

TRIBUTE TO MARGARET ROSABEL MEZZABOTTA  
(17.07.1946–20.02.2000)<sup>1</sup>

R Whitaker (University of Cape Town)

The tragic death of Margaret Mezzabotta in a car accident on the morning of Sunday the 20th of February came as a terrible shock to her friends and colleagues not only in the Department of Modern & Classical Languages & Literatures, but also in the Faculty of Humanities, and throughout the University of Cape Town. Maggie (which was the name all her friends knew her by) had worked at UCT for exactly 30 years.

Maggie Mezzabotta was born and educated in England, gaining a BA (Hons) in Classics from the University of Bristol in 1967, and a Postgraduate Certificate of Education from King's College, London, the following year. After a spell of schoolteaching, she joined the Department of Classics at UCT as a temporary lecturer in 1970, and was promoted to a permanent lectureship in 1978. She *received ad hominem* promotion to senior lecturer in 1997.

Greek Tragedy was Maggie's particular field of specialization. She gained her PhD from the University of Cape Town in 1987 for a thesis on the tragedies of Sophocles, and in recent years became increasingly interested in modern adaptations and reworkings of Greek drama. Another field in which Maggie recently developed considerable expertise was that of ancient medicine, both human and veterinary. At the time of her death she was completing a translation into English of, and commentary on, a veterinary treatise by the Roman writer, Vegetius.

Although she was active in attending conferences, giving papers, and publishing scholarly articles and reviews, Maggie Mezzabotta's first and greatest love was teaching. Generations of students can testify to her enthusiasm, skill, and meticulous care as a lecturer. Maggie truly cared about her students. She spent many hours in giving advice and counselling, not only on issues of teaching and learning, but also on personal matters. Her dedication as an educator was rewarded in 1997 by a Distinguished Teacher Award from UCT.

Maggie was very active also in the wider community, lecturing at UCT's Summer School, giving talks to schools and on the radio, being a long-standing committee member and Chair of the WP branch of the Classical Association, and member of St Cyprian's School Council. A dedicated Catholic, she was active too in the Catholic Educational Aid Programme.

Maggie Mezzabotta died the day before the 2000 academic year began at UCT. We know how much she would have been looking forward to engaging with the new intake of students, how thoroughly she would have been prepared for her teaching. But it was not to be. Our deepest sympathies go out to her husband, Marco, to her children, Marisa, Marchino and Martin, and to her wider family. It is not easy to express how much she will be missed – as a valued colleague, dear friend, and fine human being.

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<sup>1</sup> The tribute to Maggie Mezzabotta was published in the *Monday Paper*, the UCT weekly paper.