

Marianne Gosztonyi Ainley (1937-2008)

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Éloge

Marianne Gosztonyi Ainley (1937-2008)*

To everyone who knew her, Marika Ainley resembled a force of nature who united her many friends through the strong gravitational pull of her warm personality. Whether you entered her orbit as student or colleague, or were otherwise acquainted, once she had you in her high beams you remained in her sights forever. The fact that it has taken CSTHA until now to commemorate the scholarly life of its first woman president (1993-99) reflects the deep shock that her death on 26 September 2008 visited even upon those who were aware that Marika had been battling illness for some time.

Born in Budapest, Hungary on 4 December 1937, Marika Veronika Gosztonyi earned a Diploma in industrial chemistry from the Petrik Lajos Polytechnical College there in 1956. When Russian tanks entered the city to end the short-lived Hungarian Revolution later that year, she recalled, she and others ventured on foot along the local railway lines that led into Austria, and from there she joined relatives in Sweden. In 1958 Marika emigrated to Montreal, where, with her first husband, she welcomed their beloved daughter Vicky. Marika worked in Montreal as an industrial laboratory technician at Chemaco and Imperial Tobacco, attending night school to earn a B.A. in English and French Literature at Sir George Williams (now Concordia) University. The 1960s having brought this fashionable flower child face to face with the love of her life, David Ainley; she remarried in 1966. That year Marika also began work in the Chemistry Department at Loyola College, first as a research assistant and later as a laboratory instructor. Dreams of undertaking full-time graduate studies in Anthropology went temporarily on hold with the birth of their son, Mark Ainley, in 1969.

Marika meanwhile focused her wide-ranging love of nature on birds, serving the Quebec Society for the Protection of Birds in long term administrative, editorial, and research capacities and earning Cornell University's certificate in Ornithology in 1979. She also chose pottery as a practical outlet for creative passions that intensified as she matured. As

* See also "In Memoriam: Marika (Marianne) Gosztonyi Ainley 1937-2008," *Concordia Journal* 4, 3 (2008), (http://cjournal.concordia.ca/archives/20081009/in_memoriam_marika_marianne_gosztonyi_ainley_19372008.php); Jacqueline Holler, "Marianne Veronika Goztonyi Ainley, 1937-2008," (http://unbc.ca/assets/womenstudies/dr_marianne_gosztonyi_ainley.pdf); C. Stuart Houston, "In Memoriam: Marianne Gosztonyi Ainley, 1937-2008," *The Auk* 126, 3 (2009): 699; and Mary Baldwin, "Marika's Academic Career," on *Marika's Space* (<http://marikaainley.blogspot.com>).

fate would have it, these exciting formative years in History of Science as a developing discipline in Montreal's rich bilingual scholarly community lent a historical dimension to Marika's (now Marianne's) passion for birds, with the completion of both her MSc thesis (*La professionnalisation de l'ornithologie américaine, 1870-1979*) at the Université de Montréal (1980) as well as her PhD dissertation (*From Natural History to Avian Biology: Canadian Ornithology, 1860-1950*) at McGill University (1985).

The early 1980s had added another crucial dimension to the newly minted Dr. Ainley's scholarly outlook, in the feminist perspective exemplified for her by Margaret W. Rossiter's much-admired *Women Scientists in America: Struggles and Strategies to 1940* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982). SSHRC Postdoctoral and Strategic grants enabled Marika, even as an independent scholar, to begin publishing several key works on related themes in rapid succession. Her research into the scientific career of the ornithologist William Rowan, who founded the University of Alberta's Department of Zoology and pioneered experimental studies of bird migration during the interwar years, explored important themes first in "Rowan vs. Tory: Conflicting Views of Scientific Research in Canada, 1920-1935," which appeared in *Scientia Canadensis* 12, 1 (1988); and then more fully in her scholarly monograph *Restless Energy: A Biography of William Rowan 1891-1957* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1993). Marika considered the latter work in particular a "feminist scientific biography," in the sense that she was interested in exposing the hierarchical, male-dominated power structures—and their wide-ranging consequences—that privileged experimental approaches over fieldwork even in the realm of modern ecology during the early 20th century.

By that time, Marika had also built strong connections with the Simone de Beauvoir Institute at Concordia University, first as a Research Associate and then as a part-time instructor, and she began teaching Women's Studies there on a firmer footing in 1988. Her goal was to historicize Canadian women's roles in modern science and technology, an area bereft of publications especially for use in the classroom. Challenged rather than daunted, Marika characteristically deployed both the collaborative as well as the critical edges of her emerging feminist approach in editing *Despite the Odds: Essays on Canadian Women and Science* (Montreal: Véhicule Press), a wide-ranging and innovative anthology which appeared in 1990. She served as principal of the Simone de Beauvoir Institute and Director of its Women's Studies Programme during a dynamic period of the Institute's history (1991-95).

In 1995, once again taking up with great aplomb the challenge of a major life change, Marika and David Ainley exchanged the urban familiarities of Montreal for what seemed to them the unknown wilds of Prince George, British Columbia, where the recently founded University of Northern

British Columbia had appointed her Professor and Chair of Women's Studies. With the opportunity to shape not only UNBC's undergraduate but also its nascent graduate programme in Women's Studies, Marika had at last found her niche; she loved the interaction with graduate students in particular. She also loved the interaction with wild nature, including the regular sightings of bears stopping by in her own back yard. These years expanded her vision across the Pacific, with Visiting Scholar appointments in Australia and New Zealand, where she was enchanted by new landscapes and their denizens—human, plant, and animal—resulting in a spate of articles that pursued her growing curiosities about the defining roles of pioneer women and aboriginal peoples in constructions of scientific knowledge. Marika retired in 2003, pulling up stakes once more to move with David to Victoria, British Columbia, where they could be closer to their children. Retirement brought a fresh burst of creative activity, as she took up painting—and exhibiting—with her beloved art group, the Madronas; and, with equal determination, the synthesis of a hard-won, lifelong collection of oral interviews that formed the basis of the work perhaps closest to her heart, “Overlooked Dimensions: Women and Scientific Work at Canadian Universities, 1884-1980.” She died before the manuscript's journey through the publications process could be completed.

Ultimately Marika Ainley's life itself constituted a powerful, passionate synthesis—of earth mother, pantheist, naturalist, teacher, perpetual student, and historian driven by firsthand experience of what it meant to be an invisible contributor to scientific knowledge. Marika attended no scholarly conference anywhere without organizing active birding excursions; she published no work without reflecting deeply about meanings and manifestations of power, especially in the less visible corners of scientific knowledge. I encountered her first anonymously, in her generous, helpful, and instructive comments on the manuscript that became *Inventing Canada*, which was much improved by her careful input. I glimpsed some of the rest of her richly variegated world in the lovely paintings that she simply handed over, asking only that I describe how they were framed and where they were hung; on walks that began simply enough, but inevitably became soul-searching nature lessons; and on my first field trip to the legendary fossil fields at Joggins, Nova Scotia in 2004, where the rest of us had no choice but to stand back and enjoy her sheer exuberance at returning to that naturalist's hallowed place once more. Marika Ainley is deeply missed, and that is as it should be.

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