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# Editorial

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## **One Hundred Years Since the Birth of Prof. Růžena Dostálová: A Legacy Beyond Time**

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This year marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Professor Růžena Dostálová (22 April 1924, Bratislava – 18 August 2014, Prague), a scholar whose profound contributions to Classical Philology, Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies have left an indelible mark on Czech and Slovak humanities.

Růžena Dostálová spent her childhood in Bratislava at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s. As she recalled in a letter to her former student Jana Grusková, now an Associate Professor of Classical Greek at Comenius University in Bratislava, this is probably where her interest in philology originated: “Sometimes I think that my interest in philology was born here and then thanks to its trilingualism. Even as a small child, before I went to school, I used to look for words with the same meaning in the trilingual announcements around the corner of our house about the start of school, about the quarantine of dogs and about the recruitment of soldiers: škola (“school”) – Schule – iskola; pes (“dog”) – Hund – kutya; voják (“soldier”) – Soldat – katona.”<sup>1</sup>

Professor Dostálová’s academic career began at Charles University, in Prague, where she studied Classical Philology (1945–1950) and Modern Greek (1949–1951). Her dissertation on the fragmentary *Ninus Romance*<sup>2</sup> revealed her exceptional

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- 1 „Někdy si myslím, že můj zájem o filologii vznikl právě tady a tehdy díky její trojjazyčnosti. Už jako malé dítě, ještě než jsem šla do školy, jsem na trojjazyčných vyhláškách za rohem našeho domu o začátku školy, o kontumaci psů a o odvodu vojáků hledala slova stejného významu: škola – Schule – iskola; pes – Hund – kutya; voják – Soldat – katona.“ (Personal correspondence from Prof. Dostálová to Jana Grusková. Prague, 4 April 2011). We are grateful to Prof. Grusková for kindly sharing this letter with us.
  - 2 *Nejstarší román světové literatury: zlomky řeckého románu o Ninovi* (*The World’s Oldest Novel: Fragments of the Greek Ninus Romance*), 1952. The complete thesis was published in 1953 in *Listy filologické* 76/1–2, pp. 30–54 and 210–228, while its third chapter, which focused on

scholarly potential and established her enduring interest in the Hellenistic and Late Antique periods, which she further developed in her subsequent work on Nonnus of Panopolis (Candidate of Sciences thesis, 1959). She also examined in detail the relationship between Christianity and Greek culture during the transition from Antiquity to Byzantium, particularly through her studies of Libanius, Julian the Apostate and Gregory of Nazianzus.

What distinguished Professor Dostálová's scholarship was her remarkable breadth of vision. She had the ability to trace the connections between ancient, Byzantine and Modern Greek literature and to illuminate the continuities and transformations that shaped the Greek cultural tradition. Her works on Byzantine literary aesthetics (1978),<sup>3</sup> drama theory (1982),<sup>4</sup> and the Byzantine novel (1991),<sup>5</sup> contextualised within the broader framework of classical and even Modern Greek literature, won her international recognition. Her pioneering approach, which advocated for a broader understanding of Greek Studies, anticipated contemporary trends in the field by several decades. She also emphasised the crucial role of the papyri in enhancing our understanding of Greek literature. From the 1980s, she collaborated with the Italian papyrologist Rosario Pintaudi in preparing an edition of the Greek papyri held in the National Library in Prague (Florence 1988, 1995).<sup>6</sup>

In addition to her almost 400 scientific publications,<sup>7</sup> Professor Dostálová made an equally significant contribution to the dissemination of Greek literature. Through more than thirty translations of ancient, Late Antique, Byzantine and Modern Greek authors, she made a wealth of Greek texts available to Czech readers. Particularly noteworthy is her work on Nikos Kazantzakis, including the publication of his correspondence with the composer Bohuslav Martinů (2003).<sup>8</sup>

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rearranging the order of the three papyrus fragments of the Ninus Romance and subsequently dating the novel's composition to the first century BCE, was published already in 1951, in a manuscript collection of papers dedicated to Prof. Novotný on the occasion of his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday (Masaryk University, Brno, 1951).

- 3 Dostálová, R. 1978. Zur Entwicklung der Literäresthetik in Byzanz von Gregorios von Nazianz zu Eustathios. In V. Vavřínek (ed.), *Beiträge zur byzantinischen Geschichte im 9.-11. Jh.* Prag, 143–177.
- 4 Dostálová, R. 1982. Die byzantinische Theorie des Dramas und die Tragödie *Christos Paschon*. *JEByz* 32/3, 73–82.
- 5 Dostálová, R. 1991. *Il romanzo greco e i papiri*. Praga.
- 6 Dostálová, R. – Pintaudi, R. – Vidman, L. (eds.) 1988, 1995. *Papyri Graecae Wessely Pragenses I-II*. Firenze.
- 7 Complete bibliography 1951–2014 in: Kulhánková, M. – Bednářová, A. 2014. *Neograeca Bohemica* 14, 15–30. 378 entries.
- 8 Dostálová, R. – Březina, A. 2003. *Řecké pašije: osud jedné opery. Korespondence Nikose Kazantzakise s Bohuslavem Martinů*. Praha.

Professor Dostálová's influence extended far beyond her written work. She was an exceptional teacher, known for her genuine empathy with her students and her distinctive combination of erudition and humour. The political constraints of the communist era in Czechoslovakia delayed her formal academic appointments until the 1990s (habilitation in 1991, professorship in 1996). After the fall of the communist regime, she also played a key role in the establishment of Modern Greek Studies at Masaryk University (1993) and their subsequent revival at Charles University (2007).

As the long-standing managing editor of *Listy filologické* (*Folia Filologica*, 1953–1985) and a member of the editorial board of *Byzantinoslavica* (1989–2014), Professor Dostálová not only shaped the scholarly discourse within these prestigious journals but also initiated the establishment of the first specialised publishing platform for Modern Greek Studies in the Czech Republic. In 2001, *Lectures of the Czech Society for Modern Greek Studies* (*Přednášky České společnosti novořeckých studií*) was launched as a modest bulletin, initially intended to disseminate the Society's public lectures. Professor Dostálová herself was a frequent contributor, beginning with her inaugural article "Christ in the Works of Nikos Kazantzakis" ("Kristus v díle Nikose Kazantzakise", pp. 5–16) in the first issue, and continuing to enrich the publication with reviews, reports and papers almost until her death, with her last contribution appearing in 2012. This periodical, which adopted the parallel title *Neograeca Bohemica* in 2008, evolved significantly over time, eventually becoming the peer-reviewed scholarly journal *Neograeca Bohemica*, which continues to serve the field today in its twenty-fourth year of publication.

This issue commemorates the journal's founder by including texts related to her work. María Paz López Martínez focuses on fragments of the historical novels *Parthenope* and *Calligone*, which echo the beginnings of Dostálová's academic career. As López Martínez remarked during our correspondence, "Dostálová's example has accompanied me throughout my academic career." Michał Bzinkowski highlights the Byzantine aspect of Dostálová's scholarship in his text "Nicolaus Copernicus as Translator of the 'Letters' of Theophylact Simocatta: Linguistic and Historical Context". This theme is also represented by Martin Surovčák's translation of a chapter from Isidoros Zourgos' Byzantine novel, reminding us of Dostálová's translation activities. Dostálová's interest in Modern Greek literature is represented by Prof. David Ricks, who has dedicated to her memory a paper examining the difficult circumstances in the communist countries of the Eastern Bloc and their reflection in Modern Greek literature. The contemporary breadth of Modern Greek Studies is represented by Michail Marinis' contribution, which, although outside Dostálová's specific scholarly focus, demonstrates how the field of Modern Greek Studies has expanded since her active years.

We believe that Professor Dostálová would be proud of our journal today. With this issue, commemorating the centenary of her birth, we celebrate the life and work of a remarkable scholar whose contributions to Greek Studies continue to resonate both in her published works and in the hearts of those who knew her.

Kateřina Bočková Loudová  
editor-in-chief