

# Laudationes

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## 1. To Frans Plank, without whom not

I have always known that Frans Plank was a special person. How could one be German and be called ‘Frans’ instead of ‘Franz’? I have never known, however, why he contacted me to help lay the groundwork for the Association for Linguistic Typology and, more or less simultaneously, the journal *Linguistic Typology*. We met inside the EUROTYP project (1990–1994), an endeavor sponsored by the late European Science Foundation, to investigate, I thought, whether Sapir’s unseriously meant ‘Standard Average European’ was a serious notion after all. But Frans and I were not quite on the same wavelength. The typologist Frans was not interested in reviving or testing this notion or, more generally, in engaging what was beginning to be called ‘areal typology’. For “typologists on duty [...] truths have to be universal” (Plank 2003: 20). For Frans the only area for typology was the world and it was also for the typologists of the world and its *aller Länder* that he wrote a manifesto ending with a haunting plea to unite. This manifesto was sent out in late 1994, if I remember well, and close to a pre-inaugural workshop for the later Association for Linguistic Typology in Konstanz (November 29–December 1, 1994). There was no need for any further pre-inauguration: the typologists couldn’t help uniting fast and September 1995 saw the Inaugural Conference of the new association at Vitoria-Gasteiz, in smooth transition to the last EUROTYP meetings.

If one works on universals one is bound to miss out on language particular details. Frans knew that all too well and he took care to focus no less on *minutiae*. Probably the first paper I read of his is his 1984 “The modals story retold” (Plank 1984a). It is an account of the diachrony of the English modals, in part in the form of a harsh review of a generative account of the selfsame English modals. The focus on English is no surprise – Frans was also a professor of English. That the very particular deserves no less attention than the very general is also evident in his inspiring *Grammatischem Raritätenkabinett* (<https://typo.uni-konstanz.de/rara/intro/>).

It is a little known fact that Frans once gave a presentation in Dutch, though it was *in absentia* and with me (1993, *Belgische Kring voor Linguïstiek/Cercle belge de Linguistique*, Bruxelles/Brussel). It is the one paper that we collaborated on, one that was not published and is unlikely to ever be published. The title of the paper is “Wie was Henri Bourgeois?” and since this is Dutch and not

German, *wie* means what German *wer* means and *was* is what German *war* means and the English translation is “Who was Henri Bourgeois?”. At least one reason why this project did not result in a publication is that we never did find out who this gentleman was. Why were we interested in this *gentilhomme*? At the time that Frans was working on *Double case. Agreement by Suffixaufnahme* (Plank 1995), he found an article by the said Henri Bourgeois in the 1909 issue of the *Revue de linguistique et de philologie comparée*, focusing on Old Georgian. Though the man remained a mystery, it became clear that he was a prolific writer in the years just before and after the first World War. His interests ranged from Georgian to Yiddish, Albanian, Estonian, Romani, Konkani, Marathi, Ossetic and many more languages. His first name goes from Henri to Heinrich and back, depending on the language he wrote in. His habitat was Bruxelles, at least on July 5, 1914, but during a part of the Great War he seems to have worked in the Glasgow University Library, which owns 2,000 of his books (this we found out only 2 years ago from David Weston, arts and library scholar at that university). Frans gave Bourgeois a well deserved footnote in the history of typology and this act also testifies to Frans’ respect for the history of the field, rendering onto Humboldt, Hamilton, Smith, Rask, von der Gabelentz ... and Henri Bourgeois what is due to them.

But back to the man who has a whole chapter in the history of typology. Thank you for having created a Plank *Gesellschaft* for typology, for making typology relevant and visible, in part through what I take to have been a happy partnership with De Gruyter Mouton, but in part also through your scrutiny of duals, paradigms, sounds and other *obscurs objets* (in the Buñuel-Plank sense, see Frans’s introduction to his 1984b book on Objects).

### **Johan van der Auwera**

*Professor of General and English Linguistics, University of Antwerp, Belgium*

## **2. Frans Plank: On making a difference**

Given that I was a founding member of the Association for Linguistic Typology and went on to become the Association’s first President, it might be assumed that I played a major role in the founding of the Association. Honesty, reinforced by rereading my correspondence with Frans Plank and Johan van der Auwera from 1994, requires me to correct this impression. In fact, I was a relatively late recruit to the class of founding members, and for reasons beyond my control was unable to attend either the pre-inaugural ALT meeting at Frans’s home base in Konstanz (November 29–December 1, 1994) or ALT I in Vitoria-Gasteiz

(September 1995). Indeed, as I review that old correspondence I see that Frans and Johan between them had almost everything in place before I came on board, and all that was left for me to do was to comment on some of the details, for instance of the charter.

When I look at that early correspondence as it relates to the journal, then to say that I took a back seat would be to advance my contribution undeservedly, and here is where Frans really comes into his own. I was actually skeptical about the then nascent journal *Linguistic Typology*, and with hindsight all I can say is: Was I wrong! My reservations mainly concerned the economic viability of a new journal in what was then a recession in academic publishing, with many university libraries in the USA starting to refuse to subscribe to new journals unless there was a financially equivalent cancellation of an existing subscription. I did recognize that there was room intellectually for a new journal in the field of linguistic typology: In the early 1990s I had myself recently taken over as Co-Managing Editor of *Studies in Language*, and I see in my early ALT correspondence that I acknowledged that there were enough good manuscripts to fill another journal, and that potential rivalry between *Linguistic Typology* and *Studies in Language* was not a factor in my misgivings. But Frans had the foresight and the tenacity that led to the founding of the new journal, to his becoming its founding editor and continuing in that role for the next 21 years.

Of course, the Association and the journal have gone from strength to strength. It was Frans Plank who had the vision back in the early 1990s that this would come to pass. Yes, Frans, you made a difference, and we are all in your eternal gratitude.

### **Bernard Comrie**

*Distinguished Faculty Professor, Department of Linguistics, University of California, Santa Barbara, USA*

### **3.**

In the antediluvian era of language typology, before ALT was founded, I had the great fortune of attending quite a few of the EUROTyp meetings (between 1990 and 1994), including those of Frans Plank's Noun Phrase Structure group. What impressed me particularly about Frans was his irreverent attitude towards authorities and towards the present. At one meeting, someone said that each of the papers of the resulting EUROTyp volume should have the quality of an article that could be published in *Language*. To which Frans replied: I'm not sure that that particular journal always has the best papers. And he may have added

(on that occasion, or on some other occasion): If you look at Techmer's *Internationale Zeitschrift für Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft* of the 1880s, you will often see higher quality, but unfortunately, Techmer ran out of good submissions, so he had to stop publishing his journal in 1891 – it may take some time before we reach that level again. I found this attitude quite strange at the beginning, but of course we should not think that we necessarily have better insights into language than our predecessors.

Another sobering remark of Frans's that I remember from that time was: There are very few typologists, and that has always been the case. This is natural, because typology is very very difficult. Personally, I never found typology very difficult, but in hindsight, I must agree with Frans: Most of what passes as typology or universal grammar research does not look at many languages (and nowadays Frans would probably add that when people claim to look at many languages, they actually mostly look at numbers). But this feeling of relative isolation did not stop Frans from bringing typologists together. I remember a conversation with Leon Stassen and Bill Croft in 1993 in Leon's house in Nijmegen: Leon had heard from Frans that he planned to organize a scholarly society for typology! I first couldn't believe it, but then I realized that a dream might come true: Typology would continue as a community, even after EUROTYPE funding from the European Science Foundation ran out. And of course, the association should have its own journal. Since there was already another journal called *Sprachtypologie und Universalienforschung* (and freshly renamed to *Language Typology and Universals* in 1993), I thought that it would have been easier if the new association had simply adopted this journal. At ALT's pre-inaugural meeting in Konstanz in 1994, I involved Frans in some public discussions about this, but in the end, I understood that a single scholar's personal commitment is the most important argument, stronger than all other reasoning. Frans wanted to start with a clean slate, and when he got the community's approval for it, he devoted all his energy to the new journal. In the nineteenth century, it was common (in Germany at least) to call journals by the names of their dedicated editors (e.g. *Kuhn's Zeitschrift*, for what was officially called *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachwissenschaft*). For those who know a bit about the history of the journal *Linguistic Typology*, it would be equally natural to call it *Plank's Journal*.

### **Martin Haspelmath**

*Senior Researcher, Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History, and Professor, Leipzig University, Germany*

#### 4. How *Linguistic Typology Wanderers* won the *IF Cup*\*

\* [Apart from the italics sections, these are faithful, although scrambled, excerpts from J. L. Carr, *How Steeple Sinderby Wanderers won the FA Cup*, a book that Frans gave me, which shows his good taste for literature (especially of the most unusual sort), as well as his phlegmatic passion for soccer, which I suspect is part of his understatement. But isn't it astonishing that one can use the same words for soccer and academic matters?]

*This story began the day when Captain Plnk launched the idea of a new Typology journal.*

*A group of brave pioneers gathered in Knstnz. Nobody was in charge of collecting the minutes, but I have personal memories of the meeting.*

*Some suggested to join the "Universal Fighters", some favoured the hazard of the "Typology Wanderers".*

Both parties had their supporters and the *assembly* divided joyfully into camps. You have to understand that, *in academics*, people live wrapped tight in cocoon; only their eyes move to make sure nobody gets more than themselves.

*Captain Plnk was unmoving.*

He then said (and, for the Record, these are his exact words)

"If you gave your Full Mind to it, I bet you could come up with something just as revolutionary for *Typology*. And, if ever you do, I'd take it as a favour if you would let our Wanderers have first go at trying out whatever you come up with."

"What shall we do?" I asked.

"We?" he said. "We shall think *typology* and dream *typology*, and we shall not bother our heads about anything but *typology*."

—  
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD TWO YEARS LATER

Present. *Captain Plnk* and ...

Apologies. *Myself* and ...

The Secretary read the minutes of the last meeting & there were no matters arising.

Giving his report, *Captain Plnk* itemized recent playing results and expressed qualified satisfaction with his side's record. He announced that our team would play in the next qualifying round of the *Impact Factor Cup*.

At the Chairman's wish playing members were now admitted to the meeting for a discussion of Postulations 2 and 3:

POSTULATION 2. A very good *editorial assistant* is a team's most valuable asset. Almost alone *She/He* can thwart superior opponents.

POSTULATION 3. An *editorial assistant* does not need to be an accomplished *typologist*. He needs qualifications similar to a good cabinet-maker or bus driver – distinguishing instantly what will or will not fill a space. To this must be allied outstanding agility and courage.

*Mr Whowashe* then asked, “What is the *IF Cup*?”

Requesting that his remarks would not be reported to the Press, *Captain Plnk* said this *Cup* had been described by some as the waiting room for the *ERIHPlus Division* and by others as a hovering flock of vultures willing some poor straggler to fall. But no one disputed that it was a drab, boring, irritating competition where nobody even remembered last season’s champion. Most of the performers would never move on to anything better, and sides were sprinkled with players on their way down from better days, with maybe a couple of seasons left. The *IF Cup* was a bitter pill to swallow but it helped pay the butcher.

“And your last word is?” *Mrs Maybeyou* asked.

*Captain Plnk* answered that *the adversaries* could be, but would not expect to be, beaten.

After reflecting on this Great Truth the Meeting adjourned.

When the match began, the *Linguistic Typology Wanderers* bought another identity. They bellowed disbelief at incompetence, cried scornfully to the grey heavens in doglike despair, clamoured angrily for revenge. For free they did all this and were not called to account.

It was *typology* at its classic best, *all* sides playing with academic confidence, because *all* sides knew they were going to win. Pure ballet!

Imagine hard-pressed Editors finding this foreign name, *Linguistic Typology Wanderers*, on the *IF Cup*’s press release. *They knew many journal names* and every odd year or so, all these glimmered faintly before being snuffed out. But *Linguistic Typology Wanderers ... ?*

I often wish that I could have known the end at the beginning, so that each detail could have been savoured as it happened. But then, life isn’t a gramophone record one can play again and again till one feels one understands it. It is Now or Never for most of us, and we haven’t the time. But we shall tomorrow ...

Naturally, as you’d expect, *Captain Plnk* took all that happened as something that had happened. But it seemed that all that had happened meant no more to him than a good harvest. This perplexed me thoroughly. Could anyone really take these things in his stride? Well, seemingly our Chairman could. But he was a very remarkable man.

But is this story believable? Ah, it all depends upon whether you WANT to believe it.

### **Pier Marco Bertinetto**

*Professore Ordinario, Laboratorio di Linguistica “Giovanni Nencioni”, ELiTe (Experimental Linguistics Team), Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa, Italy*

## 5.

Frans' contributions to language-typological studies are manifold. Initiating *Linguistic Typology* in 1995 was a highly significant and very courageous undertaking on his part especially since another journal on the same topic – *Sprachtypologie und Universalienforschung* – was already in existence. Some of our colleagues and I asked Frans if he felt uncomfortable about a possible rivalry but he thought that having two similar journals in the field was an advantage. He was a very insightful and amicably critical editor and as a result, the journal has offered a cornucopia of great papers.

The same organizational and leadership qualities that were apparent in his editorship of *LT* also resulted in several volumes that he edited and contributed to. An early collection of papers is *Objects. Toward a theory of grammatical relations* (Plank 1984b). Another joint project assembled and headed by Frans resulted in *Double case. Agreement by Suffixaufnahme* (Plank 1995), which put an unusual and little-recognized construction on the map. As part of the EURO-TYP project – the five-year-long cooperative endeavor on the typology of European languages that employed over 100 linguists from Europe and from outside it – he headed the Noun Phrase Structure Group. I had the great privilege of being a member of it and I have fond memories of the intellectual level of the meetings as well as of our social get-togethers where both drinks and new ideas were flowing freely. He selected members for the group with a wonderful sense for both diversity and cohesiveness. He was the editor of the 845-page-long tome which summarized the NP Groups' work (Plank 2003).

A further monumental and lasting work by Frans is the Konstanz Universals Archives (<https://typo.uni-konstanz.de/archive/intro/>), currently consisting of 2019 entries and counting. This endeavor once again took organizational skills and leadership for enlisting co-workers to catalogue entries, many of which have been meticulously checked and annotated by him.

And then there are Frans' own writings. In addition to those in the "must read" list, there are many other papers of his that have been very important to me. One of the outstanding characteristics of his interests is probing into the writings of nineteenth-century linguists whose work is generally forgotten by most of us. Another recurrent motif is his meticulous study of specific marginal grammatical constructions – such as double case, or the dual – and exploring their broad implications.

While he is taking farewell of *LT*, it is wonderful to know that he will continue to be part of the virtual community of language typologists and pursue his research. It is with profound gratitude and fond regards that I congratulate him and wish him all the best!

**Edith Moravcsik**

*Professor Emerita, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, USA*

**6.**

I've served on many editorial boards over the past forty years or so, but none was as rewarding as working with Frans on *Linguistic Typology*. I was on the board from 2001 to 2007. Many journals, like *Cognitive Linguistics* (de Gruyter Mouton) and *Journal of Child Language* (Cambridge University Press), have a small number of Associate Editors and a long list of members of the Editorial Board. The latter do very little beyond lending their names, rarely providing intellectual input, and occasionally meeting together at society meetings. But others, like *Language* and, indeed, like *Linguistic Typology*, have only a band of Associate Editors. And Frans treated the board members (there were nine of us during my term) as true participants in guiding the philosophy, content, and mission of the journal. And so there were many emails asking for joint problem-solving on planning a special issue, or adjudicating between incompatible reviews, or mulling over ethical questions. The editor informed us of tables of contents of issues in progress, discussed business details of finances and circulation – in short, involving us in his ongoing editorial work (which must have been exceptionally time-consuming). Frans was incredibly dedicated to the journal and to the field, and hence to us as his associates. I learned a great deal in those years, both from his wisdom and from the times when he was uncertain of a path to follow. At ALT meetings there were dinners with Frans, the publisher, and board members – always in a good restaurant, and always with intellectual and personal conviviality.

*Linguistic Typology*, along with ALT, provides a voice to scholars with related interests, across disciplines and countries. Frans worked to shape us into a coherent working group with common goals. In his introduction to the first issue, twenty years ago, he clearly and cleanly set forth a field: “What typology thrives on is variation across languages, but what makes the typologist’s day is co-variation ...” (1997: 1). This quest requires rich and diverse data, and the 21 volumes of the journal are, in themselves, a continually growing scientific archive – an archive containing not only data but discussion and debate and theorizing – wisely adjudicated by Frans. In that first issue he laid out what he saw as a straightforward task: “The comparatively simple brief of its

editors and referees is to recognize quality wherever and in whatever guises they see it and channel it into the journal's open minded pages" (1997: 3). A high goal. I trust that Frans will look back on these years as, generally, having carried out that mission.

He never stopped questioning, and demanding of us that we question. For the tenth-anniversary issue of *LT* in 2007 he asked 32 linguists to mull over the question, "Whither linguistic typology?" The resulting thick special issue can be seen as an honest pause in midstream to look back and advocate for future paths. Frans, as always, was at pains to remind theoreticians and typologists that we cannot help but be interdependent, sighing: "as if theorists could responsibly theorize about something other than what is observed and not observed across languages (and across language stages), and typologists could hope to make sense of anything typologizing a-theoretically or anti-theoretically" (2007: 2). He looked toward 2022 with optimism: "by the time of *LT*'s silver jubilee, such unreasonably divisive practice will barely be remembered" (2007: 3). Frans has been our good conscience through these years.

He continued to push us toward thoughtful probing of the discipline in the last issue of 2016, beginning with another provocative editorial question—this time also posed to practitioners in "potential partner fields": "Is typology relevant?" (2016a: 463). In his farewell introduction, Frans raises many new questions, once again looking toward the future, this time casting his gaze further: "But give linguistic typology (and *Linguistic Typology*) another twenty years and full scope and extent of its relevance will be beyond all question" (2016a: 466).

May the journal continue on the sure path that Frans put us on, and may he watch over us wisely from his emeritus position.

### Dan I. Slobin

*Professor Emeritus of Psychology and Adjunct Professor Emeritus of Linguistics*  
University of California, Berkeley, USA

## 7.

We have been amazingly fortunate to have Frans at the helm during this journey that is the modern development of typology. He was already a leader in typological work whose value has lasted far beyond the norm in the field, with such projects as the Noun Phrase Structure group of the EURO TYP program, his landmark volumes *Ergativity: Towards a Theory of Grammatical Relations* (Plank 1979b), *Objects: Towards a Theory of Grammatical Relations* (Plank 1984b), *Relational Typology* (Plank 1985), *Typology* (Plank 1986), *Paradigms: The Economy of Inflection* (Plank 1991) and *Double Case: Agreement by*

*Suffixaufnahme* (1995) and many others, in addition to so many influential, cutting-edge articles on a wide range of topics. His work has always been characterized by both profound understanding of history and broad knowledge of the current state of the field. Especially appreciated are his way with words and his exquisite wit.

In light of his impressive activity in the field throughout his career, his tremendous generosity in taking on the editorship of *Linguistic Typology* is all the more remarkable. He has shaped the journal and the discipline in ways we all recognize, but also in ways often unseen. When a journal is running smoothly, the competence and enormous work behind it can be nearly invisible. During our time together on the Editorial Board since the inception, I have constantly marveled at what Frans does on a regular basis and how he does it. He is certainly a role model for journal editors. He has set up a gold-standard working style for the board. A board member serves as the Responsible Editor for each submission, recruiting outside referees and compiling their contributions, then the full board discusses the results in terms of inherent quality and contribution to the field. Frans has established a style of interaction that promotes energy on the part of members, careful consideration of the larger implications of each submission, and fairness.

We are so grateful to you, Frans, for shaping our field.

### **Marianne Mithun**

*Professor, Department of Linguistics, University of California, Santa Barbara, USA*

## **8.**

I first encountered Frans Plank in the usual way that PhD students first encounter famous linguists: as a book, specifically the 1979 *Ergativity* volume, and shortly afterwards the 1984 *Objects* volume. Those books were an important part of the flowering of linguistic typology in the 1980s, when much work in particular was done on grammatical relations typology, work which – admittedly, like much typology, due to its sound empirical basis – still stands today. Thanks to Elizabeth Traugott at Stanford, where I was a PhD student, I also learned about Frans' contributions to English historical linguistics. Frans' deep knowledge of the history of the field as well as his detailed and thorough analyses were already clear to me, but it was not until I was invited to a EURO-TYP meeting that I finally met Frans in person. I participated in the Word Order group, while Frans led the Noun Phrase Structure group. I immediately heard about the meetings of the Noun Phrase Structure group; it appeared to be an understatement to say that they were very convivial. Alas, it was not my

fortune to participate in any of the Noun Phrase Structure group meetings, so I must leave it to others to tell how Frans created such a great environment—which certainly led to another excellent volume.

Frans' scholarly contributions to the field of linguistic typology are undoubtedly of major significance, spanning many different domains of grammar. But Frans' impact on linguistic typology is at least as great due to his unique role as the editor of *Linguistic Typology* from its inception in 1997 to this year: twenty-one years of guiding the field through his supervision of its flagship journal. As with Frans' scholarly work, I first admired it from the outside, as a reader and occasional contributor. When I (along with many others) was asked to write a brief retrospective of the field for the tenth anniversary of *Linguistic Typology*, I went through the first ten years of issues. I was very impressed at how Frans and his team of editors had selected such an excellent representation of much of the best of early twenty-first century typology.

Then it became my turn to be part of the process when I was elected to the Editorial Board a few years ago. I serve on many journal editorial boards, but this was a unique experience. All steps of the review process are discussed by Frans with all of the Editorial Board members. Of course, not everyone on the Editorial Board speaks up every time when submissions they are not managing are being discussed. But everyone has the opportunity. It turns the Editorial Board into a real team, and editorial decisions are truly collective, albeit with the masterly guiding hand of the Editor. Even so, Frans' efforts on the journal were often heroic. My appreciation of Frans' management of the journal has risen even more through witnessing his editorship from the inside, especially to realize that he has done this for twenty-one years!

Frans' impact on linguistic typology has been immense, in both scholarship and the advancement of the field. Thanks so much, Frans!

**William Croft**

*Professor, Department of Linguistics, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, USA*

**9.**

As others who have written for this gratulatoria page, I greatly admire Frans for his original contributions to typology and his efforts in establishing it as an important subfield of linguistics. As a member of the Editorial Board of *Linguistic Typology* from 2006 to 2013 I also developed an admiration for him on a different level entirely, indeed a more human level. His view of editing the journal as joint project meant that the board was included in and apprised of most everything that was going on. As a result my g-mail folder for *LT* contains more than 2000

messages, and that's just for 2011–2013. A mere 1000 of them are from Frans. Nonetheless, I am not complaining about the volume of e-mails; indeed, I never dreaded opening a message from Frans. The reason, as you will see in the excerpts below, is that while there were numerous workaday messages, it was also common to find a rhetorical gem among the prosaic phrases. In addition, Frans was always able to muster a delicacy and elegance in the most indelicate task of rejecting a paper or convincing authors to revise and resubmit. Because of their confidential nature, I can only excerpt from these messages unless the context cannot be inferred, but I assure all that he practiced what he preached to the board:

“mutual altruism: that is, review like they would want to be reviewed themselves. Competently, fairly, timely.”

For those who have not been fortunate enough to experience Frans' thoughtfulness about the editorial process and his wit in expressing his point of view, I reproduce here some of his prize expressions.

### **On the philosophy of editing/publishing in a reputable journal:**

No idea whether publication in a reputable journal further increases the likelihood of being read: one would hope so, given the efforts that have gone into pre-selecting the wheat from the chaff; but we don't know for sure, do we? Citation activity in our field is not necessarily encouraging. (There are probably too many different topics and too few people working on each one to ever add up to substantial quotation records.)

The safest way is probably to write letters to your friends and/or enemies (or emails if you insist): they'll be certain to read you. And why should you care about the rest? Future generations should then occasionally collect and edit the very few things which have turned out to matter.

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..our dilemma – which is, as Uri put it, whether a journal is good and living or excellent and dead, if it can't quite attain permanent glory and eternal life ...

But in order to avoid ending up excellent and dead, we probably have no choice but to compromise every now and then.

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Publishing in English and editing an English-language journal, we do feel embarrassed turning out and condoning prose which is lexically and grammatically, not exactly faulty, but very basic and stylistically couldn't be poorer. It is almost a blessing that the English of native speakers is sometimes so limited, too. Otherwise it would only be fair to decree a language for international communication that everybody has to learn from scratch – a language isolate, obviously, say, Burushaski.

**On footnotes:**

While I wouldn't appreciate footnotes in poems or novels or email messages, I see them as potentially very useful elements in scholarly publishing, both papers and books. It's like polyphonic music, perhaps. I like endnotes less.

**The role of reviewers** (of three he lists the following first):

– to prevent (i) authors and (ii) editors from making fools of themselves, through identifying glaring mistakes and oversights, egregious nonsense, conscious or unconscious plagiarism, pointless questions – anything authors and editors themselves, upon reflection or in hindsight, wouldn't want to blot their scholarly reputations;

**To the editors on specific cases:**

This was a hard nut, and I'm not sure it's cracked yet.

A difficult case, but no reason to wear sackcloth and ashes.

The thrust of the paper still is to present a curio. Well, it's a challenging curio and well-presented.

Although I have nothing against squibs, and I don't see why LT shouldn't publish any, I don't think this is a paper that would come under this rubric. However concise, it makes a serious methodological or technical (certainly not pyrotechnical) point.

this paper – or rather (the reviewers) – wins the prize for supersonic yet scrupulous reviewing.

re-re-revisions have arrived – and let's hope the iteration will remain finite.

Although the author – ... – envisages both harmonisation and disharmonisation ..., our reviewers are in perfect harmony about his paper. I don't think he'll mind. Does anybody wish to disharmonise?

**To an author:**

You should aim to be not only a Lord Shiva the Destroyer, but also a Brahma the Creator. A Vishnu the Preserver we don't need in the circumstances.

If these guys (the reviewers) aren't persuaded, it's a reasonable inference that there's still some serious persuading to be done.

Following the advice of the reviewers, which we think is sound, the Editorial Board recommends another pass of "Revise & Resubmit". Don't let this frustrate you: we are convinced it is worth your while and ours.

**Then, pure entertainment:**

A message with the subject line: *nani gigantum humeris insidentes* lets us know that

Georg von der Gabelentz was a towering 2.08 meters tall!!!

(6 ft 9.89 in, if you prefer)

Even Dirk Nowitzki, the most successful German basketballer of all times and by some considered one of the greatest power forwards in NBA history, measures not more than 2.13 meters (7 ft 0 in).

The height of Panini, patron saint of ALT's junior grammar award, remains to be reliably ascertained. Though pictures on stamps can be misleading, he appears to have been no midget either.

**He almost never complains:**

November is the cruellest month, with at least one submission per day. (11/27/12)

**And ends one message:**

Looking forward to a quantum of solace and advice.

Frans

**Joan Bybee**

*Distinguished Professor Emerita, Department of Linguistics, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, USA*

**10.**

I first got to know Frans in his role of editor of *Linguistic Typology*, initially as an aspiring author and later also as an occasional reviewer. There were two things that consistently impressed me, and one thing that invariably made me smile. Somehow, the journal always managed to get the most relevant and most authoritative reviewers for a paper, so that authors received the best and most constructive feedback possible, even if the message was negative. It was also clear to everyone involved that Frans, or at least one, often more of the associate editors, read and evaluated every submission in depth before making a final decision – a seemingly self-evident but often under-appreciated aspect of the editorial process. All of this ensured that *Linguistic Typology* offered peer review in the best sense of the term: collegial, constructive, and consistently high-quality. At the end of the process, Frans always managed to deliver the final verdict with elegance and friendly wit, even if it was not what the author wanted to hear. In this sense, an anthology of Frans's papers could easily be complemented with an equally readable collection of his editorial decisions – a genre that remains sadly under-anthologized but to which Frans contributed some witty and highly personal masterpieces.

**Jean-Christophe Verstraete**

*Professor, Department of Linguistics, University of Leuven, Belgium*

## 11.

Linguistics, I'm glad to say, is not a discipline where impact factors and other such algorithms for ranking journals count for much. Rather, what matters is esteem and respect among colleagues, and which they then transmit to others as they enter the field. The challenge for a new journal, therefore, is to acquire the status that means the best researchers will seek to place their work there and will advise their colleagues and students to do the same. I hope fellow members of the Editorial Board over the years will not take offence if I say that the fact *Linguistic Typology* has successfully achieved this status is due in large part to the vision, energy, commitment, erudition and good judgement displayed by Frans in his two decades of editorship. My own experience in this domain consists in ten years as editor of the then already well established *Journal of Linguistics*. I found that demanding enough, so I can only be in awe of someone who took on the much more daunting task of shaping and steering a new journal and did so with such success for so long.

One of the striking things about *LT* is the diversity of its contents. Many journals are simply compilations of articles. In a world where increasingly researchers read and download single papers, a journal often serves as a repository and as a validation of quality but is not something that is accessed for itself. *LT* is different. Its mix of articles, themed discussions, book reviews and short comments means that every issue is of interest and relevance to a wide range of linguists regardless of their own language specialisms and theoretical interests. And here too Frans is always innovating. I was very flattered when a couple of years ago he picked up on a note I had posted on the ALT list about the term “conative” and suggested it might be revised and extended for the new section he was about to introduce under the rubric “What exactly is ...?”. Rightly, the fact of being invited did not mean I could circumvent the rigorous refereeing processes that have been in place under Frans' watchful eye ever since the outset. At the same time, of course, I was able to benefit from his characteristically perceptive comments and suggestions.

In addition to his editorial role, Frans has also been a regular contributor to *LT* in his own right. Some of these contributions appear on this site but two others, which are among my personal favourites, are “Delocutive verbs, cross-linguistically” in *Linguistic Typology* (Plank 2005) and most recently his detailed review article on suppletion in *Linguistic Typology* (Plank 2016b), arguably a more significant contribution to the debate than the volume under review.

It is natural, in a forum like this, that attention should focus on Frans' role as editor of *LT*, but we should not forget that he has continued to play an active role as author and conference speaker throughout the period of his editorship, with numerous papers on a variety of topics. Two themes in this work stand out

for me: first, his contribution to our understanding of the nature of morphological systems and the place of irregularity within them, and second his reflections on the balance and interaction between synchrony and diachrony. This interest in the history of languages is matched by a parallel concern for the history of the discipline and for due recognition to be given to scholarship and original thinking from previous generations.

In short, both as editor and scholar Frans's contribution is a model for us all and one that it is a pleasure to be able to recognise publicly in the present context.

### **Nigel Vincent**

*Professor Emeritus of General and Romance Linguistics, Department of Linguistics and English Language, University of Manchester, UK*

## **12.**

I have only had the pleasure of interacting closely with Frans towards the end of his tenure at *Linguistic Typology*, but, even in that short period, I have come to learn how exceptional he has been as an editor. He did not simply accept papers but actively curated the journal and ensured that all the material in its pages was only of the highest quality. The intellectual and editorial effort that this required over more than twenty years is simply astounding. As a reader, I had always greatly appreciated the content of *Linguistic Typology*, and some of its special issues have stood out in my mind as truly significant for the field. I had only to understand the singular role that Frans played in shaping its pages much later, and, as a member of the Association for Linguistic Typology, I am extraordinarily grateful for his contributions to the journal, the Association, and the field.

### **Jeff Good**

*Associate Professor, Department of Linguistics, University at Buffalo, and President, Association for Linguistic Typology, USA*

## **13.**

To round up the figure of Frans as linguist it is useful to underline his keen interest for the history of linguistics and particularly linguistic typology. I will refer to some publications by Plank, some of them not easily retrievable and not included in his 21 years tireless activity as editor of *Linguistic Typology*.

Already in his Dissertation at Universität Regensburg (Plank 1978) he referred to Sapir's classification scheme with the difference between "basic

(concrete) concepts” (= lexical) and “derivational, concrete and pure relational concepts” (= grammatical).

My friendly relations with Frans go back to a time when paper offprints were the usual means for keeping contacts with colleagues. Looking in my shelves of abstracts under the name “Plank” I find lots of important contributions which show both his deep knowledge of the history of science (including linguistics) and a fruitful application of this history to the actual state of the art in linguistic research.

In 1979 he was the editor of a book on ergativity, which received much attention among typologists. Plank’s introductory contribution to the book was directed (also) to the historical development of the concept: see Plank (1979a). As the title of his introduction explains, it is typical of Plank’s scientific approach to use the past in order to explain the present. The list of Plank’s publications with such an approach could be very long. His publications deal with authors who are ‘classic’ in every handbook on the history of our discipline (see, for instance, Plank 1986a on Humboldt, Schleicher and Pott). I shall limit myself to quote a couple of his writings. In 1986 he was guest editor of an issue of *Folia Linguistica* dedicated to typology. In the preface to the issue he proposed the well-known statement by Georg von der Gabelentz about the ‘ungeborenes Kind’ whose name should be ‘Typologie’. He had already discussed the topic in *Linguistische Berichte* (Plank 1981). In an article published in 1992 in a collection of papers gathered under the rather surprising title “Language and Earth” he referred to Adam Smith’s and James Watt’s generalizations about the improvement of both (proper) machines and scientific systems by simplification of principles. In this article he follows the particular tradition of the instrumentalist conception of language, originating in the mid-eighteenth century, by quoting William Smellie, Lord Monboddo, James Hutton and other scholars – up to Max Müller’s *On the stratification of Language* (1868), W.D. Whitney’s *Life and Growth of Language* (1875) and finally to Gabelentz’s “Spirallauf” (1891): see Plank (1992). Immediately thereafter Frans wrote an article on Lord Monboddo’s views on the origins and development of language (Plank 1993).

The list could be much longer, but I think it is long enough to illustrate this important aspect of Plank’s research on philosophical-linguistic theories, and consequently on linguistic typology.

Finally, a personal note. In 1989 I received from Frans the offprint “On Humboldt on the Dual” (Plank 1989). I was deeply impressed when reading this article: I invited Frans to give a talk at my University in Pavia and, inspired by Frans, I held a course a few years later (1993/94) on Humboldt’s *Über den Dualis!*

### **Paolo Ramat**

*Professor Emeritus, Department of Linguistics, University of Pavia, Italy*

**14.**

I have known about Frans Plank since late 1970s, when my father Aleksandr Kibrik was writing a paper for the collection “Ergativity: towards a theory of grammatical relations” that was edited by Frans (Plank 1979b). It was a time when few contacts between Russian and Western scholars were possible, and it was fascinating to see the book when it appeared on my father’s shelf. When we became free to travel, my father met Frans in person. I think that was in the early 1990s, and both of them were in the same research group of the EURO-TYP project. At that time they developed a wonderful friendship that lasted throughout the rest of my father’s life. When I also met Frans, I was very deeply impressed by his personality, particularly by his intellect and kindness (Thomas Mann once said that these two things are actually identical). During these two decades while Frans was editing *Linguistic Typology* his name has become inalienable from the name-sake flourishing field. Thank you, Frans, for your tireless work!

**Andrej Kibrik**

*Director, Institute of Linguistics, Russian Academy of Sciences; Professor, Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics, Philological Faculty, and Head of the Center for Cognitive Studies, Moscow State University, Russia*

**15.**

Alas, one of Frans’ most endearing attributes is also one that is well-nigh impossible to commit to words. I refer, of course, to his sense of humour, which pretty much demolishes any stereotypes that one might have misguidedly harboured about, dare I say it, typological correlations between nationality and the ability to enjoy a good joke.

Trying to exemplify his sense of humour here brought home to me the inherent ineffability of humour, dependent as it is on diverse and complex factors such as context, timing, personalities, intonation, and myriad other factors. My two favourite examples of Frans at his best ... well I can’t even begin to convey them to anybody who wasn’t there at the time. In fact, all I can do is ruin them. But here goes ...

One was in Leipzig, at the old Max Planck Institute, at one of the editorial meetings devoted to the planning of WALS. Somebody asked how many copies of a handout needed to be made, and Frans answered “thooooousands”. But there was something about the exaggerated intonation, the overly-lengthened vowel, and the voice quality, a certain creakiness perhaps, though I could be wrong on the phonetics of it, which made it the funniest word I had heard in a very long time, one which I couldn’t, in fact still can’t, get out of my head. You’ll just have to take my word for how utterly hilarious it was.

Then there was the time in Jimmy's, the favourite evening hangout of the EUROTYP Noun-Phrase working group during our meeting in Malta. For some reason, a political discussion developed, during which Frans came out as a Monarchist. I may be doing Frans an injustice, maybe he actually is a monarchist, in which case I apologise profusely for the misunderstanding. But the impression I got, at least, was that he was engaged in an elaborate dead-pan joke, leading us all on, or at least one or two of us ... It was a gem.

Anyway, having failed miserably to convey Frans' unique sense of humour, all I can do, I suppose, is to express my own personal gratitude to Frans for essentially rescuing me from the obscurity of a dead-end career path and introducing me to a wider world of linguistics that was out there awaiting me. It was back in the early 1980s, in a time when there was no internet, email was barely starting up, and — at least where I was — there weren't even any decent photocopying machines, just those horrible revolving contraptions that used some kind of alcohol-based liquid to produce moist and smelly sheets of paper with purple text. Communication with the outside world involved writing on paper, stuffing the paper into envelopes, writing an address on the envelope, attaching a stamp, inserting the envelope into a box, and then waiting a few weeks for a response, if you were lucky. Thus, as a beginning lecturer at Tel Aviv University, in a generatively-oriented department, I had no way of knowing that, out there in the wide world, there was a newly emerging field of linguistic typology. Indeed, I had never heard the word "typology" before. But one day a brown envelope showed up in my box, with a scrawly handwritten return address that said, among other things, "Frans Plank", "Sprachwissenschaft", and "Konstanz". Inside was an invitation to contribute an article to a special issue of *Folia Linguistica* on typology that Frans was editing. I have no idea how Frans got hold of my name. But I gratefully contributed the paper ("A Prosodic Typology of Language" 1986), and then one thing led to another, and in 1990 Frans invited me to become a member of the Noun-Phrase group of the EUROTYP project, which was my breakthrough into the world of typology. In the course of that memorable five-year project, I became acquainted with many of my colleagues who are now sharing these pages with their testimonials to Frans; it was there that I discovered the field of typology and became part of the community of typologists. So for all that you did for me, Frans, a HUGE thank you.

### **David Gil**

*Scientific Researcher, Department of Linguistic and Cultural Evolution, Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History, Jena, Germany*

## 16. What I learned from Frans – besides linguistics

As I started my linguistics career, ALT was in its beginnings, and so was *LT*. Back then, the senior people I was interacting with, particularly my supervisor Paolo Ramat, would speak of EURO TYP, the big European typology project they had all been involved in, as well as of various typology meetings here and there. From the enthusiasm of the people concerned, it was clear that there was something going on, and there might be exciting opportunities for young typologists, but the full magnitude of it was not quite apparent yet, at least not in the context where I was working. At the time, Frans was the German friend of Paolo who would visit us from time to time and make a point of giving his seminars in Italian, which to me was a manifestation of the same old-world classical education that I had had and was delighted to find in academics.

Then I gradually came to discover Frans by myself. This was fueled both by more and more personal interactions with him as I progressed in my career, and by the broadening of my research interests that naturally came with time, and made me bump into Frans's work again and again. Besides the obvious intellectual rewards, this made me realize something at least as important: science is a collective enterprise, and it's not enough to just sit at home and do your homework, but you have to have a sense of community. From "Ergativity", "Double case" and "Paradigms" to the Konstanz Universals Archive, from innumerable workshops to ALT and *LT*, it was clear that Frans' projects were carried out with the community in mind, and with an acute sense of what the benefits would be both for the community and the specific topic at issue. I think there are very few people to which this applies to the same extent it applies to Frans. It is this spirit that largely led to the gradual evolution of typology into the vibrant endeavour it now is, and I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to witness this.

### Sonia Cristofaro

*Associate Professor, Theoretical and Applied Linguistics, Department of Humanities, University of Pavia, Italy*

## 17.

Frans, you have imbued the field of linguistic typology with your unique and generous spirit. I know no one who has read so widely, into the most obscure areas, and found such treasures.

For me that was exemplified the first time I met you, having thrashed around with my friend Alan Dench trying to make sense of multiple case-marking in Australian languages. You not only very kindly invited a bunch of

Australianists to the foundational 1991 conference on Suffixaufnahme in Konstanz, you also paraded a bunch of forgotten scholars from the historical margins of linguistics – from Finck to Bork to Winkler to Bourgeois (“who does not figure in any history of linguistics or biographical dictionary”) to Lewy, using these fascinating characters and others to turn over a rollcall of languages from Elamite to Old Georgian to Sumerian to Erzya Mordva – and even (something that really impressed us young Australianist greenhorns) a reanalysis of Arrernte (Aranda) by the obscure Lewy (certainly not a paper on our regular diet at the Australian National University).

I risk portraying Frans’ lovingly roundabout savouring of the vast field of scholarship as an end in itself: far from it, as is typical in Frans’ writings it is a way of turning over alternative analyses that have been proposed through time, weaving together argumentation and counter-analyses with the history of ideas and ensuring that those who deserve historical credit for their ideas get it centuries later across a whole range of traditions. This doesn’t make for snappy formulations or workshops that run crisply on time. But it has steeped the field of typology, as it has developed in the last three decades, in a magnificent sense of character, breadth, and historical texture.

I’d like to emphasise two other features of your personality, Frans, that have stamped the field. First is your marvellous sense of who to get together for a workshop or discussion. This replicates, in contemporary time, your sense for the texture of intellectual difference and how to make it drive discovery in the most stimulating way. I owe many friendships with other typologists to the opportunity I’ve had to meet them at events you’ve organised. Second is restlessness in going after new questions and seeing how the new pepper can constantly be put on the field.

And, since we met through the Kayardild language and you figured out so quickly how its magnificent complexities work, let me leave you with a little Kayardild sentence which I know you’ll understand: *ngijuwa yalawujarrantha kangkinaantha ngumbannguninaantha birrijilnguninaanth*.

### **Nick Evans**

*Distinguished Professor, Department of Linguistics, School of Culture, History and Language; ARC Laureate Fellow; Director, ARC Center of Excellence for the Dynamics of Language, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia*

## **18.**

A good editorial director at a reputable academic publisher must always approach all publications with complete impartiality and objectivity. Playing

favorites among book series, journals, and editors is a strict no-no. And indeed, I'd like to believe that throughout my years as editorial director of De Gruyter Mouton I've managed to remain even-handed in my treatment of all publications and editors. That being said, a particularly astute observer in my office at the De Gruyter building in Berlin would have noticed something odd. Among hundreds of books from dozens of series that lined my office walls stood out some issues of just one journal: *Linguistic Typology*.

Of course, a journal and its editor are separate entities. One can have a special interest in a journal without having a special interest in its editor. Except that in the case of Frans and *LT*, it is not really possible completely to separate one from the other. Not when Frans has nurtured the journal from its very inception, has devoted endless hours to it, and has led it through more than two decades of successful publication.

Frans and I had met each when I was still working at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, but we did not really get to know each other until I became editorial director of Mouton. Once we started working together there was an immediate click, a chemistry that not often emerges in the sometimes fraught relationship between editor and publisher. Even when discussing problems—and *LT* had its share of those—the tone of the discussion was always civil and conveyed not only mutual respect but also friendship. One incident in particular comes to mind. As anyone who has ever published in *LT* knows, Frans is a true perfectionist, and holds submitted articles to the highest standards. During a brief period in *LT*'s history, though, this selectivity that lies at the base of every successful academic journal was becoming a liability when not enough articles passed the stringent quality assurance process that Frans had instituted. At one point the journal's future could no longer be taken for granted. After a few worrisome months of back-and-forth correspondence, I sent Frans the following message: A good living journal is better than an excellent dead one. There was no need for any further action; from that day on the flow of journal issues resumed, and the issue never emerged again.

There are many good qualities to admire in Frans, not least of which are his complete dedication to whatever enterprise in which he is involved, and his sharp analytical mind. What I will always cherish most, though, is his understated humor. More than once during meetings I had to control myself not to burst out laughing at one of his deliciously sarcastic remarks, said with such a straight face that nobody else seemed to take notice. I did not need to exercise this self-control when alone, and guffaws could sometimes be heard echoing through the corridors of Genthiner Strasse 13, a sure sign that I was reading a message from Frans. Thank you, Frans, for helping make my years at De

Gruyter Mouton that more interesting and more enjoyable. I will always value our friendship.

**Uri Tadmor**

*Former Editorial Director, De Gruyter Mouton, Berlin*

**19.**

As the Journal Editor and Production Editor for *Linguistic Typology* for many years at De Gruyter Mouton, we have had a long and often extremely entertaining virtual e-mail relationship with Frans. Neither of us can quite imagine *Linguistic Typology* without Frans at the helm. Frans, very ably supported by the distinguished Associate Editors' Board, the tireless Wolfgang Schellinger and of course the many hard-working expert reviewers, has always strived for the highest of standards for each and every article published in the journal. Frans's unflinching and painstaking commitment to the journal has always impressed us both beyond measure and to say that Frans has been a conscientious Editor-in-Chief would be a huge understatement.

Often publication of the journal can be an organic process, as Frans said in his own words:

“20 Jahre – und kein Stueckchen flotter. Endlich ist DAS MEISTE von meinem letzten Heft im Kasten.” [20 years – and still no faster. MOST of the last issue is finally in the can.]

Natural forces couldn't even stop Frans and we both always enjoyed his understated, dry wit even in the face of disaster: “ ... bei einem Erdbeben der Stärke 6,8 ist uns das Dach, wiewohl knapp davor, nicht über dem Kopf eingestürzt. Ein gutes Zeichen!” [ ... the roof didn't collapse on our heads during an earthquake of 6.8 on the Richter scale, despite being just about to. A good sign!]

Frans tirelessly enforced a rigorous review process of the highest of standards – not always easy in the current academic climate: “ ... kompetente Gutachter nicht wie warme Semmeln zu haben sind.” [ ... good reviewers are not as easy to come by as freshly-baked bread rolls.]

Thank you for your amazing contribution to the field and *LT*, and also personally for all the times you have made us both smile or laugh out loud at our desks!

**Rebecca Walter**

*Team Manager Linguistics Journals, De Gruyter Mouton, Berlin*

**Monika Wendland**

*Production Editor, De Gruyter Mouton, Berlin*

## 20.

My fondest memories of Frans Plank and the ALT go back to a dinner at Larry Hyman's house in Berkeley. To be precise: it was July 26, 2009. Frans sent the following invitation to the publishers: "Here is a sort of agenda for our *LT* board meeting, *Chez Larry*, after the ALT business meeting. If we find further *agendums* (sic) till Sunday, I'm sure we will also find ways and means of dealing with them." Any normal person would have said: "If you have other points you wish to discuss, please get back to me." His phrase "If we find further *agendums* till Sunday, I'm sure we will also find ways and means of dealing with them" sounds so much more elegant and sophisticated than the simple request "to put more things on the agenda". Don't you agree? I always admired that Frans has the rare originality and talent and the even rarer ability to make his conception of what he says seem the definite way to say it. Frans uses language like a Vladimir Horowitz plays his Bechstein so it becomes unfailingly recognizably "his tone", or to stick to the restaurant genre, like a Bocuse adds to his dishes a little unexpected ingredient so that his dish becomes recognizably "a Bocuse", while untalented chefs like me would think that putting the right amount of salt and pepper on the food would already make a great dinner.

Even if the inception of ALT was several years back, it was at that very dinner that I felt more at home and more comfortable with typologists than ever before. *Chez Larry* turned out to be better than a five-star restaurant. Larry was 100% in his element: he was very much into his kitchen and his cooking as he was into his Bantu tones. My task was to bring the wine, which turned out to be a big logistic problem so I did what seemed the easiest: I simply signed the bill (note: the winelist included a 1997 Suduiraut) and Larry took care of the rest.

Larry had supplied us with a French menu as Bocuse would. I remember that I was sitting across from Frans and he was at his best that evening: He had incisive comments on virtually everything: about the salad and the soup, why not everything had been said about Ergativity (yet), that everybody deserved a lecture on Modality by Johan van der Auwera and how he due to a major disagreement with a colleague publically (!) withdrew the informal *Du* (an expression of trust and friendship) and switched back to *Sie*. I can see German speakers "in shock" while reading this. This does not work in German. Germans are not exactly known for their politeness, however *that* goes a little bit too far: You can do everything in German but you cannot (!) change from informal back to formal register. This would be considered as a major *affront*. Frans simply did not care. This very colleague of his simply did not deserve his *Du* any more. (Basta!)

I, of course, loved the story and Frans became even more hero to me than the hero he already was.

And while I am writing all this, I remember the “toddler days” in the relationship between Mouton and ALT and I miss “you guys” suddenly very, very much! Thank you so much for everything, Frans, and let’s see whether we can find another bottle of a 1997 Suduiraut or — even better — I have a bottle of Mouton de Rothschild which needs our immediate attention!

**Anke Beck**

*Managing Director De Gruyter, Berlin*

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