
PROFESSOR PHILIP WATTS
1961– 2013

ST. PAUL'S CHAPEL
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
In The City Of New York

Monday, September 9, 2013

PRELUDE

F. COUPERIN, LES IDÉES HEUREUSES, ANDREW APPEL, HARPSICHORD

Elisabeth Ladenson
Professor and Chair, Department of French, Columbia

REFLECTIONS AND REMEMBRANCES

Pierre Force
Professor, Department of French;
Dean for Humanities, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Columbia

Antoine Compagnon
Professor, Department of French, Columbia

Emmanuelle Saada
Associate Professor, Department of French, Columbia

Vincent Debaene
Associate Professor, Department of French, Columbia

Joanna Stalnaker
Associate Professor, Department of French, Columbia

Laure Astourian
PhD Candidate, Department of French, Columbia

F. GEMINIANI, AFFETTUOSO FROM SONATA N° 3
ANDREW APPEL, HARPSICHORD AND LORETTA O'SULLIVAN, CELLO

Ella Brereton Allen
Senior Lecturer, Washington University

Dorothea von Mücke
Professor of Germanic Languages, Columbia

Teodolinda Barolini
Da Ponte Professor of Italian, Columbia

Jane Gaines
Professor of Film, Columbia

Alice Kaplan
John M. Musser Professor of French, Yale

Panivong Norindr
Associate Professor of French and Comparative Literature, USC

Sophie Queuniet
Lecturer, Department of French, Columbia
Prière, Jean Sénac

J. S. BACH PRELUDE FROM CELLO SUITE N°1 IN G MAJOR
LORETTA O'SULLIVAN, CELLO



Philip Watts

Philip Coulter Watts, Professor of French and chair of the French department at Columbia University, was a brilliant and inspiring scholar, teacher, and mentor, and an accomplished specialist of twentieth-century French literature, cinema and culture. His warmth, erudition, generosity, discretion, and keen sense of humor will always be remembered by those whose lives he touched.

A native of California, Phil Watts was born on February 15, 1961, the son of Richard and Micheline Watts, in Los Angeles. He received his B.A. from the University of California at Santa Barbara in 1982. The following year he moved to New York to pursue graduate studies at Columbia, where he earned his doctorate in 1991. He wrote his dissertation, entitled "History and Testimony in Louis-Ferdinand Céline's German Trilogy," under the direction of Antoine Compagnon and working closely with Alice Kaplan.

From 1990 to 1992 he taught at the University of Illinois at Chicago. It was there that he met Sophie Queuniet, who became his wife. In 1992 he was hired as assistant professor in the department of French and Italian at the University of Pittsburgh. He remained at Pittsburgh for fourteen years, six of them as department chair. In 1999 his book *Allegories of the Purge: How Literature Responded to the Postwar Trials of Writers and Intellectuals in France* (Stanford UP) won the MLA's Scaglione prize for best book in French studies.

In 2007 he was recruited back to Columbia, where he served as department chair from 2008 to 2012. As chair he led the French department through a challenging period of transition with great fairness and diplomacy and a deep sense of humanity. While chairing the department he continued to be a productive scholar, becoming among other things one of the foremost specialists of the work of French philosopher Jacques Rancière, whom he invited to speak at Columbia in Fall 2012 in an event that drew a standing-room only crowd. In 2009 he published *Jacques Rancière: History, Politics, Aesthetics* (Duke University Press), co-edited with Gabriel Rockhill. He also co-edited (with Richard Golsan) a special issue of *Yale French Studies*:

Literature and History: Around "Suite Française" and "Les Bienveillantes" (vol. 121, 2102). Among his publications while at Columbia were numerous essays on the persistence of classical style in post-war French literature and cinema. At the time of his cruelly premature death Phil was working on a book on Roland Barthes and cinema, a project which several colleagues are planning to complete and bring out so that this important work may see the light.

Phil Watts died peacefully at his home on Morningside Heights on July 20, 2013. He is survived by his wife, Sophie Queuniet, a colleague in the French department at Columbia, and their young daughters, Madeleine, 13, and Louise, 7, as well as his mother, Micheline Watts, his brother, Richard Watts, and his sister Claudine Hayashi. He is deeply missed by his family, colleagues, students, friends; in short, everyone who came into contact with him.

Prière

Je ne connais du jour que l'obscur mémoire
cette murène à travers les vertèbres
qui n'en finit plus de saigner

Je ne connais du visage triomphal
que le carton et la blanche pommade
le mime du soleil je ne connais que le néon

A cette heure tendue entre Dieu et la pierre
l'eau coule dans les rues mais dans l'âme la bière mousse
et je crie Seigneur à rayer les aciers
à déchirer le lin mordu de Véronique
à façonner le corps des anges sous la tunique du passant

Je ne sais de l'amour qu'une seule parole
mon nom Seigneur mon nom larvé

Accordez-moi la paix de grandir chez les hommes
et d'avoir en commun la beauté de personne
et si la nuit est mon chemin
qu'il conduise à la vérité

Entre loup et chien
le froid fait son bien.

Jean Sénac

In Phil's honor, contributions can be made to the U-Gift college savings program to benefit Madeleine and Louise Watts. For further information, please contact Isabelle Chagnon: isabellechagnon@gmail.com.