

# Dedication

 <https://doi.org/10.1075/cilt.16.02ded>

Pages ix–xi of

**Bono Homini Donum: Essays in Historical Linguistics, in Memory of J. Alexander Kerns. (2 volumes)**

**Edited by Yoël L. Arbeitman and Allan R. Bomhard**

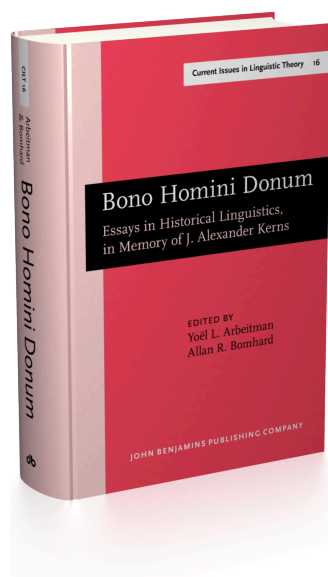
[Current Issues in Linguistic Theory, 16]

1981. xvi, 557, viii, 581 pp.

© John Benjamins Publishing Company

This electronic file may not be altered in any way. For any reuse of this material written permission should be obtained from the publishers or through the Copyright Clearance Center (for USA: [www.copyright.com](http://www.copyright.com)).

For further information, please contact [rights@benjamins.nl](mailto:rights@benjamins.nl) or consult our website at [benjamins.com/rights](http://benjamins.com/rights)



## DEDICATION

MEMINI NEQUE OBLIVISCAR: ΑΓΑΘΩΙ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΩΙ ΔΩΡΟΝ

*BONUS HOMO.* The very appellation causes the man we honor to cringe with embarrassment. But, as he was so wont to do in life, he sublimates his mortification into Indo-European citations: this time it is Luke 18: 19, which Alec quotes in (what else?) Greek & Latin (for self-explanatory reasons), followed, at once, in Gothic & Lithuanian (his *duae primae inter pares*): Τὸ με λέγεις ἀγαθόν; οὐδεὶς ἀγαθὸς εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ θεός.

*Quid me dicis bonum? nemo bonus nisi solus Deus.*

*hva mik qĩpĩs þĩuþeigana? nĩ ainshun þĩuþeĩgs nĩba aĩns Guþ.*

*Kam mane vadĩni geru? nẽ vieno nẽra gero, tik Dievas.*

I appeal to you, Alec, balance your unseemly modesty with compassion for my plight. Allow me my expiation for my sin, whereby I granted "decorum, propriety, and respectability" a prerogative not rightly theirs: to dam up the Truth from being proclaimed when it was due. At your memorial service, I *knew* it was only meet that I mount the rostrum to interrupt all those "correct and proper" eulogies being declaimed, that there was only one 6 word sentence that needed to be proclaimed: "He was the 'goodest' man alive." That would have been Truth's totality.

As a "socialized" being, I "controlled" myself; but since that day I have had to live with the guilt, guilt and sin that can only now be washed away, by proclaiming, for the Four Quarters of the Earth to hear, that which the small group, gathered on that bleak, rainy, and nasty, October day in 1975, should have heard proclaimed.

Alec loved the Indo-Europeans, a love that was almost unconditional; yet in their narrow limiting of their "earthling" word (e.g. Latin *homo/humanus*) he took great umbrage at them. For this Good Man realized that it is not mankind alone who are "earthlings"; all, who live and breathe and share this planet with us presumptuous ones, are "earthlings"

(*humani*).. For this reason he never tired of quoting *Ṛg-Veda*.X.85.42:

<i>śaṃ no bhava dvipade</i>	Be thou well-disposed to our two-footed
<i>śaṃ catuspade.</i>	[beings], well-disposed to our four-footed
	[beings].

and the Iguvian Tablet Vib 10-11:

<i>fisouie. sanṣie. ditu. ocre. fisi.</i>	Fisovius Sancius, give to the
<i>tote. iouine. ocrer. fisie.</i>	Fisian Citadel, to the Iguvian
<i>totar. iouinar. dupursus/</i>	People, to the two-footed, to
<i>peturpursus. fato. fito. perme.</i>	the four-footed of the Fisian
<i>postne.</i>	Citadel, of the Iguvian People
	[benignity] by what is spoken/
	fated, by what comes to pass,
	[the] before [determined],
	[the] after [effectuated].

He found the denomination of the bad in *man* by the word "bestial" to be a slander on the non-man earthlings, and was wont to quote "*Homo homini lupus est.*"

Though he limited his published work to IE, his command of and insight into an unreckonable plethora of other language families was of the sort one only hears of in legend. He inhabited a magic world, where he was perpetually "turned-on," lost in the minutiae of language #153 or whatever number he was up to at any given time. Perhaps most important, he had the power to transmit this magic; one who came only had to be prepared to enter that world. To discuss Old Irish glosses with Alec was to be drawn into the magic circle. There mundane reality lost its substance; its earth-bound control of our lives ceased for an hour or two for him, who had the privilege of entering where Alec dwelled continually. The paucity of his publications was a negative, but necessary corollary of his inability to conceive that the magic was not known to all others, as it was to him. For this we are all the poorer; but one cannot love a man for who he is and also expect him to be someone else. If the world has lost the boundless potential for articles, nevertheless it had such a man amongst its denizens for over fourscore years. For this we are all the richer.

Alec would never permit an afterworld in which the dictum "*Multae terricolis linguae, coelestibus una*" obtained. I am sure that in the Elysian Fields, where now he dwells, there are *many more* tongues than the paltry sum that we in this world have to content ourselves with.

We, who were privileged to share some time with this gift of a man, are entitled to modify Alec's wonted quote and say: "Alexandrus etiam lupo *bonus* homo erat."

Now, as we send forth this memorial, it is seemly not merely for all *Fachgenossen*, not merely for all fellow "humans" (in the limited Indo-European sense of the word), but truly for all co-dwellers of this Earth, to join in bidding farewell and peace sempiternal to this Goodest Man of my knowing, Ya<sup>C</sup>aqob Alakšanduš\* Kerns.

יזכר אלהים נשמת אבלי מורי י. אלכסנדר בן יעקב שהלך לעולמו.  
אנא תהי נפשו צרורה בצרור החיים. ותהי מנוחתו כבוד.  
שבע שמחות את-פניך. נעימות בימינך נצח. אמן:

Your son, disciple, and one  
whom you deigned to call  
your colleague,

Yoël Arbeitman

כז באייר תשמ"א

---

\*For the original forms and meanings of the "J. Alexander," see Yoël L. Arbeitman, "Luwio-Semitic *Mischname* Theophores in the Bible, on Crete, and at Troy," *Scripta Mediterranea, Bulletin de la Société d'Études Méditerranéennes* II (1981).