

GEOFFREY TURNOVSKY

Reading Exercises

French Literature in the Classroom

Abstract Régis Sauder's touching 2011 documentary, *Nous, Princesses de Clèves*, which follows a group of Marseille high school students over the course of a year as they read La Fayette's novel while preparing for the Baccalauréat exams, juxtaposes two distinct types of reading: a reading in which the students are able to see themselves in the characters of the novel and a more difficult classroom-based reading that seeks to instill in the students, through conventional pedagogical exercises such as the *explication de texte*, an appreciation for the literary art and importance of the text. This essay explores the tensions between these two literacies, which become manifest in the film, especially in scenes where the students, who so easily relate to the novel's characters, struggle with the more formal analysis. In a second part, inspired by the writings of Priscilla Ferguson, the essay explores the sociological and pedagogical implications of what seems, in the film, the incompatibility of these distinct appropriations of the text, as it pertains to the students in the documentary and to US-based French programs built on the literary curricula developed by pedagogues such as Gustave Lanson in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Keywords *Princesse de Clèves*, Gustave Lanson, Régis Sauder, history of reading, undergraduate education

A scene in Régis Sauder's 2011 documentary, *Nous, Princesses de Clèves*, shows a high school student named Sarah beginning a practice oral *explication de texte*, undertaken in preparation for her upcoming Baccalauréat exams. Sarah introduces the author of the passage she is analyzing, La Fontaine, as a "fabuliste du dix-huitième siècle." As she forges on hesitatingly, glancing up at the instructor, the latter interrupts, asking for clarification: "Alors, c'est un texte du dix-huitième?" "Non," Sarah replies, "l'auteur," but confirms the century: "C'est un fabuliste du dix-huitième siècle." "La Fontaine est du dix-huitième siècle," the teacher repeats, to which Sarah again says yes, though clearly aware that the rug is about to be pulled out from under her feet. "Vous me tenez," the instructor pushes, laying the trap; "C'est ferme et définitif." "Oui," says Sarah yet again, with a resigned smile as she braces for

the correction. The instructor chuckles at the absurdity of Sarah's misstatement, telling her: "c'est votre droit de le penser," before providing the rectification; "mais je veux vous dire que vous vous trompez." Sarah shrugs and smiles. She has been to this rodeo. "Du dix-septième siècle, Mademoiselle, La Fontaine," the teacher declares. Sarah repeats, "Du dix-septième siècle," and plows onward with her explication, which is not going to improve from this inauspicious start.

This difficult-to-watch moment encapsulates the power of a deeply hierarchical pedagogical paradigm, which operates even as, in the film, the classroom is ostensibly mobilized in a democratic rejoinder to the conservative cultural, social, and economic perspectives espoused by then French president Nicolas Sarkozy, manifest in a series of disparaging comments he had made about the 1678 novel *La Princesse de Clèves* between 2006 and 2008. Upholding the literary institution as a privileged point of access into French culture and citizenship, a development in the making of modern France so memorably and influentially analyzed by Priscilla Ferguson in *Literary France*, this paradigm, more than any other, has shaped undergraduate programs in French studies in the United States, which traditionally hitch the learning of language and culture to literary education. This essay meditates on the images of reading the literary canon represented in Sauder's documentary, highlighting the distinct literacies at play. An identificatory reading encourages the students to connect the themes of the "classic" work to their own personal lives by relating to the quandaries and emotions of the characters. Despite the vast social, cultural, and historical gaps separating them from the intrigues of the sixteenth-century courtiers depicted in the text, they are able to do this intuitively. A school-based reading asks them, in turn, to account for the "greatness" and "literariness" of the work through a set of formal pedagogical exercises. The film's underlying premise is that the two forms of reading are complementary. Personal engagement leads to scholarly mastery, which then undergirds an optimistic vision of cultural democratization and opportunity. But perhaps against its intentions, the film shows, in fact, how little success in the first reading style entails success in the second. On the contrary, the literature classroom comes across as a framework highlighting the incommensurability of these reading modes. The last part of the essay considers implications of this tension for the future of US-based French programs.

The Promise and Pitfalls of Reading Literature

Sauder's affecting film follows a group of fourteen high school students from the immigrant neighborhoods of North Marseille through the course of an academic year, during which they read La Fayette's 1678 novel, *La Princesse de Clèves*. They relate its themes to their lives and recite scenes by heart, as they prepare for the legendary state-administered exam required for entrance

into universities. The students associate the Baccalauréat (“the Bac”) with the prospect of escape from the grim projects and their difficult circumstances. “Le Bac ça va me permettre justement d’avoir une meilleure situation que celle que j’ai maintenant,” says one of the students when the exam is introduced into the narrative of the documentary. “Si j’ai le Bac,” another notes, “je peux me tailler de chez moi. Franchement,” she continues, “je le ferai sans hésiter.”

Nicholas Sarkozy goes unmentioned in the film. But comments he made about La Fayette’s work on several occasions, in 2006 and 2008, and the backlash that ensued, provide the inescapable backdrop to the students’ reflections and recitations. Sarkozy invoked the novel in the context of criticizing entrance exams to the civil service, which tested a candidate’s “general culture” at the expense, in his eyes, of more pertinent experience. For Sarkozy, this was symbolized by questions on *La Princesse de Clèves* that he claimed to see in a copy of the exam: “Un sadique ou un imbécile avait mis dans le programme d’interroger les concurrents sur *La Princesse de Clèves*,” he stated at a 2006 UMP party meeting. He returned to this memory in 2008. Talking to young people at a holiday resort, he wondered why community service and volunteer work (*le bénévolat*) were not given more consideration in the selection process for positions. “Ça vaut autant,” he said, “que de savoir par coeur *La Princesse de Clèves*.”

Sarkozy’s perceived elitism—his implication that the novel would not be of interest to *fonctionnaires* seeking low-level administrative posts—and the misogyny of the notorious example he went on to give in 2006 to illustrate the pointlessness of the *concours*—when he wondered how often one had to ask a “guichetière ce qu’elle pensait de *La Princesse de Clèves*”—galvanized the opposition. The novel became a focal point of resistance to Sarkozy, most famously in the readings organized in 2009 on the steps of the Panthéon and in the “Je lis *La Princesse de Clèves*” buttons worn in repudiation of Sarkozy and his politics. This was an unlikely fate for a novel whose previous big appearance in the public arena had been in the pages of the ultraroyalist *Mercure Galant* just after its publication, in which the periodical’s editor, Jean Donneau de Visé, had celebrated the princess’s severe virtue, self-denial and resignation as “singulier” and admirable, and wondered whether readers felt the same way. By thematizing the sincerity of the engagement of the students with the work and their ability to find meaning in it for their own lives, Sauder inscribes the text in this more recent history of political critique and mobilization, a fact that almost every contemporary review of and advertisement for the film would underscore. The announcement for the film’s showing at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 2012 begins, “In this insightful documentary, director Régis Sauder offers a rejoinder to President Nicolas Sarkozy’s controversial disparagement of Madame de La Fayette’s 17th-century novel, *The Princess of Clèves* as his least favorite book.”

The film's more idealistic arc builds to the students' trip to Paris, where they visit the Louvre to behold paintings of the novel's historical characters and where, in the *salle de réserve* of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, they are shown the four small volumes from Claude Barbin's first edition. Things turn darker soon after, however, as the story of the Bac, which includes Sarah's struggles with her *explication*, takes over. We don't get a tally of which students passed and which didn't. But we are left with the impression that, overall, things did not go especially well. Aside from Sarah, the only other student whose practice exam we get to witness is Aurore, and while hers was not quite the disaster that Sarah's exam was—Sarah had not brought her book and had not read the key texts—Aurore did not exactly shine. "Il faut travailler davantage," the instructor tells her as she concludes the meeting, "J'ai l'impression que c'est un peu léger, non?" In fact, Aurore will simply not show up to a number of her Bac exams and as we hear her mother read her grades over a scene of Aurore walking down a sidewalk—significantly, the only grades we will hear about for any of the students—we learn just how low they are ("C'est sur combien? C'est sur dix ou sur vingt," her mother asks about the collection of 0s, 5s, and 6s out of, indeed, twenty, which she reads from the report). A few minutes later in the film—though the real-world temporality is less clear since Aurore states that she is, at this moment, skipping her French test, which would then place this scene prior to the one just described, with her mother reading the scores—we see Aurore calling up restaurants to ask if they had open positions for "apprenties serveuses." Earlier in the film, she had expressed her desire to become a lawyer. But she is now resigned to a different trajectory; "Ils auraient voulu une grande avocate dans la famille," she says. "Ce ne sera pas moi, en tout cas."

Yet among the fourteen students featured, Aurore is the one who is most often and most forcefully depicted connecting with the novel and the one most able to relate the text to her own personal experiences. Her sense of connection is based on the fact that, like the Princesse de Clèves (in her eyes), Aurore's affections were divided between her "copain" with whom she was "fiancée" and a "garçon" whom she "frequents" ("je fréquente un garçon") and for whom she "ressent beaucoup d'attirance." "Donc c'est bizarre," she goes on, "mais je me sens un peu comme elle. . . . Je m'y reconnais beaucoup." A bit later, talking with her mother about the relationship in the text between the Princesse de Clèves's mother, Mme de Chartres, and her daughter, she again affirms, "Et moi, alors, je me retrouvais dans cette personne." After this, she then states for the third time that there are many boys who notice her; "c'est pour ça qu'on dit que je suis un peu un parallèle de la Princesse de Clèves," referring now to "ces autres garçons," rather than, as she had done earlier, to just the one other love interest. "Plein de petits Nemours en reproduction."

In this sense, Aurore embodies both the ideal reader of the *manifestants*, offered by the film as a rebuke to Sarkozy's utilitarian and classist cultural sociology—"Est-ce que ça leur parle?" asks a March 28, 2011, *Le Point* review of the film, citing Sarkozy's 2006 dubiousness about the use and interest of *La Princesse de Clèves* for a "guichetière." "De tout évidence, oui," the review counters—and as an understated but jarringly bleak cautionary tale. Aurore's engagement with the classic literary text seems set up to fail her, and this as much by the well-meaning teachers who likely signed on to the anti-Sarkozy opposition (and no doubt participated in the film to make this point) as by the government these educators opposed.

Conflicting Literacies

Of course, engaging the literary monument that is *La Princesse de Clèves* means a number of different things in the film, and it's important to distinguish clearly among them in order to better understand the ambiguity embodied by Aurore. The work is presented to the students in the beginning as "le premier grand roman moderne de la littérature française" and "un texte qui vous concerne." While the film's premise, like the teacher's introduction, conflates these two dimensions of the work—the student's personal engagement with the novel is assumed to lead, seamlessly, to a technical understanding of its greatness as a literary work—they are in fact accessed in markedly distinct ways. The students find the work's relevance to their lives through a seemingly intuitive identification with various characters, which they are almost all able to do without a lot of difficulty. Besides Aurore, Mona's father identifies with Madame de Chartres's distrust—"le peu de sincérité des hommes, leurs tromperies et leur infidélité" (La Fayette 76)—and her efforts to instill these wary views in her daughter: "Le conseil que Madame de Chartres essaie de donner à sa fille c'est exactement le conseil que tout parent donne à ses enfants maintenant," he states. Another student, Abou, sees himself in the philosophy of "l'honnête homme": "Je m'y retrouve complètement," he says, noting that people sometimes tell him, "le Prince de Clèves, c'est toi." Only one student in the group, Sarah, confesses that she feels no connection at all with the novel.

To underscore the specificity of this reading style, we should note that these kinds of identifications are at odds with the text's reception at the time of its publication in 1678. The testimonials we have are fairly limited—despite the work's reputation as a bestseller—but they suggest that contemporaries mostly failed or refused to identify with the *Princesse de Clèves* or with the moral rigor that she and her mother would represent. Roger Bussy-Rabutin famously felt her admission to her husband of her passion for Nemours—in the hope that she would convince her husband to let her leave court and the presence of

Nemours—unrealistic and lacking in good sense. “L’aveu de Madame de Clèves à son mari est extravagant et ne se peut dire que dans une histoire véritable” (4:140–41). The readers of the *Mercure*, responding to Donneau de Visé’s *question galante* about whether her confession was admirable, all similarly failed to find the gesture relatable to life in accordance with the modern, sociable ethics of *mondanité*, to which they adhered and whose precepts they turned to the *Mercure* to find: “je sçay bien,” reports one reader from his provincial town, that while such a confession might have been possible in a time when husbands were less delicate and less refined, today, “par toutes les Rives de Iuïne [the letter is addressed from “Des Rives de Iuïne”], où l’on n’est pas plus beste qu’ailleurs, elle ne sera imitée d’aucune Bergere” (*Extraordinaire*, July 1678, 41). Relatedly, the film’s 2009 identifications sometimes seem to come at the expense of the text. If the early respondents rejected the unyielding morality of the princess in the name of gallant sociability, Aurore’s connection with her simply ignores her virtue and sacrifice, generally considered her most defining features, in order to connect more specifically with her desire and desirability.

Aurore’s “misreading,” if that’s the right term, anticipates the very different reading style required to understand the work’s place in French literary history, as “the first modern novel.” This preeminence typically rests on the premise of the psychological depth and complexity of the work’s characters, and of the Princesse de Clèves in particular, portrayed as paralyzed by conflict, agonizing, undeciding, and suffering. La Fayette’s depiction of emotional struggle and internal conflict stands against the literary tradition of prose fiction prevailing in her time in the long *roman* associated with Honoré d’Urfé, Madeleine de Scudéry, or Jean de la Calprenède, in which characters were historical figures, allegorical symbols, or both. It is, ironically, precisely this depth and complexity that enables the students to identify with the characters of *La Princesse de Clèves*, whom they spontaneously take to be plausible representations of real people. Yet the appreciation of the depiction of this depth and “realism” as a literary art requires a set of reading techniques and technologies that are decidedly distinct from the “natural” identificatory reading of the students and parents and which are considerably harder to master.

These techniques are far from intuitive, a fact most viscerally reflected in the classroom, where the documentary shows teachers lecturing and repeatedly correcting and redirecting the students. The exchange with Sarah over La Fontaine’s century is a striking example. But most of the pedagogical exchanges in the film involve teachers conveying complex analytical schemas to the students and correcting them when they don’t quite find the right term or concept. Discussing the structure of the court in the opening scenes, the teacher asks who “donne le ton” within this all-important but, to the students, likely unfamiliar

sociopolitical world. When multiple students answer “Nemours,” she adeptly deflects and asks again, “Le Duc de Nemours, mais avant même le duc de Nemours?” This time she gets the answer she is looking for: “Henri II. Le roi lui-même.” The instructor administering Aurore’s practice Bac is more direct (as she was with Sarah). She asks about the author’s “vision de l’homme et du monde,” conjuring a set of intellectual abstractions that are far removed from the more tangible associations Aurore had been inclined to make on her own. The student replies with an uncertain, interrogative tone, “Que les hommes . . . ne tiennent pas leur passion?” “Donc c’est à dire, ils sont dans l’in. . .” replies the examiner, pausing to wait for Aurore to fill in the needed concept. “L’indifférence,” asks Aurore, eliciting a brusque “Non” from the teacher. “Pas forcément. Mais par contre ils sont dans l’inconstance.” “Oui, c’est vrai,” affirms Aurore quietly.

To observe that the students’ and parents’ identificatory reading in the film was “intuitive” is not, however, to say that this way of reading is a natural or innate ability. In reality, any reading predicated on empathizing with a character in a narrative rests on a set of goals, techniques, and tools that are not givens. These include a series of choices that we probably take as self-evident today: first off, distinguishing the narrative text—exclusively conveyed by the authorial voice—from the nonauthorial paratexts that, in the platform of any commercially printed book, envelop it (all the more so in the school-oriented editions read by the students); second, reading this text linearly from beginning to end in such a way that the character can come to life in the flow of time; and third, seeking from the text a synesthetic representation of a reality that the reader seeks, in his or her mind, to “see” and “hear,” and in which characters are taken for real people with whom the reader might imagine interacting (rather than for allegories or historical figures who represent to the reader lessons or moral ideals to abide by or reject). We might add to this list of prerequisites evolutions in book-forms that sustain this continuous, absorptive reading mode: portability and lighter typefaces (allowing the reader more easily to concentrate on the representation rather than the material object itself) and an organization of the text that presumes and facilitates linear reading (and fails to facilitate nonlinear reading). As obvious as they might seem, these conditions are, in fact, relatively belated developments in the history of reading and reading technologies. To take one example, the codex form of the book—the familiar form of sheets of paper (or parchment), folded and bound together—becomes the dominant platform in late Antiquity when it was adopted by early Christians as the preferred mode for recording, storing, and accessing sacred texts. Its distinct advantage over the technology it replaced—the scroll of the ancient world—lay in enabling the nonsequential perusal necessitated by liturgy and devotion. In this

respect, as shaped by the rise of the codex from the first century through the development of printing and into the early modern age, literacy hinged on techniques for jumping back and forth in a book, most emblematically between biblical passages and between the Old and New Testament. Only in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the advent of new genres like the novel did linear reading, reading a text one time from the beginning of the book to the end, become a norm (Stallybrass 42–43; Roberts and Skeat 38–61).¹

Today a big part of what is targeted in laments about the loss of reading skills, especially as those skills are thought to be corrupted by the fragmentation and distraction of digital technology, is more specifically the loss of the ability to focus on a long continuous text from start to finish (Carr; Birkerts 117–33). Linearity has in this sense entered into our basic definitions of literacy and is now learned from an early age. If children once learned to read through the recitation of catechism and other didactic religious writings amenable to non-sequential reading, today it is largely through stories and narrative, in the realism of which novice readers become invested, taking interest in the characters, and becoming engrossed in the plotlines. Indeed, the ability to do so becomes a proxy for reading ability tout court. Studies of the moral payoffs of reading that highlight empathy as the key engine of this moralization reveal that a personal and affective investment in characters, as real people, is integral to how we understand the activity of reading today.² As a result, by the time the students are adolescents, it comes easily to them to identify with the situations of *La Princesse de Clèves*, as if they were situations in which they might find themselves. This is already what reading has come to mean.

But the scholastic reading required to appreciate the value of the work as a work of art and a historical artifact comes, of course, much later in the development of a student's literacy skills. The techniques and tools for this are encountered in the secondary-school classroom, through a specific set of exercises needing to be learned and practiced. These exercises were developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in the context of educational reforms by which "French literature" was established as a school discipline, replacing the older humanities curriculum built on ancient languages, rhetoric, and appreciation of Greek and Latin classics. The core tools of rhetoric—tropes, genres, argument—were adapted into the new curriculum, where they were applied not to the classics of antiquity but now to "classic" works in French. Yet rather than studying these works in order to imitate them, as was the focus of traditional rhetorical training, students learned to analyze these texts as literary masterpieces through exercises designed specifically to this end. The *explication de texte* and the *dissertation française* are the best known. Moreover, unlike the ancient texts, which were approached as timeless models, French

literature was situated in history, manifesting the rise of the French nation, from the Middle Ages through the age of Louis XIV and the Enlightenment and into the nineteenth century. The techniques for appreciating literary masterworks inculcated a sense of French ascendancy, at a time, of course, when France was still reeling from the Prussian War and defining itself through rivalry with Germany. The 1870 disaster was ascribed to the superior Germany's educational system, which in turn drove the urgency of reforms under the Third Republic (Houdart-Mérot 30–31).³

Gustave Lanson and the Techniques of Literary Analysis

Gustave Lanson is the reformer most identified with the exercises required by the new French literature curriculum. In his 1925 “Méthodes de l’histoire littéraire,” Lanson republished an essay on the *explication de texte*, which had first appeared in the *Bulletin de la Maison Française de Columbia University* in 1919.⁴ The essay emphasizes the extent to which the *explication* is an *exercice*, in the tradition of spiritual or intellectual exercises. Lanson’s description of it begins as a response to a question, “spirituellement posée”: “quel était le tortionnaire qui avait inventé l’explication de textes?” Lanson embraces the premise. The *explication* is designed to be hard. It is a form of disciplinary training, and the teacher who administers this training is indeed a “tortionnaire,” just as the “le professeur de gymnastique” or “la maître d’équitation” or any instructor whose job is to instill in a student a skill or ability that does not come naturally might be called as such.

In this case, the skill is “reading literature,” to be distinguished from basic literacy learned, more or less universally in developed countries, in primary school: “Par l’explication, un professeur de lycée ou d’université se propose d’apprendre à lire à ses élèves. L’instituteur apprend à lire l’alphabet, et le professeur de lycée ou d’université apprendre à lire la littérature” (39). The distinction consists in reading “avec attention” or “attentivement,” as opposed to “rapidement comme on lit un journal ou”—significantly, I would add—“comme on lit un roman” (39–40). Lanson defines the exercise against readers who “rêve . . . sur les pages d’un livre, où ils s’imaginent parfois avoir trouvé, comme Diderot, ce qui n’a jamais été que le jeu de leur fantaisie ou l’émotion de leur coeur” (40). The *explication* instead trains students to “trouver dans une page ou une oeuvre d’un écrivain *ce qui y est, tout ce qui y est, rien que ce qui y est.*” It thus entails deference to the idea that the literary text stands on its own. The work contains its meaning: “Le postulat, évidemment, est que les textes ont un sens en eux-mêmes, indépendamment de nos esprits et de nos sensibilités, à nous qui lisons” (40–41). The *explication* gives access to this meaning. And the difficulty of this access is the experience of the literary quality of the work.

Not that the reader doesn't bring anything to the endeavor. Lanson does not reject the reader's more intuitive (since learned far earlier) desire to connect personally with the text. The initial emotional response is, in fact, integral to the literary work's power: "On ne songe même pas à condamner la rêverie dont je parlais tout à l'heure," he writes (44). In "La Méthode de l'histoire littéraire," Lanson explores the tension in more depth: the literary work is to be differentiated from other objects of historical study precisely on the basis that it provokes "chez le lecteur des évocations imaginatives, des excitations sentimentales, des émotions esthétiques" (34–35). What the *explication*—and related methods elaborated in these reforms—provide is a set of learned techniques for moving from the ostensibly personal, subjective, individual response to an informed understanding of the work's universality. One can imagine how this *entraînement* can then be seen to attach the student affectively to an overarching community and culture: "l'exercice de l'explication française devint l'épreuve importante et décisive où la culture française du candidat se jugea" (56).

In the 1890s and early twentieth century, Lanson's world was shaped not only by French nationalism, but also by strident anticlericalism and democratization—the Ferry Laws establishing free, mandatory, and secular primary schooling were passed in 1881 and 1882—as well as by industrialization, nineteenth-century historicism, and scientific positivism. The reforms of the Third Republic sought to turn the analysis of "French literature" into a rigorous science, and, as a new school discipline, a mechanism for advancement and social distinction. The curriculum would be reformed many times in the twentieth century and the world is now a very different place. What's above all obvious in the documentary's Marseille classroom, and central to the film's message, is the legacy of French colonialism. This is expressed most evocatively when two of the students, both Black, talk about their visit to the Louvre and the portrait gallery, where the paintings of a number of the key historical figures from the *Princesse* hang. When Armelle describes being moved at seeing "mes ancêtres" and imagining their lives, her roommate, Cadiatou, jumps in: "Quels ancêtres?" Armelle laughs, realizing the slip but defends her response: "On est françaises," she says. Yes, Cadiatou agrees, "par le sol. Mais nos ancêtres ils étaient esclaves." Cadiatou asserts that she can only be "fière à moitié"; but even if she can't consider the figures as her ancestors, Armelle states, "je m'en souviendrai tout le temps d'être allée [au Louvre] pour la première fois."

Lanson of course had no capacity for dealing with this ambivalence, though the teachers in the film are attuned to it. The very framing of the project to read La Fayette's work, voiced by one of the teachers over the opening credits of the film—"cette année nous allons étudier *La Princesse de Clèves*, le premier grand roman de la littérature française. C'est un texte exigeant, mais je suis convaincue

qu'on peut l'étudier ici. Je pense que c'est un texte qui vous concerne"—would seem to imply clearly, especially in the clause, "mais je suis convaincue qu'on peut l'étudier ici," that to "read" this work in the Lansonian sense—in the classroom, analytically—will require overcoming difficulties stemming from racial identity and colonial legacy, as well as from social class and poverty. The irony is that "French literature," which the teacher invokes at the outset as the context in which the work's importance is to be appreciated—"le premier grand roman de la littérature française— and which was "invented" at the turn of the twentieth century as a tool of nationalist belonging and assimilation as well as of social capital accumulation, now operates as the vehicle for a politics of social progress, inclusivity, and identity, all starkly and pointedly at odds with the policies of the Sarkozy government.

But if it works, it's not very obvious. The reforms, the changing times, and the intentions of the teachers notwithstanding, "French literature" comes across in the film's classroom as no less normative and exclusionary as in the essays of Lanson. Viewed through the struggles of the students fumbling for the right term or concept, it feels formulaic and entrapping, more likely to highlight failures than successes. An additional irony is that Sarkozy's critique is not exactly repudiated by the experiences of the students. Are they helped by the exercise, any more than Sarkozy thinks an aspiring functionary is helped by "memorizing *La Princesse de Clèves*"? It is maybe not the film's goal to suggest that they are or should be; and including the story line of the Bac along with its cringe-inducing practice exam scene might indicate that Sauder isn't too naive about what access to a canonical work of the French literary tradition can bring to the students. That said, it's bracing to see this pedagogy in place, borne of the ideologies of the Third Republic, repurposed for a very different time and society, yet somehow, in its power dynamics and affirmation of hierarchy, unchanged.

Yes, being "helped" in the sense Sarkozy tentatively understood it, when he averred that volunteer work "vaut autant que de savoir par coeur la Princesse de Clèves," was never the point. We saw that Lanson considered exercises in reading French literature as a means for gauging a candidate's culture, not for teaching administrative competence. Interestingly enough, Lanson develops this perspective most clearly not when he writes about French schools but in an essay describing his experience teaching in the United States in the autumn of 1911, during a stint as visiting professor at Columbia (*Trois mois d'enseignement*). Addressing the question of why one would study French in the US, Lanson spells out the benefits through a comparison with German, which was at the time the more widely taught language in American secondary schools. But American students were now turning to French. Why? They did so, as Allan Stoekl noted in his analysis of Lanson's text, because they found in French

something more than mere utility (12–15). They found beauty, order, and elegance: “Les livres et les cours des professeurs allemands . . . ne peuvent entrer en comparaison avec les livres et les cours des professeurs français, pour l’ordre de la composition et l’élégance de la rédaction” (*Trois mois d’enseignement* 195). Above all, they found an expansive, universalizing culture, whose lofty ideals and insights surpassed the narrow, pragmatic ends of a language like German: “Notre littérature, depuis la Renaissance, a vécu de l’expression des plus hautes idées de progrès, de justice et d’humanité,” Lanson writes, continuing, “Nous parlons la langue des idées claires et des idées universelles” (201).

This rhetoric does not sit well today. But I suspect that the legacy of anti-utilitarianism on which it rests weighs heavily. Neither the teachers in the documentary nor the protestors reading on the steps of the Panthéon really contradict Sarkozy’s underlying assertion that reading a great work of French literature was not going to make a candidate more qualified for a job or better prepared for a profession, let alone that it could help the students in Marseille overcome the stifling obstacles of poverty, unemployment, and racism they were constantly up against. This is not to say that there weren’t other significant benefits. But it is to concur that the “utility” of reading *La Princesse de Clèves*, and French literature in general, is a symbolic rather than an economic one, to invoke the opposition emphasized by Pierre Bourdieu in his studies of French literary culture, which were no better translated for an American public than by Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, who adapted the model in her deeply influential studies of gastronomy.⁵ The payoffs are moral and intellectual not professional or economic. Indeed, if we push further the differential logic defining the “cultural field,” in which symbolic value is not merely distinct from but inversely proportional to economic value, these payoffs should be viewed as incompatible. It is only because literary reading is *not* reducible to narrow professional formation that it is then able to afford moral insight and ethical benefit. In this sense, to be elevated through appreciation of the “highest ideas of progress, justice, and humanity” offered by French literary classics entails a renunciation of ambition, not unsimilar to that of the *Princesse de Clèves* herself. To “read” French literature in the way the reformers understood this, and the way the students at the Lycée Diderot in Marseille are asked to read, not to mention the students in our classes today in the United States, means putting aside any expectation that there will be a “practical” benefit to the exercise. Students must instead focus on learning to “read well” or “critically.” These are laudable goals. But they exist in tension with more directed and functional ends, the kind posited by say, an instruction booklet or a highway sign, or, more saliently, by a conduct manual or a book of moral maxims. The latter can of course be read critically, as we do all the time in French literature courses. But this is to read them against their stated purpose.

In fact, the seventeenth-century readers who, in the *Mercure's* pages, largely decried the Princesse's confession of her passion for Nemours offer an illuminating counterpoint to this anti-utilitarian literacy, which gives historical context to the latter. To judge from how they signed their letters to the editor, these readers hailed largely from the expanding ranks of officers and well-educated, socially mobile professionals in provincial towns. As Janet Letts showed, many worked in the state bureaucracy as lawyers in bailiwick or presidial courts, as subdelegates to regional intendants, as army officers, or as accountants in the byzantine fiscal administration. Or they were teachers and doctors; or women and youths connected through family or marriage to this burgeoning world of social fluidity and advancement.⁶ They read the *Mercure* as part of an acculturation they considered essential to the social distinction they sought through their professional service to the state, which for office holders might eventually include titles of nobility. Their letters heap praise on Donneau de Visé's periodical as an "École du beau monde," in which literate provincials were able to learn the language and behaviors of Parisian *mondains*. The *Mercure Galant* "à dérouillé & dérouille tous les jours d'Esprits dans les Provinces," writes one of these correspondents, a lawyer from Châlons sur Saône; "On se raffine insensiblement le goust en examinant les beautez des Pieces choisies que l'on y trouve" (*Extraordinaire*, July 1678, 195, 186).⁷ This refinement served and was nourished by social ambition; and it was marketed to these readers precisely for that purpose. It is at least partly for this reason that *Mercure* readers—who sought norms, formulas, and ethical precepts that would help them thrive in the socio-professional arena of absolutist France—could hardly connect with the Princesse's austere disavowal of worldly life and her desire for retreat from the very spaces these readers sought to inhabit and master.⁸

In this sense, the educational reforms of the turn of the twentieth century created "French literature" by disconnecting the works from a different set of historical uses, which, in the seventeenth century, were perhaps more grounded in real-world use-value. This goes without saying, at one level. Lanson acknowledges that history and canonization will open up any work to new decontextualized readings. A long footnote added in 1925 to his assertion, published originally in 1919, that "les textes ont un sens en eux-mêmes," owns up to a historicity of reception, which he felt he had downplayed (41). My point is more specific: as reconceived in the new school discipline of "French literature," the work is defined in terms of a repudiation of real-world utility, on the basis of which a more abstract, "universal" moralized benefit can then be conceptualized and claimed.

We wouldn't use the language of French universalism in a classroom today other than to rightly criticize the pretention. However, our definitions of the objects we study and the methodologies we use to study those objects strike

me as still beholden to the dichotomies defining this perspective. And this is the case not just in the French lycée shown in the documentary, but also in the American university classroom. We have notorious difficulties talking about the usefulness of what we teach in a French literature course or what we hope students to gain from a French major. This is not because learning French isn't useful. That would be an absurd thing to contend about a language spoken globally on a daily basis by over 200 million people. It's instead because of the extent to which French, as an academic discipline predicated on particular set of techniques and technologies of literacy, has been subsumed by this literary paradigm. The quandary is not outwardly expressed in *Nous, Princesses de Clèves*, but it's apparent in the outcomes the film foregrounds. Aurore's decision to skip her Bac exam in order to call a restaurant inquiring about training as a server is a poignant and painful moment of self-sorting, in which Aurore chooses the most "useful" path—"moi, j'ai dit de choisir. Tu as choisi ton orientation," her mother says after learning of her exam results. The dilemma is far more manifest in the US context, where French programs are under much greater pressure to articulate their learning goals in the language of relevance, posted to the obligatory "Why Study French" page of the departmental website.

The Present and Future of French Studies

My last conversations with Priscilla Ferguson were on this topic. I visited her a number of times in the summer of 2018 after my first year serving as chair of the Department of French and Italian Studies at the University of Washington (UW). No one is more responsible than Ferguson for the direction my career took after I arrived in the French program at Columbia in the fall of 1993. It's not close. She opened my eyes to history, to materiality, to the tensions and conflicts that shaped the cultural field and produced the belief in literary value, a creed that happened also to be a requirement for success in what was still the church of literariness. Indeed, passing an *explication de texte* was a prerequisite for receiving the PhD in Lanson's former department. But I was as stumped as Sarah before this exercise, and moved into the Comparative Literature program. That shift seemed to release me from some departmental orthodoxies, and, in constant dialogue with Ferguson, inspired by her insights and apostate dispositions, and directed by her rigorous but always supportive reading, I was free to explore the social and economic forces that, over time, shaped literary and cultural institutions. These conversations continued over many years, inspired by many different projects we were engaged in, from food to flowers and authorship to the history of typeface.

These have, of course, been challenging times for language and humanities programs. While a sense of crisis has been endemic in the humanities for decades, it does appear that something changed following the Great Recession of

2008–9 (Schmidt). Students face a more difficult professional landscape with fewer and less-secure job prospects. Meanwhile, tuition at UW, as at many other institutions, has gone up as a result of enormous cuts to the state allocation. If not necessarily the direct cause, this is at least the key context for understanding a precipitous drop in majors in the Division of the Humanities at the UW since 2008. Course enrollments have dropped too, though not to the same degree, which is a hint that one of the changes we are living through is not so much a wholesale loss of interest or faith in the humanities and languages in favor of STEM fields—we know that lots of STEM students are enthusiastic about taking humanities and languages courses. More exactly, we were facing a new paradigm of the college major forged in this hot crucible of rising costs and uncertain futures, to which we can add parental anxiety, trends in career counseling, and the strategies of college and university marketing and communications operations that endlessly promote STEM programs and academic pathways emphasizing concrete (which is to say, monetizable and publicizable) discoveries in technology and medicine rather than “liberal” (let alone “literary”) education.

More vocational and preprofessional, more skills- and experience-oriented, this paradigm has been a difficult one for humanities programs to adapt to. Certainly it has been for French, which, as an academic discipline, was built from the methods and objectives that Lanson brought to the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century. As a college major, French has long been, first and foremost, a literary education. Traditionally, two or three years of language instruction offer students a targeted preparation for historical surveys of “classic” works of literature, into which they immediately move. The choice of texts has changed significantly over time, thankfully, to include works by previously marginalized women writers and authors of color, and to represent far better the expansive Francophone world in all of its cultural and linguistic diversity. These have been hard won battles, and the discipline is much better for it. Yet these victories have not greatly altered the numbers game because, I suspect, these battles have tended not to engage the underlying disconnect between the ideals that drive our curricula and the “relevance” students increasingly seek—or are made to seek—in their undergraduate studies. And to be clear, by relevance, I mean less topicality than the transferability of skills they acquire (and which we emphasize) in French courses and programs to their trajectories from college major into postgraduate studies (almost never French or humanities; quite often science, policy, law, medicine) and professional life.

We are lucky at UW. French has a decently strong presence in regional high schools. As a result, our enrollments and even the number of our majors have not taken quite the hit that many other language and humanities programs have seen. But our students don’t come to us to “read literature.” They’re happy to

do so. But they become French majors because they consider French to be a thriving global language that opens doors throughout the world; because they believe French to be of value to their educational and professional aspirations; and because they want to improve and apply concretely their language skills. Aurore's choice is not one we want to see, and it is not exactly one our students are forced to make—they have already made the choice of college, after all. But with time and financial constraints, they certainly have to make related choices. Since almost all of our students are double-majoring, one of those tends to be between French and their “useful” major. While it's gratifying to be the major students “love” as opposed to the one they feel they have to do, the configuration, with French opposed to and competing with the “useful” major, serves neither our students nor our departments well at all—French almost invariably loses the face-off if and when the student has to drop one of the majors. What is essential is to think through the oppositions and to retool our programs in order to minimize these choices.

And to be clear, I do not believe this means subordinating French programs to the vocational needs of more “useful” degree options, in the style of “French for Business” or “French for Medical Professions.” Instead, it entails a different perspective on the topics and objects we teach. “French literature” or even “French culture” are not, in my view, the best paradigms, in comparison with, say, a course on translation. Translation courses are enormously popular when we offer them (which we do more and more); and they provide ample opportunities to engage “French literature and culture”: its recognized works, histories, books. But they do so without requiring that the student forgo, in the name of a particular kind of moralized reading or pedagogical experience, any sense of the “utility” of the engagement.

Conclusion: Reconsidering Sarah's “Mistake”

I actually think that Sarah's identification of La Fontaine as a “fabuliste du dix-huitième siècle” is entirely defensible, and even a more accurate characterization of the “author” she's studying than the teacher's scornful correction. After all, the canon of seventeenth-century classical authors in which La Fontaine (in his lifetime, somewhat of an outsider) found a place was an invention of the eighteenth century and later, of efforts to establish a pantheon of writers who, “dans l'éloquence, dans la poésie, dans la littérature, dans les livres de morale et d'agrément,” established the primacy of France in the age of Louis XIV (Voltaire 2: 167). Voltaire's chapter “Les Beaux-arts” from *Le Siècle de Louis XIV* is the best-known testimonial to this effort, in which La Fontaine is featured alongside the usual suspects: Pascal, Corneille, Racine, Molière, La Rochefoucauld, Descartes, Bossuet, Boileau, Fénelon, La Bruyère, and Bayle. Notwithstanding their gender

and racial identities, this is in fact a deeply eclectic group of scientists, religious apologists and preachers, professional playwrights, dissident journalists, leisured *mondains*, and educators whose representative works spoke to a range of distinct (if often overlapping) publics. Yet in Voltaire's chapter, they are united under the banner of "literature," which itself takes shape in a work celebrating the glory of the French state, if not quite yet the nation (Voltaire 2: 167–92). We of course owe so much of our understanding of this invention of "literary France" to Priscilla Ferguson (Clark; she discusses Voltaire's *Siècle* at 130–31).

I would say, though, that the La Fontaine Sarah is forced to answer for is really an author of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, born of the formation of "French literature" as a secondary-school discipline: an object of analysis and a domain in which a student's competence, not to mention the qualifications of an applicant for a job in the civil service, could be tested and measured. It is through the reading techniques of this pedagogy that the student can perceive La Fontaine as, at once, expressive of a unique literary genius and a coherent "vision de l'homme et du monde," and as representative of a particular period in the history of French literature, marking the progress of French culture toward modernity (and global supremacy in the pedagogy of Lanson). This, it might be noted, is the La Fontaine who is the author of the fables as reproduced in *Classiques Larousse* and other classroom editions that proliferated throughout the twentieth century and from which we repeatedly see the students in the film reading, in old marked-up, dog-eared hand-me-down copies, an understated yet visceral connection between the twenty-first-century literary classroom and the classrooms of earlier decades. We should distinguish this authorial figure from the "M. de la Fontaine" whose name appears on the title page of the 1668 edition of the *Fables choisies mises en vers*, dedicated to *Monseigneur le Dauphin* and published, like *La Princesse de Clèves*, by the entrepreneurial Claude Barbin, undoubtedly for that same public of restless social aspirants who, in their reading, sought behavioral and linguistic codes to emulate and for whom a non-actionable, abstract articulation of humanity's "inconstance" would likely have been of lesser interest.

In fact, the scene in which the students visit the *Réserve des livres rares* in the BnF to see a copy from Barbin's first edition of *La Princesse de Clèves* is the one that sticks with me most. The film shows the curator using his time with the group to talk yet more about text's literary thematics, emphasizing the work's representation of an impossible love. This then establishes the novel's transhistorical relevance: "C'est un roman qui est toujours dans la vie de 2009," he says, while all those in the room incongruously ignore the small 1678 volumes he holds in his hands. In the chapter on La Fayette in the famous Lagarde et Michard school manual, we read that the most important quality of the novel is its

depiction of “*la vérité humaine*. Car les sentiments sont vrais; l’analyse de la passion dans l’âme de Mme de Clèves, de son mari et du duc de Nemours n’a pas vieilli le moins du monde. Le drame qui se joue dans le coeur de l’héroïne nous touche directement” (356). I don’t mean to dismiss this important appeal of the text, which the documentary touchingly celebrates. But how likely is it that these students will have another opportunity to explore, up close and hands on in the BNF Réserve, copies from the original seventeenth-century edition of a text they read for their high school class? This hardly seems the moment to reiterate what they’re already being told in school and in their textbooks about the novel’s “timeless” themes.

It’s a stark image of the smothering power of the “literary” paradigm. This was an obvious moment to consider the work from very different angles: as a text whose history is also that of the history of books, of literacy and reading practices, of the materialities and modalities of textual transmission and information technologies, of publics and marketing. Yet the curator reads from the publisher’s preface as if it were a passage excerpted in the Lagarde et Michard inviting an *explication*, rather than the commercial pitch of a seventeenth-century cultural purveyor, trying to sell a book to a public of consumers. The preface and the object the students have the chance to behold call for different kinds of reflections. Who were the consumers addressed by Barbin? What can the object of the book tell us about how they read, about how they navigated the work and flipped through its pages? What can we ascertain from the oversized typeface or from any marginalia that might be found? One copy from the 1678 edition held in the Arsenal Library (call number 8° BL 17769) has margins filled with the grammatical emendations of a fastidious reader from the eighteenth century who approached the work more as a text to correct than a work of literature to appreciate, let alone a story in which to become engrossed. A cross marks the text’s phrase on p. 88, “Il est vray que Monsieur de Nemours a entré deux nuits de suite dans le jardin de la Forest,” pointing to a handwritten annotation below: “a entré pour est entré ne paroît pas François.” What alternate perspectives on books, texts, “literature,” culture, authors, and gender (among other things) might we see enacted here?

I don’t know if the chance to examine and hold the small duodecimo volumes would have given the students in *Nous, Princesses de Clèves* something more enduring to take from their engagement with the French literary classic into their lives beyond school. I take students to the UW Libraries Special Collections in almost every course. They complete an assignment in which they study and describe an early printed book, emphasizing features that have disappeared from the modern books whose forms—now so often encountered as digital images in PDF files—the students take for granted today. They look for the direction of chain-lines in the paper, determine formats, count signatures, transcribe

title pages, examine bindings, look for signs of use and ownership, and identify dedications and the royal privileges granting exclusive rights to print and sell the text in a specified timeframe. These are simple, mechanical tasks. But they introduce the students to another type of reading, entailing a distinct assessment of the text, not as the vehicle of timeless literary quality. Instead, the text is perceived as a constantly renewed transmission of content and meaning, via a long chain of editorial and publication processes and via what Foucault called the author function (not the act of authorship per se so much as the construction of an authorial mythology for the text, lending it credibility and an anchor point in history) (Foucault), in a variety of forms (print editions, digital formats) through networks shaped by overlapping and conflicting commercial, cultural, and political interests, by laws regulating intellectual property, by censorship and changing technologies, to a diversity of publics—some intended, most completely unintended—dispersed across geography and over time. The skills and techniques involved in this type of reading are attuned to the text as a sequence of materialized or, if on-screen, visualized instantiations and technological artifacts, as the product of a history of editorial and publishing operations, and as the function of context and decontextualization, reception and misreading, and appropriation. I can't say how transferrable the students would consider those skills to be. In an age saturated by the endlessly recycled and remediated content of concentrated, data-hungry tech corporations, my hope is that students might see some pertinence (or relief) in a hands-on exploration of a text's travels, uses, and reuses across history. In any event, of all the exercises I have students undertake—including the occasional *explication de texte*—this is one, along with research in archives and various kinds of digital projects, that students are likely to want to come back and pursue outside of class.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

NOTES

1. Stallybrass deems linear reading to be a “perverse” interlude in the broader history of reading in which nonlinear uses of the book dominate.
2. See Paul's response to Currie's op-ed in the *New York Times* on June 1, 2013, in which Currie doubted that literature brought moral benefits. Paul cites scholarship in cognitive psychology showing that “individuals who read fiction appear to be better able to understand other people, empathize with them and view the world from their perspective.” Paul cites Mar, Oatley, and Peterson; and Mar, Tackett, Moore. Hunt highlights the importance of empathetic connections with characters in novels for the development of a notion of human rights in the eighteenth century.
3. Other sources on the Third Republic reforms on which I've drawn include Jey; Chartier; Chervel; Compagnon; Genette; and Massol.

4. “Quelques mots sur l’explication de texte” is included as part 3 of this longer essay, with additional notes to the earlier version, which appeared in *Bulletin de la Maison Française de Columbia University*. Lanson had been writing about the explication since the 1890s (“Le cadre général”).
5. For Bourdieu, the opposition of symbolic and economic defines the literary or cultural field between an autonomous pole (where the literary work has its own aesthetic ends, manifested by its lack of economic viability) and a heteronomous pole (where the literary work serves the marketplace). Priscilla Ferguson adapted Bourdieu’s field model to gastronomy in “Cultural Field in the Making.”
6. Based on analysis of 2,330 letter writers to the *Mercur* between 1680 and 1710, Letts determined that 30 percent were officers, meaning functionaries who had bought or inherited positions in the state bureaucracy as lawyers, tax collectors, or other administrators. Another 29 percent were in the class of “other,” which included medical professionals and teachers.
7. The *Extraordinaires du Mercure Galant* were quarterly supplements to the “ordinary” monthly issues. Donneau de Visé published most of the letters he received from readers in these supplements.
8. To be clear, those who responded to Donneau de Visé’s *question galante* are not reading *La Princesse de Clèves*. They mostly do not know the text other than through the summary of the confession scene that is included with the question. This summary does make clear, though, that the princess is confessing her passion so that the prince will agree to let her “se retirer dans un lieu où elle ne soit point exposée à la veüe de cet Amant” (*Extraordinaire*, April 1678, 198).

WORKS CITED

- Birkerts, Sven. *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age*. New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1994.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. “Le Champ littéraire.” *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 89, no. 4 (1991): 3–46.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, edited by Randal Jackson. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. “Flaubert’s Point of View,” translated by Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson. *Critical Inquiry* 14, no. 3 (1988): 539–62.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Les Règles de l’art: Genèse et structure du champ littéraire*. Paris: Seuil, 1992.
- Bussy-Rabutin, Roger de. *Correspondance de Roger de Rabutin, comte de Bussy, avec sa famille et ses amis (1666–1693)*. 6 vols. Edited by Ludovic Lalanne. Paris: Charpentier, 1858–59.
- Carr, Nicholas. “Is Google Making Us Stupid? What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains.” *Atlantic*, July/August 2008. www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/07/is-google-making-us-stupid/306868/.
- Chartier, Anne-Marie. “When French Schoolchildren Were Introduced to Literature (1920–1940),” translated by Elizabeth Purdue. *Yale French Studies*, no. 113 (2008): 60–76.
- Chervel, André. “The Baccalauréat et les débuts de la dissertation littéraire (1874–1881).” *Histoire de l’éducation* 94 (2002): 103–39.

- “Children of the Princess of Cleves.” BAM, www.bam.org/film/2012/children-of-the-princess-of-cleves.
- Clark, Priscilla Parkhurst. *Literary France. The Making of a Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.
- Compagnon, Antoine. *La Troisième République des lettres: De Flaubert à Proust*. Paris: Seuil, 1983.
- Currie, Gregory. “Does Great Literature Make Us Better?” *New York Times*, June 1, 2013. opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/06/01/does-great-literature-make-us-better.
- de Bruyn, Olivier. “‘Nous, princesses de Clèves’: Oublions les clichés!” *Le Point*, March 28, 2011. www.lepoint.fr/cinema/nous-princesses-de-cleves-oublions-les-cliches-28-03-2011-1312323_35.php.
- Extraordinaire du Mercure Galant*, April and July 1678.
- Ferguson, Priscilla Parkhurst. “A Cultural Field in the Making: Gastronomy in Nineteenth-Century France.” *American Journal of Sociology* 104, no. 3 (1998): 597–641.
- Foucault, Michel. “What Is an Author?” In *The Foucault Reader*, edited by Paul Rabinow, translated by Josue Harari, 101–20. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.
- Genette, Gérard. “Enseignement et rhétorique au XXe siècle.” *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 21, no. 2 (1966): 292–305.
- Houdart-Mérot, Violaine. “Literary Education in the ‘Lycée’: Crises, Continuity, and Upheaval since 1880,” translated by Ralph Albanese. *Yale French Studies*, no. 113 (2008): 29–45.
- Hunt, Lynn. *Inventing Human Rights. A History*. New York: Norton, 2008.
- Jey, Martine. “The Literature of the Enlightenment: An Impossible Legacy for the Republican School,” translated by Antoine Krieger. *Yale French Studies*, no. 113 (2008): 46–59.
- La Fayette, comtesse de, Marie-Madeleine Pioche de La Vergne. *La Princesse de Clèves*, edited by Jean Mesnard. Paris: Gallimard, 1996.
- Lagarde, André, and Laurent Michard. *XVIIe Siècle*, Collection littéraire Lagarde et Michard. Paris: Bordas, 1992.
- Lanson, Gustave. “Le cadre général d’une explication.” *Manuel général de l’instruction primaire, supplément* 16, no. 8 (1892): 117–18.
- Lanson, Gustave. “La méthode de l’histoire littéraire.” *Essais de méthode, de critique, et de d’histoire littéraire*, edited by Henri Peyre, 31–56. Paris: Hachette, 1963.
- Lanson, Gustave. “Méthodes de l’histoire littéraire.” *Études françaises*, no. 1 (1925): 1–57.
- Lanson, Gustave. “Quelques mots sur l’explication de textes.” *Bulletin de la Maison Française de Columbia University* 2, no. 1 (1919): 1–6.
- Lanson, Gustave. *Trois mois d’enseignement aux États-Unis. Notes et Impressions d’un professeur français*. Paris: Hachette, 1912.
- Letts, Janet. “Responsive Readers of the *Mercurie Galant*, 1680–1710.” *Cahiers du dix-septième siècle* 5, no. 1 (1991): 211–28.
- Mar, Raymond, Keith Oatley, and Jordan Peterson. “Exploring the Link between Reading Fiction and Empathy: Ruling Out Individual Differences and Examining Outcomes.” *Communications* 34, no. 4 (2009): 407–28. doi.org/10.1515/COMM.2009.025.

- Mar, Raymond, Jennifer Tackett, and Chris Moore, "Exposure to Media and Theory-of-Mind Development in Preschoolers." *Cognitive Development* 25, no.1 (2010): 69–78. doi.org/10.1016/j.cogdev.2009.11.002.
- Massol, Jean-François. *De l'institution scolaire de la littérature française: 1870–1925*. Grenoble: ELLUG, 2004.
- Paul, Annie Murphy. "Reading Literature Makes Us Smarter and Nicer." *Time*, June 3, 2013. ideas.time.com/2013/06/03/why-we-should-read-literature/.
- Roberts, Colin H., and T. C. Skeat. *The Birth of the Codex*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- Schmidt, Benjamin. "The Humanities Are in Crisis." *Atlantic*, August 23, 2018. www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/08/the-humanities-face-a-crisis-of-confidence/567565/.
- Stallybrass, Peter. "Books and Scrolls, Navigating the Bible." In *Books and Readers in Early Modern England: Material Studies*, edited by Jennifer Andersen and Elizabeth Sauer, 42–79. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001.
- Stoekl, Allan. "From Culture to the Canon: Lanson's Mission in America." *ADFL Bulletin* 26, no. 2 (1995): 12–15.
- Turnovsky, Geoffrey. "Literary History Meets the History of Reading. The Case of *La Princesse de Clèves* and Its (Non)readers." *French Historical Studies* 41, no. 3 (2018): 427–47.
- Voltaire. *Le Siècle de Louis XIV*. 2 vols. N.p., 1751.