
In Memoriam

Alan S. Kaye
(1944–2007)

Alan S(tewart) Kaye died in California on May 31, 2007, at the age of 63. Some readers will remember him for the 40 book reviews he published in the *Canadian Journal of Linguistics/Revue canadienne de linguistique* since 1980. Others may also know him through his work on Semitic and other language families. (See campusapps.fullerton.edu/news/inside/2007/kaye.html, accessed October 2008.)

Alan Kaye and I started corresponding by email in 1993, when I served as the book review editor of the *CJL/RCL*, but we only met 13 years later in Al Ain, United Arab Emirates, where he was on a research leave from his home institution, the University of California, Fullerton. Extrapolating from his amazing publication record—more than 15 authored or edited books, 100 articles, and 600 book reviews—I expected to meet a man who looked like he had spent all his life in libraries, but I was surprised to discover an intense and energetic fitness fanatic bent on gym sessions and mountain hikes. He was, of course, a voracious reader, but he especially liked communicating. He loved conversing with everyone in the numerous languages that he spoke, which included Arabic, Hebrew, Urdu, and Persian.

In the sixties, Alan studied for his BA in Semitic linguistics at the University of California, Los Angeles, with Wolf Leslau, whom Grover Hudson describes as “the greatest Semiticist linguist of the post-war generation” (linguistlist.org/issues/17/17-3470.html, accessed October 2008). Though Alan studied with other illustrious linguists for his MA and PhD degrees, it is Leslau—who died at the age of 100 on November 18, 2006—who remained Alan’s role model all his life. Though Alan was conversant in modern formal linguistics, it is Leslau’s timeless empirical studies that he tried to emulate. While Leslau spent his life describing the little-known Semitic languages of Ethiopia and all aspects of Ethiopian linguistics, Alan spent his bringing to light little-known dialects of Arabic and all aspects of Arabic linguistics. He published extensively (but not exclusively) on all matters related to Arabic, from historical reconstruction to current patterns of diglossia, from Arabic pidgins and creoles to Arabic-influenced languages such as Urdu and Persian. During the last week of his life, Alan—fighting generalized cancer and the pneumonia he caught on his final trip home—strove to complete his outstanding publications. One of them was an obituary of

Wolf Leslau which Alan jokingly said he must finish before someone wrote one about him. It appeared in the December 2007 issue of *Language*.

Emirati students of linguistics told me how impressed they were that he kept encouraging them and his colleagues to the end, even though he was fighting for his life. Alan S. Kaye lives on in his publications, as great researchers do, but also, and equally importantly, in the positive influence he had on those who met him.

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