

## Foreword

However incongruous it may seem to use Amy Lowell's poem *Patterns* as an inspiration for the title of a festschrift to mark Professor Dušková's seventy-fifth birthday, we believe it has a deep symbolic relevance. It is a love poem about perceiving patterns, living in patterns, breaking patterns, holding to patterns, becoming a captive of patterns and ultimately questioning the sense of patterns ('Christ! What are patterns for?').

Put this way – without intending to mock Lowell's poem in the least – it sounds like a perfect summary of a linguist's life endeavours. Structuralists of the Prague School, to which Libuše Dušková firmly belongs, justly claiming the Mathesius noble lineage, describe language as a system of systems. We could just as well speak of it as a pattern of patterns. Dušková's life is a love affair with language, the pursuit of a pattern of patterns.

The Academe, especially those of its sections who are not exactly basking in the spotlight of public interest, set great store by paying dues to the anniversaries of its distinguished members whose importance to the field, albeit unrecognized by the general public, is well known to the insiders. Some of the honoured love it, others, like Dušková, don't.

Whatever their attitude, starting from their age of sixty, they have their laudatory profiles printed, have to give special lectures, receive festschrifts, etc., at regular five-year intervals. It is a good tradition. Only when the festschrift reaches 75, two unsettling things happen. By that time it is difficult to say something original about her or him that has not been said before, however much you would like to. The other thing is you suddenly realize that each of the intervals is shorter than the preceding one.

Let us therefore say this. The present volume is a symbolic tribute to Libuše Dušková's lasting impact on English linguistics here and beyond this country's borders. All of those who contributed to this volume, or wanted to but were prevented from doing so by whatever reason, did so because they think Libuše Dušková is a wonderful person, because she has had an influence on them – either professional, often profound and life-long, or personal, as a model of modesty and integrity, or both.

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