



Deconstruction of a Random Text

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ABSTRACT:- This study aims at understanding the concept of deconstruction which is extensively used as one of the literary reading methods. This paper is merely a reflection of how deconstructing a text works at its base level. An application of deconstruction reading is done to a randomly chosen text; the idea is to analyze any given text unbiased. For every phrase given for analysis, there exists two faces, the obvious meaning and the latent meaning. The surface level reading of the text gives us an idea of its obvious meaning, while re-reading the same text in the highlight of the placing of the words, or with its strategically used figures of speech, would probably illuminate us with a perspective different from the former ones. While deconstructing a text, it is rather not advisable to make references or compare to larger texts dealing with the same themes or issues, because, this again would bring us back to being biased.

Keywords: Binary, Center, Contradictory, Deconstruction, Structure

I. INTRODUCTION

Deconstruction designates a theory and practice of reading that questions and claims to subvert or undermine the assumption that the system of language is based on grounds that are adequate to establish the boundaries, the coherence or unity, and to determine meanings of a literary text. Typically, a deconstructive reading sets out to show that conflicting forces exist within the text itself, and how it serves to dissipate the appearing definiteness of its structure and meanings into an indefinite array of possible interpretations.

Deconstructive reading critiques the established structure systems and attempts to decenter the system's main ideology. Derrida, in his work *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences*, mentions that structures always have centers and it is this point that shapes and defines the structure. The center, according to Derrida, is paradoxically both within the structure and outside it, meaning the ideology which is the center of the structure is both part of the structure as well as something which is above and beyond the structure.

The central point of the structure, though related to the structure, is superior and different from the various other elements that constitute the structure. Derrida calls this "contradictorily coherent" (394), which means there is a contradiction in which the focal point of a structure which is both part of the structure and outside the structure. A deconstructive reading of the given literary text works to point out these contradictions present in it and to subvert the implied notion to that of the hidden or possible interpretations.

Deconstruction also looks for binary pairs of oppositions where things are supposed to stay neatly in fixed categories. If the stability of a structure depends on these binary oppositions, shaking the oppositions will shake up the whole structure. We need to examine every word present in the text to extract the obvious and the latent meaning, and thus, a deconstructive reading would be beneficial to literally examine the text in every single aspect.

II. TEXT FOR A DECONSTRUCTIVE READING

Take up the White Man's burden--
Send forth the best ye breed--
Go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives' need;
To wait in heavy harness,
On fluttered folk and wild--
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
Half-devil and half-child.

Take up the White Man's burden--
In patience to abide,
To veil the threat of terror
And check the show of pride;
By open speech and simple,
An hundred times made plain
To seek another's profit,
And work another's gain.

III. OBVIOUS MEANING

The two extracts talk of the plight of the natives under the colonial rule of the Whites. The speaker says to take up the “White Man’s burden”, which is to send the best men abroad and their sons into exile to serve the natives. These “new-caught” people are wild, angry and both devilish and childish. The speaker repeats that the White representative must take up this burden to be patient, to temper his terror and hold back his pride, to use simple and frank words, and to gain profit by others (natives).

IV. READING AGAINST THE GRAIN

The extracts though reverberates the idea of a colonial situation, it starkly hints at the mockery at the ways of the white man’s attitude. The speaker could probably be a white man himself who is addressing another white man about the ways of ‘colonizing’. The two extracts hint at the shrewd strategies that a colonizer would adopt to capture the natives. The extracts carry certain words that could be read in a different way apart from the obvious meaning that it possesses. In the very first line, there is the mentioning of the term “burden”, this could probably be a reference to the task that a white man is supposed to undertake of that of ‘civilizing’ the natives. The pun intended on the word is that of the ego of a white and that his false perception that he is the ‘superior’ of all races. The white is actually exploiting the natives in the name of civilizing them.

The line, “Send forth the best ye breed –” reflects the meaning that the white man himself is not confident enough of his own capabilities and so, he wants the best and the smart men to explore the far-off lands. Indirectly, the line hints at the strength that the colonized lands possess – this overthrows the surface level meaning that one might obtain from reading the text. The term “exile” also carries a heavy connotation for the term is used in reference to the position of the whites and that they have to part away from their dear ones so that the younger ones explore new lands. “To serve (the) captives’ need” becomes a line hinting at one of the colonial strategies that the whites adopted. The whites have to first please the natives and to never let them realize that they (natives) are being enslaved–this is the main task or rather the “burden” that the white man has to take up.

The words, “folk” and “wild” are a reference to the natives, but this could be interpreted differently by showing how the West defined the East. The folk refers to the mysterious and unexplainable practices of the East which was never understood by the West and thus comes the aspect of rationalization as an important aspect of the West. The natives are also referred to as wild for they are called uncivilized and that there is no difference between their attitudes and that of animals’. Similarly, the hyphenated words, “half-devil” and “half-child” is indirectly hinting at how the natives are, that is, the natives though are barbaric in nature, they are innocent just like a child and so, it is easy for an outsider to exploit them.

The second extract carries certain terms or rather adjectives that refer to a white man but it is not in his nature to possess those qualities. For instance, the words like “patience”, “check”, “simple” and “plain” – these are some of the qualities that the white man lacks and so he is asked to pretend to possess these qualities for the speaker knows that in this manner, the natives would not stand to ‘doubt’ the outsiders. There comes the aspect of ‘language’ as carrying an interpretative meaning where the outsider exercises his authority by convincing the natives that his language is superior and that the rest are inferior or even not right.

The strategy that the white man is asked to adopt is that of portraying himself to be simple and caring but only to seek advantage of the natives.

“To seek another’s profit,
And work another’s gain.”

These lines indicate the manipulative agenda that the white man has; he has to work in such a way that the natives should think it is for their benefits but ultimately, the white man is working for his own benefit. The surface level meaning of the extracts would not reveal this interpretation. But, while deconstructing a text, the very same words, phrases and sentences take on different and even contradictory meanings.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, deconstructing any given text is indeed a work unbiased. As, this type of re-reading a text would eliminate any references to the biography of the writer, or the history of the age to which the text belongs to, or even the geographical settings if any references are made.

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