

Stephen D. Rogers. *The Dictionary of Made-Up Languages: From Elvish to Klingon, The Anwa, Reella, Ealray, Yeht (Real) Origins of Invented Lexicons*. Adams Media, 2011. 294 pp., \$16.95 (hardcover).

Scholarly and popular interest in invented languages has burgeoned over the last several years, insofar as this is the fourth new book on the subject I have reviewed for the Mythopoeic Society since 2010 (see the forthcoming *Mythlore* 117/118 for my review of Michael Adams's *From Elvish to Klingon: Exploring Invented Languages*, a title that appeared within a week of Rogers's dictionary). More titles will be coming (the dedication of this book suggests there may be a second volume), even as it seems that the actual invention of languages and their use in fictional worlds becomes increasingly trite. On the plus side, this abundance of publications can only reach greater audiences, with the possibility of diversifying and enriching invented languages, as well as revolutionizing the way they operate in both fiction and the real world.

To say that Rogers's *Dictionary of Made-Up Languages* is a reference book aimed at a general audience is probably fanciful considering the niche of its subject matter. It is, however, a good way of describing its presentation, which is simple, introductory, and extremely user-friendly. Languages are presented in alphabetical order on their own pages with large banner-headings, with boldfaced headings for specific details. These details include whom the language is *Spoken By* and *Documented By* (though often invented by), and a range of other information depending upon the extent to which the language has been developed. Samples, when extant, are included under *A Taste of the Language*, *Some Useful Phrases*, and *Numbering System*. Although the Introduction declares that the Lord's Prayer and the Babel Text are included "[w]hen available" (ix), it hardly seems worth mentioning when only a few of the 125 entries include it. Numerous factoids are included under the headings, where they appear, of *Behind the Words* (which provides contexts of use and invention), *Derivation of the Language*, *Characteristics of the Language*, *Philological Facts*, and *In Their Own Words*. There are also sections providing information for learning more about the language (specifically websites), as well as for actually learning them, where resources permit. No single entry for a language includes all these sections—*In Their Own Words* appears, at my count, twice—and entries range from 1-3 pages (about 100-300 words). Concluding most of the entries is a text box containing a general quotation about language, most by recognizable personalities.

A Dictionary of Made-Up Languages has two smaller parts following the dictionary proper. One, at thirteen pages, is *Construct Your Own Language*, which suggests in three sections some of the reasons, objectives, and methods for creating a conlang. As a manual, it is a poor substitute for Mark Rosenfelder's 292-page *Language Construction Kit*, a title unmentioned in the Bibliography (though Rosenfelder's invented language Verdurian, as well as his website zompist.com, is included among the language entries). Following the guide is the six-page *Language Games*, which details thirteen linguistic larks from Gibberish (inserting a group of letters after the opening sound of each word in a sentence) to Vesre (a Spanish game played in Buenos Aires and Uruguay by reversing the syllables in a word). Examples of each are provided for English, though some, such as the Swedish Rövarespråket ("Robber-speech") and Finnish Sananmuunnos ("Word Modification") cannot really be appreciated outside the idiosyncrasies of their native tongues. The section is, however brief, good for whetting the imagination about how speakers of structurally complex, and even invented, languages might play around with their words. Completing the book is a modest bibliography, two appendices, and a comprehensive index. Appendix A, *Works, Language Creators, and the Languages Associated with Them*—to

be used in conjunction with the index—is particularly useful. Appendix B provides a basic linguistic glossary.

The dictionary will prove a comfortable curiosity to its readers, many of whom, I suspect, will find its material very familiar. The sheer range of its coverage is unprecedented for a print publication, touching languages from film, television, and even video games, as well as from literary and non-fictional (including auxiliary and artistic) contexts. That said, one will notice right away that highly developed languages with vast vocabularies and even texts are given entries among conlangs with only a few words and no real structure. The entry on Parseltongue (the snake-speech of the *Harry Potter* franchise) is almost the same length as the entry on Quenya; Adûnaic has the same coverage as Esperanto. This misrepresentation is an unavoidable consequence of the dictionary's format, which must imply that all conlangs are compeers, no matter the expertise of their inventors and the extent of their growth. To find much more fault with so casual a survey, however, is to nit-pick—if there is any sweeping criticism to offer, it is that anyone with access to the Internet could find everything the book offers and more. Most of Rogers's references themselves are to *Wikipedia* articles, and for that reason, it would have been beneficial to attach a summary of electronic references to the bibliography.

On that note, it is difficult to shake the suspicion that *A Dictionary of Made-Up Languages* was written toggling between Word and the Web, making it essentially obsolete before it was written. For the most part, the Internet has monopolized the casual coverage of all subjects, and even—with Google Books—taken a big bite out of the specialist market. This is especially the case with surveys, where collaborative efforts, or crowdsourcing, is able to compile a wealth of material any single researcher cannot hope to match. Where Rogers's volume best stands out is in the geek-chic attractiveness of its binding, as well as in its sense of humor. For example, under the heading of *If You're Interested in Learning the Language for Black Speech*, one finds the following entry: “You don't want to learn Black Speech. You just don't” (35).

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