ARCHIBALD A. HILL

When Archibald Anderson Hill died on March 29, 1992, in Austin, Texas, we lost one more of that dwindling number of linguists who had been present at the creation of our discipline in its modern American guise.* We lost not only one of the last links to 1930s American linguistics but one of the most devoted servants the Linguistic Society of America has ever had.

Arch Hill was born July 5, 1902, in New York City.[1] He grew up in California, where he attended private schools (his mother was a teacher) and San Diego High School from 1916 to 1918. The bicoastal origins seem odd to those of us who met him in later life, when one would have taken him for a Southerner of the old school. His speech and bearing—'courtly' is the only word that will do—came from south of the Mason-Dixon Line, where he spent most of his adult life.

In 1919 Hill went to Pomona College in Claremont, graduating with the A.B. degree in English in 1923 (minors in Spanish and science). He attended Stanford for a year, studying English, and earned the A.M. degree in 1924. His 'field', to the extent that he had one, was literature. From Stanford he went to Yale for doctoral work in English literature and was awarded the Ph.D. degree in 1927. At Yale he met his future wife, Muriel Louise Byard of Ellsworth, Maine. They were married August 8, 1928.

Hill's education had done almost nothing to prepare him for his life's work in linguistics. That was of course normal at the time, and for many years afterwards. Speaking of his first, more or less accidental encounters with what we think of today as linguistics, he wrote a half century later:

> '[A]nother stage began when I went to Stanford for graduate study. It was there for the first time that I met Old English, and thus got some inkling of language history. I remember trying to master umlaut, from the description in the Sievers-Cook grammar. The statement was that umlaut occurred when there was an *i* or *j* in the syllable following. So I looked for the *i* or *j* in the syllable following but there was nothing there. Eventually, light dawned. The *i* or *j* was a prehistoric *i* or *j*. The result was that language history seemed to be something like archaeology, something I had always been interested in. After that experience, I always had an open ear for language history, which was the linguistics of that day ... Then I went on to Yale. It should be said that my stay there was before the days when a great scholar like Prokosch

* I am grateful to several of my colleagues for their suggestions and advice in preparing this obituary: C. L. Baker, Thomas M. Cable, Robert T. Harms, Winfred P. Lehmann, and William Roger Louis. I am especially grateful to M. Ali Jazayery, professor emeritus of linguistics at the University of Texas and himself a student, colleague, and devoted friend of Arch Hill's. I refer the reader to the obituary of Hill written by Charles T. Scott which appeared in *Historiographia linguistica* (Scott 1993), to Einar Haugen's 'For Arch' in Jazayery et al. (1978:1.14–18), and to Edgar Polomé's 'Archibald A. Hill: A biographical sketch' written for the Hill *Festschrift* (Jazayery et al. 1978:1.13–14)

[1] He was 'Arch', always 'Arch', to everybody except former students and others who couldn't make the leap from 'Dr. Hill'.

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> taught Gothic and Old High German in New Haven ... If I try to summarize the kind of education I had been given, it must be said that linguistics was slighted. There were no departments or even programs with that name. I had managed to sneak in as much linguistics as I could, but I would have been deeply grateful for a lot more. Actually, my real education in the subject began at Michigan, after I had achieved a literary doctorate' (1980:70–2).[2]

Hill's first academic appointment was as Instructor of English at the University of Michigan in 1926 (he became Assistant Professor three years later). He went there, as he put it, as a 'very junior understudy to Samuel Moore' (Hill 1980:72). Moore, the scholar of Old and Middle English, played a major role in Hill's development; Hill in his seventies still referred to Moore as 'my hero' (Hill 1991:50). In 1930 he moved to the University of Virginia with promotion to Associate Professor, eventually becoming Professor of English. During World War II he served in the Communications and Intelligence Division (cryptanalysis) of the U.S. Naval Reserve, rising to the rank of Commander. Following discharge from the service he returned to Virginia, leaving in 1952 to go to Georgetown as Vice-Director of the Institute of Languages and Linguistics. In 1955 he was recruited to the University of Texas. Arch Hill was the right kind of faculty member to join Winfred P. Lehmann (who had come in 1949) in building Texas as a center for language study.

Apart from the usual leaves of absence and visits abroad on various consultancies, Hill remained in Austin the rest of his life. He retired from the faculty of the University of Texas in 1972 at age seventy amidst honor and acclaim. The university celebrated the event with a symposium presided over by Chancellor Emeritus Harry H. Ransom at which Einar Haugen, Hill's friend of long standing and former President of the LSA, gave the main testimonial address. Hill continued doing pretty much what he had done before, writing articles and book reviews, giving lectures, worrying about the advancement of his former students, preaching the linguistic gospel, and in general being the best kind of elder statesman a university can wish to have: supportive, helpful, generous with his time and experience, not a meddler, not a nuisance, at peace with himself.

His major project during retirement was the writing of his part of the proposed 50-year history of the LSA commemorating the Golden Anniversary celebrations in 1974. The project foundered (concerning which see Hill 1991:49, n.), but Hill's contribution was published as 'The Linguistic Society of America and North American linguistics' in *Historiographia linguistica* some fifteen years after he had written it (Hill 1991). Declining mobility confined Hill to his home in the last half of the 1980s, though he remained intellectually alert and engaged throughout. He never lacked for visitors. Not a linguistics conference was held at Texas whose participants (over the age of fifty, and some under) did not make the pilgrimage to his beautiful home overlooking the hills of west Austin. He was always glad to see his old friends. The companionship meant

[2] This citation is from Hill's contribution to the Conference on an Oral Archive for the History of American Linguistics, held in Charlotte, North Carolina, March 9–10, 1979, published as Davis & O'Cain 1980. The collection and its sequel, Koerner 1991, are invaluable for getting a feel for American linguistics in its early days.

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much to him. Little things did, as well. Maggie Reynolds, the Executive Director of the LSA, always made it a point to send him the handbook of the annual meeting. It was my happy duty while I was on the Executive Committee (1989–1992) to be the bearer of Maggie's handbooks back to Austin. They delighted him, summoning remembrance of people and things past.

* * *

> 'I am continually at work on literary analysis and relations of literature and linguistics as well as my usual work on linguistic analysis and theory.'

Hill wrote that revealing description of himself in the annual report of his activities for the year 1959. It is not a bad summing-up of his life's activities and interests. He published extensively on a variety of topics—some 164 publications including books, articles, essays, reports, and monographs.[3] He was not a theoretician and never claimed to be. He applied the ideas of others and, always tactful, gained for those ideas a foothold in hostile encampments. He was best known to the wider audience of linguists and English department language/linguistic specialists for his 1958 textbook *Introduction to linguistic structures: From sound to sentence in English,* a classic neo-Bloomfieldian analysis of English when that version of theory was the regnant orthodoxy. All of it is in there: DON'T MIX LEVELS!; the Trager-Smith 3×3 vowel system plus three offglides (though he was skeptical of postvocalic /h/, judging it 'radical'); four degrees of stress; plus-juncture; the definition of parts of speech in purely surface-functional terms. Hill's *Introduction to linguistic structures* stands today as a monument at a way station in the evolution of linguistic theory, as does Chomsky & Halle's *Sound pattern of English* (1968). Hill never much cared for the label 'neo-Bloomfieldian', preferring simply 'Bloomfieldian'. But we are known by the company we keep, and in Hill's case it was linguists like Martin Joos, Bernard Bloch, Charles Hockett, George Trager, J Milton Cowan, and Henry Lee Smith, Jr., with whom he had the greatest elective affinity. However, he wasn't dogmatic about much of anything—ever.

Hill was one of the first American linguists (in his *Introduction*) to utilize the relationships between syntactic structure and prosody in the analysis of English. The avant garde of the time, the late 1950s, attacked Hill on this, but today that same relationship is taken as obvious.

I was one of many embryonic historical linguists influenced by his 'Phonetic and phonemic change' that had appeared in *Language* in 1936 but was rescued from obscurity by its inclusion in Martin Joos's *Readings in linguistics* (1957). Joos's *Readings* was standard reading material for most of us who came to linguistics in the early 1960s, as Pāṇini was said to have been Leonard Bloomfield's bedtime reading. 'Phonetic and phonemic change' was one of the first attempts to bring what was then called the 'phonemic principle' to bear on

[3] I forego the complete listing of publications that is usual in a *Language* obituary because that listing has already been provided elsewhere in easily available sources. Hill's publications through 1974 (147 items) are listed in Jazayery et al. (1978:1.19–32), and Scott (1993:507–508) completes the bibliography from 1975 to the time of his death (17 items).

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historical sound change. Joos's comment was:

> 'Seldom referred to, even at the time, and almost forgotten today, this paper was actually of very great importance. By discussing phonetic realities in the familiar historical field, while taking phonemics for granted, so that the distinction between the phonetic and the phonemic aspects was illustrated again and again, a hearing was gained for phonemic philosophy [among readers otherwise unimpressed] ...' (1957:84).

The article contains a number of insights that modern historical linguists rediscover periodically; it reads very well even today (cf. Posner 1978). An interesting sidelight on this article is that Hill himself considered it one of his most important contributions to linguistics. On the biographical data sheet he filled out on joining the faculty at the University of Texas in 1955, under 'Chief Articles' he listed only two:'Phonetic and phonemic change' and 'Juncture and syllable division in Latin', which had come out in *Language* in 1954. He had published almost fifty articles by that time.

Linguistics was always his first love, as field of research and as teaching profession. He felt himself a linguist first and foremost—he liked the phrase 'scientific linguist'—but his love of literature always ran a close second.[4] He never let many years go by without writing something of a literary nature, e.g. 'A philologist looks at *Finnegan's Wake*' (1939); 'The sound symbolism of Poe' (1940); 'An analysis of "The Windhover": An experiment in structural method' (1955); 'Pippa's song: Two attempts at structural criticism' (1956); and, in retirement, *Constituent and pattern in poetry* (1976) and 'Rhymes and reasons: The practice of two poets' (1982).

Hill was skilled in the role of ambassador-at-large to a world which, he felt devoutly, could only be the better for knowing more about linguistics. This missionary spirit was the impetus behind various of his projects, most notably the Texas Conferences on Problems of Linguistic Analysis in English. These conferences helped to establish the place of Texas in the universe of linguistics, of course, but Hill conceived them mainly as a way to get the linguistic word out to a wider audience. It was one of these conferences, in 1958, that provided Noam Chomsky with an early forum for his then novel and offputting ideas. Chomsky's paper, 'A transformational approach to syntax', appeared in print four years later (Hill 1962).[5]

[4] The notion of linguistics as science ('linguistics is the scientific study of language', 'we are scientific linguists') was always an important emphasis for Hill. He liked to repeat a story about Samuel Moore, who had answered a student's criticisms of what he was teaching by saying: 'I'm not teaching literature, I'm teaching science' (Hill 1980:72, 1991:49–50).

[5] Hill, though himself very much a Bloomfieldian, laid great value on an ecumenical stance, and there was no linguist's work in which he couldn't find something of value. He went to lengths, in his valedictory, to praise the contributions to linguistics of Bloomfield, Sapir, Sturtevant, Noam Chomsky, and Mary Haas (Hill 1991:147). Although personally upset by the attacks of TG grammarians on his *Introduction to linguistic structures* (which came out just as TG theory gained momentum), his response was to learn as much as was then available about generative syntax. Subsequently he focused more on the literary side of linguistic studies (though without animosity toward generative work).

One might simply say that Arch Hill had a gift for gratitude and leave it at that.

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Hill was proud of his multiple appointments at the University of Texas: he was Professor of English, Linguistics, and Education, and he took his responsibilities to each of his departments seriously (though English remained his home department). Teaching teachers always mattered to him, as did the teaching of writing—English composition. Some of his most influential and most often anthologized articles appeared in *College English*. His teaching load down to retirement included courses for future teachers of English. TEFL was always one of his professional and teaching interests. His valedictory address to the graduating class of 1972 of the College of Humanities at the University of Texas dealt with a 'description of a Freshman Composition course at the University of Utopia with some description of the teaching methods and devices that could be used' (Hill 1972). If I had not been in the room to hear it, no one could possibly persuade me that a commencement speaker had actually ever talked on such a topic, or that the graduates sat there attentively and with respect and LISTENED. This was during the cultural (if not literally chronological) epoch we call 'The Sixties'! Would a graduating class anywhere today sit still for a commencement address on freshman composition? The thing cannot be imagined. O tempora! O mores!

One of Hill's most solid contributions to the farflung world of linguistics lay in his former students, on whom he made an extraordinarily enduring impression. They loved him; on this all agree. Charles Scott, himself a former student, is especially moving on this aspect of Hill's legacy (Scott 1993). His ties to foreign students of linguistics, at a time—the 1950s and 1960s—when linguistics was one of the leading exports of the American intellectual enterprise, secured standing, affection, and loyalty for our discipline abroad. The simplest gauge of the esteem he was held in throughout the world is his *Festschrift* (Jazayery et al. 1978), which required FOUR volumes (encompassing four different fields) to accommodate all the contributors, including colleagues and former students. One of my most permanent visual memories of Arch Hill, even after retirement, is of students, many of them foreign students and old friends from abroad, crowding the antechamber to his office waiting to see him.

In the course of his long career he had acquired an exceptionally complete collection of books and periodicals on linguistics and cognate literary matters. Even while he was still an active member of the faculty and was using this material regularly, he made it available to the entire faculty and student body of the department. In the year before his retirement he formally donated the collection to the Department of Linguistics. Not content with having done all that, Hill continued to keep the collection current with a steady flow of new book acquisitions and periodical subscriptions. The Hill Library has become an irreplaceable scholarly resource for the Department of Linguistics and linguistic scholars from all departments at the University of Texas. He wrote in 1971, upon making the bequest: 'The opportunity of making this donation for student use is as pleasant a way as I can think of of marking a stage in a relationship which has been pleasant throughout.'

And then there is the story of Archibald A. Hill and the Linguistic Society

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of America. The LSA was founded in 1924; Hill became a member in 1928.[6] However, he and the Society almost got an early divorce: 'In 1929, curiously enough, I thought of dropping out. The journal [*Language*] was full of things like Hittite, which seemed to me as distant as the other side of the moon' (Hill 1980:73). But he kept paying his dues and soon things were looking up:

> 'For me, the first revolution began when I attended my first meeting of the Linguistic Society ... The meeting was in the old Jefferson Hotel in Richmond, and a vivid memory of it was a fountain in the lobby with little alligators in it. Among the linguists who were present at that meeting were Gray, Kuryłowicz and Sturtevant. Sturtevant was talking about Indo-European ablaut with Gray, and I ventured a comment on it. I said that it seemed to me that the vowel alternations between a pair of forms like *alternation* and *alternate* was very like Indo-European ablaut. That was a pretty silly and certainly a very naive question, but Sturtevant took it perfectly seriously and gave me a very good and revealing answer ... From that time on I was hooked. There was no scholarly organization which meant as much to me as the Linguistic Society' (Hill 1980:73–74).

In 1950 Hill was asked to succeed J Milton Cowan as Secretary-Treasurer of the LSA, a position he held until 1968. During that time, the better part of a generation and during a time of massive expansion in higher education and in our discipline in particular, Archibald A. Hill was the 'face', as it were, of the Society. He was active behind the scenes of course, as the Secretary-Treasurer always is. But those were the days of plenary sessions: every session at every Annual Meeting, winter or summer, was a plenary session; there were no parallel sessions or sections. It was the Secretary-Treasurer's job to preside over these mammoth sessions, to admonish windy speakers to observe their time limits, to keep the questions within bounds, to deal with the unpredictable.

No person ever performed that irksome task better than Arch Hill. Tall (6′4″), always formally dressed in suit and tie (of course!), slightly stooped with an academic's myopia (it seemed)—Hill kept things on track with humor and dignity and patience (and polite toughness, if that's what it took). He was especially kind to neophytes. The one time I gave a paper at an Annual Meeting in its old format, in 1967 in Chicago, my nerves were naturally on edge beforehand, and I tripped over a microphone cord as I walked up to the podium. I had an awkward time extricating myself from all the electrical impedimenta lying about on the floor. The moment threatened to become lost in vulgar detail. Arch (who hardly knew me at the time, I hadn't been at Texas very long) asked to see my handout before introducing me, he raised some point or other about the handout, and by the time he announced my paper I had calmed down, at least on the outside. It wasn't until later that I realized he knew exactly what he was doing when, like a magician, he deflected my attention away from that coiled and rattling mass of microphone lines and extension cords that had nearly undone me; he had doubtless performed a similar service a dozen times before for fidgety newcomers.

[6] 'Sammy [Samuel Moore] did one other important thing for me. He dragooned me into the Linguistic Society' (Hill 1980:73).

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It was a marriage made in heaven, as they say, Arch Hill and the Secretary-Treasurership (Arch Hill and the LSA, actually). There was no Secretariat, no staff to speak of in those days, and almost all of the paperwork created by the Society's affairs was done out of his home and office by Hill and his wife, Muriel (who died in June, 1986). I recall as a graduate student in 1962 ordering Eduard Prokosch's *A comparative Germanic grammar* from the LSA, which meant from the 'offices' of the LSA, University Station, Austin, Texas. It arrived with a handwritten receipt, signed Archibald A. Hill.

I never once heard Arch talk publicly about his years as Secretary-Treasurer without expressly according his wife Muriel her share of the accolades (see, for example, Hill 1991:146). His devotion to her was total.[7] Her contributions ranged from stuffing envelopes and licking stamps to higher counsel and proofreading as well as stylistic emendations ('Muriel writes better than I do', he liked to say: she went over everything he wrote before he mailed it). The Hills had no children of their own, and both of them sometimes spoke of the LSA as their child. Certainly it would be a lucky son or daughter who received as much love and care as the Society and all its outworks while Arch was Secretary-Treasurer. He was President of the LSA in 1969, and the suite of offices housing the Secretariat is named in his honor.

In these pages I have frequently alluded to Hill's inborn kindness. It is true; he was extraordinarily well disposed toward all. The now antediluvian phrase 'a gentleman and a scholar' attached itself to Arch Hill like an epithet in *The Iliad*. But it will not do to leave the impression that he was a sort of never-met-a-man-he-didn't-like Will Rogers of the Academy. Bad manners of any sort he simply could not abide. He would tolerate not a bit more than the usual amount of arrogance in the questions following presentation of a paper at the Annual Meeting; he once ruled a discussant's remarks 'off the record' when, in Hill's opinion, they exceeded the bounds of academic decency (see Hill 1991: 122).

The harshest remark I ever heard him make publicly about someone (a colleague who made an avocation of bad manners) was 'I don't have much use for that man'. He was talking to Dave Decamp and me at the time, and the effect on us, who had never heard Arch say a thing like that in public, was not unlike the effect that Louis XIV's 'Qui est cet homme ...?' must have had on those in attendance. It is very amusing of course, that so mild a statement ('I don't have much use for that man') could sound like a veiled threat of death or expropriation, but that's the way it was with Arch Hill.

Not that he could not get mad. He was very angry when Martin Joos, probably his closest friend, was denied the Presidency of the LSA in 1970—'a blot on our history', I remember him saying. The things he said about some of the

[7] 'The effect of Muriel's death—and life—on him cannot easily be described. She remained with him to the end of his own life; facing him through his favorite picture of her placed in full view from the armchair where he sat all through his waking hours' (M. A. Jazayery, personal communication, 1992).

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actors in that sad drama didn't sound much like Will Rogers to me, but after all he knew that I felt exactly the same way as he did, only more so.

No summation of Archibald Hill's life would be complete without mention of his oddest claim to fame: 'the song'. Hill ended his contribution to the Oral Archive for the History of American Linguistics by saying:

> 'I will close with a pair of anecdotes. Professor [Henry] Hoenigswald, earlier in this meeting, was good enough to quote me quoting Wordsworth, to the effect that to be young in those days of the first revolution [the Bloomfieldian "revolution"] was "very Heaven". He said it took some courage to make that quotation. I don't see why—the quotation is in the public domain. Some of you will, on the other hand, understand me when I use a quotation to wish the Linguistic archive a "happy birthday" and say that that quotation is not, like Henry's, in the public domain' (Hill 1991:75–76).

This statement will seem cryptic to many (and now, no doubt, most) readers of *Language*. Those present understood it immediately, for Arch Hill OWNED the copyright to the song 'Happy Birthday'. The song was written by two maiden aunts of his who had had the uncommon good sense to copyright it, and Hill inherited the rights to 'Happy Birthday' when they died. Every time 'Happy Birthday' was played commercially, Hill made some more money. He used to point to this or that and say something to the effect that '"Happy Birthday" bought that'. Many have speculated how much 'Happy Birthday' subsidized the LSA between 1950 and 1968, and even now I cannot walk past the Hill Library in the Department of Linguistics at Texas without wondering the same thing about it. So much that he did lives after him, for linguistics, for the LSA, and for us at the University of Texas.

I once had a memorable talk with Arch about something I had written on the Middle High German courtly epic *Tristan* by Gottfried von Strassburg. I was surprised (though why, I don't know: he read EVERYTHING) at how much he knew of medieval Germanic languages other than English. He was especially fond, he told me, of the translations from Old Icelandic made by his colleague, Lee Hollander. In seeking a proper benediction for this occasion I think I may have found one from that language, from the *Hávamál:*

> Cattle die. Kin die.
> Thou thyself shalt die.
> One thing I know that never dies:
> Judgment over the dead.

Time's judgment of Arch Hill—of the man himself, and of all his works and days—is secure and always will be, as it was on that winter day in 1992 when a hushed and respectful linguistic world received the news of his death. [ROBERT D. KING, *University of Texas*.]

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