

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

CHIMERE S



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O F K A N S A S

"C'est souvent, [...], au moment où les jeunes gens désespèrent le plus de leur avenir, que leur fortune commence."

Honoré de Balzac, *Illusions perdues*

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F rom the desk of the editor

—Alain-Philippe Durand—

The other night while organizing my office, I came upon the complete collection of *Chimères*. I then began a very interesting journey back in time, into the archives of our journal. I smiled at the first 1967-68 covers charmingly illustrated by hand. I wondered which kind of musical instrument (or was it one?) that hairy man was holding on the Winter 1969 issue. Finally, I approved “the transition from typing to word processing” praised in the Spring 1986 issue by then editor-in-chief Hope Christiansen.¹

What struck me the most, however, was to notice that for so many years, generation after generation, the message of *Chimères* had remained the same: to publish a literary journal of quality, “written by graduate students of French and intended for graduate students of French (8) as Lloyd Free, the first editor of the journal wrote.² In fact, in his introduction “An Editor’s Astrobale.” Free underlined major points of graduate publishing which are still relevant today. He insisted on the permanent “need for dedication and foresight” and the “exhausting and at times discouraging” (9) efforts the enterprise of editing a journal requires. In addition, Free mentioned what he saw as four major obstacles: “apathy, time, money, and inexperience” (9). Which graduate journal could claim exemption from these obstacles today? What is most encouraging, however, is that through the years the students editing *Chimères* have always overcome those inherent problems thanks to their enthusiasm, motivation and, most importantly, their team spirit.

Thanks to many people, the present issue reflects this philosophy. An admirable group of editors and authors worked hard in order to complete this edition on time. Professor Ronald W. Tobin, who witnessed the birth of the journal, accepted generously to write our *Carte Blanche*. Our advisors, Professors Caroline Jewers and Allan H. Pasco and the rest of the faculty in the department of French and Italian of the University of Kansas have always been supportive. Finally, other organizations such as the *Modern Language Association* have contributed in various ways to the popularity of *Chimères*. On behalf of the entire staff, I thank them warmly.

I sincerely hope the future generations of editors will accept the challenge and keep building on this rich foundation. As the original initiator of our review, Professor Kenneth S. White stated enigmatically, and yet prophetically: “nos *Chimères* continuent. Son titre dit bien pourquoi.”³

Notes

¹Editor-in-chief from 1985 to 1988.

²Cf. "An Editor's Astrolabe," *Chimères*, Winter 1969: 7-12. Lloyd Free was editor of the journal from 1967 to 1970.

³Cf. *Chimères*, Fall 76/Spring 77:5.



Ronald W. Tobin

Teaching and Research

I am happy to be able to respond to the invitation from Alain-Philippe Durand to address an issue of moment for graduate students in French at the University of Kansas. Since *Chimères* was founded while I was chair for French and Italian at KU, I have always taken an avuncular interest in its progress. I am indeed impressed to note that *Chimères* has managed to swim against the tide in difficult financial times by finding a source of funding.

These are, to be sure, difficult times and they require a different preparation and more commitment from graduate students. To pursue a career in higher education in the twenty-first century, students will have to be trained in technology for research and for teaching, for there is little point to using yesterday's tools to educate tomorrow's citizenry. While we immediately think of word-processing, data banks, and e-mail for research purposes, we should also remember that instructing the "electronic generation" of the 1990's is often more effective if one uses multi-media delivery systems. In fact, such a crossover between research and teaching instruments should be a given at a research university like KU because the faculty--and the future faculty--have the enormous advantage over professionals at other kinds of educational institutions of teaching what they research. They are not only prurveyors of knowledge but producers of it--and this production informs instruction and gives cutting edge knowledge to students, thereby making teaching exciting for the instructor and exemplary for the student.

And then there is the other indispensable element of graduate education, indeed of all education in these times: a rededication to ideas. The American public is aware, at some level of its collective consciousness, of the need for professors to be more than data processing machines. What they require of us is the acknowledgement that traditional, value-oriented education has a major role to play in the preparation of their children. While hoping that its offspring will be competently trained in an academic discipline (that will lead to a job!), society expects us to assure students' intellectual and moral formation as a response to its recurrent nightmare, namely, that America is neglecting its young. Our society also dreams of a return to a sense of community, as a corrective to the fragmentation, clanning, and rampant egocentrism of the day in other words, the public has put on us the whole onus of the African proverb: "It takes a whole village

to raise one child." That is the reason why everyone, from parents to legislators, is making so much of "accountability." Since the stakes appear to be very high, the citizens want us to act responsibly toward our important tasks.

What has this to do with graduate education in French? Everything, I suspect. Now that the age of "les grands maîtres de la critique" is largely past and the profession is going through a period of soul-searching, it is time for those of us who teach literature to point out that we hold answers to the public's concerns. From Aristotle on, the of education has always been to form moral beings--alas, we have forgotten that to a disappointing degree. If we are to return to that healthy, traditional view of education, then the teaching of literature must be central, for basic questions about society and the individual are the stuff of which literature--and classroom discussion--is made. And, of course, the national literature which deals most intensely with such issues is (as we all know...) the product of a centuries-old confluence (collision, really) of Latin passion and Germanic rigor.

As Editor of the *French Review* I do not wish to be seen as calling for a return to a belletristic approach to literature that prefers impressionism to formal analysis. Nor do I recommend that we set aside the exegetical lessons learned from structuralism and post-structuralism. But if form does follow function, then the skillful dissection of a text can be not only a fruitful exercise in critical thinking but the prologue to debates on the assumptions and perceptions such analyses reveal. A contemporary graduate education in teaching and research would, therefore, call for a new attention to the *content* of great works, a careful extension of the canon so that we may be enlightened by other voices, an apprenticeship in the use of educational technology, and a heightened sensitivity to student learning so that exploring vital concerns can be done effectively, as a form of interaction and dialogue. Let the professors show the way and the (graduate) students will follow.

Ronald W. Tobin

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