

Zvetlana-Mihaela Tănasă
(1968-1998)

On November 8, 1998 Zvetlana-Mihaela Tănasă, PhD student of our department, died in a monastery situated high in the Moldavian mountains. Death put a premature end to this life full of strife and conflicts, but also full of hope and optimism, and, above all, full of kindness and love towards all those who had the chance to belong to the environment of the moving personality who Zvetlana was. And – although this is certainly less important *subspecie aeternitatis* – Zvetlana’s premature death also put an end to the career of someone gifted with an exceptional intelligence, someone who could have produced astonishing scholarly results in any of the fields where she was at home: comparative linguistics, classical philology, or patristics.

She was born in a small village in Moldavia in a poor family, in very difficult conditions. She did her graduate studies at the “Al. I. Cuza” University in Iași. First she graduated in English language and literature (1992), and secondly in classical languages (1995). In 1989, at the university, she took an important part in the students’ movement against the Ceaușescu regime. She was among the main organizers, which fact later caused her many hardships. During her university years she was also occupied with comparative linguistics. She worked on Gothic loanwords in the Romanian language. Then she came to us, To the CEU, where her interest turned to patristics and medieval manuscripts of St. John Chryostom’s *Homilies on Genesis*, kept in the Library of the University in Budapest (*Elte graec. 2*). It is our pride that a Romanian student of ours made the first detailed and reliable description of this important holding of the Library of the University. However, the thesis was about much more than a mere description. In her essay, Zvetlana put forward and supported with strong arguments a daring hypothesis about the way Chrysostomian texts were transmitted. If her hypothesis turns out to be true, it should change our way of approaching patristic texts, and make us ask questions which we have not asked before. The description of the manuscript, and the chapter presenting Zvetlana’s new hypothesis can be read in the *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU 1997-1998*. Of course, proving this hypothesis would have required much more work in the same direction, and I believe that sooner or later Zvetlana would have elaborated her thesis. However, her innovative mind could not continue in this direction. She wanted to start a new research in the comparative history of late antique and medieval philosophical and theological doctrines, a project which required also her excellent knowledge of philology; she has embarked upon this new plan in her first PhD year.

Unfortunately, all these scholarly pursuits had to remain merely a promising beginning. A serious cancerous illness claimed to utter the last word in Zvetlana’s young life. However, cancer’s was not the last word, or only apparently so. Zvetlana, this indefatigable warrior, fought back the illness with all her strength. Feeling the decay of her physical abilities, she changed her intellectual pursuits to spiritual ones. She went home to Moldavia, became a nun, and faced the indescribable sufferings with unusual courage. As her last letters, and also the reports of those who knew her in her last period, testify, she became more and more calm and faced death with serenity. What could be a greater achievement for somebody who has been so dedicated to Christian “philosophy,” a philosophy which consists not as much as in an exercise of the mind as a moral and spiritual preparation for the world to come?