

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: *A dictionary of nineteenth-century journalism*, ed. by Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor (2009, 1014 pp, £65). Rev. by Donald Hausrath, www.amazon.com, 12 June 2011.

Browsing – which is fun to do in this title – through the best index I have ever seen in a reference book, I come across multiple entries on, for example, Aubrey Beardsley, booksellers, circulating libraries, child labor, Lord Byron, censorship, colored illustrations, comic journals, crime reporting, Charles Dickens, engravers, foreign correspondents, gossip columns, Thomas Hardy, Henry James, journalists, lower-middle class readers, mass readership, New York Times, paper, railways, reading and class, sensation fiction, United States, war correspondents, women journalists and women's suffrage not to mention entries on sports, politics, printers, editors, and publishers. Besides the 100 page bibliography, and 189 page general index, there is a useful listing of relevant – and often hard-to-find – websites and archives, and a separate index of all the illustrators, journalists/editors, distributors, printers, publishers and journal titles mentioned in the work. [*Indexes by SI members Drusilla Calvert, Phil Aslett and Judith Menes.*]

Cambridge University Press: *The exoplanet handbook*, by Michael Perryman (2011, 424 pp, £45). Rev. by (SI Secretary) John Silvester, *Spaceflight Magazine*, November 2011.

It includes a suitably extensive and well set out subject index (which will be of help to general readers who venture into its text) . . .

Chatto & Windus: *Nikolaus Pevsner: the life*, by Susie Harries (2011, 866 pp, £30). Rev. in *The Economist*, 401(8758), 5–11 November 2011.

His life provides a focus for numerous cultural and social observations, both high and low: in the meticulous index to Susie Harries's new full-length biography 'Jayne Mansfield' comes after 'Thomas Mann' and 'Mannerism'.

Council for British Archaeology: *The new antiquarians: 50 years of archaeological innovation in Wessex*, ed. by Rowan Whimster (2011, 256 pp, £20). Rev. by Christopher Scull, *British Archaeology*, November/December 2011.

Editing, design and production are of a high standard; the volume is well (sometimes charmingly) illustrated; and there are full references (very useful) and index. [*Presumably the index is also useful.*]

English Heritage: *A history of aerial photography & archaeology*, by Martyn Barber (2011, 300 pp, £25). Rev. by Mike Pitts, *British Archaeology*, November/December 2011.

The bibliography and footnotes are extensive, the index welcome . . .

Fourth Estate: *The lost diaries*, by Craig Brown (2011, 400 pp, £9.99). Rev. by Roland White, *Sunday Times*, 2 October 2011

It has one of the funniest indexes of any recent title and is also among the few works to feature both Lord Rees-Mogg and 1970s rock chick Suzi Quatro.

Rev. by Judith Rice, *The Guardian*, 25 October 2011.

. . . the index gives references with deadpan precision ('Greer, Germaine: condemns Queen, 13-14 . . . condemns pineapple, 70 . . . condemns fat, thin and medium sized women, 83 . . . condemns kangaroos, 122').

Kyle Books: *Grammar rules: writing with military precision*, by Craig Shrives (2011, 244 pp, £9.99). Rev. by Catharine Morris, *Times Literary Supplement*, 21 October 2011.

Clearly written and easy to navigate, *Grammar Rules* considers both American and British English, and covers punctuation, parts of speech, easily confused words and miscellaneous topics such as misplaced modifiers and the uses of which, that and who. There is also a good index.

Frances Lincoln: *My dear Hugh: letters from Richard Cobb to Hugh Trevor-Roper and others*, ed. by Tim Heald (2011, 240 pp, £20). Rev. by Noel Malcolm, *Sunday Telegraph*, 13 November 2011.

What this book gives is a glimpse into various corners of intellectual life in the late 20th century. Future historians will pillage it. But they, like many present-day readers, will find it hard work in some ways, for the editor, Tim Heald, has done an appallingly slapdash job. Well-known people who happen to be mentioned in passing are explicated, while key figures and allusions go unexplained. In places one gets the impression that the indexer had a better understanding of the book than the editor himself.

Polity Press: *Coltan*, by Michael Nest (2011, x + 220 pp, £40). Rev. by Andreas Exenberger, *African Affairs*, 21 November 2011.

. . . there is an extensive index allowing perfect navigation throughout the book and a well-annotated selected readings section. [*Index by the author – his first, over which he 'sweated blood and tears'.*]

Random House: *Crooked talk: five hundred years of the language of crime*, by Jonathon Green (2011, 400 pp, £14.99). Rev. by Oliver Harris, *Times Literary Supplement*, 7 October 2011.

No sources are given (for that we have to turn to Green's own three-volume *Dictionary of Slang*, published last year), but the index lends utility to what is otherwise an entertaining meander through themes: con men, drugs, prostitution, etc.

Thames & Hudson: *Verdi and/or Wagner*, by Peter Conrad (2011, 384 pp, £24.95). Rev. by Fiona Maddocks, *The Spectator*, 3 December 2011.

Every page is a cabinet of curiosities. The book has a good index and lively illustrations, but no footnotes or bibliography, which tells you much. It is a work of passion, not a thesis. [*Index by SI member Christine Shuttleworth.*]

Yale University Press: *Alfred Kazin's journals*, ed. by Richard M. Cook (2011, 598 pp, £35). Rev. by Zachary Leader, *Times Literary Supplement*, 30 September 2011.

Though in a book of this size mistakes and omissions are inevitable, the annotation is for the most part full and useful, as in the index, which notes topics or themes as well as the names of persons, places, works and events.

Indexes censured

Australian Scholarly Publishing: *From New Left to Factional Left*, by Alan Barcan (2011, 242 pp, \$A44). Rev. by Michael Wilding, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17-19 September 2011.

Alan Barcan's study of student activism at the University of Sydney ranges from the engaged 1960s to the present day. It offers a comprehensive dossier of names and groups, some forgotten, many now distinguished. . . . Not all are in the index.

Manchester University Press: *Air empire: British civil aviation 1919-1939*, by Gordon Pirie (2009, xii + 249 pp, £60). Rev. by J. E. Hoare, *Asian Affairs*, March 2011.

My only complaint is that something seemed to be badly wrong with the index in my copy, which jumped from 'London' to 'Royal Air Force' and then stopped. Curious in a book published by a university press.

John Wiley & Sons: *Windows 7 for dummies*, by Andy Rathbone (2009, 432 pp, £17.99). Rev. by J. A. L. Powell, www.amazon.co.uk, 10 April 2010.

Lots of info – but hard to find it. No proper index and if the list of contents doesn't respond to your problem, it is not a lot of use. I have failed to find an answer to the specific difficulty that led me to buy the book.

[*The book does have an index, even though this reviewer found it unsatisfactory. In fairness, another Amazon reviewer, 'Eastendboy', wrote on 14 November 2011: 'It's usually difficult to find the help or information when you need it. Having had the previous "Dummy's" I've always found them to be a source of answers and "How to" when you're stuck, via their very comprehensive indexing and plain language.'*]

Indexes omitted

John Blake: *Cry havoc*, by Simon Mann (2011, 351 pp, £19.99). Rev. in *The Economist*, 3 December 2011.

Despite its labyrinth of names and places, the book does not even have an index.

Bloomsbury: *Indigo: in search of the colour that seduced the world*, by Catherine McKinley (2011, 235 pp., Aus\$39.99). Rev. by Claudia Hyles, *Canberra Times*, 29 October, 2011.

McKinley is an excellent storyteller and while her style is natural and fluent, she seems intoxicated with this fluidity; at times it is difficult to actually excavate meaning from a web of words, odd

adjectives and strange similes. An Index would have been helpful and a little more attention should have been paid to fact.

James Clark: *An unexpected light: theology and witness in the poetry and thought of Charles Williams, Michael O'Siadhail, and Geoffrey Hill*, by David C. Mahan (2010, 246 pp, £20). Rev. by Stephen Prickett, *Times Literary Supplement*, 11 November 2011.

. . . though it has a bibliography, unlike [two other books reviewed], it has no index. The overall impression, whether correct or not, is more that of a PhD thesis than of a critical monograph.

Faber: *The Faber pocket guide to Bach*, by Nicholas Kenyon (2011, 512 pp, £8.99). Rev. by Peter Phillips, *Times Literary Supplement*, 30 September 2011.

Although there is no bibliography apart from a well-annotated Further Reading List, and no proper index, he manages to draw into his discussion many of the leading writers on Bach, as if they were personal friends.

Hodder & Stoughton: *The happy hooper*, by Celia Imrie (2011, 320 pp, £20). Rev. by Robert McCrum, *The Observer*, 20 November 2011.

Celia Imrie, one of the treasures of the British stage, is shortly opening in a revival of [Michael] Frayn's *Noises Off*. The publication of her memoir . . . makes it an autumn double for Ms Imrie. Sadly, this enthralling paperback is short of an index, so the thespian community will actually have to read it to find their reviews.

Murdoch Books: *Letters to my daughter*, ed. by Heather Henderson (2011, 304 pp, \$A39.95). Reviewed by Mark McGuinness, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29-30 October 2011.

A one-sided series of letters can be a challenge to continuity but vivid introductions to each chapter and frequent footnotes address this. (The only disappointment is the lack of an index.)

NewSouth Books: *Adelaide*, by Kerry Goldsworthy (2011, 304 pp, Aus\$29.95). Rev. by Christine Wallace, *Canberra Times*, 22 October, 2011.

Adelaide is a bijou delight and all credit to NewSouth Books for the design and production. An index would've been nice though. Good publishers should include them as standard. [*Hear, hear.*]

W. W. Norton: *The black banners: the inside story of 9/11 and the war against al-Qaeda*, by Ali Soufan (2011, 572 pp, \$26.95). Rev. in *The Economist*, 1 October 2011.

It is not the fault of author or publisher that the CIA so heavily redacted the text, often for no discernible reason. But they could have done more to make the book accessible to the general reader, who will be put off by a mass of names (and aliases) and a complex set of plots and subplots. The more specialised reader, meanwhile, will lament the scant information about Mr Soufan's sources, and the lack of an index. This is a pity since this is one of the most valuable and detailed accounts of its subject to appear in the past decade.

Oxford University Press: *Chamber music: a listener's guide*, by James M. Keller (2011, 494 pp, £27.50). Rev. by Peter Williams, *Times Literary Supplement*, 30 September 2011.

The background information, rich but without footnotes or index,

will remind readers how much has been contributed to music as a whole by American concert promotion in the twentieth century.

Quercus: *The table comes first: family, France, and the meaning of food*, by Adam Gopnik (2011, 304 pp, £18.99). Rev. by Paul Levy, *Times Literary Supplement*, 11 November 2011.

It was probably a poor choice not to include an index or apparatus, as these might have helped Gopnik do his homework more thoroughly.

Schocken: *Sacred trash: the lost and found world of the Cairo Geniza*, by Adina Hoffman and Peter Cole (2011, 286 p, \$26.95). Rev. by David J. Wasserstein, *Times Literary Supplement*, 30 September 2011.

The epigraph, taken from Ecclesiasticus, that text recognized a century ago by Schechter, asks what is the use of hidden wisdom and concealed treasure. A bibliography and an index would have brought out more of both in this wonderful book. [*Solomon Schechter, the Reader in Rabbinics at Cambridge University, was the scholar who discovered the manuscripts known collectively as the Cairo Geniza in 1896.*]

Verso: *All over the map: writing on buildings and cities*, by Michael Sorkin (2011, 320 pp, £20). Rev. by Robert A. Beauregard, *Times Literary Supplement*, 28 October 2011.

It is a shame that Sorkin has not given the same critical attention to the book as he does to buildings, places, and cities, starting with the culling of under-developed essays and adding an index.

Viking: *Bushrangers: Australia's greatest self-made heroes*, by Evan McHugh (2011, 336 pp, \$32.95). Rev. by Warwick McFadyen, *The Saturday Age*, 24 September 2011.

While the ambitions of Carol Baxter, author of *Thunderbolt* [*Captain Thunderbolt and his Lady*] and Evan McHugh, author of *Bushrangers*, should be lauded, the execution leaves a little to be desired.

One needs to read from the back to understand why. *Bushrangers* has no index, footnotes or bibliography. McHugh writes that preference was given to the text. 'Sufficient detail is contained in the text to identify nearly all newspaper articles, most of which can be found in the invaluable resource trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper. Readers requiring further assistance . . . are welcome to write to the author care of Penguin Australia.'

As if that is a reasonable alternative. One reads history to have questions answered, not to have to ask questions. It's a shame because – notwithstanding the screaming subtitle 'Australia's self-made heroes', a debatable point – there is a worthy book in here struggling to get out.

Obiter dicta

Bloomsbury: *Wild flowers*, by Sarah Raven (2011, 512 pp, £50). Rev. by David Sexton, *Evening Standard*, 6 October 2011.

Obviously it is not intended for in-the-field identification (Marjorie Blamey and Christopher Grey-Wilson's *Illustrated Flora* remains tops for that), despite an index of flowers by petal colour.

Rev. by Simon Jenkins, *The Guardian*, 18 November 2011.

I hardly know these flowers, let alone could recognise them Hence when Sarah Raven's colossal new compendium, *Wild Flowers*, thudded into my lap, it was not to the pictures that I turned

but to the index. The names are, in truth, the pictures, recording how country people down the ages have seen in nature a mirror of their lives. Here are adder's tongue, autumn lady's-tresses, betty-go-to-bed-at-noon, runaway jack, change-of-the-weather, codlins-and-cream and creeping-jenny. Here are dodder, madder, fat-hen and ling. Here are polypody, pignut and pudding dock, sowthistles, sorrels and spurges. Here are stitchwort, spleenwort, woundwort, sneezewort, lousewort, mugwort and nightshade. [*Index as poetry?*]

Rev. by Paul Johnson, *The Spectator*, 19 November 2011.

. . . this is a valuable work and admirably organised. Each plant has a separate entry and picture. There are glossaries of family names, species names and botanical terms and, most important, four separate indexes by petal colour, common name, Latin name and family name. The bibliography is up to date and there is a useful list of botanical organisations.

Oxford University Press: *A commentary on Ovid, Tristia, Book 2*, by Jennifer Ingleheart (2010, 448 pp, £80). Rev. by Dennis Feeney, *Times Literary Supplement*, 16 September 2011.

And Augustus becomes the one-eyed reader not just in terms of sex, for the Emperor reads all of his Ovid through the lens of the hermeneutics of suspicion Every aspect of Augustus' achievements begins to look vulnerable to this corrosion, from his legislation for the improvement of public morality to his building programme: witness the wonderful solitary entry in Ingleheart's General Index under 'temples' as 'erotic meeting places'.

Routledge: *Primate visions: gender, race, and nature in the world of modern science*, by Donna Haraway (1989, ix + 486 pp, \$35). Rev. by Matt Cartmill, *International Journal of Primatology*, 12(1), 1991.

This is a book that clatters around in a dark closet of irrelevancies for 450 pages before it bumps accidentally into its index and stops . . .

Viking: *The better angels of our nature: why violence has declined*, by Steven Pinker (832 pp, \$40). Rev. by Elizabeth Kolbert, *The New Yorker*, 3 October 2011.

Yet other episodes that one would think are more relevant to a history of violence are simply glossed over. Pinker is virtually silent about Europe's bloody colonial adventures. (There's not even an entry for 'colonialism' in the book's enormous index.)

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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).