

T H E U N I V E R S I T Y

Chimères



Volume XXVIII

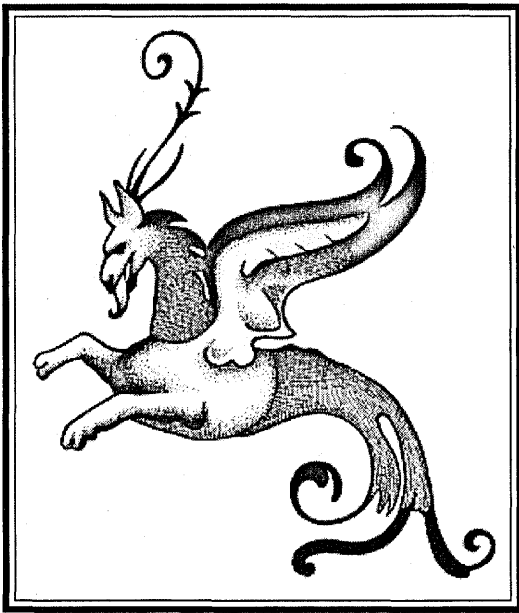
Spring 2004

A JOURNAL OF FRENCH LITERATURE

O F K A N S A S

Chimères

A Journal of French Literature



Volume XXVIII

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———— Daniela TEODORESCU ————

I am pleased to present our 2004 issue of *Chimères*. Our articles this year are on very diverse topics and cover nearly every period of French and Francophone literature. There are nevertheless some echoes between the studies.

A number of our writers showed an interest in “dialogue”: the dialogue of the arts, or of genres, of writers, of writers and critics, of storytellers and their audience. I begin this part of our issue with Selbee Diouf’s Interview with Senegalese writer Aminata Sow Fall (a recipient of the Goncourt Prize), in which Sow Fall speaks of her attitude towards feminism in writing. Our second selection is Catharine Randall’s study of different voices in Ronsard’s poetry through the musical notions of polyphony and counterpoint. Carla Calargé’s study brings together the world of the typically French *bande dessinée* through “Asterix,” and of the Francophone novel and the life of *beurs* through *Le Gone du Chaâba* by Azouz Begag. Christy Wampole explores the Foucauldian concept of writers creating *potential* works actualized by their followers. Sandrine Teixidor studies the powers of storytellers in their society and over their audience as well as their representation of the collective mind of their community.

Our other writers explored questions of identity for men and women in different historical and social contexts, often as a function of violence. Kirsten Halling looks at identity in relation to power as it manifests itself through cultural and symbolic capital and social interactions. Ann Kontor discovers a medieval story about the Saracene Saladin that unlike other epics portrays him as a courtly hero resembling his Christian counterparts. Babacar Ndiaye looks at particularly masculine traits as he examines the definition of the male hero in *Les gardiens du temple* by Cheikh Hamidou. And finally, Bérénice Le Marchand studies the Aristotelian definition of the woman hero in Racine’s theatre as it is embodied and subverted.

In this issue I have decided also to include small biographies of the authors, in order to show the variety of backgrounds of our writers. *Chimères* is a graduate journal run entirely by graduate students, with advice from faculty in the French Department at the *University of Kansas*.

Most of the articles we receive are from graduate students who are about to finish their doctorate. However, we have accepted good articles from Master students. We have also published articles from professors, some of them in the beginning stages of their career, and others well-known. Our journal has gained visibility with time, and major libraries in France, Germany, Italy and the US are currently subscribed to it.

The process of choosing articles and preparing them for publication involves quite a bit of serious work, but is also very stimulating. This year, the members of the Editorial board met several times a semester to discuss articles that we had received. We were able thus to put together a list of suggestions for the authors. These meetings were enjoyable, sometimes involving tea and cookies, and other times leading to unexpectedly heated debates. The second stage, preparing accepted work for publication, involved checking every rule in the book (the MLA style manual) to make sure the format of each article complied. This is detail work, but aspect matters as much as content. To everyone who has helped make this year's issue of *Chimères* possible, Selbee Diouf, Frédérique Sevet, Anna Lambertson, Regina Peszat, Mohammad Mohtashempour, Professor Caroline Jewers and Ms. Pam LeRow from the CLA&S Word Processing Center, I would like to say Thank You.

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About the Authors

CARLA CALARGÉ finished a DEA in French Literature in Lebanon, and is presently a PhD student at the University of Iowa. She is interested in non realist and postrealist forms of expression in Francophone literature, especially the literature of North Africa and the Near East. She is in the process of publishing articles on Bouraoui and Serhane.

MAME SELBEE DIOUF graduated from the University of Dakar, Senegal, with a Master's degree in English in 1994. She wrote a master's thesis on gender and identity in African women's writing. As a graduate student at the University of Kansas, she presented a paper on the African experience in the Caribbean novel by women at the ALA conference in 2001. She also presented papers for the 2002 Summer Institute and 2003 Spring Seminar on *Women and Islam* organized by the University of Kansas. She is currently a PhD candidate in English at the University of Kansas. Her dissertation focuses on the issue of gender and race in three black women's novels: *Beloved*, *Douceurs du Bercaïl* and *David's Story*. She reads the novels of Toni Morrison, Aminata Sow Fall and Zoe Wicomb as reconstructive narratives of the imperialist construction of gender and race.

KIRSTEN HALLING, Assistant Professor of French at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio, received her doctorate from the University of Virginia in 1996. Her research interests include: Twentieth and Twenty-first century French and Francophone Literature and Cultures, Film Studies, and Language Pedagogy.

ANN KONTOR holds a Master's degree in French Literature from the University of Kansas and is currently enrolled in the University of Nebraska's College of Education and Human Sciences. Her areas of interest are pedagogy and second language acquisition.

BÉRÉNICE LE MARCHAND has obtained a PhD in May 2004 at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN. Her dissertation title is: *Mise en scène du miroir: Le spectaculaire dans les blasons et emblèmes de la Renaissance et les contes de fées du dix-septième siècle en France*. Her dissertation director is Professor Holly Tucker. With a minor in Medieval Studies and Second Language Acquisition, and a primary research field in Early modern France, she will start a tenure-track position at the level of Assistant Professor in August of 2004 at San Francisco State University, California. Her immediate project is to rework her dissertation in hope of having a publishable book-length manuscript.

BABACAR NDIAYE obtained a PhD in Political Philosophy from the University Cheikh Anta Diop of Dakar, Senegal. His dissertation was *Anthropologie et*

science du pouvoir: la question de l'unité de la pensée dans les écrits politiques et autobiographiques de Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He has published thirteen articles in *Ethiopiennes*, *Revue de la gendarmerie nationale*, *Armée-Nation*, *Revue de la Gendarmerie* (France), *Revue d'études et d'information de la gendarmerie* (Sénégal) and *Armée-Nation*. A former civilian police officer for the United Nations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Babacar Ndiaye is a Major (Chef d'escadron) of the Senegalese National Gendarmerie, and is attending Libreville Army Staff College.

CATHARINE RANDALL is a Professor of French in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at Fordham University, New York, NY., where she was Chair of the department from 2000 to 2003. Previously, she was an Assistant Professor at Rutgers University and Barnard College and an Associate Professor at Fordham University. Randall obtained her PhD in French from The University of Pittsburgh in 1987. The title of her dissertation was *Strategies of Overcoming: The Author as Sinful Creator in Agrippa d'Aubigné's Epic and Prose Works*. Catharine Randall has published five books, among which *Building Codes: The Aesthetics of Calvinism in Early Modern Europe* (1995) and has two book-length manuscripts currently under review. She has also published well over fifty book chapters and articles, and presented over eighty conference papers. She is currently working on a book-length manuscript *Inventing Angeline: Myth, Memory, and the Acadian Diaspora*, and on "'Comment raconter l'Acadie?': Avatars de Pélagie La Charrette: Chrétien de Troyes, Rabelais and the Cent Nouvelles nouvelles."

SANDRINE TEIXIDOR, after receiving a Master's in English from the University of Paris 7, obtained a Master's in French literature from Ohio University and a PhD in French from Duke University. Entitled *Littératures de Bretagne; symbole de la France plurielle*, her dissertation analyzed four authors from that region — Coic, Hélias, Grall, and Thomas — who published mainly after the 1970's. She will be a visiting Associate Professor at Duke University starting August of 2004. She is mainly interested in 20th century French and Francophone literature with an emphasis on marginality, regionalism and cultural diversity.

CHRISTY WAMPOLE studies French literature and Italian in the Doctor of Modern Languages Program at Middlebury College in Vermont. Her particular areas of interest include 20th and 21st century avant-garde literature, critical approaches to visual culture, and the role of technology in literary production and criticism. She recently proposed the creation of the Workshop for Potential Electronic Games, modeled after the Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle, at the "Form, Culture, and Video Game Criticism" Conference at Princeton University. She has reviewed several books for *The French Review* and currently works as both a French instructor at the University of North Texas and a freelance translator.

Letter from Professor David Dinneen

Website for Alumni of the Department of French & Italian

In February of this year (2003), we published a newsletter for alumni, containing news and comments from many alumni who responded to a questionnaire we sent out in 2000. What was originally intended to be a century-ending newsletter has now developed into a regularly updated "Alumni Notes," available on the web page given here:

<http://www.ku.edu/~frnwsltr/feb03.htm>

At present, the site contains the original set of alumni notes, alphabetically by decades (from the 1930s to the 1990s), with a brief introduction. When the revision is complete, there will be a regularly updated "alumni notes" section, plus a separate section for the most recently received responses, one for notes by former faculty, and various other sections.

We have alumni all over the world and, although many no longer have a direct connection with French or Italian, many have commented on how much they still love the language and take every opportunity to use it. Some of the comments are wonderfully expressed testimonials for the value of a liberal arts education in general and a strong foundation in language in particular. Respondents told us what they've been doing since graduation, related anecdotes about their time at KU and, in particular, about any Study Abroad experiences they may have had.

We encourage you to look at the web page next time you're on the internet and scroll through the entries. Of course, if you're an alumna/-us who has not had a chance to respond to the original questionnaire, we'd very much like to have you respond as soon as you can: the basic information is in the introduction to the web page.

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C a r t e b l a n c h e

Paul A. SCOTT

I t is a pleasure to be asked to write a *carte blanche*. When Edward VIII abdicated as British monarch in 1936, he gave a radio broadcast to the nation and Empire, in which he began: “At last I am able to have a few words of my own,” and I feel a little of the same. The irony of the former King’s words is that they were largely written by another — Winston Churchill — but these *propos* are of my own.

Over the past decade or so, in both North America and Europe, the graduate student has evolved into a multi-tasker. During the pursuit of a doctoral degree, they are typically expected to teach, research, present at conferences, perhaps organize a graduate conference, network, work, and publish to a degree and combination never seen before, all of which almost fulfills the requirements of a Nietzschean *übermensch*. Added to this is the stress of applying for positions towards the end of the degree; I found conferences a wonderful forum for trading horror stories with other sympathetic graduate students. Often, we would find ourselves dreaming of generations past. And we were not the only ones. One professor I particularly admired, who had the ability to make poetry sooth, seize, and sing to freshmen, started off his speech at his retirement luncheon with the words: “At last I am getting out. The halcyon days of the academy are over, and I pity graduate students coming into the system today.” It is easy to sympathize with such sentiments. Although my advisor spent seven years completing his dissertation and was warned not to think about publishing until he was in his mid-30s, as his views needed to mature, today, this would spell certain death to a prospective career, mature or otherwise. However, like my friends’ visceral reaction to my proposed move to America, I firmly believe such attitudes must be resisted. It is certain that things have changed over the past few decades within the college and university educational systems, yet we should not lose sight of the positive aspects to this as well. The more intensive graduate studies’ programs and the activities that students are expected to participate in means that there is less of a gulf between faculty and graduate students, and more importantly, between the transition from graduate

research and teaching to the assistant professor position. There is no doubt that contemporary graduate students are better prepared and equipped to deal with the rigors of today's academy.

I began looking for a teaching position in the United States shortly before the atrocities of September 11, 2001. In the following months, particularly when I was interviewed by several institutions at the MLA Convention held in New Orleans, several friends back in the United Kingdom thought I was courageous to be looking to locate across the Atlantic at such an uncertain, and apparently unsafe, period. It is an attitude that is understandable to a degree, but which I believe is ultimately self-defeating. I have visited Belfast during the Troubles as well as Jerusalem during one recent terror campaign, and the best defense against fear is normality. It was in Israel in March 1996, just before the terminal examination of my B.A. degree, that I experienced something that changed my priorities in life. It was not so much what happened to me as what did not take place. One morning I slept in and missed my regular bus into central Jerusalem. I was awoken by the building shaking violently, and the very specific sound of an explosion. Then, an unearthly silence. It is this short period of total stillness that I remember the most vividly, as if nature had been stunned by human barbarity. The number 8 bus had been suicide-bombed instantly killing twenty-eight people on board. Had my alarm-or body clock been more accurate, I would have been on that very bus. When I sat my finals two months later, they somehow did not seem so terrifying or decisive as before. Many people in war-torn situations, such as the Blitz or more recent conflicts, simply get on with their lives. Ignoring adversity can be as potent a weapon as combating it head on. Refusal comes in many forms.

It has therefore been interesting to move to the States with the current international situation †the war of terror, the war in Iraq, enhanced security — ever present in the background. My arrival having been delayed due to the prolongation of the visa process, as part of the stricter security screening procedures, I arrived in early January in Lawrence just in time for the beginning of the Spring Semester at the University of Kansas. Moving anywhere mid-year can be unsettling, and I would like to offer some of my observations on differences between the American and British academies. Having recently completed my doctoral dissertation, I am still very much close, both in time and in spirit, to being a graduate student, and this area particularly interests me. It is probably not an understatement to note that undertaking graduate studies in the UK at this moment in time involves being rather rich or rather insane (eccentricity being an

unspoken pre-requisite to study in some schools). Around 15% of graduate students working within the humanities receive the traditionally prestigious Arts and Humanities' Research Board (AHRB) scholarship. This used to be awarded solely to individual research projects, but there is a significant trend for faculty members or departments to submit a proposal for a specific project which is then awarded funding for a three-year dissertation. Upon receiving a favorable decision, the department then recruits a graduate student (usually external) to undertake this particular dissertation topic. I consider this a depressing development. While on paper it may seem an efficient method for departments to attract researchers, the ultimate consequence is that individual endeavor is harnessed. Given that a public body has funded a very detailed project, there is little scope for the recipient of such an award to deviate away from the original emphasis, and that can never be a positive effect. The primary difference I have noticed between graduate students in the UK and in the USA, is that students in the States tend to be much less isolated than their British-based counterparts. Doctoral students do not take classes or examinations in the UK, and even master's degrees can be entirely done by research. Feelings of isolation, compounded by poverty, and the prospect of facing a barren job market, results in widespread malaise and angst among my compatriots, and with good reason.

One great benefit of teaching in the American system is the greater freedom to teach works and courses of my choice. Typically in the UK, a faculty member inherits courses whose entire set texts and evaluation component has been decided by a committee, an arrangement which inevitably results in courses being handed down with little change over the years. I found with some amusement that I was teaching an identical syllabus of an introduction to literature course in 2000 to what I had myself studied eight years earlier as a freshman. A grade for participation is becoming increasingly common in the UK, but is by no means universal. I find students in the US are much more responsive and prepared to engage more in class than their British counterparts, and having a participation grade makes a tangible difference. My decision to accept the offer of a post in Lawrence essentially came down to one thing. The crucial question I asked myself, was whether I could be happy here? The answer was affirmative, and it has been proved right so far.

In short, my manifesto is one of hope in the face of new challenges. It is easy to fall into the category of a professional prophet of doom, harking back to structures in place in an arcadian past, or to a life where pressures appeared to be less intensive. However, simply because things

are so markedly different today does not necessarily mean they are tougher or worse. Life seems to move at a faster pace, but if one takes a step back, then it is exposed for the illusion it really is. Due to advances in technology, it is information that is dominant today, not knowledge, and I believe the two things are not identical. Technological progress has resulted in the streamlining of education, which in turn has led educational systems to categorized and evaluated all too often on a business-type model. Yet, all has not changed as much as we might be tempted to imagine, for although the Internet has speeded up the way we research and communicate, it has not constituted in itself a major advance in global civilization. The most influential inventions of the past few centuries are not the telephone or the computer, but rather the printing press and railway travel. Everything else has been as a result of the change in our mindsets that these two innovations produced. It is easy to become caught up in the apparent speed of the technological age, and feel trapped by the waxing tide, and lose sight of the fact that the essential constituents of the academic sphere have not evolved as much as we might believe. Like the bus not taken, I believe we should look to the future, not dwell on, or in, the past.

**Dr. Paul A. Scott, Assistant Professor
University of Kansas**