

norms, should have had his life transcribed in blizzards of detail is choice irony.

Before tweaking Boswell, Whittemore admits explicitly what the reader has inferred long since from his text: "There is nothing simple about the history of biography, so I must be conscientious and end by introducing confusion." He locates the confusion in all the literary forms that by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries gave authors the opportunity to break the rules and to ignore custom, as early biography surely did not. Three pre-Boswellian works in particular are said to be evidence of the favorable cultural climate for expanding the base of biography: *Pepys' Diary*, *Defoe's Moll Flanders*, and above all, *Sterne's Tristram Shandy*, which is, for Whittemore in a spirit of Shandean exuberance, "of course the finest book ever written." Whittemore's attention to *Sterne* is a surprise—a Shandean move, even. He sees in him "a man who found the life of the self to be suddenly spacious to a degree he had not previously imagined." As such, he was a powerful influence on formal biographical practice and on psychobiography, though he was not himself a biographer—just "a mock-up of what a biographer would be if he did not take on great public figures, and if he looked not at his subjects' performances but at their sentiments."

Whittemore was not going to let pass the opportunity to write about *Sterne*, and the chapter is as provocative as it is unexpected. But then so is much of the book, which accounts for its great charm. It is rather like walking a museum not with a guide constricted on cassette but in the company of a civilized man of forthright opinions and idiosyncratic views who will say the most surprising things to instruct and to provoke, and say them without recourse to the critical fatuities of our age—the anemic prose, its lifeblood deficient, that tortures thought and language and reader in equal measure in the process of twisting about to bite its own tail. Whittemore is of a different school—of the school that once persuaded students to care passionately about literature not because it is pretext for theory but because it is text

from life, and sometimes even for life. Biography indeed. This is a short book but not in the least a slight one. Whittemore promises a sequel carrying the argument from Boswell to the present. Godspeed to his good work—*James M. Morris, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, New York, N.Y.*

Literary Reviewing. Ed. by James O. Hoge. Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia, 1987. 139p. \$24.95 (ISBN 0-8139-1146-X). LC 87-8309.

This slim volume collects essays by such authorities as Richard D. Altick, Stanley Weintraub, Angus Easson, and Derek Pearsall on the techniques of reviewing literary scholarship. Six essays cover genres of scholarly production—theory, history, biography, editions, and bibliography (two on the last)—and three provide more general considerations of the practice of reviewing from the viewpoints of an editor, a publisher, and a producer of literary scholarship. The essays are largely taxonomic and prescriptive and are saved from dullness less by particularly new, or newly stated, insights than by numerous anecdotes of offences against the reviewing principles being recommended. Despite the contributors' occasionally conflicting views of these principles, librarians who are asked advice on reviewing a particular type of academic production can cite with assurance the appropriate essay here.

Librarians themselves will find some of the essays of interest as well. For example, Altick's essay accuses "the library press" of encouraging shoddy bibliographies, questions the reliability of reviews in professional library periodicals, and asserts that librarians seldom keep themselves informed of scholarship outside their own profession and even less frequently permit their professional judgments to be influenced by such scholarship as they do read—all in an essay which calls for increased cooperation between librarians and literary scholars. The two essays by Bruce Macphail and Robert Patten are useful surveys of the place of the review in the scholarly communication matrix. Despite these attractions, *Literary Reviewing* is a confused production. The dust-jacket's

claim that the nine essays form "an invaluable guide to the art of literary reviewing" could be tenable only for those who take "literary" to mean "academic literary criticism." Those seeking guidance in reviewing "literature" in the sense of poetry, fiction, drama, and, yes, even some essays in criticism will not find it here. The lack of an index reduces the book's usefulness as a reference guide. No essay is devoted to special problems in reviewing literary criticism by, or concerning, feminists or members of ethnic and sexual minorities, nor are women among the contributors.

Besides attempting to be a guide to review writing, this book is a manifesto for the book review as an important scholarly activity. This is not surprising, since the editor, James O. Hoge (with a contributor to this volume, James L. W. West III) co-edits *Review*, a literary annual founded in 1977 and also published by the University Press of Virginia. Hoge and West hoped that *Review* would "promote scrupulous and responsible reviewing that would measure up to the most rigorous and exacting standards of scholarly excellence." The present volume continues this proj-

ect, in the belief that reviewing is "difficult, grueling work that . . . performs the essential service of promoting what is good in scholarship while discouraging what is bad" and that it should be taken as seriously as other scholarship.

But Hoge's message has not affected the academic rewards system, as the provocative final essay, "Reflections on Star Wars and Scholarly Reviewing," by Michael West, makes clear. Citing the results of his survey of academic deans and drawing from his own experiences in reviewing and on the tenure track, West concludes that few literary scholars or deans give the book review a high rank as a scholarly activity. This is surely news to no one, and West's suggestions for improving the situation (increase the length of reviews, give superior ones prizes) are limp.

This honest and lively (if finally complacent) essay was an ill-advised conclusion to both the literary guide and the manifesto. The reality it depicts inevitably throws an ironic glare upon the aspirations and recommendations in the earlier pieces. In the larger argument about the value of the book review in the abstract and as measured by the rewards a scholar



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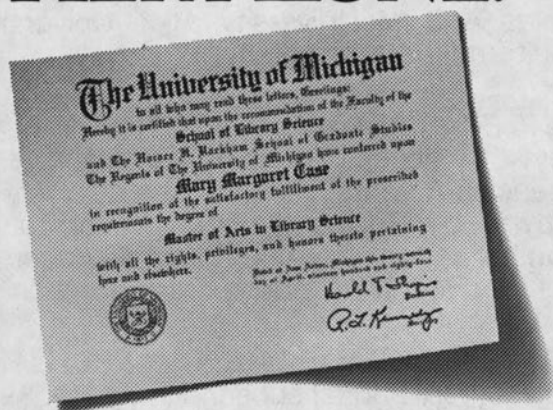


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can expect, the excellent advice contained in the intervening essays is lost and made to seem beside the point. The final lesson of the volume is the marginality of the book review to American literary scholarship. Taken as a whole, *Literary Reviewing* is a victim of the identity crisis that continues to grip higher education.—Frank Immler, *Humanities/Social Sciences Libraries, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.*

Sitzman, Glenn L. *African Libraries.* Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1988. 486p. \$49.50 (ISBN 0-8108-2093-5). LC 87-35658.

African Libraries is a collection of unannotated bibliographies and descriptive essays on all types of libraries in Sub-Saharan Africa, excluding those in South Africa and the Comoros as well as the five North African countries of Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia. There are five parts, followed by a name index.

Part 1, *Buildings and People: a Photographic Sampling* (p.1-81), presents ninety black-and-white photographs that must have printed darker than the originals must

be. The photographs are both inside and outside shots taken by the author during his visits to the continent in the 1960s, 1971, and 1980. Description, history, and type of library is usually limited to one paragraph. While the national and academic libraries also are discussed later in part 4, part 1 is the only location for information on children's and special libraries.

Part 2, *Chronology of Library and Related Events, 1773-1984* (p.82-101), is useful for all types of research, as there is no other chronology for libraries in Africa during the colonial period (1885-1958) and after independence (1959 for most of the fifty African countries). Although the events for the first half of the twentieth century are somewhat sparse, Sitzman has provided a framework on which others may build. Use of this section is limited because names and places are not indexed.

Part 3, *Development of Library Literature, 1950-1980: A Bibliographical Essay* (p.102-57), is a chronological description that traces the development of libraries and librarianship in Africa using the cita-



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