

## Obituary: Barbara Hayley

On 15 May 1991 Barbara Hayley died following a car crash at the untimely age of fifty-two. The shock to the academic community was and continues to be enormous. Those who are members of IASAIL will mourn the loss of a former secretary (1982-88) very strongly committed to the aims and ideals of the association. Those who knew Barbara more personally, her colleagues at St Patrick's College, Maynooth, where she occupied the chair of English with great distinction, her fellow-committee members at the Royal Irish Academy, where she was secretary of the National Committee for Anglo-Irish Literature at the time of her death, and all the many people in literary, publishing and intellectual life in Ireland and abroad who were her friends, must find her death painful in the extreme.

Barbara Hayley was always a welcome contributor to *Irish University Review*. In particular, her essay for the Brian Moore issue (spring 1988) is memorable for its characteristic thoroughness and depth of insight. She had agreed to write an essay on her beloved William Carleton for the upcoming *Festschrift* for Maurice Harmon (spring 1992); the loss of such a contribution will be acutely felt.

By kind permission, we publish in what follows the funeral address by the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr Donald Caird. We conclude with an appreciation by Peter Denman, lecturer in the Department of English, St Patrick's College, Maynooth, who is poetry editor of *Irish University Review*.

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**Address by the Archbishop of Dublin at the Funeral Service for  
Professor Barbara Hayley in St Mary's Church, Maynooth, on  
Monday 20th May at 10 a.m.**

This morning we come to express in the context of this service of prayer and scripture reading, of psalm and hymn, what Barbara meant to each one of us, and to share with Walter, Sophie, Celia and her mother Mabel our sympathy and our love, knowing how much more deeply her life was entwined with theirs.

Words are always feeble when we try to console those who are tragically bereaved and our words fall pathetically short as we struggle to express the burden of our hearts; but we can repeat those



words which were known and loved and faithfully and joyfully accepted by Barbara who knew from childhood the bible and the liturgy, the words from St John's gospel "Let not your hearts be troubled, believe in God, believe also in me.... In my Father's house are many rooms.... I go to prepare a place for you."

Barbara worshipped in this church and often played the organ to assist the worship of others. The Church of Ireland was important to her as the ambience of her faith and her culture; it was the place from which she started in her ever-widening search to understand, to appreciate and in loving openness to accept other spiritual insights, other ways of worship and other paths of culture. Her mind was open and explorative in terms of faith and culture. When she came people found the best in themselves drawn out, because there were no barriers of prejudice or suspicion in her mind and heart.

Some weeks ago I met her at a reception and she said how privileged she felt to be teaching what she most loved to study and to teach, Irish literature in English, which I think she preferred to call her subject, rather than Anglo-Irish Literature: and to teach it in a University College for which she had the greatest affection and respect and to teach it to students who were half-way there already by heredity and nurture in their study and appreciation of the subject. She was proud to be a professor in St Patrick's College, Maynooth; she knew that it was a unique honour for her and this confirmed her sense of privilege. She never took privilege for granted.

A brilliant student in Trinity, she did not pursue the academic life immediately on graduating, but only returned to it after some years in the publishing world and after her marriage. She had time to test her academic vocation and she found it to be true and she never faltered in its pursuit.

Her study was never remote and coldly academic. She had a deep empathy with the Ireland celebrated in the writings of William Carleton and the Hidden Ireland of Daniel Corkery; her understanding and love of Ireland was inspired by Carleton's writings but not confined to them; Hyde, Moore, Yeats, Lady Gregory, Synge, O'Casey were all an integral part of what she loved and thought. She was proud of Ireland's literary heritage and literary fame. Her enthusiasm was infectious and was easily caught by those whom she taught and those who were privileged to hear her lecture. Her concern for and kindness to her students were proverbial. To her they were persons with a full life of inter-personal relations and concerns apart from their strictly academic interests and responsibilities. She was human and humane in her relationship with them; and for this reason she drew the best from them. We express our sympathy to St Patrick's University College, to its President, Staff and students in

the loss of a distinguished and devoted professor who was proud of the College and jealous for its high reputations in the academic world, and who never spared herself in its service.

We mourn Barbara, and those who have known and loved her for a long time are reminded of a verse by Yeats,

While still I may, I write for you  
The love I lived, the dream I knew.  
From our birthday until we die  
Is but the winking of an eye.

We mourn for our own great loss; and turn again to the words of Christ recorded by St John: "Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms ... if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you." Not a place of spectral uniformity but a place where all the richness, diversity and potential of the whole person is fulfilled in the fellowship of the one "who lets be", and who said "where I am, you may be also."

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#### Professor Barbara Hayley: An Appreciation

As we at Maynooth assimilated the news of Barbara Hayley's death in a car accident, there was grief at the loss of a colleague, scholar and companion; added to that shock was incredulous surprise at the thought that one so vital and with such energy should be suddenly stilled. As a friend remarked, "She will be absolutely furious at being dead." Barbara was fuelled by her furies and her friendships; I imagine it made her a formidable opponent, but I know she was the most wonderful ally to have on your side in any arena, whether social, administrative or academic. And at Maynooth we were fortunate in that she was unremittingly on our side: on the side of the students and the staff of the Department of English — *her* Department — and on the side of the college. Furthermore, her campaigns were always to achieve something positive, never to obstruct or delay.

Her commitment showed not just in the way she shaped the intellectual and professional life of so many who came in contact with her, but also in her tireless support for scholarly activity at all levels. After a long day — and her days were invariably long — she would travel willingly to speak at a school function, or participate in a meeting, or to encourage some lonely postgraduate student whose

research was in the doldrums. And all this was done not out of a tired sense of duty but from a delight in and a commitment to the idea of an extended community of learning.

We have lost an academic and critic of distinction, and the loss will be felt in many respects. There was her authoritative work on William Carleton and on nineteenth-century periodicals, her participation in the Yeats Summer School to which she was so looking forward to returning this year, her long and distinguished contribution to IASAIL of which she was a Vice-President, and the unremitting stimulus of her presence at any gathering. But those of us who worked with her at Maynooth, students and colleagues alike, will have a particular and enduring memory of that presence. She was proud of what she had done, and that healthy pride transferred to all of us. Most of all she delighted in having an English Department that was cohesive; she relished gathering us together, whether it was to chat over a glass of wine out of a paper cup or to enjoy an elaborate argumentative meal.

Her office and mine were side by side in the long low glass-fronted Arts Building, looking south across the Galway Road towards the spire and the old campus of Maynooth and separated only by the side door into the building. It will take a long time for me to realise that, as I go in through that door, there can no longer be the smiling glance through the window each morning, at once appraising and welcoming. It is not only the greeting itself that I shall miss, but also the delicious apprehension that when Barbara was about anything could happen. That was her particular enriching gift: she conferred on others a sense of possibilities — anything *could* happen.

P.D.

