

Julie Coleman. *A History of Cant and Slang Dictionaries. Volume I: 1567–1784.* 2004, xii + 259 pp. ISBN 0 19 925471 0 (Hb.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. Price: £115.

Julie Coleman. *A History of Cant and Slang Dictionaries. Volume II: 1785–1858.* 2004, xiv + 338 pp. ISBN 0 19 925470 2 (Hb.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. Price: £115.

Julie Coleman. *A History of Cant and Slang Dictionaries. Volume III: 1859–1936.* 2009, xxiv + 489 pp. ISBN 978 0 19 954937 5 (Hb.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. Price: £94.

Julie Coleman. *A History of Cant and Slang Dictionaries. Volume IV: 1937–1984.* 2010, xxvi + 503 pp. ISBN 978 0 19 956725 6 (Hb.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. Price: £85.

I

Now that four volumes of Julie Coleman's documentation of cant and slang dictionaries have appeared, it is a suitable time to consider them together* to determine the way she researched their history and the way she presented the results.

The volumes are structured almost similarly, with small variations made necessary by the special requirements of the different periods. Important in the front matter is, except the Prefaces, the Introductions in which Coleman presents, apart from a brief summary of the contents of each volume, the time delimitation of the dictionaries she discusses and the objectives she set herself.

She uses specific labels to distinguish the different types of non-standard language. Colloquial language is the language of conversation. Dialect terms are restricted to a geographical region. Colloquial and dialect terms remain peripheral in the dictionaries studied. Slang, which is usually short-lived, often belongs to specific age and social groups. Jargon is the specialized language of occupational or interest groups. Cant is the secret language of thieves and beggars, used for deception and concealment. Flash refers specifically to the fashionable slang of London's eighteenth- and nineteenth-century demi-monde. As these types of language cannot be clearly delineated, terms move easily between categories, being adopted by new groups of speakers. Not all lexicographers, whose dictionaries Coleman discusses use them with these meanings. Some lexicographers make little distinction between them, combining them all in one. Linking all these language types is their not belonging to Standard English. This determines the criteria for inclusion.

Coleman aimed at discussing these dictionaries within the context of the general and specialized dictionaries of a specific period, at demonstrating how the dictionaries are related to each other, at establishing their relationship with earlier glossaries, at identifying distinctive features of content and methodol-

* A review by Anne McDermott of the first two volumes appeared in *Lexikos* 17: 442-445, 2007.

ogy, and at placing them in the historical and social contexts in which they originated. In this way the dictionaries' topicality and role could be determined.

In each chapter related dictionaries are discussed, compared and evaluated. If available, short biographies of the compilers are given with reference to their place of birth, education, and sphere of activity. Features such as sources, subject matter, semantic coverage, usage labels and lexicographical features (citations, examples, authorities, etymologies, pronunciation, and cross-references) are considered, the author continually referring to the statistical tables of these features given in the Appendixes of each volume. These statistical tables therefore form an integral part of the discussion of the different dictionaries in the main text of a particular volume. Each chapter is rounded off by a summary of and conclusions about its contents. The concluding chapters give a general overview of the trends observed in the different publications of the period covered in a specific volume. The back matter of each volume contains, apart from the Appendixes, an extensive Bibliography, a Subject Index and a Word Index.

In the following four paragraphs a short survey of the contents of the four volumes is given, attempting to indicate the breadth and depth of Coleman's research.

II

Volume I covers slang dictionaries published between the years 1567 and 1784. These lists must be understood against their historical background, which Coleman describes in Chapter 1. The early part of the period is characterized by "the agrarian revolution, and the progressive criminalization of poverty" and the latter part by "the transition to a cash culture and the haphazardly harsh treatment of criminals" (Volume I, p. 8). The lists reflect "changing interests and concerns caused by population growth and migration, developments in legal and penal theory and practice, and far-reaching changes in trade and travel" (Volume I, p. 8).

Chapter 2 deals with Thomas Harman's list, starting off with the short glossary of beggar's language in *Caveat or Warening for Common Cursetors* (1567). Harman's list was reworked and republished by Thomas Dekker in his *Bellman of London* series (1608), while S.R. published a list in *Martin Mark-all, Beadle of Bridewell* (1610) as a riposte to Dekker's first book.

Chapter 3 discusses the three cant lists produced by Richard Head in *The English Rogue* (1665), each based on Harman's list, but every time with something new added. These were followed by Head's *Canting Academy* (1673) and its different versions. Head's list was adapted and reissued until the end of the eighteenth century. It was also included in editions of *The Triumph of Wit* (1688) by John Shirley. Editions published in 1707, and later, contain a number of deviant readings not found in earlier ones. The cant list *The Life and Death of the English Rogue* (1720) published many years after Head's decease, is derived

from that in the *Canting Academy*. It shares some readings with a list in *The History and Actions of Jonathan Wild* (1725) which appeared in two later editions.

B.E.'s *New Dictionary of the Terms Ancient and Modern of the Canting Crew*, published in 1698 or 1699, is analysed in Chapter 4, being the most substantial work which appeared during the period covered by Volume I. Coleman mentions that B.E.'s dictionary represents a major development in the English slang and cant dictionary tradition for at least four respects: it is the first word-list published in an independent volume, the word-list is expanded to over 4,000 entries compared with Head's list of 265 in the *Canting Academy*, the new entries represent an expansion in the scope of the contents, including, apart from cant, also general slang, colloquial language and jargon, and it contains some of the features commonly found in mainstream monolingual and bilingual dictionaries. B.E.'s work was quickly and comprehensively pirated. One group of word-lists by Carew, derived from the anonymous *New Canting Dictionary* (1725), was produced in such large numbers that Coleman treats them in a separate chapter, Chapter 5. The later lexicographers, who based their dictionaries on B.E.'s each ended up with a different selection of terms, showing the breadth of its coverage. Only after several editions of Alexander Smith's popular work *The History of the Lives of the Most Noted Highway-men* (1714) had appeared, did he include a cant glossary in the augmented, three-volume edition of the 1719 *A Compleat History of the Lives and Robberies of the most Notorious Highwaymen*. The editor of the American edition, which only appeared in 1813 largely excluded the cant terms, producing a less offensive, more moralistic dictionary of slang. B.E. made considerable contributions to the history of English in general and its slang in particular. Coleman mentions that, through Grose's dictionary, many of B.E.'s entries appear in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century word-lists, still presented as contemporary slang.

Chapter 5 deals with the cant glossaries contained in the editions of Bampfylde-Moore's life, the first edition published in 1745, and the first to include the glossary, appearing in 1750. His biography was supplemented, abridged, edited and adapted for more than a century under various titles which reflect the changes of taste during the years. The word-lists are a mixture of plagiarism from various sources and original observation of changes in slang. They are not, however, as claimed, glossaries of the language of English Gypsies.

In Chapter 6 Coleman discusses cant and slang lists not wholly derived from the four main strands of the tradition: Harman, Head, B.E. and Carew. A varied selection, they are attached to works as different as exposés of the vices of the capital, memories and confessions of real-life and fictional villains, miscellaneous anthologies, and plays. After Robert Greene's cony-catching works, published during 1591–1592, no wholly independent cant glossaries were produced for almost a century. Between 1688 and 1799 there appeared several of these lists which are frequently authenticated by their compilers' assertion of inside knowledge. Greene associated with dubious characters in London, while biographical evidence supports Charles Hitchen, James Dalton, Daniel Defoe

and John Poulter's position of authorities on criminal and prison life and language. These lists might contain convincing evidence of contemporary cant: *The Regulator* (1718) by Hitchin, *Genuine Narrative of all the Street Robberies Committed since October last* (1728) by Dalton, *Street Robberies Considered* (1728) by Defoe and *The Discoveries* (1753) by Poulter.

Although numerous general dictionaries included at least some cant terms, especially two of those Coleman discusses in Chapter 7 are significant to the cant and slang dictionary tradition. Elisha Coles not only incorporated some cant in his *English Dictionary* (1676), but also influenced B.E.'s dictionary. Nathan Bailey not only provided a separate list of cant terms in *The Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (1737), but it was also used by Grose in the compilation of his dictionary.

In the concluding chapter, Chapter 8, Coleman mentions that only a few cant and slang lists produced during the period covered by Volume I were sold as independent books: most formed only a small part of some larger work. The sixteenth-century glossaries are typically found in rogue books, which are general descriptive catalogues of the various types of villain that the reader should learn to avoid. By the seventeenth century, the word-lists normally form part of the biographies or autobiographies of specific criminals. The only exception is B.E.'s dictionary, which was directed wholly to public interest in non-standard language. In spite of its wider linguistic focus, those who used his dictionary as the basis for their own, mostly concentrated on his cant terms.

These cant and slang word-lists and the works in which they were found, all depended on and contributed to a general fear of crime. These books dealing with criminal lives fulfilled a deterrent function, relying on indoctrinating and admonitory example. Coleman believes that a wide range of readers would have bought these books: those seeking entertainment, an understanding of criminality and advice for the safeguarding of their lives and possessions.

There is no conclusive evidence that the authors of these works had any first-hand knowledge of the criminal underworld. Although the contents of these lists are often similar, they claim to cover the language of a wide range of users. However, the fieldwork methods of these compilers should be viewed critically and the results with reservations. Coleman stresses that these word-lists "not only form part of lexicographical tradition, they are also intricately linked with contemporary literary depictions of the criminal underworld" (Volume I, p. 187). Even if the contents of these lists, according to Coleman, were terms used by criminals, they may represent little more than short-lived code words employed within specific criminal gangs. The discarded vocabulary, if not fallen into disuse then, continued to be freely included in word-lists and used in literary works as "convenient symbols of criminality" as Coleman puts it (Volume I, p. 189). Widely known in the eighteenth century, canting drama and ballads, examples of which are given in Appendix B, were composed by hack writers and street singers themselves, rather than by criminals. In the word-lists and literary works, there are undoubtedly some terms that are

genuine criminal cant, but by their repeated occurrences, became fossilized. Other terms which acquired more general currency, may have formed part of contemporary urban slang or dialect, while a few are still in common use.

III

Volume II considers cant and slang dictionaries published between 1785 and 1858. During this period, language was felt to be changing as rapidly as society. The working classes were abandoning rural pursuits and dialects in their migration to the industrial towns and cities. Opportunities for discussing social and linguistic changes were provided by numerous clubs and periodicals. The circumstances were suitable for the publication of an authoritative lexicon of slang.

The three editions of Francis Grose's *Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (1758, 1788, 1796), covering not only general slang, but also cant, jargon and dialect, are analysed and compared in Chapter 1. Trying to appear authoritative and scholarly, Grose listed his sources both in the preface and in the body of the dictionary, making them seem more extensive than they actually were. In the first edition, he chose from his dictionary sources those labelled as 'cant', those illustrated by citations and/or those dealing with selected semantic areas, thereby including relatively few terms not listed earlier. Grose's other sources, credited where appropriate, comprise canting works, novels, plays, popular literature and reference works. The second edition shows a considerable augmentation of the first. In addition to the use of new antiquarian sources, he again consulted volumes used in the compilation of the first edition. By including more general non-standard and colloquial language, he moves away from the language of criminals. The third edition, extensively edited by Wigstead, may include some material from notes made by Grose. Although it contains relatively few new entries, many existing entries were rewritten and updated. With an increase in jargon, the movement away from cant continued.

Grose's dictionary established his reputation as an important authority on both antiquarian and contemporary slang. Later lexicographers relied on this reputation by using either his name or his work. The dictionaries discussed in Chapter 2 range from the entirely pirated to the partially original. The most important dictionary is the *Lexicon Balatronicum* (1811) which increased the word-list by over 300 headwords and almost 400 new entries. The compiler edited existing entries to make them more concise, correct, modern and informative, adding citations and authorities. George Matsell's *Vocabulum* (1859), although largely derivative, made, through his additions, a significant contribution towards charting early American slang, demonstrating an awareness for small shifts in meaning. Herbert Astbury's selection from Matsell's dictionary in *Gangs of New York* (1927) resulted in a concise, more sensational glossary.

Although the dictionaries discussed in Chapter 3 are all ultimately derived

from that of Grose, they are linked by a common intermediary, Humphrey Tristram Potter's *New Dictionary of all the Cant and Flash Languages* (1795). Over 80 per cent of the word-list of Potter's dictionary is found in earlier slang dictionaries from which he selected terms labelled as 'cant' and dealing with crime and punishment. By deleting citations, authorities and etymologies given in his sources, Potter produced a more concise dictionary. George Andrewes's *Dictionary of the Slang and Cant Languages* (1809) is largely derived from Potter's with the introduction of a few terms of his own. The tiny anonymous *Flash Dictionary* (1821) edits the material that it adopts from Andrewes and Potter, adding entries which represent contemporary cant and slang. George Kent's definitions in *Modern Flash Dictionary* (1835) are usually briefer than those of his sources. Just over a fifth of his entries cannot be traced to these sources, thus indicating that these probably reflect contemporary speech. The author of *The Sinks of London* (1848) adopted his entire word-list from Kent's. In comparison with other dictionaries in this group, Duncombe's *New and Improved Flash Dictionary* (c. 1850) added significantly to the material from its sources, especially Kent's dictionary on which it is based. Although only three-quarters of the size of Kent's dictionary, over two-fifths of its entries were entirely new. The dictionaries related to Potter scarcely testify of original lexicography, mostly only adding a few new entries to those taken from their sources.

Chapter 4 deals with the word-list in *The Memoirs of James Hardy Vaux* (1819). Coleman is of the opinion that this glossary is a genuine record of the language used by English felons at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It demonstrates the dissemination of English slang and cant across the world, confirming the continued currency of many terms found in the *Lexicon* and Potter's dictionary.

Known for the journal *Boxiana* (1818–1824) as well as the book *Life in London* (1821), Pierce Egan brought out in 1823 an edition of Grose's dictionary, which is discussed in Chapter 5. As sources he used several minor slang dictionaries, in addition to the *Lexicon* and Vaux's word-list. In selecting terms from the *Lexicon*, he tended to omit marginal terms, concentrating on its core semantic coverage. He also re-alphabetized the word-list.

The topic of Chapter 6 is the work of John Badcock, who published works on boxing and racing under the pseudonyms John Bee and John Hind between 1816 and 1830. Each of Egan's most popular works was preceded by a similar but less successful work by Bee: *Boxiana* by Bee's *Lives of the Boxers*, and *Life in London* by Bee's *Letters from London*. Egan also published a slang dictionary before Bee could finish his. Throughout his dictionary Bee tries to demonstrate his greater knowledge and erudition. He provides anecdotal and encyclopaedic information, moral and social commentary and guidance on usage. He abandons crime and punishment for social and sporting terms. Bee claims that he built on Grose's dictionary. Like Grose he draws attention to his comprehensive written sources which he, unlike Grose, used critically. Both attempted, by means of the extensive use of citations and authorities, and particularly in Bee's

case, etymologies, to produce scholarly and authoritative reference works. Both emphasized their use of slang-speaking informants, Bee, however, commenting on non-standard pronunciation more than Grose. Bee even provided some headwords with grammatical labelling. Coleman is of the opinion that Bee's dictionary is in many ways better than either the *Lexicon* or Egan's dictionary. Its coverage is more limited both as far as etymology and register are concerned, thereby showing that Bee had a clearer and more focused purpose. Egan's dictionary was largely derivative, while Bee recorded contemporary slang, especially sport slang, accurately and observantly.

In Chapter 7 Coleman treats the numerous minor British cant and slang word-lists that appeared during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These were not issued as dictionaries in their own right, but formed part of larger works such as plays, autobiographies and guidebooks, being added as appendixes or glossaries to these. These shorter lists were meant for a public not able to afford the more extensive volumes produced by compilers like Grose, Egan and Bee. Independent of the main slang dictionary tradition, these lists contributed significantly to the recording of non-standard English during this period. Their authors include not only journalists and hack writers, but also criminals and officials tracking down crime, both of whom should be expected to be knowledgeable of the secret languages used by contemporary villains. Several of these glossaries profited by the craze for flash language arising from the success of Egan's *Life in London*.

In contrast to Noah Webster who created an authoritative dictionary for Americans, John Bartlett restricted his dictionary to colloquial, dialectal and slang terms peculiar to the United States, but excluded cant. The American cant and slang glossaries discussed in Chapter 8 are independent products by users or hearers of the terms they include. Unlike Webster's more general and Bartlett's more specific dictionaries, they rely rather on spoken than written sources, being therefore useful portrayals of the development of American cant and slang.

This volume is concluded by Chapter 10 in which Coleman indicates, in addition to the continuities in slang lexicography, the changes in linguistic theory and practice, in attitudes towards non-standard registers and in publishing. As far as continuities are concerned, two examples can be mentioned: some lists, like Matsell's, compiled first-hand, can trace their ancestry, and even some of their contents, to Harman's *Caveat*; and some lists, like those of Grose and Egan, compiled, at least in part, from written sources at their disposal, copied B.E.'s example.

This period, however, saw the development of a historical approach to slang lexicography as practised by Grose. Because of Grose's influence, at first directly and later indirectly through Egan, many dictionaries included the same core word-list. Shorter independently produced lists often better reflected current non-standard language than the more generally consulted works like the *Lexicon*. By changing into flash, cant has now become stylish. While it still

implied knowledge of the underworld, the use of flash did not indicate criminality in a similar way as the use of cant. What made flash appealing was, according to Coleman, that "it occupied the area between the classes: between those who were respectable and those who were not" (Volume II, p. 260). Flash language was therefore, for users of any class, an expression of defiance. Publishers were responding to market trends. After the appearance of Egan's *Life in London*, for example, the inclusion of a slang glossary could improve the sales of a similar work. These works were bought mostly for entertainment. Their readers could raise their status among their peers by using the same flash language in everyday life.

IV

Volume III deals with cant and slang dictionaries published between 1859 and 1936. In the late 1850s, the British Empire was at its height. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the Empire was declining. At the beginning of the First World War, America was both more industrialized and more productive than the United Kingdom. As America's national influence and confidence continued to grow, American English disengaged itself from British English, accentuating its greater informality and creativity. English in Australia took longer to assert its independence.

The different editions of John Camden Hotten's *Dictionary of Modern Slang, Cant and Vulgar Words* (1859) are discussed in Chapter 1. Hotten tried to do for the nineteenth century what Grose had done for the eighteenth: to summarize the history of cant and slang, and to provide an account of contemporary non-standard usage. It catered for an uncritical audience and a popular market. Although Hotten emphasized his use of slang-speaking informants, he also extensively employed numerous written sources, praising some and condemning others, in this way appearing to produce a scholarly and authoritative reference work.

The lexicographers of the international slang dictionaries treated in Chapter 2 were not native speakers of British English. Their dictionaries often include information about slang in other European languages. Apart from Henry Baumann's dictionary, those of Albert Barrère, Charles Leland and Karl Lentzner are discussed. These works are of a scholarly nature, beyond the understanding and means of the uneducated.

Of the works considered in Chapter 3, the most important is John Farmer and William Henley's *Slang and its Analogues, Past and Present* (1890–1904). Bringing about many improvements in English slang lexicography and having a great influence on later slang lexicographers, Farmer and Henley's dictionary gave fully referenced citations both to support their definitions and to indicate dates of usage. Speculation about unknowable etymologies was avoided. Obscene and offensive terms were defined without being evasive or obscure. They developed a stricter sense of the boundaries of slang, excluding dialectal

and colloquial terms.

As shown in the discussions of the British general slang dictionaries in Chapter 4, slang lexicography conducted in Britain during this period was predominantly historical. *A Dictionary of English Slang and Colloquialisms* (1913) by Arthur H. Dawson and *Slang Today and Yesterday* (1933) by Eric Partridge are the only glossaries offering even a limited insider-perspective and that only in the relatively few original entries. Looking back to the nineteenth from the early years of the twentieth century and the inter-war period, the discontinuity between the past and the present became apparent. American English and its slang were now distinct enough from their British equivalents that mutual explanation was required, glossaries of American slang for British audiences being the more common. Rhyming slang, indicating a particular image of the British urban working classes and capturing the imagination of those hearing it, both at home and abroad, caused a disproportionate number of these dictionaries to appear among dictionaries of British slang.

Chapter 5 covers glossaries of British school and university slang, sometimes appended to publications such as guides and reminiscences. Many schools developed their own slang, some persistent enough to be documented. Such slang remains an important part of the identities of some schools, several providing a glossary for the information of new pupils. The enforcement of conformity and the instilment of respect for school traditions were important functions of school slang. These glossaries are generally reminiscent, associated with memoirs of school life in earlier days to be seen in light of a general pressure to modernize and reform.

The slang dictionaries discussed in Chapter 6 are accounts of English used in Australia, largely by British emigrants. Given the tendency of glossaries of Australian slang to include widely accepted Australianisms, there is sometimes little difference between the Australian slang dictionaries and the general dictionaries of Australian English. Coleman mentions that slang is a particularly problematic label for Australian English, because within the inherent informality of Australian English many slang terms are acceptable, and because many distinctly Australian words and phrases were stigmatized as slang in the nineteenth century. The use of English was largely viewed from the perspective of British English, resulting in deviations from Standard British English to be regarded as merely uncouth language.

The American slang dictionaries considered in Chapter 7 are characterized by their diversity: slang could not become national without the power of the media. At the beginning of this period no contacts and therefore no shared interests could develop across a vast continent. More possibilities for personal encounters with American English were supplemented and eventually overshadowed by the recorded versions distributed by film and record companies. Several of these glossaries were produced for British theatre- and cinema-goers who found American terms unfamiliar and unintelligible. The glossaries for an international audience focus on similarities rather than differences between

speakers of American English, probably therefore contributing to the development of the sense of an existing national slang.

Chapter 8 concentrates on American school and university slang dictionaries. In some respects these contain the same kind of insider slang that characterizes British school and college glossaries. All the glossaries discussed in this chapter date from the later nineteenth century when the enrolment of students increased. These glossaries are untrustworthy in methodology, terminology and documentation: their authors usually do not inform on the way the lists were collected, define what kind of slang are being listed and give little particulars about currency. They document the beginnings of a youth culture that was to move beyond educational affiliation. Here, however, Coleman stresses, slang was often a measure of conformity, rather than rebellion. These glossaries are better than contemporary British school and college lists: they contain current slang collected by young academics, and are therefore more reliable than those recorded in older men's reminiscences.

Chapter 9 examines dictionaries of the slang of World War I. Because of the Americans' shorter involvement in the War and because there was already an established vocabulary at their arrival, relatively few of these glossaries are American. Some military slang was carried over from the pre-War period into the First World War. Many of the glossaries comment on differences in slang used in various areas and periods of the War. After the War, some terms survived into wide or restricted usage, but the ones becoming obsolescent served often as motivation to document them. These glossaries, having many different purposes, cannot be interpreted without reference to their function. They reveal details not only of the military experience, but also of personal and social interaction. The earliest of these glossaries appeared while the War was still in progress; the latest were published when the next war had become inevitable.

The effects of World War I on American society and language are shown in Chapters 10 and 11, which deal with glossaries of tramp and criminal language. There is some continuity between the language of tramps and criminals, and, as Coleman says, some glossaries could justifiably have been placed in either chapter. In contrast with the period covered in Volume II, there are relatively few British tramp and criminal glossaries.

Most of the glossaries of homelessness in Chapter 10, dealing with the language of tramps and hoboes, are American. There is a sufficient overlap between the numerous unrelated lists to suggest that there really was some national link joining the terms. These glossaries demonstrate the appeal of an itinerant lifestyle comparable with the fascination with Gypsy life found in eighteenth-century British texts.

Few of the dictionaries of crime discussed in Chapter 11 are British and Australian. American cant glossaries tend to categorize criminals and criminal activities into specific groups, documenting and labelling the language of these groupings separately. These lists often lacked authenticity which was counteracted in the late 1920s by sociological studies of criminals and their language.

David W. Maurer changed cant lexicography by introducing data collection in the field, his presentation of separate lists for different criminal communities emphasizing the specialization of crime. In the late 1920s particularly, American criminals started to reveal their secret language as part of the process of reformation. By the 1930s, glossaries tended to concentrate on the language of prisons rather than that of unjailed criminals.

Many of the glossaries of the slang of the entertainment industries, grouped together in Chapter 12, could also have been treated in Chapters 10 and 11. The entertainment industries were beginning to have an effect on the development and dissemination of slang. Academics in America and England needed to help the audiences understand the slang used in the respective countries. The entertainment industries also developed slang of their own, this chapter therefore concentrating on glossaries of terms used within show business in its various forms. The theatre, particularly vaudeville, the circus and the carnival were all on the decline after the early years of the twentieth century, the itinerant employees often living, as Coleman puts it, "on the edges of poverty and legality" (Volume III, p. 7). Like the glossaries discussed in Chapters 5 and 10, these glossaries were sometimes self-consciously preserving the vocabulary of a fast disappearing way of life. Similar to the glossaries treated in Chapters 10 and 11, they are mostly American. The later dictionaries discussed in Chapter 12 show the appearance of African-American music and language, laying the foundations for the rapid changes in musical trends after the World War II period.

The concluding chapter, Chapter 13, summarizes the general trends of slang lexicography during this period. Many of the British slang dictionaries, being historical, detail changes terms underwent through time or document obsolescent terms from previous generations. As social structures in Britain, the United States and Australia differed, each system of non-standard speech carried a different meaning. Although social and educational distinctions in language were maintained in the United States, contemporary slang and dialect were of interest for their own sake. While still considered inferior by Anglo-centrics, Australian slang and Australian English had become symbols of national pride and self-respect to their speakers. It is uncertain how reliable slang glossaries from this period are as representative of non-standard speech, but the areas of slang they chose to document indicate a contemporary interest. This period sees the necessity for and beginning of sociological slang lexicography, sometimes scholarly, sometimes journalistic.

V

Although there were still general dictionaries of national slang in the period 1937–1984 covered by Volume IV, with Partridge's dictionary as dominant example, lexicographers increasingly specialized in the slang of social sub-groups. These slang dictionaries, mostly by amateur lexicographers, reveal

their incompetence as historians of the language, etymologists, definers, grammarians and proof-readers. In this volume, as Coleman says, "glossaries that warn of the dangers posed to society by slang users are in the minority; instead authority and traditional values threaten individual self-determination" (Volume IV, p. 2). She largely organized the dictionaries geographically or thematically, with each group of dictionaries discussed chronologically.

Chapter 1 deals with the eight editions of Eric Partridge's *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* in its four redactions. Partridge was not a discriminating lexicographer: his dates are often based on deduction rather than evidence, he frequently includes unreliable etymologies and he depended on single sources or correspondents for many of the terms listed. After the third edition no up-to-date coverage of contemporary slang was provided. In light of political and cultural influences, his exclusion of American slang became more difficult to justify. The separate listing of acronyms was hard to sustain and his complex system resulted in mistakes in alphabetization. Until Paul Beale's combining of the two lists and revision of the alphabetization, users were never certain whether a sought term was included.

Chapter 2 concentrates on dictionaries of slang used during periods of conscription. These treat glossaries of military slang of the Second World War, as well as glossaries of the First World War published during this period. Only two years after the start of World War I the first slang glossaries appeared, but already early in World War II their potential contribution to morale was recognized. The official American glossaries imply that all personnel were united by their shared slang, but in reality technological and tactical specialization led to the documentation of slang restricted to specific units and divisions. Military slang was incorporated into general slang during the War and for some time afterwards. This is especially the case with air force slang where civil aviation kept original military slang in general circulation. The long continuation of World War I slang lexicography was prompted, according to Coleman, by a feeling of futility, while the justness of World War II stood confirmed. Few glossaries of the Korean and Vietnamese wars focus on slang, perhaps because of the short period of conscription and the maintenance of civilian slang.

Chapter 3 discusses British slang dictionaries of the post-war period, tending to be historical in content or approach, which is particularly evident in their concentration on rhyming slang. These rhyming slang dictionaries, found over-represented among dictionaries of this period, are often associated with the entertainment business, emphasizing the unreality of the Cockney character presented in them. The relatively few number of general British slang dictionaries during this period must be ascribed either to Partridge's domination of slang lexicography or the overwhelming influence of American slang.

The declining influence of British English is reflected in Chapter 4 which groups together glossaries of the slang of new English-speaking nations, of which Australia was by far the most productive. As Australian English interacted with a developing sense of nationalism, its slang tends to be presented as

uniform and unifying. Lexicographers in New Zealand and Canada had to distinguish distinctive national forms not found in the usage of their neighbours Australia and America respectively. The production of national dictionaries in New Zealand and Canada during this period probably explains why less attention was paid to slang. Of the British colonies, only Nigeria produced slang dictionaries, indicating that national developments in non-standard English had taken place there.

As shown in Chapter 5, considerably more lists of American than British slang appeared during this period. This chapter also looks at several American glossaries dealing, often nostalgically, not only with circus and carnival slang, but also with soda-fountain and hotel slang. Coleman believes that patriotic motives may explain some of the academic attention paid to American dialect and slang. Although the formal English of Britain and America are not markedly different during this period, their slang is. Generally the American glossaries are more contemporary in focus than the British ones.

Chapters 6 to 12 focus on slang glossaries of social sub-groups, although grouping occurs nationally within these chapters. British school and college dictionaries and their American counterparts discussed in Chapter 6 represent the continuation of established traditions of school and college lexicography, motivated, at least partially, by the desire to distinguish one educational establishment from another by accentuating its unique traditions and language. However, by the late 1960s, as seen in Chapter 8, there is a move to study youth slang, rather than school and college slang. Coleman stresses that "it would ... be impossible to discuss youth slang during this period without reference to African-American slang" (Volume IV, p. 3). Throughout Chapters 7 and 8, she presents the assimilation of youth culture. Chapter 7 discusses glossaries of African-American slang, followed by glossaries of musicians' slang reflecting the way of speaking which accompanied each new musical trend. Chapter 8 deals with glossaries of slang used by counter-cultural groups and youth culture groups. These glossaries served a variety of different purposes, for example to challenge or defend traditional values, to help young people deal with the youth scene and to define or address a target market. Coleman treats them chronologically to emphasize the rapid dissemination and appropriation of the language of these groups by advertisers and the media. Philosophies of self-determination, social revolution and sexual liberation characterized youth culture during this period. These are also crucial to many of the glossaries of sexual orientation which Coleman examines in Chapter 9.

In contrast to the general acceptance of other slang users, two groups are considered a threat to society: drug users and criminals. Criminals were always seen as dangerous, but drug users became prominent during this period. Terms for drugs are found in glossaries discussed in most chapters in Volume IV, particularly frequently in Chapters 6 to 9, but Chapter 10 especially concentrates on glossaries focusing on the slang of drug addicts or dealers. Many of these glossaries were compiled by or for professionals working with addicts in

various capacities. The many glossaries of drug slang published during this period, especially in America, could, according to Coleman, be the result of the increasing problem of drug addiction in the inner cities, perhaps attributable to the association of drugs with successive popular music trends, or a result of the criminalization of drugs which increased the potential profits of importers or purveyors. Chapter 11 considers dictionaries of the language of other criminal groups, particularly prisoners. The adoption of American slang by criminals in other parts of the world should be attributed to the media rather than personal contact. The production of so many glossaries by prison officials and sociologists indicates that prison slang was successful in allowing prisoners to communicate secretly. It strengthens the belief that neither prison authorities nor prisoners themselves can be fully understood without knowledge of their language.

A few glossaries react against the liberal movements considered in Chapters 6 to 10 and the Citizens' Band Radio slang glossaries discussed in Chapter 12 reflect the call for a return to traditional values. These dictionaries and glossaries show the effect of changing technology on the development and transmission of non-standard terms, express a belief that first-hand knowledge qualifies a person as slang lexicographer and demonstrate that there is a market for accessibly written populist dictionaries. Coleman sees CB users as representing an early form of virtual community, with their lexicography being joined by a dictionary of the slang of computer users.

Conclusions about slang lexicography during this period are drawn in Chapter 13. Scholars discussed the processes and purposes of slang lexicography, some emphasizing the importance of sociological context, others the necessity of historical textual research. This also becomes apparent in many scholarly glossaries, which belong either to one or the other approach. Although slang dictionaries, largely composed by free-lance compilers, are unreliable for academic purposes, these lexicographers are not deterred by debates about the way of undertaking slang lexicography or delineating a particular area of interest. Being knowledgeable about slang, they compiled dictionaries, which sometimes came to be used as tools in the struggle for personal or national identity, civil rights, non-conformity, self-expression, sexual liberation, and a greater understanding and equalization of various social sub-groups.

VI

After studying these four volumes, the reader is left with two predominant impressions: first, the enormous amount and diversity of materials collected, consulted, compared and evaluated, and second, the competent integration and presentation of these materials in an absorbing and scholarly way. It is a masterly and admirable accomplishment. These volumes not only give an overview of the dictionaries that were published during particular periods, but also of the social and historical backgrounds which produced them. They are therefore

not only informative to lexicographers and linguists, but also to sociologists and historians. Hopefully in a few years' time, a fifth volume will appear that will cover the period from 1985 onwards.

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