

Library Publications

A MAGNIFICENT ACHIEVEMENT

GASKELL, PHILIP. A new introduction to bibliography. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972. xxiv, 438 p. £6.

Reviewed by Dr R. H. Carnie, Professor of English, University of Calgary.

McKerrow's *Introduction to Bibliography* (1927) has been recognized as a classic study ever since its first appearance. In recent years teachers of bibliography—in graduate schools of English and in library schools on both sides of the Atlantic—have become increasingly aware of its limitations and defects. The defects are largely the result of the passage of time and the great explosion of knowledge in the field. In such important areas of study as paper and type identification, the significance of press figures and printing-house history, to name only three areas, McKerrow's guidance has had to be supplemented by increasing reference to current knowledge as reported in a widely scattered range of bibliographical journals. The other great weakness of McKerrow is that it deals almost exclusively with the period of the handprinted book, and there has been no lucid and scholarly introduction to the technology of the book in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Dr Gaskell's eagerly awaited *New Introduction to Bibliography* is a splendid attempt to provide a new basic textbook in the field. This attractively produced volume from the Clarendon Press is scholarly, comprehensive and compulsively readable and must find a place on the shelves of all serious students of bibliography whether they be collectors, librarians, teachers or students. As Gaskell points out in his preface, this is an entirely new book, not a revision of McKerrow, and as a new book should, it goes well beyond the limits of its predecessor both in time and range. It is also more satisfactorily structured than McKerrow's study.

After a short introduction on the nature and purpose of bibliography, the author takes the reader in a systematic fashion through the materials and techniques of book production in the hand-press period up to 1800. The present reviewer found the chapters on paper and type particularly useful, not surprisingly perhaps in view of the fact that Gaskell's

A Bibliography of the Foulis Press (1964) set new standards of excellence for the description of these elements in eighteenth-century books. The first section is concluded by a concise survey of the English booktrade to 1800. Reference to James Watson of Edinburgh and Foulis of Glasgow in this chapter might make a Scottish reader wonder whether the word *British* would have been more appropriate. Book production in the machine-press period up to 1950 is then treated in a similar fashion, with particularly valuable chapters on stereotyping, machine-made paper and mechanical composition, concluded by a survey of the booktrade in Britain and America since 1800.

The third section, which deals with bibliographical applications, is of particular importance as far as the literary scholar is concerned. It gives precise instructions on how to identify and accurately describe the material objects we call books; on how to apply this knowledge to the study of texts and how to evaluate editorial procedures and produce accurate new texts. In this section, Gaskell leans heavily, and understandably, on the work of Greg and Bowers, and points to the latter's *Principles of Bibliographical Description* as the vade-mecum of all who engage in analytical bibliography. Gaskell also shows clearly in this section his informed awareness of the recent reevaluation of the theoretical basis of mid-twentieth-century bibliography by D. F. McKenzie and others, who stress the importance of basing all bibliographical generalizations on a close examination, not only of the actual books described, but also of contemporary printing-house and book-trade practices. The detailed study of the ledgers of Strahan and Bowyer in England, and the less well-known ledgers of Neill and of Bell and Bradfute in Scotland, is the most likely source of further extension of our bibliographical knowledge.

Gaskell's main text is followed by three short appendixes and a most useful reference bibliography. The first of the appendixes is a reprint of McKerrow's 'A note on Elizabethan handwriting', presumably included both as an act of piety towards Gaskell's distinguished predecessor and because it was thought to be the most useful introduction to the

subject; the second appendix consists of four specimen bibliographical descriptions, and the third gives two examples of the transmission of texts, one from Shakespeare and one from Dickens. There is a Gaskellian commentary to all three, and the graduate student in particular will learn much from working his way through them. The utility of the reference bibliography is enhanced by Gaskell's compact commentary on the items he is listing. In view of Gaskell's own work in Scottish bibliography my only complaint here is a little surprising. Any reference bibliography on the British booktrade which fails to mention the work of these stalwarts of Scottish bibliography, Dickson, Edmond, Aldis and Beattie, is surely over-selective. Similarly Tanselle in his recent article, 'The periodical literature of English and American bibliography' (*Studies in Bibliography*, 26), points out that *The Bibliothek* contains much valuable Scottish material. One might have hoped that the bibliographer of the Foulis press would do the same. It would be a shame, however, to end this notice on a sour, sectarian note. Minor flaws do not alter the fact that *The New Introduction to Bibliography* is a magnificent achievement.

1984 AND ALL THAT

CLARKE, I. F. The tale of the future: from the beginning to the present day. An annotated bibliography. 2nd ed. London: Library Association, 1972. 196 p. £3.75 (£3 to members).

Reviewed by Gordon Johnson, Clydebank Public Library.

Many people are under the impression that stories of the future and science fiction are the same thing. This is not so, and Professor Clarke has gone to the trouble of exploring in some considerable depth this literary device of setting the scene in the future.

Of course, for the last thirty years or so most science fiction has been set in the future, but this is merely because it is easier to gain the acceptance of the reader if a fantastic story is set where one might expect it to happen. The tale of the future, however, means any fictional narrative which employs this device, and in that group we can find utopias and dystopias, political and economic ideas being proposed and explored, blatant propaganda, possible religious or social developments, and latest of all, the scientific romance or science fiction.

This is the field bibliographically ploughed by I. F. Clarke, and one immediately has to consider what decisions have been taken regarding what is to be included or excluded.

The entries have been strictly limited to prose fiction—a sensible decision which unfortunately forces the exclusion of important plays such as

Karel Capek's *R.U.R.* (which gave us the term 'robot'), and a number of good poets of the calibre of D. M. Thomas. Such sacrifices are necessary.

Juvenile fiction has been kept out as far as possible, although the boundaries between adult and juvenile reading are often unclear, and I might have expected a few of the Del Rey and Heinlein titles to be dropped on these grounds.

The most important criteria for inclusion has been that of British publication, and the compiler has obligingly added (U.S.) to annotations, where the original appearance was in America.

Book publication or appearance as a pamphlet is the unspoken decision here. Appearance in periodicals alone means exclusion, and this could have been made clear, for some of the pamphlets are shorter than many tales which never got out of the magazines. Perhaps some future edition will discuss the magazine tales, particularly the turn of the century popular family journals.

The structure of the bibliography is in four parts: the main short-title list with annotations, a short-title index, an author index, and a sources bibliography. There is also a two-page addendum to Part One. The annotations are brief and to the point, necessitated by the huge number of entries to be dealt with, from 1644 to 1970, and some useful work has been done in giving real names of anonymous and pseudonymous authors. However, the late John W. Campbell will find it astounding that his pseudonym of 'Don A. Stuart' is listed as his real name, and Theodore Sturgeon is not actually a pseudonym for he legally changed his name from Waldo before he did much writing. It is the publisher's fault that Professor Clarke has been misnamed Ian on the book's cover.

That vexing question of omissions must now crop up. I hesitated at first, because of the difficult problem of deciding when the future is: today, tomorrow, next year? However, on further examination I was forced to the conclusion that however this was taken there were still some omissions. Where are Tom Boardman's anthology *The Unfriendly Future* (1965), Carnell's *Lambda One* (1965) and Asimov's *Through a Glass Clearly* (1967)? Yet I was particularly struck by the non-appearance of a Panther paperback, *The Disappearing Future*, a collection of stories and articles edited by George Hay in 1970. As Professor Clarke must have known of it, being one of the contributors, why isn't it in this bibliography?

However, I do not wish to complain too much, for this work is a very useful addition to any set of library shelves. It is able to answer so many questions quickly and accurately that it is an essential standby for any reader's advisory service. If your library does not have a copy, or has the first edition only, then it is time you corrected the situation.