

Dear Barbara,

We are here to mourn your death and celebrate your life. I wish I had the oratorical power of a Bossuet, but your own rhetorical ability will have to be my inspiration.

Our friendship began ten years before I came to Trinity: we met at a conference on the relationship between text and image at Manchester university at which you gave a masterful paper on – guess who? – Eugène Fromentin. We spoke, and that was the start of fifty years of close friendship, sealed when I came to Ireland for the very first time, in May 1979, to be interviewed for the chair of French. With your usual kindness and generosity, you invited Pat (my wife) and me to dinner the evening before the interviews started. Each of us then said how delighted we would be if the other were appointed.

May 1979 was the month when Mrs Thatcher was elected to government in Britain; we could not have been happier at the coincidence of being able to quit the country. From that autumn, we were colleagues, and I could not have wished for one more loyal and supportive. Being a more constructive and imaginative administrator than I ever was, and having a vision for the future of your discipline in a European context, you were Dean of the Faculty of Arts for a total of nine years. During that time, you developed and steered skilfully through all the committee stages several innovative new courses which recognised languages as a key to future opportunities in Europe, combining them with Computer studies and linguistics, Law, Business studies, and developing with several colleagues a master's course in Textual and Visual Studies which from the outset involved the University of Paris 7 and soon added the Free University of Amsterdam. You also set up a joint degree in music education with the Royal Academy of Music, of which you were made an Honorary

Fellow. Together, you and I made possible the establishment of the Drama and Theatre Studies department.

On the very day you died, an *Irish Times* columnist, writing in the wake of the tragic farce of Brexit, lamented the lack of language skills among the Irish: 'Paradoxically, a tool – English – that supposedly underpins Ireland's global ambition is also responsible for narrowing its field of vision. Fixing that is about to become a national imperative.'¹ Barbara knew and preached that decades ago.

Your commitment to Trinity was second to none. Simultaneously, in 1956, you were awarded your Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Law degrees, taking your M.A in 1960. After graduating, you studied for your Ph.D. at Cambridge, completing your thesis on the painter and writer Fromentin in 1962. Then, after posts at the Universities of Manchester and Exeter, you returned permanently to your *alma mater* in 1965. In 1968, when Trinity first allowed women to be elected to fellowship, you were one of a small handful to be so elected. 1978 saw you promoted to a personal chair as Professor of French Literature and you took your Litt. D. (Doctor of Letters) in 1995, ten years before you officially retired.

Generations of students are indebted to you. From the firm base of Trinity, you were extremely supportive of any initiatives regarding French across the country and of younger scholars working in the field. You attended countless committee meetings aimed at promoting our discipline and the improvement of the already good relationship between Ireland and France.

The artistic work and writings of Eugène Fromentin lay at the heart of your scholarship and publications. Your 1966 edition of his novel, *Dominique*, is considered definitive and your 1995 edition of his correspondence, running to some two and a half thousand pages, unsurpassed. Your 1987 edition, with James Thomson, of his

¹ Ruadhán MacCormaic, 'Ireland is not ready for post-Brexit future', *The Irish Times*, 14 December 2019, p. 19.

paintings and drawings had to be expanded to two volumes in 2008 because of all the discoveries you had made in the meantime. Meanwhile, you published in 2000 a highly praised critical biography running to over 600 pages which was given a French translation in 2006.

Fromentin was undoubtedly the central focus of your scholarly attention, but the fact that he was both painter and writer led you to explore the interconnection between literature and painting in other nineteenth-century Frenchmen, to investigate their correspondence and delve into their manuscripts. So, with the Modern Humanities Research Association, you published editions of work by Narcisse Berchère and Albert Aubert; elsewhere, you edited work by Gustave Drouineau and Edgar Quinet, and wrote articles on Gustave Moreau, Charles Baudelaire and more. Furthermore, because of your competence in Irish as well as French, and because of your insatiable thirst for knowledge and determination to share it, you published the personal diaries of Françoise Henry recounting her archaeological discoveries on the islands of Inishkea. One of your most recent publications, in conjunction with Jane Conroy, was in the *Analecta Hibernica* of Irish Manuscripts Commission: 'France and Ireland in the Late Eighteenth Century: The Correspondence of Charles Coquebert de Montbret and Andrew Caldwell'.

But it is not your last. Through the good offices of our colleague James Mason, you had what you described as your greatest find ever: the unpublished 1824 manuscript of a journey through Britain and Ireland written and beautifully illustrated by Edouard de Tocqueville, the elder brother of the more famous Alexis. In the full knowledge that your days were numbered, you were determined to complete the editorial work on it and, by entrusting mechanical aspects of the work to a small team of devoted colleagues in Ireland, France and the Netherlands, you could be assured that the project would be seen

through the Paris-based press you had chosen and which had accepted with alacrity.

All this has brought you honours aplenty. Fromentin's home town of La Rochelle made you an honorary citizen and, over the years, you collected many other distinctions, among them: *Chevalier dans l'Ordre National du Mérite* (1975); Member of the Royal Irish Academy (1988); Member of the Academia Europaea (1989); *Officier dans l'Ordre National du Mérite* (2004); and the crowning and quite exceptional glory for a foreign academic of *Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur* earlier this year. You go out in a blaze of glory.

Your work will continue to have the life you have given it, Barbara. Your publications will remain as witness to the excellence of scholarship which has earned you world-wide esteem: *scripta manent*. We honour you for what you did, but love you for who you were. For your family, colleagues and friends, treasured memories will remain: of an exceptionally gifted, gracious, courageous, loving and lovely human being who will be deeply missed.

Roger Little

Former Professor of French (1776), Trinity College, Dublin

20.xii.2019