Memorial Resolution of the Faculty of the University of Wisconsin-Madison
On the Death of Professor Emeritus Howard D. Weinbrot

Howard D. Weinbrot, Ricardo Quintana Professor of English, Emeritus and Vilas Research Professor of English, Emeritus died from COVID-19 on January 19, 2021 at the age of 84. He is survived by his wife, Dawn Simon Weinbrot.

Professor Weinbrot earned his BA from Antioch College in 1958, and his MA and PhD from the University of Chicago in 1959 and 1963. After teaching for three years at Yale University, he was an Assistant and then Associate Professor at University of California-Riverside from 1966 to 1969. He then moved to the University of Wisconsin, his academic home until his retirement in 2012. He was proud to be part of the eighteenth-century English faculty at Wisconsin, where Ricardo Quintana had taught and where he became colleagues and close friends with Phillip Harth and Eric Rothstein. In 1984 he became Ricardo Quintana Professor of English, and in 1987 William Freeman Vilas Research Professor in the College of Letters and Science.

Professor Weinbrot’s publications, capacious in knowledge and precise in details, spanned nearly sixty years. In a 2017 essay on historical criticism, he observed that the “historical critic illumines what once was dark,” a statement that perfectly describes his own scholarship, which helped define and broaden the field of eighteenth-century studies. His scholarly work ranged across eighteenth-century topics such as British writers’ transformations of ancient Roman satire, the construction of a British national canon, Anglo-French relations, and shifts in religious attitudes, always with careful attention to the dynamic interactions between texts and their varied and often conflicting contexts. He wrote about most of the central literary figures of late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain: John Dryden, the Earl of Rochester, Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope, Henry Fielding, Samuel Richardson, Thomas Gray, William Collins, Oliver Goldsmith, and most centrally for him, Samuel Johnson. Professor Weinbrot published six monographs: *The Formal Strain: Studies in Augustan Imitation and Satire* (1969); *Augustus Caesar in “Augustan” England: The Decline of a Classical Norm* (1978); *Alexander Pope and the Traditions of Formal Verse Satire* (1982); *Britannia’s Issue: The Rise of British Literature from Dryden to Ossian* (1993); *Menippean Satire Reconsidered: From Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (2005); and *Literature, Religion, and the Evolution of Culture 1660–1780* (2013). Some of his over one hundred essays were collected in *Eighteenth-Century Satire: Essays on Text and Context from Dryden to Peter Pindar* (1988) and *Aspects of Samuel Johnson: Essays on His Arts, Mind, Afterlife, and Politics* (2005).

One of his earliest and enduring interests was lexicography, and he amassed an impressive collection of eighteenth-century English dictionaries. That interest aligned with his rigorous efforts to ground his interpretations among those plausibly available to contemporary readers. This “historical reader-response” approach was central to his scholarship and teaching.

Professor Weinbrot’s research was grounded in the study of primary materials, and he was always quick to acknowledge with gratitude the fellowships that supported his work: the

He was an eighteenth-century enthusiast, and not just about literature and history, which were central to his scholarship, but also the theatre, painting, architecture, and landscape gardening. He seemed to know everyone at eighteenth-century conferences, in large part because of his generosity and sociability, two traits noted by many people when they learned of his passing. If he saw a fellow attendee dining alone, he would ask to join that person, often junior faculty and graduate students who had never met him.

With his boundless energy and enthusiasm, he was a dedicated teacher and mentor. In the classroom, he cultivated a lively and informed dialogue about material that, no matter how often he taught it, remained fresh and compelling for him. As a dissertation director, he perhaps set a record for responsiveness, nearly always returning drafts within forty-eight hours. He continued to mentor his students after graduation, and was delighted to learn what they were up to.

Professor Weinbrot retired from his faculty position at Wisconsin in 2012 but never retired from scholarship, and continued his research at the Huntington Library, celebrated for its eighteenth-century holdings. With his wife Dawn, he established a Huntington fellowship in 2019 to assist research in eighteenth-century British society and culture. For Professor Weinbrot, the tradition and continuity of eighteenth-century studies was vital, which is why it was so important to him to pay tribute to his mentors and colleagues and to mentor others. It is thus fitting that among his last publications are: a forthcoming essay in *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* on Donald Greene and the founding of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (ASECS); a forthcoming essay in the next issue of *Swift Studies* dedicated to his Wisconsin colleague and friend Phil Harth; and memorial profiles of Harth and Paul Alkon in the Spring and Summer 2020 issues of the ASECS News Circular.

Professor Weinbrot epitomized what it meant to be a scholar of eighteenth-century literature and culture. His splendid contributions to the field, both in his research and his teaching, will not be forgotten.

MEMORIAL COMMITTEE
Richard Begam
Stephen Karian
Mark Vareschi