

SOURCES

expensive purchase.—Nevin J. Mayer, *Coordinator of Instruction, John Carroll University, University Heights, Ohio*

Dictionary of Atheism, Skepticism, and Humanism. By Bill Cooke. Amherst, New York: Prometheus Pr., 2006. 606p. alkaline \$70 (ISBN 1-59102-299-1).

This collection of essays, apothegms, and admonitions by Bill Cooke is a topical guide to the rationalist-humanist worldview, written for a popular audience. Cooke defines concepts, gives biographical sketches, explains philosophical and religious movements, and critiques cultural trends. He traces historical and contemporary traditions of atheism, skepticism, and humanism from around the world, and exposes some of the excesses of their opponents, religious and nonreligious. To his credit, Cooke's tone is not combative and his overall goal is a positive one, as he shows in his introduction: "this book is not about the falsity of religion—it is about the possibility of a morally engaged, intellectually full, and laughter-filled life without it" (14).

Cooke is an enthusiastic and chatty writer who editorializes freely. In the introduction he nods to those famous single-author dictionary predecessors, Voltaire and Ambrose Bierce. His best passages are indeed reminiscent of Bierce's *The Devil's Dictionary*, as in this assessment of Descartes: "A mathematical genius and (along with Plato) by far the most influential philosopher whose main conclusions were almost all wrong" (144).

The character and direction of the entries vary greatly. Some are careful and coherent essays (for example, "Humanism in the Ancient World"). Some are statements of ethical positions ("Abortion"). Some offer advice on writing and rhetoric ("Scare Quotes"). Some are summary accounts of their topics drawn from a single source ("Twentieth Century Philosophy, Main Features of"). Some are appreciations of popular writers, comedians, and musicians written in the tone of a fan Web site ("Pink Floyd"). Several entries contain errors or odd omissions. For example, the entry on "Apostate" is mostly a discussion of Epicurus because, Cooke claims, "the word derives from *Apikoras*, the Greek spelling of Epicurus; a sign of Christian fear of him and his subversive message" (41). (In fact, the word "apostate" has a straightforward Greek cognate meaning "to revolt.") Another example is the entry on Immanuel Kant, which does not mention his *phenomena-noumena* dualism. Though the entry on Helen Keller notes she was blind, it does not mention that she was also deaf.

Dictionary of Atheism, Skepticism, and Humanism cannot be recommended as a scholarly reference work. A better alternative would be to rely on general dictionaries and encyclopedias of philosophy and theology or to use *The Encyclopedia of Unbelief* (edited by Gordon Stein and Paul Edwards, 2 vols., Prometheus Bks., 1985). This is not to say it does not belong in the library at all. It is an earnest, popular statement of a worldview that is usually misrepresented.—Alistair Morrison, *Product Manager for LexisNexis, Bethesda, Maryland, and MLS Candidate at the University of Maryland, College Park*

Encyclopedia of Chinese-American Relations. Ed. by Yuwu Song. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2006. 367p. alkaline \$55 (ISBN 0-7864-2406-0).

There has been a spate of books published recently on the rise of China as America's rival for superpower status. Amidst the rampant speculation about future relations between the reigning world superpower and its potential rival, reference staff may see an increase in interest in the past relations between the two countries. To assist library users who want a basic overview of Sino-American relations, librarians may turn to reference works that focus on U.S. foreign relations. The four-volume *Encyclopedia of U.S. Foreign Relations* (Oxford Univ. Pr., 1997) has one of the best articles on the topic. With the entire range of U.S. foreign relations to cover, however, this excellent work can devote only one fifteen-page article and a handful of shorter articles to Sino-American relations.

Encyclopedia of Chinese-American Relations fills the need for a reference book focusing entirely on the relations between the two countries. More than four hundred articles written by experts in the field cover such topics as the "Anti-American Boycott of 1905," "Spy Plane Incident of 2001," and "Ping Pong Diplomacy," subjects that are difficult to find in other reference sources. Biographical entries on lesser-known Chinese political figures and on American diplomats and missionaries who devoted their careers to China are another feature that sets this work apart. And although entries on well-known military and political leaders, writers, and businesspeople, such as Franklin D. Roosevelt, Mao Zedong, and Clare Booth Luce, can be found in plenty of reference sources, in this work the focus is on their contributions to Sino-American relations. Each article includes a short list of references. Useful appendixes include a chronology of events from 1784 to 2005, lists of ambassadors, two maps, and a conversion table showing the different methods of romanization of Chinese names.

It is unfortunate that such an important reference work contains many entries that are riddled with typos, misprints, and grammatical errors. For example, the title of the entry for President William McKinley lists his birth year incorrectly: "McKinley, William (1943–1901)"—it should be 1843. In the entry on the transcontinental railroad there is this indecipherable sentence: "By 1867, 12,000 of the 13,500hinese immigrants." Several entries incorrectly omit articles and misuse singular and plural word forms, making the text difficult to read. Better editing and proofreading would have eliminated these and other mistakes that detract from the usefulness and readability of this source.

This work fills an important gap in reference collections for large academic and public libraries. A revised and better-proofread edition would be welcome.—Peter Bliss, *Reference Librarian, University of California, Riverside*

Encyclopedia of Erotic Literature. Ed. by Gaetan Brulotte and John Phillips. New York: Routledge, 2006. 2 vols. alkaline \$350 (ISBN 1-57958-441-1).

Editors Gaetan Brulotte, distinguished professor of French and Francophone Literature at the University of South Florida, and John Philips, professor of French Literature and Culture at London Metropolitan University, have produced a scholarly reference source that examines the variety and scope of erotic literature and its importance as a legitimate topic for study. This resource is timely in its subject matter, and international and historical in scope. Four hundred contributors from the world's most prestigious universities acted as advisors and authors of the 546 entries that comprise the two volumes.

In the introduction, Brulotte and Philips discuss the importance of erotic literature as an emerging field that explores and expresses the varieties and history of human sexual experience. They include entries on all forms of erotic literature, including fictional genres, essays, memoirs, sex manuals, and treatises. The framework of the set consists of historical overviews that are categorized by culture and language, topics and themes, literature surveys covering genres and publications, and writers and works consisting of individual author entries that address the authors' contributions to erotic writing.

Brulotte and Philips's coverage does not leave out any era of literature, from the ancient Greeks to the present. An essay on the eighteenth-century French literary phenomenon, libertinism, is an example of one of the topical articles. The essay explains the popularity of libertine works during the reign of Louis XV and its demise at the beginning of the French Revolution. *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* by Choderlos de Laclos is the most popular libertine work, but the most notorious author was Bastille resident the Marquis de Sade, whose works were still banned in the 1950s. The entry on contemporary Algerian fiction writer Assia Djebar and her writings exemplifies the international scope of the work. Her books are able to express women's desires and experiences within the context of Islam.

The significance of libraries is explored in an entry that explains that the preservation of erotic works depends largely upon collectors, scholars, and booksellers. The most significant collections are held by the Library of Congress, the British Library, the private library of J. P. Morgan, and the Kinsey Institute, to name a few. Even in the twenty-first century, access to these collections must be controlled due to theft and mutilation of texts.

Each of the signed essays includes lists of selected works and further reading. Following the introduction is a list of contributors, an alphabetical list of entries, and a thematic table of contents. The editors have thoughtfully added a complete index in both volumes. There are no illustrations, which might disappoint some readers.

The first work claiming to be an encyclopedia on erotica was Henry Spencer Ashbee's bibliography of his collection of erotic literature, *Centuria Librorum Absconditorum: Being Notes Bio-Biblio-Icono-Graphical and Critical on Curious and Uncommon Books*. Ashbee published this work under the scatological pseudonym of Pisanus Fraxi and had it privately printed in London in 1879. In 1962, Documentary Books of New York

produced a facsimile under the title, *The Encyclopedia of Erotic Literature*. Both editions are classified as rare books. Ashbee is best known as the alleged author of the infamous eleven-volume erotic work, *My Secret Life*, which was privately printed in Amsterdam in 1888. (Incidentally, upon his death in 1900, Ashbee donated his collection of erotic texts to the British Library.) In 1996, Clifford J. Scheiner of the Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality and an advisor for Brulotte and Philips's book published a two-volume set called *Essential Guide to Erotic Literature* in the United Kingdom (Wordsworth Bks.) and *The Encyclopedia of Erotic Literature* in the United States (Barracade Bks.).

Brulotte and Philips's *Encyclopedia of Erotic Literature* is another high-quality resource from Routledge. Its intended audience is college and university students and faculty. It is recommended for academic libraries and special collections that focus on human sexuality.—Lisa N. Johnston, Associate Director, Sweet Briar College Library, Virginia

Encyclopedia of Fictional and Fantastical Languages. By Tim Conley and Stephen Cain. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 2006. 272p. alkaline \$75 (ISBN 0-313-33188-x).

One might think it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find a reference source on a single subject that included entries on *Gulliver's Travels*, "Star Trek," *Through the Looking-Glass*, *Lord of the Rings*, and the '70s TV series, "The Land of the Lost." However, these disparate works all employ fictional languages—from Brobdingnagian to Klingon to Paku—and are all included in *Encyclopedia of Fictional and Fantastic Languages*.

The foreword by science fiction author Ursula K. Le Guin makes a compelling argument for the entire concept of fictional languages within texts. She explains not only why it is sometimes necessary for authors to create such languages, but that creating a language for a far-away place (or planet or dimension) is the natural progression from simply naming that place: "To make up the name of a person or a place is to open the way to the world of the language the name belongs to. It's a gate to Elsewhere. How do they talk in Elsewhere? How do we find out how they talk?" (xvii–xviii).

The book's aim is to present critical summaries on imaginary languages created in novels, stories, movies, and television shows. Not included are actual languages, constructed languages (such as those inspired by comic books and role-playing games), and various forms of dialect. The editors state in the preface that, "*Encyclopedia of Fictional and Fantastic Languages* represents an attempt to document the ingenuity brought to the problem of artificial languages by fabulists of many different nations and eras" (xxii).

Entries are listed in alphabetical order by title of the work that contains a fictional language—one would turn to the entry on *A Clockwork Orange* to read about nadsat—although an "Index of Named Languages" (as well as a general index and bibliography) is included at the back of the book. A guide to related topics in the front of the book groups like entries together. Topics include dinosaur languages, Martian languages,