

Chapter 1 : Deconstruction - Oxford Reference

In FROM THE NEW CRITICISM TO DECONSTRUCTION, Art Berman takes an in depth look at a forty year stretch that begins with the New Critics in the s, follows with America's brief critical flirtation with structuralism in the s, and concludes with Jacques Derrida introducing the logocentric shattering era of deconstruction in the late s.

According to Derrida and taking inspiration from the work of Ferdinand de Saussure , [14] language as a system of signs and words only has meaning because of the contrast between these signs. Derrida refers to the "in this view, mistaken" belief that there is a self-sufficient, non-deferred meaning as metaphysics of presence. One of the two terms governs the other axiologically, logically, etc. The first task of deconstruction would be to find and overturn these oppositions inside a text or a corpus of texts; but the final objective of deconstruction is not to surpass all oppositions, because it is assumed they are structurally necessary to produce sense. The oppositions simply cannot be suspended once and for all. The hierarchy of dual oppositions always reestablishes itself. Deconstruction only points to the necessity of an unending analysis that can make explicit the decisions and arbitrary violence intrinsic to all texts. This explains why Derrida always proposes new terms in his deconstruction, not as a free play but as a pure necessity of analysis, to better mark the intervals. Derrida called undecidables "that is, unities of simulacrum" "false" verbal properties nominal or semantic that can no longer be included within philosophical binary opposition, but which, however, inhabit philosophical oppositions "resisting and organizing it" without ever constituting a third term, without ever leaving room for a solution in the form of Hegelian dialectics e. However, Derrida resisted attempts to label his work as " post-structuralist ". This foil to Platonic light was deliberately and self-consciously lauded in Daybreak, when Nietzsche announces, albeit retrospectively, "In this work you will discover a subterranean man at work", and then goes on to map the project of unreason: Does not almost every precise history of an origination impress our feelings as paradoxical and wantonly offensive? Does the good historian not, at bottom, constantly contradict? Reason, logic, philosophy and science are no longer solely sufficient as the royal roads to truth. And so Nietzsche decides to throw it in our faces, and uncover the truth of Plato, that he "unlike Orpheus" just happened to discover his true love in the light instead of in the dark. This being merely one historical event amongst many, Nietzsche proposes that we revisualize the history of the West as the history of a series of political moves, that is, a manifestation of the will to power, that at bottom have no greater or lesser claim to truth in any noumenal absolute sense. By calling our attention to the fact that he has assumed the role of Orpheus, the man underground, in dialectical opposition to Plato, Nietzsche hopes to sensitize us to the political and cultural context, and the political influences that impact authorship. For example, the political influences that led one author to choose philosophy over poetry or at least portray himself as having made such a choice , and another to make a different choice. The problem with Nietzsche, as Derrida sees it, is that he did not go far enough. That he missed the fact that this will to power is itself but a manifestation of the operation of writing. This is so because identity is viewed in non-essentialist terms as a construct, and because constructs only produce meaning through the interplay of difference inside a "system of distinct signs". This approach to text is influenced by the semiology of Ferdinand de Saussure. In language there are only differences. Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system. The idea or phonic substance that a sign contains is of less importance than the other signs that surround it. Nevertheless, in the end, as Derrida pointed out, Saussure made linguistics "the regulatory model", and "for essential, and essentially metaphysical, reasons had to privilege speech, and everything that links the sign to phone". A desire to contribute to the re-evaluation of all Western values, a re-evaluation built on the 18th-century Kantian critique of pure reason, and carried forward to the 19th century, in its more radical implications, by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. An assertion that texts outlive their authors, and become part of a set of cultural habits equal to, if not surpassing, the importance of authorial intent. A re-valuation of certain classic western dialectics: To this end, Derrida follows a long line of modern philosophers, who look backwards to Plato and his influence on the Western metaphysical tradition. However,

like Nietzsche, Derrida is not satisfied merely with such a political interpretation of Plato, because of the particular dilemma modern humans find themselves in. His Platonic reflections are inseparably part of his critique of modernity, hence the attempt to be something beyond the modern, because of this Nietzschean sense that the modern has lost its way and become mired in nihilism. Understanding language, according to Derrida, requires an understanding of both viewpoints of linguistic analysis. The focus on diachrony has led to accusations against Derrida of engaging in the etymological fallacy. The mistranslation is often used to suggest Derrida believes that nothing exists but words. Form of Content, that Louis Hjelmslev distinguished from Form of Expression than how the word "house" may be tied to a certain image of a traditional house i. The same can be said about verbs, in all the languages in the world: The same happens, of course, with adjectives: Thus, complete meaning is always "differential" and postponed in language; there is never a moment when meaning is complete and total. Such a process would never end. Metaphysics of presence[edit] Main article: Metaphysics of presence Derrida describes the task of deconstruction as the identification of metaphysics of presence, or logocentrism in western philosophy. Metaphysics of presence is the desire for immediate access to meaning, the privileging of presence over absence. This means that there is an assumed bias in certain binary oppositions where one side is placed in a position over another, such as good over bad, speech over the written word, male over female. Derrida writes, "Without a doubt, Aristotle thinks of time on the basis of *ousia* as *parousia*, on the basis of the now, the point, etc. This argument is largely based on the earlier work of Heidegger, who, in *Being and Time* , claimed that the theoretical attitude of pure presence is parasitical upon a more originary involvement with the world in concepts such as ready-to-hand and being-with. Difficulty of definition[edit] There have been problems defining deconstruction. Derrida claimed that all of his essays were attempts to define what deconstruction is, [26]: In these negative descriptions of deconstruction, Derrida is seeking to "multiply the cautionary indicators and put aside all the traditional philosophical concepts". If Derrida were to positively define deconstruction "as, for example, a critique" then this would make the concept of critique immune to itself being deconstructed. Some new philosophy beyond deconstruction would then be required in order to encompass the notion of critique. Not a method[edit] Derrida states that "Deconstruction is not a method, and cannot be transformed into one". A thinker with a method has already decided how to proceed, is unable to give him or herself up to the matter of thought in hand, is a functionary of the criteria which structure his or her conceptual gestures. This would be an irresponsible act of reading, because it becomes a prejudicial procedure that only finds what it sets out to find. Not a critique[edit] Derrida states that deconstruction is not a critique in the Kantian sense. For Derrida, it is not possible to escape the dogmatic baggage of the language we use in order to perform a pure critique in the Kantian sense. Language is dogmatic because it is inescapably metaphysical. Derrida argues that language is inescapably metaphysical because it is made up of signifiers that only refer to that which transcends them "the signified. For Derrida the concept of neutrality is suspect and dogmatism is therefore involved in everything to a certain degree. Deconstruction can challenge a particular dogmatism and hence desediment dogmatism in general, but it cannot escape all dogmatism all at once. Not an analysis[edit] Derrida states that deconstruction is not an analysis in the traditional sense. Derrida argues that there are no self-sufficient units of meaning in a text, because individual words or sentences in a text can only be properly understood in terms of how they fit into the larger structure of the text and language itself. Derrida states that deconstruction is an "antistructuralist gesture" because "[s]tructures were to be undone, decomposed, desedimented". At the same time, deconstruction is also a "structuralist gesture" because it is concerned with the structure of texts. So, deconstruction involves "a certain attention to structures" [26]: An example of structure would be a binary opposition such as good and evil where the meaning of each element is established, at least partly, through its relationship to the other element. It is for this reason that Derrida distances his use of the term deconstruction from post-structuralism , a term that would suggest that philosophy could simply go beyond structuralism. Paul de Man was a member of the Yale School and a prominent practitioner of deconstruction as he understood it. Caputo attempts to explain deconstruction in a nutshell by stating: Indeed, that is a good rule of thumb in deconstruction. That is what deconstruction is all about, its very meaning and mission, if it has any. One might even say that cracking nutshells is what deconstruction is. Have we not run up against a paradox

and an aporia [something contradictory] Allison is an early translator of Derrida and states, in the introduction to his translation of *Speech and Phenomena*: Particularly problematic are the attempts to give neat introductions to deconstruction by people trained in literary criticism who sometimes have little or no expertise in the relevant areas of philosophy that Derrida is working in. These secondary works e.

Chapter 2 : Deconstruction – Literary Theory and Criticism

From the New Criticism to Deconstruction traces the transitions in American critical theory and practice from the 1930s to the 1980s. It focuses on the influence of French structuralism and post-structuralism.

Neither is an ordinary German word; both were borrowed from Latin almost as neologisms to express a concept their creators perceived as relatively new to the philosophical domain, only to have the words become confused with their more common cognates when translated into French or English. Derrida uses the word deconstruction to capture both German terms. This is the double gesture referred to above, one that takes apart the European traditions and in so doing finds the basic understanding of Being beneath its surface. This goal separates *Destruktion* from deconstruction, not because deconstruction is purely negative, but because it has no fixed endpoint or goal. Deconstruction is always an on-going process because the constantly shifting nature of language means that no final meaning or interpretation of a text is possible. Subsequent ages, grounded in a different language and different ways of life, will always see something different in a text as they deconstruct it in the context of the realities with which they live. All deconstruction can reveal are temporary and more or less adequate truths, not more primordial or deeper ones. Time, then, is not only a category of experience as in Kant, but the very core of our existence. On a larger scale, this temporality of *Dasein* as opposed to Hegelian Spirit is what creates history; our ability to project forward and interpret backwards not only the circumstances of our lives, but also those of the entire social world to which we belong. Early Formulations As already noted, deconstruction differs from *Destruktion* in that it has no fixed or expected endpoint or map, but is rather a potentially infinite process. Although obviously a critical tool, it also lacks the sense, evident in Heidegger, that the text to be deconstructed is part of how European thought has somehow gone wrong and needs correction. This is because deconstruction rejects both the idea that there is a fixed series of eras ancient, medieval, modern in European history that mark a downward path, and the idea that there is some determinate way in which that path might be reversed, by a re-interpretation of early Greek philosophy. In 1967, Derrida offered this definition: What is outside of, or excluded from the realm dominated by the philosophical tradition, although unnamed in it, provides a vantage point and a key with which to find the flaws and lacunae that domination seeks to hide. Each of these pairs is also a hierarchy meant to exclude both the non-dominant member of the pair the body, the female, the margin, the contingent and anything outside the opposition the ambiguous, the borderline, the hybrid from the philosophical realm. What deconstruction reveals, among other things, is that the repression that is necessary for creating a history of philosophy is in large part a repression of what philosophy itself cannot control, of what escapes the grasp of philosophy while being part of it. The fault lines that deconstruction follows are the traces left inside philosophy by what it must define as exterior to it in order to be philosophy. Literary Deconstruction One notable fact about the reception of deconstruction in the United States was its relatively early acceptance by departments of literature compared to departments of philosophy. The tools of deconstruction and the sorts of truths they reveal, are similar in both spheres. The basic strategy is still to follow the trace of a key ambiguity or blind spot through the text to illuminate hierarchical oppositions it relies on and the fault lines along which it can be undone, while still acknowledging its power and importance in European thought. This highlights the fact that deconstruction plays a different role in literature than in philosophy. Deconstruction tends to be used in literary theory in arguments between and among theorists about the value of their theories, rather than about the value of the texts under discussion. In addition, literary deconstruction is about texts that are of a different nature than the deconstruction itself, while the deconstruction of one philosophical text results in another philosophical text. This makes it much clearer in philosophy that deconstructive texts can themselves be, in fact must be, deconstructed. What literary deconstruction produces, on the other hand, is not itself literature. The context in which such a deconstruction might be carried out, is quite different from the context in which the original deconstructive text was created. Put another way, literary deconstruction assumes the possibility and reality of literature in at least some sense of the term, whereas deconstruction as a philosophical enterprise questions, at its most basic level, the possibility of philosophy itself. Contentions and Confrontations Deconstruction has always been engaged in

active dialogue with other contemporary approaches to philosophical and literary texts. At the same time, the issues raised in those debates are often similar to those raised by more strident critics completely opposed to the deconstructive enterprise. A brief summary of some of the most notable confrontations, across more than twenty years, offers an opportunity to consider the most powerful objections to deconstruction, from the end of the 20th century, onwards. The conversation between deconstruction in the person of Derrida and hermeneutics in the person of Hans-Georg Gadamer raises at least two recurrent themes. The first has already been indirectly discussed—the charge that deconstruction is a negative enterprise. As already noted, however, deconstruction is always a question and a double movement aware of its own debt to the texts it deconstructs, and so never a repudiation. The second charge is that deconstruction does not allow for the possibility that a word can be redefined or used independently of its traditional metaphysical meaning. Although directed at postmodernism, the exchange between major feminist theorists recorded in *Feminist Contentions* raises some of the same themes as the earlier debate, but also bears directly on the feminist reception of deconstruction in the United States. The feminists who argue here against postmodernism, and by extension against deconstruction, make the case that political action requires a stronger basis than either of these is capable of providing. In her response to Butler, Benhabib emphasizes another recurring theme in debates about deconstruction: We have seen, however, that for deconstruction discourse is neither monolithic nor unequivocal, which means that it cannot be fully determinative of the self, either. The very lack of a permanent, substantial self in the usual sense that Benhabib and others criticize in deconstruction, is at the same time, what creates the possibility of agency outside and beyond the world of fixed essences and meanings envisioned by the philosophical tradition. A Cartesian self, Descartes himself tells us in the *Meditations*, is most free when it has no choice but to follow Reason. The complexities here can be seen in the way deconstructive texts themselves often grapple with these same questions about the possibility of personal and political agency see below but, as might be expected, come up with no final answer. The confrontation between deconstruction and the neo-pragmatism of Richard Rorty raises similar points. He similarly objects to the deconstruction of the concept of tolerance as always an exercise of the power to tolerate or not, because the toleration demanded in a democracy is one between equals and thus mutual rather than paternalistic. He also finds a certain circularity in deconstruction, since it seems to rely on the same universalism, tolerance, and so forth, it seeks to undo. As already noted, however, this double gesture is itself the essence of deconstruction. He reasserts his reading of toleration as an exercise of paternalistic, or specifically religious, power. He also questions the possibility of an actually existing democracy, due to the violence of power relations, much less the possibility of a democracy in which different groups would be sufficiently equal for toleration to be genuinely mutual. This last contestation between Habermas and Derrida, is indirect because it was in the form of separate interviews, illustrates three main points. One, already noted, is the continuity of objections to deconstruction over an extended period of time, primarily focused around issues of the everyday vs. The second is the lingering impression that these confrontations rely more on contradiction than on real attempts at communication, or even argument. A method that questions everything, including itself and even the concept of method, as deconstruction does, leaves critics little concrete substance to criticize, except the circularity and the double gesture that deconstruction embraces. At the same time, the third point to be noted is the increasing engagement of deconstruction with politics after, if not directly in response to these challenges, at least in the context of their persistence. The explicit emphasis on both politics and the pragmatic is as marked as the much more obscure references that were more common thirty years earlier. At the same time, he emphatically repeats the double gesture of affirming his faith in and allegiance to the idea of an international law that is, like democracy, unrealizable and, again like democracy, undecidable, that is, impossible even to envision without contradiction. Deconstruction retains its critical edge well into the 21st century, even when directed against closely allied texts. For instance, the address Derrida gave upon receiving the Theodor Adorno Prize turns back on Adorno himself, specifically on his privileging of the German language even as he champions globalism and a united Europe. This deconstruction centers in the familiar manner on the untranslatably ambiguous French word *fichu*. If the fault line or rifts in traditional philosophical texts are the result of attempts to exclude from philosophy what it cannot control, Woman i. In

addition to the connection psychoanalysis makes between women and death, both these themes are revealed by deconstruction to be at the root of what the philosophical tradition has always sought to avoid. Writing, for Socrates, can be deceptive like a woman, or wander from the source like an illegitimate son born to such a woman. Much earlier, however, feminist theorists in France were incorporating deconstructive strategies in their work. The list, which carries a footnoted reference to Derrida, is not, as we have already seen, an innocent one. They seek instead to think in a third way. In *The Man of Reason* Genevieve Lloyd undertakes a feminist reading on a larger historical scale, deconstructing although she does not use that term major philosophical texts from Plato to Simone de Beauvoir along a fault line that would equate reason with the masculine. Lloyd traces the ways in which these last two pairs maintained a powerfully gendered meaning as the concept of Reason itself evolved through the history of European philosophy. As we have already seen, whatever is on the masculine side of the dichotomy is assumed, simply from that fact, to have value; whatever is the feminine side, to have none. Perhaps more optimistic than her French counterparts, Lloyd ends with her own version of the deconstructive double gesture:

References and Further Readings

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"The focus of any genuinely new piece of criticism or interpretation must be on the creative act of finding the new, but deconstruction puts the matter the other way around: its emphasis is on debunking the old.

This science of signs is called "semiotics" or "semiology. These signifiers can be verbal like language itself or literature or nonverbal like face painting, advertising, or fashion " Biddle Thus, linguistics is to language as structuralism is to literature. Structuralists often would break myths into their smallest units, and realign corresponding ones. Opposite terms modulate until resolved or reconciled by an intermediary third term. Structuralists are convinced that systematic knowledge is possible; post-structuralists claim to know only the impossibility of this knowledge. They counter the possibility of knowing systematically a text by revealing the "grammar" behind its form and meaning. Texts contradict not only the structuralist accounts of them, but also themselves. All signifieds are also signifiers a car symbolizes achievement. The text has intertwined and contradictory discourses, gaps, and incoherencies, since language itself is unstable and arbitrary. Its rhetoric subverts or undermines its ostensible meaning. Jacques Derrida opposed the "metaphysics of presence, Deconstructive critics focus on the text like the formalists, but direct attention to the opposite of the New Critical "unities. There is often a playfulness to deconstruction, but it can be daunting to read too. Works Consulted Abrams, M. A Glossary of Literary Terms. Harcourt Brace College Publishers, Reading, Writing, and the Study of Literature. Writing About Literature with Critical Theory. Murfin, Ross, and Supryia M.

Chapter 4 : Formalist and Deconstructive Criticism by Mohd Ibrahim on Prezi

Deconstruction: Deconstruction, form of philosophical and literary analysis, derived mainly from work begun in the s by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, that questions the fundamental conceptual distinctions, or "oppositions," in Western philosophy through a close examination of the language and logic.

Formalism theory[edit] New Criticism developed as a reaction to the older philological and literary history schools of the US North, which, influenced by nineteenth-century German scholarship, focused on the history and meaning of individual words and their relation to foreign and ancient languages, comparative sources, and the biographical circumstances of the authors. These approaches, it was felt, tended to distract from the text and meaning of a poem and entirely neglect its aesthetic qualities in favor of teaching about external factors. On the other hand, the literary appreciation school, which limited itself to pointing out the "beauties" and morally elevating qualities of the text, was disparaged by the New Critics as too subjective and emotional. Condemning this as a version of Romanticism, they aimed for newer, systematic and objective method. Heather Dubrow notes that the prevailing focus of literary scholarship was on "the study of ethical values and philosophical issues through literature, the tracing of literary history, and Literature was approached and literary scholarship did not focus on analysis of texts. Close reading or explication de texte was a staple of French literary studies, but in the United States, aesthetic concerns, and the study of modern poets was the province of non-academic essayists and book reviewers rather than serious scholars. The New Criticism changed this. Though their interest in textual study initially met with resistance from older scholars, the methods of the New Critics rapidly predominated in American universities until challenged by Feminism and structuralism in the s. Other schools of critical theory, including, post-structuralism , and deconstructionist theory , the New Historicism , and Receptions studies followed. Although the New Critics were never a formal group, an important inspiration was the teaching of John Crowe Ransom of Vanderbilt University , whose students all Southerners , Allen Tate , Cleanth Brooks , and Robert Penn Warren would go on to develop the aesthetics that came to be known as the New Criticism. In , William K. For Wimsatt and Beardsley, the words on the page were all that mattered; importation of meanings from outside the text was considered irrelevant, and potentially distracting. This fallacy would later be repudiated by theorists from the reader-response school of literary theory. One of the leading theorists from this school, Stanley Fish , was himself trained by New Critics. Fish criticizes Wimsatt and Beardsley in his essay "Literature in the Reader" Studying a passage of prose or poetry in New Critical style required careful, exacting scrutiny of the passage itself. Formal elements such as rhyme , meter, setting , characterization , and plot were used to identify the theme of the text. In addition to the theme, the New Critics also looked for paradox , ambiguity , irony , and tension to help establish the single best and most unified interpretation of the text. Although the New Criticism is no longer a dominant theoretical model in American universities, some of its methods like close reading are still fundamental tools of literary criticism, underpinning a number of subsequent theoretic approaches to literature including poststructuralism, deconstruction theory, and reader-response theory. Yet no one in his right mind could forget the reader. Reader response is certainly worth studying.

Chapter 5 : Deconstruction Critical Essays - www.nxgvision.com

Deconstruction involves the close reading of texts in order to demonstrate that any given text has irreconcilably contradictory meanings, rather than being a unified, logical whole. As J. Hillis Miller, the preeminent American deconstructionist, has explained in an essay entitled Stevens' Rock and Criticism as Cure (), "Deconstruction is.

Chapter 6 : Deconstruction | Definition of Deconstruction by Merriam-Webster

From the New Criticism to Deconstruction The Reception of Structuralism and Post-Structuralism. From the New Criticism to Deconstruction traces the transitions in American critical theory and practice from the s to the s.

Chapter 7 : Deconstruction - Wikipedia

Both Jacques Derrida and I. A. Richards have taken a great deal of interest in language with the result that language is the central concern of the critical movements pioneered by them. In the present essay I shall first take stock of Richards's and Derrida's attitude to language and then.

Chapter 8 : Flannery O'Connor, the New Criticism and Deconstruction

Deconstruction in literary studies. Deconstruction's reception was coloured by its intellectual predecessors, most notably structuralism and New www.nxgvision.coming in France in the s, the structuralist movement in anthropology analyzed various cultural phenomena as general systems of "signs" and attempted to develop "metalanguages" of terms and concepts in which the different.

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