Michael Clyne
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'Thank you very much.'

These words, articulated in his warm musical voice, punctuated almost every conversation with Michael Clyne, and if there was a certain ritual quality about them, no interlocutor could have the slightest doubt that the ritual was grounded in sincerity. Colleague or student, one always left with the feeling that he was indeed grateful to you for the exchange. Of course, more often than not, one came away from such encounters enriched, having received, in knowledge or insight, much more than anything one brought. Such was his generosity and modesty, he never seemed aware of that.

Michael George Clyne was born in Melbourne on 12 October 1939, the only child of refugees who had left Austria after the Hitlerian *Anschluss* in 1938. Although of Jewish background, Michael's parents had no involvement in Jewish culture or religion, and adopted a thoroughly assimilationist attitude towards their son's education. He was sent to school at Christ Church and Caulfield Grammar Schools, and in due course found himself at home in the Anglican communion. His Christian beliefs would remain a fundamental dimension of his existence. He nevertheless derived two enduring values from his parents: the first was his commitment to bilingualism as a positive dimension of everyday life; the second, based on their experience as refugees, was a fierce hostility to all forms of exclusion. He was a consistent and generous supporter of organisations working for refugees and asylum seekers.

After completing his BA Honours (1960) and his MA (1962) in Germanic languages at the University of Melbourne, Michael Clyne spent a short time studying general and German linguistics in Utrecht and Bonn. In late 1962 he received his first academic appointment, in the German department at the newly founded Monash University. It was at Monash that he completed his PhD studies (in 1965) – the first PhD in the Arts Faculty – and Monash, even before his elevation to the Chair of

Linguistics in 1988, became the base for the brilliant and extraordinarily productive career that made of him one of the world's most authoritative voices in his range of fields: sociolinguistics, bilingualism, multilingualism, language contact, second language learning, multicultural communication, languages policy. Another eminent Germanist, Anthony Stephens, has observed how unusual and mould-breaking Clyne's choice of field was in the context of German studies in Australia at that time, when the overwhelming emphasis was on canonical literary authors: an early sign of the courageous independence of mind that would characterise his whole career. Although he never lost interest in his primary field of German and the European context, Clyne's passions extended to more specifically Australian concerns such as the needs of migrant communities, the situation of Aboriginal languages, and, above all, the multicultural realities in which he saw enormous untapped potential for the nation's future.

His personal scholarly output was prodigious. Working alone or in a variety of teams – and his generous assistance to younger colleagues and post-graduate researchers was renowned – he authored, co-authored or edited almost thirty books, as well as over 300 book chapters and articles. His books include *Language and Society in the German-speaking Countries* (1984), *Community Languages: The Australian experience* (1991), *Pluricentric Languages* (1992), *Inter-Cultural Communication at Work* (1994), *The German Language in a Changing Europe* (1995), *Dynamics of Language Contact* (2003) and *Australia's Language Potential* (2005). He was a shrewdly successful, but also highly principled user of the Australian Research Council grants schemes, which allowed him not only to sustain a rapid rhythm of publication over many years, but also to train and mentor groups of more junior researchers. In addition, he served on the editorial boards of more than a dozen international journals.

Clyne developed and articulated a deep understanding of the intellectually liberating power for individuals of the ability to operate in more than one language. He was himself multilingual: he had an excellent command of German and Dutch as well as English, and had also learned French, Swedish, Norwegian and Italian. In addition, he saw that such freedom could be a source of increased initiative, and hence of important social and commercial benefits. Inevitably, in the context of Australia's historical and wilfully persistent monolingual dominant culture, he found himself in opposition to the ambient trends, and such was his sense of community responsibility that during his entire working life he devoted enormous amounts of time and effort in an attempt to bring about change. It is in fact possible to interpret much of his research and writing as part of this lifelong battle to transform the anglocentric Australian mindset, by demonstrating the value of knowledge of other languages and cultures, the potential and largely untapped linguistic and cultural wealth deriving from our migrant populations, and the debilitating self-harm caused by the linguistic complacency of governments and educational institutions, as well as of most of our business community. He was fond of quoting statistics demonstrating that, on

average, the multilingual skills of European CEOs were three or four times those of their Australian counterparts.

Michael Clyne was a hands-on activist, fearless and relentless in his lobbying of university administrators, public servants, and politicians – including those at the highest levels. But elegant arguments, even when they are unassailable, cannot be guaranteed to win the day politically: monolingualism is no less pernicious for being silver-tongued. Clyne was fully aware of the immensity and intractable nature of the task he had set himself, and resigned to the fact that he would lose many fights. This never stopped him, although often enough he did experience – and express – frustration; nevertheless, he remained determined that at the very least, nobody could plead ignorance of the issues. Furthermore, the texts, the strategies, structures and networks he has left ensure that others can and will continue the work.

At Monash, he was foundation director of the interdisciplinary Centre for Migrant and Intercultural Studies (1974) and of the Language and Society Centre (1989), both of which have served as important interfaces between academic research and the wider community. A similar vision underpinned Clyne's creation of the Research Unit for Multilingualism and Cross-Cultural Communication (RUMACCC) when he moved as Professorial Fellow to the School of Languages at the University of Melbourne in 2001. In addition to regular workshops to encourage and aid parents wanting to raise children in more than one language, RUMACCC has developed research partnerships across the different discipline areas. Using sociolinguistics as a focus, this has given real content to the notion of 'school', which in the Australian university setting has been so often little more than a managerial convenience.

In all of these settings, Michael Clyne found ways to bring in a steady stream of academic visitors from other Australian universities and also from abroad. These visitors would stay for extended periods of several weeks or a semester, allowing ample time to develop fruitful collaborations with local colleagues, and also to provide students with the opportunity to work with some of the most distinguished people in the field.

Beyond the university sector, he was closely involved over many years in the development of pluralistic language policies in schools, both secondary and primary. He had a particular interest in languages spoken in the wider community and in ways of ensuring their maintenance; his attachment to the Victorian School of Languages was particularly deep, and the VSL, in recognition, named him as its patron. More generally, if the state of Victoria has a markedly less shameful record than other states in languages teaching and learning in its schools, considerable credit can be ascribed to Clyne's persistent and tireless contributions over many decades.

His achievements brought him many honours and invitations. He was a Member of the Order of Australia (1993), he held the Austrian Cross of Honour and the

German Cross of Merit, and was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Munich. He was a Foreign Member of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences, and a Fellow of both the Australian Academy of Social Sciences (1982) and the Australian Academy of the Humanities (1983). He was particularly proud to receive the inaugural Monash Vice-Chancellor's award for post-graduate supervision (1995). His work won him the highly valued Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm Prize for German Studies (1999) and the Humboldt Research Prize (2003). It was typical of Clyne's generosity and commitment to the future that he used the money from the Grimm Prize to establish a local prize for younger scholars: the Michael Clyne Prize for the best postgraduate research thesis in immigrant bilingualism and language contact is awarded annually, administered by the Australian Linguistic Society. In the later part of his career, Clyne was regularly invited to give keynote and plenary lectures in international conferences. He was also visiting professor at universities in Germany (Hamburg, Heidelberg, Stuttgart) and Italy (Verona).

Clyne served as the chair of the Academy of the Humanities' Language Studies Committee from 1992 until 1996. This period saw two Federal elections (1993 and 1996) and the minutes of the LSC show that Clyne worked hard to make sure that the Academy lobbied vigorously for languages on both occasions. From the time of his appointment, he promoted the *need* to lobby at both state and federal levels: the Leal Report on languages – 'Widening our Horizons' – marked a crucial turning-point in Australian languages education, in terms of achievements, needs and fragilities, and Clyne was aware of the importance of a clear government response, as well as of the difficulty of obtaining it. In subsequent years, issues confronted included the Rudd report on an Asian language strategy for schools, the defence of the national languages policy, the bureaucratisation of decision-making in education, problems associated with languages of small enrolment (the key example was the cutting of Dutch at the University of Melbourne), and languages in the school curriculum. In retrospect, one can see that the now quite central role of languages issues in the Academy's reflections and actions owes a good deal to Clyne's seminal activism.

In 1977, Clyne married Irene Donohoue, who shared both many of his academic interests and his commitments and activities within Melbourne's Anglican community. Their daughter Joanna, raised bilingually in English and German, has herself chosen an academic research pathway as a historian.

When he retired in 2005, his colleagues organised a written tribute that drew contributions from more than sixty individuals and groups – colleagues from Australia and abroad, as well as numerous present and former PhD students. This is a revealing and moving document that captures many aspects of the man and his work: his scholarship, his loyalty, his mentorship, his quirks and eccentricities, the admiration and affection that he stimulated. It is available on the RUMACCC website (http://www.rumaccc.unimelb.edu.au/clyne/tribute.pdf), but it deserves to exist in printed form.

Michael Clyne died suddenly at his home of heart failure on 29 October 2010, a few weeks after his seventy-first birthday. His health had been declining over the previous two years, due to a condition caused by treatment for cancer some decades earlier. Worried by his increasing immobility and the difficulties that his physical dependency was causing others, especially his family, he nevertheless remained mentally alert and engaged until the end. He gave a profound and much-commented eulogy at the death of his old friend John Stanley Martin (the great defender of Swedish and Old Norse at the University of Melbourne); and in an important example of the way he had integrated his religious faith and his linguistic research, he gave a lecture on 'Language, Religion and Social Inclusion' in the *Mind, Body, Spirit* series at St Aidan's Uniting Church in North Balwyn, Victoria. He was also working on two major new research projects: one on the social exclusion of older people through language (i.e. the ways in which they are addressed and referred to); the other on intergenerational community building through language learning (young L2 learners being brought together with older native speakers). For those familiar with Clyne's itinerary, these last projects (which others will bring to completion) rehearse central themes: the opportunities that Australia's multicultural landscape offer for creative ways of learning other languages, and the odiousness of using language to marginalise otherness. But the projects also demonstrate the vitality of Clyne's constantly innovative thinking.

His funeral, held at the Anglican Parish of St Stephen and St Mary in Mt Waverley, Victoria, on 8 November 2010, was attended by many hundreds of people: family, friends, neighbours, former students, colleagues, fellow parishioners. It was a mighty testimony to the extent of his activities and to the range of people his life had affected and often inspired. Clyne's academic legacy is immense, and it is inseparable from the humanity that he so admirably incarnated. It comes in the form of his prolific writing, and also in that of the very numerous younger scholars he helped train, to whom he imparted knowledge, methodology and the self-confidence to pursue their own paths, as well as the high-minded idealism that endeared him to so many.

Colin Nettelbeck