



IN MEMORIAM

Suzanne Fleischman
Professor of French
Berkeley
1948–2000

Professor Suzanne Fleischman of the Department of French at the University of California, Berkeley, a distinguished philologist and linguist, died of leukemia on February 2, 2000 at the age of 51.

Fleischman produced ground-breaking work in Romance and general linguistics that was widely influential. Her undergraduate degree was from the University of Michigan, where she specialized in Spanish, graduating *summa cum laude* in 1969. She received her Ph.D. in Romance Philology at Berkeley, in 1975, working under the direction of the renowned Romance linguist Yakov Malkiel. Her dissertation, “The French Suffix -age: Its Genesis, Internal Growth, and Diffusion,” traced the spread of -age (from the Latin suffix -aticu) — originally a suffix that designated forms of taxation — as a function of extra-linguistic factors, notably the spread of feudalism. A revised version was published as Volume 86 of the University of California Publications in Linguistics under the title *Cultural and Linguistic Factors in Word Formation: An Integrated Approach to the Development of the Suffix -age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977). The design and implementation of this project owed much to Malkiel’s intellectual style, but Fleischman soon emancipated herself from her mentor’s influence.

In 1974, Berkeley’s French department announced an opening for a specialist in French linguistics. Although Fleischman’s strongest languages had been Spanish and Portuguese (she had been a Fulbright fellow in Portugal in 1969 and occasionally served as a simultaneous translator for Portuguese), she had been broadly trained in the Romance languages and she was hired on the basis of her extraordinary accomplishments as a graduate student and the pan-Romance character of her dissertation. She subsequently reordered her priorities and became one of the handful of most prominent linguists in the field of French. She was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1981-82.

Fleischman’s next major work was *The Future in Thought and Language: Diachronic Evidence from Romance* (Cambridge Studies in Linguistics, 36; Cambridge University Press, 1982), in which she traced the alternations of analysis and synthesis in the morphology of forms of the future tense from Latin into the Romance tongues. This innovative book won wide acclaim from Romance linguists and general linguists alike and is recognized as an essential contribution to the theory of grammaticalization, to cognitive linguistics, and to the problematics of linguistic universals.

Fleischman’s most influential work in the field of literary studies was *Tense and Narrativity: From Medieval Performance to Modern Fiction* (Austin: University of Texas Press; London: Routledge, Chapman, and Hall, 1990), which placed medieval narratives in the context of general theories of narration and linguistic pragmatics, applying to medieval texts a series of insights deriving from sociolinguistics, in particular from the study of the spontaneous oral narratives of inner city American children. Fleischman had published two articles on Occitan narrative, each of which is a landmark in scholarship on the work in question: “Dialectic Structures in Flamenca,” *Romanische Forschungen* 92 (1980), pp. 229-46, and “Jaufre or Chivalry Askew: Social Overtone of Parody in Arthurian Romance,” *Viator* 12 (1981), pp. 109-29. She also contributed the

chapter on “The Non- Lyric Texts” to the indispensable Handbook of the Troubadours (ed. F. R. P. Akehurst; Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995). In the area of Old French epic narrative, she published two classic studies: “Overlay Structures in the Song of Roland: A Discourse- Pragmatic Strategy of Oral Narrative,” Berkeley Linguistic Studies 12 (1986), pp. 108-23, and “A Linguistic Perspective on the Laisses Similaires: Orality and the Pragmatics of Narrative Discourse,” Romance Philology 43 (1989), pp. 70-89.

Fleischman coedited two volumes of studies, one with Linda R. Waugh, Discourse- Pragmatics and the Verb: The Evidence from Romance (London: Routledge, 1991), the other with Joan Bybee, Modality in Grammar and Discourse (Typological Studies in Language, 32; Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995).

Fleischman was the only trained Romance philologist represented in the much- discussed New Philology issue of Speculum (vol. 64, no. 1, 1990), with her article “Philology, Linguistics, and the Discourse of the Medieval Text,” pp. 19-37, which argued for the importance of discourse analysis in philological work. In another important study, she tackled one of the central problems of medieval narrative, its claims to represent reality: “On the Representation of History and Fiction in the Middle Ages,” History and Theory 23 (1983), pp. 278-310.

Among the other interests of this many- faceted scholar was linguistic pragmatics, in particular in three domains: discourse markers, language and gender, and, increasingly as the disease from which she died progressed, language and medicine. In the first category is an article comparing the English marker “like” with the French “genre”: “Des jumeaux du discours,” La Linguistique 34 (1998), no. 2, pp. 31-47, work extended to other languages in a paper “Pragmatic Markers in Comparative Perspective: A Contribution to Cross- Language Pragmatics,” presented at the PRAGMA 99 conference in Tel Aviv and resulting in her posthumous study coauthored with Marina Yaguello, “Discourse Markers Across Languages,” Carol Lynn Moder and Alda Martinovic- Zic, Discourse Across Languages and Cultures (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2004), pp. 129-48. In the second area, her outstanding contribution was “Gender, the Personal, and the Voice of Scholarship,” Signs: A Journal of Women and Culture 23 (1998), pp. 975-1016. During the last few years of her life Fleischman audited courses on hematology and presented a number of papers at medical conferences, where she spoke as both patient and linguist. An example of this aspect of her work is “I am..., I have..., I suffer from...: A Linguist Reflects on the Language of Illness and Disease,” Journal of Medical Humanities and Cultural Studies 20 (1999).

Fleischman was an extraordinary classroom teacher, combining a theoretical habit of mind with rigorously practical analysis in lectures that were models of clarity. She was the opponent of all obfuscation, not just in her linguistic work but also in frank face- to- face evaluations of her students’ qualities of mind. In addition to the many topics reflected above, she taught courses on general historical linguistics and the development of the Romance vernaculars. Fleischman directed a number of superb dissertations, including those of Anna Livia Brawn, Susan Herring, Richard Laurent, Sophie Marnette, and Armin Schwegler.

Suzanne Fleischman was a great raconteuse and her ironic viewpoint enlivened any gathering. She left behind not just stunned and saddened colleagues, but students who were counting on her brilliance and wisdom to guide them through their studies. Her absence left a gap in the lives of all those who valued her love of language, her intellectual inventiveness, her incisive wit, her warmth, and the joie de vivre that she shared with us for all too short a time.

Joseph J. Duggan
Françoise Sorgen- Goldschmidt