

commodity, but Culler's *On Deconstruction* offers a sustained summary and critique of Derrida and related thinkers, a critique that Nealon seriously misrepresents.

Nealon suggests that this passage from Culler represents deconstruction as it is taught in theory seminars: "In undoing the oppositions on which it relies and between which it urges the reader to choose, the text places the [deconstructive] reader in an impossible situation that cannot end in triumph but only in an outcome already deemed inappropriate: an unwarranted choice or a failure to choose" (Nealon's interpolation). Only in the endnote do we learn that Culler is writing here not about Derrida at all but about Paul de Man. Nealon proceeds to debunk this approach, rightly, as representing only the first step of a deconstruction. He then cites the following passage from Derrida's *Margins of Philosophy*, a passage that delineates the second, and crucial, move, of displacement and reinscription:

Deconstruction cannot limit itself or proceed immediately to a neutralization: it must, by means of a double gesture, a double science, a double writing, practice an *overturning* of the classical opposition *and* a general *displacement* of the system. It is only on this condition that deconstruction will provide itself the means with which to *intervene* in the field of oppositions that it criticizes, which is also a field of non-discursive forces. (1269)

Nealon then explicitly faults Culler for not acknowledging "the importance of this displacement in Derrida's thought" (1270). But in fact Culler, on the first page of his chapter on Derrida and deconstruction (four pages after the passage regarding de Man that Nealon quotes), writes the following:

Deconstruction must, Derrida continues, "through a double gesture, a double science, a double writing, put into practice a *reversal* of the classical opposition *and* a general *displacement* of the system. It is on that condition alone that deconstruction will provide the means of *intervening* in the field of oppositions it criticizes and which is also a field of non-discursive forces" (*Marges*, p. 392/SEC, p. 195). (85–86)

Could Nealon possibly have missed this?

It might be helpful to reconsider in the light of Culler's actual presentation Derrida's remark, cited by Nealon, chiding Habermas for "abusing citations of Jonathan Culler at points where, it being a question of relations between a generality and its 'cases,' the latter is occasionally obliged to rigidify my arguments out of pedagogical considerations." Perhaps Derrida

lets Culler "escape unharmed" (1275) here because anyone who attempts to "explain" Derrida's thought, *including Nealon*, must rigidify his arguments in some form or another. Are we to assume that Nealon's quotation from *Margins*, and his contextualization of it, somehow does not rigidify Derrida, while Culler's use of *the same quotation* does?

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To the Editor:

In the first paragraph of "The Discipline of Deconstruction," Jeffrey T. Nealon writes, "[I]n the summer of 1992, at the School of Criticism and Theory, Barbara Johnson spoke on 'the wake of deconstruction,' exploring, among other things, its untimely passing away" (1266). I don't know if Nealon was present at Barbara's seminars, but, as a participant in the 1992 session of the School of Criticism and Theory, I remember that the "other things" Barbara did include suggesting that if our gathering was the wake of deconstruction, then we should have been able to open the curtain in front of which she was lecturing and reveal the body. There was no body behind the curtain. My literary-critical-deconstructive imagination tells me that if there is no body at a wake, then the body might well be resurrected. Deconstruction may be alive and well and roaming about seeking and discovering new disciples (and disciplines), appearing in new forms. Or its body may have been stolen by the original disciples . . . or the new historicists . . . or the postcolonialists . . . or the Romans . . .

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To the Editor:

I would like first and foremost to thank Jeffrey T. Nealon for "The Discipline of Deconstruction." Certainly many students of literature and philosophy have supposed the work of Derrida to be identical with that of de Man. It is not—as de Man himself would have said. Nealon offers a much needed clarification as he argues for the uniqueness of the Derridean "intervention." He is also circumspect in questioning why Derrida never deliberately distanced himself from de Man. The issue is a complicated one, which it would be hasty to dismiss as mere cronyism, and only