IN MEMORIAM

JOSEPH F. DOHERTY

Joseph F. Doherty, Assistant Professor of English, died April 1, 1974 in a highway accident, a few days before his thirty-second birthday.

He was born April 19, 1942 in Teaneck, New Jersey, the son of Joseph F. and Marian Doherty, who presently reside in Ridge-wood, New Jersey. He attended Xavier High School in New York City from 1956 to 1960, then majored in Biology and minored in Philosophy at Boston College. After graduating with a B.S. degree in 1964, Joe's characteristic versatility and desire for an ever-broadening development are clearly manifested, for he now began to follow different academic interests. Making his own synthesis of his Catholic and scientific educational back-ground, he brought his analytical training and a growing fasci-nation with the history of ideas to graduate study at Rutgers and The University of Minnesota.

At Rutgers (1964-65) he concentrated on English literature and served as a Teaching Associate. In June 1965 he married Susan Gardner, many years after they had been childhood neigh-bors. Two children, Joshua and Molly, were born in 1968 and 1970, respectively.

After receiving his M.A., Joe transferred to the Ph.D. pro-gram in American Studies at the University of Minnesota; while
there, he was a Teaching Associate for two and a half years and an Instructor for two years at the College of St. Thomas in St.
Paul. Joe's standing among both contemporaries and senior faculty at Minnesota is indicated by his election to the Freshman English Advisory Council and the English Department Advisory Council.

His dissertation for the Ph.D. in 1969 was a typically successful effort to put together diverse materials whose unity Joe saw and demonstrated: "The Supreme Fiction: The Solipsistic Imagination in American Culture--An Intellectual History of Transcendalist and Lost Generation Thought." With high recommendations from his graduate teachers, Joe joined the University of Texas faculty in the same year.

Immediately Joe's energy and professional concern were recognized: in his second year on the faculty, he was appointed to administrate a multi-section experimental Freshman course, E.501, a task he performed for two years. Joe always applied his intelligence and time generously to committee service, doing especially valuable departmental work on faculty recruitment and advising. His teaching won him extremely high praise in evaluations by students at all undergraduate and graduate levels, and he worked as well in the classroom team-teaching with his colleagues as by himself.

In the time Joe Doherty was at Texas, he tenaciously pursued the venturesome inquiry he had begun earlier. Fundamentally, it was an inquiry into whatever, in whatever discipline, might extend
and refine his grasp of two main preoccupations: the isolated human being, and the creation of a community that might redeem isolation, if not end it. In fact, one of the great pleasures of having Joe as a colleague was his practical ability to discover and build upon a commonality of interests. He inevitably flavored discussions of his own work with talk of the related ideas of his peers. And his willingness to share his enthusiasm, ideas, and vitality quickly became known and admired.

The last year of his life was an exciting one for him. In the spring of 1974, in recognition of the exceptional promise of his scholarship, Joe was awarded a University Research Institute research leave to work on a book exploring concepts of community in the American novel. He gave his colleagues the feeling not only that he was coming into his own as a literary theorist, but that a large part of this achievement was involved with his encouragement of an expanding community of thought among faculty in the English Department and elsewhere. The common ground of interest he helped to clarify and strengthen was, fittingly, the interdisciplinary examination of art as a community-making process. Humorously but also pointedly, he began to speak of those applying this approach as "The Texas School of Criticism."

In the month before his death, Joe participated in a University of Texas conference on Psychoanalysis and the Humanities
in which he presented a psychological-linguistic decoding of a sixteenth-century woodcut. Here one could see the direction Joe's reading in anthropology, psychology, and linguistics was taking him—enlarging literary criticism to include the study of perception and language. During the year following Joe's death, a number of his colleagues presented a memorial symposium to honor the man who had vitalized their mutual concerns.

Joe was extraordinarily alive. His promise was great; his performance was already exceptional; his legacy is the abundant life his family and friends remember in him.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


"Whitman's 'Poem of the mind in the act of finding/What will suffice,'" Semiotica, forthcoming.
This Memorial Resolution was prepared by a Special Committee consisting of W. P. Wadlington (chairman), Roger D. Abrahams, R. J. Kaufmann, and William Stephenson.