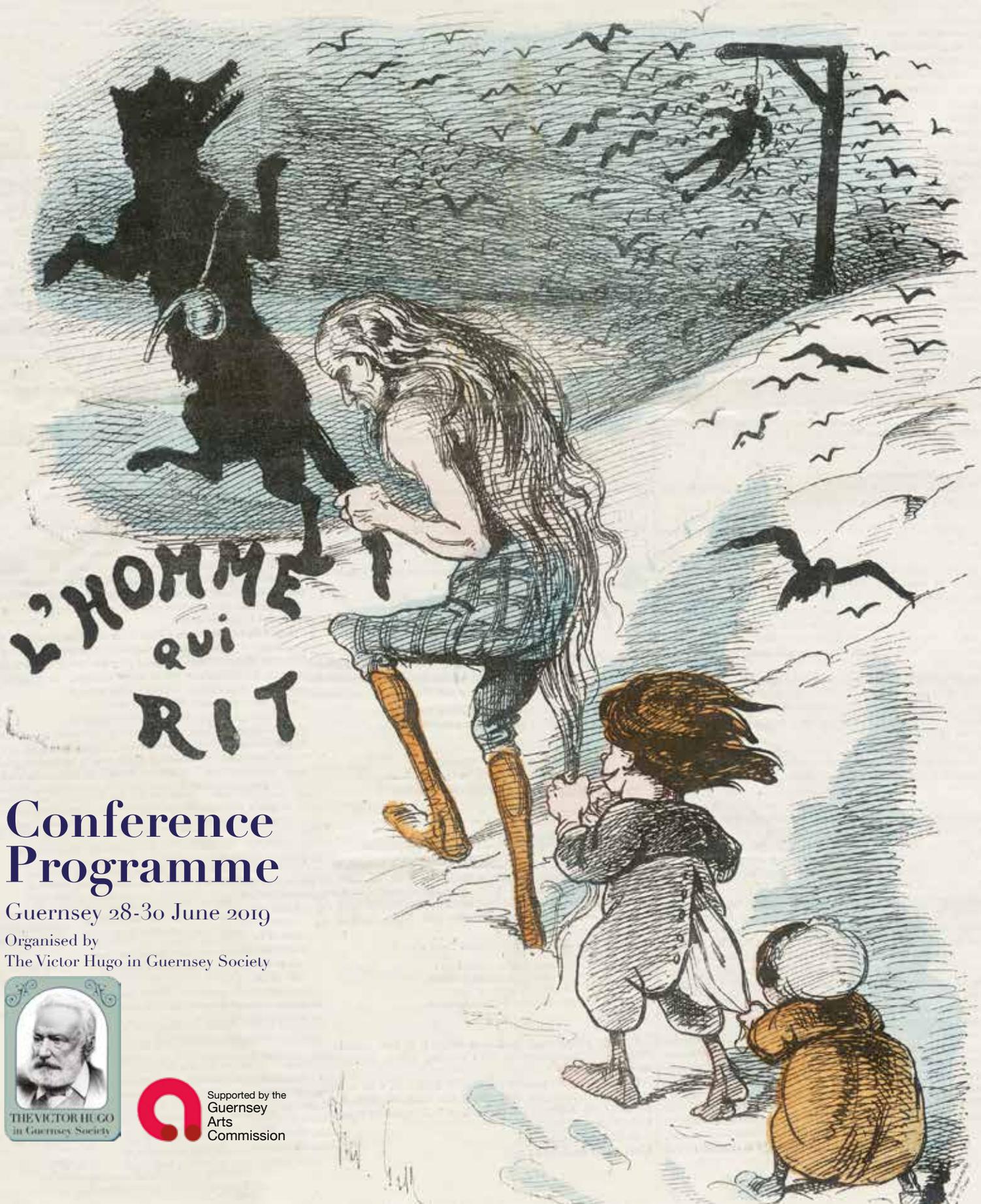


Victor Hugo

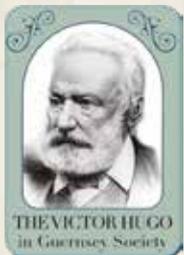
IN GUERNSEY
CONFERENCE 2019



Conference Programme

Guernsey 28-30 June 2019

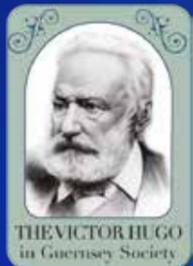
Organised by
The Victor Hugo in Guernsey Society



THE VICTOR HUGO
in Guernsey Society



Supported by the
Guernsey
Arts
Commission



About The Victor Hugo In Guernsey Society



Victor Hugo wrote many of his greatest works on the island of Guernsey, a small British dependency 20 miles off the coast of France. Hugo was in exile, but despite his grief for his family and his homeland he was inspired by the beauty of the rocky landscape and seas that surrounded him to produce magnificent novels – including *Les Misérables*, and *Les Travailleurs de la mer* – artworks, poetry, and theatre.

It was the 150th anniversary of *Les Travailleurs* in 2016 that inspired Gregory Stevens Cox and Roy Bisson to found 'The Victor Hugo In Guernsey Society' and with the help of friends from Guernsey and France, organise a celebratory week-long Festival. There were exhibitions, performances, lectures, stamps, tours and visits with Islanders and guests spreading the word about Hugo's creative exile in our island.

Since then, the Society has organised visits, lectures, performances, exhibitions and new publications. Particularly popular has been the *Victor Hugo Map of Guernsey* which combines a modern map of the island and another of St. Peter Port (kindly donated by DigiMap) with linked descriptions of the many places visited by Hugo and mentioned in his notebooks and used in his writing – especially *Les Travailleurs de la mer*. The text for the map and the recently published *Victor Hugo's Guide to Guernsey* was written by Society Honorary Président Gérard Pouchain. Both publications are in French and English and are sold at cost price to allow the facts about Hugo's exile to become widely known and understood.

In spring 2017 twenty Islanders visited Paris - including the Victor Hugo Museum, la Bibliothèque nationale de France, and Le Sénat where private collections were opened to members.

Victor Hugo is a figure of global importance. Guernsey is already a place of pilgrimage for those interested in him, but work remains to be done. Since 2018, then, the Society has been pressing the Government of Guernsey to help us facilitate the creation of a state-of-the-art Victor Hugo Centre in St Peter Port where his life and work can be studied and explained to islanders and visitors alike, young and old, as a complement to Hauteville House. Progress has been made, the need acknowledged and discussion begun on where and when. Once a site has been secured, the Society will begin a major fund-raising programme.

The Victor Hugo In Guernsey Society thanks its many supporters and members and encourages you, even when you are not in Guernsey, to visit its website and follow it on Facebook, where you will be amongst friends.

www.victorhugoinguernsey.gg

Facebook.com/Victorhugoinguernsey

The Victor Hugo in Guernsey Society reserves the right to change the programme and other conference arrangements without notice.

Welcome from The Victor Hugo In Guernsey Society

The Victor Hugo in Guernsey Society welcomes you to its 3rd Victor Hugo in Guernsey conference. This weekend in the island of Hugo's exile will focus on the novel Hugo published 150 years ago in 1869, *L'Homme qui rit*, (*The Man who Laughs*), written on Guernsey and set in England. Our sister island of Alderney plays a pivotal part in the narrative, and even our old Norman law finds its way into the text.

'The mutilation of a child's face is a thing unbearable for thought to rest on; but have we not seen first the face of a heroic soul?' [A. C. Swinburne, *L'Homme qui rit*, 1869.]

In early 1869 newspapers claimed the 'anxiously awaited novel' was to be published simultaneously in a dozen languages, but the English translators were in a quandary. '*The Laughing Man*' was apparently an absurd title, and Hugo himself refused to change it, suggesting instead they retained the French, as had been done with *Les Misérables*. The translators preferred '*By Order of the King*,' as Hugo had first styled it. Legal problems with the publication of both the French and English editions made the launch less than auspicious. Hugo fell out with his editor.

Hugo was to be disappointed in the general reception of *L'Homme qui rit*; the French thought it over the top and grotesque, while the British were mostly fixated on his unusual interpretation of their history – and attributed it for the most part to what they saw as his wilful ignorance. He was paid a great deal of money for it, and it had its eminent admirers; but it was deemed a failure. Victor Hugo himself had, he said, 'abused the novel' by trying to make it bear too heavy a philosophical and political burden. He wrote, famously, that 'J'ai voulu forcer le lecteur à penser à chaque ligne. De là une sorte de colère du public contre moi,' 'I wanted to force the reader to think over every line. As a result a kind of anger has grown up against me amongst the public.' But no jewel as brilliant and vivid as *L'Homme qui rit* will stay unappreciated for ever. Nowadays the novel is enjoying a renaissance; its intensity, its themes and treatment of sometimes difficult subjects, its darkness, its theatricality, and its sombre mood speak to and are acceptable to modern sensibilities; its political message is received loud and clear. Its complex and vastly rich narrative means that our speakers this weekend can treat subjects as diverse as disability and disfigurement, the novel's view of justice, human and divine – or lack of it, the novel's reception, art and images it has inspired, and its legacy and new life in films, theatre performances and graphic novels.

To close our conference we are thrilled to welcome Claude-Michel Schönberg to talk about his career and celebrate with him the music of the world's most successful musical, Boubllil and Schönberg's adaptation of *Les Misérables*. We thank him most sincerely for his kindness and generosity, and are most grateful to Take a Left Productions for their support. We would also like to thank the Priaux Library for hosting the conference inauguration.

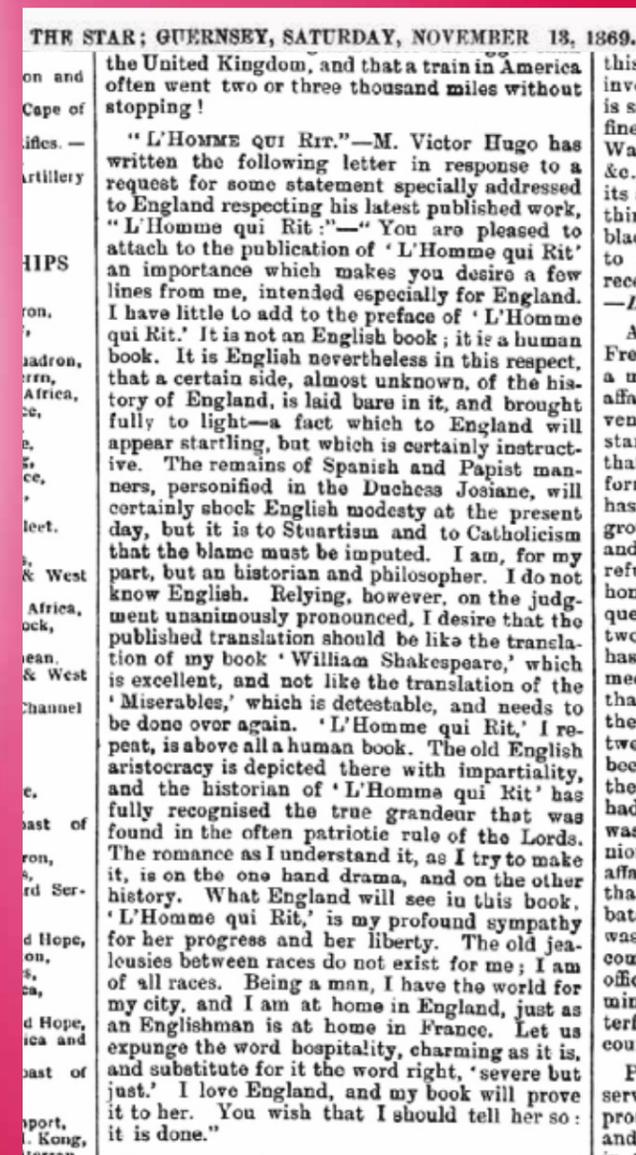
'Victor Hugo goes to work by illuminating flashes. He carries a flaring torch in his hand; and every now and then he plunges it into the caverns of the human heart, and one is conscious of vast stupendous Shadows, moving from midnight to midnight.' [John Cowper Powys, *Suspended Judgments: essays on books and sensations*, New York: G. Arnold Shaw, 1916].

Dinah Bott, Chair.

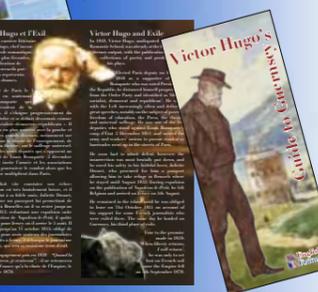
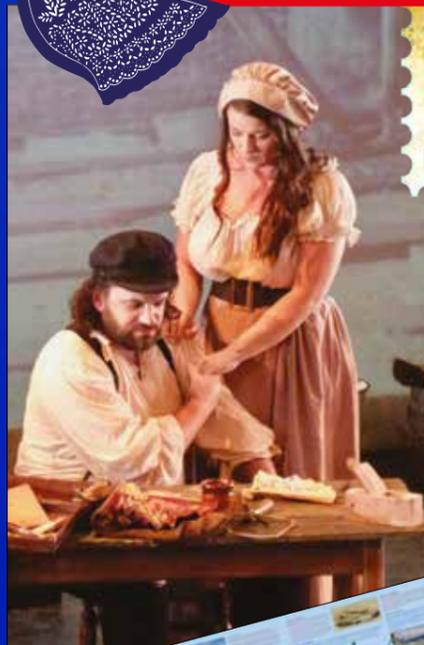
“In a letter to his publisher, Lacroix, in December 1868, after he had announced the publication of a new work by Hugo which he characterised as a Roman historique, the famous novelist wrote:

“When I paint history I make my historical characters do only what they have done or could do, their characters being given, and I let so-called invention interfere as little as possible. My way is to paint true things with invented people. . . “By Order of the King” shall then be England truly, painted by imaginary characters.

The historical figures, Anne, for example, shall be seen only in profile. The interest shall be as in ‘Ruy Blas’ and ‘Les Misérables’ only in the historical characters resulting from the historical or aristocratic surroundings of the times, but created by the author.”



“Il ne faut pas retourner voir Perkeo. La première fois il attriste, la seconde fois il effraie. Rien de plus sinistre que le rire immobile. (Le Rhin)”



Conference Programme 2019

“During 1869, there appeared in four volumes the last but one – and in literary value certainly the least – of his larger prose works of fiction, an utterly bizarre and outré production, entitled, ‘L’Homme qui rit.’ So far removed is it from being in any respect a genuine work of art, that the hero of it might just as effectively have grinned at us through a horse-collar as have wearily claimed our attention through all the four volumes of the narrative.

The most curious thing about M Hugo’s ignorance, however, is its extraordinary audacity. He makes most minute and circumstantial statements about matters of which he knows absolutely nothing, except a few phrases, and that with an air which would lead people to believe that he had made a special study of the subject on which he wrote.

(Pall Mall Gazette August 2 1869)



The Victor Hugo In Guernsey Society

Victor Hugo in Guernsey 2019 Conference

28th to 30th June 2019

Friday 28th June



ISLAND & TOWN TOURS.

During the day, Island and St. Peter Port Tours will be available with Hugo accredited guides in attendance.

17:30 CONFERENCE OPENING VIN D'HONNEUR

In the Priaulx Library, Candie Road, St. Peter Port. Guernsey’s local history centre, with a Victor Hugo special collection.

By invitation only. Free for all conference delegates.

Kindly supported by Rickety Bridge Winery.

18:30 BARBEQUE SUPPER

In the grounds of the Library. Two course buffet supper provided by Les Côtils. In the event of rain this event will be at Les Côtils Centre.

20:00 SCREENING OF ‘L’HOMME QUI RIT’

In French with English subtitles. The critically acclaimed film by Jean-Pierre Améris, starring Gérard Depardieu, Marc-André Grondin, Emmanuelle Seigner and Christa Theret.

Gwynplaine has been deliberately disfigured, his face scarred into a permanent and atrocious smile. He and a blind girl he finds, Dea, both orphans, are taken up by a travelling showman, Ursus. Gwynplaine grows up and becomes star of his own show: crowds flock to see ‘the laughing man,’ and to laugh at him. Celebrity, riches, and a liaison with royalty beckon, but threaten to distance him forever from the two people who have always loved him for what he is: Dea and Ursus.

Conference Programme 2019

Saturday 29 June - Seminar sessions

9:00 CONFERENCE REGISTRATION in the Harry Bound Room at Les Côtils Centre.

9:30 BEAUTIFUL INSIDE & OUT, by GÉRARD AUDINET

‘Beautiful inside and out.’ Does the soul have a face? We are all familiar with the concept of ‘inner beauty,’ but how do artists approach the problem of depicting it? This illustrated talk will reflect on the representations of ugliness and beauty in later arts and media of Victor Hugo’s ‘*The Man who Laughs*.’

10:30 Break for discussion, coffee or tea.

11:00 JUSTICE IN *THE MAN WHO LAUGHS*, by MYRIAM ROMAN

The novel examines the judicial system and questions its contribution to a horrifying perversion of the sacred nature of justice. It seems unique in asking a fundamental question: is there such a thing as divine injustice?, through a set of metaphors which conjure up, on a cosmic scale, terrifying images of trial and punishment.

12:00 VICTOR HUGO & THE SEA by GREGORY STEVENS COX

Book launch. At the start of his exile, Hugo set himself a grand project – to study l’Océan. He threw himself into the project with enthusiasm - he learned about all aspects of the sea. He wove his knowledge, sentiments, and observations into his poetry and into two great novels – ‘*The Toilers of the Sea*’ and ‘*The Man who Laughs*.’

12:30 Buffet lunch.

1:30 L’HOMME QUI RIT & ITS MANY FACES, by BRADLEY STEVENS

150 Years of Grins and Grimaces. This illustrated talk discusses the story’s diverse appeal and various guises in print, on screen, and on stage, including Bristol Old Vic’s acclaimed musical entitled ‘*The Grinning Man*’. Drawing on his interviews with the show’s cast and creative team.

2:30 DISABILITY & DEFORMITY IN *L’HOMME QUI RIT*, by HANNAH THOMPSON

‘*L’Homme qui rit*’ is a novel about the power of non-normative bodies. This illustrated talk will argue that Hugo’s depictions of his characters’ disabilities and deformities are surprisingly modern: rather than seeing disability as a problem, Hugo celebrates it as a radical and politically progressive way of life.

3:30 Break for discussion, tea or coffee.

4:00 HOW *THE MAN WHO LAUGHS* WAS RECEIVED, by GÉRARD POUCHAIN

The verdicts of Juliette Drouet and the caricaturists. How did Victor Hugo’s masterwork go down with his most acute, but very different, critics?

4:30 - 5:00 SPEAKERS PANEL, Q & A

6:00 CONFERENCE SUPPER on Les Côtils Terrace.

8:00 AN EVENING CELEBRATING THE MUSIC OF BOUBLIL AND SCHÖNBERG at St. James Concert Hall

Together with lyricist Alain Boublil, Claude-Michel Schönberg created two of the greatest international successes in the history of musical theatre, ‘*Les Misérables*’ and ‘*Miss Saigon*.’ In a rare public encounter, Claude-Michel Schönberg will sit down with writer and broadcaster Edward Seckerson to discuss his journey from songwriter, record producer and singer.

“However, let us take the book out of the region of history and political purpose altogether, and regard it simply as a novel. Let us accept it as true that a king - James II, if you like - has, for eccentric purposes of his own, ordered a set of polyglot scoundrels to cut off a boy’s lips, so that he shall wear an eternal grin upon his face; and then let us follow the boy’s fortunes - his meeting with Dea, the little blind girl, with Ursus the kindly misanthropic tramp; his growth to manhood; his love for Dea; his love passages with Lady Josiane the virgin harlot; his recognition as a peer of the realm; his single speech to their lordships; his return to Ursus and Dea; and his death. Let us look at the persons he comes across in the course of his career. Can it be said that a single one of them lives? They all strut about in a galvanic sort of a manner certainly, and they all talk, and in exactly the same way. But does a single one of them live? Can one of them, with the single doubtful exception of Lady Josiane, be said to have a human character? And how many of the scenes possess even as much likelihood as is required for the purposes of fiction? Certainly not the sinking of the vessel containing the polyglot scoundrels aforesaid, nor the amazing trial, nor the wonderful prize-fight in which foul blows are freely allowed. Of course there are striking scenes and pieces of literary art. A writer like Victor Hugo does not write a long book without showing signs of his power. Charles Reade held him to be the one great genius of this century, adding, however, that he sometimes had the nightmare. In ‘*L’Homme qui rit*’ the nightmare decidedly predominates.

(Swinburne, Life of VICTOR HUGO.)



“But the Casquets lighthouse was not of that type. It was at that time a basic and primitive fire, of the sort that Henri I had had built after the loss of the White Ship, a log alight under an iron grid on top of a rock, embers behind a grill, a flicker of flame in the wind.”

“One of his most interesting literary devices, and it is an essentially poetic one, is the diffusion through the story of some particular background, a background which gathers to itself a sort of brooding personality as the tale proceeds, and often becomes before the book is finished far more arresting and important than any of the human characters whose drama it dominates.

Such is the sea itself, for instance, in “The Toilers.” Such is the historic cathedral in “Notre Dame.” Such is the great Revolution - certainly a kind of natural cataclysm - in “Ninety-three.” Such are the great sewers of Paris in “Les Misérables.” Such - though it is rather a symbol than a background - is the terrible fixed smile of the unfortunate hero in “L’Homme qui Rit.” (John Cowper Powys)



Gérard Pouchain

Honorary President of
The Victor Hugo in Guernsey Society

Gérard Pouchain is professor and associate researcher at the University of Rouen, Vice-President of the Victor Hugo Society of Friends, and a Chevalier de la Légion d’honneur. He is the acclaimed author of *In the Footsteps of Victor Hugo in the Channel Islands*, which explores the caricatures of Victor Hugo and how the world press viewed Victor Hugo during his exile.

He is also the biographer of Juliette Drouet and the author of several books on nineteenth-century authors and film synopses of Victor Hugo, Maupassant and Maurice Leblanc.



Gérard Audinet

M Gérard Audinet, Director of the Maison Victor Hugo in Paris and Hauteville House in Guernsey for City of Paris - Paris Public Institution Museums since 2010. Previously, Curator, Museum of Modern Art of the City of Paris July 1991 - August 2010.



Hannah Thompson

Hannah Thompson is Professor of French and Critical Disability Studies at Royal Holloway, University of London. She has published widely on French literature and theory, the body, gender, sexuality and disability. She is the author of three books on French literature and culture: *Naturalism Redressed: Identity and Clothing in the Novels of Emile Zola* (Legenda 2004); *Taboo: Corporeal Secrets in Nineteenth-Century French Fiction* (Legenda, 2013) and *Reviewing Blindness in French Fiction (1789-2013)* (Palgrave, 2017) This third book marks the start of Professor Thompson’s influential work on the cross-overs between French Studies and Critical Disability Studies. She is also the author of the popular *Blind Spot Blog* and she has written for *The Guardian* and *The Conversation*.

“Since he was not writing a historical novel, why did Hugo, in the 1860’s, look to Queen Anne’s England for a political subject of contemporary importance to him? In a letter Hugo parallels the age of Queen Anne with pre-revolutionary France, but it seems more important to underline the parallel which Hugo surely felt with his own period in history, a period when the Republic had already come and gone. Post-Cromwellian England and Second Empire France were sisters in bondage. Both were living under a restored tyranny. For Hugo to be writing about the past was not an escape from his existential moment, but a kind of sad affirmation that the present in which he was living was a dead past. Like Hugo, Lord Clancharlie, ally of Cromwell, went in to exile when a restoration replaced the republic, ‘à l’instant où le passé devenait l’avenir et où l’avenir devenait le passé.’ (Marianne C Ford, ‘The pessimism of an idealist: Hugo’s L’Homme qui rit’, in *French Review* 41 (5) 1968)



© Victor Hugo, 1863

Conference Speakers

Bradley Stephens

Honorary Vice-President of
The Victor Hugo in Guernsey Society

Dr. Bradley Stephens is Senior Lecturer / Associate Professor in French at the University of Bristol and holds a PhD from the University of Cambridge. His teaching and research focuses on French literature and philosophy from the nineteenth century to the present day, with a particular interest in Victor Hugo’s career and its influence. He has published widely in these fields, including his recent co-edited book *Les Misérables and its Afterlives: Between Page, Stage, and Screen*, and he just published a new English biography of Hugo for Reaktion Books’ ‘Critical Lives’ series.



Gregory Stevens Cox OBE

Gregory Stevens Cox, founder of the Society has taken an interest in Hugo’s life and literature since his schooldays. He has conducted original research into the life of Hugo during the years of exile in Guernsey and has written monographs on the subject. He has written *Victor Hugo’s Guernsey Neighbours* (2016) and *Les Travailleurs de la mer - some Guernsey perspectives* (2016). Recently he has written *Victor Hugo’s St. Peter Port*, and *Victor Hugo explores Guernsey*. Now the last of the trilogy, *Victor Hugo and the sea - Love’s Labour Lost* has arrived.



Myriam Roman

Alumna of the École Normale Supérieure and *agrégée* in Literature, Myriam Roman is the author of a thesis on the novels of Victor Hugo, published by Honoré Champion in 1999. She was editor, with Delphine Gleizes, of the 2002 Livre de Poche edition of *The Man who laughs*, and, more recently, *Hugo, orator*, an anthology of Victor Hugo’s speeches published by Gallimard in 2015. Myriam is a lecturer in nineteenth-century French literature at the University of Paris-Sorbonne and is currently working on a book on Victor Hugo and justice.

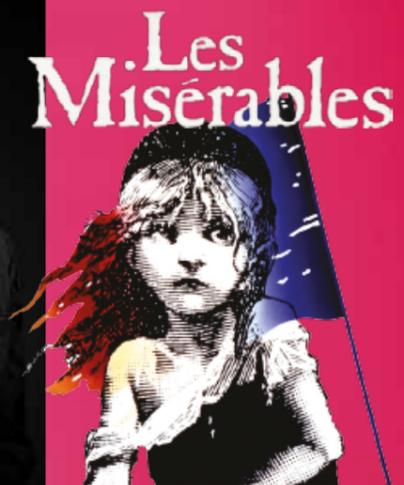


Claude-Michel Schönberg

Born in 1944 of Hungarian parents, Claude-Michel Schönberg began his career in France as a singer, writer and producer of pop songs. In collaboration with Alain Boublil he is the book co-writer and the composer of *La Révolution Française*, *Les Misérables*, *Miss Saigon*, *Martin Guerre* and *The Pirate Queen*. In 2008 his new musical, *Marguerite*, in collaboration with Alain Boublil, Michel Legrand and Herbert Kretzmer opened at the Haymarket Theatre in London.

Claude-Michel has supervised overseas productions and co-produced several international cast albums of his shows. In 2001 he composed his first ballet score, *Wuthering Heights*, which was created by the Northern Ballet in 2002. His ballet, *Cleopatra*, which opened in 2011, was his second collaboration with David Nixon and his seventh complete score. In 2012 Claude-Michel co-wrote the screenplay and reconceived the music for the *Les Misérables* musical movie.

Golden Globe winner, Oscar nominee and recent Grammy award winner for outstanding contribution to the creative community, Mr. Schönberg married the English ballerina, Charlotte Talbot, in 2003. He is the father of one son and two daughters.



“... Victor Hugo only said further that it was at Guernsey that he had written his best book. ‘Which, master?’ - ‘L’Homme Qui Rit.’ ‘England is all in ‘L’Homme Qui Rit’ and it alone is there.’

“It is not sufficiently realised how much there was of the “macabre” about Victor Hugo. Like the prophet Ezekiel, he had strange visions from the power he served, and in the primordial valleys of his imagination there lie, strewn to the bleaching winds, the bones of men and of demons and of gods; and the breath that blows upon them and makes them live - live their weird phantasmal life of mediaeval goblins in some wild procession of madness - is the breath of the spirit of childhood’s fancies. (John Cowper Powys, *Suspended Judgments: Essays on Books and Sensations*, New York: G. Arnold Shaw, 1916.)

EST
1797

RICKETY BRIDGE

W I N E R Y



Rickety Bridge is an historic Franschhoek wine estate, founded in 1797 by the widow Paulina de Villiers, and set in lush vineyards shadowed by the majestic Dassenberg and Wemmershoek Mountains. Cross the 'rickety bridge' into a haven in the vines and revel in this multi-faceted offering of fine wine, delectable cuisine and luxury accommodation.

Today Rickety Bridge is home to a modern boutique winery producing world class wines, a bistro style restaurant, romantic wedding and function venue and a luxurious 4 star guest house set in the original Cape Dutch Manor House.

Its flagship wines, the Paulina's Reserve range, proudly bear the name of the original owner of the property. These are complimented by the Rickety Bridge classic range, and both have received numerous accolades and awards in recent years in recognition of the quality produced by young winemaker Wynand Grobler.

Tel: +27 (0) 21 876 2129 • info@ricketybridge.com • www.ricketybridge.com
R45, Franschhoek, Western Cape, South Africa

