

In Memoriam

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A Tribute to Judith H. Anderson

Tamara A. Goeglein and Kathy O. Smith

My Teacher, My Mentor, by Tamara A. Goeglein

In the spring of 1984, I took Judith's inaugural John Donne seminar. A couple months later, I found in my student mailbox a copy of R. C. Bald's *John Donne, A Life*. In it was an Indiana University interdepartmental memo from her that still serves as its bookmark: "I hope you can use this. (It's useful.)" Many of Judith's students would recognize this latent gesture and its message, especially the parenthetical afterthought. I often discovered memos in my mailbox with her afterthoughts about our recent conversations, which made them ongoing, usually recursive, and always useful. I cherished this about Judith.

I am not alone. Nathaniel Smith (PhD, 2008) recalled this aspect of her presence in the classroom:

She guided class discussions with a palpable joy that was contagious, bringing to life words and worlds so apparently remote from our own. She was legendary at Indiana for reading aloud in class . . . She read aloud every single class meeting, sometimes stopping to comment on syntax, meter,



pattern, or idea, swelling and breaking the faintest smile at a thought that seemed just to have occurred to her.

These were teaching moments, spontaneous ones that John Donne Society members can no doubt easily imagine. A question-and-answer comment about one's conference paper that seemed to be taking shape even as she spoke it and, more often than not, to be taken up again later, privately, during a coffee break or in the courtesy suite: "Oh, I had another thought about" Sometimes welcome, sometimes not, her comments, I think we would agree, were always useful for improving our ideas.

Judith was avowedly a practical literary critic. She says as much in *Reading the Allegorical Intertext*: "While my own approach to [textual concerns] is initially and recurrently theorized, its strongest allegiance is to practice and demonstration."¹For Judith, ideologically driven interpretation—coded and predicable—is the death-knell for exploratory engagement with literature, literary theory, and cultural history. She called her approach a "creative exchange" with textuality, a creativity I associate with Judith as a teacher-scholar, because she not only practiced it but also encouraged it in her students.² It took time. She was my dissertation director, along with about fifty others (!) over the course her teaching career, 1964-2013. She served on nearly 100 dissertation committees, and I am sure this crew will concur that dissertating with Judith was not for the faint of heart. There were no short-cuts, no concessions to matters substantial or grammatical. Lots of incisive commentary that, for me at least, invited an occasional *serio-ludere* reaction. In one of my chapters, I included a Ramist graphic whose scale she deemed too small: "Blow it up," she wrote in the margin. In a moment of frustrated mischief, I dropped a memo in her mailbox, asking whether she meant the graphic or the whole chapter. The next iteration of her commentary witnessed much playful praise on the enlarged graphic: she got my point as I got hers.

Judith was a generous mentor to me and to our profession. Late in my graduate school days, I assisted her and Elizabeth Kirk with their

¹ New York: Fordham University Press, 2008, p. 1.

² *Translating Investments: Metaphor and the Dynamic of Cultural Change in Tudor-Stuart England* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), p. 6.



Friends and colleagues at Judith's retirement celebration in 2013.

edition of E. Talbot Donaldson's *Piers Plowman*.³ He too died too soon, leaving his remarkable translation in need of editorial completion. Judith invited me into a rare second-order learning experience, looking over her shoulder looking over Donaldson's shoulder, and, in this, I learned to see brilliance in the tiny details of *Piers Plowman* and in Judith's illuminating editing. She served on many editorial boards, reviewed innumerable submissions, and co-edited five scholarly volumes, one with Christine R. Farris, *Integrating Literature and Writing Instruction* (2007).⁴ I may have inadvertently occasioned this collection

³ *Piers Plowman: An Alliterative Verse Translation*, trans. E. Talbot Donaldson, ed. Judith H. Anderson and Elizabeth D. Kirk (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990).

⁴ *Integrating Literature and Writing Instruction: First-Year English, Humanities Core Courses, Seminars*, ed. Judith H. Anderson and Christine R. Farris (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2007).

devoted to undergraduate writing pedagogy by initiating discussions, early in my academic career, about how best to teach critical writing. What emerged was this MLA volume, with its scope encompassing creative pedagogies across a variety of institutions. Surprising to some perhaps, Judith was quite invested in her undergraduate students as well as her graduate students. Not surprising, Indiana University awarded her its Trustee Teaching Award four times in addition to its prestigious Chancellor's Professor chair.

I am grateful that Judith introduced me to the John Donne Society in 2012, nearly three decades after our Donne seminar: "You should return to Donne [as if it had been a couple years ago!] and come to this annual conference—it is genuinely collegial and fun-loving." With that, I joined her for the Leiden meeting, and of course she was right, and here we are. Over the years, Judith became my friend but, as I look back, she never stopped mentoring me. Emails replaced memos, yet her suggesting books to read and conferences to attend, and her reading my essays and inviting me to read hers, were a constant, welcome presence in my life. I have been fortunate, and I miss Judith very much.

My Friend Judith, by Kathy O. Smith

It was not so much as a scholar or even as a teacher that I knew Judith. She was much more, to me, a very dear friend. No doubt others are more familiar with her work and able to discuss at length her contributions to the field. I am sorry her students Tamara and Jennifer were not able to be here this time, for they are among those that could.

Still, the Judith I knew I suspect few others did. She was in some ways a very private person. We first met some thirty years ago when I joined the English department at Indiana University Bloomington. We met at a cocktail party, and I still remember how in awe of her I was, realizing that here was the author of so many of the texts I had read in grad school. She terrified me.

But as I got to know her, I found her to be one of the most professionally generous colleagues I had ever met. We bonded over preparing the food for an end of the year departmental party. Nothing must do but the strawberry shortcake dessert I had told her I had made the week before, and so it was that we spent some three or four hours the evening before the party hulling strawberries and talking about the



Kathy Smith, Judith Anderson, and Jennifer Vaught in 2020.

department and our teaching, all the while she was admonishing me about not taking off too much of the strawberry when I remove the cap—and drinking a lot of wine. From there on out we came to consider ourselves kindred spirits and partners in crime.

It was she who introduced me to the Donne conference years ago in Gulfport and it is with her that I would attend it for the next million years, riding shotgun in her Cadillac as she drove from Bloomington all the way down to Baton Rouge in two days, stopping overnight in the

Sikeston Holiday Inn on the way down and the Memphis Holiday Inn on the way back, where our stays invariably ended with arguments with the desk clerks over our bills. We spent the time in the car analyzing the department's faults, considering and reconsidering appropriate titles for her latest projects, and arguing about some of the claims she was making in her latest project. An ongoing disagreement about the meaning of nostalgia took us from Bedford, Indiana to the middle of Tennessee.

I should be careful to reiterate that SHE did all the driving, and how she did it I will never know. She prided herself, I think, on her stamina and the vigor of her mind and her body—my husband and I were always admonishing her to stay off the ladder and let someone else clean out the gutters. More than ten years older than I, she could outwalk me ten times over. Wherever we went, she always insisted on taking a walk, so off we went, she strolling ahead like a stork, and I waddling behind her like a puffin.

In fact, she tried to walk at least two miles every day wherever she was. It was her rather sudden inability to make that usual trek that made her aware that something was wrong. And indeed it was. It was hard to watch her grow weaker and weaker every day for the next few months, but there was never any decline in her mental health or her intellect: I have never encountered anyone who met the prospect of death more bravely or more stoically.

As her niece and I acknowledged as we followed her directive to scatter her ashes in Yellowwood Lake just outside of Bloomington, she was indeed in heart and spirit a true BRITOMART, and we remain confident that that attribution would have pleased her.

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Sean McDowell and Judith Anderson in 2010.

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