JAMES HENRY MCINTOSH

On August 30, 2021, James Henry McIntosh, Professor Emeritus of English and American Culture at the University of Michigan, died at his home in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in the presence of his wife, Elaine K. Gazda, and daughter, Karina McIntosh. The cause of his unexpected death was a stroke.

Jim was born February 4, 1934, in New York City to Rustin McIntosh M.D., and Millicent Carey McIntosh. Rustin was Chief of Staff at the Babies Hospital of Columbia Presbyterian, and Millicent was Head of the Brearley School and later President of Barnard College, Jim was the eldest of five children in a close-knit family. By temperament and abilities, he was decidedly intellectual, thoughtful and well-read.  He and his siblings were musical; Jim sang, and played the cello.  He attended Greenwood Music Camp in 1951 and took cello as well as voice lessons periodically throughout his life, frequently playing music and singing with friends and family members including his wife, Elaine.

Jim graduated from Phillips Exeter Academy in 1951, from Harvard College magna cum laude in 1955 and served two years in the U.S. Navy. He taught for a year at the Scattergood Friends School in West Branch IA. In 1957 he was admitted to the distinguished graduate program in English and Comparative Literature at Yale University. Jim was good at languages and spent a year on a Fulbright fellowship in Berlin.  From 1962 to 1967 he taught at Tufts University and lived in Cambridge, MA, where he enjoyed performing with the Peoples’ Theater and singing with a small a cappella group. After receiving his PhD at Yale in 1966, he taught there from 1967 to 1975 and in 1975 joined the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Michigan as an Associate Professor. He was promoted to the rank of Professor in 1989 and named Professor Emeritus in 2002.

Soon after arriving at the University of Michigan Jim became closely involved with the Program in American Culture (now the Department of American Culture) and served as one of the program’s most distinguished and longest-serving directors from 1984 to 1991. As an administrator, Jim was soft-spoken and gentle, bringing to this complicated job an admirably calibrated combination of qualities—an old-fashioned gravitas combined with a readiness for undogmatic observations, an enormous intellectual range, and subtle artistic judgment. His humanistic political convictions enabled him to prepare the ground for the now nationally recognized Program in Latina/o Studies and to pioneer comparative courses in North and South American Literatures.

Jim was a specialist in 19th-century American literature, and from the start his scholarship was distinguished by an ambition to focus on major writers of the American renaissance and to offer his own perspective on a body of literature that had already received considerable attention. He wrote several rich and subtle essays on Emerson, Hawthorne, and Melville and a major book, *Thoreau as Romantic Naturalist: His Shifting Stance Toward Nature*. In 1987, he edited the Norton Critical edition of *Nathaniel Hawthorne's Tales*, and in 2000 published his singularly original study, *Nimble Believing: Dickinson and the Unknown.*

Jim placed his intellectual skills and conscientious judgment at the service of both the English department and the Program in American Culture, serving on the program’s graduate admissions committee and many hiring and tenure committees.

Students and colleagues admired and appreciated Jim’s respect for English literature and for world culture. He was a valued and superb mentor to all who brought him their questions and their manuscripts. In retirement he continued to read voraciously in several languages, and he developed a loyal following for the adult education courses he taught on poetry.

His first marriage, to Ingrid Hernandez, which included some months of residence in his wife’s native country, Venezuela, ended in amicable separation and divorce. His marriage to Elaine Gazda in 1984 lasted happily for 37 years until his death. He and Elaine, a Professor of Roman Art and Archaeology at the University of Michigan, taught in the University’s Study Abroad Program in Florence (Sesto), Italy in 1998 and 2001. They frequently spent time at the American Academy in Rome and in Pompeii, where much of Elaine’s research is centered. In 1988 they adopted an infant daughter, Karina, in Warsaw, Poland, a life-changing event that they embraced with enduring gratitude and affection. Jim was a devoted and beloved husband and father, and he will be greatly missed.

Jim was preceded in death by his parents, his sister, Susan McIntosh Lloyd of Tinmouth, VT, and a nephew, Robert Keir McIntosh, of Boulder, CO. He is survived by three brothers: his twin, Rustin Carey McIntosh of Tyringham. MA, Kenneth McIntosh of Waltham, MA, and Richard McIntosh of Boulder, CO, and by their respective spouses, Joan Ferrante, Peggy McIntosh and Marjorie McIntosh, along with his brother-in-law, Robert Lloyd and many nieces and nephews and their children.

There will be a memorial service at the Union Church in Tyringham at 2:00 PM on October 16. Gifts in Jim’s memory may be made to the American Friends Service Committee, the Scattergood School in West Branch, IA, Doctors Without Borders, The Shelter Association of Ann Arbor, and—at the University of Michigan—the Institute for the Humanities, the New England Literature Program, and the Department of American Culture Program in Latina/o Studies.