
Memorial Resolution of the Faculty of the University of Wisconsin-Madison On the Death of Professor Emeritus Steven Winspur

Our colleague and dear friend Steven Winspur, emeritus Professor of French, passed away on Monday, April 20, 2015, in Madison, at the age of 59. He was born in Kilmarnock, Scotland. Professor Winspur received his M.A. (Honours, 1st Class) in French with Philosophy, from the University of Edinburgh in Scotland in 1977. It is in Scotland that he met his wife, Patty. Prior to his Edinburgh degree he received a Diplôme d'Etudes Universitaires Générales in Philosophy, at the Université Paul Valéry in Montpellier, France. Following his studies in Scotland he began graduate study in French literature at Columbia University, New York, where he earned his PhD with distinction in 1981. His specialty was 20th-century poetry, and his thesis topic announced his life-long interest in linguistic phenomena and their connection to representation, or expression, of reality: "A Grammar of Presence: Poetry of the Sign in Saint-John Perse, Yves Bonnefoy and Michel Deguy." The thesis was named the best dissertation defended in the Department of French and Romance Philology. During his graduate study he was able to spend 6 months at the Fondation St-John Perse in Aix-en-Provence, France. PhD in hand, he took a position as Assistant Professor at North Carolina State University, but after one year returned to Columbia, where he taught from 1982 to 1989. He joined the faculty of the Department of French and Italian of the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in 1989 as Associate Professor and was promoted to Full Professor in 1993, and between 2003 and 2006 was Halverson-Bascom Professor of French.

Steven Winspur was a highly successful teacher on both the undergraduate and the graduate levels. He received the Favorite Instructor Award from the UW Residence Halls twice, in 2007 and 2008, and the Honored Instructor Award from Chadbourne Residential College in 2009. His course offerings ranged from advanced grammar and composition to topics such as literature and technology, Québécois literature, modern poetry, and courses in translation on the masterpieces of French literature. He devoted considerable time to advising undergraduates and giving them meticulous feedback on their written work. He supervised several Senior Honors theses.

But it was especially on the graduate level that Steven Winspur made an indelible impact on many classes of graduate students. His knowledge of the intricacies of the graduate program and his tireless advising of graduate students made him into a foundational element of the department's excellence in graduate studies. He regularly taught French 626, an introduction into critical methods in literary research and writing; it became a cornerstone course required of all incoming students, and Steven Winspur put together a reader that has served many other instructors of that course. His own interest in linguistic and deconstructionist approaches, coupled with an intellectual range that allowed him to speak cogently about many other theories, made the course into a sine qua non of the intellectual background of our students, and contributed to their ability to teach at diverse institutions once they received their doctorate. His more recent interest in francophone (especially Canadian) literature widened the geographic scope of his course offerings, which included 19th and 20th century poetry and prose in France and contemporary literary theory. Steven Winspur's twenty-odd PhD students, several of whom returned to Madison in order to celebrate his career in December 2014, hold positions at Grinnell College, Reed College, Portland State University, and other institutions. When he retired from the department, he was directing several other doctoral dissertations. His devotion to his students, his careful and low-key, reassuring approach to their work, made him into a much admired mentor and advisor and director. He kept up correspondence with his students and did not feel that their assuming a teaching position ended the intellectual friendship that developed during their studies in Madison.

Among the several awards Winspur received while at the University of Wisconsin – Madison, there are the H. I. Romnes Faculty Fellowship (1992), the Vilas Associate Award (1998-2000), the Award for Exceptional Service (2001), the L&S Faculty Advising Award (2009-2010).

Steven Winspur's scholarly achievement is noteworthy. He published extensively both in English and in French on twentieth-century French poets. Besides editing four volumes of journals, writing 21 book chapters and 43 articles, Winspur published four books of literary criticism. His volumes include a monograph on *Saint-John Perse and the Imaginary Reader* (Geneva: Droz, 1988), one on *Bernard Noël* (Amsterdam – New York: Editions Rodopi, 1991), a study on *Poeticized Language: The Foundations of Contemporary French Poetry* (co-authored with Jean-Jacques Thomas, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), and a volume on four poets: *La Poésie du Lieu: Segalen, Thoreau, Guillevic, Ponge* (Amsterdam – New York: Editions Rodopi, 2006). Faithful to a belief in the generally cultural and intellectual importance of poetry, in his research throughout the decades in Madison Winspur moved away from a more strictly semiotic approach to the text, which characterized his graduate training and his early scholarship, and explored new venues that allowed him to tie the analysis of poetry to the ways our lives are lived and to connect poetry with a sense of collective well-being.

Steven Winspur also served on the editorial board of several literary journals and organized five symposia, one of which, "The French and Italian Poetry Day," which he co-organized with Ernesto Livorni, continued for five years as an annual event on campus.

Within the Department of French and Italian, he held many important positions and chaired more than 30 committees. He was Associate Chair, oversaw multiple hires, and was responsible for the promotion of two professors to tenure. The remarks of Professor Névine El Nossery, whom he most recently guided through the process, are indicative of his commitment to the people with whom he worked; she writes, "During the six years of his mentorship, Steven Winspur read with great enthusiasm and a keen analytical eye every single page I wrote. I am profoundly grateful for his insightful and valuable comments. His empathetic nature was unmatched. Today I can say that his mentorship, friendship, trust and faith in me made all the difference in my life."

Steven Winspur's service was hardly limited to the Department. He regularly helped select recipients for university-wide fellowships and grants, such as those awarded by the Institute for Research in the Humanities and the Graduate School Research Committee, on whose boards he sat several times. Outside the UW-Madison, he chaired the Faculty Advisory Committee of the Council on International Educational Exchange, as well as the Executive Committee for 20th-Century French Literature for the Modern Language Association, to name just two of several important positions he held. Perhaps most impressively, Steven Winspur was a tenure or promotion referee for more than 80 candidates in the field of modern French literature. This responsibility represents not only a tremendous amount of work, but also a significant contribution to the field of French Studies.

The Department of French and Italian is very grateful to Professor Winspur for his outstanding devotion to his students, colleagues, and discipline alike. His death is a great loss to us all, both personally and professionally.

On behalf of the Department of French & Italian,
Ullrich Langer
Ernesto Livorni
Thomas Armbrecht