



### Was it negligence?

Reproduced here is part of the cover of *ET7* – the part that provoked queries (including accusingly corrected photocopies) from London, England, to London, Ontario, relating to an ‘uncorrected’ item in our ‘corrected’ letter.

Malcolm Macdonald in Eire added the classical tag *Quis custodiet?*, but, as we keep trying to point out, we aren’t the guardians of the language. Queries, however, have kept on coming, as for example Anita Kern from Toronto in

Canada, who asked: ‘Did you purposely miss out a correction on “there English” on your cover – to see if your readers are thorough, perhaps?’ F G Robinson from Glasgow asked the same question, adding, ‘Ach weel, there, their – never mind!’

Well, *was* it negligence? First of all, the letter *was* a complete fabrication, packed tight with the controversial and the ghastly. Anita Kern also queried the unmarked ‘even although’; she would have preferred ‘even though’ or

just ‘although’. We wondered whether anyone would take us up on items like these, but the serious issue was: What does one gain by red-inking and red-circling so much so fiercely? Many a student has been put off writing and even speaking for fear of overt and covert red-inkers all around. In a more tolerant and practical world, might it not be better – as many teachers do – to work on problems steadily and humanely, until they diminish through practice and understanding?

### Positive feedback

*English Today* is an absolutely marvelous publication. You’re doing a wonderful job.

○ Don R Hecker, New York City, USA

The magazine is great. All the best!

○ Tom Paikeday, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada

Best wishes on your fine magazine, which I read regularly.

○ Thomas W Adams, University of Petroleum & Minerals, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia

Many thanks for publishing such consistently interesting articles in *English Today*.

○ James MaHood, Redwood City, California, USA

### Re ‘red-circle’

Re the expression ‘red-circle’ in *From our Files* (*ET7*, p. 40). It might interest you to know that here in the federal

government, red-circling is negative. When a position has been red-circled (following a review of the job description), it means that the description for that position has been downgraded to a lower level and the person’s salary is frozen until such time as the lower level catches up – usually through renewals of collective agreements or annual raises. (Any chance of *ET* ‘going monthly’? I enjoy your review so much, I would love to have more of it.)

○ Anita Kern, Station Q, Toronto, Canada

The meaning implied for ‘red-circle’ is exactly the opposite of that used in the Public Service of Canada where, I believe, the term originated. In the mid-sixties jobs found to be over-classified were ‘red-circled’. The opposite situation of under-classification was called ‘green-circling’. Both terms are still in use. Over-classification, incidentally, is frequently attributed to ‘classification creep’. Is this term in use anywhere else?

You may also care to add the following to your files. An advertisement which has been appearing regularly in our local paper, *The Kanata Standard*, reads in part,

‘Are you looking for a loving evangelical church to grow and fellowship with?’ (Best wishes for the continued success of your most enjoyable, informative and provocative magazine.)

○ Anthony G Kerr, Kanata, Ontario, Canada

### Lizarding off

I was pleased to see the article on verbal conversion in *ET7*. About a month ago I designed a simple experiment to compare how people would explain the conversions of certain nouns into verbs. My theory, which remains for the most part untested, is that all speakers of English will convert nouns similarly, perhaps even identically. I presented subjects with nouns such as *lizard*, *acre*, and *basket* and asked them for a simple formula showing how they would interpret verbs formed from these nouns. For example ‘to basket’ was interpreted as meaning ‘to place something in a basket’. Why not ‘to throw a basket at something’ in the same way that ‘to stone’ means ‘to throw stones at something’? And why not ‘to remove all the baskets from something’ in the

same way that 'to weed' means 'to remove all the weeds from something'?

The answer points to a basic, yet fascinating, idea of semantic representation. We all represent word meanings at various levels. The experiment on verbal conversion suggests that we all know how to dig around in these layers of meaning and how to surface in the appropriate one.

Professor Bolton mentions five formulas for this sort of conversion involving body parts. They are appropriate to other types of nouns as well. I suggest that there are as many formulas as there are semantic categories necessary for the rich and sometimes poetic language processing English often grants us. In the course of the experiment I discovered these additional formulas:

to place or keep something in the N (as in 'to house'),  
to divide something into N's (as in 'to section'),  
to place something on the N (as in 'to floor'), and  
to add the N to something (as in 'to salt').

○ Ben Grossblatt, Chevy Chase, Maryland, USA

I detest this modern fashion of turning nouns into adjectives and adjectives into nouns, and also verbs into nouns.

○ Jack Conrad, Finchley, London, England

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### Centring on 'centre down'

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I especially liked your article *The Usage Industry* in *ET7*. Panel 2, *Aren't I?* reminds me that my grandmother in Halifax, Yorkshire, used to say something that sounded like *Aman't I?* Am I right in thinking that *ain't* was a perfectly respectable abbreviation from the early 18th century until mid-Victorian times? My impression is that it developed from a kind of foppish slang adopted by high society at the courts of Anne and the Georges – until, in fact, it was taken over by the Cockneys. With regard to *centre on* and *(a)round*, it might be worth noting that a fairly well-known expression among Quakers is *centre down*, as in the following excerpt from *Quaker Monthly*, also in July 86: 'But this is quite different from the relaxation in stillness which comes before sleep. In withdrawing from the peripheral we "centre down" into a different awareness as preoccupation disperses, but there may be a lengthy waiting before there is any stirring in the centre . . .'

○ W Vernon Noble, Brockholes near Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, England



"If I've explained the meaning of hyperbole to you once I've explained it a thousand times!"

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### Singular plurals

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As co-authors of the *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics*, my wife Dr Heidi Weber and I were naturally interested to read your review of the book in *ET6* (Apr 86). You may be interested to know – or had you already guessed? – that 'the pronouns that some applied linguists are using these days' (like, 'A person's pronunciation may show the region or country they come from') are a product of editing at Harlow. They appear to be the latest Longman policy. It is, of course, a problem. The use of *he/she* is often awkward and one hardly dares use *he* alone these days.

○ Professor John Platt, Department of Linguistics, Monash University, Victoria, Australia

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### Singular and plural nuances

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About the discussion in *ET* on collective nouns: am I unusual (and wrong) in using either a singular or a plural verb according to circumstance? If, for me, a committee reaches a unanimous conclusion they are acting as a single body by thinking with one mind and deserve a singular verb. If however they disagree, by so emphasising their differing views they are drawing attention to their number and merit a plural verb. I use both, and would in fact not hesitate to use both in the same sentence, as: 'Although the committee has agreed that . . . this same committee have failed to . . .'

I might defend this further by suggesting that, as a native English speaker, I use the language not simply to express myself, but I believe I also *think* in English, and therefore may choose a certain word by instinct rather than accepted usage. By speaking

instinctively I sometimes expose prejudices to myself – 'How do I know what I think until I hear what I've said?' For example let us suppose a legal trial in which the jury fail to reach unanimity and a majority verdict is accepted. If I say, 'The jury *has* given a majority verdict of "Guilty", the implication is that I agree with the conclusion (I too think he did it). However, 'The jury *have* given a majority verdict of "Guilty" suggests I am a wee bit concerned about the odd jury member who demonstrably would have preferred 'Not Guilty'. Admittedly the difference in implied meaning is small and might pass unnoticed, but if I consider this precision is in any way helpful I cannot see why I should be deprived of this nuance by being told that only one or the other form is acceptable.

○ George Archbold, Hither Green, London, England

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### Wun in dhe I foh sumdy

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Eye oneda y summer yaw  
korrespondence sea phit ta wright ta  
yoo in sucha pikyooleeya manor az  
frefxarmpull Robert Craig (*ET7*).

Eye wooden mynd if there exentrick  
spelling hadd innny trew consist n c  
abow tit. Y frefxarmpull duzzee rite  
'karakteristikz' wither zed at the end  
insteddov an ess when zed nawmilly  
denoatser sound lighk the zed in 'zoo'  
aw the zed in the weigh he spelz  
'sexez'?

And writing 'males' az 'malez' soulvz  
nuffink. Wunz (aw migh) enishawl  
instinkt iz ta may kit a toosillybald  
werd.

Eye dunno. Ah there not uther  
peepawl lighk mee who would rather  
keep our current 'system' for all its  
manifold aberrations and bewildering  
inconsistencies than either an even  
more bewildering, aberrant and  
unfelicitous (i.e., ugly) free-for-all or  
piecemeal tamperings that do little  
more than merely point up the  
intractability of spelling reform?

Until some genius (pace G B Shaw)  
devises a method that combines the  
need for phonetic consistency with the  
need to please the eye, we surely must  
accept with, I think, Anthony Burgess  
that at least the more bizarrely spelt  
English words are, as it were, abstract  
symbols. I trust this may stir up  
another hornets' nest.

○ Maurice West, Angloschool, Upper Norwood, London, England

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### A tense coincidence

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There was a curious little coincidence in *ET6* and I wonder whether I'm the only reader to notice it. On p. 28 is

David Crystal's piece, *The best tense we ever had*, dealing with the American tendency to use the simple past for the perfect. At one point he says, 'these days the simple past is coming to be used in Britain'. If you turn to p. 43 of the same issue you will find in Simon Kensdale's review of *The Lisle Letters* a quotation beginning, 'I had never better health'. If we overlook the inversion, isn't this the same usage? And it was written in the reign of Henry VIII. 'These days', eh? Perhaps this is another example of American speech preserving a British usage that has disappeared in Britain.

Gillian Kay's article on Japanese *gairaigo* was fascinating. Most of us have private language games (well, I do) and, as it happens, one of mine is to speak mock-Japanese by pronouncing the English words as I suppose a Japanese would. Imagine my surprise when I discovered that some of my 'inventions' are actually in use in contemporary Japanese!

○ Stephen Edgar, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

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### Shugaa candy

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I found the article on katakana English a fairly good summary of the situation. The use of English is getting a bit out of hand, however. The old people, especially, who haven't studied English now sometimes cannot even understand the labels on the products in the supermarket. They have to some extent become functionally illiterate. As an example, my father-in-law was about to give my wife a present he had received from a student of his, saying that it looked like some sort of candy and he didn't want it. After my wife told him that what the label said in katakana ('shugaa') really meant 'sugar', he said: 'Oh, in that case, I can use it. Give it back!' I hope to be able to investigate this phenomenon sometime in the near future to see how much trouble English-in-Japanese is causing the old (and the young). I'll keep you informed of any developments.

○ Thomas N Robb, Executive Secretary, the Japan Association of Language Teachers, Kyoto, Japan

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### Greased thumbs in Finland

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You have dealt with some translation problems in recent issues of *ET*. It might also be amusing to consider translation lapses that now and then occur among the subtitles of English on Finnish TV. Apparently these are done in a hurry, without seeing the films and only by sound on tapes. We are lucky in this country to have English and all other foreign programmes undubbed,

## SAY IT WITH FLOWERS



"Surely you're going to include punctuation."

since knowledge of English above all but also of German, French, Russian, etc., are important to a small nation with a language that does not belong to the Indo-European language group.

In one film, Cary Grant is folding his suit and says that he does not want the suit to get *creased*. Finns make no distinction between *c/k* and *g*, so in this case the translation gave us the Finnish not for *creased* but *greased*. In an Oliver and Hardy film the fat partner has landed underneath a train and cannot get out. The thin one advises him to 'pull your *tummy* in', which was then translated with the Finnish version of 'keep your fingers crossed'. In Finnish, one 'keeps one's thumbs up' rather than crossing any fingers. The only conclusion is that the listener to the tapes heard *thumb* instead of *tummy*.

One query. In the televised version of Fitzgerald's 'Tender is the Night', a male character says: 'It was imagination that killed the cat'. He apparently refers to his failure with personal relationships due to his inner conflicts. It sounds like a proverb. Does it mean that the proverbial cat with nine lives could be killed with one blow out of fright with too much imagination?

○ Anja Repo, Turki, Finland

The Fitzgerald expression must be a play on 'Curiosity killed the cat'. Cats are famous for their curiosity, but in this case the speaker assigns cause of death to another factor, imagination, one which cats may or may not normally possess. *Ed*.

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### A bilingual conundrum

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Although born in England of Indian parents who spoke both Punjabi and Hindi in the home, I cannot claim to be bilingual. I was however extremely interested to read Edith Harding's

article (*ET7*). Although my mother took great care to teach me Hindi at an early age, I would regard my 'first' language as English as I was surrounded by English playfellows.

Nonetheless, when I travel to India or am among Indians, I do not find it difficult to talk to them in Hindi. Yet my fluency in the language is little, if any, greater than it is in French. And I can speak virtually no Punjabi, though I can often understand it. The argument therefore is that it is possible to over-rate the importance of the language spoken in the home. If pressed, I would have to say that my native language is English, but my mother tongue is perhaps Hindi, because that is the language which my mother consciously taught me and which came naturally to her – although the two books which she has published were entirely written in English!

○ G Chowdhary-Best, London, England

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### Come home, Alberto Florentino

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Thank you for publishing 'What price Filipino writing in English?' Alberto S Florentino modestly does not mention that he himself is a major playwright in English and was largely responsible for introducing realism into the one-act Filipino drama genre.

I cannot agree, however, with his conclusion. He writes that Filipino writers in English 'have lost the ears and eyes of their own people'. Filipino writers write in *Filipino English*, a variety of English that may actually be a different language from American English. That language is perfectly comprehensible to, and accepted by, a vast majority of Filipino readers. Filipino writers like Florentino should not expect to get published in New York, because they do not write in the American language.

I wish Florentino, Villa, N V M Gonzalez, and other Filipino writers now in voluntary exile would return to taste the adulation being given to their peers who have stayed home, writing in perfectly correct Filipino English.

○ Isagani R Cruz, De la Salle University, Manila, the Philippines

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### On Burchfield on grammar

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The rebuttals in *ET7* concerning some statements by Robert Burchfield in *ET5* were quite to the point. I should like to add my critical remarks about Dr Burchfield's claim that the tenor of the Berlin symposium on grammar was 'very much back to the basics'. The forthcoming volumes of the proceedings (ed. by G Leitner) will show that

Robert Burchfield's impression of the results of this international conference is highly subjective. As one of the participants I cannot confirm his conclusions. The survey by questionnaire Dr Burchfield mentions showed only the personal predilections of some students for various grammars and dictionaries. The discussions on the necessary types of grammar did not point to a Burchfield-type grammar that tells the user 'what is right and what is wrong'. In the discussion following Robert Burchfield's paper I questioned the necessity and feasibility of a (new) 'very traditional grammar' modelled on the diachronic principles of the OED and showing only what was grammatically 'British to the core'. I also wished Dr Burchfield good luck for his one-man project 'of the order of 700 pages'. When his grammar comes out, it will also reveal something of one man's linguistic 'Little Englandism'.

○ Professor emeritus Kurt Waechter, Department of English, Free University of Berlin

### Impurism, or an Académie Anglaise?

David Masson's letter in *ET7* warmed my heart. He documents nearly all my pet verbal hates. Indeed, much of your mail shows what a boiling ferment of indignation there is about the slovenly illiterate bagwash that goes for 'English' in the output of so many communicators who should know better. All this category of poor expression is too poor even to qualify for comparative reference to the 'bibles of usage' discussed in your recent article. But what do we do to stop the rot? As has been said more than once in previous issues, an equivalent of the Académie Française is not the answer, even if there were the remotest hope of a consensus in setting one up. I suppose we must just go on blowing our tops, in the hope that the ever-proliferating 'bibles' will collect the fallout and 'geiger' it satisfactorily!

○ Bill Broughton, Colchester, Essex, England

### Language awareness

The answer to David Masson's impassioned plea, 'Is it too late to introduce language-awareness into schools?' ('The problem of impurism', *ET7*) is 'No, it's not'. A lot of it is already there. The Language Awareness working party (sponsored by the National Congress on Languages in Education) monitors language programmes operating in a number of schools where the aim is to encourage curiosity, sensitivity and perception.

### Swish she was here

She tiptoes in,  
Wants to surprise.  
Her feathery fingers  
Cover my eyes.  
But her strategy fails.  
She is wearing taffeta,  
A boisterous fabric, . . .  
And so, I just laffeta.

○ Alma Denny, New York

The campaign includes the study of foreign languages and ways of effective communication both oral and written. The working party's basic definition is 'Language Awareness is a person's sensitivity to and conscious awareness of the nature of language and its role in human life.'

Language is a powerful weapon and – unfortunately for Mr Masson *et al* who firmly believe it to be the case – there are no simple answers. Things are not just Right or Wrong, Pure or Impure; studying the Classics is not necessarily the best and only way of learning about language; pronunciation can be diverse without necessarily being 'in confusion'. The only issues that the 'pure versus impure' argument raises are ones of bigotry and elitism. Language Awareness is concerned with matters which are both more complex and considerably less depressing.

○ Paul Harvey, North Molton, North Devon, England

### Assessing usage

Tom McArthur's interesting article on 'The Usage Industry' (*ET7*, July 86) surveys the movement from 'hellfire-and-brimstone condemnation of usage' (of which there has been and is more than enough) 'to would-be objective recording of words and their usage.' Perhaps the massive *OED* has added 'something of science' to lexicography. But how much is that 'something'? Is it possible to achieve more? In view of the considerable hostility provoked by the Webster Third's stronger attempt to be less prescriptive, dare we assume that something more of science is desirable? It seems that many people want prescriptive judgments. The problem lies in the remarkable variety of alternative judgments.

Some of the variables are illustrated in the 'Survey of Ten Usage Guides' printed with the article. The judgments made (of 'centre around') vary considerably. Two apparently offer no guidance classifiable in the terms specified. The other eight spread across the five categories allowed, fitting one, two or three slots. The extremes give more definite guidance – to be avoided

at all times/normal and acceptable (at least informally) – but the intermediate judgments are vague and less popular. To categorize a usage as 'widely criticised but also widely used' passes the buck to an individual's taste or prejudice. And of course 'centre (a)round' can, as one verdict allows, be avoided; what usage can't?

A few of us some years ago solicited views on about fifty 'divided usage' items (not including 'centred around') from a sample of five hundred or so English-users of various backgrounds and ages. The results were as diverse as might be expected. We would claim that asking for responses to each item in four modes (Informal/Formal situations in Speech and Writing) was at least a little more precise than the categories used in your Survey, especially in differentiating spoken from written usage. But in both enquiries the identifying of the usage concerned (in our case by italics or underlining) seriously reduced the reliability of the responses. It is likely that any presentation of this kind tends, by putting a respondent on his best-behaviour mettle, to elicit judgments biased – in Randolph Quirk's terms – towards *preceptive* use (what a respondent thinks his preference *ought* to be) or at least *believed* usage (what he thinks he does) at the expense of *actual* usage (what he – or of course she – *in fact* uses).

The Greenbaum-Quirk method used in *Elicitation Experiments in English* (1970) sought to avoid this serious weakness. Ingeniously they concealed each item within a sentence where a respondent was asked to make an irrelevant change (e.g. from singular to plural, from present tense to past). To some extent, by comparing responses when thus obliquely sought with parallel tests requiring overt responses (e.g. Yes, No, or ?) revealed inconsistencies and supplied more objective evidence through the implicit and indirect elicitation exercises.

Modern developments in collecting language data, including tape-recordings, have felicitated the growth of corpus analysis and increased the objectivity of this work. Whether these developments could or should aim at closer consensus and therefore more stability in usage remains debatable.

○ Dr William H Mittins, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, Newcastle, England

### A delightful lack of uniformity

Some of your correspondents complain about the lack of uniformity in English (editorial, *ET8*, Oct 86). Writing as an older male living in England (from which group YOU SAY that your

## English in Kenya: an ex-inspector replies to Tony Fairman

Being the Inspector of Schools in Kenya referred to in Mr Fairman's article in *ET7*, 'Prestige, purity and power', I feel I must for the record correct the large errors in his references to Kenya, errors which invalidate his references as illustrations of his theme. I have no quarrel with his theme, which is self-evident, illustratable in a myriad ways but it is poor publicity for Kenya and sad for Mr Fairman that one of his two chosen examples should be so flawed.

I retired in 1978 after 28 years in the Kenya service, the last 16 or thereabouts as the technical officer (Inspectors are technical officers) ultimately responsible for the teaching of English in schools and colleges and primus inter pares of the language division of the Inspectorate, covering English, Kiswahili, mother-tongues, French and their literatures. However, nothing I write below must be taken to refer to affairs after 1978.

Mr Fairman is badly wrong in stating that English was chosen as the national language of Kenya. Kiswahili was the national language just as in Tanzania. English was designated the official language in Kenya. This decision, one of the earliest political decisions of independent Kenya, meant that there was enormous establishment pressure, both governmental and private, to keep the English of Kenya as close as possible to the standard form used in all primary, secondary and university textbooks, the texts from which practically all educated Kenyans first learned their English. On the other hand popular and media pressure to Kenyanise the national language, Kiswahili, was strong, strong enough to alarm Tanzania!

The mid-1970s debate referred to by Mr Fairman was not about English

language or its use in Kenya. It was about curriculum development, specifically the balance of texts and topics in the Literature in English (not English literature, please note) syllabuses and examination profiles at O and A levels. The burning topic was oral literature, which probably explains Mr Fairman's confusion. For a blow-by-blow account of this sensational debate I refer you to the doctoral thesis of Kevin Lillis who, in the mid-1970s, was my Inspector for Literature in English and later used his experiences in his doctoral thesis in the field of curriculum development at Sussex University.

'All what I was taught and other Mistakes' (OUP Nairobi, 1974) was a production of the Kenya Institute of Administration, the prestigious staff college of the Kenyan establishment both within government and outside in the private sector. Its compiler, Mr Brian Hocking, Australian and bantuaist, was Head of the English Language Department. His task in the KIA was to correct the errors of form which appeared in the official writings and speeches of the serving men and women invited to attend the much-sought-after KIA courses. He was not concerned with creative writing. Such creative coinages as 'on tarmac' (Mr Fairman's example dating from the late 1950s, probably from Uganda) were not his concern, or only marginally so. His concern was with errors of form; for example the frequent conflation of the two form items 'in view of/with a view to'. All the material in his book, for which I chaired the selection committee set up by OUP and government to assist Mr Hocking, came from the masses of material provided by his students in their courses. KIA was all about the more efficient exercise of

power; the book was all about power and accuracy in official communication. It was intended, as well, to help students in school and college better to prepare themselves for entry into the power game.

My concern in these matters as the officer responsible for English teaching in Kenyan schools and training colleges was to encourage teachers to distinguish between form and content in language. I wrote and spoke much on this topic over the years. I got flak from stalwarts of the far right devoted to the Nesbit school of grammar and pure language; I got flak from the lively young intelligentsia on the left, a few of whom are named by Mr Fairman (so nostalgic!), to whom language was an ego trip. I tried to persuade both groups that adventures in content such as '... so she cheated me that the book was in her desk' (Mr Fairman's example) were to be encouraged, being excellent exploitation of one of the creole-type mechanisms still happily active in our young European language. On the other hand I insisted that adventures in form such as 'she wanted to go with it home' (Mr Fairman's example) were sloppy, the example being a confusion with 'she wanted to go with it to school/to church/on holiday; that is, an adverb-adverb phrase confusion where the phrase was the grammatical marker. I am aware, of course, of Mr Fairman's interest in oral literature and as part of such an event, with the associated body language, the clause as written would be effective communication. Without the body language or some diacritic in the text to indicate what such body language might be, the item is sloppy.

○ W G Bowman, Cheltenham, England

complainants come), one of the delights of English is its lack of uniformity. This is the main reason for having a magazine devoted to it.

Your correspondents are wrong in saying that this is peculiar to English. For example, in French 'eighty' is 'quatre-vingt' in most areas, but is 'huitante' around Geneva. In German, 'potato' is 'kartoffel' in most areas, but in some places it is 'erdapfel'. And pronunciation of French, German and Spanish vary enormously between the north and south of their native countries.

Some of the wrinkles in spelling can, of course, be smoothed out by proper usage. 'Inquire' and 'enquire' mean different things, as any competent lawyer will tell you. An 'enquiry' is a question – you make an enquiry at the railway station. An 'inquiry' is an

investigation – Public Inquiries are carried out into town planning matters or railway accidents.

It is relevant that Margot Lawrence's article 'Tudor English Today' draws attention to the variability of English. But herein lies a danger. Readers of the King James Bible and the Book of Common Prayer need to be aware of changes in the meaning of words, if they are to understand those splendid books. For example, the Book of Common Prayer contains the 'comfortable words'. Here, 'comfortable' does not mean a warm feeling in the tummy, as modern usage would suggest. It means 'strengthening' or 'encouraging', which is apparent from the French origin of the word (*con-fort*).

○ Anthony Ellery, Chippenham, Wiltshire, England

### Yes, there IS a book

In *ET8* (Oct 86) we published *Acts of Identity*, Robert le Page's seminal article on language and social identity. There is a full account of the points he makes in *Acts of Identity: Creole-based Approaches to Language and Ethnicity*, R B le Page and Andrée Tabouret-Keller, Cambridge 1985.

Readers' letters are welcomed. *ET* policy is to publish as representative and informative a selection as possible in each issue. Such correspondence, however, may be subject to editorial adaptation in order to make the most effective use of both the letters and the space available.

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