

## ***Introduction***

*French History and Civilization* is a new journal published by the George Rudé Society, presenting to a wider audience selected papers from the George Rudé Seminar, held biennially in the major cities of Australia and New Zealand. The seminar is a unique forum for historians and cultural scholars with French connections in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, also attracting eminent international visitors from France, Britain and North America. This first issue of the journal is the result of a particularly well-attended conference hosted by Melbourne and Monash Universities in 2004, reflecting the strong tradition of French historical study at these two universities and the attraction of the culinary and oenological delights of Melbourne and its surrounding countryside. The vibrant intellectual exchange in the conference rooms of the University of Melbourne was matched only by the camaraderie in the restaurants of Lygon Street (Melbourne's Italian quarter) and the wineries of the Yarra Valley.

The task of editing this inaugural issue as a fully peer reviewed publication was lightened by the sense of exchange and collaborative intellectual work which emerged from the conference. As a consequence, we have chosen to emphasize the underlying themes which we observed across the wide variety of papers presented. It is only natural that these papers should ask common questions about French identity at a time when this identity is less than ever a self-evident proposition. We have chosen to group the papers loosely under four broad themes, which place side-by-side those papers which seem to speak to one another in important ways: 'Borders and Boundaries;' 'Insiders and Outsiders;' 'Cultural Identities: Sound and Image;' and 'Embodied Identities.' The first of these collects the numerous papers which dealt with the changing political and geographical limits of France, whether these were the boundaries of "sections" in revolutionary Paris, the physical separations of the Channel and the Atlantic, or the more complex boundaries of French ethnic and political identities in the borderlands with Spain, Belgium and Algeria, and even as far away as the Pacific. 'Insiders' groups together the many papers dealing with the formation of French people, from counterrevolutionaries to Catholic boys and Fourierist women; 'Outsiders' conversely considers categories generally excluded from the 'centre' of French history – migrants, visitors, Jews, refugees. In our section on 'Cultural Identities' a series of diverse reflections on French song, cinema and art provides new insights into the role of particular cultural experiences and traditions in French history and identity. Lastly, 'Embodied Identities' incorporates an important theme of the conference, investigating the role of gender and sexuality in defining modern French culture, and particularly the political role of feminine and homosexual identity formations in French life.

This inaugural issue is introduced by a reflection on George Rudé, the historian for whom the Seminar is named, and who formed a generation of scholars in Australia. Our opening essay comes from an equally eminent scholar of the French Revolution, Alison Patrick, whose many decades of contribution to the study of French history in Australia are in great measure responsible for the continuing vibrancy of scholarship in this region. The editors would like to thank David Kammerling Smith, Michael Wolfe and the rest of the editorial team of H-France for their generosity in agreeing to host “French History and Civilization” as an online journal for this and future issues, an unrivalled opportunity to present this rich collection of essays to the widest possible audience.

#### The Editors

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