

# **UCLA**

## **Paroles gelées**

### **Title**

Foreword

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## FOREWORD

Our tutors never stop bawling into our ears, as though they were pouring water into a funnel; and our task is only to repeat what has been told us. I should like the tutor to correct this practice, and right from the start, according to the capacity of the mind he has in hand, to begin putting it through its paces, making it taste things, choose them, and discern them by itself; sometimes clearing the way for him, sometimes letting him clear his own way. I don't want him to think and talk alone, I want him to listen to his pupil speaking in his turn . . . *Obest plerumque iis qui discere volunt autoritas eorum qui docent.*

Montaigne, *Of the Education of Children*<sup>1</sup>

Montaigne's "new method" of education, where the pupil learns by doing rather than observing, seems to have taken hold in graduate schools of recent years. The privileged time of graduate study as it existed in the past—a period of reading, attending classes and developing ideas at one's own pace without thought of transgressing the limits of one's student status—has become a somewhat ambiguous state in the current, competitive field of academics. Doctoral students must now enter the professional ranks long before finishing their degree. They present papers at conferences, become members of various national and regional associations, and try above all to "get published." In addition, with the universities' many financial cutbacks of recent years, the expense of graduate study often curtails the leisurely pace one might like to retain from yesteryear and forces the candidate into the job market as soon as the "ABD" can be proclaimed. Whether for public or private reasons, as Ph.D. students we are compelled to go beyond the role that the term *student* usually

implies and to see career realities in the pragmatic light originally known only by our professors!

I'm not sure, however, that one need necessarily bemoan this plight. Pressure and anxiety can produce impressive intellectual fruits at any level. It is also clear that some students have talent which need not wait for the conferring of a doctoral degree in order to be acknowledged by fellow scholars. Essays or discussions prepared for graduate seminars sometimes go beyond class requirements and exhibit a mastery of subject which is deserving of public appreciation.

It is the purpose of *Paroles Gelées* and other graduate student journals like it to provide a forum for the superior graduate student—the one whose critical work blurs the once clear-cut line between amateur and professional—to share his knowledge with fellow “students” of literature at all levels. Journals like *Paroles Gelées* also serve their contributors in another way. Those who publish in reviews such as this learn to write for a general public, and to defend their work against the occasional criticism of the journal's editors and its readers, or recognize when change is in order rather than defense. For above all, wrote Montaigne, “he should be taught to yield to the truth, and to lay down his arms as soon as he discovers it, whether it appear in his opponent's argument, or to himself in his own second thoughts. For he will not be sitting in a professorial chair to repeat a set lecture.” Certainly all those involved in the preparation of a literary review learn that commitment to the honest pursuit of an idea is perhaps the most important of the qualities that separate the burgeoning professional scholar and teacher from the unfinished Ph.D.

In the current issue of *Paroles Gelées* we are pleased to present articles by three students whose interests cover quite diverse topics. Thomas F. Bertonneau (UCLA Program in Comparative Literature) has written an introduction to the work of Timothy Reiss of Emory University, followed by an interview which seeks to situate Prof. Reiss among past and present thinkers on the subjects of language, discourse and history. Charles de Bedts (UCLA French Department) analyzes in detail the relationship between subject and object in Baudelaire's and Mallarmé's “Chevelure” poems, and reveals a distinctive “poétique de la femme” at work in each of these texts. Finally, Scott Carpenter (University of Wisconsin, Madison) brings the modern critical perspectives of Derrida and Lacan to bear on a classic work of French literature: Montaigne's “De l'amitié.”

In addition to these essays volume 4 of *Paroles Gelées* contains a number of contributions from other UCLA French students and several faculty members in the form of reviews and summaries which appear in the last sections of the journal. These short pieces range from Eric Gans' abstract of the second in his series of books on "generative anthropology," to a critique by Amy Morris of A.-J. Greimas' presentation at a recent UCLA semiotics conference. Beginning next year *Paroles Gelées'* book and conference review section is expected to become a joint annual project of the French faculty and students—a further occasion, we hope, for the graduate apprentice to mingle with his or her future colleagues.

Susan Delaney  
Editor


1. My quotations from *De l'institution des enfants* are taken from Donald Frame's bilingual edition entitled *Montaigne's Essays and Selected Writings* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1963), pp. 16-78.



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UCLA French Studies



Volume 4  1986



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

Rabelais, *Le Quart Livre*

Volume 4  1986



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