

Dany

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I first met Dany Jaspers in 1983 during his first fellowship at MIT. We have been close friends ever since and have remained in contact not only by e-mail, but also by getting together during his other stays in Cambridge (and one summer in Martha's Vineyard) and during trips Nancy (my wife, who passed away) and I spent in Belgium. In the course of one of those visits, we had the pleasure of meeting his parents while visiting his native village Spalbeek (to which he is deeply attached), and of being guided by him on a number of interesting tours around Brussels and around Limburg.

Dany is the only linguist I know who ever impersonated Sinterklaas (the patron saint of school children who, in Belgium and parts of Holland, brings toys to good children every December 6). But that is far from the only thing that distinguishes him from most of the other scholars that I know. What distinguishes him for me is the wide range of his interests, ranging from issues about aspects of prime numbers (before reading his paper I did not know – as many don't know – that every prime number is either an immediate successor or immediate predecessor of a multiple of 6), to insightful generalizations about the lexicalization of logical quantifiers, and their analogy to the lexicalization of colors terms, to polarity facts, to...., not to mention his discoveries and book about the history of an 13th century controversial mystic saint in Spalbeek, or the intellectual rigour, depth, and cogency of his writings. Many of them are outside my main interests, and some of have been very challenging but I have always benefitted from the effort.

One aspect of our relationship that I have also enjoyed is that I too was born in Belgium (fled with my family when Germany invaded in May 1940) and that my friendship with Dany has in some way kept me in touch with the complex country of my childhood. Dany recently sent me his translation into Dutch of a poem by G.M. Hopkins: I was delighted to discover that I could understand most of it (I was a francophone Belgian) and to appreciate the extent to which Dany has preserved the charm of the poem.

So my very best wishes to Dany on this occasion and my thanks to the organizers of this festschrift in his honor.