Author-Created Languages:
Complicating the Reading while Keeping the Reader

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LCC4  14-15 May 2011
'Naming Languages'

'It begins with naming. Those who write fiction with an entirely imaginary setting - fantasy or far-future or alien-world science fiction - play Adam: they must make up names for the characters and creatures of their fictive world.'

-Le Guin 2006, xvii
Conlang, Conworld, Conculture, Concomitant

‘[F]or the perfect construction of an art-language it is found necessary to construct at least in outline a mythology concomitant. [...] The converse indeed is true, your language construction will breed a mythology.’

-Tolkien 1997, 210-211
In the beginning was the word...

1. Religion, specifically the story of Babel
2. Age of Exploration
3. Language creation associated with formal language study
The Man in the Moon (1638)

The Man in the Moon.

94 The Man in the Moone.

In the utterance of them, yea many words there are consisting of tunes only, so as if they lift they will utter their minds by tunes without words: for example, they have an ordinary facilitation amongst them, signifying (Perbatum) Glorie be to God alone, which they express (as I take it, for I am no perfect Musician) by this tune without any words at all.

Yet the very names of Men they will express in the same fort.

When they were disposed to take of mee before my face, so

By occasion hereof, I discern means of framing a Language (and that easy soon to be learned) as copious as any other in the world, consisting of tunes only, whereof my friends may know more at leisure if it please them.

This is a great Mystery and worthier the learning after then at first sight you would imagine.

Now notwithstanding the difficulty of this language, within two months space I had attained unto such knowledge of the same, as I understand most questions to be demanded of mee, and what with signs, what with words, make reasonable shift
St. Martinus -- ‘they all bowed their bodies, and held up hands in signe of great reverence: the reason whereof I learned to bee, that Martin in their language’ must be the word for God.

-Godwin 1638, 82-83
'The Difficulty of that language is not bee conceived, [...] it consisteth not so much of words and Letters, as of tunes and uncouth sounds, that no letters can expresse.'

-Godwin 1638, 93

Glorie be to God alone

Gonsales
Matteo Ricci in China
Translating the Unnamed

Lunars ‘account them most base creatures, even but a degree before bruite beasts imployning them accordingly in all the basest and most servile offices, tearming them by a word that signifieth bastard-men, counterfetts, or Changelings.’

-Godwin 1638, 78-79
Cultural Conventions

• ‘And his name being *Irdonozur*, his heires, unto this day, doe all assume unto themselves that name.’ (Godwin 1638, 76)

• priceless stones ‘whereof one they call *Poleastis*, another *Machrus*, and third *Ebelus*.’ (Godwin 1638, 97-98)
Comical History (1687)

THE
Comical HISTORY
OF THE
STATES AND
EMPIRES
OF THE
WORLDS OF THE
Moon and Sun.

Written in French by Cyrano Bergeras.
And newly Englisht by A. Lovell, A.M.

L O N D O N,
Printed for Henry Rhodes, next door to the
Swan-Tavern, near Bride-Lane, in
Fleet-Street, 1687.
‘They said then, (as I had it interpreted to me since) That I was infallibly the Female of the Queens little Animal. [...] I observed by the muttering and gestures, both of the People and Magistrates, that they were consulting what sort of a thing I could be.’

-Cyrano de Bergerac 1687, 34
He had a nose like a sundial

‘I asked what it was a Clock several times in the Street, but they made me no answer, but by opening their Mouths, shutting their Teeth, and turning their Faces awry. How, cried all the Company, did not you know by that, that they shewed you what it was a Clock?’

-Cyrano de Bergerac 1687, 126
Sign Language Instruction

• Juan Pablo Bonet published the first modern treatise on phonetics and speech therapy in 1620
• great interest in gesture-as-language for military purposes and long-distance communication
‘Young-Men of that Country, were more knowing at Sixteen, or Eighteen years Old, than the Gray-Beards of our Climate; for knowing how to Read as soon as Speak, they are never without Lectures, [...] they need but wind up a Spring, to hear a whole Chapter,’

-Cyrano de Bergerac 1687, 122
Stranger spoke ‘a language, which I knew very well I had never heard before, and which hath not the least resemblance with any of the Languages in this World; notwithstanding I comprehended it faster, and more intelligibly than my Mother Tongue.’

-Cyrano de Bergerac 1687 vol. 2, 60-61
The Consolidator: or
Memoirs of
Sundry Transactions
from the
World in the Moon.

Translated out of the Lunar Language,
By the Author of
The True Born English-Man.
Daniel Defoe.

The Second Edition, with the Substance of a Letter wrote to the Author of these Sheets while he was in the Regions of the Moon, concerning the Will and Disposition of the Crown of Ebronius, as also a Specimen of very valuable Books, lately Publish'd in the Lunar World.

London, Printed for B. Bragge in Amy-Mary-Lane near Ludgate-street.

Lately Published, the Experiment, or the shortest way with the Difficulties exemplified. Being an account of the inhumane and barbarous Treatment of Mr. Abraham Gill, a Diligent Minifier in the Isle of Epy, his being sent for a Soldier by Mr. Terran, an Ecclesiastical Judge of Peace, and other Conspirators, to the Eternal Honour of the Temper and Moderation of High Church Principles.

N. B. The Matter of Fact is attested by several Affidavits of Men of Credit and Reputation in those Parts.

Sold by B. Bragge, &c.

Translated out of the Lunar Language,
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Daniel Defoe.

The Second Edition, with the Substance of a Letter wrote to the Author of these Sheets while he was in the Regions of the Moon, concerning the Will and Disposition of the Crown of Ebron, and the Preservation of very valuable Books, lately Publish'd in the Lunar World.


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Note. The Matter of Fact is attested by several Affidavits of Men of Credit and Reputation in those Parts.

Sold by Ben. Bragge, &c.
‘if it be true […], That the Chinese Empire was Peopled long before the Flood, and that they were not destroyed in the General Deluge in the Days of Noah; ‘tis no such strange thing, that they should so much out-do us’

-Defoe 2001, 26
Neologisms?

• ‘he turn’d Abogratziarian, a zealous fiery Sect something like our Anti-every-body-arians in England.’ (Defoe 2001, 19)
  – Abogratziarian, Abogratrianism, Abrogratzian, Abogrian, Abrograzian

• ‘and this Neighbouring People, who they call Mogenites,’ (Defoe 2001, 112)
Lunar poetry

‘This confusion of Circumstances has occasion’d a certain Copy of Verses to appear about the Moon, which in our Characters may be read as follows.

Wondelis Idulasin na Perixola Metartos,
Strigunia Crolias Xerin Hytale sylos;
Farnicos Galvare Orpto sonamel Egonsberch,
Sih lona Sipos Gullia Ropta Tylos.

Which may be English’d thus.

Caesar you Trifle with the World in vain,
Think rather now of Germany than Spain;
He’s hardly fit to fill th’ Eagle’s Throne,
Who gives new Crowns, and can’t protect his own.’

-Defoe 2001, 121
'All these Translations have innumerable Hieroglyphical Notes, and Emblems painted on them, which pass as Comments, and are readily understood in that Climate.'

-Defoe 2001, 137
Conclusion - Launch Pad

- Emerging ideas in linguistics
- Education reforms
- Tropes of language presentation
- Onomatopoeia
- Your thoughts, hints, suggestions?

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Bibliography (3)


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Wilkins, J. (1641) *Mercury, or the Secret and Swift Messenger: Shewing, How a Man may with Privacy and Speed communicate his Thoughts to a Friend at any distance*. London: Printed by I. Norton, for John Maynard, and Timothy Wilkins, and are to be sold at the George in Fleestreet, neere Saint Dunstans Church.


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