

# **UCLA**

## **Paroles gelées**

### **Title**

Rhetoric, Referent and Performance: Reading in La Nouvelle Héloïse

### **Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/63d8t0kr>

### **Journal**

Paroles gelées, 13(1)

### **ISSN**

1094-7264

### **Author**

Kolstad, Benjamin K.

### **Publication Date**

1995

### **DOI**

10.5070/PG7131003022

Peer reviewed

## Rhetoric, Referent and Performance: Reading in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*

---

Benjamin K. Kolstad

*Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse* is a novel which has suffered much from those who have attempted to interpret it, as Paul de Man, in one of the most forceful and cogent readings of Rousseau's work, observes: "...We are still coping with a contingent and basically irrelevant misreading ... such a reading considers *Julie*, if it considers it at all, as if it would have preferred it to be the *Confessions* or the *Rêveries* rather than what it is" (189). In attempting to dialecticize what are commonly perceived to be the two halves of the novel, critics have, time and again, come up against a reading that requires a failure, either on their own part (which would be hard to admit) or on Rousseau's part. But in de Man's reading, the novel can no longer be split into the two halves of a dialectic between Rousseau the political and social theorist of *Du contrat social* and Rousseau the sentimental reader of Richardson. Instead, de Man argues, quoting Wordsworth, "we must discover another and finer connection than that of contrast" (de Man 192).

When de Man says "[a]ll the thematic problems of the work, the relationships between love, ethics, political society, religious experience, and their respective hierarchies, depend on the understanding of a term of which the meaning, for Rousseau, is by no means transparent" (de Man 193), he is adding Rousseau to the list of writers (Nietzsche, Rilke, Proust) whose texts unsettle the notion of reading, and hence require an immense effort to read. For de Man, everything in the work comes down to one crucial point—the referential moment. If language (in general, but particularly "literary" language) refers to a reality outside the text, the status of that reality must remain unquestioned in order for the referential moment to retain its authority. Rousseau's second Preface calls this moment, as well as the whole idea of reading, into question from the very beginning of the novel:

N. ...Cette correspondance est-elle réelle, ou si c'est une fiction?

R. Je ne vois point la conséquence.<sup>1</sup> (11)

This unsettling moment undermines the referential conventions on which reading is based. The play between the fictional Jean-Jacques and his interlocutor puts the authorship of the work into question, and with it, every claim to an extra-textual, verifiable referent. Love itself is seen as an illusion that stems from the very illusion on which textuality is founded. It builds "another Universe," and posits in it "objets qui ne sont point, ou auxquels lui seul a donné l'être" (15).

De Man looks to the second Preface to find support for his claim that the epistemological authority of the letters is uncertain, indeed, is unsettled by Rousseau himself. The "dialogue preface" is rich in Platonic overtones: for Plato, as for the characters in the second Preface, it is the rhetorical stance one assumes that determines the accuracy of one's argument. In Rousseau's preface, two characters, R. and N., debate the 'truth-status' of the letters which comprise the novel: are they 'real' or are they 'fictional'? R., whom most readers agree represents Rousseau himself, recognizes that N., the supposed 'publisher' of the novel, must precisely define "ce qui est essentiel à l'espece" (12) before arguing that the characters in the text are not representative of the species,<sup>2</sup> otherwise his rhetorical stance is liable to error. Socrates, whenever he finds "another man able to discern an objective unity and plurality, [he] follow[s] 'in his footsteps where he leadeth as a god'" (*Phaedrus* 512). This attempt to define the nature of the topic under discussion points to the question of referentiality. Whoever has the most well-defined rhetorical model Socrates will follow "as a god."

Similarly, the debate between R. and N. centers around questions of rhetoric and referentiality: R.'s claim that there is "no consequence" to the distinction between a real and a fictional correspondence throws N. back into the doubt which he had hoped to resolve by speaking to the owner of the manuscript. R.'s rhetorical stance refuses to authorize N.'s interpretation, putting the referential status of the letters in doubt: if they are a fiction, "Ces Lettres ne sont point des Lettres; ce Roman n'est point un Roman; les personnages sont des gens de l'autre monde" (12). If N.'s judgment is correct, then Rousseau's work must be an allegory, with divine rather than mortal characters. After all, if R.'s "beau raisonnement" were followed, and it did not matter whether the letters were real or fictional, "les Monstres inouis, les Géans, les Pygmées, les chimères de toute espece; tout pourrait être admis spécifiquement dans la nature" (12). N.'s interpretive model here is

classically Horatian (referential), in which the arts must imitate nature. A work of art which refuses to imitate nature (to refer to "reality") is "ridiculous," "incoherent," "chimerical."<sup>3</sup> The second Preface thus appears to be a debate between two discursive models: R.'s Platonic model (rhetoric) and N.'s Horatian model (referentiality).

Hence the anxious appeal throughout the novel to some model for referential authority on which to base the construction of discourse in the textual, philosophical world: in the first half, the model is that of *amour*, passion; in the second, the model is divine, religious. De Man notices that neither model sustains itself: the "retrospective clarity" in the pivotal letter (Part Three, Letter 18) which uncovers the "narrative chain of successive errors [in the first half], as misleading for the reader as they were for the character" (212), "does not extend to the second part" (216). De Man seems to give the critical shrug when he confronts this lack of clarity, and turns to a model of allegorical reading in order to impose a kind of readability on the text. This is not to imply that de Man is faced with a conundrum from which he is unable or unwilling to extricate himself. On the contrary, his reading does a masterful job of unifying the novel around its central problematic—the concept of reading itself. I claim, however, that it is the anxiety stemming from the lack of referentiality in both 'halves' of the novel that unifies the text and gives it coherence and readability.

This anxiety is, above all things, an anxiety about the power and the authority of language. Appeals to authority are everywhere in the text, as the lovers seek to ground their passion in a metaphysical system that will sanction it—"un amour tel que le notre (sic) l'anime et la [l'âme] soutient ... que serions-nous si nous n'aimions plus?" (226); as Julie appeals for authority to an (epistemologically illusory) divine model to justify her renunciation of passion (but not love)—"le vrai modele (sic) des perfections dont nous portons tous une image en nous-mêmes" (358).

Elsewhere this anxiety is reflected in the various threats and abortive, contractual performatives that move the plot along through either/or choices: "Il faut vous fuir, Mademoiselle, je le sens bien" (31) implicitly concludes with "unless you tell me to stay." The episode in which Julie gives St. Preux money when he does finally leave (66-68) is another example of this performative threat: 'you take the money or I'll know the reason why, or you're not the man

I thought you were,' another crisis of self and referent. This threat of action combined with appeals to referentiality (the point of honor by which St. Preux refuses the gift becomes the basis of a referential attack—if St. Preux can prove that it is really his honor which motivates his refusal, Julie can accept it—otherwise he is one of those "gens pointilleux" whom she detests) sustains the novel throughout several hundred long, anxiously meditative letters.

De Man, faced with the uniformity of style and the lack of decisive events related in the letters, seems almost bored by their discursiveness; they threaten action rather than perform it. He concludes from this that they *have* no active power:

Unlike Laclos's letters in the *Liaisons Dangereuses*, which are as directly effective as bullets, the letters of the *Nouvelle Héloïse* rarely set out to accomplish anything beyond their own reading; apparent deviations from this norm would turn out, at more careful consideration, to be hardly exceptions at all. *Rousseau's text does not exploit the narrative possibilities of the letters as "actants", as direct plot-agents.* They appear rather to be reflective and retrospective musings, interpretations of events rather than being themselves the events. (193-194, emphasis added)

This conclusion is based on what appears to be an inaccurate assumption. For although the letters are indeed reflective and retrospective, and the novel does face "awkward moments when it comes to writing" (294), the letters—or at least the anxious search for referentiality that they reflect—do in fact cause the action of the novel, and do in fact have performative power.

The anxiety N. displays in the Preface is mirrored throughout the text, as Julie and St. Preux explore the various models for their own behavior, searching for a referential model which can sanction their own textual contract—call it the contract of the love-letter. This contract becomes invalid, however, for they can find no epistemologically sound referent for either their language or their actions. Each successive model in the text (passion, contract, duty) is based on error and substitution—metaphor on metaphor. Hence the anxiety of the lovers, and the constant lapse into epistemological error which de Man rightly notices:

The Second Preface to Julie thus links a deconstructive theory of reading with a 'new' [my quotes] sense of textuality.

The innumerable writings that dominate our lives are made intelligible by a preordained agreement as to their referential authority; this agreement however is merely contractual, never constitutive. It can be broken at all times and every piece of writing can be questioned as to its rhetorical mode.... Whenever this happens, what originally appeared as a document or an instrument becomes a text and, as a consequence, its readability is put into question. (204)

This sense of textuality is by no means new. In the *Phaedrus*, Plato shows that he was well aware of the problems of reading and of textuality: "That's the strange thing about writing, which makes it truly analogous to painting. The painter's products stand before us as though they were alive: but if you question them, they maintain a most majestic silence. It is the same with written words: they seem to talk to you as though they were intelligent, but if you ask them anything about what they say ... they go on telling you just the same thing for ever" (*Phaedrus* 521). The problem with texts for de Man, and "written words" for Plato's Socrates is that they have no more than a representative, mimetic ability. And without the referent, the object being imitated, they stand forever in need of their "parent": "And once a thing is put in writing, the composition, whatever it may be, drifts all over the place, getting into the hands not only of those who understand it, but equally of those who have no business with it; it doesn't know how to address the right people and not the wrong [as the rhetor, and R. in the Preface, presumably does]. And when it is ill-treated and unfairly abused it always needs its parent to come to its help, being unable to defend or help itself" (*Phaedrus* 521).

I do not mean to imply that de Man is one of those who "has no business" with Julie. On the contrary, his analysis of the referential moment in the text is insightful and informative. I am merely taking issue with his admittedly unclear stance on undecidability. De Man, confronted with the uncertainty of the text and the analogous uncertainty of the characters in it as to its own referential meaning, replaces the epistemologically aberrant referent that the characters try to assert with an allegorical reading: the epistemological incertitude of St. Preux and Julie is the figure for reading in general—founded on a contractual, not natural, referent. But he recognizes that this allegory (and here he hedges his bet) is itself a

reading based on the same substitution, and presumably the same error, as the text itself:

the assumption of readability, which is itself constitutive of language, cannot only no longer be taken for granted but is found to be aberrant. There can be no writing without reading, but all readings are in error because they assume their own readability.<sup>4</sup> Everything written has to be read and every reading is susceptible of logical verification, but the logic that establishes the need for verification is itself unverifiable and therefore unfounded in its claim to truth. (202)

So where has he gotten? De Man's own text denies its readability, if here we take it at its word. One hopes that de Man is not saying that his own text is fundamentally unreadable. Presumably he is trying to account for the ultimate undecidability of referent for any text, which enables him to introduce his allegorical reading: "Allegorical narratives tell the story of the failure to read whereas tropological narratives, such as the *Second Discourse*, tell the story of the failure to denominate. *The difference is only a difference of degree and the allegory does not erase the figure*" (205, emphasis added). His assumption—that *La Nouvelle Héloïse* is an allegorical text whose rhetorical stance unsettles its own referential status—is very productive, for it allows him to treat the novel as a whole, rather than as two separate, mutually incompatible parts. He recognizes, as do most critics, the difficulty of relating the first half of the text, with its constant substitution of self and other, the confusion and cross-identification of souls of St. Preux and Julie, to the second half of the novel, where duty and the marriage contract supersede the contract of passion between "soul-lovers."<sup>5</sup>

De Man's program of allegorical reading is an attempt to restore referentiality to the text, to reimpose a meaning which Rousseau deliberately unsettles, but which we, as readers, 'must' assume is present. In this sense, de Man seems to be trying to emulate Julie, who replaces the referential model of the first half with another model of more "divine" (and presumably more legitimate) authority in the pivotal letter. De Man is trying to initiate an allegorical mode of reading which does not depend on (and is not vulnerable to) the problematic referent of the text. The allegory, then, is another form of contract between the reader and the author. It is a kind of contract that enables the author (or editor,

as the Second Preface reminds us), despite the lack of authority to perform which de Man notices in the letters, to deliver his message.

This reading seems plausible, but we shall see that in order for it to work, de Man has to deny the plainly performative nature of many of the pivotal letters (for example, Part One, Letter One, page 31—the letter which incites the series—cited above). This is where his argument becomes tenuous. Because despite the epistemological uncertainties, despite the aberrance of the lovers' views which becomes apparent in the second reading, after the pivotal letter, the letters do serve as actants. The characters' search for their authority to perform is itself performative; it is the very basis for the plot from the beginning, de Man's "plot-agent" par excellence.

Let us examine Austin's definition of the performative utterance and see if we can define exactly what it is that de Man finds lacking in the text. Austin lists several requirements that must be fulfilled in order for a statement to have performative power. First, he illustrates the general quality of a performative: "if a person makes an utterance of this sort, we should say that he is *doing* something rather than merely *saying* something" (222). He then gives several examples of this "performance of an act *in* saying something as opposed to ... an act *of* saying something" (99): saying "I do" in a marriage ceremony; apologizing; christening a ship. Austin makes the point that the category of truth does not apply to these statements; indeed "we shall see at once that they couldn't possibly be true or false (*PP*, 222)". There must also exist certain conventions, that determine the "felicity" of the performative utterance (Austin 99ff).

But Austin makes another point about the felicity of a performance: "the one thing we must not suppose is that what is needed in addition to the saying of the words in such cases is the performance of some internal spiritual act, of which the words are then to be the report" (223). It is perfectly allowable for an utterance to have performative power without the speaker having the slightest intention of actually carrying out his threat. For example, a storekeeper yelling "Stop, or I'll shoot!" at the back of a fleeing criminal can have the desired effect without the shopkeeper even having a gun, or a loaded gun. It is the intent of the performative that matters, not the truth or falsity of its constative dimension.

This enables St. Preux, in the by-now familiar letter (Part One, Letter One) to say "Il faut vous fuir, Mademoiselle, je le sens



bien," when fleeing is the last thing he wants to do. He invokes the authority of the love-convention with an entirely rhetorical statement,<sup>7</sup> and, in doing so, performs the act that initiates the "long series of flights and returns" for which de Man can find no active initiation. The invocation of this authority of the lover is problematic for de Man, because it occurs outside the sanction of a referential moment. He finds the referent for the action to be epistemologically unreliable, and, in consequence, denies the performative power of the statement. In essence, he says, the authority—the convention—that St. Preux invokes does not exist, and therefore the statement must be in error. Any performative power it may have rests on a self-instituted, *self-referential* moment.<sup>8</sup> But, if we look at Austin again, we find that this central ambiguity which precipitates de Man's allegorical reading can be clarified by treating this act as a performative utterance. For, in refining the nature of the performative utterance, Austin recognizes that "although these utterances do not themselves report facts and are not themselves true or false, saying these things does very often imply that certain things are true and not false . . . *But still it is very important to realize that to imply that something or other is true, is not at all the same as saying something which is true itself*" (224, emphasis added). St. Preux is thus able to imply the existence of a love contract between Julie and himself, and Julie is able to accept this rhetorical trickery. And both of the lovers are able to enter into the model of love relations for which they ceaselessly seek a referent.

Austin goes on to say that "it is obvious that the conventional procedure which by our utterance we are purporting to use must actually exist" (224). This is somewhat paradoxical in light of his earlier recognition of the power of implication in the felicity of a performative. If one can imply things that are not true in a felicitous performative, why can one not imply that the convention by which one performs exists as well? That the convention one invokes is epistemologically unreliable does not mean that it does not exist, that it cannot be invoked. This idea, that the convention must actually exist in order for it to be invoked, is where de Man seems to (referentially) ground his argument. But I find this argument unsatisfying. It seems that, by allowing the epistemological uncertainty of a convention to be compatible with its invocation, one can make a stronger case for the *readability* of both halves of the novel

than de Man makes for their *unreadability* (which he then solves with the 'allegory' of reading).

Both Julie and St. Preux continually remind each other (and themselves) that the conventions they invoke do in fact exist. By their continued insistence on some epistemological referent—some authority for the models, the conventions, they invoke—the lovers reveal the anxiety about the "legitimacy" of referential language that permeates both halves of the book. This anxiety is in evidence throughout the text, and will become the basis for our rereading of the novel. Let us examine some examples of this anxiety of reference.

The rhetorical statement that begins the series of letters—"Il faut vous fuir"—is an attempt to invoke the authority of the love-convention that will give St. Preux certain "droits de cœur" over Julie. Indeed, the fact that he is proleptically invoking this convention of the lover before he is actually in the situation of the lover, does not matter. His textual performance which takes the authority of the lover for granted forces Julie—if she reads the letter instead of burning it or bringing it to her mother, as she ought to have done (342)—into implicitly recognizing his authority.

St. Preux insists upon the "droits d'amour," and continually defines himself against the referent of the "stock characters in a situation of sentimental tragedy, persecuted by the social inequities of wealth and class and by the caprices of a tyrannical father" (de Man 212) When he writes from Paris, lamenting the decline of love in the big city (where these social inequities are most prevalent), he reminds Julie of the rights of the lover, of the authority of the love/marriage contract: "On diroit que le mariage n'est pas à Paris de la même nature que par ailleurs. C'est un sacrement, à ce qu'ils prétendent, et ce sacrement n'a pas la force des moindres contracts civils" (271). He worries about this loss of love's authority as he continues: "L'amour même, l'amour a perdu ses droits et n'est pas moins dénaturé que le mariage ... les amans [in Paris] sont des gens indifférens qui se voyent par amusement."

Julie, however, learns the lesson of authority well, for even in the first half of the novel where St. Preux is seen as the dominant character Julie is able to use terms of contract and of authority to get him to do as she wants. She has authority over him, for example, when she forbids him to commit suicide—"J'employe dans cette lettre une autorité à laquelle jamais l'homme sage n'a résisté. Si

vous refusez de vous y rendre, je n'ai plus rien à vous dire..." (160). She seems to resemble the "législateur" of the *Contrat Social*, who appropriates authority through a performative use of language, creating a referent in a catachrestic act that produces a contract—as long as the others involved in the contract recognize her authority to appropriate the divine model. "The innumerable writings [and social contracts] which dominate our lives are made intelligible by a preordained agreement as to their referential authority: *this agreement however is merely contractual, never constitutive*" (204, emphasis added). Yet in the case of the *Social Contract*, this contractual agreement is constitutive; it constitutes the society in which we live. Merely recognizing that we choose to institute this contract does not give us the power to break it "at all times" as de Man claims.

Julie uses the same tactic of appropriating authority in the pivotal Letter 18 of Part Three when she announces a new model that is based on a more permanent and less illusory model than passionate love: divine love. By responding to this letter and thereby accepting Julie's invocation of divine authority (as he accepts her authority when she forbids him to commit suicide), St. Preux subjugates himself to her, and allows her to act, while he only reacts.

The structural parallels are numerous—in the first half, St. Preux is the teacher, guiding and judging Julie's actions, while in the second half, Julie, and to an increasingly greater degree Claire, possess the standard by which St. Preux's actions are judged. In the first half of the novel, St. Preux's letters are the initiators of most of the action,<sup>9</sup> while in the second, Julie, Claire, Milord Edouard, and even Wolmar seem to take delight in showing St. Preux the error of his ways.

But the novel cannot simply be split into neat antitheses, as de Man recognizes. The allegory of love is his attempt to provide a unified reading of the work. I disagree with the extent of de Man's allegorical reading, but one must recognize that its attention to the importance of rhetoric in the novel is crucial. What I propose, as I hope I have already made clear, is that it is this very catachrestic act of invoking of authority, and the anxious need for referentiality that it reveals is the unifying tactic of the novel. It is not just love rhetorically defined and redefined that the "halves" of the novel are concerned with. It is the very anxiety about the "referential mo-

ment," of which de Man makes so much. But far from being simply a way out of a textual hole, an answer to undecidability, this referential appeal is the action of the novel. It is not an allegory, it is a catachresis. It is not substitution of self for author, of author for reader, it is institution of the contracts "which dominate our lives." True, the referents to which St. Preux and Julie appeal are contractual, and not constitutive, but that is the nature of the game. The reader lives in just such a contractual world as the lovers, where all appeals to referent and Truth are eventually undecidable. This ultimate undecidability notwithstanding, at some point or another all contracts must be instituted, invoked, or otherwise brought into being.

St. Preux resembles the Platonic character Lysias in his confused rhetorical invocation of the conventions of love; Julie resembles the "législateur" of the *Contrat Social* who appropriates the language of god for the affairs of men. Neither system is itself referentially sound, but it is the very search for referent that drives the plot of the novel. Without the invocation or the initiation of these contracts (which in itself implies performative power), the novel would have been much shorter. Indeed, would not have gotten past every author's worst nightmare—the blank page.

The various attitudes towards performatives throughout the text only illustrate the insistence on the referential moment that sustains the plot. Besides the famous discovery of the error of referent in Julie's long letter, there are many examples of appeals to authority and infelicitous utterances which provoke severe anxiety in the characters. In Part Four, Letter 13, Claire mentions the authority by which she counsels Julie: "Je ne prétens pas te donner mes raisons pour invincibles, mais te montrer seulement qu'il y en a qui combattent les tiennes, et cela suffit pour autoriser mon avis" (503, emphasis added). Fanchon Anet, in writing to St. Preux about Julie's fall into the water, worries about the performance her letter will affect on him: "Ah que deviendrez-vous quand vous saurez notre malheur?" (702). Le sage Wolmar himself worries about the effect of his words: "Lui annoncer sa dernière heure n'était-ce pas l'avancer? ... Etoit-ce à moi de lui donner la mort?" (707). Perhaps the most macabre example is when the Baron's "vieux domestique" sees Julie's corpse, "son imagination se frappe ; il voit Julie tourner les yeux, le regarder, lui faire une signe de tête. Il se lève avec transport et court par toute la maison, en criant que Madame n'est

pas morte... ." (736). If only saying it made it so. De Man is technically correct in that the letter is only an "interpretation ... of events rather than being [itself] the event... ." (194). But the epistemological error that founds the infelicitous utterance in this episode is closely akin to the one whose authority de Man invokes in denying performance to the letter itself.<sup>10</sup> In fact, it is "reality" itself which leads the servant into error; small wonder that letters, linguistic representations of this "reality," have the capacity to be far more infelicitous.

Perhaps the text is Rousseau's mimesis of the immanently impossible act of mimesis—his portrayal of the impossibility of absolute referential knowledge which mankind so desperately seeks yet forever must do without. Rousseau's text is a reminder of the illusory nature of meaning, a fictional parallel to his theories of the inadequacy of language to represent truth. Nothing we say is ever true, because of the fact that we say it, but we cannot deny the reality of the effects of our lies. Communication is always imperfect; in this regard, we can align Rousseau not only with Plato and Horace, but with another master of rhetoric: Nietzsche, for whom all truth is illusion, and language—specifically the catachrestic, appropriative language of Julie and St. Preux—is in fact a metaphor, although we have forgotten that it is a metaphor.

*Benjamin K. Kolstad is a doctoral student in Comparative Literature at the University of California, Los Angeles*

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> All references to *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* are to J. J. Rousseau, *Oeuvres Complètes*, edited by Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond (Paris: Gallimard [Bibliothèque de la Pléiade], 1964), vol. 2.

<sup>2</sup> In the *Phaedrus*, Plato has Socrates define the art and practice of good rhetoric: before proceeding with an argument, one must define one's terms, especially "disputed terms" such as love, and proceed to "bring a dispersed plurality under a single form, seeing it all together: the purpose being to define so-and-so, and thus to make plain whatever may be chosen as the topic of exposition" (511).

<sup>3</sup> Horace describes nonmimetic art to be "quite like such pictures would be a book, whose idle fancies shall be shaped like a sick man's dreams, so that neither head nor foot can be assigned to a single shape"

(451). Horace seems also to have been influenced by the *Phaedrus*, however; Socrates speaks, in an ironic tone, of how he leaves inquiry about "centaurs and the Chimera, not to mention a whole host of such creatures, Gorgons and Pegasuses and countless other remarkable monsters of legend" to others, so that he can concentrate on knowing himself (*Phaedrus* 478).

<sup>4</sup> Which is why Socrates emphasizes the rhetoric of dialectic, which does not assume readability, but defines it before proceeding.

<sup>5</sup> An important point to consider is that perhaps the problem lies in de Man's definition of a text: "the paradigm for all texts consists of a figure (or a system of figures) and its deconstruction" (205). But if all texts are not figural? This definition of textuality is intrinsically bound by Rousseau's thinking about language, which de Man brilliantly examines in his chapter on metaphor.

<sup>6</sup> Julie, in an attempt at a performative statement, says to St. Preux after her marriage to Wolmar "Oublions tout le reste et soyez l'amant de mon âme" (364).

<sup>7</sup> In de Man's words, "... the grammatical model ... becomes rhetorical not when we have, on the one hand, a literal meaning and on the other hand a figural meaning, but when it is impossible to decide which of the two meanings (that can be entirely incompatible) prevails" (10).

<sup>8</sup> In this sense, then, de Man's reading is entirely accurate, and quite profound. The plot of the novel is based on the referential moment *par excellence*, one which points up the arbitrary and self-referential nature of not simply narrative language, but any language.

<sup>9</sup> Notable exceptions being the episode of Julie's gift, which St. Preux attempts to turn into a "point d'honneur," and the suicide defense.

<sup>10</sup> In a note to Letter 11 of Part Four, Rousseau emphasizes the performative of St. Preux's dream of Julie's death in Letter Nine of Part Five: "L'événement [the death of Julie] n'est pas prédit parce qu'il arrivera, mais il arrive parce qu'il a été prédit" (737).

### Works Cited

- Austin, J.L. *Philosophical Papers*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961.  
 —. *How To Do Things With Words*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962.  
 De Man, Paul. *Allegories of Reading*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1979  
 Horace. *De Arte Poetica*. Trans. H. Rushton Fairclough. Cambridge: Harvard UP [Loeb Classical Library], 1947.  
 Plato. *Phaedrus*. Trans. R. Hackforth. In *Collected Dialogues of Plato*. Ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. *Bollingen Series 71*. Princeton UP, 1961. 475-525.  
 Rousseau, *Oeuvres Complètes*, Volume 2. Paris: Gallimard, 1964.



S

UCLA•FRENCH•STUDIES

I

N

T

*w*

**PAROLES•GELÉES**

I

*R*

M

M

*v*

**VOLUME•XIII•1995**

*E*

N

R

*R*

KRISTEVA

*v*

DIDEROT

M

*E*

É

*v*

E

ROUSSEAU

*A*





# PAROLES GELEES

UCLA French Studies

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*

Editor-in-Chief:	Marcella Munson	
Assistant Editors:	Anne–Lancaster Badders	Diane Duffrin
Editorial Board:	Kimberly Carter–Cram Vanessa Herold Heather Howard	Marcus Müller Natalie Muñoz
Consultants:	Colin Ellis Elizabeth Hodges Kathe Majors Betsy McCabe	Martha Richardson–Moore Jonathan Shows Steve Stella Lena Udall
Page Layout:	Joyce Ouchida	
Cover Art:	Anne–Lancaster Badders	

*Paroles Gelées* was established in 1983 by its founding editor, Kathryn Bailey. The journal is managed and edited by the French Graduate Students' Association and published annually under the auspices of the Department of French at UCLA. Funds for this project are generously provided by the UCLA Graduate Students' Association.

Information regarding the submission of articles and subscriptions is available from the journal office:

*Paroles Gelées*  
 Department of French  
 2326 Murphy Hall  
 UCLA  
 Box 951550  
 Los Angeles, California 90095-1550  
 (310) 825-1145

Subscription price:   \$10 for individuals  
                               \$12 for institutions  
                               \$14 for international subscribers

Copyright ©1995 by the Regents of the University of California.

# CONTENTS

---

## ARTICLES

The Subject: Kristeva and the <i>Antigone</i> .....	5
<i>Clifford Davis</i>	
L'entrée royale de Saint-Simon: Événement narcissique .....	25
<i>Diane Duffrin</i>	
Rhetoric, Referent and Performance: Reading in <i>La Nouvelle Héloïse</i> .....	35
<i>Benjamin K. Kolstad</i>	
The Contextualized Body: Narrative Event in <i>La Religieuse</i> .....	49
<i>Heather Howard</i>	
Destabilized Security in Mérimée's Short Stories .....	63
<i>Marianne Seidler-Golding</i>	
Les plis dans les puits: Identity and Narrative in Myriam Warner-Vieyra's <i>Juletane</i> .....	75
<i>Anne-Lancaster Badders</i>	
UCLA French Department Dissertation Abstracts .....	91
Call for Papers .....	95
Ordering Information .....	96

