

and impressive level of detail, it is highly recommended for collections dealing with popular culture and European literature. It may also prove useful in readers' advisory services, although in such situations its inclusion of untranslated authors may cause some frustration.—Grove Koger, retired reference librarian, independent scholar, Boise, Idaho

Global Happiness: A Guide to the Most Contented (and Discontented) Places Around the Globe. By Roman Adrian Cybriwsky. Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2016. 301 p. Acid free. \$89.00 (ISBN 978-1-4408-3556-8). E-Book available (978-1-4408-3557-5), call for pricing.

The Declaration of Independence only guarantees the pursuit of happiness. You have to catch up with her by yourself.
—Benjamin Franklin

There is only one happiness in this life: to love and be loved.
—George Sand

*Oh happiness! Our beings end and aim!
Good, pleasure, ease, content, whatever thy name.
That something still which prompts the eternal sigh,
For which we bear to live, or dare to die.*
—Essay on Man, Alexander Pope

As the sampling of epigrams above may attest, everyone from penmen and poets to park bench pundits have—and have voiced—opinions on the topic of happiness. And why not? Happiness concerns us all; it is a subject of universal import. That, in fact, appears to be the impetus for the author's undertaking this project, as when he states that "We think that there is a need for a book such as this because there is indeed a wide public interest in knowing the best and the worst places, and because we think that the myriad rankings of countries, cities, and states that exist to this point measure something other than contentment with place" (xix). Cybriwsky goes on to opine that many of these happiness/satisfaction/grass is greener report cards are unfairly skewed toward rich and powerful nations, while ignoring the fact that joy may still be found in some of the most deplorable places on the planet. This, then, is the author's attempt to rectify the situation.

Many problems become immediately apparent, before one even opens the book. First, how do we define what "happiness" is? Cybriwsky himself admits that this particular human emotion "... is an elusive concept" and that "no single measure and no index made of combined measures will yield an accurate assessment" (xx). Undeterred by his own acknowledgement of the obstacles before him, he nevertheless plunges headlong with enthusiasm into this pet project. The author goes to some length in discussing and describing the very measures—this survey, that index—about which he just expressed doubt ("Scope of the Study and Methodology," xix–xxiv), the upshot being that the true yardstick employed

here is not necessarily happiness per se, but rather contentment/satisfaction/peace of mind or some other synonym that basically means things are OK.

Perhaps even more troubling is the fact that the author is shooting at a moving target. The entry on Charleston, South Carolina extolls its historic architecture, rich culture, temperate climate and so on as sources of pleasure for the local populace. This reviewer surmises there was much less to be gratified about during the American Civil War, when Charleston was besieged for nearly six hundred days by Union troops, their artillery pounding the city into rubble. By the same token, the nation of Greece is listed among the world's least contented countries, due to its economy being in a shambles, rampant unemployment, governmental corruption and other ills. One can only imagine what glories Greek life had to offer two thousand years ago during the Hellenistic era, when art and literature flourished amid the marble monuments that may still be gazed upon today. The point being made here is that any endeavor such as this, well-meaning as it may be, is but a snapshot in time. In this reviewer's opinion, happiness is much like the stock market, up one day and down the next.

Yet another criticism that may reasonably be leveled against this work is that only a fraction of the populated places on the face of the earth receive treatment here. The entries are listed alphabetically in batches of twenty, as in "The 20 Most Contented Countries," "The 20 Least Contented World Cities," etc. The rationale given is that "The number 20 was chosen as a round number that represents about 10% of the counties in the world. For cities, the number 20 was chosen to be parallel with the number of countries" (xix). No doubt space constraints played a part in this decision, but nevertheless strikes this reviewer as being arbitrary.

To the author's credit, he is very knowledgeable about the places of which he writes. Holding a doctoral degree in geography from Penn State, he has taught various courses in geography at Temple University for over four decades. In addition, he has numerous publications to his credit, such as *Capitol Cities of the World: An Encyclopedia of Geography, History, and Culture* (ABC-CLIO/Greenwood, 2013) and has traveled extensively, which informs his judicious opinions and conclusions. Cybriwsky writes in a straightforward and engaging manner, giving many interesting tidbits of information regarding nations/cities/US states, such as historical background, languages, customs, and so on.

The basic problem here is that there is no reference value to a publication such as this. If one is of Swiss decent, he or she might yodel with wild abandon that Switzerland "enjoys many high rankings in comparisons of world nations" (45). Unfortunately, this kind of a revelation has more to do with bragging rights than it does with useful information. Libraries could better serve their patrons performing geographical research by having *The Columbia Gazetteer of the World* on hand. With the foregoing in mind, no recommendation for purchase can be made.—Michael F. Bemis, independent reference book reviewer