

Joseph's Jottings — A Finale

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As signaled in my editorial comments in the previous issue (*Diachronica* 18.1), this is the last column of this sort that I'll be writing for *Diachronica*. This is much to my regret, as my time working on this journal has been a source of both pleasure and pride for me over a period of nearly a decade. But I leave it knowing that the journal will be well taken care of as I move to a lesser role as an Associate Editor and Joe Salmons takes over the reins as Executive Editor.

I am writing these words at a time of national and international distress and anxiety, just weeks after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and thus a time of some uncertainty, and yes, a time of possibly drastic change in many respects.

These events have afforded us all, among other things, the opportunity to reflect on what we do, on its value, on its ultimate importance in the 'grand scheme of things', and so on, and at the risk of stepping where I should probably fear to tread, I take a few lines here to put in writing some thoughts I have had in more reflective moments in recent weeks.

A colleague wrote to me recently: 'In the aftermath of the horrible events in America I have a strange sense that everything is less important and less urgent.'

And, while I agreed at some level, at another my reaction was quite the opposite. Upon reflection, I have come firmly to the belief that what we do in academia and especially involving the humanities is of critical importance now, since literature, art, and scholarship in general represent what is best about humanity, and show what is noble in humankind. I am not saying that working on historical linguistics will fight terrorism anymore than it would conquer cancer, but it is ennobling to ponder the larger questions that concern us as linguists and academicians — questions about mind and cognition, about meaning and communication, about affect and expressiveness — and thus in a small way, we do contribute to this being a better world, and I assert that we need visions of a better world now more than ever.

Moreover, the study of language history specifically, so much a staple of historical linguistics, is important for what it shows about human creativity,

about social relations among peoples, about amicable (and polemical) contacts, about human adaptability, and so on. Much of what we look at in our field represents the monuments of human civilization ('great' texts, etc.) and even the mundane (e.g., graffiti in Pompeii or ancient Greece) reflects the humanness that links us today with our predecessors through the generations and ages — and will link us with our successors in the years and centuries to come.

Thus I see real value in what we do; our field offers a positive step in the direction of tolerance for and recognition of differences, and that is all to the good.

Shifting gears somewhat, let me reflect a bit — as I leave this position — on the state of the journal and the state of the field it serves.

The field is robust and vibrant; even as linguistics as a whole moves in new directions unthought of years ago, e.g., computational linguistics, the (sub-) field of historical linguistics is keeping pace, with new methodologies (incorporating instrumental phonetics into the study of sound change, using sophisticated statistical modeling, and so on). And, as historical linguistics advances in these ways, the traditional methodologies and issues, such as the nature of sound change, language relatedness, reconstruction, are still of vital importance and continue to be well-represented at conferences and in journals. We are pleased to see, therefore, as a reflection of this robustness, that The Australian National University has created a research center dedicated to examining language change, as the announcement in the *Miscellanea* section of this issue indicates.

And, speaking of the journal, by all measures, it is doing well — more good papers are being submitted than ever before, a backlog in what we can publish is developing (not good for the authors but an indication of the volume and quality of what we are receiving), and my impression is that more readers are taking notice of, citing, and discussing what we publish.

I am confident therefore that I am leaving the journal in good shape and in good hands as I step sideways to play a less active role.

It is customary — and actually quite essential — to thank the many who contribute to this level of quality, not just my fellow editors: Sheila, Joe, and Konrad, whose hard work and wise counsel have been invaluable to me during my tenure as executive editor, but also the many colleagues around the world who serve as referees on papers submitted and provide the peer reviews that allow us to maintain high standards; in the past months, the following have helped us out with timely and thorough reports on submissions:

Jacques Arends (Wassenaar)
Henning Andersen (Los Angeles)

D. Gary Miller (Gainesville, Fla.)
Jerry Norman (Seattle)

Raimo Anttila (Los Angeles)	Jerry Packard (Urbana, Ill.)
Christina Bethin (Stony Brook, N. Y.)	Martha Ratliff (Detroit)
David Birnbaum (Pittsburgh)	Donald Ringe (Philadelphia)
Lyle Campbell (Christchurch)	Joel Rini (Charlottesville, Va.)
William Croft (Manchester)	Orrin Robinson (Stanford)
Timothy Curnow (Bundoora, Australia)	Laurent Sagart (Paris)
Sheila Embleton (Toronto, Canada)	Maria Filomena Sandalo (Campinas, Brazil)
Jan Terje Faarlund (Oslo)	Geoffrey Sampson (Sussex)
David Fertig (Buffalo, N. Y.)	John Singler (New York)
Stéphane Goyette (Baton Rouge, La.)	Sarah Thomason (Ann Arbor, Mich.)
Zev Handel (Seattle, Wash.)	James M. Unger (Columbus, Ohio)
Brett Kessler (Detroit)	Ans van Kemenade (Amsterdam)
Jurgen Klausenburger (Seattle, Wash.)	Alexander Vovin (Honolulu, Hi.)
Merja Kytö (Uppsala)	Douglas Walker (Calgary)
Martin Maiden (Oxford)	Dieter Wanner (Columbus, Ohio)
H. Craig Melchert (Chapel Hill, N. C.)	Anthony Warner (York, England)

Thanks are due as well to Stéphane Goyette for his help in smoothing out the French *résumés* for some of the articles.

We have been urged in recent weeks to try to resume 'life as normal', whatever that may be, and unfortunately, one aspect of normal life is that there are deaths that occur in the natural course of events. A few that in recent weeks and months have touched those of us in historical linguistics deserve mention, and we thus note, with sorrow, the passing of four excellent linguists who contributed much to our understanding of language change: Machtelt Bolkestein, known for her fine work on Latin; William Cowan, known for his work on Algonquian and Arabic; Kenneth Hale, known particularly for his ground-breaking descriptions of Native American and Indigenous Australian languages and penetrating diachronic observations and analyses of these languages;¹ and Wolfgang Ullrich Wurzel, known especially for his interesting work on morphological theory and morphological change in German. We at *Diachronica* are pleased that what will be one of Ken Hale's last published works appears in this issue, namely his review of Keren Rice's book. I am sure I speak for all linguists when I say we shall miss all four of them as scholars, diachronicians, and humanists.

On that admittedly sad note, I close, and officially pass the baton to Joe Salmons.

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1. Readers interested in more on Ken Hale's most interesting life can consult the informative obituary in the Friday October 19 (2001) edition of the *New York Times*.