

Lettre de la Présidente

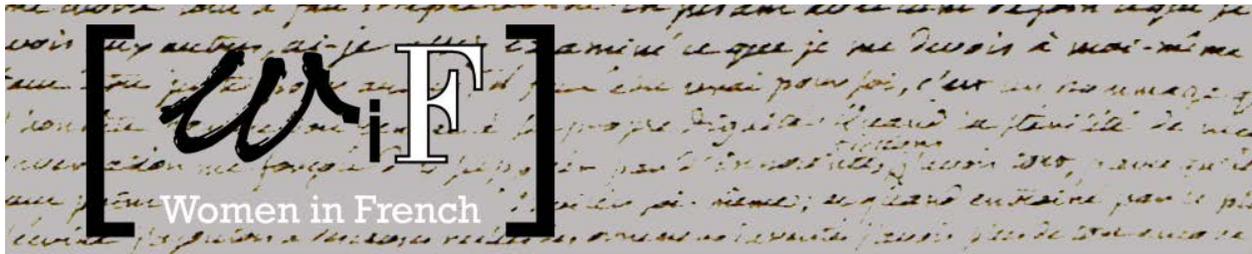
Fall 2005

Dear Colleagues,

I come away from my first six months as Chair gratified at the tremendous success of the Second International Women in French Conference held in April at Scripps College. Scripps, the distinctive women's college among the five Claremont colleges, provided the perfect setting for a conference celebrating women's writing in French and featuring cutting edge scholarship on that writing. At Scripps, each graduating class leaves its mark in the form of a mural in a courtyard rose garden. The inscription on the mural of the class of 1973 perhaps best sums up the affinities between the institution that hosted our gathering and our own organization "De l'audace, encore de l'audace, toujours de L'audace."

The conference opened with an electric presentation by the Haitian dance troop from nearby Occidental College, directed by Elizabeth Chin. After this exhilarating performance, WIF's own Barbara Klaw gave the most adventurous among us the opportunity to learn firsthand about North African dance in a presentation and workshop. Marie-Denise Shelton of Claremont-McKenna College, our plenary speaker on Friday, continued our commemoration of the bicentennial of Haitian independence with "Écriture de l'histoire," a moving presentation of the ways in which Haitian women writers inscribe the experience of slavery in their texts. We were also privileged to have Marie-Claire Blais, considered by many to be Québec's premier woman writer, read from her recent works at the conference's closing banquet. Both were powerful speakers. The entire conference was marked by a vibrant exchange of ideas and the collegiality that is the hallmark of our association. Kudos go to local hosts Thierry Boucquey and Nathalie Rachlin for their seamless organization of conference events and the hospitality we enjoyed. It was a pleasure to work with Cathy Yandell and the tireless—and surely not retired—Annabelle Rea, chair of the program committee, as well as past chair Catherine Montfort over the last two years. The WIF gratefully acknowledges the generous support offered by the deans at Scripps, Occidental, and Bates Colleges and by the Délégation du Québec à Los Angeles. Catherine Montfort's astute management also made it possible to offer for the first time limited financial assistance to participants with clearly established need: graduate students, part-time faculty members, and scholars traveling from abroad.

Above all, I want to thank all of the conference participants who made this event so special, including those who gave papers, organized sessions, or agreed to chair sessions. I came away exhausted but exhilarated. I am now counting on Cathy Yandell's enthusiasm, critical acumen, and enormous good sense as we edit a volume of selected essays that reflect the breadth and quality of the conference. Plans are also underway for the third International WIF Conference, tentatively scheduled for 2006.



As a number of conference participants remarked, an important feature of WIF is the open communication its members share, regardless of rank or length of experience in the field. In that spirit, the Executive Committee is proposing a change in the association's by-laws to include a graduate student representative, elected by the membership at large, to serve on the WIF executive board. This is a change originally suggested by Catherine Montfort during her term as chair, and is now presented for your consideration on the enclosed ballot. The purpose is to provide fuller, even more inclusive representation on the committee.

WIF also needs your vote in the elections for representatives for the following regions: Mid-Atlantic, Great Lakes, Central and Rocky Mountain. Your elected representatives serve on the Executive Committee that plans the organization's future activities and decides on important organizational issues. Please let your voice be heard.

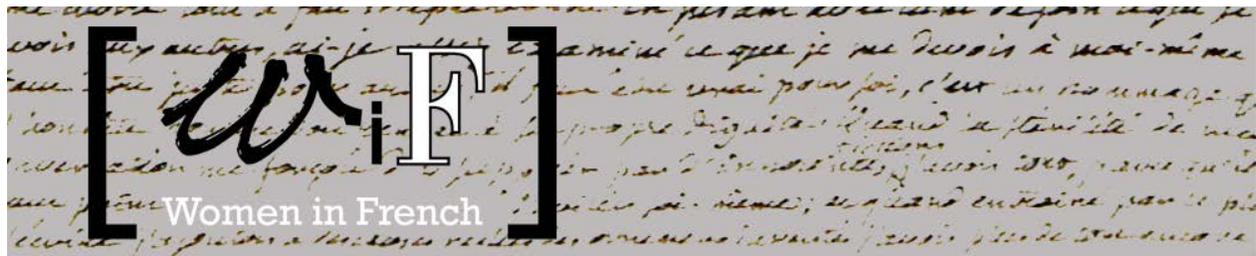
Finally, we ask you to express your choice among the proposed sessions for the 2005 MLA to be held in Washington, DC. Although it seems early, the MLA needs this information by January 4, 2005 in order to send calls for papers in a timely fashion. Please vote on these three items by sending in the ballot or e-mailing to Lucy Schwartz: schwarlm@buffalostate.edu.

This Newsletter includes one bibliography by Martine Guyot-Bender: "Romancières aujourd'hui: 1990-2004." "Les Femmes et la lecture," by Elisabeth-Christine Muelsch, and a bibliography on women who write for children, produced by a collaborative group organized by Christine Lac, are scheduled for spring 2005. WIF Vice-Chair Juliette Rogers has accepted several other proposals for future issues; if you are interested in proposing a topic (see last page), please contact her.

Thanks to Colette Trout and Audrey Sartiaux for organizing the sessions for this year's MLA convention in Philadelphia. Colette's session, *Une nouvelle écriture féminine?* features papers by Elizabeth Hall, Gill Rye, Michelle Chilcoat, and Cheryl Morgan. Participants in Audrey's session, *Le corps dans tous ses états: représentations littéraires de la honte*, include Anne Simon, Christine Détrez, Eliane Dalmolin, and a respondent, Anne-Marie Obajtek-Kirkwood.

As you can see from the announcement in the Newsletter, they promise to be exceptional. The results of your votes will be announced at our annual Business Meeting, to be held from 5-7 PM on December 28, at the Caribou Café, 1126 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, within walking distance of convention hotels. Venez nombreux et nombreuses ! It would be wonderful to see as many of us as possible.

My thanks go to all the nominees, session organizers, and volunteers that allow WIF to continue as such a vital organization.



Without your involvement, we could never attain what we have.

Marie Rice-Defosse