

Fiction and Indexes

Hazel Bell

1. Novels published with indexes

References to mention of these novels in *The Indexer* are indicated thus:
volume/issue number.page numbers

Jane Austen, editions by R. W. Chapman (Oxford University Press, 1923). These have brief indexes: *Emma* has one of the characters (mostly indicating simply the first appearance) and one of 'Feigned places'. The index of characters in *Pride and prejudice* has four entries for the Reverend William Collins, but these do not include his proposal to Elizabeth Bennet; there are no entries for ideas and abstractions. (Philip Bradley, 'Indexes to works of fiction'; *The Indexer* Oct.1989, 16/4.245)

Malcolm Bradbury, *My strange quest for Mensonge* (Deutsch, 1987). This book concerns 'the elusive European writer Mensonge, who has brought the Negation of Being to its logical conclusion by probably never existing': 'a piece of fictional non-fiction, a glorious skit on post-war philosophical writing and writers'. 'Fittingly, the index is an *anti-index*, in which the signifier refuses absolutely to relate to the signified. All the page-references are incorrect – how could they not be? The index makes jolly reading in its own right: "Sameness, see Difference"; "Nouvelle cuisine, contrasted with food, 23; compared with Mondrian, 27"; "I, is there I; 38-47".' (Judy Batchelor, 1989, in *The Indexer* 16/3/194, 'Para-Index and Anti-Index'; Bradley 1989, 16/4.248)

John Bunyan, *Pilgrim's progress*, 1928 edition.

Lewis Carroll, *Sylvie and Bruno* (Macmillan 1889). The first part had an index, by Carroll himself, 'whose whimsicality perfectly fitted the equally whimsical text, though it occupied only

five of the book's 400 pages. Four years later there appeared *Sylvie and Bruno concluded*, provided by Carroll with a "General Index" of 21 pages which included most of the entries for volume I as well as entries for volume II'. The *Buenos Aires Herald* observed of Carroll that 'he insisted his novels should have indexes with cross-references to the author's favourite jokes'. (Hans H. Wellisch 1992, 'Lewis Carroll as indexer', 18/2.110; August A. Imholtz 1996, 'Indexer nascitur, non fit', 20/1.11-13).

Suzanne Cleminshaw, *The Great Ideas*; Fourth Estate, 1999. Who-dun-it with interpolated extracts (all beginning with A) from the first volume of an encyclopedia. 304-page text, 8-page index.

Alain de Botton, *Kiss and tell* (Macmillan, 1995). A pseudo-biography with a pseudo-biographical index. (Hazel K. Bell, 'Kiss and tell and index', 21/4.180-1)

Daniel Defoe, *Memoirs of a cavalier* (Oxford edition, 1972). A biographical index recording only the first appearance of the person named; the characters involved in the campaigns of the hero were real people. (Bradley 1989, 16/4.245)

Lucy Ellmann, *Sweet desserts* (Virago, 1988). The story of two sisters, one the narrator and indexer. The index includes such self-memos as, 'Boyfriends, Franny's hand-me-down, *see less of*' and, 'Divorce, cut your losses and go to Las Vegas'. It may be taken as a (comic) extension of the text rather than a locational adjunct. It is 'a guide not to the overt topics but to its subtext and its personal connotations. The main events and characters are not indexed. There are entries with comments but without page-numbers: "Washing-machine, forget it"; entries with no direct

reference to the text at all: "Metamorphosis, *see* Kafka" (no entry under Kafka); and such teasing efforts as "Oyster, the only mention of an, 36". The index is more entertainment than use; but so, after all, is a novel.' (Batchelor 1989, *The Indexer* 16/3, 194; Bradley 1989, 16/4.248.)

Henry Fielding, *Amelia* (Wesley edition). The index to nearly 600 pages refers almost entirely to the introduction, appendices and editor's notes. (Bradley 1989, 16/4.245.)

Ranulph Fiennes, *The feather men* and *The sett* (Little Brown). Fiennes includes indexes (and maps and photographs) in his 'factional novels' to add to the impression of actual factuality. The hardback editions have 'Fact or fiction?' on the covers. When *The feather men* was brought out in paperback, the publishers presented it wholly as fiction, and removed the maps, photos and index accordingly.

Jostein Gaarder, *Sophie's world* (Phoenix; Knopf) is a compilation of lectures on the history of philosophy linked by a narrative about a young girl, and marketed as a novel. It has an index that deals only with the philosophical content, not with the fictional – and no note explaining this discrimination.

George Gissing, *The private papers of Henry Ryecroft* (1903). A fictitious memoir.

Alasdair Gray, *Lanark* (Panther, 1982). In the margins of the epilogue, pages 484-499, lies 'An index of diffuse and imbedded plagiarisms'.

A. P. Herbert, *Bardot, M. P.* 1964) (44 columns of index to 194 pages of text); ***Misleading cases in the common law*** (1929); ***More misleading cases*** (1930); and ***Uncommon law*** (1935). These indexes were all compiled by the author, deliberately intended to amuse and entertain, with sometimes fantastic entries. (G. Norman Knight, 'A. P. H.'s humorous indexes' 6/3.108-15)

Clive James, *Brilliant creatures* (Cape, 1983). The 258 pages of fiction treat of liaisons among the famous in high comic, *risqué* vein, with introduction, notes, and full, working 15-page index (by Ann Kingdom). This consists mainly of characters and titles, but with some comic entries such as 'lunches, literary, Friday (the Dregs)', sub- and sub-subheadings. Characters and their adventures are analysed in the index in loving detail, often for more than a column. (Hazel Bell, review, 1983, 13/4.277; Bradley, 1989, 16/4.244, 246.)

Jerome K. Jerome, *Three men in a boat* (Pavilion Books/ Michael Joseph, 1982). (Anthony Raven, 'Indexes to works of fiction', April 1990, 17/1.60-1) This classic comic fiction was first published in 1889. The 1982 edition contains many illustrations, and is introduced and very fully annotated by Christopher Matthew and Benny Green. So much background information necessitated an index to rediscover it all - which could hardly exclude the story itself, so the adventures of George, Harris, the narrator and the dog are duly detailed there among the historical and geographical notes. The index, by Anthony Raven, makes three and a half pages printed in four columns (to the 188 pages of text), and distinguishes typographically between references to the annotations and references to the original text, but includes both impartially.

Ethel Mannin, *Women also dream* (1937)

Harry Mathews, *The sinking of the Odradek Stadium* (1971-2) **George Orwell, 1984** (OUP, Clarendon Press, 1984). Two indexes: one to the introduction and annotations (4.5 pages, 2.5%) and one to Orwell's 174pp text (1.5%). The second contains proper names (mostly fictional) and many subjects, both abstract and concrete, such as 'beer (a prole drink)', 'betrayal', 'drugs' and 'falsification'. (Bradley 1989, 16/4.246-8)

Georges Perec, *Life: a user's manual: fictions (La vie: mode d'emploi)*, trans. David Bellos (Collins Harvill, 1988).

(Garry Cousins, letter, April 1990, 17/1,61; Batchelor, review, 1990, 17/1.72)

Juan Perucho, *Natural history* (trans. D. H. Rosenthal) (Secker and Warburg, 1918). A 'philosophical thriller' in 179 pages with a six-page 'Index of Proper Names' that lacks page numbers. ('Unnatural index', April 1991, 17/3.166)

Mary Renault, *The lion in the gateway* (1964). A 193-page account for children of the wars of ancient Persia, with an index to persons, places and titles. (Bradley 1989, 16/4.246)

Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa* (3rd ed., 1751) ***Sir Charles Grandison*** (1754). Richardson himself, at the request of Samuel Johnson, compiled an Index Rerum to the 3rd edition of his novel, *Clarissa*, in 1751, and in 1754 provided for *Sir Charles Grandison* an 'Index Historical and Characteristical of the Seven Volumes of this Work'. In 1755 he published as a separate work 'A Collection of Such of the Moral and Instructive Sentiments, Maxims, Cautions and reflexions, Contained in the Histories of Pamela, Clarissa, and Sir Charles Grandison', described in the Preface as a 'General Index both of Maxims and Reflections'. See *The Indexer*: 3/2, autumn 1962, p 69 letter from L. F. Powell; 6/1, spring 1966, pp 16, 18 in 'Book indexing in Great Britain: a brief history' by G. N. Knight; 7/2, autumn 1970, correspondence following that article, pp 81-2; 10/3 Oct 1977, note by GNK, p 159; Bradley, 1989, 16/4.241. Bradley, 1989, 16/4.241; Bell, 2001, 22/3, 127. Following the Penguin Classic edition of the complete text of *Clarissa* in 1982 (1499 pages), Susan Price Karpuk compiled an index to this edition: *Samuel Richardson's Clarissa: An Index to the Characters, Subjects, & Place Names, with Summaries of Letters Appended Based on the Penguin Classics Edition, 1985, a Complete Text of the First Edition*. A M S Press, Incorporated. Reviewed by Nancy Mulvany, 2001, 22/4, 213-14

Walter Scott, *The Waverley novels* (Portrait Edition, 1913; A. & C. Black

editions, 1886-7). The indexes are short; *Count Robert of Paris* has a 3-page index to a 400-page text, consisting chiefly of proper names; *Old Morality* has a 6-page index to a 452-page text. Another edition in five volumes from Black in 1892 has a cumulative index to all the novels, many entries being quotations (Bradley 1977, 1989, 10/4.178, and 1989, 16/4.245). A separately-published cumulative index to *The Waverley Novels* is described in Bradley, 'A long fiction index', *The Indexer* 8/3.153-9).

J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the rings* Allen and Unwin, 1955). 24-page index, divided into 8 alphabets, to 1359 pages of text, by Nancy Smith. (J. A. Greenwood 1970, *The Indexer* 7/2.55; 22/2.140). The 3-volume Unwin Paperbacks edition of 1974 includes Indexes to: Songs and verses, first by titles, then by first lines (5 columns); Persons, beasts and monsters (with preliminary note, 'References are selective' 17.5 col); Places (17); Things (8).

Leo Tolstoy, *Resurrection* (translation; Grosset & Dunlap, NY). The index was described by Evelyn Waugh as 'particularly felicitous' (*The Indexer* 3/2.67-8; 10/3.159)

John Updike, *The centaur* (1963). Index of mythological characters only.

Kurt Vonnegut, *Jailbird* (Cape, 1979 Granada, 1981). 4-page index to 246-pp text. Gives names of characters only. (John Gordon, review, 1980, *The Indexer* 12/2.109; Bradley 1989, 16/4.246)

Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (Hogarth Press, 1928). Two pages out of 299, listing characters and titles of literary works. The entry for the main character, Orlando, who lives for 400 years and turns from man to woman, duly changes sex half-way through. Woolf's 'playfulness about *Orlando*'s category met difficulties; booksellers, confused by its apparent status as biography, as indicated on the title page, and supported by its possession of an index, refused to sell it as fiction.

Nevertheless, overcoming at least that joke, *Orlando* sold well'. (Bradley, 1989, 16/4.246)

Leon Edel, in *Writing lives, principia biographica*, writes of Orlando: "In keeping with its nature the volume is endowed with an index. The pretence of scholarship and exactitude is maintained to the end".

French novels:

Honoré de Balzac, *La comédie humaine* (Garnier-Flammarion). The index of 775 pages is about 4.8% of this work of some 19,000 pages. It consists of four parts: *Index des personnages fictifs* (439pp); *Index des personnes réelles et des personnages historiques ou de la mythologie* (265pp); *Index des citées par Balzac* (68pp); *Index des oeuvres des*

personnages fictifs (3pp). (Bradley 1989, 16/4.246)

Jean d'Ormesson, *La Gloire de l'empire* (1971); 536pp. Has two indexes, one for proper names, the other for historical themes. See *The Indexer* 8/2.118.

Georges Perec (see also Section 1). *Quel petit vélo a guidon chromé au fond de la cour?* (1966); *La vie: mode d'emploi* (1978)

Marcel Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu* (Pleiade ed., 1954). The index is 151 pages, 4.3% of the total length of the 3 volumes totalling 3,500 pages. It is in two parts: *Index alphabétique des noms de lieux, de contrées et d'habitants* (42pp). (7/3.133; 10/3.159; Bradley 1989, 16/4.245-6)

2. Indexes as fiction

There is another type of overlap of fiction and indexes: the index itself as veritable fiction, or a component thereof. The most straightforward example is the last item in **J. G. Ballard's** volume of short stories, *War fever* (Collins, 1990), a 5-page *soi-disant* index fittingly entitled 'The Index'. An 'Editor's note' claims: 'The text printed below is the index to [an] unpublished and perhaps suppressed autobiography', and speculates, 'Is it a disguised *roman à clef* in which the fictional hero exposes the secret identities of his historical contemporaries?'. (*The Indexer*, October 1991, 17/4.250) The 'indexes' appearing in *Sweet desserts* by Lucy Ellmann (Virago, 1988) and *My strange quest for Mensonge* by Malcolm Bradbury (Deutsch, 1987), described above, could also be included in this category. (Judy Batchelor, 1989, in *The Indexer* 16/3.194, 'Para-Index and Anti-Index'.)

Vladimir Nabokov, *Pale fire* (Weidenfeld, 1962). This index is the second transforming layer covering – or smothering – or totally transforming – a 999-line autobiographical poem. The ten-

page index/glossary is clearly the work of the (mad) commentator. In fact the entries all refer to the commentary, none to the poem; the editor's own entry takes two of the index's ten and a half pages. His enemies are disdainfully dismissed, not even accorded naming: mentioned in subheadings, hated 'Prof. C', 'E' and 'Prof. H.' are each followed by a parenthesis, '(not in Index)'; while the poet's beloved wife, to whom the poem is addressed throughout, and whom the commentary bitterly denigrates, receives the sole entry: 'Shade, Sybil, S's wife, *passim*'. Teasing games are played. A recurring theme of the commentary is the failure of rebels to find the crown jewels.

The index includes the trail:
Crown Jewels see Hiding Place
Hiding Place, *potaynik* (q.v.)
Potaynik, taynik (q.v.)

The poet is described as having a predilection for word games, particularly word golf. The index includes the following example entries:

Lass, see Mass
Mass, Mars, Mare, see Male
Male, see Word Golf
Word Golf, S's predilection for ...; see
Lass

(Hazel Bell, 1997. Indexes as fiction and
fiction as paperchase. *The Indexer*
20/4.209-11)

3. Indexers in fiction

References to mention of these novels in
The Indexer are indicated thus:
volume/issue number.page numbers

General articles on this subject in *The
Indexer* are:

Deer-stalkers and data banks (indexers in
detective fiction). Judy Batchelor 1984
14/2.121-2

The image of the indexer? Hazel Bell
1985, 14/3.202-3

Not-quite-indexers in fiction. Judy
Batchelor 1985, 14/4.277-8

Not-quite-indexers in fiction II. Hazel Bell
1987, 15/3.168-9

Not-quite-indexers in fiction III. Hazel
Bell 1989, 16/4.254

**Indexers are featured in the following
novels**, and discussed in the issues of *The
Indexer* cited by volume/issue number,
pages.

Paul Bailey, *Kitty and Virgil* (Fourth
Estate, 1998) 21/3.144

Anita Brookner, *Lewis Percy* (Cape, 1989)
17/1.56

A. S. Byatt, *Possession* (Chatto & Windus,
1990) 17/4.256

Orson Scott Card, *The originist* (Tor
Books, 1989). The indexers are on a metal
planet several thousand years in the future.
17/3.198, 21/2.61

Candida Crewe, *Mad about bees*
(Heinemann 1991) 19/3.183

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes*;
'Some personalities' by Margaret
Anderson, 7/1.19-20; 14/3.202

Elizabeth Jane Howard, *The long view*
(Cape 1956) 11/3.169

Michael Innes, *The weight of the evidence*
(Gollancz 1944) 12/3.124; 14/3.202

P. D. James, *A mind to murder* (Faber
1963) 13/2.114; 14/3.203

Penelope Lively, *Corruption* (Heinemann
1984) 15/1.27

Penelope Lively, *Perfect happiness*
(Heinemann 1983) 15/1.27

Vladimir Nabokov, *Pale fire* (Weidenfeld
1962) 12/4.200

C. Northcote Parkinson, *Jeeves*
(Macdonald 1979) 12/1.26

Georges Perec, *Life: a user's manual:
fictions* (Collins Harvill 1988) 17/1.61, 72

Barbara Pym, *No fond return of love* (Cape
1961) 13/1.26

Barbara Pym, four other novels 13/3.197-8

Graham Swift, *Shuttlecock* (Allen Lane
1981) 15/3.156

Andrew Taylor, *Our father's lies*
(Gollancz) 1985

Angela Thirkell, *County Chronicle*
(Hamish Hamilton 1941) 14/1.58

Angela Thirkell, *Northbridge Rectory*
(Hamish Hamilton 1941) 14/1.58

Anthony Trollope, 'The Spotted Dog' in
An editor's tales (first published in *St
Paul's Magazine*, then in book form in

1870; reissued by Penguin, 1993) 20/1.24

Kurt Vonnegut, *Cat's cradle* (Michael
Joseph 1963) 11/4.228

Plays

Ray Jenkins, *Accident* (BBC Television,
1979) 13/4.257

Stephen Poliakoff, *Sweet Panic*, 1996. E.
Wallis, *SI Newsletter* 3/96.14

4. The indexing of fiction

**These articles have appeared to date in
The Indexer:**

A long fiction index [to Scott's *Waverley* novels]. Philip Bradley, 1973 8/3.153-63
Indexes to works of fiction: the views of producers and users on the need for them. Philip Bradley, 1989 16/4.239-46
Indexes to works of fiction (letter). Anthony Raven, 1990 17/1.60-1
Indexing fiction: a story of complexity. Hazel K. Bell 1991 17/4.251-6
Should fiction be indexed? The indexability of text. Hazel K. Bell 1992 18/2.83-6
A marshland index – or 'Indexing for the Hell of it'. John Vickers 1995 19/4.276-9 (on his compilation of indexes to the fiction of S. L. Bensusan)

Indexer nascitur, non fit – Lewis Carroll as indexer again. August A. Imholtz, Jr 1996 20/1.6-10
Kiss and tell and index. Hazel K. Bell 1999 21/4.180-1
A review of Robert Irwin's article, 'Your novel needs indexing' (in *New writing 9*, Vintage 2000) by Christine Shuttleworth is in 22/4, 213
'The mysteries of fiction indexing' (Mary Ann Chulik) is included in *The August indexer: Proceedings from the 2nd International Conference of the Australian Society of Indexers* (AusSI 2000)
See also *Indexers and indexes in fact and fiction*, edited by Hazel K. Bell (British Library / University of Toronto Press, 2001)

Hazel Bell 2002