LÉON-FRANÇOIS HOFFMANN
1932-2018

This Memorial Resolution
Prepared by a special committee,
was approved by unanimous rising vote at the meeting
of the Princeton University Faculty
on February 4, 2019 and ordered spread upon the
records of the Faculty.

Hoffmann's achievements and influence in the fields of French and Francophone studies are far reaching. He made signal contributions to the study of French Romanticism and became a world expert in Caribbean literature. His erudite and imaginative work includes twenty books, more than a hundred articles, reviews and translations, and innumerable lectures all over the world. His studies of the role of Spanish myths in the Romantic imagination (Romantique Espagne, 1961; La Peste à Barcelone, 1964) are scholarly landmarks. His scrupulous, detailed analyses of Balzac's Comédie humaine are a mine of critical information. One of his most important works details the representation of blacks in 19th-century French literature, Le Nègre romantique
(1974), which received the prestigious Prix de l'Académie française. Hoffmann's expertise in, and love for the Romantic era never diminished, and in 2002 he co-organized an international symposium at Princeton for the bicentennial of Victor Hugo's birth, and then edited the proceedings for publication.

Long before 'Francophone' literature became fashionable, Hoffmann studied Haiti with an unparalleled understanding of its culture and wrote a remarkable series of publications, including *Le Roman haïtien: idéologie et structure* (1982), which was awarded the Gilbert Chinard prize; *Essays on Haitian Literature* (1984); *Haïti: couleurs, croyances, créole* (Montréal and Port-au-Prince, 1989 and 1990); *Haïti: lettres et l'être* (1992); *Bibliographie des études littéraires haïtiennes 1804-1984* (1992); *Histoire de la littérature d’Haiti* (1995). He also co-authored a critical *summa* of French literature written in the Americas, *Littératures francophones. II Les Amériques* (1998). He was widely recognized as one of the most knowledgeable and serious scholars of Haitian society.

For several years, under a grant from the Ford Foundation (1984-1994), Hoffmann recorded and microfilmed selected periodicals from the libraries of Haiti. This work of love saved thousands of documents that would otherwise have been lost to future generations of scholars. A complementary product of this project was the long-awaited critical edition of the *Complete Works* of the Haitian poet and journalist, Jacques Roumain. After retirement, Hoffmann continued to be the leading figure in Haitian literary studies.

At Princeton, he was an invaluable teacher. In the 1960s he developed new methods for language teaching and wrote several standard textbooks. Many
Americans learned French studies through his *L’Essentiel de la grammaire française*, and *Travaux pratiques*, followed by *La Pratique du français parlé*. Hoffmann taught graduate and undergraduate literature courses at all levels, and developed new seminars on French language, literature and culture in former colonial territories in Africa, America, and the Far East. In conjunction with these courses and with the support of funds from the Center for French Studies, he organized a series of lectures on “Francophonies,” which brought speakers from many parts of the French-speaking world. Hoffmann is one of the few faculty members who could bridge Spanish, Latin American and French literatures and cultures. He was a brilliant Director of the Program in Latin American Studies for years.

In his half-century at Princeton, Hoffmann received many academic distinctions including fellowships from the Simon Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Ford Foundation, and the American Philological Society. He served on many international boards and scholarly associations, and lectured widely around the world. He was the American Correspondent for the prestigious *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France* and the U.S. Representative to the Association of French-Speaking Universities (AUPELF). In recognition of his services, he was awarded the prestigious *Palmes Académiques* by the French Government.

In the 1980s Hoffmann founded a French speaking theatrical troupe, “Les Chers Collègues,” which staged numerous plays and poetry recitals on campus. Later, this pioneer work became an important feature of the Department under a new name, L’Avant-Scène, currently directed by Florent Masse. After Hoffmann’s retirement his colleagues continued to enjoy his presence in the department, with his multi-cultural and multi-lingual
fluency, his wonderful gift as the Department’s *raconteur*, and, above all, his indefatigable sense of humor.

*Mister President:* For the Committee I move that this Resolution be spread on the records of the Faculty; that a copy be sent to Anne Hoffmann (spouse), Jacques Hoffman (son), and Philippe Hoffman (son), and to the Archivist of the University.

Respectfully submitted by:

François Rigolot  
*Meredith Howland Pyne Professor of French Literature, Emeritus; Professor of French and Italian, Emeritus*

Pietro Frassica  
*Professor of French and Italian*

Jeffrey “Lionel” Gossman  
*M. Taylor Pyne Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures, Emeritus*

Suzanne Nash  
*Professor of French and Italian, Emeritus*

Thomas Trezise  
*Professor of French and Italian*