

September 2000

From the Reference Desk-Reviews of Reference Titles

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Recommended Citation

Gilson, Tom (2000) "From the Reference Desk-Reviews of Reference Titles," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 12: Iss. 5, Article 18.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.3573>

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From the Reference Desk

by **Tom Gilson** (College of Charleston) <gilson@cofc.edu>

With the "Iron Curtain" in rubble and events in the Balkans grabbing headlines through the 1990's, the history of Eastern Europe demands attention. A new reference book published by **Garland** and edited by **Richard Frucht** helps to meet this need. The *Encyclopedia of Eastern European History: From the Congress of Vienna to the Fall of Communism* (2000, 0815300921, \$145) traces two centuries of political and historical change in this highly diverse and complex region. Brief biographical entries cover leaders ranging from **Lajos Kossuth**, leader of the Hungarian Revolt of 1848, **Slobodan Milosevic**, as well as artists like **Magdalena Abakanowicz**, writers like **Isaac Bashevis Singer** and filmmakers like **Milos Forman**. There are also articles on topics as diverse as East European Folk Music, the Iron Guard (a Romanian nationalist-fascist movement), the impact of Islam and the Paris Peace Conference following World War I. However, the most involved articles are those reserved for the primary countries of the region: Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania. Naturally, articles on the geography and history of each country are included. The history articles are particularly helpful in that they offer a comprehensive, but straightforward, narrative of historical developments. They also contain the most extensive bibliographies and "see also" references. In turn, these articles are followed by entries covering national art, culture, literature and language. In general, the treatment of individual topics is unadorned and factual. Editor **Richard Frucht** and his contributors make a conscious effort to reflect the intrinsic values of each country, rather than merely outside influences. However, a couple features would have improved this book's value. Give the lack of familiarity many readers have with this region, a thematic list of topics, as well as a pronunciation key would have increased its utility. Also, it may be due to a lack of recent scholarship, but some of the bibliographies appear dated.

Nonethe-

less, the real service the *Encyclopedia of Eastern European History* provides its readers is to concentrate information about this neglected part of Europe into one handy volume. Academic libraries supporting courses in Eastern European history, as well as large public libraries where there is an interest will want to consider it.

Fitzroy-Dearborn adds to its string of high quality reference works with the *Encyclopedia of Historians and Historical Writing* (1999, 1-88496-433-8, \$270). Edited by **Kelly Boyd**, this Encyclopedia is a well organized, scholarly resource which students of historiography will find highly valuable. This two-volume set consists of three types of essays. First there are entries on individual historians. In one sense, the scope is limited with historians born after 1945 not included. However, this is a minor reservation. The quality and depth of the coverage given each historian included is undeniable, and most of the major names are here. Individual essays discuss historians ranging from **Herodotus** to **Richard Hofstadter**, **Bartolome de Las Casas** to **Fernand Braudel** and from **Piero Pieri** to **Elaine Pagels**. However, there are some omissions. Why **Barbara Tuchman** is not included is a mystery. The second type of entry deals with geographic regions and individual nations focusing on "historiographical questions" within each. Because of their extensive traditions of historical writing, countries like France, Germany, England, Russia and the United States receive emphasis. However, other nations like Japan, China, Poland and Brazil, and regions like Southeast Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific/Oceanic receive deserved attention. The final category of entry is topical and deals with historical sub-disciplines like political and constitutional history, methods like comparative history and major themes like slavery, European expansion and feudalism. By any measure this is an impressive work. Each entry is thorough and scholarly with many having a substantial bibliography. In addition, there is a section that lists the credentials of each contributor. Organizing features include an alphabetical list of entries, a thematic list by regions and periods, as well as by topic, and a chronology of the historians covered. While there is no general index, this is an index of titles of the principal writings of the historians, as well as an index of the works included in all of the bibliographies.

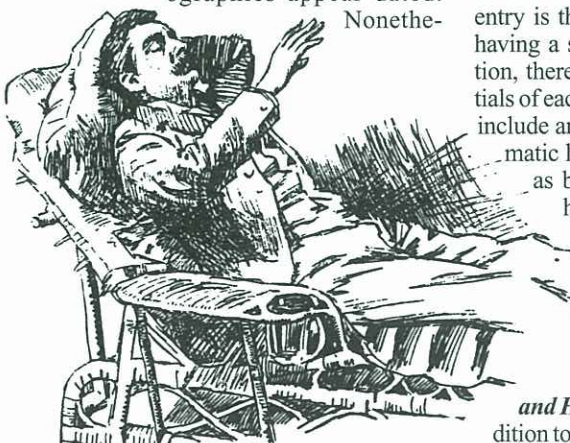
The *Encyclopedia of Historians and Historical Writing* is a necessary addition to most academic library collections.

It will be welcome by both faculty and students. Libraries needing additional works in this area might also consider *Garland's Global Encyclopedia of Historical Writing* (1998, 0815315147, \$175).

The Cutting Edge: An Encyclopedia of Advanced Technologies (2000, 0195128990, \$75) is a helpful reference that describes over one hundred new technologies, in layman's terms. Published by **Oxford University Press**, this book explains each technology in nicely organized articles. Each starts with a scientific description of the technology and continues with historical development, uses, effects and limitations, and ends with the issues and debate surrounding its implementation. The cutting edge technologies discussed here are not of the "pie in the sky" variety. Each technology is currently being used in one form or another. Advances in medicine and health care, transportation, communication and information processing head the list. However, those related to biotechnology, the military, exploration, and the environment are also included. Actual topics range from cloning to virtual reality, smart homes to artificial organs and electronic books to surgical robotics. The text is enhanced with illustrations and photos, and each article has a list of related topics, a useful bibliography and often, a list of Websites. *The Cutting Edge: An Encyclopedia of Advanced Technologies* is a useful introduction to these technologies for the general reader. High school, public and some undergraduate libraries will want to consider it for their reference collections. In a number of cases it would also be appropriate for circulation.

Greenwood Press has also published a one-volume reference that is worth a look. *The Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature* (2000, 0313300542, \$89.50) edited by **Robert** and **Laura Lambdin** covers the years 500 AD through 1500 AD. While the primary attention is on the literature of England, some of the most helpful essays are those devoted to the literature of other countries and cultures. These articles offer useful background summaries for literatures as diverse as Japanese, Islamic, German, Hispanic and even Mongolian. There are also entries defining and tracing the development of specific genres like ballads, debate poetry, drama, medieval lyric and sagas. Other essays discuss the impact of significant writers like **Malory**, **Chaucer** and **Dante**, as well as individual works like the *Chanson de Roland*,

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the **Gest of Robin Hood** and **Sir Gawain and the Green Knight**.

However, there are some self-imposed limitations in this reference. With the cutoff date of 1500, writers like **Thomas More** and **Erasmus** are not included, and because of the English emphasis, **Margery Kempe** is discussed, but not **Hildegard of Bingen**. Still, given the intent of the editors, this is to be expected. Knowing these limitations, libraries looking for a handy reference on medieval literature will want to consider this book.

Another work meriting notice is an encyclopedia that focuses on a different aspect of the Middle Ages. Just published by **Garland**, *Trade, Travel, and Exploration in the Middle Ages: An Encyclopedia* (2000, 0815320035, \$95) brings together 435 articles on topics related to this fascinating part of medieval life. Ranging in length from a few hundred up to five thousand words, the entries in this encyclopedia treat subjects as varied as cartography, ships and shipbuilding, insurance, the Crusades, medieval fairs, pilgrimages, and Muslim travelers and trade. There are also articles on famous travelers and writers like **Marco Polo** and **Jean Froissart**, leaders like **Saladin** and **Louis IX** of France and legendary and non-existent figures, like **St. Brendan** and **Prester John**. Intended for students and the general reader, this encyclopedia is both clearly written and contains reliable scholarly content. In addition, it has added features like a general bibliography that includes and enhances those for the individual entries, a brief chronology and a list of kings, popes and rulers. There is also a topical list of relevant articles grouped in broad categories like geographical works, economics, historical routes, technologies, marvels and wonders, maps, professions, voyages and literary works. The text is illustrated with photos and drawings, while a good index and appropriate "see also" references pull things together. However, there are a couple of concerns. Admittedly, there is useful coverage of Muslim, Indian and Far Eastern travel, as well as discussions of the spread of Buddhism, the Mongols and African trade. However, the emphasis remains on medieval Europe. And, the role played by women is given short shrift. This may be the result of a lack of scholarship on the topic. If so, it is an area that modern scholars should explore.

Regardless, *Trade, Travel, and Exploration in the Middle Ages: An Encyclopedia* remains a quality reference, at a reasonable price. It will act as a supplement to standards like *MacMillan's Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, as well as stand on its own as a reference for a specific area of medieval studies. It is a good choice for both academic and large public library collections.

First released in Great Britain earlier this year, **ABC-CLIO's Encyclopedia of the Boer War** (2000, 1851093427, \$75) is now available in the United States. Editor **Martin Marix Evans** provides the reader with a useful resource relevant to both British and South African history. He includes brief articles on military ordinance and weapons, specific battles, and figures ranging from **Winston Churchill** to **Christiaan De Wet** and **Harry (the Breaker) Morant**, to **Lord Kitchner**. The Encyclopedia also includes entries on topics like guerrilla war, concentration camps (both black and white), British opposition to the war, medical services and the Zulus. Evans also includes a number of informative appendices. The first two discuss the composition and structure of both the British and Boer military force, while the next, lists the concentration and refugee camps. The final two provide eyewitness accounts like **Emily Hobhouse's** report on the white concentration camps and excerpts from peace negotiations like **Lord Kitchner's Middelburg** proposal. However, there are some problems. The photo and other reproductions could be better. This is especially true for the limited number of maps included. Those unfamiliar with the major battles, not to mention the overall geography of the area, are not well served by maps that are nearly unreadable. Any new edition should include better maps and map reproductions.

Nonetheless, the *Encyclopedia of the Boer War* gives solid coverage to a war little known to readers in the United States. As editor **Martin Evans** notes in his introductory essay, it is a war that laid the foundations for the white supremacy "that would eventually become codified in the ugly system of apartheid." As such, the Boer War is deserving of more study. This book provides a good starting place. Both public and academic libraries will find it worthwhile.

Interest in Chicano, or Mexican American, studies has grown substantially over the last 30 years. Author **Rafaela G. Castro** has written a reference book that delves into a particularly important facet of Chicano life and culture. Published by **ABC-CLIO**, the *Dictionary of Chicano Folklore* (2000, 0874369533, \$55) explains both the traditional and the modern, still evolving, folklore of Americans whose heritage is linked to Mexico and the Spanish language. In over 225 entries, the Dictionary defines religious practices, festivals, urban culture, art, customs, music, dance, clothing, food, theater, as well as the folklore of different states and regions. Also sprinkled through the book are brief biographical sketches of people like folk heroes **Eduardo "Lalo" Guerrero** and **Cesar Chavez**, the ground breaking scholar **Americo Paredes** and "amateur" folklorist, **J. Frank Dobie**. Most of the entries use the

original Spanish terms with the English in italic. However, both "see" references and the index provide links for readers unfamiliar with Spanish. Aside from the definitions themselves, the most useful aspect of this work is the 36 page bibliography found at the end of the text. As author Castro writes "it provides a basic body of literature" on Chicano studies. (Each entry has its own brief bibliography that uses the author-date system to reference the full citation in the overall bibliography.)

Not only does this reference provide useful definitions, as one reads through it, you are struck by how much the Chicano influence has added to American culture. The *Dictionary of Chicano Folklore* is a well-written and serious book about a subject that is attracting increasing scholarly interest. Depending on need, it is a book that could find a place in either a reference or circulating collection and is suitable for the general public, serious high school students and undergraduates.

New editions of two major works have also been recently published, both by the **Gale Group**. Particularly impressive is the sixth edition of the *Columbia Encyclopedia* (2000, 0787650153, \$125). Updated since the last edition published in 1993, this version adds 1,300 new entries and claims to have revised 40% of the existing entries. The encyclopedia contains over 50,000 articles spread over 3,200 pages and is illustrated with 700 line drawings. It is ideal for finding brief definitions and biographical sketches, as well as longer articles on individual countries and topics as diverse as feminism and North American native art. In short, it remains the most comprehensive and authoritative single-volume general encyclopedia in print. However, there are a few downsides. The print size will be a visual challenge for some, and the book itself has gotten so large, it is becoming unwieldy. Also, one must wonder how well the paper binding will hold up. And finally, it has doubled in price. Published by **Columbia University Press** in 1993, and priced at \$62.50, the *Columbia Encyclopedia* is now published by the **Gale Group** at \$125. Nonetheless, librarians who have turned to this reference standard in the past will want the new edition on a nearby shelf.

Actually, **Macmillan**, an imprint of the **Gale Group**, has released the other new edition referred to above. The *Encyclopedia of the American Constitution* (2000, 0028648803, \$500) is now a six-volume set that encompasses the original 1986 edition, its 1992 supplement as well as the updates made since. The second edition contains 341 new articles (by my count it adds up to about 250 new pages of text, although the print seems smaller in the new edition). Constitutional issues not treated

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Noteworthy Books

Column Editor: **Deborah Vaughn** (College of Charleston) <vaughnd@cofc.edu>

The books reviewed this month reflect our diverse society. **Phillip Powell**, Library Instructor Extraordinaire, has joined us again to review Faber and Faber's *The American Presidents Ranked by Performance* and Piotrowski's *Genocide and Rescue in Wolyn: Recollections of the Ukrainian Nationalist Ethnic Cleansing Campaign Against the Poles in World War II*.

Jennie Vaughn is new to *Against the Grain*. This month, she has reviewed Biggers' *America Author Houses, Museums, Memorials, and Libraries: A State-by-State Guide* and Lemberg's *Eating Disorders: A Reference Sourcebook*. Currently the Assistant to the Vice President for College Relations at **Warren-Wilson College** in Asheville, North Carolina, Jennie has written for **Wake Forest University's** newspaper, *The Old Gold and Black*, the *Lexington Dispatch* (NC), the *Winston-Salem Journal*, and the *Rock Hill Herald*. Not only is Jennie a creatively apt journalist, she is also one of my three beloved sisters. Welcome aboard, Jenn!

Biggers, Shirley Hoover. *America Author Houses, Museums, Memorials, and Libraries. A State-by-State Guide.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland c2000. 207 pp. ISBN 0-7864-0777-8. \$39.95.

Reviewed by **Jennie Vaughn** (Warren Wilson College)
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About a half-mile from the funky coffee shops, bookstores and vintage clothing stores that make up downtown Asheville lies Riverside Cemetery. I've lived in Asheville for nearly seven years — two of them in an upstairs apartment just blocks from the site — and never visited the grave of short story writer **William Sydney Porter**, better known as **O. Henry**. I'm embarrassed to admit that I didn't

know it was there. On the civic front I'm a pretty "with-it" person: I suffer through the typos in the local paper, keep up with what they're doing in city council, even listen to the AM country station at times to make sure I know what's going on. But sometimes you're living amidst treasures you had no idea even existed, and when you find out about them, you're fascinated and amazed. That's the fun of **Shirley Hoover Biggers'** fabulously informative book *America Author Houses, Museums, Memorials and Libraries*.

A must-have for any bibliophile, this book lists,

state-by-state and city-by-city, a huge variety of sites connected to all kinds of American authors, from **Fitzgerald** to **Faulkner**, **Hemingway** to **Joel Chandler Harris**, **Whitman** to **Laura Ingalls Wilder**. Each entry starts with a summary of visiting hours and other vital information, followed by a description of the site and its significance in the author's life. It's a great guide for travelers who want to walk in the footsteps of our country's most eloquent wordsmiths. Even for armchair voyagers it's a treat, chock full of obscure facts. Did you know that the **Lewis Grizzard Museum** is housed in a former gas station in Moreland, Ga.? (The Southern humorist spent his childhood in this town near Atlanta.) That the complete text and pictures of **Dr. Seuss's** first book, *And To Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street*, is featured in a bas relief at his national memorial in his hometown of Springfield, Michigan? Or that **Oscar Hammerstein II**, the famous playwright and lyricist, got his start at **Manhattan's Columbia University**, where he wrote and acted in several student plays? Or that the living room in the country cottage of **Dorothy Parker**, the famous wit, poet, and critic, was painted in ten shades of red? These are just a few of the off-the-wall facts you'll find in this work.

Biggers' writing isn't nearly as good as that of the authors she writes about. Her summaries are rather dry and monotonous. But her meticulous research and excellent organization make this book a winner.

Faber, Charles F. and Richard B. Faber. *The American Presidents Ranked by Performance.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2000. ISBN 0-7864-0765-4. \$45.00.

Reviewed by **Phillip Powell** (College of Charleston)
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Numerous books and articles have been written in the past rating and ranking U. S. Presidents with the efforts of **Ridings & McIver** (1997) and **Murray & Blessing** (1993) being published within the past 10 years. This reviewer was skeptical upon seeing another book earnestly ranking Presidents. Reading the introduction, though, makes apparent that **Faber & Faber** have taken a slightly different approach. Although the criteria by which each President was judged are similar to past works, the Fabers avoided the polling process often favored by the others. Rather, only they are responsible for the ranks assigned to each President, from **Washington** through **Clinton**.

Admittedly, the reviewer's skepticism continued as he began reading. Any book of this type is fraught with subjectivity, no matter how objectively the information is gathered. Concern was raised when it was learned the decisions were solely those of the

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in the first edition or the supplement, but treated in this edition, include DNA testing and genetic privacy, partial birth abortion, and the Internet and intellectual freedom. Also, the impact of the Rehnquist Court is more fully evaluated, especially as it relates to federal and state jurisdictions and the rights of criminal defendants. Most importantly, the same high quality stan-

dards that marked the first edition and the supplement, hold firm in this new edition. (The original *Encyclopedia of the American Constitution* was a Dartmouth award winner in 1987.) Contributors are mainly academicians, but there are also articles by practicing attorneys and judges. While the appendices remain the same, there are updated case, name and subject indexes.

Quality is not the issue with this set. This encyclopedia is an obvious choice,

especially for those libraries not owning the original edition, or even the 1992 supplement. But libraries owning both the first edition and the supplement will have to decide if the amount of updating warrants the \$500 price tag. Most larger academic and public libraries will want to add it. They always have the option of placing the earlier versions in circulation, or sending them to a branch. It is smaller libraries with limited budgets that have the more difficult choice. 