

# 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

**Alma Books:** *A. J. Cronin: the man who created Dr Finlay*, by Alan Davies (2011, 384 pp, £20). Rev. by Michael O'Sullivan, *The Tablet*, 10 September 2011.

The book is meticulously researched and documented, contains copious explanatory notes, a proper index and 12 pages of plates . . .

**American Library Association,** *Building bridges: connecting faculty, students and the college library*, by Monty L. McAdoo (2010, 159 pp, \$55). Rev. by Colin Higgins, *CILIP Update*, February 2012.

. . . this volume is well written, well edited, and clear throughout. Though it rewards cover-to-cover reading, an excellent index permits its use as a tool of ready-reference.

**American Library Association,** *Broken pieces: a library life, 1941-1978*, by Michael Gorman (2011, 232 pp, £30.50). Rev. by J. H. Bowman, *CILIP Update*, February 2012.

. . . there is a full index, including such delights as 'catalogue drawer rods, duelling with' and 'hares dancing in English countryside' . . .

**Ashgate:** *Visual interface design for digital cultural heritage: a guide for rich-prospect browsing*, by Stan Ruecker, Milena Radzikowska and Stefan Sinclair (2011, 197 pp, £55). Rev. by Catherine Gilbert, *Australian Academic & Research Libraries*, 42(4), December 2011.

There is a comprehensive index and list of references for following up.

**Facet:** *Innovations in information retrieval: perspectives for theory and practice*, ed. by Allen Foster and Pauline Rafferty (2011, 156 pp, £44.95). Rev. by Catherine Gilbert, *Australian Academic & Research Libraries*, 42(4), December 2011.

There is a comprehensive index and a detailed bibliography for each chapter.

**McClelland & Stewart:** *A matter of principle*, by Conrad Black (2011, 592 pp, \$37). Rev. by Bernard Bujold, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/lestudio1/6121878449/>

A very well written book that chronicles the journey of Conrad Black from the time of Argus until today. For the curious, there is an index at the end, allowing [sic] to trace the characters rapidly. [Index by ISC/SCI member Heather Ebbs. See also the entry for this book under *Obiter dicta*.]

**Manchester University Press:** *Dearest Jean: Rose Macaulay's letters*

*to a cousin*, by Martin Ferguson-Smith (2011, 349 pp, £70). Rev. by Ana Vicente, *The Tablet*, 3 September 2011.

There are two appendices, a bibliography, a key to first names, two family trees, a good index, and 18 illustrations. All this material is excellent.

**Oneworld Classics (now Alma Classics):** *The Divine Comedy, Purgatory*, by Dante Alighieri, tr. by J. G. Nichols (2011, 396 pp, £10.99). Rev. by A. N. Wilson, *Times Literary Supplement*, 2 December 2011.

I learnt much from [Nichols'] version, and it has one particularly useful feature – an index.

**Oxford University Press:** *Ben Jonson: a life*, by Ian Donaldson (533 pp, £25). Rev. by Brian Vickers, *Times Literary Supplement*, 17 February 2012.

An entry in Donaldson's admirable index, 'Troubles with the law', lists six plays which also got Jonson into trouble.

**Oxford University Press:** *The life of slang*, by Julie Coleman (2012, 368 pp, £14.99). Rev. by Robert McCrum, *The Guardian*, 26 February 2012.

What reader could not thrill to an OUP monograph whose index catalogues arf arf, bunny-boiler, fucktard, hornswoggle, reffo, skankaroo, top banana, wowser, wha'gwaan, and zhoosh?

**Oxford University Press:** *Oxford companion to Charles Dickens* (Anniversary Edition), ed. by Paul Schlicke (2011, 736 pp, £25). Rev. by Catherine Peters, *Literary Review*, February 2012.

It has a wonderfully informative index, always a good indication of a really well-conceived companion.

**Profile:** *Van Gogh: the life*, by Stephen Naifeh and Gregory White Smith (2011, 912 pp, £30). Rev. by Brian Sewell, 22 December 2011.

It is a worthy but not worthwhile effort, for who now has the time to read a thousand pages crammed with uncomfortably small print? As this may well be another book much owned but little read, its index is invaluable for finding odd facts not easily discoverable elsewhere . . . .

**Thames & Hudson:** *Archaeology: theories, method and practice*, by Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn (2012, 656 pp, £32). Rev. by Mike Pitts, *British Archaeology*, March/April 2012.

Now in its sixth edition, this book has become so popular with students on both sides of the Atlantic mainly, I think, because it thinks big. With every revision it has become more attractive to look at, so that now the entire book is in full colour. It is immaculately fact-checked and proofed, there are huge reading lists, a fat index and plentiful photos and diagrams.

**Thames & Hudson:** *Verdi and/or Wagner*, by Peter Conrad (2011, 384 pp, £24.95). Rev. by Philip Gossett, *Times Literary Supplement*, 10 February 2012.

The book has no bibliography . . . and no references of any kind, although it does have a serviceable index. [*Index by SI member Christine Shuttleworth.*]

**Westport Book:** *Eamon De Valera, 1882-1975: Irish Catholic visionary*, by Anthony J. Jordan (2010, 328 pp, €15). Rev. by Hugh Oram, *Books Ireland*, May 2011.

Jordan's book is admirably produced with plenty of historical photographs, a very detailed bibliography, plentiful footnotes and an abundant index.

**Cecil Woolf,** *Virginia Woolf: A to Z*, by Mark Hussey (1995, reissued 2011, 464 pp, £17.50). Rev. by Bea Crawford, *Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain Bulletin*, no. 39, January 2012.

The volume is remarkably easy to use, partly owing to the refreshing absence of the asterisks and footnotes often found in such comprehensive reference books. Nor did I have to spend hours turning to the back of the book in pursuit of explanatory notes: the indexing is excellent and everything is clearly cross-referenced, making it easy and quick to use.

## Indexes censured

**Cambridge University Press:** *London, Modernism, and 1914*, ed. by Michael J. K. Walsh (2010, xx + 294 pp, £50). Rev. by Patrick Parrinder, *Literature & History*, 3rd series 20/2.

Some opportunities are missed, perhaps because they took place outside London – the extraordinarily productive friendship between Edward Thomas and Robert Frost is a striking example – and, one must reluctantly add, a good deal that is mentioned in this book (including such a prominent figure as D. H. Lawrence) is omitted from Walsh's index.

**Edwin Mellen Press:** *The architectural achievement of Joseph Aloysius Hansom (1803–1882)*, by Penelope Harris (2010, 200 pp, £69.95). Rev. by James Stevens Curl, *Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain Newsletter*, no. 102, Winter/Spring 2011.

Harris should be encouraged to produce a major, complete and thorough study of Hansom's work, for this slim volume is only a prelude: the illustrations are unsatisfactorily reproduced, and some are so distorted they should not have been included at all. The bibliography is rudimentary, and the index could have been better. The price being asked seems on the high side.

**Mary Rose Trust:** *Weapons of warre: the armaments of the Mary Rose*, ed. by Alexzandra Hildred (2008, 1000 pp, £49.95). Rev. by Robert Waterhouse, *Current Archaeology*, issue 263, February 2012.

While the intellectual content is uniformly satisfying, I was left with some minor concerns about editing and presentation. Even allowing for the scope of the volumes, the number of typists', spelling, omission, and indexing errors is surprising. To be fair, this seems to have become an endemic problem in publishing over the last few years. In any case, such errors do not prevent the reader from understanding the text or illustrations.

**Oak Knoll Press:** *Christina Rossetti: a descriptive bibliography*, by Maura Ives (2011, 344 pp, \$95). Rev. by Russell James, *Times Literary Supplement*, 6 January 2012.

There are a few minor problems here. Rossetti's contribution to Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *The Germ*, submitted under the name Ellen Alleyn, is described in the text, but we find no entry for the pseudonym in the index. Also, the index may give over twenty page references for a poem, but with no indication as to which are significant and which incidental. (Perhaps to a bibliographer, no occurrence is incidental.)

**Oxford University Press:** *Art and the senses*, ed. by Francesca Bacci and David Melcher (622 pp, £69.99). Rev. by Michael Silk, *Times Literary Supplement*, 24 February 2012.

There is more cause for frustration. On a superficial level, the volume is poorly edited: within the first four pages the contributor Laura Marks turns into 'Mark' (later on, in her own bibliography, she becomes 'Tiarks'). Horace is 'Horatio' and Nietzsche 'Nietsche'; the index is wildly erratic . . .

**Oxford University Press:** *Jane Austen's letters*, ed. by Deirdre Le Faye (694 pp, £25). Rev. by John Carey, *Sunday Times*, 18 December 2011.

The letters, it must be added, are not an easy read, least of all in this fat, ugly edition. There is a bewildering torrent of unknown names and unexplained allusions, and Deirdre Le Faye's notes, inconveniently stuffed away at the back, are hopelessly inadequate, absurdly supplying information about minor alterations in the manuscripts when what you want to know is who is being talked about. The biographical index, to which refugees from the notes are presumably meant to go to seek enlightenment, is a morass of indigestible erudition. The whole farrago is an object lesson in how not to present the fruits of learning to the common reader, and Austen, who valued clarity and simplicity, would have been properly derisive.

**Quartet:** *Outsider: always almost: never quite*, by Brian Sewell (2011, 343 pp, £25). Rev. by Richard Davenport-Hines, *Times Literary Supplement*, 20 January 2012.

Sewell is a discomfitingly intelligent writer. The chief defect of his book is an intolerably scant, cheeseparing index which makes it hard to navigate and the best stories all but irretrievable.

**St John Publishing:** *Selling sickness!*, by Ronnie Plant (2011, 290 pp, £17.50). Rev. in *Books Ireland*, May 2011.

It is a densely packed and chaotic book with an index at the front labelled 'contents', listing unequal headings – under C is Calcium and Cancer and under W is 'We are a sick and malnourished nation'. [*The author has published this book himself, and presumably also compiled his own 'index'.*]

## Indexes omitted

**Allen & Unwin:** *Everyday kindness: short cuts to a happier and more confident life*, by Stephanie Dowrick (2012, 384 pp, \$27.99). Rev. by Dianne Dempsey, *The Saturday Age*, 3 December 2011.

It is just a pity there is no index to get more out of [Dowrick's] considered and gentle writings.

**Baker Academic:** *A hitchhiker's guide to Jesus: reading the gospels on the ground*, by Bruce N. Fisk (2011, 287 pp, £24.99). Rev. by Tom Wright, *Times Literary Supplement*, 16 December 2011.

The major questions are well presented, with good endnotes and

bibliography (but, again, no index).

**John Blake:** *Cry havoc*, by Simon Mann (2011, 351 pp, \$24.95, £19.99). Rev. in *The Economist*, 3 December 2011

The book is also riddled with omissions and evasions. . . . Despite its labyrinth of names and places, the book does not even have an index.

**Common Ground Publishing:** *Reopening the space frontier*, by John Hickman (2010, 198 pp, \$30). Rev. in *Spaceflight*, 54, January 2012.

Disillusioned manned space enthusiasts should read this book, as well as general readers, but it would have been better with an index.

**Continuum:** *Jesus of Nazareth: an independent historian's account of his life and teaching*, by Maurice Casey (2010, 560 pp, £22.99). Rev. by Tom Wright, *Times Literary Supplement*, 16 December 2011.

Casey's massive learning is hard to summarize (just as his book, lacking a proper index and bibliography, is harder to use than it should be).

**Doubleday:** *Lucking out: my life getting down and semi-dirty in the seventies*, by James Wolcott (2011, 260 pp, \$25.95). Rev. by Alan Taylor, *Times Literary Supplement*, 13 January 2012.

What emerges . . . is a funny, evocative counterpoint to the novels of Jay McInerney, Tama Janowitz and Bret Easton Ellis. That its author appears to have been sober while all around were not adds curiously to its appeal, which would be further enhanced by the addition of an index.

**History Press Ireland:** *Plantation castles on the Erne*, by Bill Wilsdon (2010, 252 pp, £17.99). Rev. by Pat McCarthy, *Books Ireland*, April 2011.

For anybody interested in the history of counties Fermanagh or Cavan or in Irish military history in general, this book is to be commended, the only criticism – the lack of an index.

**Mercier Press:** *Riotous assemblies: rebels, riots and revolts in Ireland*, ed. by William Sheehan and Maura Cronin (2011, 320 pp, €19.99). Rev. by Barry McLoughlin, *Books Ireland*, Summer 2011.

. . . the merits of the contributions are diminished because the book is disgracefully produced: firstly, the footnotes are not at the bottom of the page or at the end of the chapter but squeezed together at the back of the volume, without chapter title or any kind of caption so that most readers will tire of thumbing back and forth; secondly, this book about public violence contains only one map and, thirdly, there is no index.

**Penguin:** *What is madness?*, by Darian Leader (2011, 359 pp, £20). Rev. by Carlo Gébler, *Irish Times*, 22 October 2011.

One final quibble: why has this book no index? [*Madness indeed.*]

**Private Eye Productions:** *Private Eye: the first 50 years*, by Adam McQueen (2011, 312 pp, £25). Rev. by Patrick Marnham, *The Spectator*, 17/24 December 2011.

[Ian Hislop's] fans will no doubt be delighted by the many photographs of him that appear in this book. Indeed he pops up all over

the place. You think you are getting a short break and there he is again, just in case you had forgotten what he looks like. I lost count of the number of headings which set out to cover a subject – Youth, Lookalikes, Moron, Cook (Peter) – which suddenly metamorphose into further aspects of Hislop. This is a clear example of the rule More means Less. I would have traded about 200 Hislops for an index, which would assist readers to follow particular lines of enquiry.

## Obiter dicta

**Éditions du Cercle de la Librairie,** *Dictionnaire encyclopédique du livre, N–Z*, ed. by Pascal Fouché, Daniel Fouché et al (2011, 1,088 pp, €195). Rev. by Philip Ford, *Times Literary Supplement*, 3 February 2012.

Weighing in at a little under 4 kilos, the third volume of this monumental work completes a project whose first volume (A–D) came out in 2002, and second volume (E–M) in 2005. Volume Three is accompanied by an index for the complete set . . . contributors are very much aware of the issues facing the publishing world, which are in a constant state of flux as new technology comes on stream. In that sense, it is hard for a work of this nature to keep up, and if we look at the Index, there is no entry for 'Liseuse' (an e-reader), which no doubt would have found its way into the 2005 Volume Two had it existed then, for 'Google Books', announced in December 2004 but also too late for Volume Two, or even for the online journal archiving system JSTOR, active since the mid-1990s.

**McClelland & Stewart:** *A matter of principle*, by Conrad Black (2011, 592 pp, \$37). Rev. by Nicholas Köhler, *Macleans.ca*, 12 September 12, 2011.

Black is nowhere more vulnerable than in the book's index, where, under the heading 'Kissinger, Henry,' the first subject reads 'abandons CB.')] [*Index by Heather Ebbs.*]

**Oxford University Press:** *W. B. Yeats and George Yeats: the letters*, ed. by Ann Saddlemyer (2011, 624 pp, £30). Rev. by Seamus Heaney, *Times Literary Supplement*, 2 December 2011.

And as [W. B. Yeats] shifts from Coole Park to London clubs to hostesses at other distinguished addresses, George [his wife] stays in Dublin, ready and cheerfully willing, to the extent that on one occasion she prepared the index of first lines for W. B.'s *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* ('it took me 13¾ hours').

**I. B. Tauris:** *The wartime journals*, by Hugh Trevor-Roper, ed. by Richard Davenport-Hines (336 pp, £25). Rev. by Noel Malcolm, *Standpoint*, January/February 2012.

He was engaged in a kind of private literary exercise, and some years later . . . he amused himself by compiling a detailed index, which is also reproduced in this edition . . . But there are many other memorable things here . . . and increasingly intolerant comments on the truly intolerable A. L. Rowse (for which Trevor-Roper's index entries supply a suitable running commentary: 'Rowse, A. L.: poor old, becoming a bore; his deplorable autobiography; once influenced me; a talented shit; touched in the brain'). [*Index by Hugh Trevor-Roper and SI member Christopher Phipps.*]

Warm thanks to the contributors to this section:

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