

# Indexes reviewed

Edited by Christine Shuttleworth

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*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

**ALA TechSource:** *Implementing virtual reference services: a LITA guide*, ed. by Beth Thomsett-Scott (2013, 152 pp, \$70). Rev. by Elizabeth Melrose, *CILIP Update*, November 2014.

Each chapter ends with a list of references and along with biographies of the authors there is a useful index.

**Atlantic:** *More dynamite: essays*, by Craig Raine (560 pp, £31.50). Rev. by Jeremy Noel-Tod, *Daily Telegraph*, 7 December 2013.

The lavish index will take you to anecdotes about WH Auden, Harold Pinter, Seamus Heaney, Robert Lowell and Tom Stoppard. It also reveals at a glance who is a friend and who is not. For example: 'Coetzee, JM, prose 219, shortcomings 219; Hughes, Ted, charisma, 168' .... Writing about Jeff Koons or Gerhard Richter, he has no time for 'art historians' (Eliot, oddly, remains the touchstone authority), but also, suddenly, no problem with post-modernism, and can appreciate 'the halo, the nimbus, the blur, the suggestion' that he finds intolerable in the poetry of his peers (see 'Paterson, Don, lack of clarity 317').

**Canongate:** *The novel cure: an A to Z of literary remedies*, by Susan Elderkin and Ella Berthoud (2013, 464 pp, £17.99). Rev. by Gavin Francis, *The Guardian*, 21 September 2013.

An index of authors lets you seek out your darlings and cross reference them with the ailments they've been prescribed for. The result is more bibliophilia than bibliotherapy; an exuberant pageant of literary fiction and a celebration of the possibilities of the novel.

**Oxford University Press:** *The Oxford handbook of Nietzsche*, ed. by Ken Gemes and John Richardson (816 pp, £95/US \$150). Rev. by Tom Stern, *Times Literary Supplement*, 5 September 2014.

As for the French Nietzsche: Derrida is not in the *Handbook's* comprehensive index.

**Penguin Classics:** *Letters to Vera*, by Vladimir Nabokov (2014, 864 pp, £30). Rev. by Eric Naiman, *Times Literary Supplement*, 31 October 2014.

*Letters to Vera* is better suited to the scholar than to the general public, but its publication is an impressive achievement. Copiously annotated and amply indexed, it is extremely user-friendly.

**Random House:** *How to be well read: a guide to 500 great novels and*

*a handful of literary curiosities*, by John Sutherland (2014, 516 pp, £20). Rev. by Toby Lichtig, *Times Literary Supplement*, 14 November 2014.

The books appear alphabetically, moving from *Aaron's Rod* by D. H. Lawrence ('a novel fated, like "aardvark" in dictionaries, always to come first') to Max Beerbohm's *Zuleika Dobson*, which presumably takes the role of 'zyzzyva', 'zyxt' or 'zygote', depending on your dictionary. At the end is a useful index in which, for example, Jackie Collins (*Hollywood Wives*: 'hugely readable') appears next to her namesake Wilkie (*The Moonstone*: 'a groundbreaking achievement' that 'now seems clunky') and Don DeLillo's *White Noise* ('a comic masterpiece with black, surreal fringes') cosies up to Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* ('The sheer zest of [her] writing is like breathing oxygen off the page').

## Indexes censured

**Cambridge University Press:** *Choral mediations in Greek tragedy*, ed. by Renaud Gagné and Marianne Govers Hopman (2013, 437 pp, £65). Rev. by Stephen Halliwell, *Times Literary Supplement*, 26 September 2014.

*Choral Mediations ...* does have a deplorably poor index.

**Faber:** *The letters of T. S. Eliot*, ed. by John Haffenden (2014, 928 pp, £50). Rev. by J. C., 'NB', *Times Literary Supplement*, 7 November 2014.

The fifth volume of *The Letters of T. S. Eliot* (Faber, £50) thumps on to our desk and we flick to the index to discover more about his relations with the *TLS*. The 850-page volume covers the period from January 1, 1930, till December 31, 1931, during which Eliot was a regular contributor to the paper.

The first reference to the *TLS* in the General Index directs us to p265 and a letter of July 23, 1930. Browsing from the front, however, we find on p12 a letter to the paper's editor, Bruce Richmond, written on January 3, 1930. It was a covering letter attached to a review of a new edition of Thomas Middleton's play *A Game at Chesse*. 'I send herewith at last my belated review. ...' Eliot plays down his qualifications for the task – 'It is really a book for ... one of the bigwigs of text criticism' – but goes on to say that the new version 'makes me want to scrap my essay on Middleton and write another, longer and better one'. Which 'essay on Middleton'? Doubtless, the one that originally appeared in the *TLS* of June 30, 1927, later in *Selected Essays* (1931). The footnote takes the same silent line as the index.

Richmond has been keeping him busy. 'I want to review the [Robert] Southwell next', he says in the same letter, referring to Middleton's near contemporary. Did he? We are not told. And he has yet another assignment in hand. 'I doubt whether vol III of *The History of the Novel* is worth more than half a column.'

An In Brief by T. S. Eliot would be welcome, none the less, but from a letter to Richmond's assistant (February 14, 1930), we learn that Eliot preferred to wait 'for the fourth volume' of the *History*. 'I think a column or a column and a half is quite possible for the two volumes together'. A footnote tells us that Eliot's long piece

appeared as a 'front-page review ... *TLS*, 17 July 1930'. The index passes by in silence.

Another important letter for those wishing to explore Eliot's relations with the *TLS* is dated March 18, 1930. It is printed on p121:

Dear Richmond,

In suggesting that I should write about Tourneur you are exposing me to serious temptation: I want to write about Tourneur more than about any other Elizabethan, and the occasion may never occur again.

He took his time, but 'Cyril Tourneur' appeared in the *TLS* on November 13, 1930 – the footnote tells us so, but the index ignores the event. At the end of his letter, Eliot asked Richmond, 'Is anyone writing about Whibley for the *TLS*?' This refers to Charles Whibley (1859–1930), a now-forgotten figure, whose column for *Blackwood's* Eliot considered 'the best sustained piece of literary journalism that I know of in recent times'. The reference to the *TLS* is again invisible. Eliot did write about Whibley – the piece is in *Selected Essays* – but not for the *TLS*.

**Oberon Books:** *In two minds: a biography of Jonathan Miller*, by Kate Bassett (2014, 288 pp, £16.59). Rev. by Frogstopper, Amazon Customer Reviews, 16 October 2013.

But he doesn't just use his eloquence scurrilously; he describes conkers as looking like the eggs from which Sheraton sideboards are hatched (I had to dredge that one up from memory as there is no entry for conkers in the index, a glaring omission in an otherwise perfect book). [*Maureen MacGlashan, who submitted this item, comments that it's not surprising conkers weren't in the index, since it is only a names index.*]

**Oxford University Press:** *Of the laws of ecclesiastical polity*, by Richard Hooker, ed. by Arthur Stephen McGrade (2013, 3 vols, 1,152 pp, £275). Rev. by Scott Mandelbrote, *Times Literary Supplement*, 14 November 2014.

Most seriously, no proper effort is made to identify the contemporary sources used by Hooker, with modern editions standing in wherever possible. There is no discussion of the printing history of the text (so that the names of Windet, Stansby, Spencer and Hole, for example, appear to be absent from the introduction, which is also not indexed anywhere).

**I. B. Tauris:** *When the tiger fought the thistle: the tragedy of Colonel William Baillie of the Madras Army*, by Alan Tritton (2013, 314 pp, £27.50). Rev. by Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, *Asian Affairs: Journal of the Royal Society for Asian Affairs*, July 2014.

This is an old-fashioned history book, deliberately so perhaps, without footnotes, but with long and elegant chapter headings in the 18th century manner. It is discursive, leading slowly into the story by examining the 1707 Union between England and Scotland, although this is in fact relevant because it gave younger sons, like William, opportunities for commissions in the army. It is a pity the index is so skimpy. William doesn't even have his own entry, and there are a few editing errors. But this is a book to be enjoyed, where the author is not afraid to voice his own perceptive opinions and comments.

**Yale University Press:** *The Leonard Bernstein letters*, ed. by Nigel Simeone (606 pp, £25). Rev. by Anthony Burton, *BBC Music Magazine*, January 2014.

Simeone's chapter introductions are clear and sympathetic, while his footnotes are helpful and occasionally copious, though some of

the more obscure references remain frustratingly unexplained (and the index of any future edition should point the reader towards the useful potted biographies of correspondents).

**Thames & Hudson:** *Stonehenge complete*, by Christopher Chipindale (2004). Rev. by Neville Macaulife, *Stonehenge starship* (Rosseta of the West, 2014).

This is a good read, well illustrated, well researched, and comprehensive. ... My only problem with it is that I found the index confusing, and key terms had so many marginally relevant entries that I sometimes found it quicker to use the web.

## Indexes omitted

**Arrow:** *How life imitates chess: insights into life as a game of strategy*, by Garry Kasparov (2008, 288 pp, £9.99). Rev. by Cochin Blogger, <http://cochinblogger.wordpress.com/2014/09/09/on-squeezing-one-ball/>

I must point out one unpardonable defect of the book: inexplicably enough, it lacks an index. For a book that ranges far and wide over history and current affairs, it's a crippling omission. For example, I had to flip back and forth to locate the Pan Am discussion; with an index, I could've gone straight to the page number.

**Edward Elgar Publishing:** *Trade secrets and undisclosed information*, ed. by Sharon K. Sandeen and Elizabeth Rowe (2014, 968pp, \$470). Rev. by Jeremy Phillips, *The IPKat* (intellectual property law blog), <http://ipkitten.blogspot.co.uk/2014/09/trade-secrets-exposed.html>

... the volume consists of a short, well-written introduction followed by a collection of previously-published journal articles and book chapters, reproduced in their original format, and without the unifying convenience of an index or list of cases .... At US\$470 this tome may be an invaluable one for students, but it's a pretty expensive one too. For that price, some helpful indexing would be the least one might hope for – especially since each of the articles found via a random search of some of the chapters contained here shows that they were available at no cost via SSRN.

**Faber:** *How to speak money*, by John Lanchester (2014, 304 pp, £17.99). Rev. by Larry Elliott, *The Guardian*, 6 September 2014.

It is also annoying that the book does not have an index. Presumably, the publishers thought the list format made it unnecessary, but they were wrong. Searching for the reference to Isaac Newton – who despite being the cleverest man in the world lost a packet in the South Sea Bubble – I had to skim through every listing before finding it (under 'greater fool theory').

**Gallimard:** *Oeuvres complètes*, by Marguerite Duras, ed. by Gilles Philippe et al (2014, I and II, 1,608 pp and 1,896 pp, €65 and €70; III and IV, 3, 536 pp, €133). Rev. by Dan Gunn, *Times Literary Supplement*, 14 November 2014.

The only possible lacuna – though given the thoroughness of Philippe and his team, it seems almost churlish to mention it – is the lack of an index; it would be helpful to know, for instance, just how often Duras mentions this or that fellow writer, or politician, or lover.

**Headline:** *Gin glorious gin*, by Olivia Williams (2014, 317 pp, £14.99). Rev. by Lewis Jones, *The Spectator*, 6 September 2014.

It is not a remotely scholarly book. There are no notes or index ...

**Outskirts Press:** *Fifty years on the space frontier: Halo orbits, comets, asteroids and more*, by Robert Farquhar (2011, 460 pp, £26.31). Rev. by John Silvester, *Odyssey: the e-Magazine of the British Interplanetary Society*, October 2014.

Although there are some technical parts to it the book, with a foreword by Roger Bonnet, a former director of ESA, is an excellent read on a subject that is growing in importance. It covers much else besides. My one criticism of it is that it does not have an index.

## Obiter dicta

**Bloomsbury:** *Philip Larkin: life, art and love*, by James Booth (2014, 544 pp, £25). Rev. by Rory Waterman, *Times Literary Supplement*, 14 November 2014.

Part of the problem with Booth's argument is that he holds too resolutely to contradictory statements depending on the point he is trying to make. So, for example, we are told that 'Nationalism was alien to Larkin's sensibility' one minute, then, a few pages later, 'It is dispiriting to see his ... narrow defensive nationalism'. (Both are listed next to one another in the index, under 'Larkin, Philip and nationalism'.)

**Hodder:** *The Churchill factor: how one man made history*, by Boris Johnson (2014, 416 pp, £20). Rev. by Philip Hensher, *The Spectator*, 25 October 2014.

Whether or not this biographer, after years of being regarded as an intensely likeable but somewhat shambolic person, a gifted writer but not entirely to be trusted, is going to be presented with the great opportunity of disaster to test his mettle in the worst of all moments, we must wait to see. In the meantime – granted this volume's entertaining as well as mildly preposterous elements – it is true to say that few people in the mid-1930s would have thought it remotely likely that Churchill would ever be regarded as his country's saviour. Whether that entirely justifies an index entry reading 'Habits resembling Bertie Wooster figure, p.122' (really, Boris? Really?), I can't honestly say.

**John Murray:** *Alphabetical: how every letter tells a story*, by Michael Rosen (2013, 431 pp, £16.99). Rev. by Stephanie Cross, *Daily Telegraph*, 8 December 2013.

It does not escape Rosen that the internet has sidelined the alphabet almost entirely in one respect: as a means of ordering information. Thanks to Google we now search for what we want by using whole words, not just their first letter, and what we find is often ranked in terms of popularity. In spite of what you might think, Rosen doesn't regard this as necessarily a change for the worse: 'For all its virtues, alphabetical order has had its drawbacks. Surely it's imposed an arbitrary view of what or who is first, second and third.' Funnily enough we discover that Samuel Taylor Coleridge had exactly this beef when it came to the subject of encyclopedias. Rosen is, however, noticeably silent on the subject of indexes and how they might otherwise be arranged. For this reviewer at least, it was something of a relief to find that *Alphabetical's* still ran conveniently, if a little quaintly, from A through to Z.

**Oxford University Press:** *Dangerous rhythm: why movie musicals matter*, by Richard Barrios (2014, 288 pp, £22.99). Rev. by Sam Leith, *The Spectator*, 19 July 2014.

Smitten with the musicals of the past, Barrios is nevertheless unstuffy about those of the present. The late 1980s rapper Vanilla Ice even merits two mentions in the index (under V) .... Barrios zips back and forth through time and repeats himself, and his discussion of any given musical tends to be spread through the book like, well, fruit coulis through the layers of a magnificent pastry. The index entry for *My Fair Lady*, for instance, has it mentioned on average about once every ten pages. You long for him to slow down and focus.

**Simon & Schuster:** *Rocks: my life in and out of Aerosmith*, by Joe Perry (2014, 432 pp, £20). Rev. by David Smyth, *Evening Standard*, 4 December 2014.

[This book], like his music, has all the classic elements. Simply check the index under singer Steven Tyler and you can already begin playing bingo: 'drugs and', 'fellatio and', 'guns and', 'paranoia of'.

**Simon & Schuster:** *Norman Mailer: a double life*, by J. Michael Lennon (2013, 947 pp, £30). Rev. by Lewis Jones, 23 November 2013.

The greatest number of entries in Lennon's index occurs under 'Mailer, Norman: infidelities of', covering the ins and outs of his six marriages.

**Wilmington Square Books:** *101 places in Italy: a private Grand Tour*, by Francis Russell (2014, 288 pp, £15). Rev. by Jonathan Keates, *Times Literary Supplement*, 19 September 2014.

Originally published in 2007, Francis Russell's *52 Italian Places: A pocket Grand Tour* quickly established itself as an indispensable guide to the genius loci of everywhere that matters in Italy, from Turin to Palermo. There was an excellent fold-out index, a generous clutch of blank pages encouraging travellers to add their own discoveries, and the bonus of David Hockney's ink-and-watercolour sketch of the author .... Now, Russell's guide has been reissued by another imprint, with the number of sites almost doubled and its subtitle changed, owing to the larger format. [*But is the index still in fold-out form?*]

### The expected task

You recall Barbara Pym from Mama's bookshelves? In *Excellent Women* Miss Pym made it clear that indexing is the expected task of a helpmeet, though she also implies that indexing becomes an obligation only when one has accepted the inevitability of the relationship.

*The outsmarting of criminals: a mystery introducing Miss Felicity Prim*, by Steven Rigolosi (Ransom Note Press, 2014).

### A duchess's index

When some years ago I stopped having to go to an office, mainly because nobody wanted me to go to one, I started to do quite a lot of cooking. I am no natural cook, but I had ambitions. I bought more and more cookery books – Jane Grigson, Elizabeth David, Nigella Lawson, Jamie Oliver, that kind of thing – far more than I was ever going to consult. ... for bread-and-butter pudding I liked to refer to the late Duchess of Devonshire's *Chatsworth Cookery Book*, where it is puzzlingly found in the index not under 'B' but under 'D', for 'Duke's Bread and Butter Pudding').

Alexander Chancellor, 'Long life', *The Spectator*, 11 October 2014

[*I wonder, would a duchess prepare her own index?*]

### A racing commentator's index

In it [Sir Peter O'Sullivan's autobiography] will be plenty of references to the race he yesterday followed from his armchair after breaking off from working on the index to the new book.

(Interview with Sir Peter O'Sullivan, *Racing Post*, 6 October 2014)

[*Ian Craine, who submitted this item, writes:* Monday 6 October, the day after the world's richest horse race, the Prix de L'Arc de Triomphe at Longchamp in Paris's Bois de Boulogne. The doyen of racing commentators, Sir Peter O'Sullivan, is being interviewed. In seventy years he's only missed two Arcs, but this year ill-health prevented him attending – last year as usual he drove himself there. Instead he watched the race on television while working on an updated edition of his autobiography. Sir Peter is 96.]

### Legendary index entry

It [the cuckoo] is famous in literature, with no greater tribute paid to it than P. G. Wodehouse's : ' "My boy," I remembered Fiat Justitia saying to me once after he had been kind enough to read some of my unpublished material, "don't let editorial rejections discourage you. You must not try to run before you can walk. Begin, like all the great masters, with the cuckoo." ' The Master would surely have approved of the legendary index entry: 'Cuckoo, see Shaftesbury, Constance Lady' (Lord Egremont, *Wyndham and Children First*, 1968).

John McEwen, 'Bird of the month: the cuckoo', *The Oldie*, May 2014

### A clarification

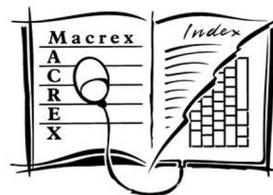
It has been brought to our attention that in 'Indexers reviewed' in the September 2014 issue of *The Indexer*, Rebranding rule: the Restoration and Revolution monarchy, 1660–1714, by Kevin Sharpe, was wrongly ascribed to Oxford University Press. This should have been Yale University Press. And on reflection, it would probably have been more appropriate to include the item under *Obiter dicta* rather than *Indexes censured*, since the reviewer's complaint is not so much about the quality of the index as of the copyediting and proofreading in general, which inevitably carried over into the index.

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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# R

# E

# X



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