

# Deconstructionism: the method in the madness

by Webster G. Tarpley

American college and university campuses are increasingly crippled by a form of mass irrationalism called political correctness. The purveyors of this doctrine proclaim that everything important in history can be summed up under the headings of race, gender, ethnicity, and choice of sexual perversion. They condemn western Judeo-Christian civilization, and inveigh against the dead white European males who predominate among the scientists of the last 600 years. True to the spirit of Herbert Marcuse's 1968 essay on "Repressive Tolerance," the politically correct demand the silencing of any speech that might be offensive to themselves and their radical feminist, homosexual, or ethnic-group clienteles. Instead, they busy themselves with coining absurd new euphemisms for plain English, fashioning labyrinths of pedantic circumlocution.

The infantile irrationality of political correctness might suggest that all of these characteristics were purely arbitrary expressions of the prejudices of the politically correct thought policepersons themselves. What needs to be appreciated is that the politically correct creed is coherent with a kind of philosophical doctrine which has a name: deconstructionism. The leading expositor of deconstructionism is a French writer named Jacques Derrida, a professor at the School for Higher Studies in Social Sciences in Paris. Since his appearance at a celebrated conference at Johns Hopkins University in 1966, Derrida has been a frequent guest professor and lecturer at many American universities, especially Yale, but also Berkeley, Stanford, and many others. Although Derrida is not a household word, he is the dominant academic philosopher in the world today. Ironically, his support and readership is greater in the United States than in France or any other country. U.S. higher education is now decisively influenced by Derrida's deconstructionism, a patchwork of fragments scavenged from the twentieth-century ideological junkyard of totalitarian movements. For those who have been wondering about a possible new prime focus of philosophical and political evil after the discrediting of Marxism: This is it.

Deconstructionists are radical nominalists, which means they are virtual paranoid schizophrenics. Books are already filled with the humorless politically correct Newspeak of post-modernism: vertically challenged instead of short, differently hirsute instead of bald, and so forth. But changing

words does nothing to change real situations. If tens of millions are unemployed and starving in today's depression, then they need jobs and economic recovery, and not terms like "momentarily downsized" or other new ways euphemistically to express their plight. To say nothing of the fact that this jargon makes thinking impossible.

## Derrida the deconstructionist

Jacques Derrida was born to a Sephardic Jewish family in El Biar, Algeria in 1930. He began writing in the early 1960s, and his first important books, *Writing and Difference*, *Disseminations*, and *Of Grammatology*, came out in 1967-68. Derrida's existential matrix is the May 1968 destabilization of the great Gen. Charles de Gaulle's government—an operation fomented by Anglo-American intelligence. This intellectual milieu was dominated in the 1950s by the existentialism of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, and in the 1960s by the structuralism of Levi-Strauss (whose networks spawned much of the terrorism plaguing Ibero-America) and the Freudianism of Jacques Lacan, spiced by the Hegelianism of Jean Hippolite. During the late 1960s, Derrida was built up by the group around the magazine *Tel Quel*, including one Felix Guattari, later an apologist for the Italian Red Brigades terrorists.

Derrida's immediate academic lineage at the elite Higher Normal School (ENS), makes for one hell of an intellectual pedigree. Start with Louis Althusser, the structuralist Marxist of *Reading Das Kapital*. Already in the late 1940s Althusser was suffering frequent mental breakdowns; in 1980, he murdered his wife by strangling her, and was committed to an asylum for the criminally insane. In the late 1940s, Althusser acquired a disciple: This was Michel Foucault, a young homosexual who periodically made abortive attempts at suicide, so that he was allowed to live in the ENS infirmary. Foucault was an enthusiastic reader of Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger who, under Althusser's influence, also became a Marxist and a member of the French Communist Party, where he was rumored to work as a ghost-writer for Jean Kanapa, a Stalinist member of the Politburo. Later Foucault would discover themes like the glorification of insanity, liberation through masturbation, and the like. Foucault ended up at the University of California at Berkeley, where he

frequented the chains-leather-riding crop homosexual and sado-masochistic scene. Foucault died of AIDS in 1984.

### 'Giving bullshit a bad name'

But Foucault also had a disciple: Jacques Derrida, who took his course at the ENS: "I was struck, like many others, by his speaking ability. His eloquence, authority, and brilliance were impressive," said Derrida later of his mentor. Derrida was taken by Foucault to the psychiatric hospital of St. Anne to hear patients examined (*Michel Foucault* by Didier Eribon, p. 50). Derrida has been less of a political exhibitionist than Foucault. Derrida was arrested by the communist authorities in Prague in 1981 on charges of drug trafficking; he said that he had come to meet dissidents and was

released after protests. In the mid-1980s, Derrida authored a characteristically garbled essay in praise of Nelson Mandela. In general, Derrida claims always to have been a leftist.

Foucault and his pupil Derrida quarreled during the 1970s, and Foucault has provided some trenchant summations of Derrida's work, which he rightly called "terrorist obscurantism." Obscurantism because Derrida deliberately writes in an incomprehensible way. If one ventures to criticize Derrida, the latter says: "You misunderstood me you are an idiot" (*Limited Inc.*, p. 158). Foucault also said of Derrida: "He's the kind of philosopher who gives bullshit a bad name" (*Illiberal Education* by Dinesh D'Souza, p. 190). The main exception seems to be when Derrida has to argue for funding for his activities; in these cases he seems to

## Stanford: the home of 'political correctness'

In October 1983, the Stanford University faculty voted to uphold Ph.D. candidate Steven Mosher's right to free speech, while simultaneously expelling him from the university. The reason given for this Orwellian decision was an article written by Mosher and published in Taiwan in 1981, describing his one-year visit to a mainland Chinese village during 1979-80. In the article Mosher portrayed the barbarity of China's one-child-per-family law, and included photographs of Chinese women, some nine months pregnant, undergoing forced abortions. The Stanford faculty deemed the article "unethical" and kicked Mosher off the campus. This incident, which at the time seemed an isolated one, was an ominous sign of the coming transformation of the university.

A leading American university, known as the "Harvard of the West," Stanford has now become an Orwellian thought-police state, dominated by the ideology of "political correctness." Recently, associates of Lyndon LaRouche attempted to organize on the Stanford campus. They were stopped by campus authorities in less than an hour, and were told that they could organize only in a designated "free speech zone." The problem is that in that zone, one may not set up a table, display signs, or sell literature. (The other problem is that the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights apply all over this country, not just in "constitutional zones.")

### Culture without values

In 1988, the Stanford University administration voted to junk the traditional Western Civilization curriculum

and institute instead the CIV (Cultures, Ideas, Values) program, in which students are drilled in a value-free comparison of all cultures. Thus, today, while freshmen might still read Shakespeare, they must also read pro-terrorists like Franz Fanon, for a different perspective on European culture.

A visit to Stanford today is eerie, as the world's real problems are utterly ignored. There are no demonstrations, no mass meetings, no posters or signs, no forums on issues like the economic crisis or the threat of World War III in the Balkans. A recent Stanford Black Liberation Month made *no mention* of the genocide against Africa; instead, there were lectures on Women and Gender in Malawi, Angolan Literature, Black Styles Through the Ages, and Diaspora Get Down II.

CIV undergraduate courses now include: Gender and Representation in Africa, African and Caribbean Roots of American Jazz Dance, Population Perspectives in the Third World, Mayan Mythology, Critical Perspectives on Feminist Theory, and American Indian Ways of Knowing.

There are hundreds of such courses spread throughout every branch of the Liberal Arts curriculum. If a student attempts to focus his studies on the primary classes in history, literature, or philosophy, he will find that even the "basic" courses are taught from a "multicultural," "feminist" perspective. No student is allowed to graduate without completing a mandatory course in "Gender Studies."

In his book *Local Knowledge*, anthropologist Clifford Geertz states that the world's population has been enslaved by a Judeo-Christian European culture that came into being during the fifteenth-century Italian Renaissance. To liberate mankind, says Geertz, this Renaissance culture must be overthrown. That is indeed the aim of the CIV curriculum.—Robert Ingraham

be able to speak quite clearly (see *Tenured Radicals*).

### The destruction of language

Those who try to read Derrida find a smokescreen of infuriating jargon, thoroughly pedantic but in a modish way. What is Derrida up to behind the smokescreen? One thinks of Molière's pedant Vadius in *Les Femmes Savantes*. His task at one level is simply to destroy the literate languages of western Europe and their developed capacity to transmit advanced scientific, artistic, and epistemological conceptions. Derrida wants to wreck everything that has been accomplished since *De Vulgari Eloquentia* (*On the Eloquence of the Vernacular*) by Dante, Petrarch, and their heirs in many countries. Derrida also knows that in order to destroy the efficacy of these languages, he must also destroy the heritage of Plato. Derrida wants to show that all written and spoken discourse is unreadable, undecipherable, incapable of meaning anything. Reading a written text, above all, is for Derrida always a misreading.

For this operation Derrida proceeds in the spirit of an ultra-Aristotelian radical nominalism which abolishes any relation between language on the one hand, and concepts and reality on the other. Such an outlook is always closely linked with paranoid schizophrenic mental pathologies. The operation is far from new, but has been attempted many times during the centuries, in recent times especially by the Anglo-Venetian or continental oligarchical schools of philosophy. Derrida is like David Hume, who began with the usual "Nihil in intellectu quod non prius in sensu" ("Nothing is in the intellect that was not first in the senses") of Paolo Sarpi's disciples among the British empiricists, and soon ended up denying the possible existence of truth, the world, causality, knowledge, and the self. Derrida uses "texts" as the primary sense impressions and arrives at the same kind of radical skepticism.

### Signs without reality

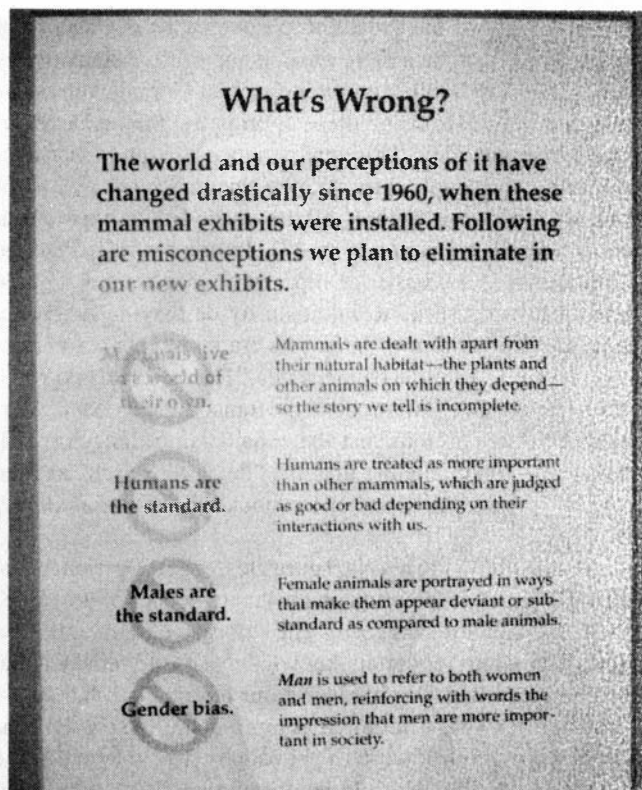
Much of modern philosophy is an attempt to dissolve epistemology into language and then to cripple epistemology by dissolving language. This is typical of Ludwig Wittgenstein, who has had immense influence in the Anglo-American world. Ernst Cassirer wrote in his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* about language becoming the principal weapon of skepticism rather than the vehicle for philosophical knowledge. Stuart Chase and the semanticists tried to show that most important political and historical concepts were meaningless verbiage. The modern hermeneutic school is not far behind. Derrida's late comrade in arms, Paul de Man, the leading "boa deconstructor" at Yale University until his death in 1984, talked about the predicament of modern thought as being linguistic rather than ontological or hermeneutic—meaning once again that language is a self-contained world of signs without links to reality. Concepts about the real world are degraded to rhetorical figures and tropes.



Derrida: "The axial proposition of this essay is that there is nothing outside the text." As the Spanish artist Goya captioned this etching from his *Caprichos* series: "Might not the pupil know more?"

Derrida's trick is to veil his extreme subjectivist denial of reality with an apparent negation of both subject and object: ". . . not only [does] meaning . . . not essentially imply the intuition of the object but . . . it essentially excludes it. . . . The total absence of the subject and object of a statement—the death of the writer and/or the disappearance of the object he was able to describe—does not prevent a text from 'meaning' something. On the contrary, this possibility gives birth to meaning as such, gives it out to be heard and read" (*Speech and Phenomena*, pp. 92-93).

Derrida's irrationalism has more flair than that of his plodding factional adversaries in the older Anglo-American linguistic analysis schools. When Derrida was a young boy, he was locked by his sister in a cedar chest in the family home and kept there by her for what seemed to him to be an eternity. During this time the child Derrida thought that he had died and gone to another world. After he had been rescued from the cedar chest, he somehow conceived the idea



*This sign in the Mammal Hall of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History, pledges to spend taxpayers' money to make the exhibitions politically correct.*

that he had been castrated. He came to see himself as the Egyptian pagan god Osiris, who had died and been dismembered, but then reassembled and brought back from the dead (minus his male organ) by Isis. Derrida told his Paris students of the early 1970s that this decisive experience in his life had led him to write the book *Dissemination* (Paris, 1972), which includes much elaboration of the theme of seed that is scattered, etc. Derrida felt compelled to narrate the Isis-Osiris-Horus myth in detail in the chapter of *Dissemination* entitled "Plato's Pharmacy," which is otherwise a document of his hatred for both Socrates and Plato.

### The Kabbala and mysticism

Derrida is the bearer of another form of irrationalism of a specifically Venetian stamp: He has been pervasively influenced by the mystical writings of the Kabbala, a school cultivated over centuries by the Luzzato patrician family of the Venetian ghetto. Derrida cites a certain "Rabbi Eliezer": "If all the seas were of ink, and all ponds planted with reeds, if the sky and the earth were parchments and if all human beings practiced the art of writing, they would not exhaust the Torah I have learned, just as the Torah itself would not be diminished any more than is the sea by the water removed by a paint brush dipped in it." Can this be Eleazar Ben Judah of Worms, the Hasidic Kabbalist who lived from 1160 to

1238? An ancient text with each single word surrounded by endless pages of exegetical commentary, with each note pointing to a another, older text—this is one of Derrida's dominating visions. Derrida's essay on the *Livre des Questions* (*Book of Questions*) and *Je Batis Ma Demeure* (*I Build My House*) by the contemporary French author Edmond Jabès yields a singular quotation on "the difficulty of being a Jew, which coincides with the difficulty of writing: for Judaism and writing are but the same waiting, the same hope, the same depletion." "The art of the writer consists in little by little making words interest themselves in his books" (*Writing and Difference*, p. 65). Derrida sometimes assumes the persona of a Kabbalist and signs his essays as "Reb Rida" or "Reb Derissa."

Derrida was much influenced by the French writer Emmanuel Levinas, who popularized the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl and the pro-Nazi existentialism of Martin Heidegger in France. Husserl and Heidegger had appeared as co-thinkers until Hitler's seizure of power in 1933, when Heidegger came out openly as a raving Nazi, while Husserl declined to do so. At this point, Levinas gravitated to Heidegger's, that is to say, to the open Nazi side. Levinas helped to direct Derrida's attention to Heidegger, who was also profoundly influencing French thought via Sartre, who was also a convinced Heideggerian. Just as Heidegger is a commentator of the protofascist Nietzsche, so Derrida can be seen as a commentator of the Nazi Heidegger. Derrida's endorsement of Heidegger is indeed very strong: "I maintain . . . that Heidegger's text is of extreme importance, that it constitutes an unprecedented, irreversible advance and that we are still very far from having exploited all its critical resources" (*Positions*, pp. 70, 73).

### Deconstruction is destruction

A typical theme of the irrationalists of the Weimar Republic was *Destruktion*. Karl Mannheim wrote in his *Ideology and Utopia* (1929) about the need to promote the *Destruktion* of self-deceiving ideologies. For the Heidegger of *Being and Time*, *Destruktion* meant something similar, approximately the clearing away of what deconstructionists call "western metaphysics" from life and the institutions of thought. Heidegger wrote after the war in his *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (p. 221) of the need for a "destructive retrospect of the history of ontology" whose task would be to "lay bare the internal character or development" of its objects of study. This would involve a "loosening up" of the "hardened tradition" of "ontology" by a "positive destruction."

The Nazi Heidegger's notion of *Destruktion* is the immediate starting point for Derrida and his entire school. In the first published edition of *De la Grammatologie* (*Of Grammatology*) published in Paris in 1967, Derrida does not talk about "deconstruction" but rather about "destruction" throughout. Derrida says that in deconstruction, "the task is . . . to dis-



mantle [*déconstruire*] the metaphysical and rhetorical structures which are at work . . . not in order to reject or discard them, but to reinscribe them in another way" (*Margins of Philosophy*). Derrida is nervous to the point of paranoia lest this connection become too obvious: He deliberately lies that "deconstruction has nothing to do with destruction. I believe in the necessity of scientific work in the classical sense. I believe in the necessity of everything which is being done."

### The destruction of reason

With deconstruction thus revealed as a slyly disguised form of destruction, the next question is to determine what is to be destroyed. Derrida wants the destruction of reason, the deconstruction of the *logos*, which he identifies as the central point of the Judeo-Christian philosophical tradition. That tradition is what the deconstructionists are attacking when they rail against "western metaphysics." Derrida is anti-western because he regards the line of development from Socrates and Plato through Gottfried Leibniz as "ethnocentric" and racist. When he attacks "metaphysics," he means human reason itself. Derrida writes:

"The 'rationality'—but perhaps that word should be abandoned for reasons that will appear at the end of this sentence—which governs a writing is thus enlarged and radicalized, no longer issues from a *logos*. Further, it inaugurates the destruction, not the demolition but the de-sedimentation, the de-construction, of all the significations that have their source in that of the *logos*. Particularly the signification of *truth*. All the metaphysical determinations of truth, and even the one beyond metaphysical onto-theology that Heidegger reminds us of, are more or less immediately inseparable from the instance of the *logos*, or of a reason thought within the lineage of the *logos*, in whatever sense it is understood: in the pre-Socratic or the philosophical sense, in the sense of God's infinite understanding or in the anthropological sense, in the pre-Hegelian or the post-Hegelian sense" (*Of Grammatology*, pp. 10-11). And again: "This absolute *logos* was an infinite creative subjectivity in medieval theology: The intelligible face of the sign remains turned toward the word and the face of God" (*Of Grammatology*, p. 13).

How then can reason and the *logos* be destroyed? Heidegger had already given the example of attempt this by mystifying the concepts having to do with language: "Thinking collects language into simple speaking. Language is therefore the language of being, just as the clouds are the clouds of the heavens. In speaking, thinking plows simple furrows into language. These furrows are even simpler than those plowed with slow steps by the farmer."

### 'The death of civilization of the book'

For Derrida, using a terminology that is borrowed from the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, language is at first the realm of "sign" and "signified." "The difference between sign and signifier belongs in a profound and implicit way

to the totality of the great epoch covered by the history of metaphysics, and in a more explicit and more systematically articulated way to the narrower epoch of Christian creationism and infinitism when these appropriate the resources of Greek conceptuality. This appurtenance is essential and irreducible; one cannot retain . . . the scientific truth . . . without also bringing with it all its metaphysico-theological roots" (*Of Grammatology*, p. 13). In other words, Platonic Christianity is the basis for modern science, and that is the enemy Derrida seeks to liquidate by destroying language. The scientific tradition "begins its era in the form of Platonism, it ends in infinitist metaphysics." (Here Derrida is probably targeting Georg Cantor and the transfinite numbers.) Derrida is fully conscious that the exhaustion of language will bring with it nothing less than the "death of speech" and the "death of the civilization of the book" (*Of Grammatology*, p. 8).

Again following his Nazi guru Heidegger, Derrida focuses his destructive attention on the "metaphysics of presence" as this relates to language. The "presence" amounts to a solid grounding for certain knowledge, for the certitude that something exists. Derrida is at pains to point out that "presence" of this kind is required as a pre-condition for the conceptual apparatus of western philosophy from the time of the Greeks on down: "It could be shown that all names related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the center have always designated an invariable presence—*eidōs* [action], *archē* [principle or first cause], *telos* [purpose], *energeia*, *ousia* (essence, existence, substance, subject), *aletheia*, [truth] transcendental, consciousness, God, man, and so forth" ("Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," pp. 279-280). In language, "the metaphysics of presence" is equated with a "transcendental signified" or "ultimate referent," which would function as the ultimate guarantee of meaning. We see that for Derrida, all western languages are "metaphysical," since their key words and concepts are permeated by Christian Platonism. They are also metaphysical, he thinks, because the only way to be sure of the meaning of "Send over a pizza," presupposes the Christian Platonic foundations of the whole civilization. Derrida therefore sets out to destroy Platonism by destroying language, while hoping to destroy the civilization along with both.

### Reason and speech

Derrida asserts that the western languages are "logocentric," that they are based on reason in this way. *Logos* can mean reason, but also lawfulness or ordering principle, but also word, discourse, argument, and speech. "With this *logos*," says Derrida, "the original and essential link to the *phonē* [sound] has never been broken." In other words, human reason and human speech are inextricably bound up together. The connection of speech and reason is the organizing principle of Plato's dialogues and of all the literature

based on them, through St. Augustine to the Italian Renaissance. The theater of Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Schiller represents a continuation of this tradition in a slightly different form. We must also recall that the classical poetry of Homer, Dante, and Chaucer was meant to be spoken or sung aloud. If "the scar on the paper," were to replace all this, colossal cultural damage would of course be the result.

Western language is therefore not only logocentric, but also *phonocentric*: that is to say, western language recognizes the primacy of the spoken language over the written language. "The system of language associated with phonetic-alphabetic writing is that within which logocentric metaphysics, determining the sense of being as presence, has been produced" (*Of Grammatology*, p. 43).

Derrida obviously cannot deny that spoken language "came first." He also cannot escape the fact that while the spoken word (*parole*) is a sign, the written word (*mot*) is the sign of a sign. He tries to go back to a mythical form of writing in general that might have existed before Socrates and Plato came on the scene, calling this *arche-écriture*, (*arch-writing*) but this is plainly nothing but a crude *deus ex machina* hauled in to substantiate a thesis that has nothing going for it. In the Book of Genesis, Adam creates language under the direct tutelage of God by giving names to animals and other objects. But Derrida is hell-bent on reducing everything to writing and texts as the only sense data the individual gets from the world.

### Black marks on white paper

In order to attack the *logos* and reason through the spoken word, Derrida sets against them his notion of writing: *l'écriture*. Derrida explains that what he means by writing is "a text already! written, black on white" (*Dissemination*, p. 203). That means a text already written, black on white. Black marks on white paper, plus excruciating attention to spaces, numbers, margins, paragraphs, typefaces, colophons, copyright notices, plus patterns, groups, repetitions of all of the above and so on in endless fetishism. Since it is probably clear by now that Derrida, posing as the destroyer of western metaphysics, is only spinning out very bad metaphysics in the process, we can feel free to say that Derrida attempts to establish the ontological priority of writing over language and speech. Nothing in the way of proof is offered in favor of this absurd idea: The argument proceeds through a "we say" and ends by lamely hinting that the computer revolution will also help reduce all spoken words to black marks on the page: "The entire field covered by the cybernetic program will be the field of writing" (*Of Grammatology*, p. 9).

This is Derrida's new pseudo-science called "grammatology," which studies the marks (*grammata*) on the paper. Each grammè or grapheme can be endlessly commented upon. The word comes from a nineteenth-century French dictionary by Littré and has been more recently used by

## Gulliver travels to Stanford University

*Judging from what has been coming out of the Stanford-based Modern Language Association recently, there is strong evidence that when Mr. Lemuel Gulliver took his third voyage to the Pacific in the year 1707, he entered some sort of time-warp, which landed him at the Stanford campus in 1993; obviously, Mr. Gulliver considered that the true story would be received by the public with such disbelief, that he decided to disguise the institution's name as the Grand Academy of Lagado, located on the isle of Balinbari. Nevertheless, we believe that the attentive reader will readily see through this crude ruse.*

*Below is part of Mr. Gulliver's account of his visit to that institution, as passed on to us by Mr. Jonathan Swift.*

The first professor I saw was in a very large room, with forty pupils about him. After salutation, observing me to look earnestly upon a frame, which took up the greatest part of both the length and breadth of the room, he said perhaps I might wonder to see him employed in a project for improving speculative knowledge by practical and mechanical operations. But the world would soon be sensible of its usefulness, and he flattered himself that a more noble, exalted thought never sprang from any other man's head. Every one knows how laborious the usual method is of attaining to arts and sciences; whereas by his contrivance, the most ignorant person at a reasonable charge, and with a little bodily labour, may write books in philosophy, poetry, politics, law, mathematics and theology, without

I.J. Gelb in the title of his book *A Study of Writing: The Foundations of Grammatology*.

For Derrida, the black marks on the white paper are the only reality, as he very radically asserts in *Of Grammatology*: "The axial proposition of this essay is that there is nothing outside the text." Since the notion of the "text" has already been expanded to include all language, and since real events are reduced by Derrida to "discourse" about those events, the deconstructors argue that this is not as fanatical as it sounds. But the fact remains that for Derrida, the sense data we have are the texts. There is no other perception. Better yet, as he says, "I don't believe that anything like perception exists" ("Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" in *The Language of Criticism and the Sciences of Man* (Baltimore, 1970), pp. 272 ff., "Discussion").

the least assistance from genius or study. He then led me to the frame, about the sides whereof all; his pupils stood in ranks. It was twenty foot square, placed in the middle of the room. The superficies was composed of several bits of wood, about the bigness of a die, but some larger than others. They were all linked together by slender wires. These bits of wood were covered on every square with papers pasted on them; and on these papers were written all the words of their language in their several moods, tenses, and declensions, but without any order. The professor then desired me to observe, for he was going to set his engine at work. The pupils at his command took each of them hold of an iron handle, whereof there were forty fixed round the edges of the frame, and giving them a sudden turn, the whole disposition of the words was entirely changed. He then commanded six and thirty of the lads to read the several lines softly as they appeared upon the frame; and where they found three or four words together that might make part of a sentence, they dictated to the four remaining boys who were scribes. This work was repeated three or four times, and at every turn the engine was so contrived, that the words shifted into new places, as the square bits of wood moved upside down. . . .

We next went to the school of languages, where three professors sat in consultation upon improving that of their own country.

The first project was to shorten discourse by cutting polysyllables into one, and leaving out verbs and participles, because in reality all things imaginable are but nouns.

The other was a scheme for entirely abolishing all words whatsoever; and this was urged as a great advantage in point of health as well as brevity. For it is plain, that

every word we speak is in some degree a diminution of our lungs by corrosion, and consequently contributes to the shortening of our lives. An expedient was therefore offered, that since words are only names for *things*, it would be more convenient for all men to carry about them such *things* as were necessary to express the particular business they are to discourse on. And this invention would certainly have taken place, to the great ease as well as health of the subject, if the women in conjunction with the vulgar and illiterate had not threatened to raise a rebellion, unless they might be allowed the liberty to speak with their tongues, after the manner of their forefathers: such constant irreconcilable enemies to science are the common people. However, many of the most learned and wise adhere to the new scheme of expressing themselves by *things*, which hath only this inconvenience attending it, that if a man's business be very great, and of various kinds, he must be obliged in proportion to carry a bundle of *things* upon his back, unless he can afford one or two servants to attend him. I have often beheld two of those sages almost sinking under the weight of their packs, like peddlars among us; who when they met in the streets would lay down their loads, open their sacks and hold conversation for an hour together; then put up their implements, help each other to resume their burthens, and take their leave.

Another great advantage proposed by this invention was that it would serve as an universal language to be understood in all civilized nations, whose goods and utensils are generally of the same kind, or nearly resembling, so that their uses might easily be comprehended. And thus ambassadors would be qualified to treat with foreign princes or ministers of state, to whose tongues they were utter strangers.

## Deconstructing Plato

Derrida exalts writing over speech, but logocentric-phono-centric western thinking refuses to go along with him. Derrida directs his rage against Plato by "deconstructing" the dialogue *Phaedrus*. The result is the essay "Plato's Pharmacy" which appears in *Dissemination*. This is classical Derridean obfuscation, playing on the multiple meanings of the Greek word *pharmakon*, which can mean variously poison, remedy, magic potion, or medicine. But the fields of meaning are even more complicated: Socrates, at the beginning of the dialogue, recounts the story of the nymph Orithyia who was playing with the nymph Pharmakeia when Orithyia was blown over a cliff by Boreas, the north wind. Pharmakeia was herself associated with a healing fountain. *Phaedrus* has brought some written texts for Socrates to read, and these are compared to a drug (*pharmakon*) which has lured Socrates

to leave Athens in order to meet with him and see the texts. Are these texts a healing drug or a poison? Socrates narrates the fable of the Egyptian god Theuth, a Hermes-Mercury figure who had invented counting, geometry, astronomy, dice, and letters (*grammata*) for writing. Theuth wants to share all these arts with the people of Egypt, so he goes to Amon Ra (Thamus) and offers them to him. Amon Ra rejects the letters, explaining that these will weaken memory and make available only the appearance and presumption of knowledge, but not true knowledge. Derrida explodes with rage against Socrates and Plato: "One begins by repeating without knowing—through a myth—the definition of writing: repeating without knowing. . . . Once the myth has dealt the first blows, the *logos* of Socrates will crush the accused." (*Dissemination*, p. 84). He then proceeds to an obsessive recounting of the Isis-Osiris story. Derrida also makes much

of the fact that although Plato includes reference to Socrates as *pharmakeus* (poisoner, medicine man, sorcerer), he does not free-associate from *pharmakon/pharmakeus* to *pharmakos*, meaning scapegoat. The idea is that Socrates really became a scapegoat at his trial, while Plato is making a scapegoat of "writing." The conclusion is that "the *pharmakon* is neither the cure nor the poison, neither good nor evil, neither the inside nor the outside, neither speech nor writing" (*Positions*, p. 59). Through a hidden pattern of ambiguities, the text, in addition to saying what Plato might have meant, also says what Plato cannot have meant. The dialogue thus deconstructed is hopelessly contradictory and impossible to interpret or construe. Q.E.D.

Nietzsche had called himself Plato in reverse, and had railed against "Socrates, he who does not write." Derrida attacks Plato in another interminable book, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*. Half of this book is made up of a series of wildly dissociated, stream of consciousness letters that revolve around a postcard Derrida says he found at the Bodleian Library at Oxford University. The postcard depicts a miniature from an old manuscript showing Socrates seated at a desk writing, with a smaller Plato behind him, appearing to Derrida "dictating, authoritarian, masterly, imperious" (pp. 10-11). Upon seeing this, Derrida naturally went wild: "I always knew it, it had remained like the negative of a photograph to be developed for 25 centuries—in me of course." Hundreds of pages of babbling follow, always returning to Derrida's desire to rewrite the history of philosophy by securing the greatest possible attention for this postcard: "Don't forget that all of this took off from the wish to make this picture the cover of a book, all of it pushed back into its margins, the title, my name, the name of the publisher, and miniaturized (I mean in red) on *Socrates' phallus*" (p. 251). Other essays in this book evoke Freud and his comparison of the human psyche to a "mystic writing pad" as another way of undermining the *logos*.

### Slaying the 'tyranny of reason'

Derrida is always heavily larded with Freud (who was a Kabbalist mystic, homosexual, and morphine addict himself). This opens up new possibilities for deconstruction: in "Plato's Pharmacy" discussed above, Derrida exerts himself to show that Plato's notion of the *logos* had strong fatherly and paternal overtones. From here it is not far to Derrida's idiotic neologism of "phallogocentrism." Derrida seems to think that his confrère Lacan does not go far enough in liberating himself from phallogocentrism. Derrida comments: "Freud, like his followers, only described the necessity of phallogocentrism. . . . It is neither an ancient nor a speculative mistake. . . . It is an enormous and old root" (*Le Facteur de la Verité, (The Factor of Truth)* p. 145). Infinite variations on this psychotic revolt against the tyranny of reason, featuring the related need to slay the father and fight phallogocentrism are now playing, often at

taxpayers' expense, at your local campus.

One of Derrida's nervous tics is that texts have no authors. This is strictly in accordance with his deconstruction of the notion of the human self, which in his eyes is an invention of those hated western metaphysics. The late Paris "semiologist" Roland Barthes had proclaimed that "as institution, the author is dead: his civil status, his biographical person have disappeared." Derrida agrees, and writes: "The names of authors or of doctrines have here no substantial value. They indicate neither identities nor causes. It would be frivolous to think that 'Descartes,' 'Leibniz' 'Rousseau,' etc. are names of authors, of the authors of movements or displacements that we thus designate. The indicative value that I attribute to them is first the name of a problem" (*Of Grammatology*, p. 99).

In the 1970s Derrida engaged in a polemic with a certain John R. Searle, an academic specializing in so-called Anglo-American speech act theory. Derrida advances philosophical doubts about the existence of Searle, and then spends several pages clowning about the copyright notice (*Copyright © 1977* by John R. Searle). Derrida fantasizes that there might exist a copyright trust with stocks and bonds, and that this might be the agency which produced Searle's essay. He then free-associates from the copyright trust to the French expression for a type of limited liability corporation, *société à responsabilité limitée*—abbreviated "SARL" (*Limited Inc*, pp. 29-36). From that point on, Derrida pretends that this SARL is the author of the adversary piece. It is all endlessly long-winded and not funny. But deconstructionists prefer expressions like "subject positions" to persons, since this expresses their belief in the fragmentation of the human self and ego in the post-age of post-modernism and post-structuralism.

### 'Provisional' reading

It will be useful to show in somewhat more detail how Derrida's deconstructive shredder goes after a piece of writing. Remember that this can be any kind of writing, be it advertising, law, economics, movie scripts, the telephone book, etc.—there is no such thing as a work of art. Derrida always acts with duplicity, or what he prefers to call the "double bind": His first or "provisional" reading often establishes what a text might be thought to mean according to the traditional academic standards of, let us say, the 1950s. Derrida concedes that texts are legible and at this level there is something to be gotten out of them. The fact that "Send over a pizza" will often produce a pizza at the door he ascribes to the "effects" of language, meaning that some of those who make up the same community of interpretation will get the idea. But this is a far cry from the ontological certainty of meaning which he says is indispensable. At this stage Derrida reaches into Heidegger's threadbare bag of tricks and pulls out the stratagem of crossing out certain "metaphysical" words that he wants to use but distance himself from at the



same time in a way that mere quotation marks will not accomplish. An example is Derrida's phrase "to think that the sign is that ill-named thing," with both "is" and "thing" crossed out but still legible (*Of Grammatology*, p. 19). In order to even pretend to say anything, Derrida needs to use the old "metaphysical" vocabulary, but he does it "under erasure" in this way.

Derrida needs a "provisional" reading which makes some sense in order to then knock it down with the cudgels of his trade. The most important of these is *la différance*. Note the "a"—in French, as in English, differEnce is normally spelled with an e. *La différance* in Derridean jargon is supposed to join together two separate ideas. One comes from Ferdinand de Saussure, who built up his school of linguistics in the nineteenth century as a means of undermining the great German school of historical philology associated with such figures as Wilhem von Humboldt, Franz Bopp, and the Grimms. Saussure mystified language by wholly removing the historical dimension. Saussure argued that no phoneme or other linguistic sign has any meaning by itself, but only by virtue of the way in which it is different from other signs. "Cat" can denote the feline critter not because of any intrinsic quality, but only because it is not the same as "bat," "rat," or "mat," which have been conventionally assigned to other objects. This is de Saussure's negative and relational approach to the function of words. The other idea which Derrida wants to mix in is that of delay or deferral. The written word comes forward with the promise of meaning, but the meaning of any "écriture" always sends us off to other written words and other texts to find out what the given word means. When we reach those other written words and texts, they do not deliver meaning, but rather send us off on an endless journey through a bad infinity of texts. We never get real meaning, and never reach the primordial "arche-writing" that never existed anyway. The promised meaning never materializes, but is always postponed.

### A counterfeit of real meaning

*Différance* can thus power Derrida's shredder forward in much the same way that absolute negativity was used to power the Hegelian dialectic.

Closely related to *différance* is something Derrida calls *la trace*, meaning trace, track or spoor. Trace is first of all a *simulacrum* or counterfeit of authentic presence, that is, of real meaning. Writing tries to harken back to the arche-writing, but cannot. But every time words are used, and every time they are re-examined in the endless workings of *différance*, they acquire new and elusive overtones of connotation. The "sedimentation" of traces which a word has acquired remains with it always, and makes up the infinite range of its possible present meanings.

In other words, every time a word is spoken or written, its meaning changes and evolves. The associations thus acquired are long-lasting. Who can hear the word "crook,"



*Any piece of writing can be made to scatter itself like seed in all directions, with an endless "freeplay" of possible meanings. One obvious way to do this is to get etymological dictionaries and trace back the varying meanings of words, going all the way back to the hypothetical proto-Indo-European if possible. If this does not work, go ahead and invent false etymologies, the stupider and more pedantic the better (like "his-story" as the opposite of "her-story"). This etching from Goya's Caprichos shows a donkey contemplating his-story.*

for example, without thinking of Nixon? Who can think of "malaise" without thinking of Carter? "Normalcy" still means Warren Harding for some, and so forth. So much sedimentation! In Derridean jargon this idea is summed up as follows: "A phoneme or grapheme is necessarily always to some extent different each time that it is presented in an operation or a perception. But it can function as a sign, and in general as language, only if a formal identity enables it to be issued again and to be recognized. This identity is necessarily ideal" (*Speech and Phenomena*, p. 50).

Derrida harps endlessly on this notion that words change each time they are used, and thus never possess the ideal purity they would need to be the bearers of guaranteed meaning. It is interesting to note that Derrida incessantly changes



The threat of being “politically incorrect” caused a town in Virginia to displace a Nativity display in 1992 from its traditional location on the courthouse lawn and move it to a vacant storefront.

his own jargon, dropping old terms and eliminating new ones. His cover story is that even his own jargon, once coined, is re-absorbed by the metaphysical language he is fighting against, so he has to invent new terms. Another term for what has just been discussed under the headings of trace and sedimentation is “iterability,” again meaning that words are used repeatedly. “Iterability . . . leaves us no choice but to mean (to say) something that is (already, always, also) other than what we mean (to say), to say something other than what we say *and* would have wanted to say, to understand something other than . . . etc.” (*Limited Inc a b c*, p. 62).

Yet another word for the same thing is *dissémination*. This is important for Derrida because of the Osiris-Isis experience related above. Any piece of writing can be made to scatter itself like seed in all directions, with an endless “freeplay” of possible meanings. One obvious way to do this is to get etymological dictionaries and trace back the varying meanings of words, going all the way back to the hypothetical proto-Indo-European if possible. If this does not work, go ahead and invent false etymologies, the stupider and more pedantic the better (like “his-story” as the opposite of “her-story”). Otherwise, Freud, Husserl, Nietzsche, Levi-Strauss, and many others can be plugged in to feed the process of free association.

In Derrida’s book *Glas (The Death-Knell)*, much attention is focused on Hegel. Derrida clowns with the French

pronunciation of “Hegel”: “His name is so strange. From the eagle (*aigle*) he draws his imperial or historical power. Those who still pronounce it as French, and there are those, are silly only to a certain point: the restitution . . . of the magisterial cold . . . of the eagle caught in ice and frost (*gel*). Let the emblemized philosopher be thus congealed.” Later in this endless doubletalk, Hegel’s absolute knowledge (*savoir absolu*) get identified as SA, which then becomes “a, it,” which then suggest the Freudian id—but also *Sturmabteilungen*, stormtroopers. And so on.

In *Of Grammatology*, the freeplay goes into action starting from a discussion of “supplement” in Rousseau’s *Essay on the Origin of Languages*. This leads to scores of pages on supplement as the part needed to complete the whole, versus supplement as a part added to a complete whole. Elsewhere, Derrida delves into Aristotle’s *Physics* to dissect the use of the term “*ama*.” As some may have already guessed, James Joyce is one of Derrida’s all-time favorite authors. From *Finnegan’s Wake* Derrida takes the phrase “HE WAR” and traces associations from military combat, to past time (German *er war*, he was), and notions of keeping and preserving (bewahren, aufbewahren) (see *Ulysse Gramophone*). For the boa deconstructor Hillis Miller of Yale, all these meanings send the reader into a *vibratory suspense* endlessly bouncing from one possible interpretation to another in a never-ending holding pattern.

## Paradoxes

The crowning moment of any deconstruction is the moment of aporia, of insoluble conflict discovered within the writing. Contradictions like these are very easy to find: As Gödel's proof shows, no formal system can ever be complete and avoid contradiction at the same time. Words have contradictory meanings, as poets have always known. The chologistic Zeno made aporia into his stock in trade, proving that time is and is not, etc. Zeno's paradoxes gave rise to an entire school of skepticism called the aporetics. Whenever a deconstructionist charlatan reads a book or article, he can always be sure to find aporia and then pronounce the text deconstructed. The solid ground of truth and meaning thus supposedly falls out from under Plato and his followers, and the western world suddenly finds itself suspended over the abyss of chaos and delirium. This is the plunge into the abyss with which Derrida's exercise in dishonesty and malevolence puts down the book.

## The politics of rage

Other than grabbing endowed chairs and foundation and government grants, what is the point? It is, once again, to destroy civilization. A society that submits its future leaders to education at the hands of deconstructionist con artists cannot survive. Rage is doubtless one of the ruling passions of Derrida and his cohorts, timid academics though they may seem. Derrida praises a "way of thinking that is faithful and attentive to the ineluctable world of the future which proclaims itself at present, beyond the closure of knowledge. The future can only be anticipated in the form of an absolute danger. It is that which breaks absolutely with constituted normality and can only be proclaimed, *presented*, as a sort of monstrosity" (*Of Grammatology*, p. 5). Derrida writes elsewhere of "the as yet unnamable which is proclaiming itself and which can do so, as is necessary whenever a birth is in the offing, only under the species of nonspecies, in the formless, mute, infant, and terrifying form of monstrosity" (*Writing and Difference*, p. 293). The old epoch is ending, and a new form of horror is arriving for which we do not even have a word. Maybe it will be called a new fascist era. Or maybe it will be called the living hell of deconstructionism.

But Derrida urges his cohorts forward, recommending that they not look back with nostalgia at the old world of western civilization they are determined to bury. Let us act, he says, like Nietzsche's superman whose "laughter will then break out toward a return which will no longer have the form of the metaphysical return of humanism any more than it will undoubtedly take the form 'beyond' metaphysics, of the memorial or of the guard of the sense of being, or the form of the house and the truth of Being. He will dance, outside of the house, that *aktive Vergesslichkeit*, that active forgetfulness (*oubliance*) and that cruel (*grausam*) feast [which] is spoken of in the *Genealogy of Morals*. No doubt Nietzsche called upon an active forgetfulness (*oubliance*) of Being which would not have had the metaphysical form which Hei-

## Modern Language Assn. junks 'language as such'

The Modern Language Association has been called the "mother lode of political correctness." Originally the professional group for college and university instructors in language and literature, the MLA has become little more than the enforcement arm of the deconstructionist movement.

In his 1986 presidential address before the MLA, J. Hillis Miller effectively made deconstructionism operant policy, and announced a universal shift away from "an orientation toward language as such," and its replacement by the study of "history, culture, society, politics, institutions, class and gender conditions, the social context, and the material base." One year later, Miller announced that the revolution was going well, in part because the ferment was "taking place in what has been called the 'hidden university'—study groups, symposia, conferences, and institutes that are outside of departments."

In that same year, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reviewed the damage, noting that post-structuralism and deconstruction had begun to "profoundly affect research in the United States." One professor complained: "Many of the perspectives that seemed new in the 1970s, have taken hold so that people are saying things—about reading conflict of meaning in a text, or about the problems of intention in writing—that derived from the work of Derrida or Barthes, without even realizing where they came from."

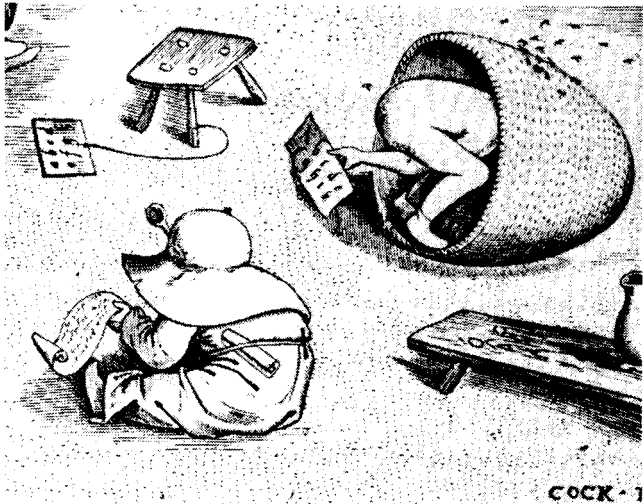
Today, the MLA's annual conferences have dropped all pretense of scholarship, and are dominated by lectures on "Sodomy in the New World" and "Women's Responses to Shakespeare Today."

—Michael J. Minnicino

degger ascribed to it" (*Margins of Philosophy*, p. 163).

## An admirer of Artaud

How Derrida might be found celebrating is suggested by his abiding interest in the well-known French cultural degenerate Antonin Artaud, to whom Derrida has dedicated a great deal of admiring attention over the years. Artaud, we recall, was yet another profoundly disturbed personality who was repeatedly committed to mental institutions, where he spent the years from 1937 to 1946, approximately the last decade of his life, and who is known for his "theatre of cruelty." *Writing and Difference* contains not one but two



"Students," a detail of the 1557 engraving after Bruegel entitled "The Ass at School."

essays on Artaud, "La Parole Soufflée" ("The Whispered Word") and "The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation." Derrida is also a co-editor, with Paule Thévenin, of a collection of Artaud's sketches and portraits published with full-color plates by Gallimard-NRF in 1986. To this volume Derrida has contributed an essay. Artaud's drawings and paintings are pathetic and sick, but Derrida obviously takes them very seriously. Artaud must rank as an influence of the very first magnitude upon our philosopher. Let us sample "The Whispered Word" for satanic, pornographic, and coprophilic motifs. Weak stomachs should skip this paragraph. Derrida writes:

"Let us not be detained here by a possible resemblance to the essence of the mythic itself: the dream of a life without difference. Let us ask, rather, what difference within the flesh might mean for Artaud. My body has been stolen from me by effraction. The Other, the Thief, the Great Furtive One, has a proper name: God. His history has taken place. It has its own place. The place of effraction can be only the opening of an orifice. The orifice of birth, the orifice of defecation to which all other gaps refer, as if to their origin. . . . 'Now, the hideous history of the Demiurge/ is well known/ It is the history of the body/ which pursued (and did not follow) mine/ and which, in order to go first and be born,/ projected itself across my body/ and/ was born/ through the disemboweling of my body/ of which he kept a piece/ in order to/ pass himself off/ as me.' . . . God is thus the proper name of that which deprives us of our own nature, of our own birth; consequently he will always have spoken before us, on the sly. . . . In any event, God the Demiurge does not create, is not life, but is the subject of *oeuvres* and maneuvers, is the thief, the trickster, the counterfeiter, the pseudonymous, the usurper, the opposite of the creative artist, the artisanal being, the being of the artisan: Satan, I am God and God is Satan. . . . The history of God is thus the history of

excrement. Scato-logy itself. . . . 'For one must have a mind in order/ to shit,/ a pure body cannot/ shit./ What it shits/ is the glue of minds/ furiously determined to steal something from him/ for without a body one cannot exist' (84, p. 113). One can read in 'Nerve-Scales': 'Dear Friends, What you took to be my works were only my waste matter.' . . . Like excrement, like the turd, which is, as is also well known, a metaphor of the penis, the work *should stand upright*" (*Writing and Difference*, pp. 180-183).

### Imposed meaning

In the meantime, since nothing has any meaning anyway, the exterminating angels of deconstructionism are free to impose any meaning they want simply by an act of force. Nietzsche himself had claimed that the same text authorizes innumerable interpretations: there is no correct interpretation. *The Will to Power* documents Nietzsche's idea that there is no meaning to be discovered anywhere, but only a meaning that must be imposed from the outside by whoever has the stronger will to power: "Ultimately, man finds in things nothing but what he himself has imported into them." This is now standard campus exegetical practice.

Philosophical hucksters have always played games with dualisms, or with what deconstructionists call binary pairs. Many phenomena exhibit such apparent dualism, as in the cases of cause-effect, spirit-matter, speech-writing, and so forth. The secret of these apparent dualisms is that as they are better understood they reveal underlying coherence, since all of them must coexist in the same universe and are governed by the same lawfulness. Hucksters like Derrida have made a living for thousands of years by picking up one side of the dualism, and stressing that to the exclusion of all else. Derrida talks about "the coupled oppositions on which philosophy is constructed" (*Margins of Philosophy*, p. 18). He says that these always contain "a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms controls the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), holds the superior position. To deconstruct the opposition is first . . . to overthrow the hierarchy" (*Positions*, p. 57). The subordinated term is placed on top, then removed from the dualistic pair, and finally given a new jargon name to signify its new top banana status. Take, for example, the well-known dualism of men-women. To reverse sexism, exalt women over men, and then change their name to "womyn" to remove the residue of the previous dualistic pairing. Any campus will immediately offer dozens of such examples, usually of incredible banality.

### The 'New Criticism'

After Derrida's 1966 appearance at Johns Hopkins, deconstructionists began to colonize U.S. university faculties. They did not find employment first as professors of philosophy, but usually as literary critics in English, French, Romance language, and comparative literature departments. These English departments especially were still dominated in those days by a school of literary studies called the New



Criticism. New Criticism had grown up with a group of Confederate nostalgics at Vanderbilt University who called themselves the Southern Agrarians. In their manifesto, entitled "I'll Take My Stand," these old New Critics came out against modern technology, industry, and urban life. John Crowe Ransom, Alan Tate, Cleanth Brooks, and others taught their students to disregard history, biography, authorship, and other relevant information and focus exclusively on "texts," understood as pieces of writing floating in a void. The result was that most English departments had given up any idea of reality and confined their attention to such fetishized "texts" long before Derrida had come along. These departments became the line of least resistance to deconstructionist infiltration.

Some of the New Critics exhibited fascist sympathies, and this reminds us of the case of Paul de Man, the Belgian-born literary critic who helped make Yale University's high-powered English Department the leading American nest for deconstructionists during the late 1970s and early 1980s. In 1988, some years after his death, De Man was widely accused of having written collaborationist, pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic articles for the Belgian newspaper *Le Soir* of Brussels between 1941 and 1943. These articles have since been published. Derrida and many other deconstructionists, including Geoffrey Hartman, rushed to defend their former colleague. Deconstructionism has never been characterized by high moral tension. De Man himself had once written: "It is always possible to excuse any guilt, because the experience exists simultaneously as fictional discourse and as empirical event and it is never possible to decide which one of the two possibilities is the right one. The indecision makes it possible to excuse the bleakest of crimes" (see *Allegories of Reading*). This may be how the Serbian killer Karadzic thinks about his own activities. No one should look forward to appearing in court before judges who have been trained in "critical legal studies," which is the expansion of deconstruction into law schools which Derrida has been busy promoting. A deconstructionist judge would have no problem in showing that expressions like "due process" or *habeas corpus* are full of aporia and thus meaningless.

After examining the cases of Heidegger and De Man, plus the implications of Derrida's own work, it would be perfectly in order to brand deconstructionism as fascism warmed over. But this may not convey the magnitude of what the deconstructionists are attempting. At the present moment, the banner of deconstructionism is the rallying point for regrouping every epistemological obscenity of the last hundred years, including Nietzsche, Heidegger, Freud, Nazis, fascists, and the rest. Shortly after the Berlin Wall came down, Derrida spoke at a symposium in Turin, Italy, and indicated what his next move would be. At the very moment when Europe had a chance for historical renewal, Derrida talked about Europe, which he inevitably described as "the point of a phallus." Derrida repeated his usual litany that Europe is old and exhausted, that Europe must make itself

into something that it is not, far out of the European tradition. Then he announced that it was time to go back to Marx so as to be able to deconstruct both left-wing dogmatism and the counter-dogmatism of the right. This will allow a new critique of the new evils of capitalism. The main thing, he stressed, is to tolerate and respect everything that is not placed under the authority of reason. Since Derrida has never written at length about Marx, this represents his bid to bring former and future communists into his phalanx as well. Deconstruction thus advances its candidacy to become the undisputed focus of intellectual evil in the late twentieth century.

## References

- Jacques Derrida, *Antonin Artaud: Dessins et portraits*, (Paris: Gallimard-NRF, 1986).
- Jacques Derrida, *La dissémination*, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972); in English as *Dissemination*, translated by Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).
- Jacques Derrida, *Glas*, translated by John P. Leavey (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1986); French edition (Editions Galilée, 1974).
- Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).
- Jacques Derrida, "The Laws of Reflection: Nelson Mandela, in Admiration," in *For Nelson Mandela*, edited by Jacques Derrida and Mustapha Tlili (New York: Henry Holt, 1987).
- Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1988); "Limited a b c" is an essay in this collection.
- Jacques Derrida, *Marges de la philosophie*, (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1972). Translated as *Margins of Philosophy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).
- Jacques Derrida, *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe*, (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1992).
- Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, translated by Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981). Published under the same title (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1972). One of the participants in this discussion is Mme. Julia Kristeva, a close friend of Derrida's wife and herself the wife of Philippe Sollers, of the *Tel Quel* clique.
- Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, translated by Alan Bass (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987).
- Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, translated by David B. Allison (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1973).
- Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *Writing and Difference*.
- Jacques Derrida, *Ulysse Gramophone: Deux Mots pour Joyce*, (Paris: Galilée, 1987).
- Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, translated by Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).
- Dinesh D'Souza, *Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus*, (New York: Macmillan, 1991).
- Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, translated by Betsy Wing (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991).
- Roger Kimball, *Tenured Radicals*.
- James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993).
- Christopher Norris, *Deconstruction and the Interests of Theory*, (Norman, Okla. and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989).
- Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore, Jr., and Herbert Marcuse, *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968).