

## 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."

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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