

Terence Cave

2009 Balzan Prize for Literature since 1500

For his outstanding contributions to a new understanding of Renaissance literature and of the influence of Aristotelian poetics in modern European literature.

The Balzan Interdisciplinary Seminar: Literature as an Object of Knowledge St John's College, Oxford

Adviser for the General Balzan Committee: Karheinz Stierle

Terence Cave will use the second half of his Balzan Prize to explore the value of literature as an object of knowledge, and more specifically, the cognitive value of literature in relation to other kinds of discourse. The research project will be run at the Research Centre of St John's College, Oxford. The word "seminar" is used in the title to indicate the heuristic nature of the project: the core of the work will lie in discussions designed to foster a sharper awareness of the issues that are at stake and to explore new directions in the understanding of literature.

There will be two principal sub-themes: (i) historical approaches to literature as an object, vehicle and instrument of knowledge (with particular reference to the early modern period); (ii) cognitive approaches to literature.

The project will seek to encourage specialised individual research programmes that fall within this perspective, in particular research that illuminates or foregrounds the place of literary study in the interdisciplinary spectrum. It will also organise workshops and discussion groups in which those interdisciplinary issues will be collectively explored and debated with the cooperation of colleagues from non-literary disciplines. The twin themes of knowledge and cognition will provide a focus for discussions. Individual research programmes will be respected, but will also be used as test-cases or illustrations of the broader interdisciplinary issues raised by the project.

The programme will establish a core team of individuals who are committed in the longer term. These will in their turn seek to involve others working in suitable interdisciplinary fields for attendance at workshops and discussion groups, under the general guidance of Terence Cave, who will act as Director. It is anticipated that the project will comprise a Senior Advisory Panel, two Balzan Postdoctoral Research Fellowships, four short-term Balzan Research Lectureships, and a number of discussion groups.

The function of the *Senior Advisory Panel*, which will have an interdisciplinary char-

acter, will be to provide advice on the development of the project and on locating suitable candidates for the various positions it offers and suitable participants in the group activities. Members of the panel will also be invited to participate actively in the project, whether by attending events or delivering an individual Balzan Lecture.

Two postdoctoral *Balzan Postdoctoral Research Fellowships* will be advertised for open competition. The Fellowships will be tenable for 3 years. The Research Fellows will be expected to produce published work of the equivalent of a book-length study over the course of the Fellowship, or (in the case of a monograph) within a period of at most two years after the completion of the project. They will also be expected to assist in the arrangement of discussion groups, workshops and the interdisciplinary colloquium. They will not be permitted to take on duties external to the project (for example teaching duties) except with the agreement of the Director. The Research Fellowships will be held at the St John's College Research Centre in Oxford.

Four *Balzan Research Lectureships* will be offered to younger colleagues holding permanent or semi-permanent academic positions, each to last for up to one semester on a "buy-out" basis at a time that best suits the needs of the post-holder, although it is envisaged that such appointments will be made relatively early in the project's lifetime in order to bind those individuals into its developing activities. The positions will carry with them the obligation to produce at least one article-length publication during the period of leave, and (under the guidance of the Director) to arrange a one-day workshop at the end of the period of leave structured around the Lecturer's work. The Research Lecturers will be expected to participate as far as their other duties permit in the other collective activities of the project, in particular the methodological colloquium. The Research Lectureships will normally be held in the Lecturer's home institution.

The Research Lecturers will be expected to use the workshop associated with their period of tenure to build up a *Discussion Group* that will continue to meet occasionally for the remainder of the project period. The Director will also actively seek to locate other suitable younger colleagues, in literary studies or another discipline, who are able and willing to organise further discussion groups; he will provide these with support from the Balzan funds. It is not excluded that some individuals will belong to more than one group.

A *Methodological Colloquium* will be held in the later stages of the project period with the aim of bringing the various participants together in order to discuss methodological points of convergence or bridges between the different disciplines involved. Particular methodological issues will be highlighted to give the discussion coherence, e.g. the constitution of an archive, the relation between empirical and theoretical per-

spectives, the logic and rhetoric that are particular to a given discipline, the limits of transitivity between disciplines. Participation will be limited to those who have already established an active and lasting connection with the project's aims. There will also be a programme of *individual visits and exchange visits*. These will enable younger colleagues to establish appropriate contacts in other universities, with the possibility of reciprocation.

Statement by the Prizewinner: *Literature, I hope you will agree, is not merely a pleasure to be indulged in when one has nothing better to do. Because it embodies the most complex and imaginative uses of human language, it is an indispensable instrument of thought; it provides us with alternative ways of understanding the world and ourselves. I have begun in recent years to explore that cognitive dimension of literature with the help of colleagues in other disciplines – historians of ideas, linguists, philosophers, psychologists, social scientists, also musicologists – and this cluster of concerns will form the basis for the project I intend to launch with the funding the Balzan Foundation has so generously provided. It is a great delight to me that another of this year's prizewinners is one of the world's most distinguished cognitive neuroscientists, a founder of the scientific methodology which is progressively transforming whole swathes of the research landscape, including my own. I therefore have the greatest pleasure in accepting the prize. I hope that, in the implementation of my Balzan research project, I shall be able to justify the trust the Foundation has placed in me.* Terence Cave (Berne, 20.11.2009)