



IN MEMORIAM

Thomas Warren Ramsey
Professor of French and Comparative Literature, Emeritus
UC Berkeley
1914 – 1997

Born in 1914 in Spokane, Washington, Warren Ramsey joined the University of California, Berkeley's Department of French in 1950 as associate professor and was appointed full professor five years later. He had arrived in Berkeley after several years' teaching at Yale University, where he had earned the doctorate in 1949 with a dissertation on Jules Laforgue, the nineteenth century Symbolist poet. This work, transformed as *Jules Laforgue and the Ironic Inheritance*, was awarded the Modern Language Association Prize in 1953 and was widely recognized as a major contribution to comparative literature studies.

From the outset, his writing was considered "meticulous, energetic and highly individualistic" (Renato Poggioli) — traits that came to characterize the man himself as he continued to publish articles on "The Oresteia and Hofmannsthal" and "Voltaire et l'art de peindre," while investigating the eighteenth century esthetics of the Jesuit Fr. Yves-Marie André, among several ancillary topics, and publishing an introduction to Ann Hyde Greet's translation of Guillaume Apollinaire's *Alcools*. At the time of his death, he had been at work on the Cartesianism of Fr. Daniel Gabriel, S.J., a noted follower of the philosopher. For this later undertaking, he had received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1961, a grant from the American Philosophical Society in 1965, and a Humanities Research Professorship at Berkeley in 1974.

At Berkeley, he served on several department, college and university committees and was a prime mover, in the 1960s, with Marianne Bonwit (German) and Alain Renoir (English), in founding the Department of Comparative Literature on campus. Graduate students in his courses and seminars greatly admired Ramsey and stood in awe of his knowledge, critical acumen and demanding intellectual standards. These qualities made him a much sought-after director of doctoral dissertations. Most notable among these were Karl Uitti's on the concept of self in the Symbolist novel, Pierre Robert's on the postwar writings of Jean Giono, and Maureen Brignall Wesolowski's on the child in the fiction of François Mauriac.

He retired in 1972 but continued privately, despite failing eyesight and hearing, to pursue those topics of scholarly interest that had attracted him throughout his career. He died in 1997 in Berkeley. He is survived by his devoted wife Betty, an esteemed violinist among local musical groups, and a sister, Lucille, of Winchester, Massachusetts.

Basil Guy
Leonard W. Johnson