

B O S T O N U N I V E R S I T Y

G R A D U A T E S C H O O L

Thesis

PHASES of the WORK of MAURICE BARRES

Submitted by

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Analysis of story

"Régionalism"--new doctrine. Importance.

Thesis of book--author's solution

Comments & Criticisms

c. Regional Problems: "Les Bastions de L'Est"

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"Les Amitiés Françaises")

Colette Baudoché (1909) (Lorraine) best example

Analysis of story

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d. Other Writings

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"Un Jardin sur l'Oronte" (1922)

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V. PERSONAL COMMENTS

VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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by Barrès--

Colette Baudoche

Les Déracinés

Un Jardin Sur L'Oronte

La Grande Pitié des Eglises de France

Les Diverses Familles Spirituelles de la France

The Faith of France

The Undying Faith of France

Colette Baudoche--arr. by Pierre Frondaie Pour "La
Petite Illustration Théâtrale." (Paris--1920)

Also

Selections from some of the author's other works.

Maurice Barrès

Maurice Barrès is a man of such varied interest that he might well be studied from more than one point of view. I shall concentrate my attention, however, particularly on that side of his character shown in his activities as a writer, with a brief glance at those as a politician and patriot.

Maurice Barrès was born September 22, 18⁶⁸26, at Charmes-sur-Moselle in the Vosges Mountains. On his mother's side he belonged to one of the oldest families of Lorraine. His father's family was of Auvergnat origin. From 1550 the Barrès name is to be found in the registers of Blesle (Haute-Loire). For generations, father and son, the Barrès' were royal notaries. Barrès' enemies have found pleasure in calling him a Portuguese Jew. The Portuguese ending of the name, together with the writer's profile, seem to be the most important factors in this attempt at genealogy, together with the desire to wound a national writer. The Barrès family takes its name from the little commune of Mur-de-Barrez, and for those who are interested in the quest of atavism and eugenics, it is as well to add here that the country of Auvergne is old Celtic territory, which, like so many regions in the south of France, bears the mark of Saracen infiltration. Many are the villages in this region where the people are an Arab type. Partisans of race theory may explain in this way the mystical philosophy of Barrès, for it was the Arab Philosophers of the Middle Ages who analyzed with such wonderful precision the mysterious communion of the soul with God.

The novelist's great-grandfather, "officier de santé et conseiller-général" of Haute-Loire, published in 1801 a topographical description of the canton of Blesle. He had three sons. The youngest of these, Jean-Baptiste Auguste, who was born in 1784, enrolled in the "corps de vélites" which Bonaparte created in 1804. Travelling in the east of France, he married at Charmes-sur-Moselle Mademoiselle Barlier, whose father and

grandfather had been members of the council of that district. Of this marriage was born Auguste Barrès, who after taking his degree as civil engineer in the Ecole Centrale, and after two years of travel, returned to settle at Charmes, where he married Mademoiselle Luxer, who was of pure Lorraine stock. These were the parents of Maurice Barrès.

The boy Maurice was brought up in Lorraine while that province was undergoing its painful Germanization. His grandfather, a captain in light infantry of the Guard, was one of the "Grogards" of Napoleon I. During the Franco-Prussian War the old soldier was taken as a hostage by the invaders and died of maltreatment in some unknown corner of that desolated province. The scenes of slaughter and devastation of which the child was a terrified eye-witness at the time made an indelible impression on his mind. Brought up in a region ruined by crushing defeat, he grew up in an atmosphere of sadness. The strife of the two races made a strong imprint on the sensibility of young Barrès. The effect which this had on his writings we shall see later.

Barrès first studied at Malgrange Collège in the suburbs of Nancy, and later in the lycée of the same town. A frail and over-sensitive child, he suffered from the roughness of his schoolmates, and his independent and inquisitive mind found no consolation in the formal teaching of his masters. His family wished him to become a magistrate. In 1880 he began to study law, but Flaubert, Montesquieu, d'Aubigné and other thinkers attracted him a great deal more than the civil or penal code.

His earliest writings had been in the form of regular contributions to "La Jeune France." Allenet, the editor, showed some of the young man's manuscripts to Anatole France and Leconte de Lisle, who advised him to come to Paris. In 1882 at the age of twenty, he left his Lorraine for Paris. His articles not being always accepted, as he thought they should have been, in 1884 he began to publish a review of his own, "Les Taches d'Encre", which lasted but little more than a year, but helped him to gain admission to the leading dailies and periodicals.

In 1886, in collaboration with Charles le Goffic, he started another review "Les Chroniques", which was also short-lived.

At this point he turned to another field of literary expression--- the "Cult of the Ego", or the cult of self, the philosophy with which his first fame was associated. The trilogy published under the general title "Le Culte du Moi," includes "Sous L'Oeil des Barbares" (1888), which describes a young man's struggle for self-assertion against the Philistines; "Un Jeune Homme Libre" (1889), which also develops a theory of egotistical gymnastics; and "Le Jardin de Bérénice" (1891), less obscurely written, repeats a similar theme, with somewhat more regard for the outer world. At this stage Barrès believed that humanity could become "a beautiful forest" only through the intense cultivation of each individual tree; therefore "let us keep our egos in a state of ardent and extreme exaltation." Dilettantism and affectation are conspicuous in these works, which owe most to the influence of Renan, of whom I shall speak later.

To analyze these works is no easy task; there is no plot, there are few incidents, and although the connection between the various parts is, on the whole, logical, the thread is difficult to follow. They are really a series of essays on the philosophical doctrine of the author and on his interpretation of life; he called them "metaphysical novels." They are certainly metaphysical enough, and just as certainly not novels. To modern critics these early works were obscure, uneven and decadent, interspersed with sporadic criticism. An interesting sidelight is the influence of these books on the remarkable "Confessions of a Young Man" by George Moore. The psychological adventures and experiments of the hero in "Le Jeune Homme Libre" are continued through the other two books. In "Le Jardin," Barrès develops his ideas not only in Lorraine but in Italy and Germany. The author was himself enlarging his mind in accordance with his theories by contact with life.

4.

Against this first theory of egotism and ^{its} master, (Renan), Barrès presently turned violently, became an apostle of action, and wrote another trilogy or cycle called "Le Roman de l'Energie Nationale;" which is composed of three novels, or rather three volumes, the first, "Les Déracinés," being the only one which could accurately be called a novel. It is of special interest because of its presentation of the new doctrine of "regionalism". The "déracinés" are seven young Lorrainers of different temperaments and stations in life but brought up under the same influences. Having studied the system of Kant with Professor Bouteiller, (whose characteristics are strangely similar to those of the late professor and politician Burdeau), they have retained as a result of his teaching only the power of destructive criticism. Bouteiller is the type of educator who has political ambitions and attempts to apply to public life the dry theories of the classroom. The man who plays this influential role is taken from the author's own life. Barrès himself studied under such a professor of philosophy at the lycée of Nancy, and speaks of the Philosophy class, "où son adolescence s'enivra d'une poésie qui ressemblait à de l'épouvante." But this professor is only a representative man of the élite of the philosophy professors in the University of France before the coming of Bergson, men who made their students "swallow a German pill by putting it under the name of those magic words, 'Categorical Imperative.'" In their pride of believing a moral law applicable to all men at all times and in all places, they ignored the point that conscience is a strictly human fact; and Barrès declared in "Les Déracinés," "Il y a dans cette règle morale un élément de grand orgueil, car elle équivaut à dire que l'on peut connaître la règle applicable à tous les hommes--et puis encore un germe d'intolérance fanatique--car concevoir une règle commune à tous les hommes, c'est d'être fort tenté de les y asservir pour leur bien:- enfin il y a une méconnaissance totale des droits de l'individu, de tout ce que la vie comporte de varié, de peu analogue, de spontané dans mille directions diverses."

The episodes in the story are too numerous to be related in detail; suffice it to say that the seven pupils of the lycée, thus déraciné from their native soil, go to Paris to seek their several fortunes. Severed from all former connections, they fall an easy prey to circumstances and their own passions. The book has an extremely diversified and keen psychology, and deep moral and social meaning. Its lesson is that of faithfulness to one's native soil.

The solution of the problem offered by Barrès is that we should strike deeper root into our native soil. This doctrine of regionalism is a "ruse de guerre". The author takes our instinctive selfishness and converts it into patriotism, for in order to achieve his end he has recourse to another potent feeling, our desire to endure forever among our fellow-men,--to perpetuate ourselves in our species. "Let us return to the place where we were born and where our dead lie buried, for there we shall find the truth which shall comfort us." Feeling then, that all things but race shall fade and pass away, above all obedient to that great contemporary French movement, that much more than socialistic social growth of France, seeking by every means in his power to restore that equilibrium of mind lost in 1789, Barrès is far from wishing to impose immobility on the world. The aim of his nationalism is to respect the divergences of men, and to organize the social relations between his own personality and the personality of others. "His nationalism is the true intuitiveness of the poet in whom lies fermenting the living intellect of a whole race." When, as a kind of explanation of his so-called conversion, he says, "Penser solitairement, c'est s'acheminer à penser solidairement," the saying, for all its neatness, may be taken literally.

The two later volumes, "L'Appel au Soldat," and "Leurs Figures," are dramatized history. They relate respectively to the Boulanger affair and the Panama Scandal. They are eloquent arraignments of parliamentary institutions. At this point Barrès seems to have definitely renounced his egotism theory. In his view, if a race wants to survive, it must

above all consider itself as the heir of the dead buried in its soil and must cherish all the customs accumulated through centuries. Every man who wants to reach his highest development must remain attached to his "petite patrie", his province, the land of his ancestors. Such a theory is of limited interest to Americans, but it must not be forgotten that the doctrine of regionalism developed in this most typical and perhaps the best of Barrès' books has had considerable influence on French politics and literature.

We have traced Barrès' development from egotism, through regionalism, and we shall see it widen into nationalism and ultimately to a view of civilization as a whole. His next group of writings, a trilogy called "Les Bastions de L'Est", pleads for the defense of the Eastern bastions, like Metz, because France is the chief representative of modern continental civilization. The Alsatian problem as it presented itself before the Great War is considered in "Au Service de l'Allemagne" from the point of view of the young man compelled to serve in the armies of the conqueror; and in "Colette Baudouche", from that of the young girl of Lorraine who has remained the faithful guardian of the home of her ancestors. She makes the acquaintance of a young German, and is attracted by certain sides of his nature and at the same time repelled by others. Although the book at first appears to be merely a novel with a love plot, it is really a comparison between French and German culture, an explanation of the deep-seated causes of a century-old antagonism. Barrès makes us feel a sense of sympathy and rapport for the "vieux type français" through his friendly bits of description of the ancient buildings, and the quiet country scenes of his beloved region of Metz. The deep-seated pride of the "Messins" for their own civilization, nurtured among their hostile surroundings, shows the unquenchable strength of mind and heart that is characteristic of the French people in any environment. "Les édifices civils gardent encore la marque des ingénieurs de notre armée; c'est partout droiture et simplicité, netteté des frontons sculptés, aspect rectil-

ligne de l'ensemble. D'un bord à l'autre de la Place Royale, le palais de justice s'accorde fraternellement avec la caserne du génie; les maisons bourgeoises elles-mêmes se rangent à l'alignement, et sous les arcades de la place Saint-Louis, on croit sentir une discipline. Cet esprit s'étend sur la douce vallée mosellane. Depuis l'esplanade on devine sous un ciel nuageux douze villages vigneron, baignés ou mirés dans la Moselle, et qui nous caressent, comme elle, par la douceur mouillée de leurs noms: Scy, qui donne le premier de nos vins; Woippy, le pays des fraises; Lorry, que ses mirabelles enrichissent; tous chargés d'arbres à fruits qui semblent les abriter et les aimer. Mais les collines où ils s'étagent ont leurs têtes aplanies; c'est qu'elles sont devenues les forts de Plappeville, de Saint-Quentin, de Saint-Blaise et de Sommy.

Les Messins d'avant la guerre, tous soldats ou parents de soldats, vivaient en rapports journaliers avec la région agricole. Les rentiers y avaient leurs fermes, les^{ur} marchands, leurs acheteurs et la plus modeste famille rêvait d'une maison de campagne, ou, chaque automne, on irait surveiller la vendange.

Tout cela composait une atmosphère très propre à la conservation du vieux type français. Qui n'a pas connu, médite cette ville, ignore peut-être la valeur d'une civilisation formée dans les moeurs de l'agriculture et de la guerre. Les Lorrains émigrés ne regrettent pas simplement des paysages, des habitudes, une société dispersée; ils croient avoir laissé derrière eux quelque chose de leur santé morale."

We now come to three books of widely differing character, showing the versatility of Barrès' pen. "L'Ennemi des Lois" show three different and opposed currents in his thoughts: (1) egotism and esthetic sensibility; (2) moral sensibility, love for his fellow-men, and a kind of tender anarchism; (3) political activity and Nationalism. As an egotist, he first pursued and investigated every new thought and idea, but realized that this dispersion of energy was wasteful and dangerous. He concludes that what his heart tells him should be his guide, so the egotist

retires within himself and searches for the spring of these unconscious feelings, which is for Barrès French and particularly Lorraine tradition. In dealing with the question of Death, Barrès having discarded his Christian faith, falls back on tradition again as his ultimate resource. He is one of the comparatively few thinkers who have rejected the ideas impressed on them by society, family and teachers, and set out to build for themselves the very foundations. He has reverted to tradition from his previous belief in egotism. The conversion (evolution would be a more nearly correct term) of Barrès is a frequent topic of debate among French intellectuals. "La Grande Pitié des Eglises de France" is one of the most peculiar of the many peculiar books written by Barrès. After the separation of Church and State in France, confessional associations had been charged with the upkeep of religious edifices; the Catholic Church having rejected the principle of these associations as contrary to canonical rules, there was practically no one responsible for its ecclesiastical buildings; this state of affairs permitted the desecration of some monuments and the destruction of others. Although an agnostic, Barrès is a poet and an artist, and as such could not remain indifferent. The following selection from one of his Chamber speeches on the subject was selected for the magnificence and classical beauty of style.

"This beautiful steeple, which is the most ancient and the most striking expression of divinity in our race; that darkened nave, in which one realises a consciousness of a long previous life as well as of an eternal life; this table of stone, on which rest the great principles which are the moral life of our history--nothing of this persuades you, nothing keeps you from ruining this house, which through its door, wide open at every hour of the day, creates in the middle of the village a communication with divinity and mixes it with our daily lives....

"There are not in this land of France two churches which are in every way alike, any more than there are two leaves which are

identical in a vast forest. Romanesque churches, Gothic churches, churches of the French Renaissance, churches in the barroque style --all bear a magnificent testimony, the most powerful, the broadest of testimony in favour of French genius....They are the song of our land, the voice of the soil on which they rest, the voice of the time when they were built, the voice of the people who willed them."

Henri Massis in his "Jugements" says à propos of Barrès' attitude toward this question of religion, "Croyant, il abandonnerait sa foi aux suggestions incertaines du coeur et de l'imagination. Incroyant, s'il aime tant les hymnes de l'Eglise, c'est qu'à ses yeux elles n'ont rien de dialectique et il s'abandonne à leur volupté. Mais, au reste, les images, les symboles de la foi ne lui sont que prétexte à faire saillir la poésie de la vie humaine: et de toutes ces pages monte le même motif- qui est celui du dilettantisme supreme et dont on trouve chez Renan la formule: 'Les dogmes catholiques nous blessent, mais leurs vieilles églises nous enchantent.' Voilà sa conviction profonde."

Another very different type of novel but one which also involves the question of religion is "Un Jardin Sur l'Oronte," in which poetic fancy is the chief element. It takes the reader into the times of the Crusades of Christian knights to the Orient with its visions of fairyland. For sheer voluptuousness and beauty of description this story is unrivalled. It has aroused considerable discussion as to the advisability of indulgence in such romantic story-telling; but these discussions have left undisputed the beauty of style of the author, more than once the name of Chateaubriand has been recalled, and the latter's exquisite pictures in "Le Dernier des Abencerages." "Un Jardin" has also been the center of controversy by the Catholic church, which of course resents the theme of it.

In "Un Débat Sur l'Art et Le Catholicisme", à propos of this book Henri Massis says that the question is one of art versus Catholicisme. " 'Comment,' demanda Barrès lui-même, 'la critique catholique conçoit-elle le rôle de l'artiste?' Je n'entends pas prendre part a ce débat, si ce

n'est pour essayer de mettre quelque discernement dans les principes que chacun a invoqués pour défendre son point de vue. Et, dès l'abord, que voit Barrès au fond de la querelle qu'on lui cherche? Si je vous comprends bien', dit-il, 'vous voulez réintégrer la morale dans l'art, dans la littérature, dans le roman et diminuer, repousser, marquer les écrivains qui la contredisent en s'en écartant.' Ainsi Barrès semble reprendre, pour son compte, la fameuse antinomie de l'art et de la morale, et précisément à propos du catholicisme qui seul 'concilie sans leur faire subir diminution ni violence les droits souverains de la moralité et les revendications absolues de l'intellectualité, qu'il s'agisse de la science ou de l'art.' Pour Barrès comme pour beaucoup d'écrivains d'aujourd'hui, en effet catholique signifie moraliste et rien d'autre; et ce qu'il reproche à la doctrine catholique, c'est de porter atteinte à la gratuité de l'art, alors qu'ordonnant toute notre vie à la vérité même, elle réalise d'incomparable façon l'unité supérieure du moral et de l'intellectuel. Pour le philosophe catholique--comme pour le pur artiste--l'art en tant que tel, est gratuit et désintéressé; c'est-à-dire que, dans la production même de l'oeuvre, la vertu d'art ne vise qu'une chose: le bien de l'oeuvre à faire, la beauté à faire resplendir dans la matière, la chose à créer selon les lois propres, indépendamment de tout le reste.....C'est bien, en effet, les intérêts de la vérité qui sont engagés dans le débat que Barrès vient d'ouvrir: ceux de la morale ne viennent qu'ensuite. Il ne s'agit pas de condamner l'art, mais de le maintenir dans la dépendance de la vérité qui seule a des droits sur lui en ce qu'elle vise une fin plus haute: le bien supérieur de l'homme."

We now come to an important phase of Barrès' work--his contributions to the literature of the Great War. During this time he undertook to maintain the morale of the people at the rear, and nearly every day published an article in "L'Echo de Paris." These articles, gathered in book form, make some ten volumes of rather unequal worth, but representing a most moving history of the great conflict. Many of the articles were published under

the collective title, "L'Ame Française et la Guerre." Others were published in the Atlantic Monthly (July, 1917) and still others in the two books, "The Undying Spirit of France" (English translation), and "Les Diverses Familles Spirituelles de la France." The latter deserves special mention. The spiritual element was the dominating force in the World War, and Barrès attempted to prove it by making use of correspondence and documents of every sort which were put at his disposal. This book has in it the precious life-blood of many fearless and devoted spirits, brave boys and steadfast men of France, who offered themselves in valiant sacrifice. Whence does Barrès get these letters "d'outre tombe"? He answers this question himself when he speaks of the "millions of sublime letters, which for the past two years have furnished France her food--these innumerable letters, perhaps a million a day." They come from Roman Catholics, Protestants, Traditionalists, Jews, Socialists, and they all give the same impression, that these men, whatever their creeds, fought for the same ideals. This book is really not that of Barrès--a whole generation has written it. The glorious artist, member of the French Academy, the great egotist in literature, considered it an honor to act as the respectful interpreter of these unknown heroes. He is continuing the same message in this book which he gave to the public through his articles, but this is the highest expression of the message, more beautiful and pathetic because it is voiced by men who died for their country conscious of their sacrifice and having a keen insight into their own state of mind.

Each political or religious party in the country had a special reason for being heroic even if there was a common sense of ultimate aims; and Barrès has glorified with the same emotion the sacrifices of each of these factions who had united in the one cause. A Roman Catholic thinks of another reward and of another purpose than a Protestant when both offer their lives for their beloved country; a Jew is animated by other ideals than a Traditionalist when the hour comes for "going over the top" with

the same spirit of abnegation. The solid spire towering on the solid basis of well-defined groups witnessing the same faith, Barrès' book brings to a beautiful and harmonious culmination the different kinds of ideals embodied in the "spiritual families". Luminous conviction in the Roman Catholics that supernatural reward will crown sacrifice, moral exaltation of Protestant minds, devotion of the Traditionalists to the enduring spirit of the generations,--these forces are not surprising in the individuals animated by them.

The prominent place which has been accorded Barrès among the French writers of the Great War is due not only to his wonderful talent as an artist in prose but mostly to the impassioned emphasis he laid unweariedly since August, 1914, upon two ideas:--the growing evidence that the world-crisis was a conflict of spiritual forces even more than of material and economic interests; and the necessity of the "union sacrée" for France. "L'union sacrée" has been Barrès' daily watchword for a truce of political differences during the war. Because he was a permanent advocate of preparedness against German insatiability, a son of those eastern provinces where patriotism is not only a sentiment but an every day necessity, a believer in moral values which, stronger than political denominations represent the true soul of a nation--Barrès might have been justified to minimize in his writings some misleaders of opinion, who had, before the crisis and in spite of threatening signs, lulled the country to sleep under the easy assumption of universal peace and German good will. As soon, however, as the war broke out, he at once silenced every religious and political disagreement; and paying an equal tribute of admiration and respect to all defenders of France, served by his articles in the "Echo de Paris" as a most efficient link between the spirit of the fighting line and the interior of the country.

France is multiform; France is too articulate to be represented even in war, by a single creed; what a former writer once called the divine versatility of France has left too many tendencies in her people for a monoto-

nous unanimity of sentiment. And yet, unanimous she feels and she fights in the face of a common danger. She is showing the value and vigor of her civilization by the spirit in which she defends it; allthreads of the remotest or of the nearest past are woven into an intimate human fabric of a marvelous and enduring tenacity, in spite of the difference of the woof and warp in color and quality. Such has been Barrès' point of view throughout the three years of the continued suffering, deferred hopes and magnificent fighting which France has undergone with an unbroken courage.

Some critics, considering Barrès as a patriot and politician pronounce him the "Roosevelt of France". There are indeed marks of resemblance between these two exceptional men in their character, ideals, books and activities. Barrès' excessive patriotism is Rooseveltian in many respects, and the former, like Roosevelt, was an ardent disciple of the doctrine of the "Strenuous Life". In the preface to "L'Ennemi des Lois" we read, "It is not systems which we lack but energy--the energy to conform our habits to one way of thinking." Such a man was sure to make his mark eventually in the political world although he entered it incidentally, as a side-issue of his literary career. It was in 1888, to put into practice his theories of "L'Homme Libre" and to acquire data for "Le Jardin de Bérénice" that he entered the political arena. In 1889 he was elected Deputy for Nancy after a savage fight in which on one occasion at Champenoux he was seriously wounded, his carriage broken to splinters and set on fire by the mob. He was then so youthful in appearance that people frequently thought he was campaigning for his father and were dismayed to find that he himself was the candidate. He had joined the party of General Boulanger; that a man so clever as Barrès chose such an indifferent leader may cause surprise. The explanation lies in the fact that he was a Lorrainer; he had never give up the hope of seeing his native province restored to its former allegiance Boulanger embodied for him the spirit of Revenge. Beaten in 1893, Barrès did not abandon his political activities; he kept on fostering by all means in his power the ideas of nationalism and regionalism developed in the novel

of this period. Elected deputy for Paris in 1906, he has since always been re-elected. In political circles he enjoyed a great deal more influence than could be inferred from his opinions; this is due to his prestige as a writer and a thinker, to a proverbial coolness under fire, and a dangerous gift for biting repartee. His speeches at the Chambre des Députés and in political meetings gained for him a well deserved reputation as a debator, and after the death of count de Mun, he was with perhaps one exception the greatest literary orator in Parliament.

The most interesting aspect of the study of Barrès is that of analyzing his style. Beginning his literary career as an extreme devotee of "art for art's sake", he was as an artist first a Romantic; but his Romanticism was purified from all its inferior characteristics, excessive imagery, doubtful grammar and inaccurate language. From his first complexity and obscurity he developed a passion for simplicity, whether in character, plot or ideas. He is now a classic "by the preponderance of the inner life, concentration of thought, clearness of expression and impeccable syntax." He has contributed more than anyone else to the reversion to traditional forms of style, and at the same time he has assimilated all that there was of real worth in impressionism. This tendency to classicism is more and more noticeable in his work; he himself said in "The Voyage de Sparte", "I was mistaken in my manner of interpreting what I admired; I was striving for a certain effect and turned things about until I had obtained it. Now I meet life in a more familiar way; I wish to see it with eyes as simple as the eyes of the ancient Greeks." Formerly the most subjective of artists, he tends now to an ever-increasing objectivity. Not only does Barrès carry on the sentiments of youth, a child's sense of wonder, a feminine desire for novelty, into the realm of manhood, but his voluptuousness is so physical, his power of thinking so great, that he far surpasses Rousseau and the Romantic artists on this point.

It will be a long time before enough is said about the influence of German philosophy on nineteenth-century France. Barrès, in undergoing

this influence, is only following such illustrious predecessors as Mme. de Staël, Victor Cousin, Michelet, Pierre Leroux, Proudhon, Taine, Renan and others. This German influence on Barrès is in reality merely the influence of Rousseau in another form. His writings on criticism, travel or philosophy are really an interpretation of German metaphysics, and that is why the English writers he most recalls are Disraeli, Coleridge and Carlyle. When we consider the young Barrès, we say that the most important thing about him, besides his childhood in Lorraine, is his German culture. All his early books are either the sensual application of the doctrines of Kant or Fichte, of Hegel's notion of "universal becoming" and his idea of the "identity of contraries", or else the outcome of a most ardent patriotism. And for a long time this patriotism drew its weapons from Germany. Barrès is deeply imbued with German philosophy. His milieu is Kant-laden, Hegel-laden as well as Marx-laden. His life might be summed up as a contest between the romantic inspirations of a student of things German, and the patriotic instinct of a Lorrain who had suffered from the Franco-German war. And as the influence of Germany may be called "Romanticism" and that of France "Classicism", it is obvious that the contest has a very wide bearing and is the battle between two civilizations--two geniuses.

Other influences have combined to make Barrès what he was in the field of literature. His mind was covered with scraps from Michelet, Savit, Beuve, Boudelaire, Stendhal and Renan, besides those from German philosophers and the foreign scenes with which he was familiar, and through the very comprehension of so many different souls, he felt all the more strongly the bonds holding him to his own country. To Barrès all exceptional men were heroes, and this hero-worship is a prominent factor in all his writings. He was very catholic in his choice of them, numbering in his early books those as varied as Napoleon, Renan and Taine. Later on Boulanger and Déroulède became his chief worthies. We have seen that he deserted his first great master, Renan, to become a disciple of regionalism. He next came under the influence of Bergson, the protagonist of the

worth of intuition as against instinct. Barrès thinks with Bergson, that we are determined by our ancestors--they are the well-springs of that sub-consciousness upon which we must always draw if we are to live in beauty. So ardent a follower of Bergson did he become that he is cited in G. Turquet-Milnes' "A Study in Bergsonism" as one of Bergson's converts and a lengthy chapter is devoted to an explanation of how Barrès carries out Bergson's philosophy in his writings. It cannot be doubted that Barrès' "conversion" or evolution of thought was due to his belief in the philosophy of Bergson. The story of Barrès is the history of countless other young writers who began with subjective idealism and individualism and ended in collectivism or nationalism. That is why the evolution of his books has such significance for us.

As a writer Barrès stands unquestionably in the front rank of modern French authors. His ability for marshalling facts is unexcelled, while his style of expression has seldom been equalled. At times his ideas may not coincide with ours, but we can never fail to recognize the skill and charm with which they are presented. Indeed, his gifts of style have been considered remarkable by the best critics of France. Charles Maurras spoke of the "music of Barrès' prose", Henri Brémont devoted a section in his preface to "Vingt-cinq Années de Vie Littéraire" to Barrès' rhythm; and Anatole France says, "His language is supple and at the same time precise; it has wonderful resources." It has been pointed out that Barrès' early books are written in an elaborate style and are often obscure. As he advanced in life and experience, however, his style became less involved and the obscurity disappeared completely. Without depreciating the value of his service or of his message, it should be said that many people find the literary temperament of Maurice Barrès perverse, dogmatic, unduly critical and over-bearing. But his style has marked qualities of subtlety and eloquence; he has a gift for description and much ironic power.

Most of all we see in Barrès a man whose genius masks a multitude of men,--the mass of all those Lorrains who for centuries past have defended

their possessions against every invasion. His greatness, his humor, are the greatness, the humor of all those fine men his ancestors, who were individualists too in the best sense, since it was their business to hand down intact to their descendants the land which they ploughed and shielded from the barbarians. At this point I can do no better than to quote the varied and enlightening comments of a few of Barrès' critics, as I culled them from my reading:

G. Turquet-Milnes says in his "A Study of Bergsonism",

"A personality as complex as Maurice Barrès' is well calculated to attract and defy criticism, for he unites in the highest degree the faculty of contemplation with the talent for action, combining the idealist and the practical man, the mystic and the realist;--being at the same time President of the League of Patriots and a great parliamentary figure. Maurice Barrès' success is therefore, all the more interesting in that his soaring imagination, his avidity for ideas have never been checked by the materialism of a changeable Parisian world;" and further, "Nature had endowed him with a peculiar modesty always on stilts, and with a hero-worshipping faculty begun perhaps too often at home; and in addition she gave him the same gift that she gave his fellow-countryman, Callot, that of seeing things at once in their true and their grotesque lights. These gifts together with his unslumbering curiosity, his unerring instinct for unmasking a countenance and his youthful superciliousness led him to adopt that ironical pose which is so entertaining both for himself and for his reader". One of Barrès' own country-men, René Jacquet, thus defends his "master" against contemporary critics:

"On a dit que Barrès est un poète de la mort. Comme c'est faux! Il n'aime que les harmonies de couleurs violentes, les contrastes énergiques. Avez-vous remarqué que dans ses livres il ne descend jamais à s'attendrir sur les nuances pâlistantes, la splendeur atténuée des crepuscules ou les lointaines collines dont le bleu meurt parmi le lointain? Mais connue

il dit bien les après-midis inondés de soleil, la puissance des cieux occidentaux, la silhouette aux arêtes énergiques des Tolède que les ombres en opposition dans les murs blancs dessinent sur la montagne comme une vigoureuse eau-forte!

Est-ce que ne voilà pas jusqu'à l'hyperbole des témoignages de vie? Ne sont-ils pas plus près de la mort ceux qui lavent à grande eau leurs paysages pour en atténuer les teintes--et qui mettent leur amour dans les nuances qui s'éteignent?" Another French critic, René Gillouin, speaks in the most glowing terms, though we may not agree to his giving Barrès the highest place in modern French literature:

"Il a agi, il a travaillé. Il a sauvé les lettres françaises des basses décadences. Depuis plus de trente années, il est à la tête de la littérature de son temps, et de lui, comme de Chateaubriand, on peut dire: "Presque tout ce qui s'est tenté d'un peu grand dans le champ de l'imagination procède de lui, de la veine littéraire qu'il a ouverte, de la source d'inspiration qu'il a remise en honneur; ce qu'on a applaudi de plus harmonieux et de plus brillant est apparu comme pour tenir ses promesses et vérifier ses augures. Il a enrichi notre langue en fixant ce qu'il y avait de plus durable dans le romantisme et le symbolisme; il a eu d'innombrables disciples, et il est à la source de toutes les oeuvres vivantes. Plus encore, il a restauré le patriotisme chez les intellectuels; il a défini, en le nommant, le nationalisme français. Il n'est point de grandes causes qu'il n'ait servies et ennoblies; il a donné à son époque le désir de la grandeur, en la ramenant aux sentiments où elle s'alimente. Artiste, ses prestiges ne sauraient subir de diminution; et sans doute est-ce ainsi qu'il veut surtout qu'on le juge, sur cette part inaliénable où se marque le génie, bien plus que sur des idées qu'il n'a jamais élues pour elles-mêmes, mais rien que pour l'élan que son ame y goutait."

Again I quote from Jacquet, whose comments are most enlightening, and who gives Barrès a chance here to defend himself:

Pourquoi Tout le Monde ne Comprend Pas.

Ceux qui ont décerné à Barrès l'épithète--qu'ils voulaient injurieuse-- de décadent, sont ceux qui furent incapables de le comprendre, car par decadent ils entendent généralement inintelligible.

En analysant une page de Barrès on remarque la raison de la prétendue obscurité de ses écrits. Chaque phrase renferme une idée, mais d'une phrase à la suivante le raisonnement a fait un tel progrès qu'entre les deux plus-ieurs autres seraient souvent nécessaires. Il ne fait que poser des jalons; au lecteur de les relier! Ces sauts imprévus rendent naturellement la lecture difficile.

M. Bywanck dans son curieux volume "Un Hollandais à Paris", raconte qu'accompagné de Jules Renard il alla interviewer Barrès sur la "Trilogie du Moi" dont le dernier volume venait de paraître. Au cours de la conversation, l'auteur du Jardin du Bénédictin en vint à parler de "cette obscurité qu'on lui reproche", et il dit:

"J'ai toujours fait de mon mieux pour donner à chaque phrase le degré de clarté qu'elle comportait, et je crois bien y avoir réussi. Quant à pour suivre exactement la ligne logique de ma pensée par la liaison des phrases, voilà où j'ai failli. La raison en est très claire pour moi. Aussitôt que je mets à rédiger ma pensée, elle fait une évolution dans un sens ou dans l'autre et tout ce qui sur le papier se trouve fixé dans sa forme définitive, pousse l'esprit vers une direction qui n'était pas dans l'intention originale. Ainsi, à chaque instant, il y a un tournant dans le raisonnement et la conclusion ne correspond plus au début. Celui qui a pris la peine de suivre l'idée à travers cette transformation successive ne se récriera pas contre ce manque de logique, mais les autres jetteront le livre."

Toutes ces explications suffisent à montrer que le style de Barrès pêche non par obscurité, mais par excès de concision.

The Anglo-Saxon world has generally neglected Barrès as an author, and frequently misunderstood him as a thinker; unlike some of his con-

temporaries, he is held in much higher esteem in his own country than abroad. The fewness of the translations of his work into English and their general inadequacy may be explained by the delicacy of his style; the subtlety of his thought, and the peculiarly French characteristics of both. Yet he was pre-eminently qualified by the extra-ordinary richness of his sensibility, the keenness of his intelligence and the artistic skill of his self-expression to be the interpreter of the generation which came to its majority in the early and middle eighties. The young intellectuals of this epoch were not a happy generation. Brought up under the shadow of defeat,--their country divided--they did not know where the truth was to be found, or whether there was even any truth to be found. Many had discarded their traditional faith, some had accepted the cold teachings of a philosophy mostly German, unsuited to their mental equilibrium; others fell into an indifferent skepticism, or into a dilettantism alluring but perilous.

Barrès, himself a prey to the tendencies of his time, reacted against the excesses of his own theories and helped his generation to recover its intellectual balance. This may explain in a measure the esteem in which he is held by his contemporaries in the field of literature.

Barrès has been more or less misunderstood by Anglo-Saxons, particularly by Americans. His reasons are based too much on general and abstract principles to satisfy practical minds. His nationalism appears narrow in comparison with the new theories of broad internationalism. His doctrine, founded on deep-seated tradition, naturally makes little appeal in a country whose inhabitants belong to almost all the races on earth. He cannot be for them a teacher as he has been for the youth of France; but they may be able to admire in him a curious thinker and a master of style--one of the best prose poets of the time.

Theodore Stanton of Cornell University believes that Barrès possesses to a high degree the characteristics of three different types which in life are generally met in distinct individuals, the moralist, the artist,

and the man of action. My own personal appreciation of Barrès as a writer includes a vast respect for his versatility. He covered a wide and varied range of subjects in the field of literature, and followed many different activities during his life. I found "Les Déracinés" quite readable after I had "gotten into it", which as in the case of Dickens' works, took some time. I thought the psychological study of the seven young men was fascinating. Barrès brought out very noticeably what a far-reaching effect a teacher can have upon the minds of his pupils, and I drew therefrom a lesson unto myself. The unhappy ending of the book--the misfortunes of the young men,--I considered to have been directly caused by M. Bouteiller;-- he was the "vrai coupable".

"Colette Baudoche" was to me the most charming of the books--the most human and most nearly like the popular novels which Americans enjoy today. I liked the bits of description here and there, whether of the interior of Colette's home, or of the pastoral country round about Metz, or of the city itself. I particularly enjoyed reading the play version of the book, published in a theatrical supplement of "La Petite Illustration."

The much-discussed "Jardin Sur l'Oronte" held my attention to such an extent that I read the whole book at a sitting, which was not difficult, as it is shorter than most of Barrès' other books. The descriptions are very beautiful and even musical in their rhythm. His gift for making the reader see pictures is truly a great one, but his choice of a theme shows a streak of sensuality in his nature. It seems to me that there was a rather glaring inconsistency in the author of "Les Diverses Familles Spirituelles de la France" writing a book like "Un Jardin", which strikes deliberately at the Catholic Church. Barrès was an agnostic, of course, but if he did not believe himself he might at least have spared the church the disparagement implied in his book. In my reading I did not find any wholly adverse criticism of Maurice Barrès, but I have heard it said that the opinion of most Frenchmen is against Barrès because of his attitude during the war. It seems that he was of age to have enlisted, but through some subterfuge escaped being

drafted, and remained safely at home urging the young men of the country on to fight. However true this sentiment may be, I can only state that one who has lived in France mentioned this fact to me. I did feel that Barrès' attitude during the Boulanger affair showed strength of mind and adherence to conviction. His love of heroism was so great that he invested with the rare qualities of genius a man who at best was only a kind, gentle fellow; for General Boulanger was nothing but "a puppet in the hands of certain peculiar fates". But it can be said to Barrès' eternal honor, that he never ceased to defend his former hero and political chief when he was maimed and bruised in the political mêlée.

However, I think that whatever his character as a man, his ability as a writer cannot be questioned. I have learned a great deal about his work and incidentally uncovered a great many interesting side-lights on French literature which I never would have met had I not studied the work of Maurice Barrès.

(Over)

SUMMARY

Maurice Barrès was born in 1862 of combined Lorraine and Auvergnat stock. He was educated for the law but followed his own inclinations into the field of literature. The environment of his early childhood,--after the war of 1871--greatly influenced his later writings. Beginning with the philosophy with which his first fame was associated, Barrès produced a trilogy of books dealing with the cult of self or the Ego. Then came writings dealing with his own province in which he sets forth the doctrine of regionalism. His patriotic writings during the Great War influenced the morale of those behind the lines. Other writings show decidedly different phases of his literary activity and reveal masterly power of expression and originality of thought. He was made a member of the Academy in 1906. Besides being a writer he took a very active part in politics and journalism, both of which benefited by his facile pen.

In Barrès' writings we see several influences at work,--first Renan, then his childhood experiences in Lorraine, (the German influence striving against it) and lastly that of the great modern thinker Bergson. His style is a fusion of the classic and Romantic, and shows great versatility, clearness of expression and "impeccable syntax." He is rated among his contemporaries as one of the greatest--and as one of them puts it--one of the best prose poets of the time.