



A Message from Senior Editor Linda E. Mitchell

With this first issue of Volume 44, I have some announcements to make. First, I am very sorry to report the death earlier this year of one of our long-standing members of the Editorial Board, Vicki L. Eaklor. Vicki was a professor of US history at Alfred University for 30 years before retiring in 2014. She served as a guest editor, peer reviewer, and contributor to the journal for most of her tenure at AU. A terrific colleague, talented musician, creative scholar, and brilliant teacher, Vicki will be missed by all who knew her zest for life, intellectual rigor, sense of humor, and love of good bourbon.

Second, as of this issue, I am announcing my retirement from the position of senior editor of *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques*. I joined the Editorial Board of the journal in 2002, became a coeditor (with Dan Gordon) in 2004, and assumed the duties of senior editor in 2006. In the 16 years of my direct involvement with *HR/RH*, I acted as guest editor for several special issues, initiated an occasional focus titled “Historians Reflecting on the Writing of History,” negotiated the transformation of the journal from an artisanal in-house publication into a thoroughly professional operation under the management of Berghahn Books, and expanded the remit of the journal from one based largely on modern French and Francophone history to much broader historical and geographical perspectives. In the 12 years I have served as senior editor, *Historical Reflections* has expanded its readership significantly, in large part because of our inclusion in the JSTOR database, which Berghahn was able to negotiate about eight years ago, and which ensures the survival of our backlist as a vital component to the historian’s “toolbox.” I am proud of the work I have done, but it is time for me to concentrate on other projects and challenges. I will continue to be associated with *HR/RH* by returning to the Editorial Board, and I hope also to develop some special issues in the coming years that will add to our deserved reputation for publishing scholarship of the highest standard.

Third, I have the distinct pleasure of announcing that one of our Editorial Board members, Dr. Elizabeth Macknight, of the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, will be taking on the duties of senior editor beginning with the second issue of the year, and that W. Brian Newsome will be remaining as coeditor. Elizabeth is the perfect person to assume the job of senior editor. She is a brilliant historian focusing on Third Republic France, has had plenty of



experience in editing—including a special issue for *Historical Reflections* that led to her joining the Editorial Board in 2009—and will be able to tap into a wide range of scholarly communities in Europe, the UK, North America, and Australia. I think it is very exciting to have a new senior editor who is not located in North America—Elizabeth will bring tremendous energy to the position and I hope everyone reading this gives her a hearty welcome. I am exceedingly grateful that she has agreed to take this on, and that Brian Newsome has agreed to continue in his position.

Finally, a word about this special issue. I think it is a good omen that my last job as senior editor has been to oversee the publication of this issue, which is devoted to a wide-ranging and erudite critique of the claims of evolutionary psychologist Steven Pinker that (a) the modern world is less violent than the premodern world, and (b) historians are not treating the period of the seventeenth and eighteenth century known as the “Enlightenment” with the respect it deserves. As the pages of this journal have demonstrated over and over, these statements are not just problematic and controversial, they are patently tendentious. Pinker—who is not a historian—belongs to a group of people, often our colleagues, who believe that writing history is easy and that anyone can do it. We know that what makes a good historian is training in the theories, methodologies, and materials of historical study. We know that history is not merely a narrative. Historical writing is labor intensive, often requiring hundreds of hours of sifting through archival materials in many languages and many forms. It also requires a clear understanding of and sensitivity to the contexts of historical inquiry. The 12 articles in this issue demonstrate the best kinds of historical writing in critiquing the methodology and conclusions of Pinker’s best-selling pseudohistorical study.

Thank you to everyone involved in the creation and work of this wonderful journal. It has been an honor and a pleasure to oversee *Historical Reflections*, and I look forward to seeing its evolution as we move into the third decade of the twenty-first century.

With all best wishes,
Linda Mitchell