conflated into a single chapter, as both exemplified how the miscalculations of the presidents themselves led to dysfunctional leadership. Chirac’s second term is omitted completely, and one senses that Chirac’s inability to dramatize his presidential function (with the exception of the Iraq war), coupled with his seemingly indolent persona, does not fit well with the sort of leadership Gaffney presents. With the last chapter devoted to the presidential elections of 2007, Gaffney finds his second wind, as Ségolène Royal’s gender, the role of new media, and the blurring of the candidates’ public and private lives allow him to speculate on the advent of a new type of presidential leadership influenced by celebrity culture. As a fine observer and analyst of French presidential elections, Gaffney sees political leadership in terms of constructing a presidential persona and winning elections rather than developing effective policy objectives and ensuring their implementation: as such, he does not explain systematically how leaders diagnose problems, prescribe solutions, and mobilize followers to implement their visions (although the analysis of Michel Rocard’s and Édith Cresson’s premierships offers some illuminating insights into failed leaderships). This approach is unsurprising: after all, the Gaullist settlement implies a major difference ‘between the Fifth and earlier Republics, […] the division of labour between a time serving manager, […] and the symbolic nature of new leadership with its emphasis upon visionary leadership’ (p. 63). Gaffney argues that the Fifth Republic enshrines the presidentialization of politics rather than the politicization of the presidency: it is essentially a discursive Republic, where the performance, discourses, and gestures of the leader have real and enduring consequences. As such, the leader’s persona introduces a high level of volatility at the top. This alone is a stimulating take on the subject.

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doi:10.1093/fs/knr258


This bilingual collection has developed from a similar volume published in 2000 devoted to France at the threshold of a new century. A decade later, the ‘new perspectives’ identified have emerged especially from the suburban protests of autumn 2005: symptom, symbol, or catalyst of crisis. There are twenty-two chapters, including a review of available resources. Chapters are arranged under seven headings, from politics, economics, and society, through France in Europe and the world, to artistic expression — a patchier section covering only novels, cinema, and popular music. The volume will primarily serve teachers and students of French at advanced school level and as a set text on undergraduate ‘civilization’ courses. Some in academia might approach a book with so many subdivisions and so familiar a remit a little warily, but in this case that would be a mistake. Whether in French or English, chapters are invariably readable, avoid jargon or abstruseness, and have something to say. The periodization varies slightly, with some stopping in 2007 and others managing to slip in references to 2009. But the authors and editors have ensured that each topic works effectively as a platform for subsequent updating, so the volume’s usefulness should last. There is a slightly condescending tendency in French literary studies to think of work on ‘civilization’ topics as ‘descriptive’, that is, short on the kind of ‘research’ content restrictively defined in UK research assessments. This is often the case, and it is here in a few cases. But most of the contributors find a judicious balance between description and analysis. Christopher Pinet, for instance, exemplifies the book at its best. He methodically unpicks the contemporary-historical origins of growing government intolerance of religious ‘signs’ (like the Islamic headscarf and niqab) from 1989 to the 2004 legislation banning the wearing of such signs in school. Things have, of
course, moved on considerably since then, with a new act in 2011 outlawing the covering of the face in all public places. Yet the chapter retains its pertinence in that it plots an ideological itinerary without which the 2011 legislation cannot be properly understood. Other contributors adopt divergent approaches to their exposition: an interview with the 2007 president of Ni Putes Ni Soumises, a theatrical case study illustrating administrative decentralization, or a whistle-stop but illuminating tour of American non-fiction writing on France including books, press articles, and blogs. Occasional chapters even succeed in integrating significant ‘research’ findings. Olivier Bourderionnet provides a pedagogically useful, informed overview of French popular music while identifying and critically interpreting three embryonic phenomena of the first decade of the current century: the nostalgic return of la chanson française, the apparent though deceptive success of the radio quotas, and the recent feminization of popular song. With such a diversity of ‘new perspectives’, then, although some lecturers will be exasperated to find elements of this book (not least the ample statistical data) recycled in student essays for years to come, there is also plenty here to illuminate and inspire both their students and themselves.

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This is a scholarly, authoritative, but very readable work on a topic that has hitherto not benefited from such exhaustive research. Kirsten Kragh examines the recession of the imperfect subjunctive in French and assesses the factors influencing this change, putting forward the theory of grammaticalization as a means to account for such development. According to her interpretation, the replacement of the imperfect subjunctive by the present subjunctive is an aspect of a more general reorganization of the tense system of French. Kragh proposes two main hypotheses: first, that the use or non-use of the imperfect subjunctive is governed significantly by register, thus conferring on this verb form a new role as a style marker rather than a temporal marker; second, that the erosion of the imperfect subjunctive is influenced by certain syntactic and semantic parameters. The volume is organized into twelve chapters and includes a fairly extensive Introduction and Conclusion. Kragh begins with an overview of four theories of language change, the focus of which narrows to the theory of grammaticalization, which she selects as the theoretical framework for her study. She then proceeds to examine existing works on the recession of the imperfect subjunctive, and subsequently explores literature on the modal value of the subjunctive and its system of tenses. The methodology and corpus used for the study are then presented, together with the statistical tools used for their analysis. Four chapters are devoted to the classification and results of the data analysis. The study concludes with an appraisal of the factors contributing to the demise of the imperfect subjunctive, of which the author identifies register as being the most prominent. The main strengths of this book are the comprehensive statistical analysis that Kragh presents and the depth of the treatment of the subject. In addition, in the absence of a suitable existing corpus for a study of this nature, the author has created her own, comprising 2277 tokens drawn entirely from literary sources; this is supplied with the book on a CD-ROM. Kragh writes in an accessible, fluid style and is careful to avoid generalizations and assumptions, substantiating her arguments in a balanced and coherent manner. The publication itself is clearly structured, with numerous graphics to illustrate the findings of the data analysis. One drawback is that, given its highly specialized nature as a work...