

ascribes to the 1935 congress is extraordinary. Clearer judgment would suggest that no such congress could have any of the strength he claims for this one. There were many reasons to choose sides with the Soviets later, none of them having to do with a literary gathering in Paris in earlier years. Stalin's monstrousness and the purges of 1936–39 are most assuredly not to be forgotten. We have all, as C. L. R. James said, memorably borrowing from *Macbeth* to comment on these 1930s totalitarianisms, "supped full with horrors" (*Beyond a Boundary* [1963; London, 1980] 186). Hobson pushes the needs of memory to the banalities of cant. To mention these horrors every time one put pen to paper would be far less useful than to fathom the difficult, complex choices forced on individuals by events. To recognize that is not to favor crimes against humanity.

As for the rest of Hobson's version, I can assure him that I had no intention of "mak[ing] the Popular Front look good" or of concealing abuse. Conspiracy theories of history are wonderful simplifiers, but they distort the present no less than the past. I am astonished that one who presents himself as a historian can conflate the motives of western Europeans in 1935 with those of various citizens of the ex-Soviet Union in 1993—an astonishment he will naturally see as another device to conceal the truth about liberal interest. It has been said that to characterize motives for action in the light of subsequent history is easy and usually self-serving. Hobson gives no reason to challenge that view.

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### Derrida's Remark on Gasché

To the Editor:

In a contribution to the October Forum (108 [1993]: 1166–67), Jeffrey T. Nealon quotes from the interview with Jacques Derrida that I included in *Acts of Literature* (New York: Routledge, 1992), asserting that Derrida's comment about Rodolphe Gasché—"I talked to him about it"—is an assurance "that his disciplining of Gasché has taken hold" (1166). I still have the tape of the interview, but there is no need to hear the friendly tone of the comment to determine the emptiness of this assertion. All that is necessary is the ability to read words in their context. The sentence in question, which is about Gasché's use of the term

*infrastructure*, nothing more, ends, ". . . I understand what justifies the strategic use of it proposed by Gasché (and I talked to him about it)" (71). The conversation was obviously about the pros and cons of using this term, and only a reader already gripped by the fantasy of deconstruction as an authoritarian institution could assume otherwise.

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### Reply:

While I accept Derek Attridge's rejoinder, I would nevertheless maintain that the spoken "friendly tone" of Derrida's comment is far from self-evident in the written text. In response to Attridge's question concerning the specificity of literature as a deconstructive infrastructure in Rodolphe Gasché's work, Derrida says:

The word *infrastructure* troubles me a bit, even though I did use it myself for pedagogical and analogical purposes, at the time of *Of Grammatology*, in a very specific rhetorical and demonstrative context, and even though I understand what justifies the strategic use of it proposed by Gasché (and I talked to him about it). In an analysis of "literary" writing, you do of course have to take account of the most "general" structures (I don't dare say "fundamental," "originary," "transcendental," "ontological," or "infra-structural," and I think it has to be avoided) of textuality in general.

Now certainly this is not invective or polemic—modes that Derrida consistently refuses—and he goes on to say twice that "Gasché is right to remind us" of the difficulties surrounding the question of literature and deconstruction (*Acts of Literature* 70–71). However, there is—"friendly tone" notwithstanding—a rejoinder or critique offered here.

In addition, Derrida's remarks are specifically aimed at an intervention beyond mere quibbling about Gasché's use of the word *infrastructure*. Derrida continues, "Having said this, it is perhaps at this point that there could be a discussion with Gasché beyond strategic choice of terminology" (71). Such a "discussion" is outside the scope of this letter, but suffice it to say that for Derrida the word *infrastructure* opens onto a larger consideration of potentially dangerous philosophical horizons that could be dominated by a