



IN MEMORIAM

G rard Marc Jian
Senior Lecturer in French
UC Berkeley
1928 – 2009

G rard Jian, distinguished teacher and educator of teachers, died on June 22, 2009.

He began teaching in the Department of French at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1966 as a lecturer, and obtained security of employment as a senior lecturer in 1972. As director of the department's lower division courses, he developed the language program curriculum and supervised (and inspired) the teaching of generations of graduate student instructors and lecturers.

G rard Jian was born August 29, 1928, in Algiers. He moved with his family to France before the outbreak of the Algerian war, and the family settled in the suburbs of Paris. Spurred by his father to seek a profession, he first entered dental school at the University of Paris and also worked as a wholesale wine representative. He was at the same time enjoying the pleasures of Paris as a young man, notably in the circle of Marie- Laure de Noailles, where he perhaps honed his flair for repartee. After satisfying his obligatory military service, Jian decided to emigrate to the United States. Arriving in California in 1956, he taught French at the Army Language School (now the Defense Language Institute) in Monterey, where he was trained in the audiolingual and direct methods of language teaching.

In 1959, he entered the M.A. program in linguistics at Stanford University, where he studied with the noted linguist Alphonse Juilland. During his time at Stanford, he taught as a teaching assistant and spent a year of study in Romania. After earning his master's degree in 1964, he taught for two years at Foothill Junior College.

Alexandre Calame, chair of Berkeley's Department of French at the time, wished to reorganize the teaching of French — and especially the training of graduate student instructors — so as better to serve the very considerable number of students enrolled. He called on John Lapp, who chaired French and Italian at Stanford, for a recommendation. Lapp put forward Jian's name; he had been most impressed by observing classes of team-teaching done by Jian and Ralph Hester. The recommendation proved an excellent one, and Jian took over the direction of lower division French at Berkeley in the fall of 1966.

Jian was best known outside Berkeley for *D couverte et Cr ation: les bases du fran ais moderne*, an introductory-level French textbook he coauthored with Ralph Hester of Stanford. First published in 1974, the textbook was immensely successful and quickly became adopted in French departments across the nation. Its popularity endured for decades and the book went through five editions. Inspired by the direct method, which shifted emphasis away from extensive formal grammar analysis to learning the living, spoken language, Jian and Hester's "rationalist" direct method introduced a component of inductive grammar instruction not present in the "pure" direct method while remaining faithful to the principle of immersion in the foreign language. Emphasizing "discovery" and "creation" rather than mimicry and repetition, Jian and Hester gave the following advice to students in their preface: "When you really communicate, you must constantly invent what you are saying, and if the perfect way of saying it does not occur to you immediately, then you must find

an alternative route.” Adding Gail Wade to their team, Jian and Hester extended their approach in two second- year curriculum textbooks: *Traits d’union* (1988) and *Liaison* (1992).

On campus, however, Gérard Jian was known first and foremost as an inspired and inspiring teacher. Throughout his career, he demonstrated an unparalleled enthusiasm, energy, and love of teaching to his students and to the many graduate student instructors he trained. Personal testimonials tell of Jian’s ability to engage students’ hearts, minds, and imagination, and of his remarkable capacity to make even the most tedious aspects of the language interesting and creative. A master of teaching American students who had never spoken a word of French how to pronounce difficult French vowels, Jian never failed to make language learning fun in his daily 9:00 a.m. class. In all his years of teaching, he never once showed the slightest sign of fatigue. His teaching assistants were continually amazed and inspired by his teaching methodology and by his vitality in the classroom. They learned valuable lessons on teaching, on simplifying complex ideas, and on communicating with students with just the right balance of humor and authority. Jian’s consummate skill as a teacher was recognized campuswide in 1972 when he was awarded the Distinguished Teaching Award from the Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate.

Gérard Jian retired in 1991, leaving a legacy of exemplary teaching and creative scholarly work. His memory is honored on a daily basis by his former graduate students, who in turn are training future faculty on campuses all across the nation. One former graduate student offered this appreciation:

I was trained as a teaching assistant by Jian and taught under his supervision from 1971-1976. Sitting in the back as a novice GSI and watching him teach was a revelation to me. It was like watching an artist at work. Jian’s palette was his students and the classroom his canvas where he wove the colors intricately to bring out the ensemble. It was like an impressionist painting where the parts (the paint strokes) formed the whole but without losing sight of either one. Close up, one could see the details of his teaching methodology; farther away, one could see the final product. The difficult task of teaching at 9:00 AM day in and day out for five days a week without the slightest decrease in his level of energy or enthusiasm was quite exceptional.

Deciding to sell his apartment in Paris, Jian enjoyed his retirement principally in his Victorian San Francisco home. He had long suffered from asthma and, in his later years, from an arthritic condition that made it difficult for him to walk for any distance.

Gérard Jian will be remembered and missed not only for his outstanding contributions to foreign language education but also for his wit, his vigor, and his humanity. He is survived by his brother, Claude, who lives in Paris, and by two nephews.

Richard Kern

2010

Seda Chavdarian

Leonard Johnson