

A full page is devoted to *Does your mother know you're out?* which both the *Oxford Dictionary* and Benham's *Dictionary of Quotations* trace back to 1838. That the query occurs also in an ancient Greek graffito suggests to Partridge that certain thought patterns recur 'throughout the ages and in all countries'. The best catch phrases have an Anglo-Saxon pithiness and are longer-lived than most people believe. *Gently, Bently* was taken from the BBC radio show *Take it from here* in the 1940's, and is still with us; *I'm not so green as I'm cabbage-looking* comes from Cuthbert Bede's *Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green* (1853), the same year as *Pop goes the Weasel*; but even these are striplings compared with *Hay is for horses*, which appeared in Swift's *Polite Conversation* (1738).

The most prolific catch-phrase inventor is thought to have been Ted Kavanagh, the script-writer for Tommy Handley in *ITMA* (1939–49). Cinema was undoubtedly the most productive area in America. In the theatre, Albee and Noel Coward are the playwrights who contribute most fruitfully to the language. The material is practically inexhaustible; there is no reference, for instance, to *The best things in life are free* (song title); *Thin as a boarding-house blanket* (bowls cliché); *He's the fundi* (folk-word for 'expert'); *You've made my day* (social compliment); *You think you got troubles* (caption for cartoon). This list is a typical cross-section of the sources available.

This is an altogether fascinating volume, much too entertaining to be classified as a reference book.

A.C. Partridge

Patricia Hill, *Password*. Penguin, 1978. 33 pp. Paperback R1,65.

In January this year Penguin published three additional issues of their language teaching booklet (nos. 7, 8, 9). Judging from format, illustrations and much of the content, they are designed for fairly young learners of English (Standards 5 to 8 in South African terms, I would say) or for slightly older students in foreign countries learning English as a second language. This is not specifically stated as editorial policy, but the articles about Britain invite comparison with conditions in 'your country'. Furthermore, while the language is extremely simple, the content often deals with topics with which an older child is more likely to be familiar. One story deals with urban terrorism and another with the subconscious mind, while the science fiction stories assume a fairly sophisticated social consciousness.

Some articles will be of interest to young adults. Those include interviews with a young orchestra conductor, a dress designer and a show jumper, as well as features on places of interest in London. The story (entitled *The Snowman*) about a sinister lodger who may or may not have designs on the landlady's children, is much too subtle and suggestive to be understood by pre-teenage readers, as is the poem by Stevie Smith, *Not Waving but Drowning*.

'Social comment' and 'contemporary relevance' are strong features of these booklets. The science fiction stories, *Ticket to Tranai*, which describes an apparent utopia where there are some frightening flaws, and *Hands Off*, which describes the encounter between a kind 'alien' and some criminal spacemen on a distant planet, have, as their theme, the relativity of our values. A story set in Ghana is designed to give yet another perspective on the varieties of human culture. One little language exercise is meant to encourage thinking on sex discrimination in jobs and in a (purely linguistic?) exercise, *The Patter of Tiny Feet*, we are asked 'How do parents explain to young children where babies come from?'

Each issue contains a playlet for young children and a simple crossword puzzle as well as a few other language exercises which steer clear of any suggestion of 'formal grammar'. Each issue also describes a place of interest in London, with attractive accompanying photographs. The cartoon 'Adventures of Professor Bighead' is an amusing incentive for foreign students to read a little more English.

The question is: who in this country will find these 'magazine-style books' (as the editor, Patricia Hill, calls them) of use? They are intended to cater for a wide range of ages and abilities, and will certainly be useful for those teaching English as a second language to senior Primary or junior High School pupils. The stories, but not the elementary exercises on them, can be used profitably in an English High School, as they are imaginative and thought-provoking.

E. Hees  
University of South Africa