



TUFTS UNIVERSITY

RESOLUTION ON THE RETIREMENT OF

GEORGETTE VABRE PRADAL

ADOPTED BY THE FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES OF

TUFTS UNIVERSITY

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Georgette Pradal came to Tufts in 1962 carrying the vision of a poet and the tradition of southwestern France. The countryside of her native Toulouse inspired her to write her first poems as a young lyceenne. Another source of her early poetry was World War II. Until 1943 Toulouse was in the unoccupied zone. Thousands of refugees came streaming in from the north of France, night and day, exhausted Polish and Alsatian Jews, Italians and Spaniards. They entered the city with their frightened children at their side. Georgette's family joined those who hid the refugees from the police of the Vichy government and later from the German Gestapo. That war confirmed Georgette as une femme revoltee. Much of the war's misery and suffering is the subject of Georgette's poetry which appeared in the French literary review Poesie 1941.

Among the Spanish Republican refugees who lived in Toulouse was a young man, son of an important member of the socialist government which fell during the Spanish Civil War. He met Georgette in a soup kitchen run by American Quakers in Toulouse. Gabriel Pradal who later became Georgette's husband, was also a writer in both French and Spanish.

Georgette and Gabriel studied together at the University of Toulouse for their "licence" without heat in the classrooms or in the library and with no paper, taking notes on scraps of blotters and on anything of use that they could find.

In 1944 Georgette received her licence in French Literature and Philosophy and a year later her Diplome d'Etudes superieures in Philosophy. Her first job was teaching philosophy at the Lycee in Rodez, where she had previously been a student.

In 1945, the distinguished refugee poet, Claude Vigee, suggested that Gabriel come to the U.S. to teach Spanish Literature. Both Pradals were invited to teach foreign languages at Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. Georgette taught elementary French at Columbus, three classes a day. It was in Columbus that their daughter Eva was born.

Seven years after Eva's birth, Gabriel became ill with leukemia and died in 1958. Georgette deals with the terrible loss in her poetry. It also led to the sequence of events that brought her to Boston.

In 1959 she accepted an invitation to teach French literature at Wellesley College. Georgette taught for three years at Wellesley while working on her book based on her doctoral thesis, The Historical Dimensions of Man or the Myth of the Wandering Jew in the Thought of Edgar Quinet, published by Nizet in 1961. In this work devoted to the great French historian Quinet, one can see developing Georgette's interest in the human mind and intellect, her interest in moral philosophy, her interest in the symbolic view of the ebb and flow of time and human events.

From her very first day at Tufts in September, 1962 to the day of her retirement in May, 1986, Georgette Pradal brought distinction to the Department of Romance Languages. Four major influences are clear in Georgette's career at Tufts.

First, her profound influence on her students. She has succeeded in instilling in generations of students not only a love for the French language and literature, but also a love of poetry, an ability to understand the world of symbols, and an appreciation of the deeper, more hidden meanings of words and how they are put together. Faculty members who audited her courses were as likely as undergraduates to fall under Georgette's spell. Many of her students learned not only to love poetry but have come to be creative writers themselves.

Second, Professor Pradal brought to the departmental teaching program a sequence of courses which she taught from the pre-romantics through the novel and poetry of the 20th century - a progressive history of the mind and of creative consciousness viewed by an artist and scholar.

Third, Georgette Pradal played a major role when the Department began a Ph.D. program in the sixties. Not only were many of the M.A. and Ph.D. theses she directed published, but some of her students went on to become professors of French in universities throughout the United States. Georgette helped build our department by finding young teachers and scholars of high quality whom she could envision as future professors of French and Spanish literature at Tufts.

Fourth, Mme. Pradal made important scholarly and artistic contributions to the Department. In addition to her book on Quinet, she has published four books of poetry, Les Saisons de la Mort, Les Saisons de la Vie, Les Saisons de L'Amour and Les Saisons du Jour Nouveau. In 1978 the latter book won "Le Grand Prix des Muses."

In poetry, the artist personalizes what is most difficult - if not impossible to deal with - the deepest experiences in life. Literature requires the willingness, even eagerness to explore the profoundly personal. Georgette in her professional life represents the union as well as the orderly presentation of ideas, the well-argued proposition, the clear analytical line. Her willingness to marry the imaginative and the Cartesian typifies her sensibility and the character of her poetry. That sensitivity made her an outstanding mentor for students and colleagues alike. For she believed that mind and soul, reason and emotion, action and dream are necessary parts of human affairs of all sorts. Georgette viewed the cultivation of both sides of life as the realization of one's whole personality. She taught the value of the logical as well as the splendors of the poetic, the need to mold form and order out of what is wild and chaotic in human experience. Her strong affection for the Chinese symbol of Yin-Yang in which spiritual opposites are united in a fundamental complementarity led her to suggest to some faculty admirers that their strong rationality must somewhere be linked to deep irrational springs. Heaven and hell, man and woman, joy and despair each presupposing and forever requiring the other.

For those who had the joy of working with her, Georgette embodies that living complementarity. She always opened to view the other side of current experience. In depression and despair she reminded you that there is no light without shadow. Growing up in war, sorrowed by early widowhood, nagged by illness, Georgette Pradal sees light always within shadow. She once told a class that the United States was a place where "if one pushes the door, it opens." She opened so many doors for us - her students, her colleagues and friends. She gave us so much. We will be forever grateful to her.

Respectfully submitted,

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