

BOOK REVIEWS

KENNETH HUDSON. *THE LANGUAGE OF THE TEENAGE REVOLUTION*. LONDON: MACMILLAN, 1983. 123pp. HARDBACK. R36,95.

I can't see any usefulness or importance in a book like this. Before I started it, I was already worried about three things. One: the text is 123 pp long - that's not exactly voluminous - and the price marked in the front of the book is R36,95 - that's exactly and entirely ridiculous. Two: that title worried me: The Teenage Revolution - where was I when that happened, I wondered. And three: Kenneth Hudson's other books are given as *The Dictionary of Diseased English*, *The Jargon of the Professions*, *The Language of Modern Politics*. So what was this one - the shavings swept up off the floor after the others?

Still, the sub-title intrigued: *The Dictionary Defeated*. But nowhere is that promise fulfilled. There's a chapter entitled *The Lexicographer's Waterloo*, but I'm unable to see its ultimate point, except to be disarmed by its last 9 words: 'I make no claim whatever to be a lexicographer.'

Just before that Kenneth Hudson has referred to 'the 2000-odd words and senses in the glossary of British teenage English, which I have prepared, single-handed and computerless'. Herein, I thought, will lie the real stuff of the book. But no such luck. He glosses 22 words under the heading 'Sex', 8 words under 'Violence', and 4 pp under 'Drugs'. Hudson's revelations here are of the following order:

Coke: Cocaine

Shoot up: Inject a drug

Boot: in *Put the boot in:* To use violence, fight.

My goodness (to coin a phrase), we really needed to pay R36,95 to discover those in 1983, the year in which the book was first published.

Here's Mr Hudson on

Crumpet: Women and girls considered collectively and with and emphasis on their sexual attractions and willingness. A mainly, but not exclusively, male expression, used by all social classes and hardly ever heard outside Britain.

This and other discussion of words like 'Super', 'Fab, fabulous', 'Hubby' and 'Loo' don't give one too much sense of an ear exactly close to the ground (let alone the underground). What happened to the language of the 80s, the 70s or even the 60s? Like, I mean, where's this heavy dude at gosh, golly, gee-whizz.

'Punk' does have one reference in the Index, but all that does is tell us that, despite the punks' attempts to lead 'the arch-protest', 'the public at large continues to find them rather sinister figures of fun, rather than apostles of a revolution.' Revealing, innit? It says nothing whatever about their language, and in no way defines how or why the Dictionary may have been defeated by them.

On any sort of sociological front, the book is no less disappointing. It says little that I could find illuminating about 'pop culture'. It's perhaps revealing that, of the 27 works or articles mentioned in the 'Sources' under the heading 'Youth Culture in general', 3 date from the 80s, 8 from the 70s and the remaining 16 from the 60s. Not exactly what you might call plugged in. And even on the 60s, one work like Richard Neville's 1970 *Playpower* (not cited by Mr Hudson) tells you a whole lot more than is given here, despite the advantage of hindsight.

A book without any usefulness. I don't need to advise you not to buy it: no-one with any sense will buy a book of 123 pp that costs R36,95. But don't even bother to take it out of the library. Another of Mr Hudson's books might be more fun: *A Social History of Archaeology and Pawnbroking*.

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