

There are many other entries in Rosie Boycott's book which space forbids me to quote, and which make equally fascinating reading — terms such as comstockery, gibberish, cant, malapropism, panic, masochism, Pindaric, sadism, spoonerism and chauvinism. The entries which I have mentioned should serve to illustrate the wide range of terms that are dealt with in this very readable book, and the amount and variety of etymological and incidental information it embraces.

Concerning the format of the volume, it is of compact paperback size, the hardback edition being light but sturdy, with a colourful cover illustration by Brian Grimwood depicting, one supposes, the Vicomte de Turenne. Inside, the layout is very clear, and reference to particular terms is easy. There are blemishes: a couple of spelling misprints caught my eye — but that is all.

By today's standards the price of the book is extremely reasonable, and within the means of most relatively impecunious scholars and teachers. *Batty, Bloomers and Boycott* is an edifying and entertaining book which will appeal not only to the academically-inclined, but to anyone who enjoys words and is curious about how they entered the language.

KEITH RICHMOND

Jean Aitchison *Language change: progress or decay?* London: Fontana, 1981. 266 pp. Paperback £2,95.

'O grammar rules', wrote Sidney some 400 years ago, 'to grammar who says nay?' Well, Bloomfield and the behaviourists, with their pet phonemes, said 'nay' very loudly in the 1930's to the prescriptive rules of grammar handed down from the Golden Age of Rome. They began the movement towards using the conversational exchanges in the playground rather than the formal statement on the printed page of grammar books as the language teaching method. Chomsky's counter-argument that the young acquire a knowledge of language as much from what they generate themselves as from the imitation of their elders produced the present chaos in schools and Education Departments. The only people who seem to be gaining any benefit from the contemporary Tower of Babel are the lawyers and the linguists. The present book comes from a lecturer in linguistics at the London School of Economics, that hotbed of Marxist iconoclasm.

A potential purchaser of the Aitchison book might be put off by the cover illustration. He will be confronted by the menacing figure of Batman — it could be Captain Marvel — in natty blue underwear, starred crash-helmet, and bunched leather gloves, saying: 'Gadzooks! Zounds! Fie on thee, foul villain'. The point made with this excrescence of Pop Art, and throughout the book, is the influence of temporal states on language change. Indeed, situational grammar is the whole tenor of the author's argument. Whether the change taking place in language is good or bad is immaterial; language changes and it is the nature of the change and how it is detected that we are dealing with here.

The scholarly competence of the author is never in doubt. She knows her stuff and can put it across in convincing fashion. The conclusion reached makes interesting reading:

Language change is in no sense wrong, but it may, in certain circumstances, be socially undesirable. Minor variations in pronunciation from region to region are unimportant, but change which disrupts the mutual intelligibility of a community can be politically and socially inconvenient.

The change that disrupts intelligibility can be more than inconvenient. It can be downright disastrous. The medium *is* the message.

W.D. MAXWELL-MAHON
University of Pretoria

Francis Radice *English for International Trade*. London: Evans Brothers, 1982. 112 pp. Paperback.

English for International Trade is a course in international trade procedures as well as an English course and it is intended for students who are embarking on careers in business. The book can be used to teach the language of import and export procedures, to give students an understanding of world trade conditions and to familiarize them with authentic documentation commonly used in international trade.

There are eight chapters which cover topics directly related to shipping and commerce, such as the organization of shipping, world shipping problems, export orders and documentation, customs procedures, shipping documents and methods of payment. All the