

IN MEMORIAM

DIANE JORGE

The Classical Association conference held at the University of the Orange Free State in January devoted a brief period of a plenary session to an obituary for Diane Jorge, who was to have presented a paper on Catullus but was killed in a tragic motor car accident in Namibia in December 1994. It was a tribute to her achievement and a mark of our loss that her memory was honoured in this unprecedented way, as she was one of the youngest of our colleagues and one who still had to gain a permanent post at a university.

But funerary rhetoric is quite inappropriate for someone so ebullient and unconventional. She fell victim to the physical laws of gravity, but in her academic career she appeared to defy, if not gravity, at least the predictions of those who had taught her at each preceding stage. I enjoyed the reaction of amused disbelief from her former Latin teacher at Sans Souci when I reported on her progress as an undergraduate. After graduating Diane was planning to take a law degree, but switched to Latin Honours. She then registered for the MA degree in Literary Studies and having completed more than half this interdisciplinary course she switched to a straight MA degree in Latin despite all our warnings and advice. We were wrong and she gained the MA *cum laude* for a thesis on *Female characterisation in the epic poetry of Statius*' (1990). She then gained admission to the Master of Studies in Oxford, and gave her friends more anxious moments as she delayed travelling to Britain till the last possible date, and returned to Cape Town for the vacations. But in less than a year she completed her course work, which included Homer, Catullus and textual criticism, and wrote another thesis and won the degree *cum laude*.

Her academic record is an object lesson to university teachers who would categorise students and fit them into slots. Diane herself was an excellent teacher, as she proved in temporary lectureships which she held at the University of Natal in Durban (1988), at the University of Cape Town (1988 and 1990) and at the University of the Western Cape (1991 and from 1993). She had an extraordinary ability to empower others by getting them to defy expectations of failure. She thrived on challenges and led by example. As the universities of South Africa grapple with the problems of transformation, now there was a good role model of a university teacher. We miss her.

J.E. Atkinson