



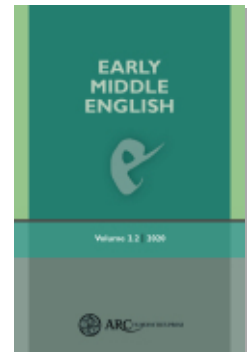
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Catherine Innes-Parker, *In Memoriam*

Cate Gunn

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# CATHERINE INNES-PARKER, IN MEMORIAM

CATE GUNN

THE LOSS TO Middle English scholarship of Catherine Innes-Parker is great, but it is the loss of a friend, colleague, teacher, and mentor that is felt most sorely. Catherine's studies started with that most famous of Early Middle English texts, *Ancrene Wisse*, on which she wrote her PhD dissertation at Memorial University, but her research blossomed outwards from there, encompassing the other texts associated with *Ancrene Wisse* and, in particular, the *Wooing of Our Lord* and Wooing Group prayers, of which she created an accessible edition and very useful translation for students.

She became interested not so much in the text of *Ancrene Wisse* as its "legacy," as her seminal paper on the topic in *A Companion to Ancrene Wisse*, edited by Yoko Wada, indicates. In this article, having started with a typically whimsical image, Catherine wrote a thorough survey of the later translations, adaptations, and incorporations of *Ancrene Wisse* and detailed how many of these texts were written for devout women. Women as readers were often the focus of her studies. It is no surprise that when she turned her attention to the translations and adaptation of Bonaventure's *Lignum vitæ*, she alighted on a French translation found in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 19548 originally composed for Antoinette Auger, abbess of Montmartre (d. 1539), whom Catherine found to be a "fascinating character." When she gave her original presentation on this manuscript at the Nuns' Literacies conference in Antwerp in 2013, I remember that she started in her usual playful manner; she asked us to imagine the lives and reading of the nuns of Montmartre, the Fontevraudian monastery, and introduced Antoinette as an acquaintance. Catherine's whimsy and playfulness, however, were a thin veil over her meticulous and professional scholarship; Catherine wrote several papers on the translations and adaptations of Bonaventure's *Lignum vitæ*, all marked by thorough, detailed research and closely worked argument.

While Catherine would never assert anything without sufficient evidence, she was always intrigued by the question "what if?": what if, for instance, the thirteenth-century French translation of *Ancrene Wisse* had been made for sisters Loretta and Annora de Braose? While admitting that there is "no direct evidence for any connection between these women and the *Ancrene Wisse* group authors," Catherine considered, in a 2011 paper for a special issue of *Florilegium* honouring Margaret Wade Labarge, "the lives of Loretta and her siblings as models for the kind of audience imagined by the authors of the *Ancrene Wisse* Group." Catherine was as concerned with the readers as with the original writers of texts, especially when they could be shown, or at least assumed, to be women. Many of her papers placed women firmly back in the story.

Such women were alive for her; the de Braose sisters were almost friends. In summer 2018, after she presented a paper on the Wooing Group as the "*kinds*

of prayers that Annora de Braose might well have read”—this was in Iffley, near Oxford, on a day celebrating Annora de Braose, the “recluse de Iftel”—she and I drove to Abergavenny in Wales on a search for the de Braose family. Catherine listened to the voices of these women, and through her reading and close examination of the texts (and their material existence in manuscript form) she enabled others to hear them too, and to hear what the early audience heard. But this ability came from many hours spent in manuscript reading rooms, scrutinising old volumes and giving great attention to detail. Her publications show her care and rigour, and her ability to understand how manuscripts worked: their composition, compilation, and construction (she loved to teach her students about making manuscript books), as well as their transcription, translation, and transmission.

Manuscripts provided Catherine with her intellectual food; conferences gave her oxygen—working at a university without a graduate program, on a small island off the east coast of Canada, she needed to meet up with fellow scholars to discuss ideas and network. When she died, she was still hoping to complete an edition, with a comprehensive introduction and notes, of *A Talkyng of the Love of God* (a fourteenth-century composite adaptation of material from the Wooing Group and St Anselm’s *Meditations*), which she was working on with Margaret Healy-Varley. Margaret is one of many young scholars who gained much from Catherine’s support and encouragement; she had organised a session at the 2020 Leeds International Medieval Congress in her memory, though cancellation of the in-person conference amidst a global health crisis postponed this event to 2021. The theme of this memorial session is “The Wooing Group and its Descendants”; the other contributors, Ayoush Lazikani and Annie Sutherland, have also been inspired and encouraged by Catherine’s work and generosity.

I consider myself fortunate and privileged to have become a friend of Catherine, having met her at the first International Anchoritic Society (IAS) conference in 2002. She was often the first person I turned to with a query or when I needed advice. I am hoping to repay my debt of gratitude to some extent by helping Liz Herbert McAvoy and Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa on a project to celebrate Catherine’s work and “through examinations of silence and enclosure, inward speaking and outward performance, and translation and transmission” to “make silence speak.” Liz and Naoë are both members of the IAS, Liz having organised that first memorable conference, and Naoë, with Catherine, having edited the papers from the IAS conference held in Hiroshima, Japan in 2008. Catherine was a dedicated teacher and mentor to many—including also Jennifer Brown, whom she continued to mentor into an established academic career—as well as a dedicated researcher and writer. She inspired new generations of scholars, and she was a much-valued colleague to scholars throughout the world as well as at her own University of Prince Edward Island.

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