

Barbara Godard and I were friends. We walked Toronto's neighbourhoods and ravines together. Barbara knew a lot about the city - its formation and history, its intellectual and cultural life, its plants and animals, its waterways and buried streams. We walked and talked. She pondered whatever was pressing - political events, her next day's lecture, what her son Alexi was up to, how to handle the raccoon breaking in through her third floor window. I heard about the developmental trajectory of the English novel, the biography of Margaret Atwood she was writing for the Canadian Encyclopedia, her study of Cree language and theatre, the music she was practicing for her recorder ensemble, stories of student days in Paris in the late sixties, the Roland Bathes lectures she attended at that time - many, many things. I talked about whatever impinged on our senses as we walked, whatever caught my attention - the light, Mayflies, birdsong, blossoms, posters, renovations, roadwork, pollution. Barbara would interrupt her rapid-fire flow and without missing a beat, join my thread. She had earned Girl Guide badges for identifying birds and birdcalls, trees and indigenous plants, cloud and weather patterns, and she would supply rich detail on any topic before returning to her own subject.

When we walked in *her* neighbourhood, every street, alley and park sparked stories. Barbara not only knew many residents, past and present going back to the early seventies, but she knew the history of residential architecture, like which year stained glass windows of birds gave way to stained glass windows of geometrics. I think she said it was 1889.

Recently when I was really missing Barbara's company I took one of our campus walks. I found myself in the grassy area across from Hart House, behind the former Stewart Observatory, now the Student Union Building. I remembered being there with Barbara one spring afternoon last year. Two ancient crusty cannon are installed on a hillock there and we talked about their role in a decisive battle between French and British. It was a Maritime battle and it stimulated Barbara to recall her summer as an immersion student on St Pierre and Miquelon where she lived completely in French for the first time.

When I was back on that spot again this spring I re-read the plaque that tells the story of that regime changing battle. It reads, "Historic Cannon from Louisberg, Nova Scotia. On June 23, 1758, the British Navy besieged Louisberg, capital and major settlement of the French colony of Cape Briton Island.... After the fall of Quebec in 1759 and Montreal in 1760, Louisberg finally yielded, thus ending France's military and colonial presence in North America. More than 100 cannons from the 1758 siege were lost in the Louisberg Harbour and of these about 20 were raised in 1899. Two were purchased by University of Toronto as historic monuments."

While I was reading, an episode I had completely repressed suddenly resurfaced. I remembered the last time I had read the plaque I was busy dissociating myself from what was going on. Because after Barbara had shared her stories with me, she had wandered over to one of the cannon and to my horror she nimbly clambered astride a cannon barrel. Completely embarrassed, I immersed myself in reading and acted

as if I didn't know her, had never known her, was there on my own. Too bad for me. One of Barbara's amazing characteristics of mind was her ability to inhabit all her ages without censure. She identified equally with herself as toddler, as child, as teenager and adult. All her experience was of a piece.

I once had a dream about the poet Charles Olson. In the dream he threw a fistful of gold dust at me. I reached out both arms to catch it, but in spite of my efforts it all slipped through my grasp. My hands were empty but when I looked down I saw I was covered in gold dust. Knowing Barbara was like that. She knew so much and talked so fast it was hard to hold on to things she said. But I've been coloured by the gift of her friendship, and I don't suppose I'm the only one. The gold she shared is legion.

That we're here today is a kind of full circle. Barbara Godard had a powerful relationship with this area. She studied at the University of Toronto as an undergraduate. She knew all the shortcuts through campus. Our last coffee together, just days before she died, was at a Yorkville café she frequented in the sixties. She swam at the Athletic Centre, gave books to Trinity College and maintained a carrel at Robarts Library until the end of her days. She also headed the University of Toronto Semiotic Circle, which meets in Northrop Frye Hall on Queen's Park Circle. Another kind of full circle because Barbara studied with Northrop Frye. She not only knew the hidden paths around campus, she also knew its hidden stories - like that unwanted babies in the nineteenth century were drowned in a well near what is now called Philosophers' Walk. As a long-time denizen, this area is Barbara Godard's stomping ground. It's totally fitting this street now bears her name - Barbara Godard Way. She really did have *a way* about her. I'm only sorry Barbara is not here to share the occasion with us.