MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

Frederick J. Hoffman (1909-1967)

Professor Frederick J. Hoffman was born in Port Washington, Wisconsin, and was educated at Stanford, Minnesota, and Ohio State. He taught at Ohio State, Oklahoma, Wisconsin (Madison), California (Riverside), Harvard, Stanford, Washington, and Duke before joining the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee faculty in September 1965 as Distinguished Professor of English. He was the author of more than 20 books and some 300 articles and reviews. He was an internationally respected scholar.

The *Imagination's New Beginning*, the title of one of Frederick Hoffman's last books, is revealing of his state of mind in the months before his death on December 24, 1967. He had reached a point of affirmation both in his scholarly career and in his personal life. He was beginning to receive the kind of recognition from his colleagues which is usually reserved for a scholar on the verge of retirement from his academic post. Plans were underway for a Festschrift to honor him on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday; the Festschrift will now, unfortunately, have to appear posthumously.

Professor Hoffman was the rare combination of a scholar-critic and gifted teacher. His many books from *Freudianism and the Literary Mind*, first published in 1945 and reprinted several times since, through *The Art of Southern Fiction*, published in the fall of 1967, are characterized by an enormous flexibility and a rare fondness for literary study. There are few bodies of scholarly work which equal the depth and versatility of Hoffman's; the method always suits the literary need.

The vitality of his scholarly career found its way into his teaching. The exceptional student could always find a home in the Hoffman seminar. Few teachers had his ability to teach method as well as subject matter. His
record for training Ph.D.s in modern literature must be the envy of the entire profession: during a ten year period he directed some thirty dissertations, half of which have been published as books. Among this number are studies of William Faulkner and Wallace Stevens—which are almost universally regarded as the finest books on their subjects.

Fred Hoffman always believed that 20th century literature made special demands on its students and should be regarded as a discipline apart. He was untiring in his efforts to make literary study of modern writers an organic part of every literature curriculum; he lived long enough, fortunately, to see his dream partly realized.

When we speak of Frederick J. Hoffman, then, we are reminded of one of the most admirable careers ever achieved by a university professor. His best book, The Mortal No, should be placed in the same company as those other landmarks of 20th century literary criticism like Northrop Frye’s Anatomy of Criticism and Erich Auerbach’s Mimesis. Hoffman has been honored already by having two of his books chosen for distribution in a book club sponsored by the Modern Language Association of America (no other scholar is represented by more than one). He was the first to give the Ward-Phillips lectures at The University of Notre Dame. He will doubtless be honored again and again in the coming years by having books dedicated to him and collections of his essays brought out. His students will continue to distinguish themselves and keep his memory alive through their accomplishments.

In his preface to The Twenties he told us something which should be helpful to all of us: ‘Literature is not valuable simply because it ‘uses’ the matter of the time, nor merely because it has degrees of formal excellence, but because it helps us to see the reality of any idea in a full, clear, and meaningful form; the form is the matter, the matter is in the form,
and the reality which is thus formally given is a moral and aesthetic anecdote of one or another aspect of the time." It is doubtful whether anyone ever put this any better.

Gareth Dunleavy
Morris Marden
Robert Turner
Charles Vevier
Melvin Friedman (Chairman)