



Introduction

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you understand, within every sign already, every mark or every trait, there is distancing, the post, what there has to be so that it is legible for another, another than you or me, and everything is messed up in advance, cards on the table.

Derrida, *The Post Card*

editor: *The Photograph* (2004), *Following Derrida Legacies* (2006), and *Freud After Derrida* (2010). From distribution of the Call to arrival of the participants, each conference was a good two years in the making, feats of organization that I could not possibly have undertaken without stellar staff and student interns. Each time, they assumed responsibility for coordinating the vetting of submissions, for correspondence, promotion, funding applications, travel arrangements, student grants, ground transportation, room bookings, receptions and meals, program printing, and so on — so much so, that for me, each conference unfolded as some kind of miracle, running so smoothly, meals appearing, buses there just when you need them, and not the least, participants from around the world gathering together for an amazing few days of concerned conversation. In my life as an academic, a teacher and writer, these are the days that matter most to me. I love to meet distinguished scholars whose work I have been reading and teaching for years, but even more, I love to have serious students

Considering the time it takes to organize a major international conference, the events themselves are remarkably brief. Or so I have come to conclude on the basis of the three conferences I organized as *Mosaic*





meet them, listen to, and even speak with them. I love the way that institutional hierarchies and disciplinary boundaries collapse at these events, where the listening is respectful and the responses invariably generous, whether the speaker be a student or a world-famous scholar. Because the *Mosaic* conference experiences have been so full for me, I have been twice tempted to try for “one more.”

This is the first of two special issues that collects selected proceedings from the October 2010 conference, *Freud After Derrida*. The event featured five extraordinary keynote speakers, three of whose papers are included in this issue, with the two others to appear in the December 2011 proceedings special. In addition to the keynote speakers, the *Freud After Derrida* program included close to one hundred presentations, among them papers given by graduate students from seventeen different countries. Although not all of these papers could be included in the two proceedings issues, those that are published in this and the next *Mosaic* issue will give readers a good sense of what discussions the conference involved. I wish to extend special thanks here to Laura Cardiff, Production Manager at *Mosaic* until July 15, 2011, at which point she left to study Law at the University of Toronto. Authors published in the present issue will know how gratifying it is to work with her, and will appreciate both her impeccable copy-editing and production skills and her always gentle demeanour. Authors publishing in the December 2011 issue will welcome, as I do, the experience, professionalism, and tact of our new Production Manager, Andrée-Anne Boisvert.

I have to admit that the conference title, *Freud After Derrida*, is my own doing. I did run it by David Farrell Krell—a keynote speaker, published in this issue—who gave me two thumbs up. Even after that, however, I reflected on it for several months, a process with which those of you who are journal editors may be all too familiar. It is at once unsettling and exhilarating to send out a Call for a conference or special issue, as if one could glean some sense of “what’s going on,” or better, “what will be going on two or three years from now,” even while realizing that as far as one can see is not very far at all. In this case, my provocation came from both Freud and Derrida, not one before or after the other, so much as the impossibility of establishing, on the basis of their work, the linearity of inheritance, textuality, or indeed, and perhaps especially, of “life” and “death.”

As keynote speaker, Samuel Weber, points out in the first essay in this issue, Derrida’s reading of Freud in *The Post Card* “complicates” the “linear, ‘generational’—which is to say, also generative—conception of sequence as above all irreversible.” Yet, quite apart from his reading of Freud, Derrida’s concepts of textuality and signification render problematic the consequentiality suggested by such words as “heritage” or “inheritance.” For one thing, Derrida’s “appeal to a response on the part of the addressee”—who, rather than the sender, is the one who in reading-receiving actually



signs the text—suggests that between Freud and Derrida, no easy father-son filiation can be posed. Weber ventures rather that, “Freud in general—everything we can associate with that proper name—can be read as coming ‘after’ those who read him, and not only Derrida. What does distinguish the way in which Derrida reads and rewrites certain texts of Freud is the way this after-effect is shown to be irreducible and constitutive of the text and of the name of its signatory.” *Freud After Derrida*: and the title can also be reversed to suggest, as Weber writes, “that Derrida as well can and perhaps should be read differently ‘after’ the Freud that his work allows us to reread. There is a certain circularity here, but it is not one that rejoins its point of departure.” Weber’s essay approaches two instances of such circular or reciprocal reading: Freud’s move beyond the pleasure principle, read after Derrida’s suggestion that the move is anything but a “step beyond,” and Derrida’s notion of autoimmunity, read after Freud’s (Derrida’s reading of Freud’s) “non-step” beyond the pp. Nothing here can be understood “genetically” or in sequential before-and-after terms.

At stake both in Derrida’s concept of autoimmunity and in Freud’s “non-step” are repetition (the repetition-compulsion) and death (the death-drive), topics that Weber engages in his essay and that reappear in David Farrell Krell’s “Pulling Strings Wins No Wisdom,” an astonishing study that, it seems to me, turns on the conjunction of life and work—in Freud, Derrida, and Krell—and that offers an incomparable meditation on the theme of *lifedeath*. The essay takes up Freud’s story of the *fort/da* game in Chapter 2 of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, read by Derrida in *The Post Card* and, with all of the “complications” of fatherly or grandfatherly inheritance in play, read by Krell in “Pulling Strings.”

Without reference to either Freud or Derrida, architect Alberto Pérez-Gómez in “Built Upon Love: Towards Beauty and Justice in Architecture,” touches on motifs—desire, writing, *logos/mythos*, play, the tragic, ethics antithetical to calculability or code, textuality irreducible to communication of meaning, and what Weber calls “appeal to a response on the part of the addressee”—that certainly could be developed in relation to the conference title and that, in some cases, are broached by subsequent essays in this proceedings issue. Nine essays, in addition to the three keynote contributions, make this a remarkable *Mosaic* special, one of which I am very proud.

Thanks to all participants in the *Freud After Derrida* conference, many of whom came to Manitoba from afar, and thanks in particular to contributors to this special issue.

WORKS CITED

Derrida, Jacques. *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1987.

