

**MEMORIAL RESOLUTION OF THE FACULTY
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON**

ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS WILLIAM GORDON CUNLIFFE

W. Gordon Cunliffe, professor emeritus of German, died in Wiesbaden (Germany) November 18, 2001. Born in Southport (England) on March 25, 1929, he received his education in England and Germany. After studying at Tollington Grammar School, London (1947–1949) and Queen Mary College, University of London (1949–1951), where he earned a B.A. (with honours) in English, he worked first as a teacher of English to foreigners in London and then as a translator and teacher of English in Hamburg. In 1960 he continued his studies of English and German literature at the University of Hamburg, where he was awarded a Dr. phil. in 1963 with a dissertation on "Die Spannung zwischen Mut und Demut in der englischen Literatur des Mittelalters." Wavering between careers as a free lance writer, translator, and teacher, he studied two more years for a translation diploma at the University of Saarbruecken. After teaching two years as lecturer in German at Bradford University, he emigrated to the United States, and in 1965 accepted a tenure-track position in the German Department of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He was promoted to associate professor in 1968 and to full professor in 1984. He retired in 1992 and spent the following years translating and writing in England and Germany, where he died after a long battle with cancer.

As a scholar of modern German literature he left his mark by publishing frequently on Guenter Grass and by writing the first full-fledged monograph of the author of "The Tin Drum" to appear in English (New York: Twayne, 1968), which is still one of the best introductions to the early Grass. Max Frisch, Uwe Johnson, Peter Weiss, and Heinrich Boell were other authors about whom he published numerous articles in German, British, and American journals, and his translations and supplementary publications on English and American literature for the "Insight" series (Frankfurt: Hirschgraben, 1967ff.) became standard reference books. What stands out in Cunliffe's scholarly work is its breadth of knowledge in English, American, French, and German literature, its truly humanistic learning, and its stylistic clarity. I have seldom seen a colleague who was so well read in and knowledgeable of modern European literature and who could talk so effortlessly and subtly about it. At the end of his life he was still working on his "opus magnum," on which he spent the last two decades: *Great War Coming: The Prophecies in Modern German Literature*, which will be his unpublished legacy.

W. Gordon Cunliffe taught a wide range of courses in our department, from composition to introduction to literature for undergraduates, lecture courses and seminars on modern German literature for graduate students, and courses in translation, which were his forte. Even if he did not like the concept of an aesthetic education and hated composition classes, he was a witty, sharp and rigorous teacher. In spite of his idiosyncracies, he was beloved by students for his piquant criticism and understated aphorisms.

W. Gordon Cunliffe was one of the most agreeable colleagues at the UW-Madison. When one overcame his reticence and got to know him personally, he always had something worthwhile to say, and the way he expressed himself was witty and to the point. He was helpful, understanding, and cooperative whenever he was asked to take up an extra assignment, and he never complained when we pestered him with our translation problems. Although he saw through sham and false pretensions quickly, one never heard him utter a negative comment about a colleague. With his engaging and infectious sense of humor he saved some difficult or even embarrassing situations in department meetings, and we all were thankful for that. Gordon Cunliffe will be remembered by those who knew him as an unpretentious, delightful, and cooperative colleague, and his friends will miss him.

He is survived by his wife Luise Cunliffe and his two children, Stefan and Hannah.

MEMORIAL COMMITTEE
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