

# The French Review

*From the Editor's Desk*

With presidential and legislative elections scheduled in both France and the United States, 2012 promises to be an exciting and momentous year. In the French Society and Culture course I am currently teaching, the unusual coincidence of the election cycles in both countries provides a more topical opportunity to compare their political and constitutional systems—and to explore the circumstances in which their political campaigns differ in style and substance. For instance, the fact that in each country a sitting President is running for reelection in the same year (if not the same month) offers an approach to discuss the various ways in which the personal lives of politicians play a role in the electoral process. At a broader level, national elections in France (and the wealth of online *documents authentiques* they tend to generate) allow for the recontextualization in the classroom of a wide variety of historical, social, and economic issues, from *la laïcité* to *le multiculturalisme* to *les délocalisations*.

This brings me to our regular “Society and Culture” rubric, which features articles on sociocultural long-term trends and contemporary topics of the Francophone world. The current volume (85) of the *French Review* includes several fascinating offerings in this rubric. In October (85.1), the annual Bloc-notes culturel article (by Stéphane Spoiden, University of Michigan, Dearborn) recapitulated and commented on the principal social and political events in France during the preceding year. In December (85.2), an article by David Fein (University of North Carolina, Greensboro) detailed the usefulness of a relatively unknown legal document, the *inventaire après décès*, as a means to more precisely examine the often bleak living conditions of rural residents in nineteenth-century France.

The current issue (85.3) features a Culture and Society article that will be of interest to all those with an interest in contemporary France. Dan Golembeski (Grand Valley State University) has provided a timely overview of Mayotte, the Indian Ocean island that last year officially became France's fifth *département d'outre-mer*. French instructors who had long been accustomed to listing four *DOM* (Guadeloupe, Martinique, la Guyane, la Réunion) will now have to learn more about Mayotte—and will find this article to be very useful. It should be noted that instructors have already been faced with the necessity of adapting the classic pattern of presenting *la Métropole* and *les DOM-TOM*. The more recent acronym, *DROM-COM*, (*Départements et régions d'outre-mer – Collectivités d'outre-mer*) reflects the new political and administrative realities of the various islands and territories that make up *la France d'outre-mer* (in which live approximately three million of the country's sixty-five million inhabitants).

In the March issue (85.4), a Culture and Society article by Arthur Saint-Aubin (Occidental College) will examine how an autobiographical text by the hero of Haitian independence, Toussaint Louverture, was edited and published long after his death, producing a highlighted and distorted representation of racial difference. The April issue (85.5) will include an article by Jonathan Gosnell (Smith College) on the fluctuating levels of cultural hybridity in south Louisiana, including a survey of the musical traditions of Louisiana's Cajun and Creole communities. In May, our Special Issue on the Enlightenment (85.6) will feature, among others, an article by Lars Erickson (University of Rhode Island) on the social and

economic ramifications of the rapidly evolving conceptions of work and education in eighteenth-century France.

What the diverse articles of the Society and Culture rubric have in common is a focus on the social, political, and economic realities of the Francophone world. I hope that researchers will continue to submit articles that would fit into this rubric. I would particularly encourage colleagues who are researching sociocultural issues in Francophone countries and regions that have recently received comparatively less coverage in our pages to submit their articles.

In other news, we welcome a new Assistant Editor, Elizabeth Knutson (United States Naval Academy), to the editorial team of the *French Review*. I would like to take this opportunity to remind our readers of the importance of the work accomplished by our Assistant Editors, who regularly evaluate submitted articles and who, through their detailed comments and suggestions, play a vital role in maintaining the high levels of quality of the articles published in the *French Review*.

Edward Ousselin, Editor in Chief

# In Remembrance of: Christopher P. Pinet (1944–2011)

Chris Pinet, former Editor in Chief of the *French Review*, passed away on 17 November 2011. Chris was raised in Lawrence, Kansas, and earned his B.A. at the University of Kansas (appropriately enough, he always remained a Kansas Jayhawks basketball fan) before going on to Brown University for his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees. It was at Brown that he met his future wife, Carolyn, who had come from Great Britain on a Fulbright. Their dual teaching careers would take them on to Indiana State University, Marquette University, and, for nearly thirty years, to Montana State University, Bozeman. An avid outdoorsman, Chris enjoyed fly-fishing, cross-country skiing, and hiking in the mountains. His E-mails often included descriptions, verging on lyricism, of a mountainous *paysage* that he particularly enjoyed. He clearly loved both his teaching position at MSU and living in Montana. This did not rule out frequent travels, including a sabbatical in France with his wife and two children, during which he conducted a sociocultural study of a *commune de la banlieue parisienne*, Villejuif.

A very active scholar throughout his career, Chris was an outstanding literary and cultural critic. His publications ran the gamut, from French Farce during the Renaissance to the myths and stereotypes of “Frenchness” in *Astérix*. If there was a person who could convey a sense of intellectual and aesthetic excitement—about a novel, a film, a piece of music, etc.—it was Chris. As (what I would call) an enlightened epicurean, he was always eager to discover something new to enjoy and to study. This sort of energy and wide-ranging intellectual curiosity, combined with rigorous attention to detail, also made him an exceptional editor, someone who could always be counted on to improve a text. During his last few weeks, even as Chris was battling against a rare form of brain cancer, he remained characteristically upbeat. He had planned for an active retirement, which included several research projects. In particular, he was completing a several-hundred-page manuscript on Villejuif, and also pursuing an abiding interest in the Maghrebian presence in France. He would go to the *Le Monde* Web site every morning—after first checking the Jayhawks, of course.

Several colleagues (whom I would like to thank) have sent me testimonials about Chris. In fact, there are so many that it is impossible to quote them all, an indication of how many lives he touched over the years, and of how much he will be missed. There are some recurring statements in these varied testimonials, which I will briefly summarize here. Chris understood that being a good literary and cultural critic entails taking the object of one’s study very seriously—without taking oneself too seriously. In his conversations and messages, Chris exhibited the intellectual depth and breadth that resulted from a lifetime of scholarly pursuits. He also showed flashes of the sort of self-deprecating humor that people who have attained a high level of accomplishment sometimes indulge in. His was the voice of a confident and open scholar, who encouraged and enjoyed spirited discussions. In his multifaceted activities as Editor, Chris was at once friendly, generous, and demanding. He had an uncanny ability to combine his constant pursuit of high professional standards with a deep sympathy for individuals, their needs, and their foibles. His unique blend of dynamism and charisma, of intellect and enjoyment, was an encouragement to students and colleagues alike. Chris lived a full and productive life, a life of teaching and service to others, of critical thinking and scholarly research, of good food and wine, of love and friendship. Unlike many intelligent people, he had very little vanity, which made him very sincere and empathetic in his dealings with colleagues. In all his professional endeavors, he was determined to “do it right,” and that is exactly what he usually managed to do.

Chris Pinet holds a special place in the long history of the *French Review*. He served as Review Editor, Assistant Editor, Managing Editor, and most notably as Editor in Chief.

During his twelve years in this last position, he made several innovations, such as new rubrics (Focus on the Classroom, Professional Issues) and annual special issues, which helped to shape the current look and content of our journal. Chris chose topics and was lead editor for successive special issues on Paris, Martinique and Guadeloupe, Francophone Belgium, Quebec and Francophone Canada, Francophone literature in Sub-Saharan Africa, Vietnam, the Maghreb and the Caribbean, Francophone literature in the United States, and two issues devoted to pedagogy. He wrote nearly 70 editorials on subjects ranging from Francophobia in the United States to riots in the Parisian *banlieues*. He referred to his work on the *French Review* as a "labor of love," and it was obvious to all those who met him that he was passionate about his role as Editor, that he considered it to be a capstone to his rewarding career as a teacher-scholar. He especially enjoyed discovering new talents and publishing innovative articles. Since he was very conscious of the importance of our journal for French and Francophone studies, he wanted each issue to reflect the best contributions from colleagues around the country (and, increasingly, around the world).

As part of his duties as Editor, Chris could be a stern taskmaster. He demanded much from himself and from the authors with whom he worked. Anyone who has ever received a politely- but firmly-worded letter from him (I was one of those recipients) remembers that he fully expected that substantial emendations be made to almost all the submitted articles he received, and that mediocre or poorly-conceived texts would not be accepted for publication. Yet even in this sometimes less-than-popular aspect of his work, he regularly infused into his letters and messages a note of encouragement and good humor. His enthusiasm for in-depth research and for good writing was contagious. It brought out the best in all those who were in professional contact with him.

When I succeeded Chris as Editor, I naturally relied on his insights and experience. As he had been throughout his career, he was always ready to help out. Although I had been in regular E-mail and phone contact with him for several years, I only met him in person fairly late, when he was already planning ahead for his retirement. He nevertheless quickly became a mentor and a friend. I will miss his advice, his encouragement, and his booming laughter.

Edward Ousselin, Editor in Chief