established with his wife upon leaving Nelson’s. Shortly after the publication of *The English as Collectors*, Herrmann took on the history of Sotheby’s, initially juggling the research with his responsibilities at Marshall Morgan & Scott. *Sotheby’s: Portrait of an Auction House* appeared in 1980, published by Chatto & Windus in London and W.W. Norton in New York. Herrmann also became a partner with Philip Wilson Publishing, producing *Art at Auction*, and other art books. Between 1980 and 1983 Herrmann was more directly involved with Sotheby’s, at first taking on the reorganisation of Sotheby’s book department. He was later made a director of Sotheby’s main board in London, a member of its executive committee, and served as the head of Sotheby’s Overseas Operations outside the United Kingdom and the United States. On more than one occasion he was asked to provide an assessment of the auction house’s financial position.

Following his departure from Sotheby’s, Herrmann decided to set up a new auction house that would concentrate on the middle range of books no longer of interest to Sotheby’s. He was joined in this venture by David Stagg and John Kerr, both formerly of Sotheby’s book department. Bloomsbury Book Auctions proved to be a success and its progress over the past twenty years is described by Herrmann. Although it became his primary concern in these years, he continued to make some forays into publishing. Frank Herrmann has had a rich and varied life in the world of books. There is much in his autobiography to interest those concerned with the history of publishing in Britain in the twentieth century, and developments in the auction world in the 1980s and 1990s.

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From the outset Nancy H. Marshall’s lengthy compendium functions under a double mode: the exclamatory and the laudatory. With 1001 bibliographic entries, 80 black-and-white illustrations, a 24-page colour-plate section, and a large hardcover format, this collection
offers a “comprehensive but not exhaustive” study of Clement C.
Moore’s iconic poem, “A Visit From St Nicholas,” or more popularly,
“The Night Before Christmas.” The exclamatory mode emerges in
the literal presentation of the bibliography. From the festive cover of
riotous red and green – almost technicolour in its vivacity – to the
steady concatenation between illustrations and text, Marshall’s
enthusiasm for the poem and its implied culture are undeniable. By
culture, I mean a “culture of contentment,” to borrow and alter John
Kenneth Galbraith’s phrase, which is a dialogue between desire and
the promise of its fulfillment, between excitement and ultimate
release. Christmas, perhaps more than any other holiday-cum-cultural
arena, exudes an aura of excited excess. It is an anticipation distilled
by Moore in lines such as “The stockings were hung by the chimney
with care, / In hopes that St Nicholas soon would be there.” Cynics
may comment that Christmas is a materialist’s holiday, and a morass
of mass consumption and palpable greed; idealists will counter that
it is a sensory and imaginative celebration encapsulated in a religious
setting. Marshall herself demonstrates this pressurised momentum
in parts of her exuberant phrasing for the introduction: “Beginning
in the 1860s, [Thomas] Nast spent more than thirty years drawing a
rosy-cheeked, rotund, jolly Santa ... wearing a red suit with fur trim,
a floating white beard, and twinkling eyes!” As if reading the
bibliography to a group of entranced youngsters, Marshall continues,
“From the pens of great artists as well as those with names not easily
recognised today, St Nicholas began to emerge as an interesting and
diverse personality. Why, he even read books while waiting to descend
the chimney to deliver his presents!”

The exclamation point is a rare find in bibliographies. Rare, too,
is the serious attention that can be bestowed upon an introduction
interlarded with such partisan platitudes as, “Moore will forever be
remembered as the person who truly gave S. Nicholas to the world,”
“Clement Clarke Moore and his magical poem,” or “Generations of
illustrators have taken inspiration from the verses he created for
their unique, indeed often magical interpretations” (emphases added).
Just as exclamations are very self-aware utterances, the text, “a labour
of love built upon a lifetime of collecting,” cannot be classified as a
mere study of slightly-altered versions. Marshall’s aims are praise
and apotheosis through a discerning if not selectively discerning I/
eye. If we still consider ourselves to live, pace Wilde’s Lady Bracknell,
in an age of surfaces, then surfaces should suffice. Christmas, as an
ephemeral, though cyclical affair, rarely seems to look at itself for
long, or seriously for that matter. It is, to quote a popular paradox, a profundity that is all surface. When the bibliographer professes such a personal investment in the text she compiles, readers are faced with the speciously legitimising assumption that this material must be especially trustworthy because of the professed or implied bias, or “obsession,” as Marshall herself confesses. Reviewers, too, feel the implicit pressure, and perhaps guilt, of critiquing person rather than technique, thereby falling prey to a cult of personality that can too often obfuscate the shortcomings of a work.

Marshall’s penchant for hero worship does not negate the reality that her scholarship is careful and worthwhile. Indeed, the mark of the self-avowed collector and enthusiast lies in the claim that more than 95 percent of the material has been personally examined. However, the fact that 80 percent of this is part of the bibliographer’s personal collection makes the statistic somewhat less impressive. The reader senses a totalising hermeneutic, even with regard to the issue of Clarke’s apocryphal authorship of these verses “that have endured in our memories for nearly 180 years.” Marshall’s argument against the potential authorship of Major Henry Livingston (1748-1828) is forceful, but generally dismissive of other studies. The “our” in the preceding quotation also indicates Marshall’s assumption of a homogenised, ultimately trans-historical audience. In other words, she gestures to a community of selfsame individuals whose devotion to the poem and its productive milieu – everything from children’s versions to novelty formats with “beautiful illustrations and innovative design” – is impenetrable and uncontested. There is no comment on tacky commercialisation, no interpretive guesses as to the role of Moore’s religious proclivities – he was a Doctor of Divinity – in the rather fantastic poem. Also absent is the criticism that such entries as the 1927 version illustrated by Frances Brundage bears the racist imagery of a “black Mammy” in it. Marshall celebrates it all. The bibliographer’s note that only select parodies have been included also makes the reader wonder whether less of a personal investment on Marshall’s part may have made the bibliography more welcoming of these unconventional, potentially subversive, and yet undoubtedly enriching voices.

Marshall’s text, despite glacial biases, does make great attempts to be inclusive, with entries for foreign editions published in Spanish, Dutch, French, German, Hawaiian, Yiddish, and others. The compiler also mentions that the first Filipino translation was slated for 2001, although too late to be included in the text. One notable
inclusion is *Ol' Sandy Claw: A Christmas Poem in Gullah*, whose very existence highlights the diversity of voices within the American national milieu that produced Moore’s work. The multiplicity of forms also emerges: Marshall includes a few electronic sites, differentiates between a “holiday keepsake” (issued privately, a limited edition) and a “holiday giveaway” (issued in mass quantities by commercial enterprises), and is conscientious enough to include a bibliography of Moore’s other works. It would have been intriguing to hear more of Marshall’s impressions on, say, how the “recycling” of pictures, techniques, and formats by publishers furthered the archetype of Santa Claus, or whether the diminution of his punishing, panoptical persona either inflated or suppressed the acquisitiveness now inseparable from the Christmas season. The bibliographer’s import is clearly quantity and quality over critical commentary. Another, more prolonged discussion might emerge from the eastern origins of St Nicholas which Marshall does mention, and the primarily occidental flavor that infuses the Santa Claus Moore envisioned. Given the legend that Nicholas gave his possessions to a family whose father was planning to sell his daughters into sexual slavery for lack of dowry money, the bibliographer might ask how accessible versions of Moore’s work were, or still are, to the general populace, how class privilege is limned or effaced in the poem, and how the market forces functioned in the publishing trends laid out by decade in Table 2.

Insofar as bibliographies map the genesis and evolution of texts, this collection includes a highly legible holograph of Moore’s poem from the Strong Museum archives. Marshall makes an innovative choice to include the least well-known version among the four extant copies. There is also a transcription of the “official” wording from the 1844 publication of Moore’s *Poems*. Variations between the original and the copies are summarised, but again, not critiqued. These include the replacement of “Happy Christmas” with “Merry Christmas;” the orthographic mutations of Moore’s “Donder and Blitzen” to “Donner”/“Dunder,” and “Blixem”/“Blixen;” some inserted archaisms (“spoke” to “spake,” “jerk” to “jirk”); amplifications of diction (“dressed all in fur” to “trimmed up in fur”); and slight bowdlerisations (“settled our brains” to “settled down”). Certainly, the content of the popular song “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer” does not take account of the original “Donder,” which is a humorous, if not slightly pedantic anecdote to disseminate among overzealous carolers. The scope of entries runs from 1823 to 2000, and each
sequentially numbered entry includes a bibliographic description as well as a physical description. Each black-and-white illustration is linked numerically to its bibliographic entry, and there are seven index formats: author/editor, general, format, illustrator/artist/designer/typographer, publisher/printer, series, and title.

Christmas enthusiasts will be pleased that this bibliography, by synecdochal logic, presents a small portion of a larger whole—that is, the bibliographer’s collection of Christmas and Moore memorabilia which will be bequeathed to the College of William and Mary’s Earl Gregg Swem Library in Williamsburg, Virginia, “at a later date.” This is Marshall’s own gift to posterity, a form of perpetual donation that mimics the so-called spirit of the season.

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This new study joins an ever-growing body of specialised work on the history of the book, particularly research dealing with what Gérard Genette refers to as paratexte, the title-pages and prologues, indexes, dedications, and notes that accompany the primary text. There was a time when such work required an apologia, but now the seemingly marginal components of the printed book have found their place at the centre of the critical arena of textual studies. After his series of groundbreaking articles on printed marginalia in English Renaissance books during the last dozen years, William Slights has now rewarded us with an impressive and generously illustrated book on the same subject. While the work is recommended to anyone interested in print culture, it will be of particular note for those attracted to Renaissance material culture, to editorial theory, or to the history of reading. Frequent users of the Short-Title Catalogue will similarly feel right at home in Slights’s world.

The book is divided into seven chapters, the first of which considers different kinds of printed marginalia ranging from notes that amplify or explicate the central text, to those that correct or justify an established argument, and how this marginalia assists and complicates the reading experience. In the next chapter Slights proposes a theory