



The Wake of Deconstruction (Bucknell Lectures in Literary Theory)

Barbara Johnson

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Is deconstruction dead? Was it ever alive? These are the questions discussed in Barbara Johnson's *The Wake of Deconstruction*. What gives these questions their urgency is what Johnson sees to be the continuing determination by journalistic commentators to misrepresent, to misread, or to ignore the writings by such theorists as Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man. Similarly at the heart of the problem is the determination of feminist and other politically engaged writers to assert the disabling consequences for activism that deconstructive reading promotes. The celebration of ambiguity and other forms of polysemy in contemporary literary theory, she argues, has been strangely yet persistently falsified as a denial of meaning. Beginning with two different cases of double mourning (for Paul de Man and for feminist legal theorist Mary Joe Frug), Barbara Johnson goes on to analyze the allegorical status of women in the public sphere and the uses to which Paul de Man's theories of allegory may be put in understanding today's politics of identity.

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