
Michel Grimaud

On August 10, 1993 Michel Grimaud, professor of French at Wellesley College, died of cancer which had been diagnosed fourteen months earlier. At his request, bagpipes were played at his funeral and Victor Hugo's poetic epitaph for Jean Valjean will be placed on his tombstone. These final requests reflect significant aspects of his life.

He was born in 1945 in Scotland where his father, a member of the Free French Navy, was stationed. His mother was English. After the war his family settled in France, first in Toulon, later in Marseille. Although Michel was educated in French, he acquired English at home and on vacations in England. He attended the Université de Provence where he earned a Licence in 1967 and a Maitrise in 1969. As part of his national service, he spent a year in Quebec where during the day he taught French, and at night, read the complete works of Sigmund Freud.

In 1972 he went to the University of Wisconsin in Madison, earning his Master of Arts in 1973 and his Doctorate of Philosophy in 1976, both in French Literature. The subject of his doctoral dissertation was Victor Hugo's poem "Booz endormi." Upon receiving his Doctorate, Michel joined the French Department at Wellesley College where he taught until his death. At Wellesley, he served four years as Chair of the Department and was instrumental in establishing the Wellesley Junior Year in France program at Aix-en-Provence. He was recognized as a dedicated and gifted teacher, as a mentor for junior faculty, as someone willing to take on sometimes onerous responsibilities.

In addition, he was a prodigious scholar, researching and writing in several different and seemingly unrelated fields, from French literature to street names. He wrote over 80 articles, mainly in French and English, but also in Hungarian. He was a founder and editor of *Empirical Studies of the Arts*, *Revue des Lettres Modernes: Série Victor Hugo*, and *Carnet Bibliographiques Victor Hugo*.

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There were two salient and counterposed tendencies which Michel brought to his work. On the one hand, he could not resist an opportunity to enumerate, classify and organize. He brought this proclivity to administrative work to the college and to his research. On the other hand, he did not hesitate to explore new approaches and to use new tools. During his first ten years of research, he thoroughly investigated psychoanalytic theory as an approach to literary criticism and later shifted to cognitive science. Early on, he mastered the computer to facilitate his research.

Michel worked in the area of literary theory, examining semiotics and poetics (most recently rhyming and versification). He explored discourse analysis in both French and English, studying literary texts and the oral language of children and adults. As a student of onomastics, he specialized in discourse analysis and more recently in the history of street naming.

He gravitated toward nineteenth century French literature, frequently turning to Hugo. Thus, Michel wrote a paper on proper naming in *Les Misérables*, a paper on metaphor using an example from Hugo, a paper on the importance of the "mute e" in Hugo's verse, several papers responding to interpretations of Hugo's work by critics, and most recently a paper on rhyme schemes and versification drawing heavily on Hugo.

In the last year of his life, Michel continued to teach and do research. With generosity and love he helped his friends and family prepare for his death.

Michel leaves his wife Lisa and eight year old daughter Sarah.

Lawrence M. Baldwin
Wellesley College