

Preface

Three or four generations hence, when historians look back at the work of their predecessors, this inaugural publication of *French History and Civilization: Papers from the George Rudé Seminar* could well serve as an exemplar of the historical profession in the very early twenty-first century. The essays themselves demonstrate the high quality of research produced by scholars from eight different nations on three different continents. The study of French history has become a truly global endeavor. Further, the issue of French identity running through many of the papers in the volume could provide our future historians numerous avenues by which to explore the theoretical influences on current scholarship. Or these historians might investigate how the theme of identity in this volume resonates with contemporary debates over immigration policy and headscarves or over the European Union and agricultural subsidies. Whether future scholars look to this volume to make use of its scholarship or treat the volume itself as primary source to be deciphered, they will find that the first issue of *French History and Civilization* continues the tradition of internationalism and outstanding scholarship associated with George Rudé and the seminar which bears his name.

The publication of this volume, however, also points to a different issue shaping the historical profession of the early twenty-first century: the integration of new digital technologies into our professional lives and work. From the punch-card computers of the 1960s which few could use, digital technologies have grown into a standard component of our professional lives. Our future historians might find the advent of the digital technologies of communication as important an innovation for contemporary historical scholarship as the latest theoretical turn. As these technologies spread announcements of conferences and provide information on new publications, we are drawn more and more into an international community of scholars of the history of France. In this spirit, the directors of the Rudé Seminar have chosen to enrich us all by developing *French History and Civilization* as a web-based publication, ensuring its easy access by historians across the globe. On behalf of H-France, I can express our pleasure at being asked to provide assistance in this task and at entering into a collaborative process for the publication of *French History and Civilization*. We hope that this and future volumes will give honor to the physical and scholarly wanderings of George Rudé.

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