DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 042 383 FL 001 889

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TITLE	A Program of French Studies: A Guide for the College Student.
INSTITUTION	American Association of Teachers of French.
PUB DATE	Dec 61
NOTE	32p.; Reprint from The French Review v35 n2 p221-251 Dec 1961
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$1.70
DESCRIPTORS	Bibliographies, College Majors, Cultural Education, *French, French Literature, Graduate Study, *Language Instruction, *Liberal Arts Majors, Linguistics, Literature, Modern Languages, *Program Content, Romance Languages, *Second Language Learning, Undergraduate Study, Units of Study (Subject Fields)

ABSTRACT

This pamphlet informs the college student of the nature of French studies as a language major. Key sections include: (1) Why major in French?, (2) French and the study of language, (3) aspects of French culture, (4) French and the study of literature, (5) graduate and undergraduate study of French, and (6) French in the liberal arts program. A selected, topical bibliography pertaining to each of these sections in included. (RL)

A Program of French Studies: A Guide for the College Student

by Richard M. Chadbourne and Edward J. Geary

Made in the United States of America
Reprinted from THE FRENCH REVIEW
Vol. XXXV, No. 2, December, 1961

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I. Why Major in French?

In choosing a field of concentration, American college students, inevitably shaped in part by the utilitarian culture in which they live, are inclined to ask the wrong question. They ask "What can I do with it?" when they should ask "What can it do with me and to me?"

We do not wish to slight vocational opportunities for the French major such as interpreting, positions in government, in business, and perhaps above all in teaching, where growing enrollments in foreign languages from elementary school through university (with French among the most prominent) provide an immensely challenging and interesting opportunity to build a career. But preparing you for a vocation is at best a secondary or subsidiary function of the liberal arts college, unless by "vocation" is meant the highest vocation to which any of us can be called, that of living our lives with orderly purpose and creative fervor. The strongest rebuttal of the "school to get a good job" fallacy was made many years ago by John Henry Newman when he declared in *The Idea of a University* that the true purpose of higher education is the cultivation of the intellect for its own sake, the attainment of "illuminative reason and true philosophy." By this last he meant "the highest state to which nature can aspire, in the way of intellect," for it puts the mind "above the influences of chance and necessity, above anxiety, suspense, unsettlement, and superstition, which is the lot of the many."

The real strength of a foreign language major within this liberal arts context is

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* In May 1955 *Hispania* published "A Guide for the Spanish Major" by Robert G. Mead, Jr. and Gardiner H. London of the University of Connecticut. Several thousand offprints were made and sold before the "Guide" went out of print. In a discussion of the need for a revision of the "Guide," it occurred to us that the other AATs might like to produce corresponding guides. In the fall of 1959 I wrote to the officers of each of the five AATs and got enthusiastic responses to the suggestion. Before or during the 1959 annual meetings each AAT had selected two editors and on 19 and 20 February 1960 they met in New York with Professors Mead and London to establish criteria and agree on a working schedule for the production of programs for college students of French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish.

I have seen drafts of these programs and know how ably they have been assembled. My thanks and congratulations go to the authors for the skill and devotion with which they have worked. I am particularly happy to see a joint MLA-AAT enterprise brought through to such a fruitful conclusion.—DONALD D. WALSH, Director, MLA FL Program Research Center.

Reprints of "A Program of French Studies" may be obtained at the rate of $1.00 per copy (discounts for quantity orders) by writing to Professor Armand Bégué, National Information Bureau AATF, 972 Fifth Ave., New York 21, N.Y.

therefore something much greater than its practical usefulness. To master a second language, especially if that language, like French, expresses a substantial portion of the accumulated wisdom of mankind, is to enhance one's growth toward that philosophical sense of things which is the essence of higher education. It is also in a way to begin life anew, to create for oneself a second universe of experience.

Few languages open up such exciting new worlds as does French. We are not referring only to its wide diffusion as a means of communication between non-French peoples, a prestige it owes to its power as an instrument for the clear expression of general, universal concepts in numerous realms of human activity. We are thinking also and especially of its individual greatness. Benjamin Franklin remarked, "Every man has two countries, his own and France." For Americans the appeal of France has been of long duration and has survived many misunderstandings, probably because it is based on some kind of spiritual kinship. The French in the Age of Enlightenment took as much from Jefferson and Franklin as they gave to them. As for the great contribution made to the shaping of the native American genius by what has been called the "French Revelation," we will cite only a few examples: the Founding Fathers and Montesquieu; Emerson and Montaigne; Henry Adams inspired by Mont Saint-Michel and Chartres; our exiled artists of the twenties seeking a better understanding of their country from the vantage point of Paris; the many American poets and writers of fiction who learned in large part from the Symbolists or from Flaubert and Maupassant their belief in the integrity of their craft.

There is no reason to believe that the mystery of France has lost its fascination for Americans or that the mystery of *les États-Unis* appeals any the less today to young Frenchmen than it did to their grandfathers. Nor is France any the less a kind of second "spiritual country" for Americans today than it was in the age of Franklin. Our purpose in this Guide is to map out for the prospective French major some of the essential features of this spiritual country and to suggest some of the methods by which it can be explored further, treating first its language and then its civilization, with special emphasis on its literature.

II. French and the Study of Language

General features of language—Distinctive features of a language—Linguistic analysis and its relation to language learning—Phonetics and phonemics, grammar, lexicology, speech levels, dialects, French "abroad"—History of the French language—Indo-European, Celtic, Vulgar Latin to modern French—Historical linguistics—Etymology, evolution of sounds, of forms—Relation of language study to other fields; relation to literature

Speech is man's most useful and precious artifact. Through it, he comprehends his universe in the present, relives the past or projects his being into the future. Language is *communication,* and in the broadest sense of the word, for it links us to other persons, places and times.

In the abstract, language is a universal human phenomenon, but in fact we do not speak language: we speak *a* language. We learn the essentials of our native tongue as a child. Early forms of random verbal play develop into a system of speech acts, of verbal responses appropriate to situations within our verbal community. Initially, language has little to do with the specialized skills of recognizing its written, or *graphic,* forms or of reproducing them. It is a system of oral *speech habits,* fixed by

a vast amount of experience. The way we acquire these habits is, strictly speaking, the concern of the psychologist; but as a student of language, you should be familiar with the psychology of learning and with the nature of verbal behavior.

By definition, language is a system of *symbols*. The study of the meaning of these symbols is defined as *semantics*. A consistent theory of meaning represents a highly sophisticated view of language; but you put a semantic question whenever you ask what a word or sentence "means" or what a story or poem "is about." The word *eau* stands for a liquid, but does not quench thirst. The sounds, or letters, which compose it have no direct relationship to the thing represented. They signify a particular thing only by convention. Even imitative, or *onomatopoetic,* words fuse sound and meaning only in a particular context: *Pan! le coup de feu partit,* but *C'est un écrou à six pans.*

A given language comprises only a limited number of all the sounds that the vocal organs are physically capable of producing. A *distinctive feature* of one language, such as the nasalization which determines meaning in French (*beau-bon*) may be meaningless in another (the nasal quality of the vowel in English *tame*). Within a linguistic system, sounds are arranged in typical patterns or *structures*. Certain sequences of sounds, such as *cat,* sound "natural" to your ear; others, such as *cta,* sound "foreign."

In the same way, each language imposes a unique patterned order upon all the diverse features of human experience. In English, there is a clear distinction between a woman (*she, her*) and a table (*it*). The Frenchman, as is well known, makes a similar distinction in fact, but grammatical gender may keep him from doing so in speech (*elle, la*). You may feel indignant that the Frenchman should insist on using a future tense where "logic" demands a present; he shakes his head at your inability to perceive the delicate nuances of the *imparfait*. Concepts of time are structured differently in the two languages: what is explicit in one is implicit in the other. Moreover, both omit distinctions made in many a so-called "primitive" language. Any language is the result of a historical, selective process. It is *different* from all other languages, but in no way deficient or inferior.

Ideas about the nature of language start to take shape the moment we first learn that something we have been saying is a "word" or when we are told that "you mustn't say that." Later, these notions are reinforced by the formal study of English grammar; and we come to think of a language as a number of isolated elements which must be put together according to defined rules. When we encounter a foreign language, we all too often treat it as an object of analysis. Instead of acquiring a new means of communication and self-expression, we attempt to equate the new with the old by "translation."

Much has been done recently to counteract this excessive insistence on written language and formal grammar. Dealing largely with hitherto little known languages, many of them unwritten, the *descriptive linguist* has helped to restore the prestige of the spoken tongue and to stress the uniqueness and integrity of all languages. He has also been responsible for more sophisticated techniques of *structural analysis*. As a student of French, you are perhaps already familiar with textbooks based upon a "structural approach" to the language, and thus with some of the results of *applied linguistics.*

Learning French involves profound, radical changes in verbal behavior. The immediate problem is in large measure one of physical adaptation. When we listen to English, we notice certain variations in the flow of sounds and relate them to changes

in meaning. Others, such as a lisp, are insignificant in a linguistic sense. Physically our ear is "attuned" to the English patterning of sound, but not to that of French. A comprehensive statement about the specific sounds involved is a *phonetic* description. *Acoustic phonetics* deals with the physical features of sound and their transmission, while *articulatory phonetics* deals with the speech organs and with their positions during sound production. Hamlet's advice to the players ("Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue . . . ") is articulatory: it specifies the *manner* ("trippingly") and the *articulator* ("the tongue").

Normal speech consists of complex sequences of precisely coordinated physical movements, so deeply rooted as habits that we are usually unaware of them. In mastering a foreign tongue, we "learn how to speak" all over again. To do so, we mimic a native speaker, follow the practical counsels of *applied phonetics* and, in more stubborn cases, spend long hours on corrective exercises based on a thorough comparison of the two phonetic systems.

To represent sounds, the phonetician uses symbols, ordinarily those of the International Phonetic Alphabet. Since you often encounter them in dictionaries, they are a language tool well worth acquiring. A word of caution, however: the descriptive linguist applies the term *phonetic* to a detailed transcription of something actually said by a given speaker. A more generalized transcription, not taking into account the variations in "sounds" according to their context, is called *phonemic*. A *phoneme* represents a class of sounds. It is, if you will, a convenient way of disregarding any distinctions in sound which do not, at the same time, involve distinctions in meaning. In French, for example, the *m* of *mule* (which is "rounded") and that of *mille* (which is not) are phonetically different. But they are simply variant forms of the same phoneme: pronouncing the *m* of *mille* with rounded lips might be awkward, but would not change its meaning.

Each language has a unique phonemic structure. Common symbols may be used to compare different linguistic systems, but they often give false impressions of phonetic realities. In French, no "sound" is produced in exactly the same manner as its apparent English counterpart. The "French *r*" is an obvious case in point. Furthermore, within a linguistic system, symbols give no hint of the vagaries of individual speech. In learning French, you must for practical reasons be guided by what are in fact generalized statements about French pronunciation. From a phonetic point of view, you will encounter wide variations in the voices of teachers, visiting lecturers and speakers heard on records, tapes, or film soundtracks. The process of adjusting to this diversity is long and arduous, but necessary. French, like any other language, can be described only in terms of a *mutual intelligibility* among those who speak it, not according to rigid standards of uniformity.

Phonetic analysis does not stop with the vowel and consonant sounds which compose utterances. Understanding French and speaking it with what is commonly known as a good "accent" depend also upon our ability to recognize and reproduce other patterns of sound. The comparison of English and French reveals enormous differences in features such as syllabification, accent (or stress) and intonation. The "typical" French syllable ends with a vowel sound. It is articulated with considerable tension and with increasing intensity. The English syllable more often ends with a consonant, with far less tension and decreasing intensity of the vowel. In French, the *accent,* consisting primarily of vowel length, occurs only at the end of a word group; in English, a word of any complexity carries an accent on a fixed syllable. Vowel length may be associated with a change in vowel quality in English (*bit, beat*), but

this is not so in French. The distinctive habits of English articulation, carried over into French, have disastrous results: diphthongs and "glide vowels" distort the French vocalic system; intensity accents disrupt the normal patterning of words and transform unaccented vowels into neutral sounds without distinctive quality.

When we complain that the Frenchman talks too fast or that we can't make out his words even though we "know" them, we mean simply that we have not yet become accustomed to French habits of articulation. These, along with *liaison* (word linking) and the subtle play of the so-called "mute" *e*, blend the units of speech into "words" quite different from those we see on the printed page. *Mais c'est un petit chien!* must be identified as a "word" in much the same way as *Mathématicien!*

The relationship of sound to meaning is not, strictly speaking, the concern of the phonetician, but of the grammarian and the lexicologist. The first deals primarily with the form of words (*morphology*) and with their arrangement in utterances (*syntax*); the second, with the linguistic stock, or vocabulary, as such.

The modern linguist, in his analysis of grammar, avoids the terms "rule" and "exception" or uses them simply to describe what *does* occur frequently (a "rule") or rarely (an "exception"), not what should occur. He also rejects many of the traditional grammatical terms, which apply principally to Greek and Latin. The general tendency is to replace definitions based on meaning ("a noun is the name of a person, place or thing") by statements related to *function* (how words of a given class act in specific structures). At the morphological level, language is analyzed in terms of *morphemes,* that is, units of speech having a distinct semantic reference or "meaning," and including the forms known more commonly as *inflections.* In comparison with Latin, English and French have few inflected forms. Both are basically *analytical:* sentence structure is indicated by word order and functional words, such as prepositions (*to the man, à l'homme*). Affixes (including case-endings) serve the same purpose in the synthetic languages, such as Latin (*homini*).

Analytical structure implies rigid word order. In English and French, words occur in relatively fixed patterns. Despite certain similarities, the patterns of English and French are quite different, and there is considerable "interference" between them. The signs (order, agreement, accent and intonation) which mark the limits of French structures are complex. In the long run, learning to recognize and reproduce them calls for a far more crucial linguistic adaptation than do the lexical problems which tend to preoccupy the student of French.

Vocabulary is the vast stock of words which may occur within the relatively limited structures of a language. Of these words, an individual uses or recognizes only a certain number, determined by his powers of retention, his education, his profession, and the like. For the rest, as circumstances demand, he consults a complete word inventory, a dictionary, compiled by a team of experts, *lexicographers.* Even here, he finds only the accepted *denotation* of words, their literal or figurative significance within the linguistic system as a whole. In a real verbal situation, a word has a particular affective quality, a *connotation,* for each individual.

In studying French, we identify many new words as *cognates* (all the while remaining suspicious of the potential *faux amis*). In other cases, through some knowledge of processes of French word derivation and formation, we deduce the meaning of a new item. But, even when we consult a dictionary, the "meaning" arrived at is, at best, approximate. Translation and definition are but hesitant steps in a process. All too often, they are a vain illusion of understanding. The words *socialiste* and *républicain* do not "mean" *socialist* and *republican,* because they represent different

experiences for the French and the English speaker. Words do not cross cultures unscathed. Only by adapting to the environment in which French words occur can one truly be said to *understand* their meaning.

During this process of adaptation, you may, now and again, be told that something you say is "wrong." The concept of right-wrong (or *correct-incorrect* in French) applies in a very restricted sense to the study or use of a language. *Je pas ne sais* is wrong because it does not occur in French. *J'sais pas,* which is probably as frequent as *je ne sais pas,* does not fall into the same category. Here, "correct" really means appropriate to the circumstances or socially acceptable. *Standard French,* the French taught in the classroom, is the written or spoken language generally used by the cultivated Frenchman. It may be modified according to the traditions of a particular style (such as that of the pulpit or the university chair); or social distinction (in some cases, snobbism) may lead to elegant refinements in speech. As environment changes, so does language.

In many circumstances, the speaker of standard French is not especially aware of his speech. He relaxes linguistically. At home or with close friends, for example, he may pronounce less carefully (like the American who says *Watcha gonna do?*), or else he may use somewhat less "acceptable" words or modify "correct" speech patterns. You should acquaint yourself with this *style familier* (*colloquial French*), and, to some extent at least, should be able to respond to it. Your relationship with the French will in part be determined by your awareness of the implications of formal and informal speech.

A third linguistic level is that of the naïve or uncultivated speaker, the speech which the French call *populaire* (that is, *sub-standard*). As the term itself makes clear, it is associated with a social differentiation. You should not attempt to imitate the grammatical and lexical peculiarities of sub-standard speech, but need to recognize and understand them. Beyond the practical necessity of dealing with French people from all walks of life, there is the importance of recognizing the various levels of discourse in literary texts. In the drama and the novel, effective characterization stems in part from the appropriateness of speech; and, in poetry, particular esthetic effects may result from variations in speech level (as in Baudelaire's "Sois sage, ô ma Douleur . . . ," with its juxtaposition of the colloquial *sois sage* and the lofty, abstract *Douleur*).

These levels of discourse are not hard and fast categories. Elements of all three may occur in the speech of any one person, and there is a constant interplay of standard, colloquial and sub-standard. A word or phrase now condemned as *populaire* may, a few years hence, have been accepted in the best of linguistic circles. An element of standard French may gradually lose status or become an affectation (witness the fate of most forms of the imperfect subjunctive). There are also circumstances where the speaker consciously tries to alter his linguistic identity: the politician becomes by his speech a "man of the people," or the tradesman corrects where no correction is called for (just as in the sub-standard English *with Mary and I*).

Argot is a different matter. Primarily lexical, slang constitutes a private, limited form of communication. It cannot be identified with any particular social level. There is the special slang of the university, of the theater—and of the underworld.

If standard French is Parisian French (there are those who would argue that the speech of Touraine is the "purer"), movement away from Paris carries us through a different range of linguistic diversity. The written language is generally standard throughout France; but regional differences in spoken language are noticeable every-

where, especially among speakers of sub-standard French. When such deviations from standard French are numerous and distributed over a relatively large area, they serve to define a *dialect* of French. The diffusion patterns of dialectal speech are highly complex, and their limits can be determined only by the specialized techniques of the *linguistic geographer,* who may draw a linguistic atlas much as the physical geographer draws an atlas of topographical features. Whatever the theoretical problems involved, many a Frenchman uses a form of local communication virtually unintelligible to his countrymen from other regions. His dialect, or the special local variation spoken in his village, is his *patois;* and, in spite of the linguistic uniformity imposed by universal education and furthered by modern communication media, the *patois* remains vigorous and distinctive. French "regional" literature derives much of its authenticity from the use of dialectal forms and tends at the same time to reinforce and preserve them.

Linguistic and dialectal boundaries do not coincide with national boundaries. Within France, Breton (the Celtic language of Brittany), Basque (of the Pryrenees region) and Provençal (the distinct Romance language of the Midi) have withstood the pressures of centralization. On the other hand, French is spoken far beyond the confines of metropolitan France: in countries such as Belgium, Switzerland and Canada, where it is on an equal footing with other official languages; in former French colonies and member nations of the French Community (Louisiana, Haiti, the Malagasy Republic, etc.). Within these areas, French may be diffused in depth or confined to the upper levels of society; it may be close to standard French (as in Belgium) or widely divergent (as in Louisiana). "French" literature includes works produced in areas such as French Canada or written by authors such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "citoyen de Genève," or Maeterlinck, a Belgian.

A description of present-day French deals with the *what.* For the *why,* we must look into the development of the language from its origins. In this sense, the study of French gives us one view of the broad historical panorama of an entire "family" of languages, the Indo-European, and in particular of the Romance languages.

Through *comparative linguistics,* it is possible to establish relationships between the several Romance languages and to trace their evolution from Vulgar Latin: not the Classical written language, but the spoken tongue of the vast Roman empire. Similarly, resemblances between the Romance languages and others such as the Germanic and Slavic lead to the hypothesis of a common source in pre-historic times. Just as the anthropologist might reconstruct a "proto-Man" pre-dating the earliest known fossil remains, the historical linguist follows the patterns (or "laws") of linguistic evolution, as observed in historical sources, to reconstruct the main features of a primitive language, of "proto-Indo-European." This is the ultimate, and theoretical, ancestor of French.

Within the area now known as France, pre-Latin linguistic history is bound to the story of successive migrations of primitive peoples, such as the Ligurians and Iberians, or the incursions of seafarers, such as the Greeks. For some centuries, the Celts (especially the Gauls) prevailed over most of France, imposing their way of life, their religion and their language. With the Roman conquest, Vulgar Latin supplanted the Gallic tongue. But the change was neither instantaneous nor uniform. The indigenous language survived in part, and is believed by some linguists to have exerted a telling influence on the subsequent development of Latin in France. A great number of French place names betray clearly their Gallic origins: *Paris* comes from the name of a tribe, the *Parisii* (in its Latinized form). Many other words, reinforced by te-

nacious Gallic customs, prevailed over Latin terms: *le chêne,* for example, because of its significance in Celtic religion. The nasal vowels and the pronounced Medieval diphthongs *ei, oi, ou, eu,* which have survived in the spelling of Modern French, may owe their formation to Gallic speech habits. Geographically, too, Latin met with varying degrees of resistance. In remote areas, pre-Roman culture and language survived longer, accounting in part for later dialectal variations in French.

Because of this Celtic *substratum,* Vulgar Latin evolved differently in France than it did in Spain, Rumania and other Romance countries. Some differentiation also resulted from the intermittent Germanic invasions which led to the fall of the Roman empire. As the Franks and other Germanic peoples adopted the Gallo-Roman tongue, they imposed upon it certain speech habits of their own. For instance, they brought with them the *h* sound which had disappeared from Gallo-Roman. (Compare *l'homme,* from Latin, with *le heaume,* from Germanic.) Although the breakdown of the Empire led to a widespread linguistic fragmentation, the early Middle Ages saw the development of two general classes of local tongues: the *langue d'oïl* in the north of France, and the *langue d'oc* in the south.

With the so-called "Carolingian Renaissance," the renewed study of Classical Latin drove home the fact that the "vulgar" tongue was a distinct language. Vulgar Latin had become French. (The earliest French document extant, the Strasburg Oaths, was written in 842.) But "French" was, in fact, several languages, related by common features. Of the Old French dialects, the Francien of the Ile de France was destined to prevail: Paris was the center of an important trade network; kings of the Francien-speaking royal family gradually won the allegiance of unruly feudal barons and came to symbolize France as a nation; and Francien occupied a linguistic middle-ground between more radically opposed dialects such as Picard to the north and Norman to the west.

Linguistic standardization was the work of centuries. Before its accomplishment, several dialects had produced autonomous literatures. "Old French Literature" embraces an Anglo-Norman version of the *Chanson de Roland,* a Picard *Aucassin et Nicolette,* and *romans courtois* written in Champenois by Chrétien de Troyes. In spite of this diversity, the Old French period (approximately through the thirteenth century) produced an impressive body of literature. French had become a *literary language.* Latin was long to remain the language of the cleric and the scholar; but French had proven itself capable of depicting a wide range of human experience in appropriately stylized forms.

Consolidation and gradual evolution went on during the Middle French period (fourteenth and fifteenth centuries), but a more decisive moment came during the Renaissance. Printing gave an immeasurable impetus to the diffusion of the language; and the reawakened interest in the classics once again resulted in a sharper awareness of linguistic differences. Self-consciously, the French tried to equate their language with the venerated Latin and attempted to defend it rationally. Modern French emerged from this introspective process which was already apparent in Du Bellay's *Défense et illustration de la langue française* (1549) and which culminated in the authoritarian linguistic principles of the seventeenth-century Academicians.

Definition of linguistic norms could not guarantee French against the subtle forces of time. Subsequent events have brought about profound revolutions in modes of thought and behavior; and history always leaves its mark upon language. French has evolved and will continue to evolve according to the laws of its own destiny.

Vulgar Latin became present-day French by an intricate process of evolution ex-

tending over more than two millennia of European history. Like similar historical phenomena, such as the growth of political institutions, this transformation involved many complex and interrelated types of change.

Etymology traces the development of French words, mainly from Latin origins. In the course of time, other languages have contributed loan-words to the French lexicon: Arabic during the early Middle Ages, Italian during the Renaissance, or English during the industrial revolution, to single out but a few. At frequent intervals during its history, French has also returned to Latin as to a perpetual source. A word like *captivus* having undergone a phonetic change and a semantic shift to *chétif,* could later be borrowed and slightly modified to *captive-captif.* François Villon's "Dame du ciel, régente terrienne, / Emperière des infernaux paluz . . ." contains such late Latin borrowings, consciously more elevated in tone than his colloquial "Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?"

French has not, of course, been content to borrow from more fortunately endowed languages. Many French words were created by internal processes; and a "word-family" such as *vieux-vieillir-vieillesse-vieillissement* is the product of typically French word derivation. Moreover, French itself helped to enrich many another language, whether through the Norman conquest of England or, later, through the conquest of the European mind effected by the Enlightenment.

Any linguistic system is inherently unstable; and all languages undergo *phonetic change.* In essence, Vulgar Latin became French because of: loss of unstressed syllables and simplification of consonant clusters (*principem>prince, factum>fait*); progressive vowel and consonant change (*caput>tchief>chief>chef*); and creation of new sounds (the nasal vowels, the front rounded vowels, consonants such as *v* and *ch,* etc.).

Similar phonetic change is going on all the time, but so slowly that it is perceptible only when it becomes history. The modern pronunciation of *moi* has been arrived at quite recently; and today the four nasal vowels are, it seems, being reduced to three by the substitution of the vowel of *vin* for that of *humble.*

Changes in grammar go hand in hand with widespread phonetic change. In broad historical terms, modern analytical French evolved from highly inflected, synthetic Latin. Vulgar Latin had already made some progress in this direction by the formation of compound verbs and the more frequent use of prepositions. With the gradual erosion of final syllables, most of the Latin inflectional system disappeared during the formation of Old French. An example of noun declension is typical. The ten cases of the Latin *nepos* (Modern French *neveu*) were reduced to four:

	Singular	Plural
Nominative case	*niés*	*nevot*
Oblique (all other cases)	*nevot*	*nevoz*

Later phonetic change did away with this minimal case system and led to the more rigid sentence structure of Modern French.

Language evolves inexorably; but there are persistent forces at work which structure change meaningfully and with some uniformity. Like societies, languages tolerate differences only to a certain point; then the impulse toward order prevails over disorder. During the transition from Latin to Modern French, intense activity has been followed by periods of relative calm and stability. In Old French, for instance, stem-changing verbs were far more common than at present (*levet-lavons* vs. *il lave-*

nous lavons). "Irregularity" has been counteracted by the leveling process of *analogy*. (Compare the "regular" English plural *cows,* which has replaced *kine*.)

The study of language is unrivaled in its appeal to students of the most varied interests and in its pertinency to other fields. At one extreme, work in areas such as comparative linguistics calls for painstaking research modeled on the inductive procedures of the physical sciences. In terms of application, linguistics and science are indissolubly joined in the development of translation machines, for example, or in communications engineering. Related always to human experience, linguistics has also been closely associated with the social sciences. The student of language must constantly return to the findings of the social scientist; and the latter, in turn, must cope with linguistic evidence or behavior. The historian consults documents restored and interpreted by a paleographer. The anthropologist may need to inquire into aspects of culture, such as sexual taboos and profound religious beliefs, which lie hidden in the recesses of linguistic behavior. The sociologist undertaking an opinion survey checks the exact semantic content of his questions; and the psychiatrist doubles as a speech pathologist.

In the more traditional view, the study of languages has been associated with the humanities. The philologist is more than a linguist; and his investigations lead him, without fail, down the byways of philosophy and the history of ideas. Moreover, even though he deals with all manner of documents, he is concerned most often with *literary* texts. A medieval *mystère* may furnish linguistic data, but this must be interpreted in reference to the play as play. So the historical linguist has acted as literary critic; and to him we owe most of our knowledge of the early development of French literary genres. At its best, his critical method displays a lucid understanding of specific features in their appropriate temporal setting, combined with a keen insight into the esthetic qualities of the work of literary art.

Literature cannot be studied, or appreciated, in a vacuum. However valid a purely intuitive reaction may be, it is enhanced by the cognitive processes which relate it to similar, and to other, forms of experience. In the reading of a literary text, true critical understanding depends upon knowledge of a language in its infinite variety. Often, since linguistic change soon renders any text "obsolete," only the philologist can protect us against wrong or inadequate interpretation. Without some historical perspective, we might take a seventeenth-century hero's *feu* to be a heating system and his *je la vais voir* to be an error in grammar. And the farther back we go in time, the more dependent we are upon textual explication and historical information about constantly evolving genres. Unless we know Old French, we read epic poetry in "French translation" and are prone to judge a twelfth-century *roman* by the standards of the modern novel.

A thorough mastery of French is equally essential to the perceptive reading of contemporary literature. If we are insensitive to the rhythm and music of poetry, we hear nothing more than disorderly pose. Metaphor, irony and other devices of style function in special ways within the French linguistic system and derive much of their effect from contrast with the habitual patterns of French speech. Any literary work, from a rudimentary spoken tale to the most finely wrought sonnet, presupposes some non-literary linguistic norm. Words, in their usual shapes and combinations, are the raw material of the writer; but literature, oral or written, transposes and transforms ordinary discourse for esthetic purposes. A Proustian sentence or a poetic statement by Rimbaud stands out in sharp contrast against mundane speech. To enjoy and

understand literature, we must be able to perceive both this essential medium and the artistic object into which it has been shaped.

III. Aspects of French Culture

Some meanings of "culture"—Elusiveness of culture in its deepest sense—Various means of approach—Related disciplines helpful to an understanding of culture: social sciences, philosophy and the history of religion, natural sciences, fine arts—Ultimate puzzle to be solved

The ultimate goal of the liberal arts major in French goes beyond the acquiring of fluency in the language. Morris Bishop, an eminent American professor of French, once deplored the paucity of literary and other significant content in high school French courses and asked, "After you have learned to speak, what are you going to say?" Your goal should be nothing less than to absorb into your own cultural blood stream the values of French culture. The mastery, as near perfect as possible, of both spoken and written French is the chief means to that end.

By "culture" we mean at least two things, both of great interest to the student of French. The first is the social scientist's view of culture as the sum total of patterns of behavior, habits and ways of life, which distinguish one people from another. The Frenchman's handshake at almost every greeting and leave-taking or his love of good food and wine are part of a vast complex of assumptions about daily life which we call culture in this sense. But the word has another meaning which brings us into the realm of more important values with which education, especially higher education, deals: the sum of a people's contributions to our understanding of what life is and how it can best be lived. Each people is a voice in the philosophical chorus, speaking its own distinct message to us. The more universal the voice, the greater the culture. There are few voices more universal than that of France, few that have spoken with such lucidity of man's nature and of his essential dignity.

In the light of culture in this more profound sense, it is of little importance whether your French friend wears a beret, eats his vegetables separately, or, even though a grown man, rides a bicycle. But that his newspapers give so much space to literary matters, that he considers love to be a pleasure and an art rather than a mere biological necessity, that for centuries he has cultivated his country as though it were one great garden—this kind of fact is of the utmost importance to your understanding of his culture. Most important of all are the answers provided to eternal questions by the thinkers of France, the image of reality reflected in the "miroir de concentration" (Hugo) of her works of art. For a people, as Nietzche has said, is "nature's detour to arrive at six or seven great men." In the case of France, the number will have to be much larger.

There is obviously no formula summing up the Frenchman once and for all. If even the humblest individual always remains something of a mystery we can hardly expect an old and complex nation, a vast growing organism, to reveal easily the secrets of its "personality." It will take years of patient, sympathetic observation (something to keep your mind youthful and flexible) to recognize the distinctively French note in the universal chorus. Your college study can at best lay the groundwork. But before you receive your bachelor's degree you should at least have begun to see some pattern emerge. You can rise above stereotyped views of France and correct them when you find them in others. To cite but one example of this process of piecing together

significant relationships, you will one day grasp the distinctively French "sense of style" and perceive how it links together French excellence in the decorative arts, the cut of a gown, the manner of serving a meal, the agreeableness of polite conversation, the polish of a professor's classroom lecture. To reach the point where you comprehend something of France from the inside and, with all its faults, are able to love it, will be a unique source of pleasure and an experience that will give lasting zeal to your investigations.

The means to this understanding of French culture are varied. Some universities offer a *cours de civilisation française*. Usually, however, the student must compose his own synthesis from collateral reading included in the standard courses in literature, or from courses taken outside the French department. Of great value will be the five or six good books on French culture (successes are rare in this field) by such friendly but critical foreigners as Ernst Curtius, Denis Brogan, Barrett Wendell, and Herbert Luethy, who have attained something of the balanced view of complex French realities which we are all seeking. Direct contact with France, through a Junior Year Abroad plan or private travel, is of course essential; but its value will be all the more enhanced if it is based on reading and reflection.

Important as literary studies are, try to avoid a narrowly literary view of your subject. Broaden your sights to include related fields. Your special opportunity as a college student, we repeat, is to know France within the great context of the liberal arts. Knowledge need not be fragmentary and disconnected. "Courses" should feed broad streams of learning. It was no recent educator, but Heraclitus, a predecessor of Socrates, who said: "The learning of many things does not teach understanding." Make French not a short-sighted speciality, but the pivot of your whole college education. Few subjects can serve so well this cardinal function.

For the French major we would suggest several related fields. *Geography* should give you a sense of the great hexagonal structure of France, with its single artificial and five natural frontiers, its climate reconciling extremes (as much of its thought also does), and its "trois versants," the Atlantic facing to the New World, the Mediterranean providing the link with Africa and Asia, the Eastern turned inward to continental Europe. Geography should also give you some feeling for both the provincial diversity of France and for Paris as its heart—or is it an overgrown and tyrannical brain? *History* and *political science* will show you how modern France, despite all you have heard of the Revolution of 1789 (Madame Lafarge knitting as the heads rolled, and the like), is the product of the monarchy, which gave France its existence as a nation along with its highly centralized administration, even though today France is a republic and the dominant influence in its affairs is that of the bourgeoisie. History and political science will also reveal the bureaucratic continuity and stability underlying the recurring revolutions and changes of régime and constitution since 1789. *Economics* will present France as a late comer to the industrial revolution, a country only within recent times transformed from a predominantly agricultural to a predominantly industrial economy, with the profound changes in the social order this entails. Further light on what is permanent and what is changing in French society should come from *sociology* and *anthropology*. A tremendous feeling of renewal is stirring in the France of today as Frenchmen face perhaps their basic challenge: to achieve the technological mastery necessary for survival without sacrificing the values that have given their country its intellectual and spiritual excellence.

French schools are struggling mightily with this problem, in a series of reforms whose aim is to reconcile technical with humanistic training. The role of the educational

system in shaping the French people, both its average and its great minds, is a most important aspect of your studies. Acquaint yourself therefore with the history of education in France, especially with the *raison d'être* of its extraordinarily centralized and uniform structure, over which presides the Ministre de l'Education Nationale and the goal of which is not (as an innocent American might suspect) political propagandizing but well organized training in intellectual excellence.

Other related fields of knowledge from among which you might like to choose a "minor" are *philosophy*, the *natural sciences*, the *history of religions*, the *fine arts*, and *music*.

From her great Medieval thinkers such as Abélard, through Descartes who is "rightly regarded as the founder of modern philosophy" (Bertrand Russell), to Comte and Positivism, Bergson and his attempt to "rebuild the bridge between metaphysics and science," Sartre the atheist Existentialist or Marcel the Catholic Existentialist, France has given lavishly to the store of philosophical speculation. As for the natural and mathematical sciences, their debt is enormous to French pioneers (Descartes, Fermat, Lavoisier, Bernard, Ampère, Pasteur, the Curies, Becquerel, and many others) who have made crucial discoveries, formulated laws, or opened up whole areas of scientific investigation. As Louis de Broglie, himself one of the great names in nuclear physics, has remarked, the French mind, "at once logical and intuitive, easily grasps the relationship existing between facts or conceptions that seem at first sight unrelated," and therefore is remarkably gifted to perceive "those hidden harmonies whose progressive discovery is the true object of pure science." Some of France's scientific and mathematical geniuses, including Descartes, Pascal, D'Alembert, Buffon, Poincaré, are also great writers and philosophers—a salutary lesson to be learned from French culture for an age like ours when specialized knowledge too often leads to barbaric writing and inadequate philosophical thinking.

In French thought the investigation into nature's secrets has often taken the form of a search independent of religion and even sharply opposed to it; yet perhaps just as often scientific thought has been allied with faith in the supernatural. Laplace dismissed God as an "unnecessary hypothesis"; Pasteur was a devout Catholic and Pascal a mystic if not a saint. It is impossible to understand French culture without a knowledge of religion, and by religion the French themselves usually mean Catholicism. A friendly German critic of French nationalistic pride once asked: "Dieu est-il français?" God may not be French, but the history of religious expression in France will show you that it is not for nothing that the land of St. Louis and St. Bernard, the Gothic cathedrals, Joan of Arc and St. Vincent de Paul, Péguy and Père Foucauld, Claudel and Matisse, has been called the "Eldest Daughter of the Church." Even the vigor of French opponents of Catholicism, the most famous of whom is Voltaire, even the violence of French anti-clericalism, testify not to the shallowness of the Catholic experience in France but to its depth. If this is not enough to make you reject the cliché that Frenchmen are by nature frivolous, note that one of the most austere of all heresies (from the orthodox Catholic point of view), namely Jansenism, sprang from French soil, as did the Calvinist form of Protestantism professed by an intense minority which has left its mark on French thought.

Painting, sculpture, architecture, and music are among the richest related fields available to the French major, but since their concern with the creation of beauty links them more closely than the other disciplines we have mentioned with literature, we shall return to them in a later context.

In the foregoing remarks it has not been our intention to draw a kind of portrait

of French culture, but merely to suggest some of the salient features to be looked for in a well rounded program of studies for the major. The French national genius, by virtue of its very contradictions and paradoxes, is an endlessly fascinating object of study. Listen to one of the most stimulating recent attempts to define the personality of France, that of the Swiss journalist Herbert Luethy:

"[France] is the home at one and the same time of the Messianic spirit and of the parochial spirit, of universalism and provincialism, of modernism and antediluvianism, of intellectual rationalism and contempt for all reason, of ideological exuberance and the most petty and calculating narrowness. She is the country of the most extreme tolerance and the most malicious and virulent polemics, of democratic spirit and absolutist structure. She combines an imperishable structure with the perpetual preaching of insurrection; the deepest and most spontaneous national consciousness with the most complete and utter disregard of the state and the common good; she is the country of Catholicism and disbelief; tradition and impiety; stagnation and drama; order and anarchy." (*France against Herself*, p. 49)

How resist the challenge to unravel such a splendid puzzle?

IV. French and the Study of Literature

Privileged role of the fine arts, and especially of literature—Position of French literature—Primary importance of reading original works—Some approaches, "extrinsic" and "intrinsic," to study of literature, and some allied disciplines: comparative literature, classics—Central role of study of style—Explication de textes—*General value of sense for style in all activities of life*

In your efforts to understand French culture you should focus your attention most sharply upon the fine arts and above all upon literature. The arts provide perhaps our best clue to the inner life of a people, our best hope of sharing their spiritual secrets. Whether in the paintings of Poussin, Delacroix, Cézanne, or Picasso, the music of Couperin, Berlioz, Debussy, or Poulenc, the "frozen music" (as Goethe called architecture) of the Gothic cathedrals or Renaissance châteaux, the sculptures of Rude or Rodin, the film masterpieces of René Clair or Julien Duvivier, the tragedies of Racine or the novels of Proust—it is in such masterpieces that the dream, the inner reality of the spirit, is fixed for our ever renewed contemplation. Here are forces that both form part of the whole culture and transcend that culture. Works of art are capable of mirroring a given moment or phase of society and therefore of being a precious help to the historian or sociologist in quest of the truth about a particular age. But more often they reach beneath the surface of a given time, or reject their time, escaping into the past, anticipating what is to come, or deliberately seeking the timeless. The British literary scholar Helen Gardner has formulated a profound critical truth applicable to all the arts in stating that "the true meaning of a work of art can only be apprehended by seeing it within its historical context, but . . . its meaning is not limited by that context" (*The Business of Criticism*, p. 21).

But how justify what may seem the arrogant claim of literature to a place of special eminence, if not the supreme place, among the fine arts? The best answer may be that literature reflects, as few if any other arts can, the whole human being. It is at once one of the arts and an art transcending the others. It appeals with unrivaled fullness to all the senses and through them to the mind and heart. Surpassed by sculpture or architecture in plastic power, it has a sculptural and architectural

beauty of its own. Inferior to music in abstract purity, it is capable of musicality in both verse and prose; in fact it gives us the unique musicality of the spoken word, from which it arose and from which it can never entirely be separated. Less striking than painting in appeal to the eye, it evokes unforgettable images in the eye of the mind. Occupied like the other arts with the creation of pleasing and meaningful form, literature insists also on its contribution to "the long effort of man to understand himself and his world and his relation to the world" (Morris Bishop). Though in this function it may be less effective than philosophy in the rational ordering of knowledge and less effective than science in the objective grasp and measurement of phenomena, it provides inexhaustible insight into the nature of man and into the realm of his imagination.

On the literary map of the world the literature of France occupies a place of imposing greatness. It stands, like the country itself, or like Paris within France, at the crossroads of Western civilization. "Some eight hundred and fifty years of continuous production," writes Geoffrey Brereton in his *Short History of French Literature,* "with few of the stagnant pockets which occur in all literatures, have given France a literature of unequalled richness and variety. They have also given the Western mind an image of itself." Our aim here is not to outline a curriculum of studies in this field, but simply to indicate some approaches to it, some methods of organizing one's knowledge about it, which have proved useful. The study of French literature, or of any other for that matter, can only imperfectly be translated into "course offerings"; but certainly no curriculum for the French major is adequate if it has not familiarized you in the end with these *fils conducteurs,* or leading threads, through the labyrinth of names and dates and facts.

Bear in mind, as you consider these various frames of reference used by the literary scholar, that the most important activity for the student of literature is *reading the works themselves.* Yet no one expects you to read them all before you open a literary history or book of criticism. The ideal method is to work back and forth from text to criticism, allowing yourself to feel the initial impact of the work without preconceived ideas about it but then clarifying your understanding of it, stimulating your mind in further ways about it, with the help of interpretations by others. The only rule with dogmatic force is never to spend more of your time reading literary histories or critical studies than in reading the works upon which they are based.

With this word of caution out of the way, let us outline some of the broad organizing concepts referred to above.

Cultivate a sense of the chronological sweep of literary periods or movements, the rise and fall of schools and traditions, with their great individual spokesmen. Though it is dangerous to exaggerate the neatness and simplicity of this evolutionary scheme (never believe, for example, that Romanticism ended in 1843), it has in France a degree of orderliness which makes it easier to follow than the literary histories of other countries, our own among them, where literary schools are not so common or literary doctrines so explicitly formulated and well codified.

The Middle Ages, spanning several centuries (from the eleventh to the fifteenth, roughly); the Renaissance in the sixteenth century; the age of Classicism or "siècle de Louis XIV" in the seventeenth; the Enlightenment or "âge des lumières" in the eighteenth; the nineteenth century, really several centuries in one, rivaled only by the seventeenth in the abundance of great writers, its age of Romanticism succeeded by Realism and Naturalism in the novel and theater and by Parnassianism and Symbol-

ism in poetry—these are the major phases, to which we should add at least one more, our own unfinished twentieth century, beginning perhaps in 1914 with the First World War (literary centuries do not necessarily coincide with calendar centuries) and consisting both of authors whose work is finished and can be viewed with some perspective (Proust, Gide, Claudel, Valéry, Giraudoux) and of our closer contemporaries (such as Sartre, Malraux, Anouilh, Beckett) whose creative life still goes on.

Once you have familiarized yourself with the great literary trends and with the historical milieux (political, social, economic) that color and in part condition them, focus more sharply to detect the succession of generations, the young reacting against the old, in literary history. If poets, as some wit has remarked, always begin by killing off their grandfathers, the break is never complete; some part of the inheritance is kept and respected. This is especially true of France, where the belief in radical innovation, in unlimited experimentation by an avant-garde, is counterbalanced by an equally strong sense of tradition. The concept of generations is a relatively new approach to literary history that has proven most fruitful. By applying it you will see, for example, how the passion for encyclopedic knowledge of Rabelais gives way to the moderation and prudence of Montaigne, or how the critical, skeptical, ironic attitude of the generation of 1848, of which Flaubert and Renan were members, is their reply to the generous, naive, lyrical faith of the Romantic generation of Hugo and Michelet.

Two further concepts that will help you find order in the welter of historical data are the "history of ideas" and the concept of literary genres or types. The former, best described by its founder, Arthur Lovejoy, in the Introduction to his *The Great Chain of Being*, differs from the history of philosophy (which, incidentally, it has helped to bring into closer relation with literary studies) in that the history of ideas concentrates not on systems of thought as produced by the great philosophers but on "unit-ideas" or primary component elements of larger structures of thought. These persistent, recurrent, dynamic elements it analyzes and traces through many phases of man's reflective life, philosophic, religious, scientific, political, and other, but above all in literature, in whose "more concrete forms," according to the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, we may best hope to discover "the inward thoughts of a generation." The concepts of Christian humanism in St. François de Sales or of the natural goodness of man in Rousseau, the neo-Platonism detectable in the sixteenth-century poet Maurice Scève as well as in the nineteenth-century poets Lamartine and Baudelaire, or the notion of freedom embodied in the fiction and theater of Sartre—such ideas are not entirely the product of a single mind but have their own history of genesis, growth, transformation, sometimes decline, across generations of minds. To illustrate the last point only, you will find that the ideas of progress and human perfectibility dear to the eighteenth century are less beloved of the twentieth. Why?

The concept of literary genres (novel, poem, play, essay, philosophical dialogue, and the like) brings us closer to the inner nature of the literary work. The value of the so-called "genre course" (Novel in France, French Romantic Poetry) well taught is that it should make you feel more at home in French literature by giving you a sense of the ebb and flow of literary types, of the metamorphoses they undergo, the attempts to define their nature and requirements, the technical problems raised by their practice and the ways in which different creators have tackled these problems. Behind Proust in the novel stand Zola and Flaubert and Balzac, Stendhal, Rousseau, Le Sage and Madame de La Fayette. Just as Proust renewed the novel after and despite the massive achievement of the nineteenth century (which in turn built on the

eighteenth and seventeenth), his successors, down to such exponents of the so-called *nouveau roman* as Michel Butor or Nathalie Sarraute, have continued to experiment and to innovate. For it is one of the wonders of literature that everything has *never* been said, in spite of La Bruyère's famous dictum "Tout a été dit"—which he himself then went on to belie by renewing the prose genre of the "character" invented by the ancient Greek philosopher Theophrastus.

In your study of French poetry you will need to acquaint yourself with the rules of versification, as distinct from those of English poetry, and to attune yourself to some of the differences between good poetry and good prose (why is Voltaire's prose superior to his verse, for example?). Try to acquire the art of reading aloud well, of rendering the unique music of the human voice moved to emotion but controlled by meter, *l'art de bien dire les vers,* which is over half of the art of understanding what a given poem is about.

An especially exalted place is occupied in French literature and life by the theater. Luethy has indeed called the stage "the chief amphitheater of the French spirit." Why? Why is Paris such an unrivaled center of theatrical vitality? Why have such fierce literary battles raged in this arena, and why is it that established poets and novelists feel a part of their glory lacking until they have achieved success "on the boards," in the harsh clarity of the footlights? In pursuing the answers to these questions you must adjust to the special conditions governing the study of dramatic literature. Analyze the text as carefully as you can in class or in your armchair, but remember that a play is not a play until life has been breathed into it by the *metteur en scène,* the actors, yes, even the public. Therefore see as many plays as you can performed by professionals. The Comédie Française, the troup of Jean-Louis Barrault and Madeleine Renaud, the Théâtre du Vieux Colombier, have all appeared in the United States and will most probably return; this last company has visited scores of American campuses.

In the dimmed theater, witnessing for the first time Racine or Marivaux or Claudel performed by expert French actors, you will perceive instinctively (or almost; good teaching will have prepared the way) that such perfection of form, such feeling, all the more intense precisely because it has been subjected to the formal laws of dramatic grace and power, offer you somehow an initiation into the French ideal of beauty at its purest, perhaps also a clue to the inner meaning of French culture itself.

No great national literature is ever wholly of its nation, wholly self-contained. Each feels from time to time the need to renew its strength by contact with outside sources; on the other hand, each may extend its life, so to speak, in the form of further adaptations, further fulfillments of its creative genius in other lands and other languages. National barriers between literatures are largely artificial; it is impossible, for example, to understand the French role in the Renaissance or Romanticism, international phenomena both, without some knowledge of other literatures. From the recognition of these facts arose the relatively new discipline of Comparative Literature, which examines two or more literatures at significant points of contact.

Stand back from French literature now and then and see it in relation to others. Franco-English and Franco-American literary exchanges, numerous and important, will offer no new linguistic problems to you. To be a real *comparatiste* you would need to master several other foreign languages, a goal to be encouraged; short of this ideal, however, you will be expected at least to dip into other literatures by way of reliable translations. Whatever the means used, you should learn to distinguish the incoming waves of foreign inspiration and the outgoing waves of influence which periodically

mark French literature as it seeks to revitalize itself at foreign sources (one of the secrets of its greatness: Spain and Italy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, England in the eighteenth, Germany, England, America, and Russia in the nineteenth) or sends its influence overflowing into other literatures (Montaigne and the English essayists, Boileau and Pope, *le théâtre réaliste* assimilated and heightened in power by Ibsen and Hauptmann, the impact of French Symbolism on modern poetry throughout the world).

Let us hope that we need not plead the cause, before a prospective major in French, of Greek and Latin, or the Classics as they have come to be called. Essential to an understanding of Western thought as a whole, the knowledge of these ancient civilizations is especially relevant to the study of France, in many ways their truest heir. The very forms of the vernacular used by Medieval and Renaissance authors are steeped in Latin; it is impossible, to cite but a few examples, to understand Ronsard without Horace, Racine without Euripides, Fénelon without Homer, the ideals of the French Revolution without Plutarch's Lives, or many a modern French play without Greek mythology. If you plan to go on to graduate study, a knowledge of Latin is indispensable; even if you do not so plan, to know Latin is to strengthen your mastery of French, particularly vocabulary, and to acquire a sense of the weight and tradition behind words, of *la vie des mots,* which is of great value to a student of literature.

The approaches to literature your curriculum offers by way of courses—*survey, masterpieces, periods, schools, genres, authors,* and so on—will be nothing but empty rituals unless they converge on the only essential matter in literary studies: the works themselves. Literature is at bottom a matter not of schools or periods or genres but of individuals—individual creators and individual readers. The whole purpose of your literary training should be to help you become as well informed, intelligent, and sensitive an individual reader as possible, in your own personal response to an essay of Montaigne, a tragedy of Racine, a novel of Camus. You will show true literary understanding not by the number of facts you have retained from manuals and other secondary sources, but by how widely and well you have read the primary sources, or what the French call simply "les œuvres" or "les textes."

Of course it is useful to know something of the biography of an author, facts selected with discrimination for the light they shed on his works. Writers are not disembodied spirits and their works do not fall unexplained from the clouds. But, as a critic of Victor Hugo once remarked, "La vraie vie d'un poète, c'est son œuvre." The real biography of any author is the biography of his works, for these are flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone. It is useful also to know something about the historical and sociological setting of his work, and other aspects of what Wellek and Warren call the "extrinsic approach" to literature. Make use of these aids to the study of literature without ever losing sight of the supreme end which they are meant to serve: the intelligent enjoyment of literary works, both for what they reveal to you and your fellow men and women of life's purpose and in themselves as ideal constructs worthy of pleasurable contemplation. "Knowledge is pleasure as well as power," the great English essayist Hazlitt reminds us. He also writes: ". . . real admiration and permanent delight [in works of art] are the growth of taste and knowledge" —a better justification of disciplined training in literary study than we could ever hope to formulate.

A growing body of criticism in our time has taken the "intrinsic approach," concentrating on the work itself. What is the precise form of this play or poem or novel?

What about its style? Why this metaphor, that image, and in such and such an order? What does it sound like when read aloud? What special features of vocabulary, grammar, syntax, does it reveal? How do all these details bear on two key questions: the effect sought by the author, and his degree of success in attaining it? To know that he was twice married or never paid his laundry bills or died at eighteen will be of little help in solving these problems. You must master techniques of analysis and cultivate a meaningful critical vocabulary.

Your choice of French as a major field will favor you here. The French have long recognized that the literary work has a formal beauty existing in its own right, like that of a painting or symphony or piece of sculpture. They also know that this formal beauty is not a kind of envelope to be thrown away when its "message" has been removed, but that content and form, *le fond* and *la forme*, though separable for analytical purposes (we need to "summarize" novels, to state the "themes" of poems, and so forth), are in reality indissoluble parts of a single whole. The result of their discovery is the *explication de textes*, the "unfolding" (the Latin root meaning of "*explication*") of the meaning of a text, or significant portion thereof, by taking it apart line by line and then putting it back together again as an organic whole. This method moves not from general truths about the work posited beforehand and then supported by details, but from significant details to the gradual disengagement of general truths. Though you may be skeptical at first, you will eventually come to understand how French pupils might spend months with their teacher on the microscopic examination of one chapter of *Madame Bovary* and in the end achieve, into the work and into Flaubert and into the whole nineteenth-century French novel, an insight of greater potential usefulness to literary study in general than an entire year of *Survey of the Realistic Novel*. No American curriculum of French studies worth its salt will fail to give you some practice in this traditional French literary exercise.

But the French have no monopoly on the "intrinsic approach." To read well has always meant to read with one's critical sense alert to the significant detail and the interlocking structure. The *explication de textes* is akin to the "close reading" advocated by the so-called New Critics in our own language, whose reaction against the abuse of biographical and historical methods and whose return to the texts have been fruitful developments. Finally, by way of progress being made in the "intrinsic approach," we should mention the growth of a new and very promising field, Stylistics, whose aim, as distinct from more traditional kinds of analysis of style, is to achieve a more scientific and objective knowledge of how an individual author, from among the vast possibilities of expression the language offers him, narrows the field and chooses only those means of expression suited to the effect he seeks to produce.

Literary history will come more easily to you. But do not be impatient with the slow maturing process necessary to develop what Whitehead calls "the most austere of all mental qualities . . . the sense for style." He writes, "It is an esthetic sense, based on admiration for the direct attainment of a foreseen end, simply and without waste . . . Style, in its finest sense, is the last acquirement of the educated mind; it is also the most useful. It pervades the whole being. The administrator with a sense for style hates waste; the engineer with a sense for style economizes his material; the artisan with a sense for style prefers good work. Style is the ultimate morality of mind."

We know few better means of cultivating the sense for style in this broad meaning than familiarity with the literary artisans of France.

V. Graduate and Undergraduate Study of French

Need for French teachers—Special requirements for different levels—Meaning of scholarship—Similarities and differences between graduate and undergraduate study—French major and "discipline for the adventure of life"

Should you plan to go on to graduate work?

We have already referred to the acute need of good foreign language teachers on all levels of American education. The gentle but persistent revolution known as FLES (Foreign Languages in the Elementary Schools), the Master of Arts in Teaching programs offered by a number of universities, the government-sponsored Institutes for elementary and secondary school teachers of foreign languages—all these have made the prospect of becoming a French teacher on the pre-college level more attractive than ever. For such posts the bachelor of arts degree is of course indispensable, and the master of arts degree is becoming a requirement in most states. The essential requirement is to have as solid and as advanced training in the subject matter of French as you can acquire. This means the literature and culture of France as well as its language. For you have concluded, if you have read this far, that these three things really form a single whole. Even the elementary school teacher of French will perform better for knowing that Chateaubriand is something more than a beefsteak.

Equally badly needed are good college and university teachers with the Ph.D.—that is, having served their apprenticeship of three or four years (*festina lente,* "make haste slowly," should be the motto here) as scholars and having acquired some experience as teaching assistants under the guidance of masters while seeking their degree. You will note that we couple teaching and scholarship. It is generally accepted that these are mutually stimulating, and that good teaching, at least in the university, goes hand in hand with the active pursuit of knowledge to be shared with others, the living and the unborn, through publication. If research (a much misused word) is, as Whitehead says, "intellectual adventure," how stimulate the flair for it in your students if you are a stranger to it yourself?

Some of you will have acquired this taste for scholarship as undergraduates. The true aim of scholarship in the literary field is essentially the same critical understanding and enjoyment of literary works which we defined as the aim of undergraduate training. Only the means is different: the advancement of knowledge. The undergraduate must seek to master as much as he can of the *known,* discovering it for himself (this is the ideal) under the guidance of his teachers. The graduate student, or potential scholar, must proceed from the known to the *unknown,* seeking to make his own contribution to knowledge. In other words, if we look on the undergraduate program of the French major as the disciplined effort to integrate into one's thinking the values of French culture, this same integration should continue in graduate work, but it should take the special forms of learning in one's turn how to communicate these values to others (teaching and writing) and of exploring independently a limited but significant area of the field of French.

Should the spirit of scholarly teaching move you, take note of the steadily improving economic position of college and university teachers, of the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship Foundation's program encouraging and enabling bright undergraduates, beginning even in their freshman year, to plan for careers in college teaching. Take note also of the National Defense Education Act's provision of three year graduate fellowships in foreign languages, and of the scholarships and fellowships being offered

in increasing number by graduate schools throughout the United States. But if the spirit has moved you these will not be decisive factors.

In the end, whether you choose to go beyond the bachelor's degree or not, and whatever profession or job will be yours, the power of critical thought and feeling, the "sense for style," which your studies in French should shape in you ought, ideally speaking, to become a lasting part of your mature personality. "A cultivated intellect," writes Newman, "because it is a good in itself, brings with it a power and a grace to every work and occupation which it undertakes, and enables us to be more useful, and to a greater number." If research is a specialized taste for "intellectual adventure," education itself is a "discipline for the adventure of life" (Whitehead). Your majoring in French will be a valuable part of that discipline.

VI. French in the Liberal Arts Program

In mastering French you are creating your "second self," your "French self," France being harmonized in you with all that is finest in your American heritage. You are entering, like so many Americans before you, both great and obscure, a magnificent realm of the human spirit. At the heart of that realm awaits for your special delight the literature of France. All your struggles to speak like a native, to master the most subtle works of prose and poetry, or to make the names and dates of literary history mean more than names and dates will have been rewarded by your discovery of the special flavor, the *cachet*, of that literature: an absorbing interest in uncovering the motives of human behavior, which has made almost all its great writers *moralistes;* a *volonté de voir clair,* to translate even the most intensely emotional experience into terms that may be grasped by the intellect; yet, for all this, an un-Cartesian willingness, in some of its visionaries, to hover over the wild abyss of the irrational, to sound the depths and heights; finally, even where disorder may seem to prevail, a sense of formal perfection, of harmony and equilibrium, in the work of art.

Indeed, in the man-made work of any kind. For here, in this last trait, may perhaps be found the most characteristic gift of France. (You may not agree; you may prefer to single out others.) Here, in the French pride of form, may be the link between so many diverse aspects of French culture: landscape and garden and château, the product of the artisan's craft, the mathematical system, the scientific theory, the literary or artistic work. These all reveal the dominant French sense of the value of proportion, of balance, of economy; and this, in the end, is an esthetic value. Perhaps even life itself, the French seem at times to suggest, can be turned into an "intelligent work of art" (Luethy). "All art," writes Malraux, "begins with the struggle against chaos." Few cultures have been more profoundly aware of this than the French.

The greatness of France has, of course, its limitations, and these will also be part of your discovery. What did Henry Adams have in mind when he remarked, "France has the drawback that there are no Frenchmen"? What portion of truth is there in the quip of the English economist and political writer, Walter Bagehot, which Woodrow Wilson was fond of quoting: "The French can say anything but have nothing to say"? Yet even if the French lived up to their ideal perfectly or succumbed less frequently to mere rhetoric and verbalism, not to mention other more grievous faults, their vision of life would be at best imperfect. What, from within a given culture, is taken to be the nature of things, seen from outside is often only "la manière de sentir d'un peuple" (Madame Necker de Saussure). No single culture,

French, American, or other, no single civilization, Western or Eastern or what have you, can lay claim to speak for all humanity.

The sober truth is, nevertheless, that few cultures can lay such a valid claim as that of France to belong to the very core of your liberal arts training. "However we approach the problem," wrote Georges Duhamel, "it will appear that France has been absent from none of the adventures, none of the enterprises, none of the triumphs of Western civilization. From its origins, from the moment it began to assert its existence as a nation, down to the bitter times in which I write these pages [1943: defeat and occupation], France has had a share, often considerable, often that of an initiator, and on the whole a glorious share, in the search for truth, the experiences, the works of civilization." Crises, if not bitter times, continue in our day for France, but so also does her vital share in the life of the human spirit.

One final line of thought. Is not the goal we have proposed for your French studies —the intelligent enjoyment of the creations of the French mind—a selfish occupation in a world where two-thirds of our fellow men go to bed hungry and rise to another day of poverty? Is this not a cruel mockery of the "humanities"? True, man must have bread to live, but he cannot live by bread alone. Better a day without bread, wrote Baudelaire, than a day without poetry. If this is an experience most of us would not care to verify, you will come to understand one day the truth of Baudelaire's bold paradox, for you will have acquired the taste for spiritual and intellectual nourishment which is the essence of all education. Though you may not be the technicians and economists who bring literal bread to the starving, you will perhaps be able to provide some share of the higher nourishment. As one formed in the liberal arts, which should, as the name implies, give you freedom, you will be able to help free others from error and folly and superstition, and these are, after all, no lesser evils than hunger and poverty. As one formed in literature, you will be able to convey something of its life-affirming and life-giving spirit.

It was Socrates, one of the great sources of our whole concept of the liberal arts, who said that "the unexamined life is not worth living." Across the centuries in the Age of Enlightenment a French voice, that of Diderot, echoes and reconfirms his profound insight: "Ce qu'on n'a jamais mis en question n'a point été prouvé." The healthy and constructive critical awareness which gives true meaning to life, transfiguring it, as Santayana has said, and turning it "from a fatal process into a liberal art," is a fundamental part of the French experience in which you will be privileged to participate.

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G. Periodicals:

Students of French should consult the important journals in the field. Primarily literary and scholarly: *Comparative Literature, PMLA, Romanic Review, Yale French Studies, Modern Language Quarterly, Symposium, Modern Language Review, Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France.* Primarily pedagogical: *Modern Language Journal.* Pedagogical and literary: *French Review.* French literary reviews: *Nouvelle Revue Française, Mercure de France, Table Ronde,* etc.

Among worthwhile French newspapers and magazines: *Le Monde, Le Figaro, Le Figaro Littéraire, Les Nouvelles Littéraires, Paris-Match* (illustrated weekly).

V. *Graduate and Undergraduate Study of French*

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