

Patricia Carr Brückmann (1932–2019)

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Pat Brückmann, who died in Toronto this spring aged 86, will mostly be remembered as a scholar and teacher of the widest interests, a specialist in the English eighteenth century, who also fostered and encouraged the expansion of post-reformation Catholic studies in Britain and Canada. She was born in Boston in 1932, and studied at Trinity College, Washington. On her return to Boston, she met her future husband, the mediaeval historian John Brückmann, on the steps of the rare books library. They settled in Toronto not long afterwards, he teaching at York University and she at Trinity College, Toronto, where she was loved and trusted by many generations of students. She gave her time so lavishly and unhesitatingly to teaching, mentoring, and encouraging the work of others that her list of publications is relatively slender, though her influence on a whole generation of scholarship has been immense.

Although her remarkable book *A Manner of Correspondence: a study of the Scriblerus Club*, published in 1996, focused on Alexander Pope and his circle, studied in loving and patient detail, her literary interests were wide. She had made herself an expert on Nabokov, initially, as far as one could gather, to support the interests of a particularly gifted student. There was fine work on Chaucer which did not find a published form. And, most importantly in this context, she was part of the expansion of the study of British Catholic history and literature, which gained momentum in the late twentieth century with the pioneering work of Eamon Duffy, Alison Shell, Anne Dillon and Peter Marshall. She was an animating presence (she was in her private life a quietly devout Catholic) at the colloquia and conferences on Catholic literature and material culture held at University College London and elsewhere in the 1990s, and, since she spent time almost every year at Downside Abbey, was a pivotal person in the 2000 colloquium on Catholic manuscripts and material culture held there with the intention of introducing custodians from religious houses and organisations to a wide range of people from secular universities and colleges. In all of these activities, as in the wonderfully informed and meditated

paper which she gave on Augustine Baker and Serenus Cressy, she gave warmth and confidence to what was then a somewhat tentative group of academics, attempting to re-negotiate historical and literary canons with a sceptical (sometimes very vocally sceptical) secular academy.

In her role as a quiet supporter of the study of the post-reformation Catholic past, she read many monographs in manuscript and did a scarcely-quantifiable amount of offstage work in encouraging and promoting the scholarship of her colleagues. Hers was a rare generosity, even a rare prodigality with her time, and this generosity was a poignant reminder, to those struggling in the over-managed universities of the turn of the century, of a more leisured and thoughtful academic world. Her interest in recusancy flowered into a most informed interest in Jacobitism, focused on the figure of the devout and unfortunate wife of James Francis Edward Stuart, the Polish princess, Clementina Sobieska.

For many summers, she used to visit my wife and myself in the north of Scotland before or after her visit to Downside. Our first encounter with her was as an academic acquaintance, an acquaintance which rapidly ripened into close friendship on account of her brilliance and generosity. She enjoyed the Northern pastoral, quiet days in the country reading and thinking, with an occasional trip to Speyside or Cromarty, and in the evening, lively conversation about everyone's work in progress among a group of very old friends, sometimes sitting outside in the endless silvery light of northern high summer, when it never gets completely dark, or on cooler evenings, gathered in the parlour which had its curtains taken down for the summer and was open to the night. Anne Dillon's memories of Pat's summer peregrinations give a flavour of these conversations.

'Pat came to stay with me at home in Devon in the summer. I used to drive up to Downside — where she stayed with the Benedictine community — to collect her at the end of her visit there and bring her home. As she got into the car she would begin a conversation with me as if we had seen one another only an hour before rather than a year, and this would continue until I took her to the station a couple of weeks later to travel on to the next stage in her journey. In that time with us she would range over an astonishingly wide intellectual landscape, she would discuss her own work and mine in detail, offer the most wise and pertinent advice, encourage me and read my work for me. I remember one visit, when I was in the final stages of editing a book manuscript, she ignored my protestations that she should be resting and relaxing and insisted on reading the whole manuscript with the sharpest, all-seeing editorial eye.'

In her later years, during a long and productive retirement, she made a detailed (but so far unpublished) study of the American author and illustrator Edward Gorey, a Harvard graduate, polymath, and

eccentric after her own heart. She died in Toronto this spring and is survived by her children Peter and Elizabeth. It is very right that she should be commemorated in this journal: she published comparatively little in the field, but she did an incalculable amount to support the development of British Catholic history.