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Interview with Terence Cave

by Helen Chu and Steve Stella
with an Introduction by Jean-Claude Carron

Professeur Terence Cave est titulaire d'une chaire "ad hominem" de littérature française à l'Université d'Oxford en Angleterre. On ne compte plus les travaux de recherche qu'il a publiés, les éditions critiques dont il a pris soin, les traductions qu'il a faites, les collaborations à des ouvrages encyclopédiques ou les conférences qu'il a données à travers le monde, le tout portant essentiellement sur des domaines allant du 16ᵉ siècle à Georges Eliot, en passant par Madame de La Fayette et Flaubert. Spécialiste de littérature française du 16ᵉ siècle et de critique contemporaine, il s'intéresse d'abord à la poésie religieuse et publie Devotional Poetry in France 1570–1613 *(Oxford, 1969). En 1979,* The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance *(Oxford) appartient à la première génération de livres-phares traîtant de la littérature française du 16ᵉ siècle selon les termes de la critique moderne. Cet ouvrage, qui secoue les milieux traditionnels, aura un impact incalculable sur les études de la Renaissance en général. Arrivant quelque vingt ans après l'édition originale, sa toute récente traduction française (Macula, 1997), augmentée d'une nouvelle Préface, témoigne de son caractère incontournable aujourd'hui encore. Entre temps,* Recognitions: A Study in Poetics *(Oxford, 1988) aura marqué une nouvelle étape dans la carrière de Dr. Cave, son ambition étant cette fois de mettre en évidence une poétique de la "reconnaissance" dans la littérature occidentale, de l'antiquité à nos jours.*

Parmi ses derniers travaux, on compte une Short History of French Literature *à sortir à Oxford. D'autre part enfin,* Pré-histoires: textes troublés au seizième siècle, *rédigé en français, sera publié sous peu à Genève, inaugurant, aux Editions Droz, une nouvelle collection sur la Renaissance. Nos étudiants ont eu la primeur de ce manuscrit à l'occasion d'un séminaire que Pro-*

fesseur Cave a donné à UCLA en automne 1997. Ce travail est aussi au coeur de l'interview qu'il a généreusement accordée à Paroles gelées. *Dans cette étude de défamiliarisation historique, Professeur Cave nous invite à une re-lecture de textes en quête d'indices de la distance qui nous sépare de l'époque pré-moderne. Cet intérêt pour l'autre, rendu évident par ses travaux sur les langues étrangères et la traduction, est au coeur de sa recherche actuelle.*

Penseur, critique, éditeur, traducteur, Professeur Cave est une des figures intellectuelles les plus fortes et les plus attachantes des études françaises aujourd'hui.

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Paroles gelées: Your previous work on the Renaissance, such as the Cornucopian Text, *has contributed to a re-evaluation of Renaissance literature and thought. Can you give a brief assessment of the current situation in Renaissance scholarship, particularly in terms of any new developments in critical approaches towards sixteenth-century texts?*

Terence Cave: OK. That's a big question. It involves considering things geographically as well as conceptually, since there have certainly been all kinds of new developments in North America, especially, of course, the New Historicism which has come and almost gone, with lots of questions which have come out of New Historicism still being looked at, and people still doing similar kinds of work. In France, which is where I've been operating much more in recent years—and this book [*Pré-histoires: textes troublés au seizième siècle*, forthcoming] is written in French and primarily aimed at French colleagues—the situation is rather different. They haven't actually gone through the New Historicism. Some of them know roughly what it is, but others have no idea. They're rather more conservative in general terms, in that they often work in terms of a quite erudite approach to sources, and sometimes the whole method is quite traditional: they have never lost contact with the tradition of the history of ideas, the history of literature, and the history of literature in relation to ideas. But there are, of course, very interesting people doing ex-

cellent new work in France too, chiefly in re-evaluating areas like the one I've just mentioned, the history of ideas in connection with literature.

So where do I place myself in relation to those things? Well, I think that I have worked and passed through some of the methodological questions that characterize the New Historicism and taken points from there. Certainly I'm proud to have assimilated some of that into my work. But I've tried then to use New Historicism in such a way that French colleagues will see what I'm doing and be able to place it. And I think that means that, in general, I remain quite close to erudite methodology, making sure all of the sources are there and that one refers carefully to the contemporary context. It also means that I don't constantly refer to Stephen Greenblatt, for example. I think very highly of Stephen Greenblatt. He really did generate huge amounts of energy which is still going on, but obviously it isn't good for people to go on circulating in the energies he has released. Not referring explicitly to critical theory and methodology while trying to assimilate them is a part of what I've always done. In the *Cornucopian Text* I tried to assimilate what was going on in the seventies, but not actually to keep foregrounding it in my argument, and to rethink those questions directly through problems in the sixteenth century.

P.G.: How would you see your forthcoming book, Pré-histoires: textes troublés au seizième siècle, *fitting into the developments and approaches that you've just mentioned?*

Cave: Just picking up from what I said, each of the studies in *Pré-histoires* is quite precise and geared to a particular question or set of questions. The classic one is the way in which "*moi*" became a noun form in the late sixteenth century and what that means. Other examples are the first explicit use of the notion of suspense in poetic theory in the sixteenth century, questions connected with the way in which Pyrrhonism is presented in that period, some specific questions concerning demonology. In each case I tend to begin with quite precise configurations of texts and allow the general issues to emerge out of those. If you look after the particular, the general looks after itself: it's sort of

an axiom for me. I never go to the point of generalizing: saying "OK, now we can say the sixteenth century is like this."

Let me explain now why I call the book *Pré-histoires*. The series of questions I look at belong to, for me, the same class. They belong to the class of phenomena which we find difficult to assess now because mentalities have obviously changed since the sixteenth century, but we still think we can see continuities tracing back in questions like the self, like skepticism, or like suspense for example, which is something we now think is absolutely central to narrative composition and theory. The question is then whether those phenomena mean quite the same thing in the sixteenth century as for us. And so one tries to trace back to those moments, not from the present but from a point that's just after the moment when those issues become concrete in certain ways. You trace back from a kind of threshold moment, trying to establish how that kind of phenomenon was perceived before they had a word for it. Another very clear example which actually isn't in this book, but might be in a sequel or second volume, is the way in which a problematic set of economic phenomena were perceived. It seems certain that there was some kind of generalized inflation in Europe in the sixteenth century. But one becomes aware of it in reading these texts in very indirect ways. There is a text of 1568 by Jean Bodin, in which he says, "We're all worried about this thing. We don't know what it is and what has caused it, this rise in prices...," then he goes on to suggest a series of causes, including, for example, a massive increase in the money supply, caused by the influx of silver and gold from the New World. This is an extremely brilliant insight. He may not have been quite the first to have it, but it's clearly a threshold moment. And so you might well say that before that kind of explanation emerged, people saw that something was happening around them that they didn't understand. So we ask, what were the traces of that in the texts we read such as the episode in Rabelais's third book, "In praise of Debt," or in the fourth book, the business between Panurge and the sheep? And there are quite a number of other cases. So what I try to do in those cases is to put together clusters of examples grouped around — and especially just before — a threshold moment. That's what I mean by *pré-histoires*.

Obviously I'm not claiming that no one has ever looked at texts precisely before or operated in terms of particular examples. I find it actually quite difficult to define in what way that particular attention to individual texts is different. One of the ways is perhaps in holding back from amalgamating lots of texts into an ultimate generalization. What I do instead is try to see them as a configuration with lots of gaps in between but with oblique connections between them, so you get a constellation or archipelago effect rather than an amalgam effect. But put that way, it may well sound not very different from what some of the new historicists have done.

P.G.: I'd like to ask about a specific example that you treat in your book: the automate hydraulique *as described by Pierre de Lancre in his* Tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais anges et démons. *As we've discussed, this volume of* Paroles gelées *includes issues of technology and the body in French literature. For many, the notion of technology in the Renaissance conjures up images of the printing press and weaponry. We see that the* automate hydraulique *might be another example. What else might fall under the rubric of technology in this time period?*

Cave: Well, the other very famous thing to put together with the printing press is optics, because the invention of the telescope and ultimately the microscope are threshold moments just beyond this period. Before the threshold there were various striking developments in optics, which were perceived differently then from the way we would now perceive them within a historical continuum. Let's leave aside the *automate hydraulique* for a moment, and consider some of these questions of optics. For example, in the history of art there's the development of perspective and the discovery of the *camera obscura*, both of which seemed marvelous inventions at the time. Now, I think most people realized that these were natural effects and, of course, those who studied them and invented them didn't regard them as diabolical instruments at all. But the contemporary imagination certainly saw them as analogous to potentially supernatural effects, and so you find, for example, in a mid-sixteenth-century edition of Euclid's optics, the editor saying that by means of optics you can, if you study it properly, begin to distinguish be-

tween what is an optical illusion and what might be a supernatural effect. So many things that people think they see, like ghosts, can be explained in terms of kind of atmospheric mirror effects or some other such thing. So what does this editor do when presenting Euclid's optics to his contemporaries? He writes a preface in Latin, saying: "This will help you to wise up about what things are really supernatural and what aren't." Now obviously, we might think that technology always points in the direction of the secular explanation of things. It is the secular *par excellence*, in a way; it's something created by humans, under their control, and therefore by definition not supernatural. But I think, time and again, one sees new technology or technological inventions being assimilated to the possible invasion of the supernatural into human life. Of course, what people are often doing is trying to see where one ends and the other begins. But that means that they see them as often hard to distinguish, and that's the case with De Lancre. He says "There's this wonderful apparatus which, of course, I know is a human invention, but it's exactly like what the devil does." And there's a sense in which, as the metaphor develops, he almost reads this invention as if it actually is a diabolical machine; it's making weird things happen by supernatural agency. So the analogy tends to slide over into being a manifestation of something *alive*—which shows you that people are not making that distinction as sharply as we might expect. After all this is now the beginning of the seventeenth century and we're quite a bit further on from the invention of printing or Copernicus.

Another way of thinking about this is to follow Montaigne around in the *Journal de voyage* and look through his eyes at the different kinds of machinery that he's interested in. He's fascinated by all kinds of machines. There's a great security gate in Augsbourg which is extremely ingenious: it enables somebody lying in bed, you know, a security guy hidden away somewhere, to turn a handle and some enormous gate opens and lets people in. And they speak through a pipe, and he tries to find out whether they are suitable to be admitted entry. Then there are lots of hydraulic effects that Montaigne looks at too. He's fascinated by those and quite a number of other technological inventions as we would call them now. But while Montaigne's eye is

certainly secular for the most part, I think it might be useful to look at the ways in which his thought about those things is integrated with other phenomena that he observes in society, for example, religious questions. His curiosity about religion and about technological effects are not so separate perhaps, as we might think they would be. For example, he goes to see a circumcision in a synagogue, and describes the procedure very carefully. And you can then put next to that his visit to the baths where he's trying to use the waters and observe exactly what's happening as these waters pass through his body. So in Montaigne, you get a whole series of things, machinery, curiosity about different forms of religion, the effect on his body of the waters, which I think add up in the end to something slightly different from what we would expect: his mind works in a subtly different context. A lot of his observations seem very familiar to us, but they're more familiar if you take them out of that context and bring them nearer to our time. If you restore them to their context, where people like De Lancre are around or Bodin, for example, then they have a slightly different feel. They're somewhere different on the map. So whenever you're drawing a map of parts of this landscape you have to put in other contemporary parts carefully to make sure you're not just kind of filling in an imaginary map with materials from our own consciousness.

P.G.: You raise many issues that we'd like to ask you to explore further. Regarding the question of illusion versus supernatural effects and its relation to the man-made, you mentioned that De Lancre knows that the fountain is man-made and therefore not a supernatural manifestation of evil. Yet De Lancre still associates the man-made object with the diabolical. What might we learn about Renaissance theories of nature and artifice based on a reaction like this? How might this relate to technology and people's perception of sixteenth-century technology in general?

Cave: Well, if you take it at the most literal level, what he's saying is that the Devil doesn't actually command nature in the way that God does, or disrupt nature: he creates extraordinarily brilliant illusions. He's like a superior magician or fairground manipulator who can do things with machines that make people

say "amazing!" and "Wow!" because they look so real. And so (says De Lancre) the poor simple people are taken in by it. So, that might be an argument to say that, if some woman who is accused of witchcraft claims that she has traveled to the witches' Sabbath, or other people say that they saw her fly away and come back, they haven't made it up, their perceptions are genuine, but their perceptions have no foundation in natural events.

That kind of argument was used by some demonologists in the late sixteenth century with what we would think of as a liberal emphasis: the "witches" were just suffering from the medical condition of melancholy, or were misled or confused by other natural causes, and so it was unjust to burn witches. But people like De Lancre and Bodin say that such illusions are diabolically engineered: the Devil is at work, and the witches have allowed him to take control — they have, in some sense, lent themselves to it. And in fact you might argue that what De Lancre would think is that whoever made this fairground object — the *automate hydraulique* — is not a very moral person. He has done something quite similar to what the Devil does, fooling people and playing with these actually rather disgusting things, and making it look good. It's a sort of cheap thing, and is immoral in some way. So the *automate* begins to be itself a manifestation of the diabolic, even though it's an entirely man-made instrument. I think we shouldn't assume that either you have man-made technology or superstitious stuff about devils and diabolic figures, like magicians dabbling in the black arts. Precisely the way people saw all these things as operating was in terms of the model of technology.

P.G.: Céard mentions in his Nature et les prodiges *a similar idea that the Devil can manipulate natural phenomena and create illusions. Can we then apply Céard's idea to the situations we've been discussing and see technology as an example of such a manipulation of nature?*

Cave: Yes, but in differing degrees. When Montaigne says there are these amazing fountains in the Tivoli gardens, he's obviously not thinking that the Devil had anything to do with it at all. I'm not suggesting that. I'm just trying to create a spectrum of phe-

nomena, as it were, which are juxtaposed in that period along a line which connects up with the diabolical at one point and which at the same time includes the technological, whereas we would think of these things as being sharply separated.

Oh, by the way, people did argue about whether the Devil really interfered with nature and disturbed the course of nature, or whether he just created simulacra. All of that is very much a subject of debate in that period.

There are of course similar examples in Shakespeare, where you have scenes of "natural magic," which is a well known category in the period. Where something amazing is made to happen, but it's not actually a diabolic effect, it's not disturbing the course of nature. Hermione from *The Winter's Tale*, when she wakes up at the end, hasn't been dead in fact. But there is this heavenly music that comes on at that point, and there is the sense that something supernatural is occurring, though it's probably within the overall order of nature which includes the cosmos, the music of the spheres, and those things. So, there's what is called white magic, or natural magic, which is simply knowing how to operate within the domain of nature to make interesting things happen. In other words, one name that "technology" might have in the sixteenth century is just natural magic.

P.G.: Do you think that the blurring of the boundaries between diabolical and technological during the sixteenth century is due to the fact that the technology in question is so recent, so new to them, whereas for us in the twentieth century, something new is invented every day? That especially with computers, we've become so desensitized to all of it?

Cave: Well I think the novelty is obviously a part of the effect. When something strange happens that you haven't seen before, you think, "How does this work?" I still think that the technology we produce borders on the unbelievable. Recorded sound is for me one of the most inexplicable things—not that you can turn the sound into electronic impulses—but that there is this little box that actually turns those electronic impulses back into the full range of sound of a symphony orchestra—or gets the exact timbre of the voice of Elisabeth Schumann in 1932. Although I'm

not inclined to think that it is magic, because it can be repeated in exactly the same form time and time again. I think that we all have our thresholds of understanding of those things. And probably in the sixteenth century, when people felt that an invention had gone beyond that threshold, they said there must be something diabolic happening. They did so in the case of the printing press and gunpowder—not that those things were outside nature—but that they had been invented by diabolical inspiration, or by divine inspiration, as Rabelais puts it when he talks about them in the famous letter from Gargantua to Pantagruel in Chapter Eight of *Pantagruel*. So, even if the things themselves are clearly human inventions, they are so wonderful that they must be given supernatural agents. It's clear, then, that people did think that new "technology" was alarming or disturbing.

On the question of optics again, we know that the invention of the telescope led to a cosmology that was radically different from the preceding one. And we know also that Galileo in the seventeenth century was still having a lot of trouble because of that. Even if he wasn't thought explicitly to be dabbling in magic, his use of a little tube to change the shape of the cosmos was perceived as deeply threatening, and I suspect that behind that is the notion that somehow he was juggling with the natural. So you're not very far away there from the mode of thought that we've been talking about.

You can, of course, also talk about this in terms of power politics. The establishment didn't want their theories overturned because once that happened people would start to question other things. But I think that part of the agency of that defensiveness must be a kind of fear of the supernatural, a real disturbance deep in the force-field of their thought at the idea that you can turn the universe inside out or upside down.

But if you want me to talk about twentieth-century parallels, we still have revealing juxtapositions in the field of our thought. They're not the same ones because the far-out ones operate nowadays apparently in the realm of the quasi-fictional—science fiction and fantasy (i.e. the supernatural), and the horror film genre are thought of as being adjacent, aren't they? Often people who like one like the other. After all, the effects in horror films

are weird technologically engineered effects of the kind you get in science fiction, and in those cases you get a weird kind of estrangement or defamiliarization. And it calls on some deep level of worry about what the nature is of the world we find ourselves in, which is clearly not as easily controlled as people like to think. Machines give us the promise of controlling our environment, but there are still, of course, things that exceed our control like death and illness, and the very kinds of technology that we hope to use to get control can produce the reverse effect — like mutant strains of bacteria. Similarly, space technology is a big control exercise, but in science fiction it gets turned around and the Borg or other kinds of aliens invade with sinister versions of technology and disrupt our world because they have totally different kinds of perception. Those are the ways in which technology and the supernatural get linked up nowadays.

So we too have our rather unusual sorts of juxtapositions, which you can perceive if you go into bookshops, like the New Age ones, where there will be a range of different ways of believing juxtaposed on the shelves that you wouldn't have seen there a while ago, and you certainly wouldn't have seen in the sixteenth century. There's a kind of a mindset which has incorporated into modern technology some of those ancient fears. By the way, I only make those kinds of wild transhistorical comparisons orally.

P.G.: It sometimes seems as if humans have not changed all that much from the sixteenth century to the twentieth century. We approach issues of technology, each having our own particular thresholds of tolerance and mindsets. Do you feel that there are major differences in our conceptions of the term technology in the twentieth century as opposed to the sixteenth century?

Cave: I wasn't trying to say that we are all the same. That wasn't the point at all. I just tried to create a kind of analogy to suggest that things are not so clear-cut for us now as we might sometimes think. It's obvious that the growth of science and the way it is now studied, the role it plays in our epistemology, together with the gradual secularization of our lives, the relativization of belief systems and so on, means that technology doesn't play the same role at all as it did four hundred years ago. So, you don't

actually burn people who go to see horror films, for example. It wouldn't even cross your mind to decide that it was a heresy, or that there was something deeply wrong with it. The worst you might do is that you might regard it as kind of heretical among intellectuals and say, "Oh God that trash. You don't really go and see that stuff, do you?" Or say it's unhealthy, or it encourages children to do peculiar things. But people don't even prosecute the makers of those films. So that's very different. I think that it's interesting sometimes to take a very long view and say, "Yes, you know, the human psyche, or whatever you want to call it, doesn't radically change its structure. You usually get compensations for the various kinds of cultural shifts that happen." But it's singularly uninteresting to decide that in the end we're all more or less the same and human nature has never changed.

The interesting movement is the opposite one where you try to pin down precise mutations of those long-term or deep structures. So, for example, when I wrote up the stuff about that economic question, I began with the idea that there is a fundamental anthropological structure having to do with exchange and the danger of being taken for a ride: the shift from a barter economy to a money economy makes it much easier to take people for a ride and on a much bigger scale. And then if you have instruments such as the stock market and currency speculation, it gets even larger. So you get whole banks collapsing and global chaos.

You might say that the same anxiety persists throughout history in relation to those aspects of social organization. But the interest is to see exactly how it was figured in the period concerned, what kinds of image and what kinds of story people used to speak about such subjects and to handle their anxiety. Not how similar it all is. One of the reasons why I was supposed to come and teach somewhere else is not because lots of things are the same, though they are. Like talking to students: it's the same everywhere in one sense. But it's subtly, even often quite openly different. You feel the underlying structure differently. People have different cultural backgrounds. They have different political perception of these questions. Different ethical perceptions... So the interest is the difference. That's why I like not only going to other places but also trying to learn other

languages. It's like Montaigne says in his travel journal: you don't go to other places to meet Frenchmen who speak French. You try to acquire a different vocabulary or project yourself outward.

That's why I like science fiction, at least the creative kind, because it's always trying to think otherwise. Sometimes a bit sadly it does the opposite: you just get back to firing at whatever it is that comes over your horizon and looks different from you. But, you know, what seems to me the most powerful drive in science fiction is the attempt to imagine the beautiful Other in some way. Some amazingly different Other that you couldn't have possibly have got out of your own head. We know it does come out of our own head because we invent it. But the exercise to try and do it is endlessly fascinating. The example I gave in the *Pré-histoires* class was trying to imagine a culture that had a language so different that it was virtually untranslatable, yet it must still be in some way translatable. There would be people thinking about that and the kinds of symbols that they should put on these craft that they send up — patterns of electronic impulses that they send out into space so that people would see that at least there's a pattern. We must always assume there's something that's translatable or recognizable. But the interest would be what we, the receivers, would do with a very complex language of another race which was based on completely different pre-suppositions: that would be of immense appeal — the kind of thing I would take as a paradigm of my interest in science fiction, and in literature as a historical phenomenon.

P.G.: Following this line of thought, could we then view the mindset of the sixteenth century as "other?" — that despite our common humanity, sixteenth-century thought remains alien to us because of a wide gap in time and culture? If so, what do you think are some of the "other" aspects of the sixteenth century?

Cave: Well, that's of course the central question, it is a famous one and quite a difficult one. Because I think that it isn't in some sort of big category, like you say, "Well, they believed in witches much more than we do." There was a case of witch hunting in Wales recently where it was thought that there were diabolical things going on, and there were a series of raids on houses by the

social services, taking children away from their parents. Later it was decided that the reports were unfounded. It's true, probably, that the people who were doing the raiding didn't think that they were dealing with the supernatural, but it would be hard to say that the categories are fundamentally different in themselves. So I don't think it's those big categories — the *themes*, as it were.

What I think is that if you read a lot in the period and try to focus on what is similar and what isn't, here and there it's as if you hear another tune. Or it's like learning a grammatical construction in a language you don't know, where the grammar is very different from the grammar you're used to. I don't know whether I want to cite examples: they become quite banal when you cite them briefly, because they get translated too crudely. It's a kind of strange sense that you have, a very moving sense that you're actually hearing something that's different, that you can understand only because you don't quite understand it. The absolute balance point for this, and the model's not mine, it has often been used, is once again translatability. We know that we can translate anything into anything in terms of human languages, but that we can never translate anything perfectly because there's always a residue. And the more alien things are, the greater the residue is, and the more the residue begins to be in the foreground. And the thing that's similar moves into the background. At certain points, even in the sixteenth century, which is relatively close to us after all, we do get the feeling that there is something strange that, well... you actually for a moment inhabit that other way of looking at things and then probably you jump back out again because you can't stay.

So it's probably an intuitive feeling which energizes the work I do without actually being made fully explicit. Once it's explained, it's translated and it's fixed, and then we're outside it, back home. I'm sorry to be so obscure, but it's something paradoxical that you have to expect. It's a movement into and out of, which I try to explain in the book in other terms — in terms of this figure of antiperistasis — which is a kind of strange paradoxical movement whereby the more opposite you are to something, the more it affects you... it's like the colder it is outside, the warmer you get. That's the example they use most often in the sixteenth century. And it maybe a movement into something which is

generated by attraction, like an attraction of gravity or some force field, you know, but when you get inside somehow it flips around and you're pushed out again.

In the sixteenth century thought often operates like that, and I try to analyze the specifically sixteenth-century bits of it. So I suppose that's it as far as my early modern interests are concerned. I'm actually interested in other cultures as well and would gladly spend much more time with them, because I would now much rather study a culture that's as different as possible. I don't think I've got the time left in my life to do it, because it would mean learning languages that are too late for me to learn properly now. There are things like the Sami languages and cultures which I'd really like to look at properly, and maybe some of the Native American languages. But it would take too long, partly because the means of studying them aren't available unless you go and live with the people themselves for a while. But the more different the language or culture is now, the more it attracts me, which is why I think I probably won't do much more sixteenth-century work after this, because in a way it is, after all, too close.

P.G.: But do you see some of your future professional interests or activities still tending towards the literary and/or historical?
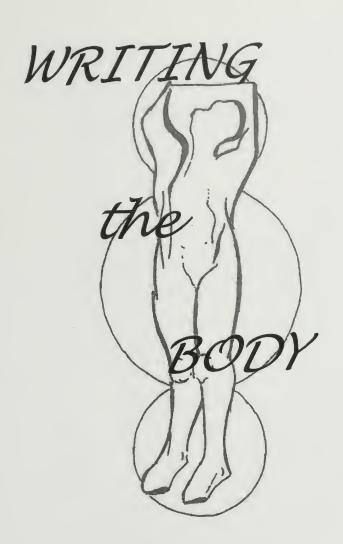
Cave: Well, I think I've got enough to keep myself going for the rest of my professional career just in terms of finishing off the things I'm supposed to do now and the spin-off from those. But I think probably they will increasingly be accompanied, in the margins of my life, as far as I have any, by other activities which will be probes into the areas I just mentioned. I already spend a certain amount of time acquiring languages that are relatively unfamiliar, even just little bits of them, because it's very refreshing to make yourself turn your mind around and think in terms of a language which has, for example, separate categories of verbs or verb forms depending on whether the object of the verb is definite or indefinite—using a different ending when you say, "I want the menu," from when you say, "I want a menu." Once you get your mind to think, "Oh well, that's normal," then you begin to see the world categorized in that way. As I said, I can't get very far because obviously it would take years to get really

into the middle of those things. So I know that this is just dabbling on the surface, but I think at this stage of my life I can afford to do that. It's become a personal activity rather than a professional one.

P.G.: We're all in the same boat, so to speak, for having taken up a foreign language and trying to come to terms with it and naturalize it, and to get as close as we can to it with a native fluency level, and it's frustrating because sometimes you realize you'll never get there. You'll get close but...

Cave: Well I use French in a very easy way now in a sense, but there's no doubt that when I write French there's slightly more friction than when I write English. I'm forced to use it with less freedom, if you like. Though that's quite a good discipline. And when I speak it to colleagues in France or give a talk in French, I'm never quite sure how it's going to sound at the other end, whether that level of rhetoric, that for me is a little bit more formal than I would think of using in English, really does sound natural to them. I can't quite judge that naturalness or disassociate my sense of it being rather rhetorical in the negative sense. So, yes, it's there to the last, that friction you encounter the minute you go into another language and it's part of the fun of learning languages. They're alternate worlds.

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WRITING the BODY

PAROLES GELEES

UCLA French Studies

*Ce serait le moment de philosopher et de
rechercher si, par hasard, se trouvait ici
l'endroit où de telles paroles dégèlent.*

Rabelais, *Le Quart Livre*

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