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Deconstructions

A User's Guide

Edited by
Nicholas Royle

palgrave

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Preface

This book is intended as a user's guide to deconstruction across a range of topics and discourses. There are essays on cultural studies, drugs, ethics, feminism, fiction, film, hermeneutics, love, poetry, postcolonialism, psychoanalysis, technology and weaving. But each of these essays has more than one focus, exploring or opening onto further and other deconstructions. The chapter on feminism, for example, is in a sense just as much, also, about visual art; the chapter on fiction as much, also, about confession; the chapter on the postcolonial as much, also, about the Jewish–Algerian–French 'origins' of deconstruction. And so on. *Deconstructions* has been put together in the hope of demonstrating the ceaselessly multiple and altering contexts in which deconstructive thinking and practice are at work, both within and beyond the academy, both within and beyond what is called 'the West'. The book starts with an introductory piece, 'What is Deconstruction?', before moving on to a series of more specifically focused essays, each of them specially written for this volume. It was proposed at the outset of this project that each essay should have a title beginning 'deconstruction and . . .'. The final essay, by Jacques Derrida, is concerned with the 'and' itself. As he remarks at the beginning of that essay, in the beginning there is the 'and'. Inaugural and supplementary, 'and' affirms the irreducible opening of, and to, deconstructions. The index at the end of the book suggests, under the heading 'deconstruction and . . .', at least some of its innumerable other possibilities.

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Raise Boys and Girls the Same Way, from *Truisms* (Sony JumboTRON video sign, Candlestick Park, San Francisco, 1987);

Arno, nine LED signs (Museo Guggenheim, Bilbao);

I Am Awake in the Place Where Women Die, from *Lustmord*; photograph of handwriting on skin;

With You Inside Me Comes the Knowledge of My Death, from *Lustmord*; human bone and engraved and etched silver (Galerie Rähnitzgasse der Landeshauptstadt, Dresden, 1996).

The editor would also like to thank Pauline Morgan for her help with compiling the index, and Maxwell Royle for his help with proofreading.

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Geoffrey Bennington is Professor of French at the University of Sussex, where he is also Director of the Centre for Modern French Thought. He has written extensively on the work of Jacques Derrida, and his books include *Jacques Derrida* (1991) (written with Derrida himself) and *Interrupting Derrida* (2000).

David Boothroyd teaches cultural studies at the University of Teesside. He is a co-founding director of *Culture Machine* (<http://culturemachine.tees.ac.uk>) and his work in cultural theory and philosophy has appeared in several edited collections and scholarly journals. His forthcoming book is entitled *Culture on Drugs: Narco-Cultural Studies of High Modernity*.

Timothy Clark teaches at the University of Durham. He works in literary theory, especially Romantic and post-Heideggerian poetics. His books include *Derrida, Heidegger, Blanchot* (1992) and *The Theory of Inspiration* (1997). He is currently working on a study of Heidegger's poetics, and he is co-editor of the *Oxford Literary Review*.

Jacques Derrida has for more than thirty-five years been one of the most faithful *users* of 'deconstructions'. But he is not and has never wished to be – nor even to supply – a *guide* to them.

Diane Elam is Professor of English Literature and Critical and Cultural Theory at Cardiff University. She is the author of *Feminism and Deconstruction: Ms en Abyme* (1994) and *Romancing the Postmodern* (1992), as well as co-editor with Robyn Wiegman of *Feminism Beside Itself* (1995).

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Robert Smith used to be a Prize Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford. During that period (1990–98) he published several texts exploring other texts – by Freud, Pascal, Wim Wenders, J. H. Prynne, Heidegger, etc. – including a book on Derrida, *Derrida and Autobiography* (1995). He is executive editor of the journal *Angelaki*, as well as series editor of the *Angelaki* book series called *Angelaki Humanities*. Currently, he is completing a book under the working title of *Remains Unknown: Forms of Death in Literature, Freud and Philosophy*.

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Robert J. C. Young is Professor of English and Critical Theory at Oxford University and a Fellow of Wadham College. He is the author of *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (1990), *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Culture, Theory and Race* (1995), *Torn Halves: Political Conflict in Literary and Cultural Theory* (1996), and *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (2000). He is also General Editor of *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*.