

In Memoriam Peter Schmitter (Cologne 1943- Seoul 2006)

Jan Noordegraaf & Frank Vonk

After the untimely death of Klaus Dutz on 25 March 2006 at the age of 52, his close friend and close collaborator in historiographical matters, Peter Schmitter died of angina pectoris in Seoul on 12 June 2006, only 63 years of age. To all his friends in the field of the historiography of linguistics Peter's completely unexpected death came as a shock. Peter had been busy preparing the Leiden colloquium of the *Studienkreis Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft* in cooperation with Els Elffers, Marijke van der Wal and Jan Noordegraaf, and as his e-mail messages clearly showed, he was looking forward to meeting his historiographical friends and colleagues at the end of June after having completed his teaching duties at Hancock University. He was to give a course on the *Cours de linguistique générale* and the authentic Saussure in Münster in July 2006.

Peter Schmitter studied Greek, Latin, general linguistics, philosophy and pedagogical sciences in Bonn and Munich. He took his doctor's degree in 1972, after having completed his dissertation on *Die hellenistische Erziehung im Spiegel der νεα κώιμώιδια und der fabula palliata* (Leiden: Brill) at the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Bonn, and his *Habilitation* in 1980 on *Untersuchungen zur Historiographie der Linguistik, Struktur - Methodik -theoretische Fundierung* (Tübingen: Narr 1982) at the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität in Münster. This text has become central to linguistic historiography in the past 25 years and was followed in 2003 by a collection of Peter's (meta-)historiographical studies, viz. *Historiographie und Narration. Metahistoriographische Aspekte der Wissenschaftsgeschichtsschreibung der Linguistik* (Seoul: Sowadalmédia & Tübingen: Narr), in which he discussed topics such as narrativity, metahistoriography, fact reconstruction and fact selection, the concepts of progress and scientific research programme. It would be interesting to compare both books with respect to the developments in contemporary metahistoriographical thought and to find out how the author's thoughts had changed.

Peter Schmitter was a founding member and coordinator of the *Studienkreis Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft* (Münster, 1989 →) and the co-founder and editor of the journal *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft* (Münster, 1991 →). After several guest professorships in Münster, Geneva, Oslo and Halle-Wittenberg he became a full professor of German linguistics and philosophy of language at the Hancock University of Foreign Studies in Seoul in

1997, at the same time continuing his professorship for general linguistics and philosophy of language in Münster.

In 2003 Peter became a member of the editorial board of the new historical-critical edition of Wilhelm von Humboldt's linguistic writings. Humboldt, or to be more precise: romantic linguistics and philosophy of language, was one of the many subjects of his research. Besides his interest in Humboldt, he also wrote on Hellenistic linguistics, on semiotics, word meaning and 19th-century semantic thought and interdisciplinary approaches towards language. He edited many volumes on the historiography of linguistics, metahistoriography, semantics and on semiotics. Moreover, many of his papers can be found in the proceedings of meetings and congresses on historiography such as ICHoLS. He considered his *Geschichte der [91] Sprachtheorie* (Tübingen: Narr), a series of which five volumes of ten have been published and a sixth volume is in preparation, to be his most important editorial work.

On the occasion of Peter's 60th birthday in 2003 he was presented with a *Festgabe: Später Mittag. Vermischte Anmerkungen zur Metahistoriographie* (Münster: Nodus Publikationen), with contributions by friends and colleagues. In 2004, because of his outstanding contributions to the historiography of linguistics, he was made a 'corresponding member' of the *Henry Sweet Society for the History of Linguistic Ideas*, whose colloquia he regularly attended.



We will miss Peter's friendly personality, as well as his stimulating and critical contributions to the historiography of linguistics, and express our hope that the *Studienkreis* will continue its meetings and encourage historiographical and metahistoriographical work. This surely is what Peter would have wished to happen.

