

## ESSAY REVIEW

### ACCESS TO RHODESIANA

ACCESS TO INFORMATION contained in the literature on Rhodesia has been greatly augmented recently by the publication of four important bibliographies.<sup>1</sup> Those by Pichanick and by Hartridge show that, in the task of compiling bibliographies, the human effort is still of vital importance; and their errors are minimal. The Pollaks have used mechanization, which is quicker in bringing the task of compilation to fruition; but, as will be seen, it has its drawbacks. The purpose of this essay, however, is not to assess the merits of different methods of compiling bibliographies; the intention is to attempt an overview of the much needed tools required by bibliophiles, scholars, and library and information scientists, particularly at this point in time when the focus is on Rhodesia and its painful transition to Zimbabwe.

*Rhodesian Literature in English* by Pichanick and her collaborators is a subject bibliography which merits serious attention, for it is a valuable addition to the few bibliographic controls that exist for Rhodesia, and it fulfils an important need in the field of English literature. In its pioneering role, it is similar to Bean's earlier effort in subject bibliography.<sup>2</sup> The magnificent effort made by Pichanick and her collaborators has the added quality of being a comprehensive bibliography. English scholars and collectors of Rhodesiana are likely to benefit immensely from it as a starting point from which to attack the problem of searching for Rhodesian novels, short stories, verse and drama.

In a lucid introductory note, the compilers state that their aim is to provide 'a comprehensive bibliography of Rhodesian literature written in English' from 1890 to 1974-5, covering all literature written with a creative intention. They have explicitly excluded literary essays, critiques and biographical publications. The exclusion of critical studies is unfortunate because, as a form of art in itself, a critique does elucidate textual matter for those readers who have yet to acquire the technique of literary or practical criticism. I believe that the inclusion of critical works on major or obscure authors, even of mere tyros, provides useful background information; and this omission somewhat lessens the utility of the bibliography by reducing it to a checklist.

<sup>1</sup>J. Pichanick, A. J. Chennells and L. B. Rix, *Rhodesian Literature in English: A Bibliography, 1890-1974-5* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, Zambesiana Series No. 2, 1977), 249 pp., Rh\$5.30.

O. B. Pollak and K. Pollak, *Rhodesia/Zimbabwe: An International Bibliography* (Boston, Mass., G. K. Hall, Bibliographies and Guides in African Studies, 1977), 621 pp., US\$50.00.

A. Hartridge, *Rhodesia National Bibliography, 1890-1930* (Salisbury, National Archives of Rhodesia, Bibliographical Series No. 2, 1977), 50 pp., Rh\$6.00.

O. B. Pollak and K. Pollak, *Theses and Dissertations on Southern Africa* (Boston, Mass., G. K. Hall, 1976), 236 pp., US\$18.00.

<sup>2</sup>E. A. Bean, *Political Development in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1953: A Bibliography* (Cape Town, Univ. of Cape Town Libraries, Bibliographical Series, 1969).

In order to achieve their aim and maintain a 'flexible and pragmatic approach', the compilers state that they have included all material 'containing recognisably Rhodesian subject matter'. But, they modestly admit that there will inevitably be omissions which hopefully will be brought to light in a subsequent edition. Omissions are to be expected in imperfect works such as bibliographies. This is even more so in a colonial situation where local publishing was slow to develop and where for many years there was no *dépôt légal*. As most Rhodesian manuscripts would have been published in Britain, the British Museum Library (now the British Library) does hold many such publications; and so the compilers were right to comb the British Museum General Catalogue and draw information from its entries. But if such culled information had been matched with the author entries in the Library of Congress Catalogue, their work would have been a very reliable bibliographic record. In some instances it is not. For example, the very first entry in the Pichanick bibliography is Allen's *An Army Doctor's Romance* speculatively dated 1894 with 109 pages, whereas a glance at the Library of Congress Catalogue shows that there was an earlier edition in 1893 with 93 pages. This therefore supports the contention that the Library of Congress Catalogue should have been scanned, for the compilers set out to consult 'the earliest edition of a work' and ignore subsequent editions. If it was a question of physical non-availability of the items listed that induced the compilers to use an available subsequent edition, the matter should have been clearly stated. Allen has 78 entries under his name in the Library of Congress Catalogue with no fewer than 10 novels; and the work of such a prolific writer should have been examined more closely for any further recognizably Rhodesian subject matter.

Also, there does appear to be rather unfortunate omissions, such as *The Mourned One* by Stanlake Samkange (London, Heinemann, 1975); and in passing, it may be mentioned that Ndabaningi Sithole's *The Polygamist* is not published personally by Joseph Okpaku but by the Third Press owned by the Joseph Okpaku Publishing Co. Inc. in New York.

The compilers say that they have omitted poems published in journals overseas by contemporary poets such as Phillippa Berlyn, D. E. Borrell, Hugh Finn and Colin Style. This is a mistake. Unless such poems are recognizably not Rhodesian in content, there is a strong case for their inclusion, for the record of all works by Rhodesians is what the compilers had set out to achieve. Also omitted, for example, is H. W. Chitepo's epic poem, *Soko Rosina Musoro*, translated into English and edited with notes by Hazel Carter (London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1958).

Taking into account the convention adopted by the compilers, the arrangement of the bibliography seems quite sensible. Under each art form, entries have been arranged alphabetically by author in double columns. In the case of more than one entry under a single author, an alphabetical sequence of titles is adopted. The use of a chronological arrangement, however, would have portrayed the development of Rhodesian literature over the years. In this way, the bibliography would have fulfilled a cardinal bibliographic principle — that a bibliography must tell a story. In addition, it might also have been useful to include locations of works held outside Rhodesia; for this helps when inter-library loans are sought.

Nevertheless, considering the paucity of bibliographical works of this nature for Rhodesian studies, this comprehensive, though not a complete, bibliography of literature in English does fulfil an important need. The compilers deserve praise for their valuable and successful pioneering effort in so admirably gathering together so much source material; this is a worthy

addition to Professor Roberts's interesting new series 'Zambezi: Culture and Society in Central Africa'.

As in the case of the Pichanick bibliography, the Pollaks' effort is a joint endeavour — in this case a retrospective bibliography covering a number of subjects. The compilers mention that a justification for compiling a retrospective African bibliography has been noted by several authors including D. H. Varley and C. Coggin who both have served in Rhodesian libraries. Rhodesia, the compilers tell us, has 'captured an inordinate amount of printed space' in the literature coming out of institutions and societies because of its 'peculiar historical and political development': hence the compilation of their sizeable volume, *Rhodesia/Zimbabwe: An International Bibliography*.

While not claiming it to be a complete retrospective bibliography, the Pollaks state that the work is 'comprehensive, extensive and representative'. But a close examination of the various subjects covered reveal some shortcomings. For instance, in librarianship there has been within the last decade no fewer than a dozen librarians from Rhodesia who studied abroad. Only two of their studies, however, have been entered in the bibliography. This reviewer himself presented in 1967 a documented special study entitled 'Library Work in Rhodesia, 1896-1966' at the University of Sheffield Post-graduate School of Librarianship and Information Science. Other published and abstracted articles by Rhodesian librarians also seem to have escaped the attention of the compilers. But more seriously, only 8 articles (and 4 'see also' references) have been selected for citation from *The Rhodesian Librarian*, the quarterly journal of the Rhodesia Library Association which began in 1968 but was preceded by the Association's Newsletter which first appeared in 1961. Such extreme selectivity, therefore, imposes very serious limitations upon the representative nature and usefulness of the bibliography.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, there are numerous entries on the burning issues of the day listed under U.D.I. and African Nationalism — a plethora of books, pamphlets and ephemera which has glutted the market. Close to 1 400 items (and about 220 under a 'see also' reference note) have been listed under U.D.I. But in a field which can be regarded as a reaction to U.D.I. — U.N. economic sanctions — only about 360 items have been listed (with about 30 under a 'see also' reference note) during the same 12 year period; this seems to indicate some imbalance of the entries in the subject fields. More entries could have been included; to take only obvious examples such as those cited in L. T. Kapungu, *The United Nations and Economic Sanctions against Rhodesia* (Lexington, Mass., D. C. Heath, 1973) — a book noted by the Pollaks — gives us B. Boczek, 'Permanent neutrality and collective security: The case of Switzerland and the United Nations sanctions against Southern Rhodesia', *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law* (1969), I, and D. von Schenck, 'The problem of the participation of the Federal Republic of Germany in sanctions of the United Nations, with special regard for the case of Rhodesia', *Zeitschrift für Ausländisches Öffentliches Recht und Völkerrecht* (1969), XXIX. In addition to these errors of omission, there are errors of commission, which are partly responsible for the imbalance; viz. the erroneous classification of items such as item no. 9947, J. W. Halderman, 'Some aspects of legal sanctions in the Rhodesian case . . .' (1968), which

<sup>3</sup>Fortunately an index to *The Rhodesian Librarian* and its predecessors is currently being compiled for publication by Mrs S. Phillips of the University of Rhodesia Law Library. This should fill the gap.

ought to have been placed under U.N. economic sanctions rather than under the U.D.I. section.

Such misclassification of entries, indeed, is serious enough to cast doubt on the Pollaks' overall representation of subject fields; for some entries, in fact, do not refer at all to the subject under which they have been listed. Take for instance the Federation, 1953-1963; entry no. 8292, 'The case against Federation . . . (1938)' by Charles Olley, and no. 8391, 'Rhodesia and the Union . . .' (1940). The titles and dates of these entries, let alone their contents, prove the point; for they simply do not refer to the federal era (1953-63) at all. Other examples are nos. 7650, 7656, 7657, 8051, 8136, 8137, 8321, 8531. These entries reveal the pitfalls of machine-searching using key words without that physical examination of the materials, which in fact is a cardinal principle observed in the compilation of bibliographies. While on this theme of faulty entries, it must be mentioned that entry no. 172, J. T. Phehane, 'Libraries in colleges of education . . .' (1974), should not be classed under Bibliographic Sources; Libraries, Archives and Museums is a suitable place for it because of its content, whereas entry no. 2473, J. T. Phehane, Catalogue of the Godlonton Collection of Rhodesiana . . . (1972), would be more accurately placed under Bibliographic Sources.

Another disturbing feature of the Pollaks' bibliography presumably flows from their 'conscious exclusion of certain entries based on a definite [but unexplained] criteria so as to meet time and cost limitations'. As a result about 155 items were listed (and nearly 25 under a 'see also' note) relating to English literature. When compared with the 11 000 Pichanick listings, the result of this conscious exclusion is a pitiful unrepresentative minority. I must in candour say that the Pollaks have in this instance taken a short-cut to the printer's mill.

Such cutting of corners, it is assumed, explains why the bibliography has yet again a rather disappointing feature in its treatment of medicine and the physical sciences (altogether omitted in their compilation of theses and dissertations on Southern Africa dealt with below). For example, much has been written in the past on the history of tropical diseases and their treatment in Rhodesia; and recent research activity and its publication in local and overseas journals can also be found in the *Rhodesia Research Index* (which the compilers say that they have consulted, but which they have not used fully), the *Proceedings of the Rhodesia Scientific Association*, and the Association's other publication, *The Rhodesia Science News*.

Despite these criticisms, it must be stated that the Pollaks' bibliography is an important addition to the bibliographic sources for Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. It has harnessed the flow of as many as 11 380 publications in 'monographs, academic theses, essays within books as well as periodical literature in over 1 100 journals' in various fields of knowledge. Therein lies its chief merit. It has provided, as it were, a useful store of bibliographic information from which some amount of 'vicarious experience' can be drawn by scholars who wish to formulate judgements on Rhodesia/Zimbabwe judiciously. To facilitate such scholarship, the Pollaks have arranged the contents of their bibliography in a practical manner to promote the understanding of the development of the country itself. In its span of subjects one moves from the inhabitants, their social organization, languages, production of wealth, culture, environment to international relations. Although very useful, this is not a common arrangement of bibliographic material; most bibliographies are arranged according to some accepted book-classification systems as is the *Rhodesia National Bibliography* which is reviewed below.

In the final analysis, I must candidly confess that I approached the bibliography of the Pollaks, whom I knew briefly at the University of Rhodesia, with mild jealousy. I felt the work should have been done by Rhodesian librarians. But out of it I have 'acquired a permanent gain'. Hence my proposal at the recent Annual General Meeting of the Rhodesia Library Association for the resuscitation of its Education Committee to promote, *inter alia*, bibliographic activity in Rhodesia. This could be done co-operatively or as Anne Hartridge has done, individually.

Hartridge's individual effort has produced the commendable *Rhodesia National Bibliography 1890-1930*. It is retrospective and national and is primarily based on the holdings of the National Archives of Rhodesia. The Archives is the main legal deposit of all the Rhodesian publications and since 1961 has issued an annual list, the *Rhodesia National Bibliography*, from which the Hartridge bibliography takes its name.

The bibliography begins in 1890 — the beginning of European administration and modern commerce within Rhodesia — and covers the period to 1930 — a date seven years after the introduction of Responsible Government but of no obvious significance. Nevertheless, covering the first forty years of publishing in Rhodesia as it does, it is the foremost printed bibliography of true and early Rhodesiana. In a succinct statement on its scope, the compiler says that books, pamphlets, maps, and serials including newspapers have all been listed. The bibliography also lists Government publications (except those covered by the Willson and Passmore *Catalogue of the Parliamentary Papers of Southern Rhodesia, 1899-1953*) and it thus fills the gap in the Pollak bibliography which has excluded all 'Government documents, reports and proceedings'. Hartridge also included publications of societies, commercial organizations, statutory bodies, local authorities, schools and missions as well as ephemera of historical importance. There are in all 923 entries.

The style of the entries follows the conventional cataloguing practice as in the other two bibliographies reviewed here. The numbered entries are arranged in double columns by author alphabetically, and under the main subject classes of the Decimal Classification System of Melvil Dewey for the sake of uniformity with the annual bibliography produced by the National Archives. Annotations, where the title is not clear, have been made. The Government publications are listed under Southern Rhodesia.

Since the bibliography is retrospective there is an assurance given that the work will be taken up from where Hartridge left off 'to provide a complete national bibliography . . . to the present day'. It is acknowledged in the forward that, 'This present publication is a major advance to this end. After covering the years 1931-60, it will be useful to bring out a cumulative bibliography from 1961 to the time when the country became Zimbabwe.

While the three bibliographies that have been dealt with so far relate solely to Rhodesia, the Pollaks' *Theses and Dissertations on Southern Africa* is a regional bibliography in which Rhodesia is but one of the 10 countries covered (Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Moçambique, South Africa, South West Africa/Namibia, Swaziland and Zambia). Expectedly, the compilers depended on metropolitan sources for entries in their bibliography. Entries were also drawn from Southern African guides and especially South Africa which 'provides one of the best national theses bibliographic services'.

In selecting material for the bibliography, the compilers paid attention to the humanities and the social sciences but ignored the pure and applied

sciences: thus they only partially approached what they term 'a qualitative sociology of knowledge' in order to meet the bibliographical needs identified by the International Conference of African Bibliography held at Nairobi in 1967.<sup>4</sup>

However, as far as Rhodesia is concerned, the Pollaks' bibliography of theses and dissertations is complementary to the above mentioned three bibliographies as it provides a record of mostly unpublished scholarly work. In this sense it is a useful bibliographic tool. It helps to discover what research has been done on Rhodesia while the locally produced *Rhodesia Research Index* includes what is currently being researched in Rhodesia. In all over 2 400 theses and dissertations accepted for higher degrees between 1884 and 1974 have been listed by the Pollaks. Those that relate to Rhodesia specifically number 233. There are also 79 others in which Rhodesia (or Rhodesian subjects) has been studied in conjunction with studies in the other countries. The latter have been put under 'see also' reference notes. Upon examination it was discovered that some items included in the bibliography do not have 'see also' references to other important areas; for example item no. 112 (Paul Peter Vouras, *The role of economic-geographic factors in the destiny of Rhodes . . . 1956*) has no reference under Economics.

It should be pointed out that the National Archives of Rhodesia as part of its collections policy does hold a number of theses and dissertations on Rhodesia in different formats. Their number is substantially greater than the Pollaks have listed and it includes scientific productions. It is from the list of the holdings at the National Archives that the present writer discovered some of the errors made by the Pollaks; for examples, item no. 90: Harper, Kenneth Eugene, 'The Changing World of the Moshona' should read: Harper, Kenneth Edward, 'The changing world of the Mashona'. Another type of error discovered is in the name of the degree as in entry no. 101 (it should be Litt.B. and not the M.A. degree). Although such errors do occur, and may be really transcription errors, they can be serious bibliographically and even academically.

The entries in this bibliography are numbered and are arranged first by subject, then by country. The arrangement by country is alphabetical. Under this order, the author entries follow a chronological sequence to show 'what topics were current at a particular period'. This, together with the author index, has unquestionably enhanced the value of the bibliography.

By way of conclusion, a question can now be asked. What features have these four bibliographies in common? The answer is in the title of this essay. They provide an access to the sources of information relating to Rhodesia. Further, the bibliographies point out clearly the direction which subject, regional and national retrospective bibliographic work should follow in Rhodesia if it has to be of any consequence. This is not to denigrate earlier efforts on Rhodesian bibliography — for some valuable contributions have been made<sup>5</sup> — but clearly much work remains to be done.

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<sup>4</sup>J. D. Pearson and R. Jones, 'African bibliography : A report on the international conference organized by the International African Institute and held at the University College, Nairobi, 4-8 Dec., 1967', *Africa* (1968), XXXVIII, 293-331.

<sup>5</sup>C. Goggin, 'Rhodesian bibliography', *The Rhodesian Librarian* (1970), II, 81-98; (1975), VII, 15-18.