

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION
FRANCES WYERS
(May 5, 1931 - August 20, 2011)

A native of Chicago, Frances Wyers was born on May 5th, 1931 into an intellectually, socially, and politically engaged family. She received her early education in that city, winning admission as a high school sophomore to the University of Chicago under a program that identified brilliant students for college acceptance pioneered by the university's visionary president, Robert M. Hutchins. Under Hutchins, Chicago's undergraduate degree program required courses in all areas with no field of specialization. Frances credited Chicago's rigorous and highly independent learning experience with fostering her life-long passion for scholarship. She received her BA from the University of Chicago in June 1950. She spent her next two years living in Mexico City, where she took courses at Mexico City College. This immersion in Mexican culture was followed by three years living in Madrid, an experience which crystallized her interest in Spanish literature and culture.

Frances continued her education at the University of Michigan, graduating as Frances Wyers Weber with an MA in Spanish literature in February 1957 and a PhD from the Department of Romance Languages in February 1962. Her dissertation on an early twentieth-century Spanish author became the book *The Literary Perspectivism of Ramón Pérez de Ayala* published by the University of North Carolina Press in 1966. Having completed her PhD, Frances lived for one year in Rome where she continued her research.

At the University of Michigan Frances began as a Teaching Fellow (1957-1961). After receiving her doctorate in 1963 she was appointed Instructor of Spanish. The following year she became the first woman to receive a tenure-track appointment as Assistant Professor of Spanish from the Department of Romance Languages (1964-1968). In 1968 she was awarded tenure and promotion to Associate Professor of Spanish (1968-1973), followed in 1973 by promotion to become the first female Professor of Spanish at the University of Michigan.

While at Michigan, Frances garnered a significant number of awards. She received a Horace Rackham Publication Grant for her first book; three Horace Rackham Faculty Research Fellowships in 1967, 1970, and 1978; and a second Horace Rackham Publication Grant in 1976 for her second book. Michigan also awarded her a Distinguished Service Award for her teaching in 1968. On the national level, she was the recipient of a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship in 1970-1971 for her project on Miguel de Unamuno and the other

writers of Spain's Generation of 1898, which allowed her to return to Madrid to pursue her research.

At the University of Michigan Frances was elected to the Faculty Senate Advisory Committee on Public Relations and to the College's Executive Committee on Romance Languages, as its first woman member. She was appointed to the Search Committee for the Director of the Residential College, the Faculty Admissions Committee, the Humanities Advisory Committee, and the Iberia Colloquium of the Center for Western European Studies. She also was a Spanish Concentration Advisor, a member of the Living-Learning Committee, a Graduate Advisor for MA Candidates, and served on the Spanish Section Committee.

Following a national search, in 1981 she accepted the appointment of Professor of Spanish and Chair of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Indiana University, Bloomington, a position she held for two years. She was the Department's first woman Full Professor and first woman Chair, as well as the first outside Chair of the department since the early 1960s. While Chair, Frances served on the Review Committee for the Film Studies Program, the Outside Evaluation Committee for Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, and the Outside Evaluation Committee for the University of Cincinnati (1982-1983). From 1983-1986 she was a member of the Review Committee for the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at Princeton University. In 1985 Northwestern University named her to a short-term visiting scholar appointment as its Chair for Distinguished Women. From 1983 until her retirement Frances continued to teach in the Department.

As both Chair and Full Professor, Frances was a role model and generous mentor to younger faculty in the department. One of her most resonant actions as Chair brought the department's teaching load and its emphasis on both research and teaching into line with other departments of the College. In an era of specialization when faculty are expected to center their teaching and research on one area, Frances taught and published on the literatures of Spain, Spanish America, and Catalonia and gained recognition as an indisputable authority in all three areas. During her years at Indiana, she made frequent visits to Barcelona, Mallorca, and Paris, thus feeding her interest in contemporary culture and the arts.

Frances's research interests and publications embraced literature, culture, and literary theory and made her a transatlantic scholar *avant la lettre*. She demonstrated her extraordinary breadth of knowledge in an impressive body of publications. Her second book, *Miguel de Unamuno: The Contrary Self*, with its revisionist reading of Unamuno, established her

as a major critic of the internationally renowned philosopher and writer. Her many scholarly articles, published in all the major journals in her various areas of expertise, demonstrate the scope of her scholarship and make her one of the most lucid and thoughtful critics of contemporary Spanish, Catalan, and Spanish American fiction. Her pathbreaking articles on Unamuno's *Niebla* and the Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier's *El acoso* appeared in *PMLA*, the premier journal of modern literatures; the latter was translated and published in Spanish and German anthologies. The major journal of Hispanic literature at the time, *Hispanic Review*, published four of her articles: studies of the internationally renowned writer Jorge Luis Borges, the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, the contemporary Argentinian novelist Manuel Puig, and the Spanish author Unamuno. Among her most widely-cited publications are two seminal articles on Spain's nineteenth-century realist masterpiece, *La Regenta* by Leopoldo Alas, republished in two different anthologies edited in Spain. The Yale University Press volume *Modern Latin American Literature* includes her essay "Manuel Puig at the Movies." Her article on "Julio Cortázar: Doubles, Figures, and Others" appeared in an anthology on recent Hispanic American literature. Equally well-known and frequently cited by scholars are her study of Ramón del Valle-Inclán *Luces de Bohemia* and her illuminating article on Catalonia's premier 20th-century Catalan novelist, the woman author Mercè Rodoreda.

Frances gave lectures at numerous universities, including Smith, Brown, Princeton, North Carolina and Yale (Program for American Studies and the Department of Spanish and Portuguese) and at symposia at Yale (Catalan Studies), West Virginia (Modern Literature), and at the Modern Language Association annual convention.

Frances was especially appreciated for her graduate teaching and her commitment to her students, as evidenced by the number of her dissertation students and her membership on numerous MA and PhD examinations and dissertation committees. To the joy of graduate students, she was a walking bibliography with an enviable recall of titles, authors, and ideas. In addition to offering a broader than usual range of graduate courses on contemporary Spanish and Spanish American literature, she developed a graduate course on literary theory and criticism that drew on her remarkable breadth of readings. She gave graduate seminars on such diverse topics as "Carpentier and the Caribbean," "The Spanish Essay," and "The Historical and Political Context of Twentieth-Century Spanish Literature to Mid-Century." Her knowledge of and commitment to Catalan language, literature and culture enriched her courses and resulted in her outstanding article on Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant*.

Frances's intellectual stimulus, cultural understanding, and wealth of bibliographic knowledge made her an indispensable resource for her colleagues and for generations of students. She was a generous reader of papers and manuscripts, offering penetrating comments and valuable suggestions drawn from her own omnivorous reading. Her knowledge of anthropology, art, philosophy, world literature and cultural history immeasurably enhanced her reading of Hispanic literatures and cultures. Frances was a scholar's scholar for whom literature was political and ideas mattered, be they social, political, or cultural. With her retirement, the Department of Spanish and Portuguese lost not only a valued colleague, teacher and friend but also daily contact with a woman with one of the finest minds in the field of Hispanic studies.

As well as a scholar and teacher, Frances was an accomplished painter who worked in water color, pen and ink, and pastel. She painted especially fine water colors of her summer home in the improbably named village of Galilea on the island of Mallorca, Spain. The Waldron Art Center hosted an exhibit of her work. One of her former dissertation students, now a professor in Spain, published a novel which opens with an affectionate portrait of a woman whose house on Mallorca has a breathtaking view of the surrounding countryside—an homage to Frances's friendship and hospitality.

When she retired in 1999, Frances moved to Galilea, one of the least touristy villages on Mallorca, where she had long owned a much loved restored cottage, Ca Ses Animes. Her son and his wife live in the capital city, Palma de Mallorca, where she took an apartment. She died there on 20 August 2011. Her ashes were scattered amid ancient olive trees. Her only sister pre-deceased her. Her older son, Daniel, died in 2006. She is survived by her son David Weber and daughter-in-law Pati Estrada.

Frances Wyers's colleagues request that this memorial resolution be presented to the Bloomington Faculty Council and be made part of its minutes, and that copies be sent to the President of the University, the University Archive, and to the family members named herein.

Maryellen Bieder
Professor of Spanish