



AN EXCELLENT YEAR
THOMAS PAVEL

Born in Romania, Thomas Pavel earned an M.A. at the University of Bucharest and a Doctorat 3e cycle at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris. He taught at the University of Ottawa, l'Université du Québec à Montréal, the University of California, Santa Cruz, and Princeton University, and is now Professor of French and Comparative Literature at the University of Chicago. He has published several books, including the scholarly studies *The Poetics of Plot: The Case of English Renaissance Drama* (1985); *Fictional Worlds* (1986); *The Spell of Language* (1988; new revised edition, 2001); *L'Art de l'éloignement: Essai sur l'imagination classique* (1996); *La Pensée du roman* (2003); *Comment écouter la littérature* (2006); and two novels, *Le Miroir persan* (1977) and *La sixième branche* (2003). During his year at Wiko, he worked on a revised English edition of *La Pensée du roman*, a history of the novel, and a book on literature and the representation of human action. – Address: Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, University of Chicago, 1115 East 58th Street, Chicago, IL 60637, USA. E-mail: tpavel@uchicago.edu

I am delighted to express my gratitude to Wiko for a happy and productive year. It was easy to get used both to Wiko's kind hospitality and to the friendly city of Berlin.

In the first half of the year I was able to finish the revised English version of my book *La Pensée du roman* (2003), a history of the novel from the Ancient Greek romances to the end of the 20th century. Before arriving in Berlin, I had expanded the sections about medieval chivalric stories and pastoral novels. At Wiko, I rewrote the chapters about the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, adding new material related to Italian, Spanish, Brazilian, and Portuguese literatures.

My main Wiko project examines the links between literature and moral reflection. I wrote the introduction of the book, which was the basis of my Wiko presentation in May, and the first two chapters. The first discusses the non-identity between literary characters and their fictional lives and the second presents these characters' long-term struggle for taking charge – awkwardly, imperfectly – of their actions. While at Wiko I read several recent philosophical works about human action, noticed the differences between the way philosophers discuss action and the way literature portrays it, and held several fruitful exchanges with the philosophers present as Fellows or spouses.

I also wrote several papers. “L’enseignement et les diplômes. Pratiques américaines”, which compares the Canadian, American, and European systems of undergraduate studies, was presented at the conference “L’enseignement de la littérature”, Université d’Aix-en-Provence, March 2011, and will be published in the Conference’s proceedings. “Understanding the unusual”, read at the conference on 17th-century French literature and its interpretation held in Chicago in March 2011, discusses an example of the sublime style: “Qu’il mourût” (in *Horace* by Corneille) in the light of Boileau and Burke’s theories of the sublime, Adam Smith’s ideas about sympathy, and Schleiermacher and Droysen’s hermeneutics. It will be published in a collective volume forthcoming at Éditions Garnier, Paris. In April, I attended a two-day seminar on *Multiple Rationalities and their Critics: Trans-Cultural and Historical Approaches* at the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, where I presented the paper “The Manifest Image and its Independence: Issues of Rationality in the Study of Meaning”, arguing that the scientist’s model of knowledge does not work when applied to meaning, be it in linguistics or in literary studies. In May, I read the paper “Love and Promotion” at the conference on “Human Links in Literature”, held at the University of Chicago Center in Paris. The paper reinterprets Tristan and Isolde’s story, as narrated by Gottfried von Strassburg, in the light of the social links prevalent at the time; it also criticizes Denis de Rougemont’s well-known views on Tristan’s myth. Again in May, I attended a major conference in Krakow dedicated to Czesław Miłosz’s birth centennial and presented the paper “Is the Past Inaccurate?”, which examines the portrayal of historical misfortune and human forgetfulness in Miłosz’s poetry. During a visit to Münster’s Westphalian Wilhelm University, I gave a lecture on the history of the novel. I then took part in the conference *La scena erotica nel romanzo*, at Santarcangelo, Italy, where every year the Malatesta Foundation organizes literary events during the last weekend of May. My paper “Eros et Chagrin” analyses an unusually moving erotic scene in Eça de Queiros’ novel *The Maias*, the greatest 19th-century Portuguese novel. The

Malatesta Foundation will publish the paper in Italian as part of the proceedings of the conference. I read the same paper in June at the conference *Littérature et immoralité* co-organized in Paris by l'École Normale Supérieure, l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales and the University of Chicago Paris Center. The French version will come out in the proceedings of this conference, whose main topic was the history of literary censorship. At the end of June, I served as keynote speaker at the conference *Legitimation of Literature in Totalitarian Regimes*, held at the University of Transylvania in Braşov (Kronstadt), Romania. My paper, which will appear in the conference's proceedings, is a reflection of the links between tyranny and culture. In addition, I published two short articles on Milan Kundera and François Rabelais in the French monthly *Le Magazine littéraire* and wrote reviews of Alan Riding's recent book *And the Show Went On: Cultural Life in Nazi-Occupied Paris* and of Paul Claudel's *Théâtre*, re-issued this year in the Bibliothèque de la Pléiade.

Over the winter and spring months, Barbara Piatti and I coordinated a literature study group. With the help of Wiko and the Romanian Cultural Institute in Berlin, Andrei Pleşu and I co-organized *A Recipe for Happiness* (May 6), a one-day event that included a discussion of the late '50s political trials in Romania and a performance of the play *Julia* by the Hungarian-Romanian playwright András Visky.

Wiko's atmosphere of scholarly emulation considerably helped me pursue my work. This year's group was particularly friendly, harmonious, and intellectually inspiring. The focus groups on Africa and on contagious diseases opened new, important horizons for me, as did the conversations with literary critics, fiction writers, historians, and economists present this year. Luca Giuliani, the Rector of the Kolleg, and Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus, the Academic Coordinator, have been very kind and supportive, as has Joachim Nettelbeck, the Kolleg's supervisor. Without the help and advice of Katharina Biegger and Christine von Arnim, the event *A Recipe for Happiness* wouldn't have been possible.

My gratitude also goes to Wiko's helpful librarians and IT service, to the administrative services, and to our dedicated German tutors. A suggestion concerning the language lessons: while there is certainly a need to discuss the Nazi regime, Communism, and contemporary political scandals, the lessons should better emphasize the long history of German intellectual and artistic achievements. Finally, the food and wine served at Wiko's lunches and dinners were excellent.