

The French Review

From The Editor's Desk: Report for the French Review, 2006–2007

FR statistics for articles submitted 1 June 2006–31 May 2007 (vol. 80)

<u>Category</u>	<u>Submitted</u>	<u>Accepted</u>	<u>Rejected</u>	<u>Under Evaluation</u>	<u>No Decision</u>
Literature	61 (57%)	27 (44.2%)	20 (32.7%)	8 (13%)	6 (10%)
Pedagogy	13 (12.1%)	5 (38%)	4 (30.7%)	4 (30.8%)	—
Civilization	21 (19.6%)	11 (52.4%)	7 (33.3%)	3 (14.3%)	—
Film	11 (10.3%)	3 (27.4%)	7 (63.6%)	1 (9%)	—
Linguistics	1 (1%)	—	1 (100%)	—	—
Totals	107 (100%)	46 (43%)	39 (36.4%)	16 (15%)	6 (5.6%)

Volume 81 of the *French Review* is distinguished by Bernard Cerquiglini's "Lexique des quatre saisons." This column succeeds "Bloc-notes culturel" by James P. McNab and offers a new and innovative format for McNab's highly successful analysis of social, political, economic, and cultural events in contemporary France. I am sure that you will be delighted by many of Professor Cerquiglini's *trouvailles*. You will also appreciate Michael Brophy's first installment of l'Année poétique (2006). He offers us not only a rundown of recent poetry and poetry criticism, but also reproduces three poems in their entirety, a boon for those of us who teach poetry at different levels. Edward Baron Turk delivers an expanded version of his theater rubric and includes a report on ACT FRENCH: A SEASON OF NEW THEATER FROM FRANCE, which ran in New York City from July through December 2005. He also gives an account of the winter/spring 2006 offerings in Paris. William Cloonan finds signs that (maybe) old-fashioned story telling is once again in vogue in the French novel (2006).

In the wake of the social unrest in France in the fall of 2005 and special issue on cinema that we published in May 2006, this year's articles on cinema have special resonance. In this issue there is an especially insightful essay on the director, Robert Guédiguian, who is best known as the director of *Marius et Jeannette* (1997). The subject here is his 2000 film, *A l'attaque*. Guédiguian's themes include immigration and the disappearance of the working classes. The film is anti-capitalist but does not offer a Marxist alternative. In fact, it is critical of the working class itself as well as the *Front National*. Set in Marseille, the film takes a close look at how social classes mix in a unique way and reminds us of Karim Dridi's *Bye-Bye* (1997) and Jean-Claude Izzo's *polar, Total Khéops* (1995). In December an article entitled "National Identity and Unrealized Union in Rachid Bouchareb's *Indigènes*" shows how the *Palme d'or* winner at the 2006 Cannes Film Festival reassembles the idealized image of French national union into a coherent yet shattered mirror of events in the Second World War. North African soldiers in the film do not achieve unity with French soldiers, but may achieve it with the spectators who react to their plight as victims of racism. The movie influenced then President Jacques Chirac to increase pensions of North African and sub-Saharan Africans so that they would be in line with those of French veterans. Another article in the

same issue, "Poire, Plume, Douve et Bob—les fantoches filmiques de la poésie," shows how poets of the early twentieth century like Apollinaire turned to cinema for inspiration and used *fantoches* (schematizations of humans) to represent the human body in movement in new ways. For example, Cocteau, Aragon, and Michaux all wrote about Charlie Chaplin (*Charlot*).

In February another piece, "The Play's the Thing: Marivaux and the *Banlieue* in Abdellatif Kechiche's *L'Esquive*," discusses the staging of Marivaux's "Le Jeu de l'Amour et du hasard" in a *cit * in the Parisian *banlieue* and highlights the struggle to reconcile traditional France with the new France emerging in the *banlieues* of large French cities. The movie sets itself against media representations and stereotypes by showing women in important roles while male figures tend to be emasculated. A more humane dimension of those who inhabit the *banlieues* manifests itself in the struggle for expression in two different codified versions of the French language (verlan and eighteenth-century dramatic language). In March the author of "Traditions orales et litt raires dans l' uvre cin matographique de Farida Benlyazid" shows us how this Moroccan director offers a feminine Islam through her films by finding a liberating force in women. She refuses to dwell on the repressive aspects of the traditions which subjugate them and considers instead the musical and literary traditions in the Koran, the sufi poets, and Arab chants. Finally, in April, another piece on film, "Auteurism and Adaptation in Jean-Pierre Jeunet's *Un Long Dimanche de fian ailles*" demonstrates how Jeunet's best-known film, *Le Fabuleux Destin d'Am lie Poulain*, influenced him in his adaptation of the S bastien Japrisot novel. The author concludes that the techniques of adaptation are probably culturally specific.

This year's selection of articles for the "Society and Culture" rubric also treats important themes present in contemporary France, some of which reflect the same concerns as those discussed in the essays on film. In December the author of "France's Burgeoning Cyber Culture: The New French Paradox" shows how France has embraced internet technology after an initial period of resistance and how the French have given it a "French" touch. February brings "Voile et laicit : la le on des Lumi res," an essay that lays the foundation for the on-going debate on the *voile* and the *foulard*. The author shows that the origins of this debate are not in Islam or oriental antecedents but rather in the opposition of the term "*laic*" to "*voile*" and mystery, or the unscientific side of religion, especially the mystery of Christianity. The decisive factor was the anti-clericalism of the Enlightenment, which opposed the Catholic veil. An essay in the March issue, "Bloguez en fran ais s'il vous pla t," considers the use of English on blogs and how to overcome it. Then, in April, the author of "Ce que lisent nos 't tes blondes': minorit s visibles dans la France contemporaine," lays out how children's literature of the past thirty years has come to include more minorities and to call for tolerance of them. The down side is that there are still not enough minority writers of children's literature. Perhaps the two best known are Azouz Begag, former Ministre d l gu    la Promotion de l' galit  des chances, and Tahar Ben Jelloun.

Pedagogy articles range from reflections on Mme de Maintenon to how to teach the "Paris Hilton" generation. In this issue the authors of "'That's hot! Teaching Paris to the Paris (Hilton) Generation," claim that the best way to get students interested in France is still through a consideration of Paris. The course is taught in English and meets a general education requirement. It uses dichotomies such as rural/urban, stability/revolution, and films to attract large numbers of students. In December the author of "Madame de Maintenon's Image in Patricia Mazuy's *Saint-Cyr: Teaching History through Film*," uses historical sources such as Madame de Maintenon's letters to show how the film distorts historical reality and oversimplifies the complexities of the lives of the daughters of poor soldiers, who attended St. Cyr in the seventeenth century. In an age when it has become more difficult to distinguish between the virtual and the real, an article like this one reminds us how important it is to try to establish as accurate an historical perspective as possible in order to see the gray in between the black and white. February brings us "Est-ce qu'On connaît la chanson? Teaching the *Langage commun* of a French Musical." The author uses Alains Resnais's film and its songs to show that the messages of the songs form a cultural code for the

French and that we must teach students how to decipher the code if they are to gain a better understanding of French culture on its own terms. "Bringing French Culture/Civilization to Life in the Classroom" (March 2008) sets out the journey of one teacher who discovered how to use films, slides, and websites to teach her course in a more interesting way for herself and her students. One of the highlights of the course is the writing of diaries by the students and their creation of "eye-witness" accounts of historical events. In April a teacher describes how she utilizes a film, *Ressources humaines*, by Laurent Cantet in his Business French classroom. The article is particularly timely because it is about the much-criticized thirty-five hour work week. It helps students to understand how the French communicate about human and workplace issues and problems in contemporary France. It also adds a human dimension too often lacking in Business French classrooms.

French literature and literature from outside France is always a central feature of the *French Review*, and this year is no exception. Articles run the gamut from Villon to Malika Mokeddem. In this issue the author of "Thierry Maulnier's Theatrical Adaptation of André Malraux's *La Condition humaine*" offers a fascinating look at the collaboration between Maulnier, the right-wing intellectual and journalist and Malraux, who wrote this iconic work of the French Left, but subsequently lost sympathy for Communism. Ultimately Malraux became a supporter of Charles de Gaulle under whom he served as Minister of Culture. Although Maulnier's theatrical adaptation of *La Condition humaine* failed, in part because Maulnier distorted key aspects of the novel, but also because Malraux's (he wrote all of the final tableau) own view of his novel had shifted. Spectacle won out at the expense of political and metaphysical content. Ironically, neither the reviewers of the Right nor those of the Left liked the adaptation. Also in this issue, "Eccentricity in *Silsie*," (a novel by Marie Redonnet), examines the tensions between men and women, old and new, and alienation in an unwelcoming and violent world that is beyond understanding. Many of our readers might agree with this premise. In December we offer a bracing essay called "Villon's Disgusting Recipe for Fried Tongue." The author shows how Villon's *Ballade des langues ennuyeuses*, from his *Testament*, attacks his enemies through the use of scatology and exploits the poetic richness of marginality in this *ballade*. Overlooked today, it was popular in its own time. Also in December, "Diderot's Dialogic Difference" argues that dialogue is constitutive of Diderot's philosophical ideas of reference and mirrors the philosophical concepts found in his other texts. The crucial text for this argument is *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville*, whose structure provides a dialogic understanding of cultural difference instead of a primitivistic one. Dialogue thus emerges as an inherent aspect of ethnographic knowledge. The author of "Post-Colonialism and its Ghosts in Tahar Djaout's *Les Chercheurs d'os*" takes up the problems of estrangement from social reality that Djaout felt in Algeria. Djaout shows that we do not always learn from the colonial past and that this failure coupled with the inability to come to terms with the post-colonial present always come back to haunt us.

A piece in February entitled "Reworking Autobiography: Malika Mokeddem's Double Life" traces the shift from the third person narrative of *Les Hommes qui marchent* (1991) to the use of "je" in *La Transe des insoumis* (2003). In this way Mokeddem reconstructs her identity and moves to a consideration of the individual identity as it emerges from a collective one. "Assia Djebar as Film Theorist in 'Touchia: Ouverture' and *Ces voix qui m'assiègent*," also takes up the quest for strong, female identity. Djebar moves to outlaw the male gaze as the only source of women's contemporary representation and creates a female gaze and perspective in these works. "Reading an Artist's Book of Poems: The *Florilège des Amours de Ronsard* by Henri Matisse" gives us a rare glimpse of how the painter adds new meanings to 56 poems, mostly sonnets and *chansons* from different Ronsard collections. The flower motif is especially important in a vase, a bouquet, or tattooed on a woman; and Matisse adds portraits of women as well as love scenes of nude women in profile and full face.

In March we present a compelling essay called "Consumption and Desire in *Au Bonheur des Dames*." The author emphasizes Zola's prophetic vision of mass consumption and how women gained a new sense of sexual identity through shopping in the *grand magasin*. "From

Literary page to Operatic Stage: Manon's Tragic Voice of her Own" shows how Manon became more eroticized in the opera where, unlike in the novel, she communicates her thoughts and guilt in the first person. This gives her a voice that she lacked in the novel, where she was unable to speak for herself, an authorial decision that led to ambiguity about how to interpret her role. Also in March "Reorienting Surrealism" underscores how the "Orient" became the surrealists' rallying cry for political action and a site where they first attempted to redefine their practice as the intersection of the political, the social, and the "spiritual" in the space of knowledge. The movement's denunciation of French intervention against the Rif Republic in 1924 is considered Surrealism's political turning point as it sought to court the Communist Party and join forces with young writers of the avant-garde literary journal, *Philosophies* and the Marxist intellectuals of the para-communist journal, *Clarté*.

There is a provocative article in the April number entitled "Narrative, Genre, and Community in Marguerite de Navarre's *L'Heptaméron* and Baudelaire's *Le Spleen de Paris*." The author asserts that Baudelaire offers a more solitary view of contemporary life and makes greater demands on the reader to interact with the poetic text than in the case of de Navarre. "Une Langue étrangère: Translating Sex and Race in Rachilde's *La Jongleuse*" highlights the preoccupation with the exotic and foreign in fin-de-siècle France through a bi-cultural and exoticized protagonist. "Poésies I & II de Georges Schéché: essai d'une étude scripturale" presents this Lebanese poet's construction of the images of earth, sun, flowers, sea, and birds. His movement towards a perfect and poetic world in exile demonstrates that place is always important. Although we only include one interview this year, it is an exceptional one with the great Martinican writer, Raphael Confiant. He discusses how relations between men and women were governed by slavery, as well as the current state of race relations in Martinique, "créolité," and the use of *créole* in his works.

In May 2008 we will publish a special issue on the literature, society, and pedagogy of Belgium, French-speaking Switzerland, and Luxemburg. I will have more to say about this special volume when it appears.

I am very pleased to announce a special issue on pedagogy to be published in the May 2009 issue of the *French Review* (cf. announcement in this issue). It will be open to all manner of articles on the teaching of French language, literature, and society and culture. We would particularly like to include articles on the teaching of beginning French at the elementary, middle, high school, and college and university levels. We also want articles that would fit into our rubric, "In Your Corner: Focus on the Classroom."

In closing I want to offer special thanks to Priscilla Ferguson, who has served as an Assistant Editor for Society and Culture for the past six years. Her multi-disciplinary training in literature and sociology gave her a unique and valued perspective as one of our readers. Priscilla was also Review Editor for Civilization in the 1980s and served as Co-editor for the 2000 special issue on Paris, in which hers was the lead article. Alec G. Hargreaves has succeeded Priscilla, and we welcome him to our editorial board.

Finally, please be sure to celebrate national French Week (La Semaine du français) from 5-11 November. As I said last year, it is more important than ever to share our passion for the French language and Francophone culture and literature with our communities and to encourage diversity across the United States.

Bonne rentrée,
Christopher P. Pinet