

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; Indexes censured; Indexes omitted; Obiter dicta.

Indexes praised

Apogee Books: *The Wright stuff: the century of effort behind your ticket to space*, by Derek Webber (2010, 168 pp, £19.95). Rev. by Mark Williamson, *Spaceflight Magazine*, March 2011.

The author is also sufficiently professional about his task to include a list of acronyms, a bibliography and a useful index.

Cambridge University Press: *The King James Bible: a short history from Tyndale to today*, by David Norton (2011, 218 pp, £14.99).

Oxford University Press, *Bible: the story of the King James version 1611–2011*, by Gordon Campbell (2010, 354 pp, £16.99). Rev. by Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Times Literary Supplement*, 3 February 2011.

Like the KJB editions published by the two universities, the two books are beautiful to look at; they are written to the highest standards by two acknowledged experts, who despite their respective insights end up saying much the same thing, though Norton has a better index.

Jonathan Cape: *Little Liberia: an African odyssey in New York City*, by Jonny Steinberg (2011, 286 pp, £16.99). Rev. by Margaret Busby in *The Guardian*, 12 March 2011.

Maps, photographs, notes, a list of further reading, as well as a thorough index, all provide useful support for his skilled and compassionate chronicle. [*Index by SI member Christopher Phipps.*]

Fourth Estate: *The lost diaries*, ed. by Craig Brown (2010, 404 pp, £18.99). Rev. by Tim Heald, *The Tablet*, 18/25 December 2010.

I enjoy the index as much as anything. 'Greer, Germaine . . . condemns Queen; condemns Thomas Hardy; condemns pineapple; condemns fat, thin and medium-sized women; condemns kangaroos; condemns seaside in summer; condemns electric toasters; condemns snow ... Hardy, Thomas, tragic accident with teacup; tragic accident with carrot; tragic accident with banana skin; tragic slip of pen.' Or 'Macmillan, Lord Harold [*sic*]; absolute poppet.' . . . The book is based largely on cod diaries written for *Private Eye*, presented largely in chronological form. It has an unusually high laugh-quotient, from the spoof introduction by the Dalai Lama, who goes out of his way to praise Victoria Beckham and Alan Yentob, right through to that index, culminating as it does in 'Zeffirelli, Franco: with Biddy Baxter on Capri'. . . . Thank you, thank you, Mr Brown.

Oxford University Press: *Adonis to Zorro: Oxford dictionary of reference and allusion*, ed. by Andrew Delahunty and Sheila Dignen

(2010, 432 pp, £20). Rev. by Jonathan Barnes, *Times Literary Supplement*, 24 and 31 December 2010.

. . . this welcoming, elegant volume encourages the ferreting-out of chance discoveries – that, for example, it was Edward Heath who coined the phrase 'the acceptable face of . . .' and Saddam Hussein who popularized that commonplace construction which begins 'the mother of all . ..'. The 'thematic index' with which the book concludes is a source of particular pleasure. Grouping together various exemplars beneath alphabetical lists of concepts (baldness; time; naivety), the effect is of the preparation of guest lists for a series of remarkable dinner parties. Under 'adultery' may be found 007, Emma Bovary, Anna Karenina and Hester Prynne; under 'youth', Cagliostro, Dorian Gray and Peter Pan; under 'solitude', Cain, Crusoe, Howard Hughes, the Lone Ranger, Jesus. [*It would indeed be quite a feat to get the last five persons mentioned into the same room.*]

Profile Books: *The Economist style guide: the bestselling guide to English usage* (2010, 272 pp, £16.99). Rev. by Sara Hulse, *Editing Matters*, September/October 2010.

As with many style guides I've come across, I suspect it may not be that easy to find the specific information you need, although the index does appear to be comprehensive.

Rough Guides: *Make the most of your time on earth: 1000 ultimate travel experiences* (2nd edn, 2010, 608 pp, £19.99). Rev. by Bruce Deachman, *Ottawa Citizen*, 11 December 2010.

It's an overused phrase, but this book really does have something for everyone, from rafting the Tara river gorge in Montenegro – Europe's largest canyon – to driving Nova Scotia's Cabot Trail or simply standing in the middle of Moscow's Red Square and soaking it all in.

The entries here are more descriptive primers than the last word on the wheres, hows, how muches and how fars, but indexes of related websites are provided for many, but not all, of the activities.

The book is divided into 21 countries or regions, but there's also a great thematic index, so if you're only interested in, say, drinking, you can easily find the 28 listed activities involving liquid sustenance, including one – a tour along Kentucky's Bourbon Trail – that may naturally lead to the more than 50 recommendations in this guidebook that involve sleeping.

Thames and Hudson: *What makes a masterpiece?: encounters with great works of art*, ed. by Christopher Deller (2010, 304 pp, £24.95). Rev. by Judith Flanders, *Times Literary Supplement*, 4 February 2011.

The book's design is slightly irritating, frequently showing a detail from a work the spread before the full piece is shown. This is more than compensated for, however, by an excellent index, which turns what might otherwise have been only a gift book into something far more useful.

University of Chicago Press: *The Chicago manual of style* (2010, 16th edn, £42). Rev. by Catharine Morris, *Times Literary Supplement*, 12 November 2010.

CMOS is marked by unfaltering good sense; and a good index and numbered paragraphs make it easily navigable.

Indexes censured

Chandos: *Website visibility: the theory and practice of improving rankings*, ed. by M. Weideman (2009, xxii + 222 pp, £47). Rev. by Ralph Adam, *Library & Information Update*, January/February 2010.

While the book is not a difficult read, the style can be rather long-winded. The detailed glossary (which omits the many abbreviations used) is followed by a rather limited index. These are, however, minor criticisms of an unusual book.

Guinness Superlatives: *Guinness world records 2011* (2010, 285 pp, 296 pp, £20). Rev. in *Private Eye*, 21 January–3 February 2011.

... among other failings the *GBR* has a notably vague index.

Peter Lang: *Modernism on sea: art and culture at the British seaside*, ed. by Lara Feigel and Alexandra Harris (2009, £25). Rev. by Brian Evans, *Bulletin of the Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain*, 36, January 2011.

For the record, Woolf has five entries in the index, and her works twelve. That brings me to the only gripe I have about the book, which is that the index is a rather half-hearted affair with too many omissions: Conrad and Joyce, for example, plus some Woolf titles. Bradshaw quotes from *Night and Day* but there is no reference in the index.

Transaction: *Publishing as a vocation: studies of an old occupation in a new technological era*, by Irving Louis Horowitz (2010, 167 pp, £27.50). Rev. by Paul Duguid, *Times Literary Supplement*, 25 February 2011.

A claim for standards fails in a collection that is riddled with slips and infelicities, has a lamentable index and (oddly for the manifesto of a copyright absolutist) is rather short on copyright notices. Copy-editing, that keystone of good publishing, seems to have had little part in any of these essays. ... The lack of editorial standards betrays not only this book, this author and this house [*the author is also the chairman of Transaction Publishing, a small scholarly press*], but also the journals (some also owned by Transaction) from which the essays are reprinted.

Yale University Press: *Walter Crane: the arts and crafts, painting and politics, 1875-1890*, by Morna O'Neill (2010, 320 pp, £35).

It is disappointing to find neither [Robert] Schmutzler's book [*Art Nouveau*, 1962] in O'Neill's 28-page bibliography, nor the phrase 'Art Nouveau' in her index.

Indexes omitted

Ashgate: *The history of the book in the West: 1914–2000* (vol. 5), ed. by Alexis Weedon (2010, xxvii + 611 pp, £130). Rev. by Jack Meadows, *Library & Information Update*, December 2010.

What we have is a collection of articles, or chapters taken from books, on the history of publishing. They provide a sequence of vignettes, rather than a systematic history of the topic. Each is reproduced in its original format, giving the book a somewhat variegated appearance. A more important consequence is that there is no general index, only an index of names.

Black Dog: *Ronald Blythe – Aftermath: selected writings 1910–2010*, ed. by Peter Tolhurst (2010, 487pp, £18.99). Rev. by Peter Parker, *Times Literary Supplement*, 11 March 2011.

Gratitude for what is included far outweighs quibbles about what is not, but the publisher ought surely to have provided an index.

Ebury: *Behind the black door*, by Sarah Brown (2011, 464 pp, £18.99). Rev. by Francis Beckett, *The Guardian*, 5 March 2011.

The most frantic bits of [Gordon] Brown's government are dealt with in a laconic way oddly reminiscent of *Mrs Dale's Diary* . . . Irritatingly, there's no index, which feels like the publisher's way of saying that this is a bit of ephemera, and no one's going to want to look anything up in it. Likeable though the book is, they're probably right.

Rev. by Janice Turner, *The Times*, 5 March 2011.

It doesn't have an index, just 12 pages of thanks and acknowledgements. But it is not written for hacks or gossips, but for those who live beyond the metropolis, who watch 'The One Show', not 'Newsnight'. Fantastic, doughty, uncomplaining women . . . [*So such women don't need indexes?*]

Rev. by 'Mrs Money Penny', *Financial Times*, 12/13 March 2011.

It's true that the lack of an index is rather maddening, meaning that you will have to read your way through the entire book if you are seeking (for example) mentions of Pilates or names of specific people (tip: she first meets George Clooney on page 120 and Naomi Campbell on page 143).

English Place Name Society: *Language contact in the place-names of Britain and Ireland*, ed. by Paul Cavill and George Broderick (2007, ix + 183 pp, £25). Rev. by Alan G. James, *Journal of Scottish Name Studies*, 3, 2009.

One's only complaint is that, in works of place-name scholarship, indexes (of subject-matter and of place-names) should not be regarded as dispensable luxuries.

Faber: *Selected poems and translations of Ezra Pound 1908–1969*, ed. by Richard Sieburth (2011, 256 pp, £16.99). Rev. by Nicholas Lezard, *The Guardian*, 29 January 2011.

This is now the definitive selection, which also generously includes the introductions written by T. S. Eliot in 1928 and John Berryman in 1949. Anyone who cares about poetry, never mind just Pound, should have it. Although the notes could have been easier to use, and there is no index of first lines. [*Generosity has its limits, apparently.*]

Lynx Edicions (Barcelona): *The handbook of the mammals of the world, Vol. 1: Carnivores*, ed. by Don E. Wilson and Russell A. Mittermeier (2009, 729 pp, €160). Rev. by David MacDonald, *Times Literary Supplement*, 18 February 2011.

So, while it might seem philistine to ask, of such a beautiful book, what it is for, one answer is that it is a rich mine of information on carnivoran topics as intricate as their social lives (although digging out these details is made much tougher by the puzzling absence of a topic index).

Mainstream Publishing: *50 years on the Street: my life with Ken Barlow*, by William Roache (£14.99). Rev. by Alice Pitman, *The Oldie*, January 2011.

I could have done with less philosophising about the actor's lifelong search for spirituality (without even the reward of letting us in on his one-time druid activities). And why no index?

Penguin: *My happy days in hell*, by György Faludy, tr. by Kathleen Szasz (2010, 528 pp, £12.99). Rev. by George Gömöri, *Times Literary Supplement*, 11 February 2011.

There is an abundance of names in *My Happy Days in Hell*, mostly Hungarian, and an index would have been useful.

Professionalism Books: *Professionalism: the ABC for success*, by Susie Kay (2010, 91 pp, £10.99). Rev. by Margaret Watson, *Library and Information Update*, December 2010.

Without an index to the themes discussed it is difficult to dip into the book for advice on specific topics, which would be most useful. The contents page only gives the main headings.

Obiter dicta

Allen Lane: *Britain after Rome: the fall and rise, 400–1070*, by Robin Fleming (2010, 458 pp, £25). Rev. by Tom Shippey, *London Review of Books*, 17 March 2011.

It's worth pointing out that there is no entry for 'King Arthur' in Fleming's index, and not a word about him in the book. [*Well, fancy that. Could these two facts possibly be related? Anyway, it would have been under A for Arthur. Indexed by SI member Christine Shuttleworth.*]

Weidenfeld: *Life*, by Keith Richards with James Fox (2010, 364 pp, £20). Rev. by Jenny Diski, *London Review of Books*, 16 December 2010.

. . . I thought I'd read it all. I was sure I had, until I saw that the *Daily Express* quoted Richards from the book on the subject of the Iraq war: 'I sent [Tony Blair] a letter saying it was too late to pull out now baby, you had better stick to the guns. If I had spare time I'd go out there and give them a shot or two myself . . . I'd terrify them!' Could I have missed this? There's nothing in the index, but then there's no mention of Blair in the index at all, and Richards certainly says that he received a get well soon letter from Blair, when he (Richards) fell out of his tree. Is it possible the passage has been taken out on its way from publication in the US? Strange because not much else has, certainly not the American spelling, or the careful explanation of anything even faintly British, along with dogged translations of rhyming slang no one has used, except Richards, since Fanny was a girl's name.

Bias in indexing

Letters about Shelley: interchanged by three friends – Edward Dowden, Richard Garnett and Wm. Michael Rossetti (1917).

The editor of this book, R. S. Garnett, was the eldest son of Richard Garnett, the confederate of Jane, Lady Shelley (hereafter Lady Shelley). The book's bias against Harriet is shown in such things as the Index, where Shelley's second wife is listed as 'Shelley, Mary', but the poet's first wife, the mother of his only lawful and living descendants, is listed by her maiden name: 'Westbrook, Harriet'.

The joy of the index

There is a joy in going across a stacked shelf, flicking through the chapter headings and searching through the index in the hope that

you will find the answer you need to whatever baffles you that day, whether it's something to do with the Napoleonic wars or how to make the perfect meringue.

(Robin Ince, *New Statesman*, 27 January 2011)

A stunningly original suggestion

Post by folderol on 24 September 2010, 8.16 pm:

I've just scanned this thread and I didn't notice a suggestion anywhere that would seem to be the answer – or help at least – to Stouty's, and others' problem re finding things on the thread.

Blast of trumpets, please and bated breath as you await this magnificent suggestion that I immediately patent: An index!!!!

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, from the heart of my bottom. An index, cross referenced, of the title and basic subject, coupled with the instigator and date. This could be on a separate button that produces a pop up. Easy peasy, I would think for someone as brilliant as Sin. Well? Isn't anyone going to swoon at my feet for coming up with this world shattering suggestion? Mmmm?

Oh, alright then, I'll get me coat . . .

Post by artistlily on 25 September 2010, 9.20 pm:

Crikey Fol, how on earth would you set up an index? Lorra lorra work, innit???

Post by admin on 24 September 2010, 8:49 pm:

Not when you expect someone else to do it!

[*Quite so.*]

'Sensible Messageboards', <http://sinsoriginals.proboards.com>

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).