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O B I T U A R Y

WERNER WINTER
(25.10.1923–07.08.2010)

Werner Winter – a renowned linguist when I was still a student of linguistics at the University of Zürich. That I would ever get to know him personally and even work together with him as an editor of *Trends in Linguistics* was unthinkable.

Werner Winter's life and work are characterized by their enormous scope. In his field of linguistics, he covered a wide range of topics and languages, starting with Indo-European Studies and German, Slavonic languages, Armenian, Greek and – of course – Tocharian. But then, he went on to American indigenous languages (Yuma and Walapai in particular, cf. his *Walapai (Hualapai) texts* from 1978) and to the languages of Nepal. His linguistic research interests are not less impressive. Let me just mention a few recurrent topics: methodological questions of diachronic linguistics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, areal linguistics, loanwords, language variation, style and stylistics, style and dialects, translation and the teaching of German as a foreign language.

Werner Winter's life is also characterized by its enormous geographic scope. He started at the Universities of Hamburg and Berne, where he obtained his PhD in 1949. After that, he spent most of his time at universities in the United States (Kansas at Lawrence, Texas at Austin) until he returned to Germany, where he held the chair of Indo-European and General Linguistics from 1964–1992 at the University of Kiel. Of course, he still went on travelling, not only to the United States but also to universities of Eastern Europe. With his interests in Tocharian and later in the languages of Nepal as the director of the Linguistic Survey of Nepal, he even expanded his scope further to the east deeply into Asia.

Finally, there is a third domain in which Werner Winter covered a wide scope, and that is organization. He was not only a member of various national and international scholarly boards, he was one of the founding members of the Societas Linguistica Europaea (secretary from 1966–1991, president in 1991–1992) and – he was the Editor-in-Chief of *Trends in Linguistics* with Mouton in The Hague and later Mouton de Gruyter in Berlin.

This is nothing but a short summary. I had the honor to meet Werner Winter first in 1989 at a Conference of the Societas Linguistica Europaea in Varna (Bulgaria). I will never forget the impression he made on me. I gave my very first paper at a conference and he was among the audience. Later, he came to me and told me something like “Yes, it was a great paper – but it was by far too much for a conference” – and then he gave me a lot of extremely useful hints of how to do better. I still think of him sometimes, when I write a handout for a conference – and I am not always sure whether I do better.

After some more meetings at conferences, Werner Winter all of a sudden called me in 1996 and asked me whether I would like to become an Editor of *Trends in Linguistics*. I felt

extremely honored and I did not regret having said yes after a while of reflection. During our cooperation, I started realising, how much effort Werner Winter put into the quality of his Series. He read each of the volumes – and he edited about 200 of them in his Series. Often, he read it even twice, first, to assess its quality, and second, to read the proofs. I was and I still am deeply impressed. I often thought about his motivation for doing all these services to the linguistic community and I think it has a lot to do with a quotation from Goethe – Werner Winter’s first paper from 1949 was on “Goethe und die Demokratie”/“Goethe and democracy”. The quotation runs as follows:

Wer ist der glücklichste Mensch? Der fremdes Verdienst zu empfinden weiß und an fremdem Genuß sich wie am eignen zu freun. (Goethe, *Antiker Form sich nähernd: Campes Laokoon*).

Who is the happiest man? The one who knows to honor the merits of others and who enjoys the pleasure of others as if it were his own.

The love of knowledge and his pleasure in discovering and supporting it in others is what made Werner Winter. This is what made his life so rich and fruitful. He really had every reason to say that his life was good and satisfactory – this is what he told me when I last spoke to him on the 4th of August this year and I shall remember him as a great linguist, a man with many talents (linguistic, organizational, and in the art of life), in other words, as a great and warm-hearted man.

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