

Introduction

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Mosaic readers who were among the hundreds in attendance at the October 2006 *Following Derrida: Legacies* conference cannot but remember Rodolphe Gasché's "Without A Title," the stunning evening keynote address with which he opened the conference. Only moments after disembarking from a plane that had been held up all day in Chicago, and without pausing for nourishment, Gasché spoke to all assembled of the critical vigilance that constitutes the singularity of Jacques Derrida's thought and that is the memory to which his heirs must respond. In the published version of "Without A Title," Gasché explains that this critical vigilance has nothing in common with a "hermeneutics of suspicion," or with an enterprise of "demystification" that occurs for the sake of a greater consciousness; "it is neither simply a subjective state of watchful awakesness, nor a deliberate act, or operation, by a fully armed subject, armed, say, with the precepts of rationality and reason" (10). Indeed, Gasché suggests, following Derrida's argument in "Some Statements and Truisms," critical vigilance, "not without the disarmament of the mastery of the sovereign subject," *suspends* the use of (no longer "uses" but only "mentions," in quotation marks) all concepts and words associated with consciousness and subjective mastery (10–11). The suspension (*epoché*), marked by the double inverted commas, opens a space for "deconstruction." As Derrida puts it in "Rams," suspension keeps attention "breathless, that is to say alive, alert, vigilant, ready to embark on a wholly other path, to open itself up to whatever may come, listening faithfully, giving ear, to that other speech" (146). In response to the legacy of such vigilance, Gasché proposes in "Without A Title" no longer to *use*, but only to *mention*, the term "deconstruction," so as to free this title word from the homogenizing "deconstructionism" of the "deconstructionists," and so as to open it to what "deconstructionism" excludes.

I cannot do justice here to Rodolphe Gasché's "Without A Title." Because he was unable to publish the text in *Mosaic*, I am delighted to include two of his essays in this

issue, “The Deepening of Apperception: On Walter Benjamin’s Theory of Film” and “The Harmless Detail: On Hegel’s Aesthetics,” along with an interview in the *Mosaic* “Crossings” series. With Rodolphe Gasché, *Mosaic* introduces the first of its “feature author” series. This is a most fitting beginning. Gasché is a Distinguished Professor at the State University of New York at Buffalo, the Eugenio Donato Professor of Comparative Literature. He taught at the Freie Universität Berlin and at the Johns Hopkins University before joining the State University of New York at Buffalo in 1978. Gasché has translated major works by Derrida and Jacques Lacan into German and has published widely in numerous scholarly journals. His books include *The Honor of Thinking: Critique, Theory, Philosophy* (2006); *The Idea of Form: Rethinking Kant’s Aesthetics* (2003); *Of Minimal Things: Studies on the Notion of Relation* (1999); *The Wild Card of Reading: On Paul de Man* (1998); *Inventions of Difference: On Jacques Derrida* (1994); *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection* (1986); and *System und Metaphorik in der Philosophie von Georges Bataille* (1978). His forthcoming book, to be published by Stanford University Press in 2009, is *Europe, or The Infinite Task: A Study of a Philosophical Concept*.

WORKS CITED

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- Gasché, Rodolphe. “Without A Title.” *Views and Interviews: On “Deconstruction” in America*. Aurora, CO: Davies Group, 2007. 1–27.