

Lettre de la présidente

Spring 2016

Dear Colleagues,

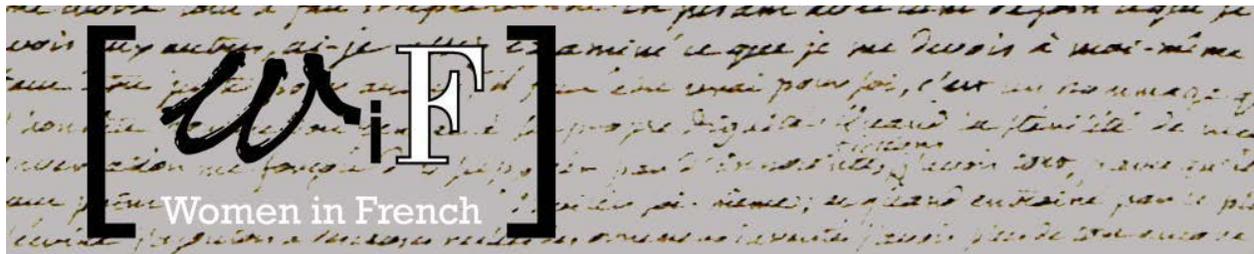
I am both pleased and honored to have been elected President of Women in French and look forward to serving this organization, which has been a great inspiration and support to me throughout my academic career. I'd like to express my appreciation to all those who have preceded me and in particular Mary Anne Garnett, the outgoing President, under whose leadership Women in French has continued to thrive since 2012. I know I will be calling on her often over the next year for advice and guidance.

Many thanks also to the outgoing regional representatives, Amy Reid (South) and Catherine Montfort (Western US and Canada), and welcome to the newly elected officers: Patrice Proulx and Susan Ireland, Co-Vice-Presidents, Adrienne Angelo, representative for the South, and Annabelle Dolidon, representative for Western US and Canada. I look forward to working with you and the incumbent officers. If you would like to serve Women in French and have not yet had the opportunity, there will be six positions opening up next year: Secretary, Treasurer, three Regional Representatives (please see the Call for Nominations later in this issue for more information). We will have an early election for the treasurer's position since Molly Enz will be on sabbatical in Senegal in the fall. We hope to have this very important position filled before the conference in June so the new person can join us at the business meeting. This past year, our regional representatives have been busy at work, notably organizing sessions at the regional MLA conferences. I was able to attend the RMMLA in Santa Fe this year where we had an amazing showing with ten WIF sessions and about forty members in attendance thanks to the efforts Arline Cravens, our representative from the Central and Rocky Mountain region. I had fun bringing my interests in Women in French and yoga together in my talk at the reception on "The Karma and Dharma of Women in French."

The MLA brought us to Austin Texas this year from January 7-10, 2016. Women in French held a well-attended session on Working Women: Labor and Gender in French and Francophone Literature and Film organized by Leslie Barnes. Members also participated in sessions organized by the George Sand

Association, as well as the Cash Bar sponsored by the Women's Caucus, Women in French, Women in German, and Feministas Unidas. Other social events included a Friday night party at the home of Alexandra Wettlaufer, who generously opened her home to dozens of conference attendees, and an informal cocktail following a session on teaching George Sand. Ten people attended the WIF business meeting which was held over lunch. No official business was conducted since the board will be holding a meeting in Gettysburg in June, but it was an excellent opportunity for new members and old get to know each other and to discuss WIF's offerings.

*Women in French Studies* had change of leadership last year; Juliette Rogers took over from Dawn Cornelio as Editor and Marjin Kaplan took on the meticulous job of Production Editor. 2015 brought us a Special Issue with select essays from the 2014 WIF conference in Guelph edited by the conference organizers—Dawn Cornelio, Margot Irvine, and Karin Schwerdtner—,



as well as the twenty-third annual collection of essays edited by Juliette Rogers. I would like to draw your attention in particular to the final essay in this volume by Laura Lott on Yanick Lahens's "post-earthquake narrative revisions." Yanick Lahens will be our keynote speaker at the 2016 WIF conference at Gettysburg College.

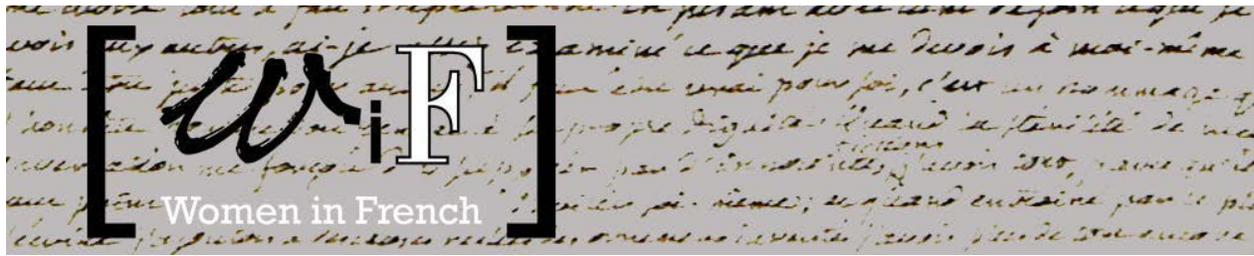
Last fall, Women in French introduced two new programs to help serve our members who are toward the beginning of their career. In addition to the mock interview program which began in 2013, we added a mentoring program for emerging scholars and travel grants for graduate students giving papers in WIF sessions at the national and regional MLA conferences. This is in addition to the already existing travel grants for graduate students presenting at the biennial Women in French conference.

Which brings me once again to this year's Women in French conference organized by Florence Jurney. Many thanks to Florence to taking on this daunting task. The conference, whose theme is Fluid Identities: Margins and Centers in French and Francophone Women's Literature, Cinema and Art, will take place on June 9-11, 2016 at Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania. The preliminary program, (available online <http://www.gettysburg.edu/academics/french/french-conference/>), promises a rich variety of topics with about 100 participants from around the world. Our keynote speaker as mentioned above will be Yanick Lahens, a Haitian author who received the Prix Fémina in 2014 for her novel *Bain de lune*. The conference will also mark the beginning of the One Book program with a discussion of Lahens's novel and a book signing (more about this initiative as the program develops).

Finally, I'd like to briefly summarize the results of the survey I conducted online last summer. Over 96% of the 111 respondents, most of whom had been members of WIF for over 6 years, thought that WIF fulfills its mission as stated, though several justifiably pointed out that it should include Canada. Our bylaws now officially reflect the importance of our Canadian membership as we voted in December to revise the statement of purpose to read:

Women in French is an organization organized exclusively for educational purposes under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or any corresponding section of any future tax code. Women in French is a voluntary organization of individuals who wish to promote research on women writing in French, on women in literature and culture of French expression, and other domains of feminist literary criticism. An additional purpose of the organization is to share information and concerns about the status of women in higher education in the United States **and Canada**.

In response to the question "Which aspects of WIF are most valuable to you?," *WIF Studies* came out ahead, followed by belonging to an intellectual community, the email discussion list, and WIF conferences. The most popular areas of research among the respondents were the twentieth century, Francophone studies, the twenty-first century, and feminist/gender theory. The novel was by far the most popular genre, followed—but not closely—by autobiography, theater and film. One surprising and troubling result for me was that in the classroom, while 94% of



respondents taught literature, primarily 20th- and 21st century, only 58% said they taught women's literature and only 27% feminist/gender theory. Let us hope that the well-attended sessions on creative and varied ways of teaching French and Francophone women's literature at the national and regional MLA conferences, as well as the future addition of a teaching dossier in the fall edition of the WIF Newsletter will help to increase the representation of women authors in our classrooms.

I wish you all a productive and peaceful year, and I look forward to seeing many of you at the WIF Conference in Gettysburg in June.

Cecilia Beach  
Alfred University