

REVIEWS

Judy Pearsall (ed.), *The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, Oxford University Press, 1998

The new Oxford dictionary introduces many new features, unknown in previous OUP dictionaries smaller than the Shorter Oxford Dictionary: it includes scientific and technical words, it has encyclopedic entries, it has examples and usage notes. From the encyclopedic entries we can learn about people like Alexander the Great, Heinrich Heine, Peter Sampras and J. R. Firth, about places like Rivne in Ukraine, Ur in ancient Mesopotamia and Chappaquiddick Island in Massachusetts (Košice is not in southern but eastern Slovakia and the name of the highest peak in the Tatra Mountains should be Mount Gerlach), about literary characters like Rip Van Winkle and Sancho Panza, about political movements like Risorgimento in Italy and Rounheads, about historical events like Battle of the Bulge and Seven Years War, etc.

It is obvious that a lot of effort went into the layout of entries: although there is one entry for **back**, it is easy to find the noun, the adverb etc. It is a bit confusing that phrasal verbs are not mentioned under the verb but at the end of whole entry, *ie* after all the parts of speech, after the derivatives and the origin of the word. The core meaning of a word and related subsenses are carefully distinguished. Phrases containing the entry word are always mentioned, either with a definition or with reference to another entry.

The new Oxford dictionary is the first dictionary of this size to include grammatical information about nouns (mass noun, count noun, in sing., treated as sing.), verbs (no obj., with obj., with adverbial) and other parts of speech, which a feature usually found in learner's dictionaries.

There is one feature which I find unfortunate and that is the treatment of derivatives. Just like the phrasal verbs, they are not linked with the appropriate part of speech. In most cases, they are not defined. There is no difficulty in understanding **lordless** and **lord-like** but how can the user decide whether to use **epiglottal** or **epiglottic**, or **parsonic** or **parsonical**? Moreover, the semantic range of an adverb is very often narrower than the range of the corresponding adjective. I am aware, though, that the dictionary is of the right size as it is.

Many other good features could be mentioned here but they are all mentioned on the dust jacket and on the blurb, in the usual sales-promotion language, which somehow overspilled into the Preface.

I have no doubt that the *New Oxford Dictionary of English* is a very good dictionary. In my everyday use of dictionaries it will probably be given preference over an otherwise good dictionary of this size, the *Collins English Dictionary*, which I have preferred over the Concise up to now.

