

DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

**REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR
ARCHIBALD A. HILL**

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Archibald A. Hill, professor emeritus, English and linguistics, has filed with the Secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

John R. Durbin, Secretary
The General Faculty

**IN MEMORIAM
ARCHIBALD A. HILL**

When Archibald Anderson Hill died on March 29, 1992, in Austin, we lost one more of that dwindling number of linguists who had been present at the creation in the 1930s of modern American linguistics. We also lost one of the last of a generation of linguistic scholars equally at home in a language department (in Hill's case, English) and in a linguistics department.

Arch Hill was born July 5, 1902, in New York City. (He was "Arch," always "Arch," to just about everybody.) 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 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 AB degree in English in 1923 (minors in Spanish and science). He attended Stanford for a year, studying English, and earned the AM 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 PhD 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 normal at the time—there were no departments of linguistics—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 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).

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 great 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 by then Chancellor Harry Hunt Ransom. 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 and linguistics.

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 70 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 (Linguistic Society of America, the major organization of linguists in North America), 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, fn.), 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 50, and some under) did not make the pilgrimage to his beautiful home overlooking the hills of west Austin on Mt. Bonnell Road. He was always glad to see his old friends. The companionship meant 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 handbooks from annual meetings. 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. 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 textbook *Introduction to Linguistic Structures: from Sound to Sentence in English* (1958), 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 3x3 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 and Halle's *Sound Pattern of English*. Hill never much cared for the label "neo-Bloomfieldian," preferring simply "Bloomfieldian" (after Leonard Bloomfield, one of the founders of modern American linguistics). 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, Albert Marckwardt, Henry Hoenigswald, J. Milton Cowan, and Henry Lee Smith, Jr.—all "neo-Bloomfieldians" with whom he had the greatest 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 and early 1960s, attacked Hill on this, but today that same relationship is taken as obvious.

Many historical linguists were influenced by his "Phonetic and Phonemic Change," which had appeared in *Language* in 1936 but was rescued from obscurity by its inclusion in Martin Joos's *Readings in Linguistics* (Joos 1957). Joos's *Readings* was standard reading material for most of those who came to linguistics in the early 1960s, as the great Sanskrit grammarian Panini 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 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. Rebecca 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 50 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. The notion of linguistics as science 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 and Hill 1991:49-50).

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). The ideas worked out in these and other essays formed the basis of his course, *An Introduction to Linguistics and Literature*, which was required of all graduate students in English during the 1960s.

A typical strategy in Hill's essays was to take an analysis of a poem by a New Critic such as Cleanth Brooks or John Crowe Ransom, endorse its general righthandedness in focusing on the details of the language of the text, and then present a more accurate analysis of those details, sometimes overturning, sometimes validating the interpretation of the New Critic. (New Criticism in capital letters, with a focus on the text rather than on the author's biography, was "new" in the 1940s and dominant in the 1950s.) The titles of Hill's essays acknowledge the tentative qualities of his analyses, with words like "experiment," "attempts," and "toward."

The two disciplines on which Hill's method of reading literature rested were to undergo dramatic revolutions—the development of generative grammar in linguistics and of "post-structuralism" in literary criticism. Such events now make Hill's linguistic approach to literary texts seem of a certain period, especially in its assumption that the determinate meaning of a poem can be established with the same precision and general acceptance as the identification of phonemes like /p/ and /f/. In his interpretations (a dozen essays on lyric poetry in *Constituent and Pattern in Poetry* alone), the symmetry of the four-part syllogism figured more prominently than it has in the markedly asymmetrical attitudes of the years that have followed. But what endures is Hill's commitment to the relation of linguistics to literature, an idea that was itself about to cause its own revolution in new linguistics-related critical models. Moreover, his firm belief in the value of philological and historical studies, in Old and Middle English and the history of the English language, helped to keep these subjects an essential part of the curriculum during a period of academic upheaval. The idea that a knowledge of linguistics and the history and structure of language can inform literary analysis is sustained in the English department at UT, where each semester a fuller selection of "lang-ling" courses is offered than in probably any other strictly English department in the country.

Hill's use of linguistics in literary analysis was evidence that he never forgot that the knowledge gained in linguistic theory has useful applications elsewhere. His work in this area is well known. Not so well known is his work in another field of applied linguistics: foreign-language teaching, specifically TEFL (Teaching of English as a Foreign Language). In his early years at UT he conducted informal seminars for instructors of foreign-language sections of required English courses (some of whose instructors were graduate students in what was then an interdepartmental program in linguistics). He also conducted short seminars in TEFL for groups of foreign teachers who came to UT on exchange programs. And in 1965 he published *Oral Approach to English* in two volumes, widely used in Japan and Taiwan. His work thus covered the two most important aspects of foreign-language teaching: teacher training and preparation of teaching materials.

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 in the late 1950s. 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).

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 transformational-generative 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.

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 (Teaching of English as a Foreign Language) 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). 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, Polomé, and Winter 1978), which required four volumes (encompassing four different fields) to accommodate all the contributors, including colleagues and former students. A permanent visual memory 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 of America. The LSA was founded in 1924; Hill became a member in 1928. ("Sammy [Samuel Moore] did one other important thing for me. He dragooned me into the Linguistic Society" [Hill 1980:73].) 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, Kurylowicz 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 the discipline of linguistics 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. Robert D. King recalls:

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 extracting 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.

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" (Robert D. King).

Arch never spoke publicly about his years as secretary-treasurer without expressly according his wife Muriel her share of the accolades (see, for example, Hill 1991:146). Her contributions ranged from envelope-stuffing 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 of the Society is named in his honor.

Muriel Hill's death in 1986 had a devastating effect on Arch. It left a huge vacuum in his life, though she was never out of his mind. Or out of his sight: "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).

Then there was Muriel Wright. Her father, Phineas Wright, had been a student of Hill's at the University of Michigan and later a colleague at the University of Virginia. His daughter was named after Arch's wife, Muriel. Muriel Wright, who attended UT and later worked for the state in Austin, was a regular visitor while the Hills were still alive. After Mrs. Hill's death, she looked after Arch with extraordinary devotion. She went to his house every day after work, staying until late in the evening. She spent the weekends there, especially in his later years when he was immobile and sometimes seriously ill. She was accompanied by her father whenever he came to Austin from his home in Virginia. She was nurse, secretary, assistant, friend, and companion to Arch Hill. She did as much for him and meant as much to him as any "biological child" could have.

In these pages we 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). King recalls:

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 [formerly UT Professor of English and Linguistics, now deceased] 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.

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. 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 or the Hill Library in the Department of Linguistics.

Hill was especially fond of the translations from Old Icelandic made by his colleague in the Department of Germanic Languages, Lee Hollander. A fitting benediction for this occasion comes 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 world received the news of his death.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Robert D. King (chair), Thomas M. Cable, and M. Ali Jazayeri.

Distributed to the Dean of the College of Education, the Executive Vice President and Provost, and the President on August 2, 2000. Copies are available on request from the Office of the General Faculty, FAC 22, F9500. This resolution is posted under "Memorials" at: <http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/>

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*For a complete listing of Professor Hill's publications we refer the reader to the obituary of Hill written by his student Charles T. Scott (Scott 1993), to Einar Haugen's "For Arch" in Jazayery, Polomé, and Winter (1978:1.14-18), and to Edgar Polomé's "Archibald A. Hill: a Biographical Sketch" also written for the Hill *Festschrift* (Jazayery, Polomé, and Winter 1978:1.13-14).