Book Reviews -- Monographic Musings

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mology, space-time, game theory and artificial intelligence. There are also entries that discuss the careers and contributions of principal theoreticians ranging from Jules Henri Poincare to Karl Popper and from Thomas Kuhn to John Searle. The articles are substantial in length ranging from 3000 - 7500 words and each ends with an impressive bibliography and a list of “see also” references to related articles. The general index is well constructed and helpful. The binding of this two-volume set is solid and should hold up well while the print font is clear and easy to read. As befitting the subject, the writing is academic and scholarly and some articles require careful reading, especially for those not very familiar with the concepts discussed.

The Philosophy of Science: an Encyclopedia is worth serious consideration from academic libraries needing resources that cover this sub-discipline of philosophy. It also serves to update and supplement more general reference works and will be of value to those needing comprehensive coverage in their philosophy collections. However, a lot of the material here is covered in Routledge’s acclaimed ten-volume Encyclopedia of Philosophy so some libraries already owning this set, or having a subscription to the online version, may want to forgo this new title. (For further details on the Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy check their Website at http://www.routledge.com/)

The Qur'an: an Encyclopedia (2006, 0415326397, $225) is another Routledge title that deserves comment. Given the growing interest in Islam, it will be viewed by many as timely and relevant. Articles on concepts, beliefs, figures, and places related to the Qur’an are covered. Entries on forgiveness, grace and repentance join those on marriage and shahada (martyrdom) along with articles on Ibrahim (Abraham) and Yahya (John the Baptist). There are also articles treating broader topics like the origins of the Qur’an and its relationship to the natural world, historic events, education, language and science. Many of the entries are short, providing brief descriptions and definitions, but others can be five pages or more in length with multi-citation bibliographies. In addition, there is a bibliographic essay at the end of the book highlighting other significant reference sources, as well as providing lists of recommended books and articles divided by subject category. There is also a “How to use this encyclopedia” section containing useful explanations, as well as an index to Qur’anic passages. And although the entries are in a straight alphabetical listing there are name and subject indexes. Unfortunately there is no thematic index but there are “see” and “see also” references.

The Qur'an: an Encyclopedia offers a scholarly but accessible one-volume work that will serve as a useful starting point for students and informed lay readers alike. Editor Oliver Leaman and his 42 contributors not only provide answers to specific questions but also attempt to stimulate thoughtful consideration of the commentary and interpretation presented. Mr. Leaman purposefully includes “accounts that often go against each other in order to illustrate to readers the contested nature of interpretation that exists in a subject area.” No doubt a worthy goal and it reinforces the role of The Qur'an: an Encyclopedia as a starting point. The Qur'an is a complex and important topic and serious students should make use of the bibliographies provided in this work, as well as seek out more comprehensive references like Jane Dannen McAuliffe’s Encyclopedia of the Qur’an (2001-2006, 9004147438, $1674) published by Brill. (For more information on the online version see http://www.brill.nl/ default.aspx?partid=18&pid=24338.)

Book Reviews — Monographic Musings

Column Editor Debbie Vaughn (College of Charleston) <vaughnd@cofc.edu>

Column Editor’s Note: At an accreditation and assessment institute last week, I had the pleasure of hearing Charleston Southern University Library Director Edith R. Causey discuss the quality enhancement efforts of her institution. When explaining why she, a librarian, was chosen as the head honcho of CSU’s accreditation endeavors, she made a poignant remark: libraries, and therefore librarians, serve everyone. This statement has stuck with me for days, and my mind continues to reflect upon the weight and breadth of Causey’s words. Libraries serve everyone at all stages of life. Furthermore, it is the “everyone” in the library-service equation that allows librarians to maintain such an integral role in society.

The books and their reviewers in this month’s Monographic Musings illustrate this idea of libraries’ magnetic qualities. As stockers and spreaders of information, librarians lead readers, historians, educators, linguists, other librarians, and “students of life” to learn about segregation, linguistics, etymology, and the function and responsibility of the very libraries in which they work.

Many thanks to faithful ATG reviewer Phillip Powell for gracing our pages with his thoughts on R. Scott Baker’s Paradoxes of Desegregation. I’d like to extend a hearty welcome to ATG newcomers Michael Andrews, Jane Tuten, director of the University of South Carolina – Aiken’s Gregg-Graniteville Library; and Pamela L. Niesslein, a linguist by education and the College of Charleston’s Associate Vice President for Accountability and Accreditation. Happy reading, everyone! — DV


Reviewed by Michael Andrews (RLS)

In 1899 Sir Edward Elgar premiered his breakthrough orchestral work Variations on an Original Theme (now known as the Enigma Variations) in which he created sound portraits of his cryptically identified “friends pictured within.” Let Them Eat Cake will have a similar fascination for those involved in STM publishing, many of whom are also to be found “pictured within” — more or less thinly disguised, since the author, hidden like this reviewer under a nom de plume, will be familiar to readers of Against the Grain and the habitudes of journal publishing.

Let Them Eat Cake is a Tom Sharpean romp (soon to be followed by a sequel) loosely based on the intersecting worlds of scientific research, scholarly publishing and the food supplement business set at the end of the print era and before the World Wide Web. The story moves between the luxuriously continued on page 67
ous realms of the retreats of the “Newtonian Academy of Scholarly Publishing,” the fantastical, ultimate jock-campus of Bear State University, California (with its Todd Institute for Wind-surfing and Moleculastics), and various conferences in the field of “Moleculastics,” an arch way of describing chemical synthesis. It swarms with a host of eccentric characters: from villains like the crazed Belgian accountant turned publishing director, Henri de Klompemakker, of the nefarious and multi-tentacled SI Corporation; the egregiously grasping and third-rate Professor Les Fyfe, of the University of Rochdale, Editor ad interim of Transactions in Moleculastics; to the heroine Dr. Fiona Hamilton, who helps cause their very public downfall through the application of sound publishing principles and the assistance of the aged Nobel laureate Sir Henry Wiseman and his formidable wife, Alberta (who attributes her good health in her eighties to her “daily trampolining sessions”).

Like any first novel, and especially, it must be said, self-published novels, the lack of an independent, strict copy-editor becomes apparent from time to time with small slips of verbal agreement and occasional continuity lapses (as well as rather unconvincing cod northern British accents and attitudes) but these are compensated by the brist of the plotting and the often baroquely amusing style of the writing. Occasional longeurs are enlivened by strokes of wit, with wry observations about the wealthy Californian ladies-who-lunch particularly well-done. Most readers will enjoy it for what it is and take it at face value, but those who have worked in the world that it parodies will recognise many episodes as built upon true nuggets of experience from science publishing in the late 1980s. Which bits are exaggerated and which true? Well, that has to be left as a cocktail-hour exercise for ATG regulars at the next Charleston Conference!


Reviewed by Phillip Powell (Reference Librarian, College of Charleston) <powellp@cofc.edu>

Growing up in the Midwest during the 1950s and 1960s, this reviewer was aware of the struggles for equality of African Americans in the South as illustrated either in Life or Look or in black and white film footage on the evening news. Charleston was never among cities often in the media glare such as Birmingham, Atlanta, Montgomery, and Memphis. Racial segregation permeated life in Charleston as thoroughly as any other Southern city, but the dynamics among and between the black and white communities were unique. These dynamics are explored by R. Scott Baker in this often compelling history.

Baker centers on four educational institutions and their evolution toward desegregation: Society Corner School (James Island), Avery Institute and Burke High School (peninsula Charleston), and South Carolina State College (Orangeburg). Each school represents a major segment of Charleston’s African American population from the 1920s through the 1960s. Society Corner was the poor rural school where students attended only through 7th grade, if they got that far. It was not until the likes of strong-continued on page 68

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Reviewed by Pamela I. Niesslein, PhD (Associate Vice President for Accountability and Accreditation, College of Charleston) <niessleinp@cofc.edu>

Linguists are endlessly fascinated by words. But then again, many non-linguists are also intrigued by the lexical world. Babies trying to talk will use the same words and phrases over and over as they become familiar with the mouth feel and sound of the words in their native language. Parents spend endless hours repeating words to help them learn. Teachers will define and redefine concepts and words in order to enable their students to master the concepts under discussion. Linguists, however, usually study words out of the pure pleasure it brings to learn “how things work” in a language. How is language built? How many words are there in Swahili? How do words evolve over time? What are the newest words that have been added to our lexicon?

In his book *Words, Words, Words*, David Crystal, a linguist, delves deeply into the “word,” in all its parts, uses, misuses, growth, and panache. He looks at the universe of words (Part I), the origins of words (Part II), the diversity of words (Part III), the evolution of words (Part IV), the enjoyment of words (Part V), and becoming a word detective (Part VI) in his very aptly titled book *Words, Words, Words*. Even for this linguist, it was a lot of words to contemplate! Each of the 25 chapters has “word” in the title (e.g., wordstarts, wordsounds, wordbirths, and a personal favorite, wordmelodies). In chapter one, “Wordsmithery,” Crystal begins by acknowledging that “[w]e live in a universe of words, and we know it. We even have names for those who are aware that they live in this universe and who have become mildly or seriously obsessed by it. We call them wordsmiths, word-buffs, wordaholics” (3).

The Real McCoy: The True Stories Behind Our Everyday Phrases explores this world of words from a very different angle, one perhaps more suited to both the linguist and non-linguist alike than its counterpart, *Words, Words, Words*. In *The Real McCoy*, Georgia Hole’s alphabetical listing of phrases strives to understand “the metaphorical expressions and allusions [that] give life and vibrancy to language...” (1). 

the kiss of death (page 97—note all definitions below come from this text) an action or event causing certain failure for an enterprise

Although this phrase is relatively recent, with examples dating back only to the 1940s, it is thought to refer to an episode in the Bible. According to the biblical account, Judas Iscariot identified Jesus to soldiers out to arrest him by giving him with a kiss. The expression is often used of apparently beneficial or well-meaning actions which somehow temp fate and have the opposite result to that intended, as in the following example from The Guardian: “Let us hope that the critics’ approval does not, at the box office, prove a kiss of death.”

When one reads, there are always expressions that are worth additional research in order to fully enjoy the etymology of a phrase. Sometimes this research can clarify meanings, while in other instances it merely adds the “spice” to the phrase that comes from truly understanding origins and meanings. It doesn’t take a linguist to hear an expression of this sort and to wonder: Where did that phrase come from? What does it really mean?

run the gamut (page 72, The Real McCoy) experience or display the complete range of something

The origins of this expression can be traced back to medieval music. Gamut was originally the name of the lowest note in the medieval scale, but the term also came to be applied to the whole range of notes used. In the 17th century it escaped from its musical context and came to mean the complete range of a particular thing. The American critic and humorist Dorothy Parker was being less than kind about Katharine Hepburn’s acting skills when she remarked: “She ran the whole gamut of emotions from A to B.”

The true beauty of this book is that it is accessible to all wordsmith wannabees as well as those who are researching from a more scholarly aspect.

Words, Words, Words does include examples of the type of lexicography that is the subject of *The Real McCoy*. In his chapter on wordsmithery, Crystal traces the origins of the expression a “404 Error,” or a “404,” which comes from the Internet error that appears when “your browser has made a faulty request to a server, typically because a page or site no longer exists.” But, he asks, why is this error called a “404”?” The expression derives from the ‘file not found’ message sent out as a response to a faulty enquiry by staff at CERN, in Switzerland—the place where the World Wide Web was devised. The members of the staff worked out of room 404” (7).

In addition, Crystal talks about how and why we learn words. How does a child build his/her vocabulary (wordgrowth)? How do we add vocabulary to our adult language (wordbuilding)? How do we build vocabularies that include foreign words and phrases (worddiversity and wordloans)? How do new words come into being (wordbirths)? What are the top fifty most beautiful words in the English language (wordmelodies)? These are the preoccupations of the linguist who seeks to cover the concept and definition of the “word” exhaustively and conclusively.

the real McCoy (inexplicably alphabetized under “M” on page 110) the real thing

The source of this expression is far from clear: the trouble is that McCoy is a rather common surname and so there are numerous candidates for the post of the original McCoy. The earliest example of the phrase, dating from 1856, is Scottish, uses the form MacCoy, and describes a brand of whisky: “a drappie [drop] o’ the real continued on page 69

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peach fighting fit on the day itself, prompting commentators to wonder whether this was the real McCoy.

Now that may be more information than you wanted to know, but for the really curious among us, it provides word origins in as complete a manner as possible.

To me as a linguist and to me as a reader and speaker of languages, words hold an endless fascination. I like the sound of them, the look of them, and the feel of them. I enjoy the hot pursuit of just the “right” word in a conversation or in a book review. I love to know where words come from, and I like to learn more about the subject of words. In my mind, these two works, *Words, Words, Words* and *The Real McCoy* are a joy to read. They both offer an intriguing peek into the world of words—an idiosyncrasy (now there’s a word!) view of the lexical world around us—a fascinating insight into meaning and lexicography.


Reviewed by Jane Tuten (Library Director, University of South Carolina - Aiken) <JaneT@usc.edu>

The cover story to the May 2006 issue of *American Libraries* Nancy Maxwell’s book, *Sacred Stacks*, certainly caught my eye and my interest. As I read the short two-page article, I thought that the premise for her book was quite intriguing and that I might like to read her obviously ambitious work. Maxwell, who in addition to an MLS holds a master’s degree in Catholic theology, presents a well-organized and thought-provoking look at two seemingly unrelated areas — libraries/librarianship and churches/ministers. Her arguments reinforce both the value and importance of librarians and libraries in today’s society.

In the preface to the book Maxwell explains to us why she wrote the book and recounts an incident that took place when she worked at a Catholic college. When addressed as “Sister,” she began to think about how her position as a librarian paralleled the role that ministers serve. The secular library space also parallels the sacred space of a church, generating many of the same feelings among those present. The genesis of the book began at that point and became her mission. The book reinforces many of the arguments made by Maxwell and provides a comparison between two institutions that provide support and solace. The library and the church offer safe havens within their communities.

Maxwell communicates what she believes the higher purposes of libraries and librarians are in the titles of each chapter. Libraries and librarians perform sacred functions, organize chaos, bestow immortality, uplift individuals and society, provide sacred and secular space, promote community, and transmit culture. The chapter titles provide hints to the reader but nothing really prepares you for the intellectual stimulation provided within each chapter. There are powerful arguments made and they are supported with historical facts along with philosophy, theology, and social science theory.

The first chapter provides a brief history of libraries while outlining a current context for religion in America. Maxwell provides examples of sacred, secular venues and explains how culture merges the sacred and secular through language and ritual. One example given is the “pilgrimage” many families take to Disney World. Another is the “confessional” nature of television talk shows.

Chapter two addresses the functions performed by librarians and clergy and explained some similarities. Personality traits such as those measured by the Myers-Briggs test were analogous in the two groups. The chapter generalizes about the demographics and values of librarians. Maxwell examines the topics of organizing chaos and how librarians and libraries tackle the vast amount of knowledge that they are tasked with organizing in chapter three. Throughout the chapter religious symbolism is applied to society while the library is depicted as the place where wisdom resides. Maxwell likens wisdom to God and points us toward a “rational order of the universe.”

Chapters four and five draw the reader in with the powerful imagery of immortality and permanence that reside in two institutions — the library and religion. Subjects discussed include the immortality of words both spoken and written upon which religions rely, the importance of citations in literature and religion, ownership versus access, religious freedom of choice, contemporary sin and the need for success in today’s society, libraries and social change, liberation theology, and the library’s place in the search for “self-improvement, self-fulfillment, and self-help.” Maxwell submits arguments which support the thesis that libraries and religion are participants in societal change and examines the idea that libraries might be dangerous places.

The author writes that both libraries and churches are environments which people enter alone but which are communal spaces. Maxwell labels these public private spaces — an intriguing idea and concept. Perhaps more than any other chapter, chapter six draws the reader into the space concept by providing clear illustrations. The author outlines similarities that exist between churches and libraries such as the private space which carrels offer. Carrels, according to Maxwell, were originally private spaces in monasteries where monks could read or write. The author examines the placement of libraries and churches in the center of their communities and the importance of that central location for the community.

The final chapters in this short book continue to expand the arguments made by the author supporting the similarities between libraries and churches. Thought-provoking, intriguing, challenging, and validating are all words that should be used when referring to Maxwell’s book. Librarians and students contemplating librarianship would be well advised to read this short but powerful book.

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