

Christa Dürscheid

## HILSNINGSTALE FRA DE NYE MEDLEMMENE



*Professor Christa Dürscheid hilser akademiet på vegne av de nye medlemmene.*

Distinguished president, dear fellow members of the Academy, ladies and gentlemen!

I am delighted to speak to you today in the name of all newly elected members of Agder Academy of Sciences and Letters. All of us would like to say thank you – thank you for nominating us and including us into this honorable circle of the Academy on the occasion of its anniversary celebration.

Scientific institutions which are independent and enable interdisciplinary scholarly exchange and dialogue are of tremendous value – since most of the time, most of us move within our own professional environment: At our universities, at our departments, in our work environment we encounter colleagues who, generally speaking, work in the same field as we do. Here, however, it is different. As a look at the list of members in the yearbook 2015 has shown me, a wide range of disciplines are represented at our academy, from didactics of mathematics through information technology, from music science through theology, from journalism to surgery and English literature. The same is true for those who have the honor of being inducted into the academy at this celebration, we, too, represent different subjects. I am sure that there will be plenty of opportunities to learn more about each other at the subsequent dinner.

But why have I been singled out for the honor of addressing you today, and where am I from? And which discipline do I represent in the Academy? The first two questions can be quickly answered by referring to an email which I received about two weeks ago. In his mail, the secretary of the academy, Rolf Nossun, wrote to me: “You are, I believe, our first Swiss member, so your induction is indeed a special occasion for the Academy.” I decided to get to the bottom of this claim. I am a professor at the University of Zurich, so I work in Switzerland. However, am I truly the first Swiss member of Agder Academy of Sciences and Letters? Again, I turned to the pages of the yearbook and found a clue in the list of members, which at first glance seems to speak against it. There is, as you probably all know, a highly esteemed colleague who worked in Switzerland for a long time; first, at the University of Lausanne, then at the University of Fribourg. He has been a member of the academy since 2003, his name is Peter Trudgill. But, as you also know, Peter Trudgill never applied for Swiss nationality. Am I really Swiss, though?

Rolf Nossun seemed to be well informed: His email dates from October 14<sup>th</sup>, a few days prior to that I received a letter from the migration office of the city of Zurich in which I was informed that as of October 7<sup>th</sup>, I had been granted Swiss citizenship. The hard and complicated procedure I had undergone in order to become a Swiss citizen (as had my husband Karl-Heinz Dürscheid, who is accompanying me today), had thus come to a positive conclusion, we are now citizens of both Germany and Switzerland.

Therefore, I am speaking to you today not only as a German, but also as a Swiss citizen; so I am your first Swiss member; in both senses of the word. And with your decision to admit me as a member of the academy, another bond between Norway and Switzerland has been formed. As we all know, both countries have a lot

in common, in fact it is only the Atlantic coast which Switzerland lacks compared to Norway. Both countries are small (as far as their populations are concerned), both have a high standard of living, neither of them is part of the EU and neither has the euro, both countries are blessed with spectacular and beautiful landscapes, with magnificent mountains and long road tunnels.

I was able to experience the beauty of this country firsthand last year, when I was in Søgne Prestegård, in the very South of Norway, where I participated in a small symposium to which I had been invited by our esteemed academy colleagues Michael Schulte and Martin Engebretsen. This symposium was entitled “SoundScriptLanguage”, its subtitle was “Recent trends in the research of written languages and media from the runes to cyberspace.” As for me, I do not conduct research into runic inscriptions, such research is pursued by Michael Schulte, who spoke on this topic on the occasion of the aforementioned workshop, and by my colleague Gaby Waxenberger, who also participated in the symposium. She is another esteemed member of the academy and is among us today as well. Michael Schulte, by the way, came to the University of Zurich about three weeks ago and gave an interesting talk on Early Nordic language history. But this topic is not one of my research focuses either.

Therefore I still owe you an answer to the second question: What is my professional background? I hold a professorship in German linguistics, my main research topic is the present-day German language. My research interests range from core subjects in linguistics (particularly, syntax and morphology) to more interdisciplinary topics. Thus, for instance, my publications also discuss the relations between written and spoken language, typical features of writing systems and graphic variation. And that is also the reason why I participated in the symposium in Søgne Prestegård. I was invited to address “cyberspace” in the broad spectrum of topics “from runes to cyberspace”. To be more precise: I gave a presentation on the new communication practices brought about by the everyday use of smart phones; and I pointed out how text messaging can be described from a linguistic point of view.

This brings me to the end of my short speech. However, please allow me to convey some regards from the University of Zurich. When I informed the dean of our faculty, Andreas H. Jucker, that I had been elected member of the academy, he expressed his most heartfelt congratulations and sent a written notice to all faculty members to inform them about this honorable election. Furthermore, he wrote me a personal email detailing how he met the president of our academy Ernst Håkon Jahr in the course of a summer school on Lesbos last year. He sends

him his best regards and he is looking forward to meeting him once again. So, as you can see, there are already some ties with Switzerland, and our joint activities will certainly bring about more of them.

I am now at the end of my speech. The famous writer Kurt Tucholsky once gave the following “advice for a bad speaker”: “Do not ever speak for less than ninety minutes, otherwise it is not even worth beginning.” Or: “If you tell a joke, laugh beforehand so the audience recognizes the punch line.” And another one of his treasured pieces of advice is: “Announce the end of your speech, then start your speech over again and talk for another half hour. This may be repeated multiple times.” Of course I do not want to act on this advice, so this is really the end of my speech.

However, please allow me to say one last thing which is of great importance to me. I am convinced that I can speak for all the newly elected members in this respect, also for those who are not able to be part of this important event today: We are proud of being members of Agder Academy of Sciences and Letters. We are looking forward to the togetherness within the Academy, which begins with today’s annual celebration, and to a fruitful exchange tonight and at all future events.

Distinguished president, dear members of the Academy, dear guests. This is – once and for all – the end of my speech. Let me conclude as well as I can in Norwegian: En stor takk fra oss nye medlemmer!



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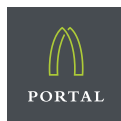
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