
Charles J. Stivale, ed. *Modern French Literary Studies in the Classroom: Pedagogical Strategies*. NY: Modern Language Association of America, 2004. 270p.

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This volume is part of the MLA series, "Teaching Languages, Literatures, and Cultures," edited by a panel of recognized scholars in the field of modern languages. Readers have come to expect high-quality materials from the MLA and this collection of essays will not disappoint, but it may well surprise those who are accustomed to a more unified scholarly focus in the publications of this series. The premise of the volume is Stivale's assertion that "teaching matters"; the genesis of the collection was a series of panel presentations at various colloquia concerning 19th- and 20th-century French literature.

The first of the four parts of the volume, called "Instructing Readers: Linguistic and Literary Frameworks," includes four essays that are each distinct in their approach and scope, but all of them address ways of reading and discussing literary texts. Of interest to all foreign language teachers are the articles by Paesani and by Porter, Alkhas, and Kuiper. Paesani's essay builds a solid case for using literary texts to develop foreign language proficiency; the article includes a review of the professional literature up to the time of publication. In the light of much ongoing discussion in the field of modern languages, Paesani's integration of language and literature has not diminished in relevance. A very different approach is taken by the essay of Porter, Alkhas, and Kuiper who provide specific techniques and seminal ideas for fostering student creativity and imagination while analyzing literary texts. Their concrete suggestions can be applied in many different types of literature classes.

Six essays comprise Part II, "Exploring the Cultural: Pedagogical Devices." Several of these are case studies, either describing the curriculum of a particular university or exploring ways of teaching individual texts. Flambard-Weisbart invites the instructor to use simulations and virtual reality in order to stimulate higher-level thinking. While all the selections in this section are informative, a few essays are genuinely outstanding. Grossman's approach to teaching *Notre-Dame de Paris* combines scholarship with multimedia techniques that will capture students' interest and deepen their understanding of the novel. Gerval's creative pairing of *Le Tour de la France par deux enfants* with a contemporary guide book and supplemental web sites is intriguing and challenges the reader to consider other pairings of works that cross several time periods, genres, or media.

The six essays in Part III, "Exploring Horizons: Interdisciplinary Challenges," step beyond cultural considerations. These essays explore specific texts or groups of

literary works and their relation to sculpture, film, sexuality, or racism. Each of the articles merits analysis. However, two stand out because of their broader relevance to the teaching of literature. Kadish's article not only tackles a particularly difficult topic, slavery and racism, but also provides a model for integrating primary historical documents into a French studies course. Among the other essays of this section, Stivale's contribution is a uniquely playful but also serious consideration of the place of literary theory in the undergraduate curriculum today. After the demise of the era of theory saturation, many instructors have experienced a backlash from colleagues who eschew all abstraction and theorizing. Stivale urges the instructor to use a "less is more" approach with undergraduates, to whet their appetite for theoretical questions, to open doors for students without pushing them through.

Finally, Part IV, "Stitching the Quilt: Institutional Demands, Curricular Strategies," brings together a very diverse set of five essays (perhaps themselves a patchwork quilt) which broaden the debate to include questions about the future (and very survival) of French studies. Topics in this section include study abroad programs, curricular issues, and the impact of globalization on foreign language programs. Of all the essays in the volume, Rachlin's is perhaps the most controversial and urgent: she asks whether the area of French cultural studies is relevant to undergraduates today. Challenging assumptions language instructors often hold, she attacks the clichés that are usually relied on to defend French cultural studies. Whether one agrees with the essay or not, the content will raise issues that French instructors cannot ignore.

One might quibble about the preponderance of 19th-century literary texts or the inclusion of two or three essays that are merely tangential to the central focus of the volume. Checking out the promised updates on Professor Stivale's faculty web site proved to be a disappointment; only a few of the contributors to this volume provide links to bibliographies or to their personal research and there is no ongoing discussion of the issues sparked in the individual essays. Nevertheless, the solid qualities of the collection make it well worth purchasing, perusing, and prolonging through the creation of new or adapted courses for our own students. This volume can broaden the perspective of inexperienced instructors by showing the scope of possible approaches to individual texts, courses, and curriculum. But it also prods the experienced teacher of literature who is already convinced that "teaching matters" to rethink core issues and to create courses with new combinations of texts, media, and disciplines. ✱