Obituary

Emerita Professor Erika Mihevc Gabrovec (1927–2017)

It is with great sadness that we report here the death of Professor Erika Mihevc Gabrovec, Professor Emerita in the Department of Classics, University of Ljubljana. She died on May 17, 2017, a few months before her 90th birthday. In international linguistic circles she is known for her contribution to the study of Post-Classical and Byzantine Greek, while at home she will also be remembered as an excellent teacher of the Greek and Latin languages.

Erika Mihevc Gabrovec was born on December 4, 1927, at Teslić (modern Bosnia and Herzegovina). After the death of her father, a forest engineer, her family moved to their homeland Slovenia, where she enrolled in 1946 at the University of Ljubljana to study Russian and Ancient Greek language and literature. In postwar Yugoslavia, this combination was considered a much safer decision than the study of Latin and Greek, on which languages she later focused as a teacher and as a linguist. After becoming an Assistant Professor in the Ljubljana Department of Classics, she continued to serve in the department up to her retirement in 1987, teaching Ancient Greek and Latin descriptive grammar and historical linguistics. She later became Professor Emerita in the same department, occasionally supervising postgraduate and doctoral students. Married to an eminent professor of archaeology, Stane Gabrovec, she was the mother of three sons.

As readers of the *Journal of Greek Linguistics* may know, the linguistic work of Professor Mihevc Gabrovec focused on the Greek language of the Post-Classical and Byzantine periods. Her main publications include two monographs, published by the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. The monograph *La disparition du parfait dans le grec de la basse époque* (1959) is a revised version of her PhD thesis, devoted to the history of the Greek perfect. This work continues Wackernagel's and Chantraine's studies of the perfect, focusing on Post-Classical and Early Byzantine vernacular texts. In 1961, the monograph received a positive review in the journal *Revue de philologie, de littérature et d'histoire anciennes*. The reviewer was Pierre Chantraine, with whom Professor Mihevc Gabrovec had studied for a year in Paris. The second monograph by Professor Mihevc Gabrovec is titled *Études sur la syntaxe de Ioannes Moschos*. Published in 1960, it remains one of the few comprehensive studies on the language of this Early Byzantine author. In addition, Professor Mihevc Gabrovec

authored a number of articles, mostly on syntax in Post-Classical and Byzantine Greek, which have continued to attract scholarly attention to the present day. An example is one of her last academic papers written in a foreign language, “L’infinitif temporel en Grec du Moyen-Age et en Slovène” (*Linguistica* 13, 1973). This paper draws attention to the existence of the so-called temporal infinitive, a construction which proves the survival of the infinitive even into the later Byzantine period, and is likewise attested for the Slovenian language.

At home, generations of classicists will remember her most vividly for her contribution to the teaching of Ancient Greek. She is the author of what remains the standard Slovenian textbook for the Ancient Greek language (*Grščina: teksti in vaje za pouk grščine*). The work was published for the first time in 1978, in the era when a series of reforms of the educational system had led to the virtual disappearance of Ancient Greek from secondary schools. Since the few students who did sign up for Ancient Greek philology had no prior knowledge of the language, the teaching of Ancient Greek at the University Ljubljana had to be conceived on entirely new principles. Her textbook remains exemplary because it brings together, without going into too much detail, the basic grammar and vocabulary of Ancient Greek, and because it is based from the very first lesson on authentic Ancient Greek phrases and sentences. It has brilliantly served its main goals: to enable students to start reading authentic Ancient Greek texts in a relatively short period of time, and to provide them, through its authenticity, with an insight into Ancient Greek literature and culture.

During her studies in Athens (1956), Professor Mihevc Gabrovec mastered Modern Greek as well, which made her one of Slovenia’s pioneering experts in this language. Her discussions of Modern Greek, mostly written in Slovenian, focus on the orthography of Modern Greek proper names when transferred to Slovenian.

For most of the Professor’s academic career at the University of Ljubljana, Greek and Latin philology had to struggle for survival as the ideological oppression they were subjected to led to a steady decrease in the number of students. An important achievement by her and her colleagues was thus to have kept the studies at their department virtually intact.

I enrolled in the department after the radical political change which took place in Slovenia in 1991, in an era full of optimism and hope for the future of Classical studies. By then Professor Mihevc Gabrovec had already retired, which was why I only met her on some formal occasions during my doctoral studies. Later I was honored to inherit her collection of papers on Byzantine Greek and modern editions of Byzantine texts. Our personal contacts were thus relatively rare. Her scholarly works, however, left on me a lasting impression, in

particular the belief reflected in these works: that the history of the Greek language does not end together with the Classical period or with antiquity, and that later periods of the language deserve the full attention of a modern linguist and philologist. She will be missed at her department as both teacher and philologist.

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