

# For Dany

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When I first met Dany, in April 1986, he was still a young man, and still under the wings of Wim de Geest, the linguistics professor at UFSAL, which has now, through various name-changes and reorganisations, become a part of the HU-Brussel, housed at the Warmoesberg, right in the heart of that unique city. We met at Zaventem Airport, where Dany had been asked by Wim de Geest to welcome me and my adopted son Raj, who had just arrived from Mauritius and for whom this was his first European experience. Dany took us to Wim de Geest's apartment in the centre of Brussels, where Raj and I spent the night, to continue next morning by car to my house in Malden, near Nijmegen. Both Raj and I took to Dany immediately, and our friendship has only been confirmed and deepened over the 31 years that have passed since.

Our friendship was fed above all by visits to and fro, by our frequent phone calls, and once, in 1990, by Dany's visit to Mauritius to attend the wedding of Raj's elder sister. Now, when I go and visit Raj's family in Mauritius, they still talk about Dany and ask after him. Nothing much has changed over the years. The visits are as frequent as ever, but they have become less mutual, as it is now mostly me coming to Brussels, rather than Dany visiting me. The reason is simple: Dany's virtues as a host surpass mine by a long shot, and also, Brussels has so much more to offer than the part of the world I live in. That is how I came to know Dany's friends, including his wonderful colleagues at the department, as well as his favourite restaurants and his little darling Anna, whom he teaches English and the art of living at La Luna.

That is, I think, Dany's secret: in all he does he displays, performs, exudes, the art of living and of being a good, warm and wise person to all and sundry. Playing on Hilaire Belloc's little poem, written almost a century ago, I dare say:

[ ] Where Dany's radiant light doth shine,  
there's always joy and good red wine.  
At least I've always found it so.

Benedicamus domino.

But there is more than just joy and good red wine when Dany is around. There is his human commitment, shown for months on end as he supported and comforted the *sans papiers* huddled in Daniel Alliet's 'church of the béguinage', seeking refuge from the hostile authorities. It was then that I discovered Dany's determination and strength of character.

And, last but in no way least, there is his breath-taking erudition. Invariably, when I visit, I find, somewhere in the apartment, a book or article that tells me new things and inspires me. Time and again I am amazed at his wide knowledge and his insights into, or his different and surprising, but always balanced, take on complex matters, as manifested in the two papers we recently published together. He is a constant source of inspiration to those who surround him—something that can only be boasted by very few and select people. In short, Dany's friendship makes me proud and happy. *Io vivat per multos annos (et vivam ego cum eis).*