

# The French Review

VOLUME 80, No. 6

May 2007

*Devoted to the Interests of Teachers of French*

## SPECIAL ISSUE ON LA FRANCOPHONIE AUX ETATS-UNIS

1213 *From the Editor's Desk*

### ARTICLES

1218

**Albert Valdman**

**"Vernacular  
French  
Communities  
in the United  
States: A  
General  
Survey"**

This article describes the current state of Francophony in the United States. It points out that American vernacular varieties of French serve as symbols of a distinct ethnic identity; this determines the type of research that can be conducted on these varieties and of endeavors designed to maintain or revitalize them. After a description of Francophone isolates (Old Mines, Missouri; Red Lake Falls, Minnesota; Frenchville, Pennsylvania) and the occitanophone community of Valdese, North Carolina, two issues concerning endangered speech communities are discussed: phenomena of language contact/shift and language attrition. The conclusion stresses the importance of description of endogenous American varieties of French for a better understanding of the evolution of the language.

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- 1235 **Barry Jean Ancelet**  
**“Negotiating the Mainstream: The Creoles and Cajuns in Louisiana”**  
 This article examines the history and development of Louisiana’s native French-speaking communities. It addresses the social and cultural development of Louisiana’s Cajuns and Creoles, as well as the linguistic and pedagogical issues involved in the effort to preserve their versions of the French language, especially since the establishment of the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana in 1968, which launched the so-called French renaissance movement.
- 1256 **Sheri Abel**  
**“Conceiving New Orleans: A Francophone Expression”**  
 New Orleans has often been a favorite backdrop for authors writing about the South. Even before George Washington Cable, the francophone literary community in New Orleans had been capturing the unique character of the Crescent City. This comparative study between a francophone Louisiana novel, *Le Vieux Salomon* (1858), written by Charles Testut, and Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), reveals that Testut’s use of local color enriches his literary production and sets him apart from Stowe’s singular northern view. Furthermore, each author’s conception of “home” for their protagonists underlines the relevancy of the Francophone experience to the southern expression of local color.
- 1265 **Carla Zecher, Gordon M. Sayre, and Shannon Lee Dawdy**  
**“A French Soldier in Louisiana: The Memoir of Dumont de Montigny”**  
 In his manuscript memoir, the soldier Jean François Benjamin Dumont de Montigny recounts his travels in Québec, Louisiana, and Brittany (1715–1747). With its reports of colonial events, ethnographic observations, and hand-drawn maps, Dumont’s memoir stands out as a seminal work of French colonial Louisiana. It also represents a rare instance of North American colonial picaresque writing. Although trained more in mathematics than literature, Dumont produced a text of remarkable scope and panache. This article traces his development as a writer and shows how publishing practices have pushed his autobiography to the sidelines, much as Dumont himself was marginalized during his lifetime.

- 1278  
**Cynthia A. Fox**  
**“Franco-American Voices: French in the Northeastern United States Today”**
- This paper describes the current situation of Franco-American French. The discussion is based on interviews with 275 speakers from eight communities: Van Buren, Waterville, and Biddeford, Maine; Berlin, New Hampshire; Southbridge and Gardner, Massachusetts; Bristol, Connecticut; and Woonsocket, Rhode Island.
- Our analysis confirms that French has not been transmitted to the youngest generations and that its domains of use are highly restricted. Nevertheless, the majority of speakers still use the language often (18%) if not daily (44%). Our findings suggest that French still plays a central role in the lives of its speakers despite their decreasing numbers.
- 1293  
**Cynthia C. Lees**  
**“Debunking the Myth of Ethnic Solidarity in Three Franco-American Texts”**
- This article examines three Francophone texts written by Franco-American authors of New England, texts that have received scant critical attention. Writing in a language other than English in the United States foregrounds issues of cultural survival. Whereas in the past Franco-American literary efforts depicted unified communities engaged in the preservation of their distinct cultural heritage—*la langue, la foi, et la culture françaises*—the works examined here subvert this picture of cohesiveness. In exposing the rigid class structure, dysfunctional families, and bitter disputes over language that fragment this linguistic group, they debunk the myth of ethnic solidarity in Franco-American society.
- 1303  
**Clyde Thogmartin**  
**“Ernest Valetton de Boissière and Silkville: The Distorted Legacy of a French Philanthropist on the Kansas Frontier”**
- After the coup d'état of Napoleon III, Ernest Valetton de Boissière, *polytechnicien*, republican, and successful entrepreneur, went into voluntary exile in the United States, where in east central Kansas he founded a cooperative farm on modified Fourierist principles. During his lifetime, regional press coverage of his enterprise was largely friendly and favorable, but his gift of the farm to a charitable institution was later the pretext for a lengthy series of acrimonious lawsuits. Subsequently, Middle American stereotypical views of utopian socialism and of the French rewrote the history of his farm, making it a place of impractical, eccentric behavior and sexual license.

1319

**Christine W.  
Vance**

**“Héritage  
Vaudois en  
Caroline du  
Nord”**

La petite ville de Valdese, Burke County, se situe dans le Piedmont de la Caroline du Nord. Elle fut fondée en 1893 sous l'égide de l'Eglise Réformée Vaudoise dont le siège était à Rome. Les colons venaient des petites vallées des Alpes Cottiennes (qui couvrent la Haute-Durance et le Haut-Piedmont) où s'étaient réfugiés leurs aïeux persécutés par les "papistes". L'immigration en Caroline du Nord fut négociée et organisée par les pasteurs des vallées vaudoises dans l'espoir de remédier à la surpopulation des vallées alpines et à la pauvreté qui en résultait. Nous allons montrer que du pays d'origine Valdese a conservé jusqu'à nos jours certains éléments du décor des vallées; d'autre part on y respecte toujours le français utilisé jusqu'en 1923 dans tous les actes officiels et on se souvient de bribes du patois franco-provençal attaché à la vie de tous les jours dans les vallées et, au début, en Amérique; enfin des efforts remarquables contribuent à préserver l'héritage culturel vaudois.

1336

**Jonathan  
Gosnell**

**“Between  
Dream and  
Reality in  
Franco-  
America”**

This article explores the development of Francophone postcolonial cultures in the United States. It examines what it means to be French not simply *in* America but *of* America. There are some twenty million individuals of Francophone descent in North America today. People continue to live in French, linguistically and culturally, in the United States, yet *Franco-Americans* are virtually unknown. My study suggests that this phenomenon is related in part to the devaluation of French identity between Old World and New. Franco-American dreams and realities provide a different reading of America, its melting pot, *métissage*, race relations, and cultural identities.

#### PEDAGOGY

1352 **Susan Pinette**

**“Teaching  
Franco-  
Americans of  
the Northeast”**

This article argues that Franco-Americans should be incorporated into the Francophone curriculum and provides a select annotated bibliography of resources to facilitate that inclusion.

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- Summer Study in Paris
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