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**\*Starred Review\***

The king is dead. Long live the king! Since 1937 the standard dictionary of English slang has been Eric Partridge's *The Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*. In edition after edition, Partridge enumerated slang words, provided quotations both to illustrate use and to date origins, cited other authorities, and applied usage labels. These included slang and cant, colloquialisms, solecisms, catchphrases, nicknames, and vulgarisms. The last, Partridge explained, are "words and phrases that, in no way slangy, are avoided in polite society." English has changed; society has changed; the time has come for a new Partridge.

Partridge recorded the slang of the UK as well as that of some Commonwealth countries. Conspicuously absent was the rich slang of the U.S., slang exported worldwide by GIs during World War II and broadcast globally through communications media that have, to use a current catchphrase, made the world flat. As the world changed, as English with an American accent became the lingua franca of the latter half of the twentieth century, Partridge (1894-1979) was less connected to the popular culture that breeds slang. As the culture changed--some would argue that it coarsened--the notion of vulgarisms has become anachronistic. Indeed, the U.S. vice president has been recorded publicly hurling one of the most vulgar yet most common slang words at a

senator. In the flattened world, colloquialisms and slang terms have often become indistinguishable. Thus, the New Partridge.

In their backgrounds, the editors embody the spirit and informality of slang. Dalzell, a California labor lawyer who entered the bar not through the conventional path of a law degree but by "reading the law," has read widely in other areas and has become a nationally recognized expert on slang in English, especially in American English. Victor, a British actor and playwright, expresses his enthusiasm for slang's popularity, earthiness, and expressiveness in his rather peculiar endorsement for the New Partridge, saying, "If you never read a more exciting, more sexy, more rude, more filthy, more disgusting book in your life, it would have been one of the best books you ever read."

Both deeply connected through life experience with post-World War II culture, the editors have created a truly new Partridge. It encompasses the entire English-speaking world and focuses on slang and unconventional English used or created since 1945. Its catholicity includes "pidgin, Creolised English and borrowed foreign terms used by English-speakers in primarily English-language conversation." Gone are

Partridge's labels separating the polite sheep from the vulgar goats. Dalzell and Victor celebrate the English language's fecundity by "embrace[ing] the language of the beats, hipsters, Teddy Boys, mods and rockers, hippies, pimps, druggoes, whores, punks, skinheads, ravers, surfers, Valley Girls, dudes, pill-popping truck drivers, hackers, rappers and more."

As in the original Partridge, entries list the term, identify its part of speech, explain its meaning, identify the country of origin, and cite

sources or provide quotations showing how the term is used. The New Partridge draws on numerous specialized dictionaries, including Rick Ayers' Berkeley High Slang Dictionary (2004); Gregory Clark's Words of the Vietnam War (1990); Ralph de Sola's Crime Dictionary (1982); John A.

Holm's Dictionary of Bahamian English (1982); and Ruth Todasco's The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Dirty Words (1973). Other sources range widely: popular fiction, newspaper stories, Lennon and McCartney song lyrics, scholarly journal articles, magazines, transcripts of debate in Northern Ireland's parliament, and more--even Rush Limbaugh's radio program (source of the term feminazi) and Howard Stern's Miss America (1995). Despite including six double-columned pages for fuck and its many related coinages, none of these entries cite Jesse Sheidlower's The F Word (1999), surely one of the very few, if not the only, dictionary devoted to a single slang word of singular popularity.

Dalzell and Victor note that Partridge's "etymologies at times strayed from the plausible to the fanciful," but their etymologies are at times absent. They clearly define terms such as bimbo, daddy mac, lug (as a noun meaning ear), and potsy. However, they leave a reader wondering where these terms came from and how each relates to the thing or condition it represents.

Like the old, the New Partridge is very much a product of English as it appears in print. Nearly all sources cited are ink-on-paper publications. It does include "several of the more prominent examples of Internet and text messaging shorthand that have become known outside the small circle of initial users" (e.g., GTG, LOL). Occasional or casual blog readers cannot, however, turn to the New Partridge to learn meanings of the blogosphere's slang terms.

Slang opens a window on society. This dictionary abounds with terms related to the human body, bodily functions, sexual acts, antagonism toward others, crime, drinking, drug abuse, gambling, and people on the margins of mainstream society or in a minority status. These topics, especially expressed using this dictionary's vocabulary, may not be the

stuff of conversation in "polite society." They are, however, the stuff of human life in every culture and all social strata. The New Partridge does a service in recording these words and explaining them. Slang also demonstrates how vibrant, flexible, and accommodating the English language is and how creative and imaginative its millions of speakers are. This dictionary informs, but it also entertains.

The old Partridge is not really dead; it remains the best record of British slang antedating 1945, just as Robert L. Chapman's Dictionary of

American Slang (1998), based on Harold Wentworth and Stuart Berg Flexner's 1960 dictionary, remains important for older American slang. Now, however, the preferred source for information about English slang of the past 60 years is the New Partridge. James Rettig  
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#### Book Description

Containing over 65,000 entries, The New Partridge details the slang and unconventional English of the English-speaking world since 1945, and through the first years of the new millennium, with the same thorough, intense, and lively scholarship that characterized Partridge's own