

REVIEW ARTICLE

By John W. Osborne

Bibliography of British History, 1789-1851. Edited by Lucy M. Brown and Ian R. Christie. (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977). pp. xxxi + 759. \$44.00.

With the publication of this book, the series of bibliographies covering all phases of British history, which is sponsored by the American Historical Society and the Royal Historical Society of Great Britain, moves toward completion. It was as far back as 1900 that a Harvard professor named Charles Gross published his monumental *Sources and Literature of English History from the Earliest Times to about 1485*. This book went into a second edition in 1915 and was brought up to date by Edgar Graves in 1975 under the new title, *A Bibliography of English History to 1485*. Conyers Read edited a bibliography of the Tudor period in 1933 (2nd edition, 1959) and Godfrey Davies, one for the Stuarts in 1928 (the Davies bibliography was revised by Mary Keeler in 1970). Stanley Pargellis and D. J. Medley took care of most of the eighteenth century in 1951, and H. J. Hanham's volume which covers from 1851 to 1914 was published in 1976. There now remains only the post World War I era to be done. This task will be aided by the completion of numerous smaller yearly and short term bibliographies that are already available and awaiting the hand of scholars as competent and dedicated as Lucy Brown and Ian Christie.

Lucy Brown, Senior Lecturer in Economic History at the London School of Economics, and Ian Christie, Professor of Modern British History at University College, London, are well equipped for a task as formidable as this and they pay tribute in their preface to numerous assistants. Let it be said at once that the standards set in previous volumes in this series have been maintained here. There are almost 5,000 numbered items in this bibliography and perhaps 20,000 works are cited. The quality of production is worthy of Oxford University Press and this reviewer could find only one missprint (in item 240, the late Herman Ausubel's first initial is given as J.).

In view of what is included here and the disarming notice on the dust jacket that "The enormous volume of the contemporary printed materials has ruled out any possibility of total comprehensiveness . . ." it seems almost churlish to complain about omissions. Clearly, anyone who wonders why historians specialize has only to be handed this book and invited to turn the pages slowly. Yet with all the wonderful information, there are a very few surprising omissions. Since I am only following customary academic practice, I may perhaps be excused of the charge of nit picking. P.D.G. Thomas, *The House of Commons in the Eighteenth Century*, and Steven Marcus, *The Other Victorians*, were probably excluded because their subjects lie mostly outside the range of the chronology of this volume, but it is difficult to account for the omission of Q. D. Leavis' *Fiction and the Reading Public*, an important part of which is set in these years. There are several other minor gaps (for example, T. M. Parsinnen's articles on the radical Thomas Spence and his followers), but the most surprising one is G. M. Young's classic two-volume *Early Victorian England*. This represents the major failing of the editors.

The bibliography is traditional in its copious treatment of political history; there will be some who will say that social history receives scant attention. The history of women, which is now either receiving deserved and long overdue notice or else is simply a fad, does not get very many references. For example, the recent biographies of Mary Wollstonecraft by Eleanor Flexner and Edna Nixon are not listed. And speaking of women, why does item 3364 list the translator of Strauss' *Life of Jesus* simply as "Marian Evans, afterwards Cross," when she is famous as George Eliot? It is also disappointing that primary and secondary education receive comparatively little attention, though the first government grant in support of the former was made in 1833 and the entire period was one of expansion for private secondary schools.

In keeping with the attention paid to politics, the individual who receives the most space in the index is Arthur Aspinall. He is cited in the text twenty-one times and no one else even comes close. Aspinall was a hard-working historian who specialized in late Hanoverian political history. Unlike wide-ranging historians such as Hugh Trevor-Roper, he was unknown to the public at large. All specialists in this era are indebted to him and there is no disposition here to quarrel with the attention which his work receives.

In fact, despite some reservations, this is an admirable book. Compiling a selective bibliography is perhaps the hardest and most thankless task which a scholar can perform. The collaborators on this one have been very successful and merit the appreciation of anyone working in the area of British studies. Oxford University Press also deserves thanks for publishing this great series of bibliographies. The task of students at all levels of research has been made lighter by their presence on library shelves.