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THE RÔLE OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN THE TRAINING OF THE MODERN LAN- GUAGE TEACHER

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TO ATTEMPT to speak in specific terms of the part which the Graduate School should play in the training of the modern language teacher is well-nigh impossible because of the variety in the preparation of those who come to pursue graduate studies. For some, it is necessary to provide a systematic survey of literature; to others we must try to give some elementary notions of the way to read and to form judgments on their reading. But to all who come, whatever their undergraduate training, there are certain general things which the Graduate School can and should give. Of these the two most important are: a knowledge of the background and vision of their field of work.

By background I mean all of those studies which are essential to the modern language teacher if he is to be a successful interpreter of the language and literature which he professes. First of all, there is the linguistic background. If we would really illumine, if we hope even to understand our texts, we must know the ancestry of words. And so the student of the Germanic tongues must know Gothic and Old High German, and, to feel their affinity to our own speech, must study Anglo-Saxon; the student of the Romance languages must know Vulgar Latin, Old French, Old Spanish and Old Italian. With the phonological and morphological study will go the study of historical grammar, for the phrase, like the word, is only a stage in an eternal process.

The second element in the background is the study of civilization. Literature springs from society; language is the voice of society. And so we must understand the social movements of the

peoples whose language and literature we teach; their history,—political, institutional, economic and social,—their arts,—architecture, sculpture, painting and music,—their religion.

Finally, there is a phase of background which sometimes seems to me the most important of all; that is, bibliography. No institution can hope to teach its students all the facts in any field. But it can and should provide them with the tools with which to get at the facts they may need. In particular, the Graduate School must make it its business to provide the prospective teacher with a knowledge of the bibliographical material, both general and special, to which he may turn for information concerning any one of the countless matters which turn up in his teaching routine that demand a detailed knowledge.

The second task of the Graduate School, the unfolding of a vision of the field of work, is more difficult to characterize, for it is a matter which depends more upon the spirit than on the content, more upon the personality of the instructor than upon his professed purpose.

One thing, I am sure, is characteristic of all graduate work, the realization that education is not a chore but a never-ending growth. Now that realization is of especial importance for a teacher, for the whole tendency of Americans now-a-days, both in school and college, is to look upon education as a sort of penal servitude, for a longer or shorter term, to be put up with in as cheerful a mood as possible, and then forever forgotten. Perhaps this is too doleful a picture, but you will agree with me that it is a diploma or a degree to which our students are looking, not to training; that they think in terms of hours and credits, with hardly a suspicion of the great adventure of learning.

That great adventure, that love of learning for its own sake, that sense of deep humility which comes with the determination to push on to the end in the quest of truth, is the finest gift which the Graduate School has to offer. It is the vital force which insures all human progress. And when every teacher in our schools and colleges has caught something of its power, we shall begin to produce educated men and women. For the teacher who has ceased to grow is deteriorating. Knowledge without the impulse of growth will wither like a plant cut off from water. If we expect our students to enter upon the task of learning with

joyous enthusiasm, we must ourselves set them an example by our devotion to the practice which we would inculcate.

There are visions of a more restricted range which the graduate student should derive from his work. Most college students have read a certain number of masterpieces in the literature which they are studying, they may remember the names and dates of some authors or works. But very few of them have acquired any sense of relationships. That is one of the major tasks of the Graduate School, to give to its students a vision of literary movements. There are several points of view from which to approach the study. We may divide literature chronologically, studying all the works produced within a given period, striving to find in them the common manifestation of an age. We may choose special types, like the drama, the pastoral, or the lyric, and follow them down through the centuries in the effort to discover how each of these forms aims to give expression to certain emotions or conditions. Finally we may even venture to visualize a whole literature and to estimate the qualities of the nation which produced it.

Our study of relationships must not end there. For literature is only one of many revelations of national character. We must, then, try to see how intimately it reflects the social conditions of its time, how closely it parallels the expression given by the other arts. If we would understand the Renaissance in Italy, it is not enough to read its chivalrous romances, its comedies, its lyrics, its tales. We must recreate their background by a study of the histories of the time; we must look at its buildings, statues, and portraits; we must even delve into its woodcuts, its jewelry, its furniture. So may we hope to create a variegated vision.

That brings me to another sort of relationship which we cannot afford to disregard: the ties which bind one literature to another. It would be idle to study the Renaissance in France or in Spain without a knowledge of the Renaissance in Italy. And as the years go by and communications between peoples grow more constant and more intimate, the interdependence of all European literatures becomes increasingly apparent. I am aware of the danger in the comparative study of literature; in the desire to embrace all things in our vision, we tend to see only a few monumental works, we lapse into facile generalizations. But in spite of the danger, such a method of study is the surest approach to what

I take to be the chief purpose in the study of literature, the interpretation of life.

We teachers of modern languages are, I hope, enthusiasts about the peoples and the civilizations which we are expounding. But we are not propagandists; we are not trying to prove that the French or the Germans or any other people are superior to the rest of the world. All that we are aiming to do is to impress upon our students that beyond the sea there are other nations which for well-nigh a thousand years have been facing life as we face it. In temperament and in mood, just as in institutions and customs, they differ widely from us. And yet in all the fundamental qualities of the human spirit they are like us, and in their literature, as in their institutions, we find that there are certain abiding values which do not depend upon race and speech but are universally human.

Perhaps you have wondered why I have not spoken of the importance of the "dissertation" in graduate work. To be frank, I cannot see that the compilation of such a work has a great influence upon the life of the student who is looking forward to teaching. In fact, writing a doctor's thesis does not even make a scholar. It is a part, and a desirable part, of the machinery, intended to test the student's ability to gather, co-ordinate, and present a given body of material. But it is insignificant in comparison with the more intangible values of which I have been speaking.

No Graduate School that I know of offers formal instruction in all the fields that I have discussed. But that is the fine thing about a Graduate School. You learn there the art of self-instruction. Whether from the inspiration of your instructors or from the sharpening contact with other minds in your own field of work, you sally forth into untrodden fields, you follow promising by-paths, you enrich your spirit with independence. But you will remember that I began with an insistence upon a sound background of knowledge. It is the combination of these two things which the Graduate School has to offer you and which will make your teaching a force and an inspiration.

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