

# Contents

Preface	1
1 Introduction: Slang: A User's Manual	5
2 In the Beginning: The Pre-History	19
3 Lewd, Lousey Language: Beggars and Their Books	31
4 Crime and Punishment: The Vocabulary of Villainy	60
5 Play's the Thing: The Stage and the Song	87
6 The Sound of the City: No City, No Slang	114
7 Flash: This Sporting Life	134
8 Down Under: Larrikin Lingo	157
9 Sex in the City: The Agreeable Ruts of Life	183
10 Cockney Sparrers: Mean Streets and Music Halls	208
11 America: Pioneers	236
12 Keeping Score: Nineteenth-century Slang Lexicography	264
13 Gayspeak: The Lavender Lexicon	279
14 American Century: The Slang Capital of the World	297
15 African-American Slang: The Flesh Made Word	312
16 Campus and Counter-Culture: Teenage Skills	343

17 War: One Thing It's Good For	364
18 Conclusion: As It Was in the Beginning	384
Notes	389
Bibliography	401
Acknowledgements	409
Index	411