

Lettre de la Présidente

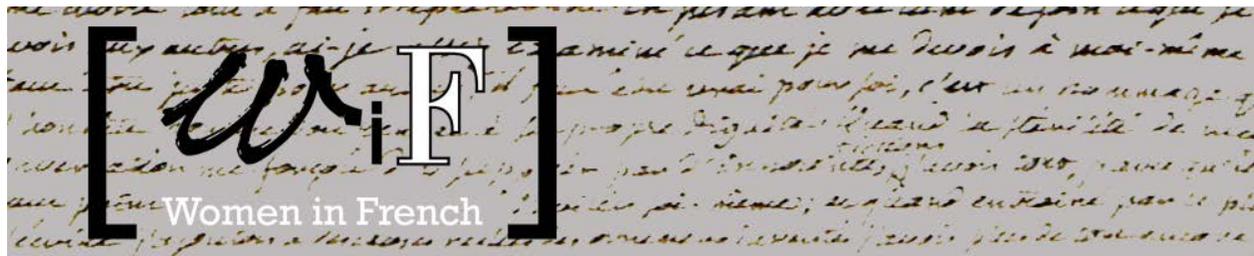
Fall 2007

Dear Colleagues,

As I write my last letter as Chair, I am both gratified by all that has been accomplished in the last four years, as well as relieved to be passing the torch into such capable hands. In this period, Women in French has maintained a steady membership; we have held two conferences, and now prepare for the Fourth International Women in French Conference, “Women in the Middle,” to be held at the University of North Texas. In addition to our own conferences, we have maintained a healthy presence at the Modern Language Association and regional MLAs. Early in my term as Chair, the MLA renewed WIF’s status as an allied organization of the MLA, a status that gives us significant presence in the profession, along with sister organizations like the Women’s Caucus in Modern languages, Women in German, and Femistas Unidas. Please note the place and time of our MLA sessions in Chicago, “Miscreants and Deviants of French Literature and Cinema,” organized by Judith Holland Sarnecki, and “Le moi en crise: Autobiography and Confession in Women's Writing,” organized by Gay Rawson (see p. 14 ).

We have published an issue of Women in French Studies, as well as two special volumes, with a third volume of essays selected from the 2006 conference in publication. You will find a call for another special volume (p. 10) in this issue and on the website. Much is due to the dynamic editors who have served in this time Frédérique Chevillot, and later Catherine Montfort as Executive Editor and Dawn Cornelio as Production Editor. Other volunteers, past and present, who deserve thanks are those who have handled library circulation (Adrianna Paliyenko and Maureen Perry) and mailings (Dorothy Stegman and Ellen Thorington). WIF Studies is also fortunate to have an impressive editorial board. In the end, however, it is the quality of the scholarship of the WIF members who contribute to our journal that makes it a premier journal in the study of women writers of French expression and of questions of gender in the French-speaking world.

The Newsletter continues to provide important news and announcements about the organization, member’s activities, and other items of professional interest, as well as a series of bibliographies. Janis Pallister’s highly original contribution in this issue, *Animation and Anime by Francophone Women Artists: A Guide*, is one such valuable resource found in each Newsletter. The Newsletter also documents the activities of our organization over time and has significant historical value. I am grateful to Martine Guyot-Bender and Cheryl Morgan for their professionalism and consistently positive outlook and editing this vital component in communications between members. I must also recognize two other key volunteers who keep us informed electronically: Gay Rawson, manager of our electronic list, and Nancy Virtue, manager of our Website, have worked behind the scenes with grace and skill on a daily basis. Roseanna Dufault and Antoinette M. Sol, who has replaced Karen Woodward, serve as editors of the WIF

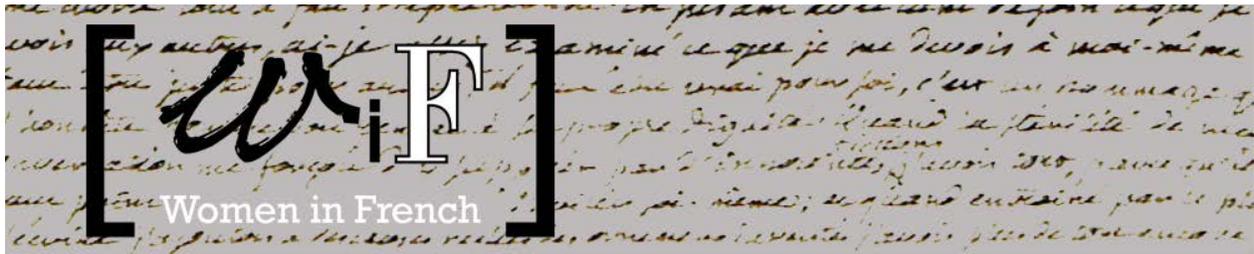


electronic Directory, another important resource for members of our organization that appears on our website.

Our Executive Committee has functioned efficiently and effectively thanks to the dedication of all those who have volunteered as regional representatives and officers. In my term, Women in French realized a dream of past Chair Catherine Montfort and changed its by-laws to include our first graduate student representative, Julie Nack Ngue. The indefatigable Juliette Rogers has served commendably not only as Vice Chair, but as organizer of our 2006 conference. Elizabeth Locey continues in her vital role as secretary. Her work should be greatly expedited by an exciting new development: thanks to the superb efforts of Eileen Ketchum McEwan, who took over as treasurer after Christine Lac's many years of service. As I write, Eileen and Nancy Virtue have just added a PayPal option via the WIF website. PayPal will offer members—especially international members—a way of paying dues and conference registration electronically, thus avoiding the difficulties and costs of paper transfers. We hope PayPal will make it easier to join or maintain membership in our organization.

WIF owes enormous debt to Lucy M. Schwartz, who stepped down after over a decade of service as Chair of the Nominating Committee and the Undergraduate Prize Committee to join her husband in his new position in Aix-en-Provence. WIF has remained such a healthy organization in large part due to Lucy's talents and perspicacity in recruiting talented and dedicated people. Happily, past Chairs Annabelle Rea and Colette Trout have agreed to replace Lucy for a time. You can find the harvest they have recruited in the list of members who have agreed to run for office in this issue (p. 9). There are important elections for Chair, Vice Chair, Graduate Student Representative, and Regional Representatives from the Mid-Atlantic, Great Lakes, and Central/Rocky Mountain regions. Many thanks to all who agreed to stand for election this year. There is also a ballot question to amend the By Laws and change Chair to President and Vice-Chair to Vice-President to parallel more clearly the French titles *Présidente* and *Vice-Présidente* and to reflect titles used by similar organizations. WIF is your organization: please vote.

Earlier this year, Katherine Stephenson announced that Sophie Delahaye, University of Kansas, was awarded the 2006 Women in French Graduate Student Essay Prize for her paper "La femme selon l'*Encyclopédie*." The essay will be published in *Women in French Studies*. Ms. Delahaye also receives a cash award of \$100, thanks to the generosity of WIF member Dr. Samia I. Spencer, Auburn University, who is also sponsoring a plaque to be presented to the professor who directed Ms. Delahaye's paper, Dr. Diane Fourny, University of Kansas, as this year's WIF Outstanding Mentor. Unfortunately, there were not enough submissions for the WIF Undergraduate Prize for committee members Margot Miller and Cora Monroe to evaluate despite new awards for the student writer and the student's undergraduate mentor, awards donated to recognize WIF members as undergraduate educators as well as their students. Please encourage your students to submit their work (please see p. 12 for more details).



In addition to the present roles of WIF's past chairs, I am especially grateful to Annabelle, Colette, and Catherine Montfort for their sage advice and counsel throughout my term. I certainly pledge my own support to our incoming Chair.

Among the volunteers who have served WIF so well, I would like to acknowledge one individual in particular: Sara Steinert Borella. Sara has held the position of manager of the electronic list, then regional representative, and is now book review editor. She is just one example of those members whose enthusiasm, good will and unflagging support have sustained me over the past four years and allowed WIF to move forward in invigorating directions.

In the long run, my best memories of my time as Chair will certainly be the memories of those who have participated in myriad ways in WIF, not just those I have mentioned above, but everyone who has organized or participated in convention and conference sessions, who has contributed an essay or review to WIF Studies or an announcement or bibliography to the Newsletter, who has posted an announcement on the website or an inquiry on the electronic list. WIF is not only a core group of volunteers—however appreciated they are! It is a network of dedicated professionals and scholars who share common interests and concerns. It's not surprising that people who share these interests also share an incredible openness and generosity of spirit. However, the organization is only as dynamic as each of us makes it. I urge each of us to make full use of our network and to invite others—students, colleagues, friends—to take advantage of all WIF has to offer. Please stay active and involved!

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible out our annual Assemblée Générale at the MLA, to be held, thanks to Juliette, at the Chicago Palm Restaurant, Swissôtel, 323 East Wacker Dr. at 5 pm on December 28.

Wishing you une bonne rentrée and a happy and productive fall,

*Marie Rice-Defosse*