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Book Reviews: Monographic Musings-Mike Litchfield and Cuba

Deborah Vaughn

College of Charleston, vaughnd@cofc.edu

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From the Reference Desk
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ABC-CLIO, is a 2-volume set offering scholarly and concise A-Z coverage of parenting issues and concerns. Drawing on the fields of psychology, health and sociology, editor **Lawrence Balter** has assembled more than 110 contributors who have written over 200 separate articles. Coverage includes issues like spacing of children, dual-career families, parent-teen communication, home schooling, divorce and custody conflicts, sibling relationships, parenting styles and the impacts of video and computer games. There are also entries on theorists and practitioners like **Louise Bates Ames**, **Maria Montessori**, **Arnold Gesell**, **Erik Erikson**, and **Benjamin Spock**.

Geared to the layperson, as well as the professional and student, the articles are written in down-to-earth, understandable language but with scholarly authority. Each entry is signed and has a brief, but helpful bibliography. A general index and "see" references provide access to related articles and there is a cumulative bibliography giving a sense of the depth of scholarship involved.

Parenthood in America should find a home in public, academic and professional libraries. It will prove a highly useful resource for a wide audience. In fact, this set might have even more value in home libraries. It's too bad the price is so steep. **ABC-CLIO** might consider an edited, single volume, paperback version for the home market.

A number of new editions of established works have also been released of late.

One of the more impressive is the second edition of the **Encyclopedia of Musical Theatre** (2001, 0028649702, \$368) published by **Schirmer Books**, a **Gale** imprint. Expanded into three volumes, the **Encyclopedia** contains 500 new articles and updates of 4000 more and is authored by **Kurt Ganzl**, who also wrote the first edition, a 1994 **Dartmouth** honoree. In the new edition **Mr. Ganzl** has also "filled in those annoying gaps in the birth and death information," as well as offering more thorough treatment of provincial theatre (outside of London and New York). Despite the heavy emphasis on American and British theatre these three volumes are international in scope and contain numerous entries for individual performers, composers, lyricists, musical producers, as well as specific shows. The entries are written in a straightforward fashion and are crammed with facts. The entries for composer/playwrights contain chronologies of their plays as an added feature. The set is illustrated with black and white photos. The third volume also has a small section of color plates. But there are some problems. While the alphabetical arrangement tries to be as inclusive

as possible, the lack of an index and cross-references is a surprising flaw, as is the lack of adequate bibliographies. The set could have also benefited from articles on the various national musical theatres, as well as on related topics like vaudeville, tin pan alley, etc. However, even with these lapses, this set will prove a necessary addition for both public and academic libraries where there is interest in musical theatre. In terms of broadness of scope and coverage there is nothing else matching it.

Also in its second edition is the **Oxford Companion to Politics of the World** (2001, 0195117395, \$60). The first edition was released in 1993 and as editor **Joel Krieger** notes "the world of politics seems more unsettled today and the challenges more daunting than ... when we began work more than a decade ago on the first edition." Reflecting this, 87 of the 672 articles are new with many others updated. There are new articles on topics like **NAFTA**, the wars in **Bosnia** and **Kosovo**, the **Rwandan Genocide**, as well as those on more recent players on the world's stage like **Tony Blair** and **Bill Clinton**. There is also a new "critical issues" essay format in this edition. Pairs of articles by different authors with differing perspectives are offered for six issues including sustainable development, the United Nations, the future of entitlements, affirmative action, censorship, and the limits of liberal democracy. In addition, there are interpretive essays on topics like gender, comparative politics, equality and inequality, globalization, media and politics, nationalism and revolution. Thoughtful and well written, the length of the articles varies from brief factual accounts to full-blown essays of 4000 words or more. Each entry has a brief bibliography and "see also" references. A set of selected maps and a general index round out the book.

The **Oxford Companion to Politics of the World** is a scholarly, skillfully edited update of a highly useful reference. The added content is worth the price, especially when you consider that the previous edition will still have shelf life in circulation. **Oxford University Press** has produced another useful reference for academic and large public libraries.

Political junkies have just received another timely fix from **Congressional Quarterly**. Now in its 11th edition, **CQ's Politics in America 2002** (2001, 1568026560, \$69 paperback; 1568026552, \$115, Cloth) provides objective and factual biographies of the men and women who make up the 107th Congress. Arranged in sections by state, each of the 535 representatives and senators is given a concise treatment in well-organized individual entries. Besides the biographical sketch, each entry contains contact information, committee assignments, election results, votes on key issues, selected interest group scores and **CQ** vote studies related to party unity and presidential support. Also included are descriptions of each state with a map of districts, as well as the descriptions of the districts themselves. Other features include a brief essay on the 2000 census and its resulting reapportionment, a section of member-related statistics and campaign financing figures back to 1996. For the first time, buyers of the book receive access to a Website from "which they can print profiles of members of both the 106th and 107th Congresses." Readers can register at <http://library.cqpress.com/pia>.

Politics in America 2002 is a necessary purchase for those public and academic libraries trying to meet the demands of either the politic novice or the serious political observer. And considering the added Web access, **CQ** has come up with a hard to resist package that will have strong appeal. 🐼

Book Reviews — Monographic Musings

Column Editor: **Debbie Vaughn** (Reference Librarian, College of Charleston) <vaughnd@cofc.edu>

Where would we be without **Mike Litchfield**? Over the past two years, our **Charleston Conference Extraordinaire** has been a driving force in our

yearly meeting of the minds. He can now add "book reviewer" to his long list of accomplishments. An English major here at the College of Charleston, his favorite pastimes include reading, writing, and perfecting his classical guitar playing. His minor in Latin American Studies and his research interests in Che Guevara and Nicholas Guillen make him the perfect commentator on **Cuba: The Contours of Change**. Welcome, Mike! — DB

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Book Reviews *from page 64*

Cuba: The Contours of Change. Ed.
Susan Kaufmann Purcell and David

Rothkopf. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000. 1555879330. \$13.95.

Reviewed by **Michael Litchfield** (Charleston Conference Coordinator)
<libconf@cofc.edu>

Over the past 100 years, the United States has gotten into the habit of viewing Cuba as something that rightly belongs to us. After all, it is a lot closer to the mainland than Hawaii or Puerto Rico. An American Cuba just makes sense. This view doesn't quite mesh with reality, however; we managed to keep Cuba as a colony for forty years, then we were content to give them freedom, so long as we controlled the people in charge. On January 1, 1959, as **Fulgencio Batista** boarded a plane for Miami and **Fidel, Raúl, and Che** rode through the streets of Havana in victory, American domination of Cuba came to a crashing halt. We're still bitter about it.

Cuba's leaders wanted to build a strong, modern, industrial nation to replace the single-crop sugar colony their island had been since Columbus first stepped ashore. Since getting the necessary aid from the U.S. wasn't an option, there was no place else to turn at the height of the Cold War but the Soviet Union.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, it took

a struggling Cuban economy with it. What followed is repeated in every essay in ***Cuba: The Contours of Change***. "The weakness and dependence of Cuba's economy became painfully evident. The years that followed saw a deepening economic crisis in Cuba." Most countries in the Americas and Europe changed their policies towards Cuba in the early 1990s. Relations were stabilized, although huge amounts of aid weren't provided. Canadian corporations entered into partnerships with the Cuban government to mine nickel and bauxite. The United States, on the other hand, passed the Cuban Democracy Act and the Helms-Burton bill, making the American policy towards Cuba even more severe.

The essays in this book address the radical changes that have taken place in Cuba over the past decade, and question what, if anything, the United States should be doing. Some essays detail the political side of the question, addressing the embargo and relations with Cuba. Other essays address the economic reforms that have taken place over

the past ten years and what those reforms mean in terms of U.S.-Cuban relations. One of the economic essays points out that Cuba's economy is one of the best in the Americas. There might not have been a "Cuban Miracle," but those economic miracles are usually followed by crushing depressions. Instead, Cuba's economy has grown slowly but steadily over the past ten years, quietly becoming one of the strongest in the Caribbean.

What does all this mean? While the essays run from "Maintain and strengthen economic restrictions against Cuba at all cost" to "Lay off a little and let a robust economy stir up Cuba's poor," the end line is this: how do we get Castro to kick the bucket, and once he has, how do we exploit the Cuban market?

While I'm up here on my soapbox, I will admit that I found the essays interesting, even while they promoted the colonization of our misunderstood neighbors. Having read ***Cuba: The Contours of Change***, I'm looking for another collection of essays, perhaps entitled ***Cuba: Why We Should Let Them Do Their Own Thing***. I'm envisioning a think-tank of Latin American scholars pulled together to offer rebuttal essays. The combination of the two would be the seminal monograph on U.S.-Cuban relations in the Post-Cold War era. As the book stands now, it is a shining example of why Cubans should not trust American think-tanks.