no index of the works enumerated in the 496 pages of catalogues which it contains. I cannot altogether blame him if on the strength of this defect he inclines to take a somewhat gloomy view of the whole compilation'. Although James's was a groundbreaking study, there were other flaws apart from the obvious one to which he alluded. This was to some degree a result of the scale of the project, and the component parts of his study are now being re-edited as separate volumes in the Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues (CBMLC) series, whose energetic editors have bravely faced up to the knotty problems of this costly and unremunerative work. . . . Even though the library of the Benedictine abbey of St Augustine is witnessed by only one surviving catalogue as such, this same document poses the most complex editorial problems of the Canterbury libraries. Unlike James, who moved from collection to collection with unrelenting speed, B. C. Barker-Benfield has worked solidly for many years on the St Augustine's catalogue and related remains. Building on (and often correcting) *The Ancient Libraries of Canterbury and Dover*, on A. B. Emden's *Donors of Books to S. Augustine's Abbey Canterbury*, on J. Roberts and A. G. Watson's *John Dee's Library Catalogue*, and on Richard Sharpe's *Handlist of the Latin Writers of Great Britain and Ireland before 1540*, he has produced a massive study in three volumes with a total of 2,356 pages, including no fewer than seven modern indices. There is, as well, a medieval index never before printed which contains, *pace* James, information not found in the catalogue itself.

Subsequently owned and annotated by the Elizabethan magus and bibliophile John Dee, for whom it functioned as a kind of 'Prospero's wish list', the catalogue, now in Trinity College Dublin is – as Barker-Benfield shows in exhaustive detail – a transcription with corrections and additions made in the last quarter of the fifteenth century of a list compiled approximately a century earlier. It thus gives us an insight into the organization of the library at two vital periods of its development.

British Library: *The story of graphic design*, by Patrick Cramsie (352

pp, £25). Rev. by Judith Flanders, *Times Literary Supplement*, 30 July 2010.

The British Library has equalled Cramsie's skill, producing a book that is handsome, user-friendly, well indexed, and remarkably affordable.

Cambridge University Press: *The reformation of the English parish church*, by Robert Whiting (2010, 298 pp, £55). Rev. by Alec Ryrie, *The Tablet*, 5 June 2010.

To say that a book's most exciting feature is its index is not normally praise. But in this case, many will not be able to resist turning there right away; it lists 1,152 medieval English churches to whose furnishings Dr Whiting refers. And once we have all looked up the buildings we personally treasure, we can stand back and marvel at the scope of the author's achievement.

Clarendon Press: *Finding a role? The United Kingdom 1970–1990*, by Brian Harrison (2010, 688 pp, £30). Rev. by Frank Prochaska, *Times Literary Supplement*, 6 August 2010.

Helpfully, *Finding a Role?* includes a chronology of events and a splendid index. It is a treat to browse through the index, where you can find subjects from mountain bikes to mergers, from knee-capping to knee replacements.

CNRS Éditions: *Dictionnaire Gustave Flaubert*, by Jean-Benoît Guinot (2010, 788 pp, €39). Rev. by Julian Barnes, *Times Literary Supplement*, 4 June 2010.

Jean-Benoît Guinot was chief editor of the 484-page index to the *Pléiade Correspondance*, which rightly forms the core of this Dictionary. His 1,500 and more entries cover the life and work, the aesthetic principles and personal pleasures, the friends and opinions and eccentricities. There is a chronology and thematic index; but also tables of the principal editions, of the novelist's rendezvous with Louise Colet and Juliet Herbert, and of his self-awarded nicknames (over sixty of them, from Cro-Magnon to Soeur Clitoris). Whether you have briefly forgotten the name of Emma Bovary's maid, or seek the answer to something more recherché – like, to which of three men called Houssaye (Arsène, Edouard or Henri) did Flaubert write asking him to remove the word 'phallus' from the magazine excerpts of *La Tentation de saint Antoine?* – you will find the answer here.

Oxford University Press: *The law of international human rights protection*, by Walter Kälin and Jörg Künzli (2009, 539 pp, £70). Rev. by Wolfgang S. Heinz, *European Journal of International Law*, 21(1), February 2010.

An extensive index helps the reader to locate cases from European, African, and OAS jurisprudence, ICJ and international criminal justice cases, and expert committees' opinions.

Princeton University Press: *Island of shame: the secret history of the US military base on Diego Garcia*, by David Vine (2009, 259 pp, \$29.95). Rev. by Ebrahim Afsah, *European Journal of International Law*, 21(1), February 2010.

The book . . . contains good but thankfully not excessive reference material which will prove useful for students of the island's history. In this respect the omission of an alphabetical listing of the literature used is regrettable, only partially remedied through a good subject index.

SCM Press: *In tuneful accord: the church musicians*, by Trevor Beeson (2009, 246 pp, £19.99). Rev. by Richard Osmond, *Cathedral Music*, May 2010.

If you dip in here and there, as I did initially, you will find most of the people you expected to see and the competent index helps you to follow up trains of thought stimulated by what you read.

Viking: *Hancox: a house and a family*, by Charlotte Moore (2010, 484 pp, £20). Rev. by Katherine Swift, *The Guardian*, 21 August 2010.

There is also an excellent index and an annotated family tree to help one keep track of the many lives which she so deftly weaves together.

Yale University Press: *Philip de László: his life and art*, by Duff Hart-Davis (2010, 448 pp, £27). Rev. by John McEwen, *The Tablet*, 31 July 2010.

. . . this entertaining, balanced, well-indexed biography is the first since 1939.

Two cheers!

Brazos: *A sword between the sexes?: C. S. Lewis and the gender debates*, by Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen (2010, 264 pp, £12.99). Rev. by Barbara Gilman, *Christian Librarian*, 49, Summer 2010.

. . . the book is blessed with an index, though with one or two surprising omissions, and frustrating in that it frequently failed to retrieve for me passages that I wanted to refer back to. [*A mixed blessing, then.*]

Informa Health Care: *Particle-lung interactions* (2nd edn), ed. by Peter Gehr et al. (2009, 319 pp, \$229.95). Rev. by Michael S. Morgan, *Respiratory Care*, 55(4), 2010.

. . . the monograph includes a useful index that will be helpful to readers who wish to explore a specific topic that might span several chapters. One disappointment in this regard is the absence of an index entry, and indeed of content in the chapters, on bacterial and fungal endotoxins associated with airborne particles. This is a topic of active investigation and might have been included in the volume. [*Not the indexer's fault if it wasn't.*]

Indexes censured

Ashgate: *Catholic gentry in English society: the Throckmortons of Coughton from Reformation to Emancipation: 5 (Catholic Christendom, 1300–1700)*, ed. by Peter Marshall and Geoffrey Scott (2009, 282 pp, £60). Rev. by Gerard Kilroy, *Times Literary Supplement*, 6 August 2010.

The topics of this book (though not the index) offer a rich treasure-trove for further research. [*So what is wrong with the index?*]

Oxford University Press: *Tchaikovsky*, by Roland John Wiley (2009, 546 pp, £25). Rev. by J. P. E. Harper-Scott, *Times Literary Supplement*, 9 July 2010.

In a work of such quality, it is disappointing to find unnecessary irritations such as the faulty presentation of some of the music examples. . . . And it was presumably the unseen copy-editorial hand of the markets that led to the bizarre mismatch between the text, which spells the composer's name 'Tchaikovsky', and the index, where it is 'Chaykovskiy'. A book with the latter spelling would surely sell fewer copies, so readers will have to live with the inconsistency. [*How did that happen? Presumably the change was made to the text after the index had been prepared, and no one thought of making the correction to the index.*]

Indexes omitted

Allen Lane: *The big short: inside the Doomsday machine*, by Michael Lewis (2010, 266 pp, £25). Rev. by George Trefgarne, *The Spectator*, 15 May 2010.

Lewis has provided perhaps the most readable account of the fiasco [of the credit crunch] – mercifully brief, but sadly without an index, glossary or appendices, which would help those of us who cannot tell a CDS from a CDO. [*Wikipedia reveals that a CDS is a credit default swap and a CDO is a collateral debt obligation, if that helps.*]

Book Guild: *A man with a mission: to seamen, refugees and parish-ioners (including convicts and addicts) at home and abroad*, by John Taylor (2009, 520 pp, £17.99). Rev. by Leigh Hatts, *Church Times*, 18 May 2010.

A Man with a Mission is a 520-page book without an index, although there are eight blank pages at the end. Including such names as Henry Kissinger, Graham Leonard, Jimmy Savile, and Chad Varah would tempt readers.

Canon Taylor hints at a further book covering the past 25 years. A sequel should include an index to both volumes.

Profile: *Howards End is on the landing*, by Susan Hill (236 pp, £8.99). Rev. by Christopher Hirst, *The Independent*, 6 August 2010.

Hill's opinion that *Diary of a Nobody* is 'no longer funny' is odd, but the most inexplicable thing about this book is that it lacks both index and contents page. [*Profile Books also failed to provide an index to Lynne Truss's Eats, Shoots and Leaves.*]

SCM Press: *Early Christian doctrine and the creeds*, by Piotr Ashwin-Siejkowski (2010, 192 pp, £18.99). Rev. by Cally Hammond, *Church Times*, 21 May 2010.

He provides two kinds of text box (one defining key terminology such as 'Christology' and 'dogma', the other giving chunks of text from original writers), a time-line, suggestions for further reading, and a glossary. The latter consists mainly of biographies of ancient writers, together with a few technical terms. 'Monarchianism', e.g., makes it in; but 'economy' (a key ancient term for the 'dispensation' or 'arrangement' by which a transcendent God can be operative in the created order) does not.

This is no substitute for a proper index: to find out the meaning of, say, 'Theotokos' or 'impassibility' (or 'economy' for that matter) one must remember where they were highlighted, guess where they are likely to have appeared – or Google them.

Obiter dicta

Weidenfeld & Nicolson: *Antony and Cleopatra*, by Adrian Goldsworthy (2010, 496 pp, £25). Rev. by Sam Leith, *Sunday Times*, 11 July 2010.

. . . since the Ptolemaic dynasty called everybody by the same name it's a job keeping it clear. There are three Arsinoes, nine Cleopatras and 16 Ptolemies in the index – which puts the brace of Brutuses and pair of Pompeys on the Roman side in perspective.

The perils of Penelope

Letter from Penelope Fitzgerald to her friend Maryllis Conder, 16 October 1976

I have delivered my tattered, ink-tea-and-tear-stained MS of book about my uncles [*The Knox Brothers*] to Macmillans, and now await a telephone call to say it's all got to be altered, and that there is not enough sex in it, although I've told them that there is none to put. However in any case that won't be out till next autumn. The index comes next, but I rather like doing that.

Letter to Richard Garnett, her editor for The Knox Brothers, April 1977

About the Russian names in the index, I am feeling wretched about all the inaccuracies and having looked at my notes in the cellar here I've decided I don't honestly know what their Xtian names are, and in any case they look silly without their patronymics, so can they appear just as Khinchuk, Meler, Zudyakov? Meler strikes me as an assumed name anyway. They're not in the Soviet biographical Dictionary because they made such a failure of their mission and in the ARCOX publications they're just Tovarich, without initials.

Letter to Christopher Carduff, her American editor, about her biography of Charlotte Mew, 12 September 1987

I'm afraid Ethel Oliver appears as Edith Oliver in the index and throughout the text, except on p. 33. I've had quite a few letters about this, but I don't see how it can be altered now . . .

From So I have thought of you: the letters of Penelope Fitzgerald (Fourth Estate, 2009)

Weird

Michael Ball: You love reading, don't you, Jennie?

Jennie McAlpine: I do, but I won't just read a book. I like facts, I'm a bit of a geek. Honestly, I could read the encyclopedia.

MB: So you're not a novel girl?

JMcA: No, I'm not. I like to flick, and I just like to pick up a book, read the index, see what I want to know, read that, put it down.

MB: That's really weird.

JMcA: I know it is! I know it is!

[Jennie McAlpine plays Fiz in Coronation Street.]

The Michael Ball Show, ITV, 19 August 2010

Warm thanks to the contributors to this section:

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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).

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