



Spoken Here: Travels Among Threatened Languages

Mark Abley

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In *Spoken Here*, Mark Abley journeys around the world seeking out languages in peril -- Manx, Mohawk, Boro, Yiddish, and many more. Along the way he reveals delicious linguistic oddities and shows us what is lost when one of the world's six thousand tongues dies -- an irreplaceable worldview and a wealth of practical knowledge. He also examines the forces, from pop culture to creoles to global politics, that threaten to wipe out 90 percent of languages by this century's end.

Abley encounters one of the last two speakers of an Australian language, whose tribal taboos forbid them to talk to each other. He spotlights those who believe that violence is the only way to save their tongue. He meets a Yiddish novelist who writes for an audience she knows doesn't exist. He pays tribute to such strange tongues as the Amazonian language last spoken by a parrot, the Caucasian language with no vowels, and the South Asian language whose innumerable verbs include gobray (to fall in a well unknowingly) and onsra (to love for the last time).

Each of the languages Abley spotlights, from the familiar to the foreign, exemplifies the various threats that endanger languages worldwide. But many also prove their resilience, thanks to the efforts of their determined speakers and such unlikely tools as soap operas and pop music. Abley meets the crusaders as well as the uncaring, all of whom offer surprising insight into this centuries-old debate. *Spoken Here* is a singular travelogue, a compelling case for linguistic diversity, and a treasure trove for anyone who loves any language.

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