

IMPRESA DA UNIVERSIDADE DE COIMBRA
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HOMENAGEM A
IRENE RAMALHO SANTOS

THE EDGE OF ONE OF MANY CIRCLES

ISABEL CALDEIRA
GRAÇA CAPINHA
JACINTA MATOS

ORGANIZAÇÃO

ON FRIENDSHIP

Lynn Whitford

It has been our very good fortune to have had this wonderful woman as a close friend for many years. We met when we were, I now realize, very young, when Maria Irene and Boaventura (who have become accustomed to being called Irene and Boa in our house) first began coming to the University of Wisconsin as visiting scholars. For the past 25 years or so they have lived in our house while they are in Madison, which has allowed our friendship to deepen. They and we happen to have been married on the same day and year, and the four of us have in fact been together in sickness and in health, through good times and bad, and been able to share some of each other's joys and to empathize with one another in some times of sorrow. It has been our pleasure to discuss matters large and small, political and personal, as we shared good food and excellent Portuguese wine.

Irene's scholarship and vast knowledge of literature and especially poetry have also enriched our lives. She has always been quietly generous with her knowledge. As I have begun to add text to my metal sculptures in recent years, she has helped me find poems I would never have come across. Her willingness to discuss poetry with me and to give me some context and help in finding new layers of meaning in them has been coupled with her encouragement

not to get caught up in trying to “explain” them, but rather to just enjoy them. In other words, she has given me both the help I have requested and the liberating suggestion that I don’t need it.

She is a powerful and passionate advocate for the value of the humanities and their necessity for keeping us human in a world obsessed with technology and disinterested in anything that is not quantifiable. I am sure that she has inspired generations of students to share these values. She has supported poets from all over the world and helped them to connect to one another, to the benefit of all of us.

I suppose someday it will be old age and the distance between our two continents that will part us, but I hope that will not happen soon. Our lives and our house will feel emptier when that happens.

With love,
Lynn