

# The French Review

## *From the Editor's Desk*

We are delighted to present the very first special issue of the *French Review* ever devoted exclusively to cinema. For a journal 79 years old this event has been a long time coming, but I believe that you will find the issue worth waiting for. Volume 79 showed that film is more popular in the classroom than ever, and our special issue highlights a dizzying array of older classics and contemporary hits that instructors will want to try out with their students as they bring language, text, culture, and image to the forefront in a visual teaching setting.

The first article, "Valentine's Love Story: Feminine Discursive Power and its Limits in *Le Crime de Monsieur Lang*," challenges the traditional reading of Renoir's 1936 classic and forces us to reconsider his view of the role of women in French society of the 1930s. This breakthrough essay is followed by an article which furnishes us with a convincing demonstration of how a master director like Truffaut uses freeze-frames to increase dramatic tension and anticipation in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* (1959) and to unify thematic strands and serve as a counterpoint to the internal narrative line in *Jules et Jim* (1962).

From the 1930s, late 1950s, and early 1960s and 1970s, we move to the twenty-first century and a 2003 animated film, *Les Triplettes de Belleville*, a joint Franco-Belgian and Canadian movie directed by Sylvain Chomet. This film not only creates a hybrid world of contemporary Paris, New York, and Montreal, but does so while hearkening back to earlier periods in French and American film-making and undermining our received notions of a purer time. The author also compels us to view this film a second time in order to consider stereotypical representations of French and American culture as well as to question the effects of globalization or "mondialisation," as the French call it.

Fans of the films of Bertrand Tavernier will find "Les Personnages féminins de Bertrand Tavernier: entre image et idée" unsettling in that the author shows how on the one hand women protagonists serve as catalysts for rethinking the role of women in contemporary society, but how on the other Tavernier most often presents them as marginalized, unproductive, childlike, and objects of both violence and the sexual appetites of men.

Women are also the subject of articles like one on *La Petite Vendeuse de Soleil* (1999), which was directed by Djibril Diop Mambety, the Senegalese director. This film calls to account the Senegalese government and the international financial community for the massive illiteracy, especially among the young, in Senegal. It also shows how the oral tradition is passed down, and the author of the article demonstrates convincingly that the film itself can serve as "a form of secondary oral mediation...."

Our sixth article, "Raoul Peck, cinéaste haïtien: 'L'Homme sur les quais,'" (1993) also presents political and social issues; in this case political repression under the dictatorship of "Papa Doc" Duvalier and how it effects the lives and memories of children who witnessed the violence. This essay has special resonance in light of the recent elections held in Haiti.

We are fortunate to be able to offer you two "what-to-do" and "how-to-do" pedagogical articles. The first, "DVD for Dummies: Lessons in Technology from *Le Dîner de cons*," will be appreciated by all of us who are "nuls devant la technologie," but who love this hilarious French comedy directed by Francis Veber and starring François Pignon (1997). A number of sample techniques and activities are presented as well as exercises that you can tear out, copy, and use in your classrooms. At the same time, those of us who still use videotapes in

our classrooms will be relieved to know that they have certain advantages over DVDs. The second pedagogical article, "A WebQuest for Intermediate Learners of French: The Cannes Film Festival," also provides ready-to-use exercises and a step-by-step approach for introducing students to the Cannes Film Festival while helping them to improve their linguistic skills.

We are also pleased to be able to publish three interviews, the first of which presents Richard Copans, who founded *Les Films d'ici*. Of particular interest are his remarks about the arbitrariness and rigidity of definitions of documentaries and fictional films. Copans explains how for him the process of making a documentary begins as a fiction. The second interview is with Jeanne Labrune, best known as the director of *Vatel* (2000) and one of the representatives of the new generation of French women film directors. Labrune maintains that "il n'y a pas de cinéma de femme et de film d'homme. En chacun de nous il y a une part de masculin et de féminin..." The last interview is with Ben Diogaye Bèye, a Senegalese film-maker who has been one of the most successful African directors. Bèye first burst onto the scene with the short film, *Les Princes noirs de Saint-Germain-des-Près* (1975). In 1996 he directed *Samba-Tali* and *Moytuleen*, both of which examine the economic and social problems of street children in the mid-1990s. He has pursued similar themes in *Un Amour d'enfant* (2004), which also treats the themes of polygamy, religion, education, unemployment, and police repression.

Finally, we have published a bibliography and synopsis of short fiction films by francophone women directors, an invaluable resource published here for the first time. I am confident that this bibliography will be an important research tool and classroom bonanza for the readers of the *French Review*.

I offer special thanks to Edward Baron Turk, our outgoing Assistant Editor for Film, and John Anzalone, a long-standing Assistant Editor for Film, for serving with me as editors for this impressive special issue on cinema. Without their hard work, insight, and critical evaluations of the many articles submitted, we could not have produced this volume. I also want to thank Sharon Shelly, who did a superb job of putting together this major volume, a task that was never easy or straightforward. I also owe thanks to J. Moss Hartt, Director of MSU Web Communications at Montana State University, Bozeman; and Sylvain Loscos, a student in Lyon, who visited the Lumière museum at my behest and met Jean-Marc Lamotte, *Responsable du patrimoine* of the Lumière Museum. Monsieur Lamotte furnished the image featured on our cover. The photo shows Alexandre Promio, one of the principal cameramen of the Lumière brothers (Auguste and Louis), and two cinematographs, the apparatus invented by the Lumières to reproduce movement through a series of photographs and to project them as films. The first public demonstration took place on 28 December 1895. The cover photo was taken in the courtyard of the Villa d'Antoine Lumière in 1903 on the occasion of the marriage of France Lumière, the younger sister of the brothers Lumière, to Charles Winckler. Though we do not know the name of the photographer, it was probably a member or friend of the family. Our typesetter, Ronnie Moore, of WESType Publishing Services put everything together with the fine touch she always provides. I also want to welcome Vincent Desroches to the *French Review* as an Assistant Editor for Literature. He published an excellent article on the film, *L'Ange de goudron* in our special issue on Québec et le Canada francophone.

I hope that you both enjoy and profit from this film feast and that it gives you good ideas for articles and for your classroom teaching. Do join us in Milwaukee, where there will be a number of panels and papers on film and several films to watch, including the screening of *Le Gone du Chaâba*, an adaptation of the award-winning novel (Prix des Sorcières, 1987) of the same title written by Azouz Begag, *Ministre délégué à la Promotion de l'Égalité des Chances*. Minister Begag, who will be our keynote speaker at the AATF convention in Milwaukee (5–8 July), will also introduce the adaptation of his book.

Christopher P. Pinet