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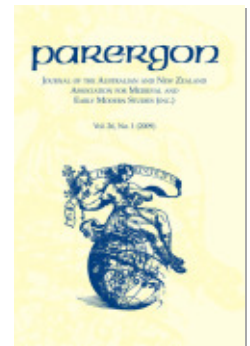
Mary Dove, 1944-2009

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OBITUARY

Mary Dove, 1944-2009

Medievalists around the world were shocked to hear of the sudden death of Mary Dove at her home in Lewes, Sussex, on June 5, 2009. Mary came to Australia in 1975 to take up a position as Lecturer in English at La Trobe University. She held this position till 1978, when she moved to the Department of English at the University of Melbourne, where she was soon promoted to Senior Lecturer. In 1995 she took up a position in the Department of English at the University of Sussex. She was promoted to Reader in 2000 and Professor of English in 2008. She was a highly regarded friend, teacher and colleague to many Australian scholars, and played an active role in the community of medieval scholars. Many readers of *Parergon* will remember the successful ANZAMRS conference she hosted in Melbourne in 1992. She was also a lay preacher at the Anglican church of St Mary in North Melbourne.

Mary was born on December 10, 1944 and studied at Cambridge and Oxford. Her first monograph, *The Perfect Age of Man's Life* (Cambridge, 1986) was a rich investigation into the medieval literature of the 'prime of life'. Mary also published extensively on the Bible in medieval culture, and on medieval and modern interpretations of the Song of Songs. She edited and translated the *Glossa Ordinaria* of the Song of Songs (Brepols, 1997), and in 2007 published her major study of the Wycliffite Bible, *The First English Bible: The Text and Context of the Wycliffite Versions* (Cambridge, 2007). From 2007-9 she held a Leverhulme Research Fellowship, and was preparing an edition of medieval English texts advocating the translation of the Bible into English.

Mary is remembered as a passionate and uncompromising teacher, who helped her students rise to the high standards she set them. One of her former students from Melbourne, Helen Hickey, writes:

I remember with great fondness her fourth year class; how she made us all follow the medieval method of instruction through 'discussio' and the 'sic et non'. Although we were all somewhat intimidated by her prodigious intellectual powers and knowledge, we invariably left feeling we had been taught by someone who loved what they did. I felt privileged to be introduced to Langland studies by her.

Another, Betty Gabriel-Jones, who studied with Mary at La Trobe, writes:

As we get older many friends and acquaintances die, and death ceases to be extraordinary, but Mary's death upset me more than I can say. She was unique, a wonderful teacher and a lovely person. I will miss just knowing that she was around somewhere, unchanged.

These comments testify to the strength of Mary's character. She was an authoritative and passionate teacher, and a courageous colleague, never compromising her own training and convictions. Colleagues from La Trobe, Melbourne and Sussex all remember Mary with great warmth. Elizabeth Adeney, who worked with Mary at La Trobe, writes:

Mary was clever, artless, funny and unpretentious, loyal to her friends, and deeply concerned about those she loved. Her pleasure in medieval scholarship was constant, her knowledge of medieval learning prodigious, her own writing meticulous. With her we have lost a whole world of wisdom and knowledge.

In April 2007 she ended a message to me from Lewes with the words,

'Primroses are out here (always a delight to glimpse the wild ones in the woods), and everything exhales spring.'

The simple joy of the comment shows better than anything the affinity that Mary had with the poets and scholars of the Middle Ages, and also one of the reasons why her friends will miss her so deeply.

Mary forged strong friendships in the different universities where she worked, with both medievalists and scholars of other periods. At Melbourne, she worked closely with Robin Grove, 'team teaching' in the long tradition of that university, but with an inspiring collaborative energy.

Mary spent seventeen years at the University of Melbourne, and from the start was an unique, invigorating presence for colleagues and students alike. She set an example of high professionalism, from her beautifully crafted lectures to the meticulous pages of her diary, where appointments, meetings, coming events were all set in order and an appropriate time allotted to each commitment. There was nothing haphazard about her scholarly interests, but nothing merely predictable either.

Together, we devised and taught a range of subjects in which her originality, wit and resourcefulness never failed, whether the investigation was into the Shakespearean sonnet, Biblical studies, Mills & Boon, or some recently published feminist essay. We gained a lot from these unfettered discussions, and I think the students did too.

Mary was a loyal colleague and a loving friend. How characteristic of her to step so briskly out of the known into the unknown.

Norman Vance, Professor of English at Sussex, comments:

She was a splendid, hard-working colleague, lively, unstuffy and very good company. It is desperately sad that she died at the very height of her powers as a scholar and with no chance to enjoy her approaching retirement.

Mary's commitment to Biblical scholarship and exegetical criticism were not always fashionable in literary studies, but she held her course steadily, building the deep expertise in philology, codicology and scholarship that informs all her work. Such was the complexity of her work that her major research projects did not always fit the rapid turnaround required by the modern academy, but in the last few years Mary had established an international reputation as one of the leading scholars of medieval English Biblical tradition.

Following a private family funeral on Wednesday 17 June, a service took place in the Meeting House at the University of Sussex in the afternoon, to which all Mary's friends and colleagues were invited. Mary is survived by her former partner, Trevor Mills, and her two children, George and Dora.

Stephanie Trigg