Supplementary materials

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Remarks Introducing Brian D. Joseph & His 2020 Presidential Address to the LSA
January 4, 2020

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Tonight's speaker is like *Aurēlius Augustīnus*—better known as St. Augustine—in his fascination with the issue of time. In about 400, Augustine asked these four temporal questions: *Quid est enim tempus? Quis hoc faciliē breviterque explicāverit? Quis hoc ad verbum dē illō prōferendum vel cōgitiōne comprehenderit? Quid autem familiārius et nōtius in loquendō commemorāmus quam tempus?* 'So, what is time? Who will have easily and briefly explained it? Who will have understood it to [the point of] offering a word about it, or in thought? Yet what do we recall more familiarly and more knowingly in speaking than time?'

It makes sense to introduce this paradox in Latin, since it was taking high-school Latin-classes that can be said to have started Brian Joseph on the path to becoming a historical linguist and, eventually, to taking the helm of the LSA. Yet it could also be speculated that there is a genetic component to this: Harriet Joseph was a Shakespearean scholar who published a book on a manuscript written in Latin by the Bard's son-law, John Hall, that was later translated into English—but with omissions which Prof. Joseph filled in from her own familiarity with Latin. Edward Joseph was also an intellectually curious scholar, one who contributed to the psychoanalytic literature on the author Joseph Conrad, on twins, and on the consciousness of being conscious—and he was elected President of the American Psychoanalytic Association once and the International Psychoanalytic Association twice: definitely a respected leader. Moreover, Brian Joseph grew up in a family that, on both sides, traces its roots back to the Québec of the early 1800s. If you're wondering whether they were successful, consider this: the patriarch of the Josephs in Canada, Henry Joseph, had a string of fur-trading posts where John Jacob Astor worked for him!

Still, none of this was really necessary for Brian to become a historical linguist known for his insight into the languages of Greece and neighboring areas, or for his insistence that diachrony includes the study of ongoing language-change in the present. In my small overlap with Brian's years teaching at Ohio State and at Linguistic Institutes, I've been impressed with his sometimes explicit but mostly implicit advice to students that it makes sense to focus on one particular non-native language (along with your native tongue), rather than fixating on a theoretical issue and then trawling the languages of the world for ones that bear on that issue. He doesn't say it exactly this way, but the upshot is: Go to a language, and it will tell you its problems.

In President Joseph's case, Greek has been good to him, and he has been good to Greek. Not only did it lead him, already as an undergraduate at Yale, toward Hellenic and Indo-European linguistics; it also, through shared interests, introduced him to the person whose husband he became, and, with a little stretching of the imagination, could be said to have led to Mary Clark and Brian's sons traveling with them in Greece and adjacent countries, and to one son's now living in Greece with a diplomat spouse (again that Canadian connection) and with children who are being or will be exposed to Greek at school. That their other son is an economics professor has a Hellenic

connection only via the etymology of *economy* as *oiko-nom-ía* ‘management of a house(hold) or budget’, I’ll admit.

In addition, not all students of Greek expand their horizons to the Balkans as a whole, but Brian did, and that fact has inspired other historical linguists, as well as synchronic linguists who focus on language contact. President Joseph has called the Balkans a laboratory for linguistic change, and by that he means not just in an abstract sense, but also in terms of a place to carry out fieldwork—whereby he has for some years worked specifically both on Greek in Albania and on Albanian. Mention of work in a concrete sense should remind of us Brian’s years as editor of our Linguistic Society journal *Language*, during which time my own experience was that there were uniquely many articles with footnotes thanking the editor for useful comments on detailed issues—which attests to our President’s breadth of interest and competencies.

In focusing his talk to us tonight on the issue of time, Brian Joseph returns to a topic which he and a colleague once addressed at arguably greater length than in any other work on historical linguistics. For example, they devoted several pages to time travel, which—at a minimum—ought to concern diachronicians as a logical possibility but is virtually never mentioned. At least two reviewers took the editors of *The Handbook of Historical Linguistics* [Volume I], to task for discussing time travel in their introduction to the volume (despite the fact that it is often talked about by physicists, albeit under disguised names like *CTCs*, for *closed timelike curves*), but Brian and his co-author had the last laugh. Both of the reviewers in question asked why the volume’s introduction hadn’t referred to certain publications, but those works were published only after the *Handbook* had gone to press—which made it seem like it was the reviewers who believed in time travel!

In any field, time is a difficult topic, and linguists are a tough crowd. Does Brian Joseph face a kind of test by fire like that set for Prince Tamino in Mozart’s 1791 opera *Die Zauberflöte* ‘*The Magic Flute*’? Probably not, but the words of Schickaneder’s libretto apply to Brian, as well. When one character asks whether Tamino will succeed, because he is not a warrior but a prince, the answer is, in German: *Noch mehr; er ist Mensch!* ‘More than that, he is a human being!’. So please join me in welcoming to the podium someone who is not only, as LSA President, a prince among linguists, but also a *mensch* among linguists: Brian D. Joseph.