

THE UNIVERSITY

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CHIMERES



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**A JOURNAL OF FRENCH LITERATURE,  
LANGUAGE, AND CULTURE**

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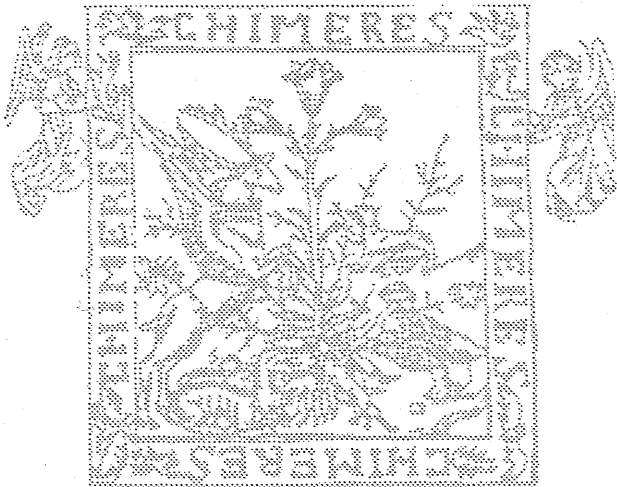
OF KANSAS

# CHIMERES

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# CHIMERES VOLUME XXII NO. 2 - SPRING 1996

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Assistant Editors:

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Tami Scheibach

Daniela Teodorescu

Incoming Assistant Editors:

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**F****rom the desk of the editor**

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*Tina Isaac*

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The graduate students from the department of French and Italian at University of Kansas are happy to present to you, our readership, the latest issue of *Chimères*. We believe the contents of the journal will be thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated by our readers. Our goal is to offer the academic community a sampling of the solid graduate work and criticism which is currently being produced throughout the country. We at *Chimères* are eager to provide a forum for publication where aspiring young scholars and untenured assistant professors are able to submit their work. We congratulate the contributors to this issue and thank them for their support.

As is natural for many graduate student journals, the editing team of *Chimères* has recently undergone a renewal of personnel. The effort to publish this particular issue has been a collective one which would not have occurred without the dedicated efforts of many people, especially Daniela Teodorescu and Professor Caroline Jewers. To both of them, the new *Chimères* team extends our sincere thanks.

And finally, this edition enables us to acknowledge the departure of an important member of the former *Chimères* contingency, editor-in-chief Scott Manning. We extend our genuine appreciation to Scott for the vital role he assumed in organizing and editing the journal. We wish him success and extend our warmest regards to him as he embarks on his new position at Susquehanna University. He will be missed at the University of Kansas.





# carte blanche

— Caroline Jewers —

In the footsteps of far more illustrious predecessors I am delighted to have *carte blanche* and the opportunity to share some musings about the current state of the profession with *Chimères* readers. My first thought was to echo my colleagues' concerns about the current job situation and the stresses of the new academic market place; my next notion was to second the necessity for more and better training, information on grant-writing and publishing, so that students are sharper and more ready for the available positions. University administrations, departments, faculty and students have never been under greater pressure than they are now, and at that point my editorial thoughts became gloomy, as terms like "streamlining" and "downsizing" sprang to mind. The ivory tower (although never a real refuge from the slings and arrows of the real world) is under seige - more must be made of less at all costs. In these fiscally anxious times administrators walk an unenviable tightrope, balancing intellectual needs with budget requirements. The effects are well-known to us all: fewer full-time jobs, many more part-time positions of uncertain duration with minimal or no benefits, and units operating on resources continually stretched to the limits. Affirmative action, tenure, and other issues related to academic freedom find themselves under challenge. All this uncertainty would be enough to cope with were it not for the fact that our fields and disciplines are changing too, a radical metamorphosis that we cannot slow down to assess. Perhaps our sense of upheaval seems more intense because of our proximity to the millenium, but there has never been a more exciting, challenging, and difficult time to be a member of this profession.

The shift towards a corporate model for universities has been an inevitable result of their emergence into the competitive



economic marketplace. The perfunctory and sanitizing language of corporate America now pervades our institutions with cold efficiency, and often we must concentrate on product rather than process, on accounting rather than accountability - all of which has an increasingly dehumanizing effect in an environment where human bonds, not financial ones, have been the stock-in-trade. Maintaining standards and preserving the humanity of the humanities is a fight in which students, faculty, and administrators must be engaged if we are to enrich that other corporate structure of which we are an integral living part, that is the body of texts and knowledge given to us in trust for future generations. There may not be an instant return from some of the intellectual questions that we seek to answer - but someone, someday will have the benefit of them. No-one engaged in the process of learning ever knows where that knowledge will lead them or what its worth may be - but because we cannot always assign a market-value to it, it does not mean that it is worth any the less. To the contrary, it is priceless.

What is more, our engagement with the profession coincides with the biggest revolution in intellectual life since the inventing of the printing press. As disembodied as we might sometimes feel, scholars have never been so connected by technology. Never have they had access to so much so easily - which makes the current trend for academic shrinkage all the more ironic. The research environment teems with life and possibilities such that in one's office there is quite literally a world of opportunity. This sense of intellectual corporation, of being formed into a unified body of widely fragmented constituent parts remains exhilarating.

When I settled to write down some ideas for this column, my alumni magazine happened to arrive. With corporateness still on my mind, I glanced through it and was very struck by a filler picture from the university archive (Oregon Quarterly, Summer 1997, p.52). It features a composite photograph of the six graduates of the 1891 class of the University of Oregon. Composite photographs, archivist Keith Richard assures us, were a popular phenomenon. Groups of people sat one-by-one for the allotted expo-

sure time in the same position, so that the net result is a superimposition of figures whose individual contours are blurred in a single portrait. Gender distinctions and individual traits are lost and traded for a surrealist and interesting whole. Like shimmering ghosts, each layer of image betrays an ephemeral fragility etched in silver salts for posterity. The class of '91 was mostly women, but the androgynous collective expression is confident, calm, and wise. Most striking are the eyes, which have incredible depth, derived perhaps from the different perspectives of each member. Their idealistic gaze is a moving reminder of the ties that bind, and of the continuity of which we are a part. They seem to have an inherent knowledge of something we are forgetting: that universities are first and foremost corporate in a human sense, and that their value transcends time, space, and the individual. The current *Verfremdungseffekt* of institutional life would seem to alienate us increasingly as colleagues, students, and academic grail- and job-seekers. But at the heart of it, and here no triteness is intended, we are still part of a body of scholars and of scholarship, and its membership is wholly worth the sacrifice and struggle we must make for it.