



Jacques Derrida: Breaking the Dome of Rigid Interpretation

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Abstract

Jacques Derrida has been hailed as a precursor of introducing new way of reading and interpreting literature and literary theory. His works enable us to understand that nothing is decidable because many meanings can exist at one time. In traditional mode of reading, a reader believes that language is capable of expressing ideas without changing the meaning. But for Derrida, any language has not provided definite and stable meaning, therefore, only text is the source of meaning. His deconstructive reading subverts the idea that text has a fixed and unified meaning. Derrida's writings influenced literary critics in American Universities and the members of Yale School including Paul de Man, Geoffrey Hartman, and J. Hillis Miller. They became prominent figures in the contemporary literary theory. The present paper is an attempt to study the ways of Derrida's deconstructive strategy. Derrida is mainly concerned with the problematic nature of all stable centers. Everything in this world is based on the idea of a center which is a truth, origin and God word etc. which generates all meaning. The deconstructive approach of reading subverts the traditional mode of reading a text. After the arrival of this kind of reading, the critical theories in the past have become absolutely irrelevant.

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Derrida has derived the philosophy of deconstruction from structuralism. It is the root of deconstruction. Structuralism emerged as a significant approach to critical analysis of literary texts in the later half of twentieth century. It studies the constituents of a text by examining the underlying variant structures which is based on the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure's work on structural linguistics. His structural linguistics formed the basis of structuralism. However, the concepts of structuralism are deconstructed as there are certain issues which are not clear in structuralism. Structuralism depends on structures and structures depend on centers. No structure can be conceived without a center. However, Derrida argues that there is no stable center. And if there is no center, there cannot be any structure. So structuralism collapses by its own implications. This is Derrida's deconstructive devices or strategy. Deconstruction means not to destruct the work of an author but to show different meanings at work in language. Therefore, it has created confusions and perplexities between literary work and its interpretation. Whenever any theory is created it contradicts itself and casts into difficult situation of interpretation or *hermeneutics* which is not definite. It has shown that the meaning of a text is really infinite and has a number of conflicting possible meanings. The critical theories such as Marxism, Feminism, Gay and Lesbian studies and recent theory like New Historicism and Cultural Materialism are absolutely irrelevant after the application of deconstructive analysis.

Derrida's deconstructive style of reading subverts the previous assumption that a text has an unchanging and definite meaning. He focuses mainly on language and argues that the traditional reading of a text makes a number of false assumptions. For Derrida, any mode of reading shows the slippery nature of language. Therefore, reading is an activity where the reader himself indulges in the game of language. The reader will interpret meaning with the help of devices like *differance* (difference and an endless postponement), *trace* (residual meaning) and *supplement* (addition or substitution word). What the reader might have not been there in the author's mind. It is because of the underlying inherent contradiction of language which is the medium of literature. So, we can say that