

Irena TEODORA VESEVSKA

IN HONOREM

Professor Dr. Elica Maneva – *alma mater*

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It is ironic how the tasks we once thought would be so easy to fulfil, come with great difficulties at the end. And even though they were well planned, or contemplated for long time, at the time of the actual execution, one finds trapped in between. Between finding the appropriate words of gratitude, respect, honour and affection on one hand, and escaping the pathetic clichés on the other hand. So this petite tribute to an immense career and even greater persona is just a humble attempt of outlining the impact that she has on generations of archaeologist, both professionally and emotionally.

I remember my earliest memory of Professor Elica Maneva being a snapshot of an exceptionally elegant figure, gracefully passing through the long halls of our University with a subtle ingenious touch of nobility. I was a freshman and still clueless, a bit lost and overwhelmed with insecurity, but her warm and encouraging smile to my greeting, left a deep mark on the framework of my yet – to – be moulded professional mind. I also remember that the very first class with her, was actually more about us, the students, and more about who are we individually, what was our narrow field of interest, why have we decided to study archaeology etc. (which was her standard procedure with every new generation, as we've learned after), and her ability to remember the tiniest detail about every one of us (previous and later generations included), precisely dissecting our individual professional growth. That kind of sincere concern left us with pleasant sense of affirmation.

During years of fruitful career, her meticulously organised approach to vast spectrum of academic issues, her never-ending enthusiasm and pursuit of knowledge, always founded on solid theoretical and practical base, have established her as one of the leading medievalist in the area. It is a true pleasure to read or listen to her interpretations and conclusions on variety of topics, whether discussing early Christian

art and architecture, medieval artefacts, coinage or necropolises. However, one of the most valuable lessons she taught us was to retain high sensibility of professional ethics, setting herself as a great example.

Every teacher and scholar has an unique approach and a certain manner of exposing their own cognition, and for Professor Maneva I believe that is the fluency and subtlety of presenting even the most perplexed issues in a comprehensible manner. Her profound perception of latent contexts and meanings, her ability to take in *sub rosa* matters and correlate them in vivid narrations never cease to amaze.

However, what truly distinguish her as a person is her sincere sense of empathy, compassion and kindness. Being fully dedicated to the profession, while balancing private life as a devoted wife and a loving mother, that alone is one of the greatest achievements. The warmth and care she radiates, always ready to listen, understand, discretely advising, offering and providing help and support, all these elements embedded in the core of her personality make her who she is as a scholar, as a teacher, as a friend.

Personally, despite my keen attempts of avoiding to sound too emotional, I got to a point where I must say, without any exaggerations, that I wouldn't have become the archaeologist and scholar that I am today without her guidance and attention. Throughout a decade of mentorship, that naturally evolved into respectful friendship, Professor Maneva has been nothing but supportive, considerate, encouraging and comforting motherly authority to me. Her constant and generous suggestions, never assertive, always moderate, have led me through many challenging and demanding periods of my life. For that, I am beyond grateful.

Dear Professor Elica Maneva,

It is exceptional privilege and honour to learn from You, as it is a great pleasure to know You. You were, are and will be an exquisite role model for generations and generations to come. Thank You for Your impressive work and inspirational lectures, and may they continue to rise and grow into fruitful academic debates and new discoveries.

Pro multisannis, alma mater nostra, salut!

Speaking on behalf of many,