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Philippe Lane and Michael Worton, eds., *French Studies in and for the Twenty-first Century*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011. xxii + 310 pp. Tables, notes, bibliography, appendix and index. £65.00 U.K. (hb). ISBN 978-1-84631-6-555; £16.95 U.K. (pb). ISBN 978-1-84631-656-2.

Reviewed by Luke L. Eilderts, Southern Connecticut State University.

After hosting a seminar where they discussed the landscape and future of French studies in the United Kingdom, Philippe Lane and Michael Worton decided to bring these voices together, as well as other invited scholars, into an edited volume. Changing educational standards, falling enrollments, and the closing of language departments across the country have led to a serious crisis within higher education in the humanities and social sciences in general and French Studies departments and programs in particular. According to numerous contributors to the volume, educational policies enacted by previous governments have had grievous effects on the health of language programs and research possibilities across the UK.

With forty-one contributors, eight sections, and twenty-three chapters, *French Studies in and for the Twenty-first Century* presents a broad overview of the diverse scholarship taking place in the UK today. Spanning women's and gender studies, sexuality studies, literature, linguistics, translation, film studies, popular culture, area studies, postcolonial studies, war and culture studies, and pedagogy, Lane and Worton have produced a kind of *défense et illustration des études françaises* that endeavors not only to demonstrate the breadth of academic pursuits, but also to exhibit the influential position French studies occupies as an interdisciplinary and innovative domain.

Lane and Worton have two main goals for this work: first, they urge their readers to come to terms with the gravity of the situation, stressing that "business-as-usual" will certainly bring unwelcome results; second, by uniting an impressive list of scholars who demonstrate the broad spectrum of French studies in the UK today, Lane and Worton not only testify to the vibrant scholarship taking place, but also to the innovative and pivotal position French studies occupies within higher education. In short, the book represents both a *prise de conscience* and a call to action, one that stresses that those working within French studies need to set the tone of the discussion at all levels.

The first section includes an introduction by the editors as well as a history of the evolution of French studies in the UK. In this chapter, Diana Holmes highlights the evolution of the discipline by tracing its growth and status through the nineteenth century up to the present, with special attention paid to the shifts in institutional directions taken on by the new universities and polytechnics of the 1960s and 1970s to their unification in the early 1990s. Holmes also calls attention to the evolution of French studies within these institutions and how they dealt with the many different elements that can make up the curriculum (e.g., language study, literature, socio-political analysis, et cetera). In her words, "[t]he story of French Studies is one of repeated and diverse struggles--sometimes successful ones--to define the nature and purpose of our multiple, complex, sometimes internally divided subject area in ways that convince those on whom our existence depends" (p. 20).

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Next, part two sheds light upon research and engagement strategies where authors examine the status of French studies and, in the words of Charles Forsdick, “[w]hy French Studies [m]atters” (p. 37). In his chapter, Adrian Armstrong focuses on the falling number of entries in GCSE and A-level French and, consequently, the declining enrollments in French Studies programs at the B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. levels. Furthermore, he discusses the idea of “coverage,” a goal many departments have viewed as both an aspiration and reality. For Armstrong, herein lies some of the difficulties facing French studies: when full coverage is not a possibility for a program, Armstrong warns his readers that a reconfiguration of the curriculum may have unintended results based on what he calls “unexamined assumptions about canonicity and relevance” (p. 31).

Indeed, Armstrong calls on us to reconsider what kind of coverage we seek and how this influences hiring decisions. He explains that, with the current trends in undergraduate education leaning towards general content-style courses, the individual research interests of the faculty, in many respects, matters little. Rather, it is far more important that the faculty “devise high quality broad-based teaching, grounded in a sufficient understanding of fields outside her immediate specialism” (p. 32). Armstrong ends his piece by writing about how French may suffer from its familiarity to the British student. France is not seen as an exotic place, and its geographic proximity to the UK, coupled with the possibility that students have had many years of French study before arriving at university, may translate into a kind of “contempt” or “lack of excitement” (p. 32). His closing advice is that French studies programs will need to “defamiliarise” the field in order to redefine relevance (p. 35).

Charles Forsdick’s chapter engages broadly with the question of the definition of French studies today and how the field’s multiple identities carry with them both strengths and weaknesses. How does French studies position itself within the larger university system? What role does and should it play? And with the current trends in higher education, how can French studies define itself in order to best play up its strengths? Many of these issues, as Forsdick points out, are actually not new, and have shadowed French studies for a great number of years. Forsdick also reminds us of the internal conflicts of our discipline (literature versus cultural studies; medieval versus contemporary). He ends his piece by providing a French studies manifesto that outlines key points for the future of the field, while also reminding his reader of the challenges it faces. Rounding out the section, Michael Kelly uncovers the impact French scholars have had in the UK on socio-political issues, concluding that, while they do not live up to the Sartrean standard of the *intellectuel engagé*, they nonetheless have had some influence on British society.

In part three, issues of gender, women’s writing, and sexuality take center stage. Michèle Cohen, Hilary Footitt and Amy Wygant explore the origins of the supposedly effeminate nature of French in relation to British cultural norms of conversation and how these stereotypes have impacted the study of French in the UK. Furthermore, authors draw attention to the paradox where French studies attracts a majority of female students, while the number of females holding advanced degrees and research positions within higher education do not reflect this trend. In the other two chapters that make up the section, Gill Rye offers a summary of the Contemporary Women’s Writing in French seminar and research network and Emma Wilson invites us to discover the scholarship taking place on sexuality, normativity, and queer theory in literature, history, and cultural studies.

In the following section, scholars contemplate the place of literature within the French studies curriculum. Simon Gaunt and Nicholas Harrison discuss the dangers of constructing a program based on its supposed attractiveness to prospective students. With many programs facing falling enrollments, the drive to attract students can have negative repercussions on courses that do not have immediately perceived relevance in a market-driven economy where so much emphasis has been placed upon “real world” and transferable skills. In the following chapter, Alain Viala proposes increased study of theater, as well as offering a program centered on France’s many cultural and literary quarrels. Viala stresses that French Studies programs can no longer remain idle and must make use of their “strong points”

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rather than chasing “fashionable trends” (p. 128). Closing this section, William Burgwinkle echoes Holmes by stressing, “it is really up to us, the practitioners, to intervene, arbitrate and set the tone of the discussion” (p. 129). Although the authors in this section acknowledge their position at highly selective institutions, they equally stress that many of the issues that occupy contemporary society were relevant at many points throughout history, and that through literary analysis, students are able to acquire and refine analytical skills that they will be able to use in both their personal and professional lives.

In part five, scholars illuminate the status of French linguistics and translation studies today. Wendy Ayres-Bennett, Kate Beeching, Pierre Larrivée, and Florence Myles explore French linguistics research and teaching, demonstrating a strong tradition of research spanning the fields of historical linguistics, sociolinguistics, and pragmatics. Moreover, the field of second language acquisition has seen tremendous growth since the 1960s and 1970s. Jo Drugan and Andrew Rothwell discuss translation’s long tradition in the formation of the nation, national literature, and language learning. Moreover, translation is often viewed as a transferable skill that can make students stand out in a competitive job market, and the need for documented proficiency has given degree-granting programs a boost in popularity. Drugan and Rothwell close their chapter by surveying translation programs across the UK, noting that while there are many institutions offering translation modules and programs at the undergraduate level, the postgraduate level offers a greater number of specialization options since it is assumed that students have already mastered their language.

The following section turns to theater, cinema, and popular culture as productive avenues of inquiry as well as excellent texts to be examined in the classroom. Strangely, the title given to this section suggests that there should be a chapter on theater, although no such chapter exists. A chapter on theater is included in this volume, but it is located in the section devoted to literature discussed earlier. This omission aside, in the first of the two chapters that do make up the section, Phil Powrie and Keith Reader invite us to survey the study of French cinema in the UK. Here, through a personal account of the field, Keith Reader discusses the evolution of cinema studies in the UK, as well as the difficulties of finding source materials. In the second chapter, David Looseley engages in a discussion of the definition of “popular” within popular culture, as well as its central position within the field of cultural studies. He also takes care to address concerns that popular culture represents literature’s downfall, writing that as long as “it [the study of popular culture] retains the elements of textual analysis (including written sources) and historical three-dimensionality, as long as it is intellectually credible and challenging, I [Looseley] am convinced it can lead seamlessly into curiosity about other cultural outputs and value systems and eventually to a better understanding of them” (pp. 192-193). Indeed, it is in many of these later chapters of the volume that we find responses to earlier chapters’ claims that the study of texts and objects outside of literature will have devastating effects on French studies’ credibility and viability.

The seventh part of the book turns to area studies, postcolonial studies, and war and culture studies. In this section authors oblige us to shift our focus from the French nation-state and look beyond France’s borders. Emmanuel Godin and Tony Chafer explain the framework adopted by the University of Portsmouth’s language degree program that began in the 1970s. Instead of pursuing a more traditional language and literature program, students could engage in the study of “history, politics, economy, society and culture of the country, or countries, in question” (p. 197). Indeed, it is this placement of France within a network, rather than as the central focus, that binds the three chapters in this section together. David Murphy urges his readers to de-center their gaze and reconfigure what they understand as French studies. He also joins the call of many of the contributors to the volume that study outside of metropolitan literature does not represent the ruin of French programs. Instead, area, postcolonial, and war studies approach the study of France within the diverse network and often complicated relationships the French nation-state has with its European neighbors and its former colonies. Finishing this section, Nicola Cooper, Martin Hurcombe, and Debra Kelly explain the central position France and French studies have had in the development of war and culture studies.

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In the final part of the book, five chapters are devoted to online language education, language pedagogy, the use of technology in the language classroom, and the many contributions that innovative language teaching techniques and methodologies can bring to the language learner. Jim Coleman and Elodie Vialleton write about distance language learning and the pioneering programs at the Open University, which they believe serve as indicators of the direction language learning and higher education will take in the future. Dominique Borel discusses online and blended learning at King's College London and the challenges, as well as the successes these computer-mediated approaches can have. Turning to issues of employability, Maryse Bray, H el ene Gill, and Laurence Randall consider what they call the "employability imperative" that is paramount for universities, employers, and students alike (p. 263). M arie Fedelma Cross discusses the history and evolution of the Association for the Study of Modern and Contemporary France (ASMCF). In the closing chapter, Laurence Auer writes about the Culturetheque, a free online site dedicated to French culture and developed as a part of the one-hundredth anniversary of the Institut fran ais du Royaume-Uni.

After this overview of the contents of *French Studies in and for the Twenty-first Century*, it becomes clear quite quickly that the material at hand is very diverse. Indeed, one of the strong points of this book is that it covers a great deal of territory and speaks to many scholars working in French studies. As a fellow colleague on the other side of the Atlantic, many of the concerns raised throughout the book also ring frighteningly familiar in the United States. In that respect, this volume appeals to those working in French studies both in and outside the UK.

In the words of the editors, the goal of this work is "to offer a picture of French Studies today, an analysis—from the inside—of what the discipline has become and where it might and, indeed, must go in the future" (p. 2). Keeping these words in mind, this reader found that most chapters follow the same format, opening with an explanation of the field in question and following with exemplary scholarship as a way to demonstrate not only the continued importance, but also the innovative and pioneering work being done at universities in the UK. Some chapters offer suggestions on how to invigorate French programs by (re)introducing methodologies and/or texts for analysis, while others end with their review of the scholarship. In general, the beginning chapters of the book tend to focus on where French studies must go in the future in order to (re)affirm its position within higher education, while the later chapters survey the many disciplines that make up the field.

To close, Lane and Worton's volume is intended to stimulate discussion(s) on the place and role of French studies while also providing entry points into the field. As many of the contributors urge, it is now up to us to continue the discussion.

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