

The French Review

From The Editor's Desk: Report for the French Review, 2004–2005

FR statistics for articles submitted 1 June 2004–31 May 2005 (vol. 78)

<u>Category</u>	<u>Submitted</u>	<u>Accepted</u>	<u>Rejected</u>	<u>Under Evaluation</u>	<u>No Decision</u>
Literature	86 (65.6%)	35 (40.7%)	27 (31.4%)	18 (20.9%)	6 (7.0%)
Pedagogy	15 (11.5%)	4 (26.7%)	9 (60.0%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (6.6%)
Civilization	16 (12.2%)	5 (31.3%)	6 (37.5%)	1 (6.2%)	4 (25.0%)
Film	7 (5.3%)	1 (14.3%)	1 (14.3%)	4 (57.1%)	1 (14.3%)
Linguistics	7 (5.3%)	4 (57.1%)	3 (42.9%)	—	—
Totals	131 (100%)	49 (37.4%)	46 (35.1%)	24 (18.3%)	12 (9.2%)

"L'Année littéraire" always opens our October issue and this year is no different. However, Martine Antle, the author of "L'Année théâtrale," is stepping down after over a dozen years of presenting French theater highlights. We are indebted to Martine and wish her well in her future pursuits. She will be succeeded by Edward Baron Turk, who himself is retiring from his duties as Assistant Editor for Film after many years of exemplary work. We are delighted that Edward is turning his talents to theater. Carolyn Eades will be his successor and we welcome her to the editorial staff. Jim Mc Nab continues with his column, "Bloc-notes culturel: l'année 2004," as does Michael Bishop ("L'Année poétique") and William Cloonan, who highlights the novel in France in 2004. Two other long-time Assistant Editors are retiring from the profession and both have given distinguished service to the *French Review*. William Ashby has been our Assistant Editor for Linguistics for many years and we will miss his unerring evaluations of articles in this field. He will be succeeded by Clyde Thogmartin, former Managing Editor. We welcome Clyde back to the fold. Gil Chaitin, Assistant Editor for Nineteenth-Century literature is also retiring. The breadth and depth of his knowledge of the nineteenth century and his perceptive reviews will also be missed. We wish him and William Ashby the very best in well-deserved retirements.

French literature is alive and well and this is reflected in a wide variety of articles in Volume 79. In October, for example, we offer an essay on Christine de Pizan and Marie de France. Both writers show how women of different social classes could act to control their fate through virtuous behavior, thus underscoring equality among women and higher standing alongside men. Another piece in December discusses reappearing objects in *La Chanson de Roland*. The author demonstrates the importance of repetition and non-verbal communication in determining textual meaning and how objects in this epic are made active, thus lending a greater appreciation of the character and feelings of the protagonists. For those of us who still teach *La Chanson de Roland*, this essay will serve as a great pedagogical tool. There is also an essay on Stendhal's debt to the *mémorialiste*, the Cardinal de Retz.

In February one author employs "pulp theory" to help account for Jean-Pierre Camus's use of violence in his *histoires tragiques*.

Self-fashioning, an important topic in literary studies, is featured in a piece published in March on Julie Krudener, a confidante of the Russian emperor, Alexander. She strategically fashioned her identity as a woman and author by idealizing her life in order to insure the publication and success of her work. Krudener actually promoted her work by inventing a line of products not yet in existence "à la Julie," and created a demand for them and her novel, *Valérie*. A second essay compares novels by George Sand and Balzac to show how Sand's oft-criticized idealism was a conscious and precise reaction to unpleasant reality which led her to choose illusion over reality. This allowed her to offer a double vision of the world and distinguish herself from realists like Balzac.

In April one of our authors shows how the French writer, Lydie Salvayre, writes literature that is "engagée" and deals with ordinary working people and their lives. She also uses her novelty to show her skepticism about contemporary literature and the misuses of literary authority. A piece on *Bloom & Bloch*, the novel by Henri Roczynow, reflects on many of the same themes as the essay on Salvayre while also considering Judaism, and intertextuality.

Literature in French outside France is also featured in Volume 79. December brings an important update on the sub-Saharan African novel from 1995–2000 by Claire Dehon, one of our Assistant Editors for Literature. She offers a follow-up to her 1995 article on the same topic from 1989–1994. Themes include prejudices among ethnic groups, jealousy among multiple wives, bad behavior by men toward women employees, incest, and genocide. Dehon notes that more young people are writing than ever before. In February one essay looks at violence in the Quebec film, *Léolo*, and the novel, *L'Avalée des avalés*, and shows how both film and novel reflect Quebec's *révolution tranquille*. A second article reevaluates the crucial but overlooked role of Suzanne Césaire in establishing a new Caribbean identity and literature through essays on Surrealism in the short-lived journal *Tropiques*. The March issue features an important article on "Beur" travel writing, focusing on Tassadit Imache, who as a women travel writer carries out a radical transformation of the Western-other binary approach usually found in the genre. She does this by formulating the new notion of "being in common." In April Quebec and the *révolution tranquille* are once again the theme of an essay that charts social change in the 1960s and 70s as reflected in Jacques Poulin's *Les Grandes Marées* during a period when the government of Quebec took over health, education, and other social services from the Catholic Church. The novel also serves as a cautionary tale about modern-day Quebec.

This year there is an excellent fit between articles devoted to film and pedagogical articles on how to teach French using film. For example, our February issue presents an article entitled "Initiation truffaldienne à la lecture," which shows how to use any number of films by Truffaut based on novels at the intermediate and advanced levels in order to highlight both writing (in the novels) and its transformation in film. The same issue contains an article, "War, Parody, and Historical Memory in Jean-Jacques Annaud's *Black and White in Color*," which explains how recent attempts to come to terms with France's colonial past have lent this movie more resonance than when it first appeared. This essay could easily be used in conjunction with the film in a class on contemporary France.

A similar pairing is present in the March issue. One author offers "A Process-Oriented Approach to *Zazie dans le métro*," which sheds light on how to teach *le français populaire* in a phonetics and pronunciation course. The integration of listening, speaking, writing, and understanding could also be adapted to an advanced grammar course or courses on French society and culture. The article which follows, "*Le Petit Chaperon rouge: un moyen de lire Le Ballon blanc*," demonstrates how the Grimm adaptation of the Perrault *conte* was transformed so that it incorporates new meanings in the Iranian film.

In the current issue "Autour de Mona dans *Sans toit ni loi* d'Agnès Varda," shows how absence and presence and present and past are reconstructed for the dead protagonist, Mona, through the eyes and words of others. The camera is also an actor with a life of its own as it follows Mona's recreated moments, but does not always keep up or overshoots her, underscoring the arbitrariness of narration and the elusiveness of an individual life. In

December “La Transposition dans *Prénom Carmen* de Jean-Luc Godard et dans *La Belle Noisette* de Jacques Rivette”—as with two essays discussed earlier—considers the liberties taken with literary works, in this case by Balzac (Rivette) and Mérimée (Godard). The nature of the changes makes these films “transpositions” rather than what we often refer to as cinematic “adaptations” of literature to cinema, the latter less faithful to the original, the former more faithful.

In April an essay entitled “Film and the Popular Front: *La Belle Equipe* and *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange*” shows how these films reflected the aspirations of the urban working class and the tumult of the Popular Front period (1934–38). Themes, all of which could be treated readily in a course on French society and culture, include workers’ cooperatives, communal celebration, escape from urban Paris, populism, misogyny, and the movement from hope to despair that characterized the Popular Front in the run-up to the Second World War.

One can readily see how the lines between pedagogy, society and culture, and film become blurred when one considers the content and presentation of the articles I have just discussed. The multi-disciplinary imperative in teaching and research is also evident in the pairing of pedagogical articles and those on linguistics in Volume 79. For example, in “*Le Chemin du retour: Life after French in Action*,” in the current issue, the author suggests ways to motivate intermediate level students through videotexts, especially *Le Chemin du retour*, where the characters are more subtly drawn than in *French in Action*. No Americans are present, and the context is that of a young French adult. This piece raises serious questions about the use or perhaps overuse of English in teaching French since many of the cultural readings accompanying the video are in English, as are the grammar explanations (this is a beginning text that the author has transformed for intermediate use). The article immediately following this one, “Subject Doubling in Spoken French: A Sociolinguistic Approach,” gives real life examples from recorded speech among different social classes and age groups in Picardy. A happy blend of the theoretical (what do we count as doubling?) and the practical (what do the French actually say?), this article suggests that while we should teach how subject doubling is presented in spoken French, more standard word order is still “de rigueur” in formal varieties of written and spoken French.

In the April issue we present another pairing of pedagogical and linguistic articles. “Teaching Stylistic Variation through Film” shows again how our profession is using film more and more frequently to enhance our teaching and to emphasize the visual aspects of culture. This piece shows how to introduce intermediate and advanced learners to spoken stylistic variation through film excerpts. Naturally, one could introduce subject doubling in this context as well. In the essay, “L’Intégration des emprunts à l’angliche dans des dictionnaires,” the author scrutinizes the *Nouveau Petit Robert* (2002), the *Dictionnaire de françlais* (1980), and the *Dictionnaire des anglicismes* (1988) for their treatment of anglicisms occurring in French and praises the last of these for its exemplary treatment of the subject. This piece will help all of us who introduce anglicisms and *le verlan* in the classroom. One other pedagogical article, “Re-presenting the Orient: A New Instructional Approach,” is particularly helpful to those who teach francophone literature because it offers a reassessment of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* and shows how to explore the western gaze and the response of the “other.”

Our interviews this year encompass both French and francophone literature. In December we feature Maire-Céline Agnant, the Haitian writer who now lives in Montreal. She discusses the roles of women and social conditions in contemporary Quebec. An interview with Abdouraham Waberi, a writer from Djibouti now living in France, but whose central concern remains his native Djibouti and its political situation, appears in February. Finally, in March we present Marie Darrieussecq, a French writer whose early works such as *Truismes* shocked the French literary establishment.

Under “Society and Culture” you will find a fascinating piece in this issue entitled “The Triumph of the *bouffons: La Serva Padrona* at the Paris *Opéra* (1752–57),” which highlights the struggle that took place between defenders of the French “tragédie lyrique” and adherents of the Italian “opera bouffa” in a war of words in 60 pamphlets written at the time. This

debate challenged royal authority in taste-making and even involved Diderot and the *encyclopédistes*, who made it part of a more general questioning of royal authority. In December "Une France plurilingue?" takes up French opposition to the Charte européenne des langues after it was signed on 7 May 1999. The Conseil Constitutionnel ruled the Charter unconstitutional and opposed regional languages much as the Revolution of 1789 had. The French fear of social fragmentation combined with their centralizing imperative is also the subject of a piece entitled "Du monolinguisme français et de la diversité" which appears in April under the "Professional Issues" rubric. The author, Bernard Cerquiglini, presented a different version of this article in Atlanta at our international meeting with the FIPF, whose theme was "Le Défi de la diversité." Cerquiglini shows how, in spite of attempts to define French language as monolithic, there is great and rich linguistic diversity in France. He argues that it is time to see regional languages as allies before they disappear and the French language becomes impoverished through their loss.

In February we proudly publish an essay called "Homage to *Village in the Vaucluse*" by Richard Goodman, the author of *French Dirt: The Story of a Garden in the South of France*. For those of us who studied with "Larry" Wylie and who have taught his books, this homage is long overdue in the pages of the *French Review* and confirms the enduring quality of his work and observations while more stereotypical popularizations fall by the wayside in ever growing numbers. A piece called "Collective Memory before and after Halbwachs" in the March issue provides an overview of the history of the meaning of "collective" memory from the sixteenth century to the present and shows how the original notion has evolved to reflect the times. April brings "The Palace of the Tuileries and Its Demolition: 1871–1883," a fascinating study which examines the eleven-year political debate surrounding the decision to demolish the palace of the Tuileries. The author shows how political hatred for the Second Empire and the monarchists drove the Republicans, who could not forget the 20,000–25,000 who died during the Commune.

A special issue will be published in May 2006 in honor of the annual meeting of the AATF to be held in Milwaukee in July 2006 (cf. "Announcements"). It is to be entitled "Cinémas" and it will include a wide range of articles on the topic. I will discuss them in the May 2006 issue. This will be a first for the *French Review* and reflects the growing interest in and use of film in the classroom already highlighted.

As I did last year, I want to urge our members and readers to continue to submit first-rate articles on pedagogy for that rubric and accounts of successful teaching practice for "In Your Corner: Focus on the Classroom." We need your ideas, experience, and research more than ever. If you want to discuss a project with me, just give me a call or send me an e-mail.

Finally, please continue to celebrate "La Semaine du Français (7–13 November). We have much to be proud of and should make others in our communities aware of the vitality and richness of the French language and the commitment of our students and ourselves. Bonne rentrée!

Christopher P. Pinet