

PREFACE

Robert Lawrence (“Larry”) Trask (b. Olean, NY, 10 November 1944, d. Brighton, Sussex, 27 March 2004) was a linguist of remarkably profound knowledge and unusually broad expertise. Commenting on Trask’s *Dictionary of Phonetics and Phonology*, the great phonetician Peter Ladefoged wrote, “I cannot imagine how one person could have read enough to be able to compile this book” (quoted on the back cover of the book). Astonishingly, phonetics and phonology was not even Larry’s major area of investigation. This dictionary is, in fact, only one of a number of outstanding technical dictionaries that Larry produced single-handedly, covering virtually all areas of linguistic research. It is indeed difficult to imagine how he could have read, assimilated and synthesized so much linguistic knowledge.

But if Larry Trask’s linguistic interests ran wide and deep, there is no doubt that his true passion was Basque linguistics, and very particularly, the history of the Basque language. Trask made lasting contributions to the study of Basque diachronic syntax and morphology and his *The History of Basque* is required reading for anyone interested in the evolution of the Basque language. It is also perhaps the best introduction to the field of Basque Linguistics as a whole. At the time of his untimely death, Larry was working on an etymological dictionary of the Basque language. Undoubtedly Larry Trask must be counted as one of the towering figures of all times in the field of Basque Linguistics.

Larry’s work on the evolution of the Basque language was grounded on his thorough knowledge of the methodology and findings of diachronic linguistics, as reflected in his masterful textbook *Historical Linguistics* and other publications.

The present book was initially conceived as a present to Larry from some of the many scholars in Basque Linguistics, Historical Linguistics and other fields, who have been inspired by his work. Sadly, his life came to an abrupt end when the book was still in its initial stages. With this volume we would like now to pay homage to the memory of our sorely missed friend.

We are thankful to Larry Trask’s widow, Ms. Jan Lock, for giving us permission to reproduce the photograph and to Professor Max Wheeler for his help with compiling Larry’s bibliography.

J. A. L. / J. I. H.