

E PLURIBUS UNA 'THE ONE IN THE MANY'

For Anna Wierzbicka

PREFACE

The idea to do a Festschrift for Anna Wierzbicka dates all the way back to the summer of 1989, when my friend Andrzej Bogusławski asked me, in a letter sent to the U.S., if I felt like cooperating in such an endeavor. Andrzej would take care of the East (then still more or less hermetically sealed off), while I was to solicit contributions from the West.

Owing to various circumstances (such as multiple missed over-optimistic deadlines, problems of overseas coordination, the changing political situation, and so on and so forth), the plan never got beyond its initial state until 1994, when (with several of my own undertakings temporarily out of the way) I could start concentrating on our project and especially, sound out my publishing connections with a view to establishing some kind of sponsorship for the volume. This, however, turned out to be a rather difficult affair, as Festschriften, they all said, were not 'in' any more, and the market was deteriorating for scholarly books in general. Hence, much time was spent in fruitless negotiations of various kinds.

An unexpected benefit of these delays was that the time elapsed gave us the opportunity to fix a new, and more suitable date for the volume's publication. Earlier, Andrzej had always insisted, in his chevaleresque Central European manner, that we should not take our bearings from any of Anna's personal life-marks, such as a birthday. 'Ladies don't have birthdays', he was wont to say, 'and since Anna is forever young, anyway, nobody should want to know'.

However, as we know, time loosens all our lives' constraints, and this is why we feel safe to offer this Festschrift to Anna on the occasion of an important day in her life (we still aren't telling you which one: for all we know, your guess is as good as ours!)

We are also very pleased to finally have solved the publishing problem. When I took over the editorship of the Odense University 'house publication' *RASK. International Journal of Language and Communication* in 1996, upon my retirement from the Chair of

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Linguistics, one of the first things I did as Editor was to try and find a slot in which we could put the Festschrift. As luck (and the powers that be) would have it, I was able to let the book appear as a double issue of *RASK*, nominally dated March 1998. (For those who still believe in birthdays: *Sapienti sat*).

In this connection, it behooves me to express my heartfelt gratitude to Ms. Kirsten Albjerg, who by dint of continuous application of her secretarial skills and not least her invincible optimism, was very substantial in bringing this effort to a happy ending. And I should not omit, either, to thank Lea Brown, for her encouraging and helpful assistance in matters as delicate as photographs and signatures. Last but not least, a big thanks goes to all the contributors, who stayed with us until the end – 'even though things looked dark' from time to time.

So now, finally, we can offer to our beloved *jubilatrix*, a collection of essays and articles from the scattered desks of her admirers and professional colleagues, who all by this gesture have wished to express their appreciation for Anna's lifelong work and her truly Sisyphean efforts to bring our thinking from the sluggish phases of Anglocentric, Neopositivist, Transformational, and other kinds of linguistics, up the steep, critical slope in order to arrive at the summit state, where a Universal Linguistic Sun shines over a cloudless celestial empyreum of semantic bliss and happiness. It is our wish that Anna may have the possibility of spending many more years under this benign light, and share some of its rays with us, earthling linguists, pragmaticists, and other scholars of the most different persuasions, who wish her in this spirit:

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Austin, Texas, February 7, 1998
Jacob L. Mey