

The French Review

From the Editor's Desk

I think that most of us would agree that Francophony in the United States has been an undervalued and inadequately treated subject. This special issue, *La Francophonie aux Etats-Unis*, is a step toward righting the balance and remedying this deplorable situation. It is also the first time that the *French Review* has devoted an entire special issue to the topic.

As always, there are many people to thank. But first, I want to dedicate this issue to the courageous people of New Orleans, many of whom lost their homes and most of their belongings during the hurricanes and floods of the fall of 2005. Many will never be able to return to New Orleans, and New Orleans itself is far from being reconstructed and reestablished. One day, however, the Crescent City will get back on its feet. It is gratifying to know that a significant number of members of the AATF contributed donations toward flood relief and the cause of French teaching there.

One of our articles, "Concerning New Orleans: A Francophone Expression," by Sheri Abel will help us to gain a greater understanding of the historical context of life and local color in New Orleans through the examination of two novels, one by the Francophone Louisiana writer Charles Testut (*Le Vieux Salomon*, 1858); the other, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). Stowe, a northerner, felt that slaves could only achieve freedom by leaving the South and moving to the morally superior North. Testut, on the other hand, ends up sending his slave couple from Louisiana to Guadeloupe, where the abolition of slavery is proclaimed at the end of the novel and the Civil War is predicted as is the liberation of slaves in the United States.

Special thanks go to my two co-editors for this unique volume, Barry Jean Ancelet and Clyde Thogmartin. Professor Ancelet has also contributed a history of the development of Louisiana's native French-speaking communities with particular attention to the Cajuns and Creoles and efforts to preserve their versions of French since 1968. His article is entitled "Negotiating the Mainstream: The Creoles and Cajuns in Louisiana." Professor Ancelet will also be the keynote speaker at the annual convention of the AATF in July in Baton Rouge, where many thousands of evacuees from New Orleans have now settled. We will also hope to catch his weekly radio variety show broadcast from Lafayette. The other co-editor is none other than Clyde Thogmartin, a former Managing Editor of the *French Review* and currently Assistant Editor for Linguistics. Professor Thogmartin has also contributed a fine piece entitled "Ernest Valetton de Boissière and Silkville: The Distorted Legacy of a French Philanthropist on the Kansas Frontier." Thogmartin tells how the silk trade came to Kansas, where it ultimately failed, although at one time forty-six of Kansas's 105 counties saw attempts at silk raising. In fact, some of the mulberry trees planted by de Boissière are still alive. Thogmartin also shows how over the next 100 years de Boissière fell victim to stereotyping in the press, which initially praised him, but ultimately claimed that he was a utopian socialist and that his farm was the site of licentious behavior.

Other articles in this volume include Albert Valdman's impressive opening piece, "Ver-nacular French Communities in the United States: A General Survey." This overview gives us a good sense of where such communities are located historically and where they stand today in both cultural terms and in numbers of speakers of French. Carla Zecher, Gordon Sayre, and Shannon Dawdy's "A French Soldier in Louisiana: The Memoir of Dumont de

Montigny" examines the important genre of travel writing in the first half of the eighteenth century when Jean François Benjamin Dumont de Montigny related his trips ranging from Brittany to Quebec to Louisiana. The authors present de Montigny's memoir as a rare example of picaresque writing, which gives insight into the realities of daily life in Louisiana.

Cynthia Fox's "Franco-American Voices: French in the Northeastern United States Today" presents interviews with 275 speakers from eight communities. As is the case with other articles in this issue, her work confirms that French has not been transmitted to the youngest generations, but that those who do still speak French in New England speak it on a regular basis. Cynthia C. Lees explodes the myth of ethnic solidarity in her article "Debunking the Myth of Ethnic Solidarity in Three Franco-American texts." Equally important, she makes us aware of a recent trend of Franco-American authors living in the United States who write in French, a hopeful sign for the future of French in both New England and Louisiana.

Christine W. Vance's "Héritage Vaudois en Caroline du Nord" makes us aware of Valdese, a small town in Burke County, North Carolina founded by the *Eglise Réformée Vaudoise* in 1893 after its members had left the valleys of the Upper Piedmont where poverty and overpopulation in the Alpine valleys made life impossible. Although French has not been spoken since 1923, official documents are still written in French to this day and a "Trail of Faith" offers buildings and recreations of life after the arrival of the Vaudois as well as a "Waldensian Heritage Museum." Jonathan Gosnell's "Between Dream and Reality" takes on the paradox created by the presence of twenty million individuals of Francophone descent in *Franco-America* who, for the most part, go unnoticed for a variety of historical and cultural reasons. He also reproduces tell-tale signs or vestiges of their existence on road signs and buildings. Finally, Susan Pinette (no relation!) shows us how to incorporate Franco-Americans of the Northeastern United States into the Francophone curriculum and provides an exhaustive annotated bibliography to help us do so.

I have already thanked my two co-editors and contributors, but want to thank several other key individuals without whom the publication of this volume would not have been possible. Mary Mees, the Marketing Manager for the Publications and Marketing Department of The Historic New Orleans Collection and their research services, furnished me with a number of maps from which to choose our cover. J. Moss Hartt, Director of MSU Web Communications at Montana State University, took the image that he and I selected and turned it into the splendid cover you see before you. The indefatigable Ronnie Moore, of WESType Publishing Services, Inc., has once again done an outstanding job of typesetting and bringing the entire issue to fruition.

I must save special praise for our terrific Managing Editor, Sharon Shelly, who will be finishing her three-year term with this issue of the *French Review*. She has brought all the hard-earned experience and craftsmanship of the past three years to make her last special issue her final "grand geste" and has succeeded admirably. We will all miss Sharon tremendously but are buoyed by the knowledge that she will be succeeded by Wynne Wong of Ohio State University, who is stepping down as our highly capable Review Editor for Course Materials and Methodology to take on this new challenge. Wynne is already working on the October 2007 issue and will be a worthy successor to Sharon, who will now take a well-earned sabbatical. I am happy to say that she will continue to read and evaluate articles for the *French Review* on an occasional basis. Wynne will be succeeded by Carolyn Gascoigne of the University of Nebraska, Omaha. Carolyn is a well-known pedagogy specialist who has published frequently in the *French Review*.

We also welcome Jack Iverson of Whitman College, who has published with us on Voltaire. He takes over from Jonathan Walsh, who did a first-rate job of evaluating manuscripts in his four years of service as an Assistant Editor for Literature.

Before closing I want to say a final word about our special cover. I am particularly pleased that it is a map since I once worked as a student cataloguer in a map collection at the University of Kansas. The map is entitled *Carte de la Nouvelle France et de la Louisiane Nouvellement decouverte dediée Au Roy l'An 1683*. It is taken from its creator, Louis Hennepin, *Description De La Louisiane Nouvelle France au Sud'Oüiste de la Nouvelle France*. Paris, 1683.

Belgian missionary Louis Hennepin's continental map—the earliest published source to name the Mississippi Valley “La Louisiane”—appeared only a year after La Salle had claimed the territory in the name of King Louis XIV. It shows the Mississippi River (R. Colbert) from its headwaters south to the Mission des Recollects. A few Native American nations are noted. Hennepin, whose travel accounts invited speculation concerning fact and fiction, has been generally recognized as the first European explorer of the Upper Mississippi. On the map he names the Falls of St. Anthony, in present-day Minnesota, where Minneapolis (Hennepin County) was located afterward. He also identifies California as a peninsula bordering on the Strait of Anian, rather than an island as was then common. Hennepin was the first to describe Niagara Falls.

Please do join us at our annual meeting to be held in Baton Rouge, Louisiana from 12-15 July. There will be Cajun music, good food, good interchange, captivating presentations, and an opportunity to help in the recovery of Louisiana through your presence, good will, and purchasing power. Since I am writing these words on Mardi Gras I say “Laissez les bons temps rouler!”

Christopher P. Pinet