

Lettre de la Présidente

Spring 2012

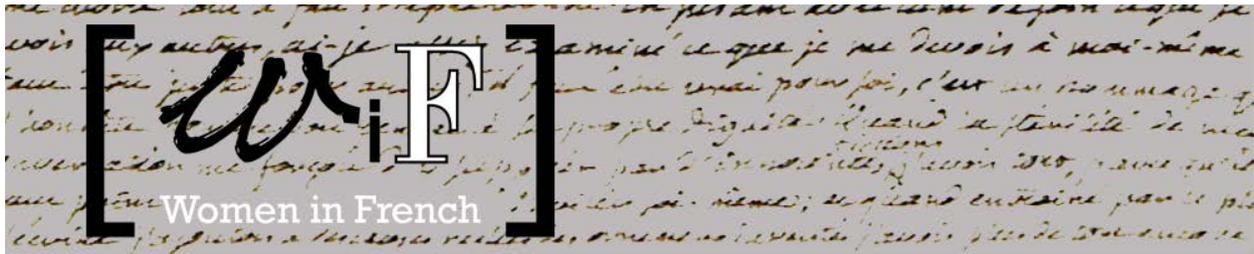
Dear colleagues,

As your newly elected President, I would like to begin my first letter by thanking Juliette Rogers, our outgoing President, for the tremendous work she has done the past four years for Women in French. You will be pleased to know that Julie is currently enjoying a well-deserved sabbatical in France. Thanks to her leadership, our organization remains strong and more visible than ever at a time when French studies as a whole are being threatened. Our membership numbers are holding steady and our finances are solid. We continue to attract new members thanks, in part, to our excellent journal and biennial conferences, as well as our expanding presence at the regional MLAs and partnerships with sister organizations such as the George Sand Association and the Simone de Beauvoir Society. Julie will be the first to admit that the great strength of Women in French lies in our many volunteers, at all levels, who continue to do so much to make our organization a vibrant and welcoming venue for scholarship on women writing in French.

As we welcome newly elected officers to our Executive Board, I would like to express my gratitude to other outgoing officers, Frédérique Chévillet (Vice-President) and Natalie Edwards (New York State co-representative) for their service to WIF. Our new Vice-President is Cecilia Beach (Alfred University), a long-time member who most recently served with Natalie as co-representative for New York State. Congratulations to Eileen Angelini (Canisius College) who has been elected New York State representative and Karin Schwerdtner (U. Western Ontario) who has been re-elected as representative for New England and Eastern Canada. To fill my vacancy as representative for the South, I have appointed Theresa Varney Kennedy (Baylor University) who has done a wonderful job in organizing WIF sessions for SCMLA. Congratulations also to our new graduate student representative, Jenny Meyer (U. Wisconsin-Madison).

Our journal, *Women in French Studies*, has a new Managing Editor, Valérie Dusailant-Fernandes (U. Waterloo), who succeeds Marianne Golding. Caroline Strobbe (U. Northern Iowa) and Joëlle Vitiello (Macalester College) have volunteered to serve as Book Review editors, following Sara Steinart-Borella in that role. My thanks to all for their past and future service. Catherine Montfort deserves a special thank you for the many hours she has devoted to securing a contract with Project Muse for the online publication of our journal beginning with volume 19. She is also negotiating a second contract for the publication of back issues. We've come a long way since that first (66 pages!) issue, published in July 1993, containing the seven papers presented at WIF's first two MLA sessions as an Allied Organization in December 1992.

Our "webmestre" Michèle Schaal has also been hard at work updating our website whose new design was unveiled to members at our MLA cash bar in Seattle. If you haven't already, I encourage you to check it out: <http://www.womeninfrench.org/>. We have switched to WordPress



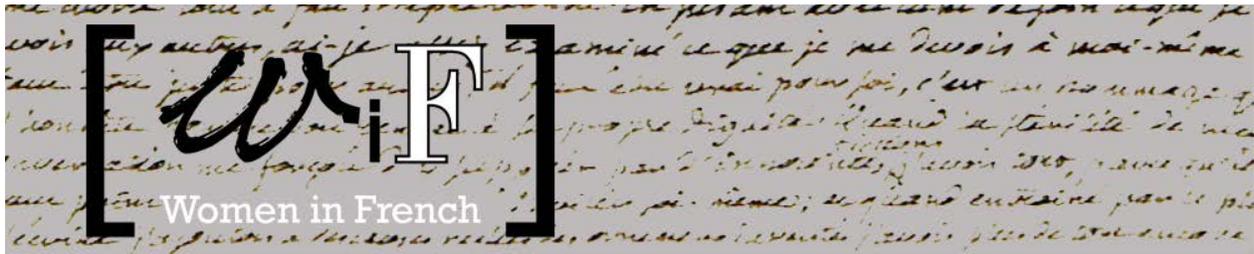
to make it easier for us to update and edit the site. There will soon be a password-protected “espace membre” that will contain our membership directory. Michèle and other volunteers are also working on translations to make the site bilingual French/English. The site is still a work in progress and we will keep you posted as new additions are made to it.

Our two sessions at MLA in Seattle (see our Fall *Newsletter* for details) were impressive and well attended. In addition to our own cash bar, we also co-sponsored one with the Women’s Caucus for the Modern Languages, Feministas Unidas, and Women in German. This joint venture was disappointing, however, in that there was almost no interaction among members of the different groups. We will be reconsidering whether to continue our participation in it.

Congratulations to Florence Ramond Jurney (Gettysburg College) and Karen McPherson (University of Oregon) whose session proposal “Périodes charnières dans la vie des femmes” was selected by our members for the 2013 MLA Convention in Boston. Our second session, “The Influence of Simone de Beauvoir’s Writings on Following Generations of French Women Writers,” was proposed by Barbara Klaw and will be a collaborative one with the Simone de Beauvoir Society. The call for papers for both sessions is included in this *Newsletter*.

Last, but far from least, I would like to thank Aleksandra Gruzinska and her colleagues at Arizona State for hosting our conference, “Crossing Boundaries: French and Francophone Women in Literature and Science, Culture and Arts,” at Arizona State University, Tempe, February 24-25. It was an unforgettable conference and truly international in scope. Our keynote speaker was Martine Reid (Université Lille 3) who spoke on “Le sexe de la littérature.” The campus and weather were beautiful; the staff friendly and helpful; the food delicious; and the technical support excellent. Most importantly, as in the past, the ambiance was welcoming and supportive of women’s scholarship, whether by that of “seasoned veterans” or “first-timers” of which there were many. The tone was set by Aleksandra who hosted a lovely reception the evening before the conference at the Mission Palms, and continued throughout the conference. Particularly memorable for many of us was the presentation by the “doyenne” of WIF conferences, Raymonde Bulger, who at age 90 organized a session on Women in Science and presented a paper. She is an inspiration to us all.

Several decisions of importance were taken at the meeting of the Executive Board. In order to encourage graduate student participation in WIF, we are lowering the annual dues for them to \$15. We will also establish a procedure for graduate students whose papers have been accepted to apply for financial assistance to attend our future conferences. We voted to discontinue our financial participation in the cash bar of the Women’s Caucus at MLA (see my comments above) but instead to provide funding, up to \$150, for WIF meetings at the regional MLAs. We accepted a proposal by Joëlle Vitiello to include a dossier of 5-7 articles in honor of Andrée Chedid in the 2012 issue of *Women in French Studies*. A formal call for articles, with deadlines, will be forthcoming. Perhaps best of all, I am pleased to announce that our 2014 conference will cross



another boundary and, for the first time, be held in Canada at the University of Guelph, thanks to the generous offer of Dawn Cornelio.

Please consider encouraging your students to apply for the WIF Undergraduate Prize and the WIF Graduate Essay Prize. The deadline for submissions for the Undergraduate Prize is May 15; the deadline for the WIF Graduate Essay Prize is May 7, 2012. See our website for details.

To conclude, I am honored to be entrusted with the responsibility of serving as President of Women in French. This organization has meant a great deal to me professionally over the years, and the friendships that I have made through Women in French are many and deep. I hope to continue, with your help, the tradition established by my predecessors in making WIF a true “home” for women scholars.

Mary Anne Garnett
University of Arkansas at Little Rock