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The University of Alberta

DECONSTRUCTION AND HERMENEUTICS:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TWO INTERPRETIVE APPROACHES

BY

RUI UMEZAWA

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Deconstruction and Hermeneutics; A Comparative Study of Two Interpretive Approaches

submitted by Rui Umezawa

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Arts (Comparative Literature).

(Supervisor)

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Date:

to my parents, who have always

been sources of inspiration.

Abstract

This is a comparative study of fundamental deconstructionist and hermeneutic approaches to literary texts and their interpretation. The basic concepts of semiotics are utilized in the first chapter to form a simple model of the deconstructionist principle. The deconstructionists, who depart from the stance that literary texts and texts about literature do not exist as "signifieds" but only as "signifiers," produce criticism which clearly lays bare this proposition. In the second chapter, fundamental ideas proposed by Dilthey and Gadamer are discussed, as well as their development in later hermeneutic theorists such as Iser, Jauss, and Hirsch. Afterwards, the same model produced in the first chapter to illustrate deconstruction is used to define hermeneutics. The third chapter contains closing remarks concerning the problems of validating one approach to interpretation and not the other.

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This thesis is a product not only of my readings concerning this topic but also of insights provided me by all the instructors I have had the priviledge of studying under at The University of Alberta. I could never fully express my gratitude to them for allowing me opportunities for intellectual and personal growth.

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I. Deconstruction: The Critic As Artist

The application in literary scholarship of the deconstructionist theories formulated by Derrida has produced an attitude towards literature characterized by this insight of Harold Bloom, quoted here by Vincent B. Leitch;

> Criticism insists on performing what cannot be performed -- reading texts. There can never be 'correct' or 'objective' readings, only less or more energetic, interesting, careful, or pleasurable misreadings.[1]

This central (I use this word purposely) thought in deconstructionist criticism, the motive behind the writings of such celebrated contemporary critics as Bloom, Hartman, DeMan, and Derrida himself among others, is often shocking, if not discouraging, to many students of literature and understandably so. It would be reasonable to think that one need not study diligently for years in order to "misread" texts. For what purpose does the student of comparative literature study foreign languages if not to more "correctly" read foreign texts? Of what use is historical knowledge in reading if it does not produce "correct" interpretations? Leitch's comment seems to discredit criticism and so it is not surprising that deconstructionism has been the subject of heated debate within the institution

of literary scholarship. However, deconstructionist criticism has undergone considerable change since its first introduction to North America by Derrida in the 1960's. Even later writings of Derrida himself are drastically different in nature from his initial formulation of the theory. It would be quite premature then to pass judgement on this new approach to criticism without an understanding of the basic principles out of which it developed. Thus, before discussing the development of deconstructionist criticism from the time it first gained popularity, a brief illustration of the theory itself seems to be in order.

Because it would be difficult to talk without a great deal of confusion of all the different schools of thought which have been the subjects of Derrida's earlier writings, I wish to restrict myself to the very basic concepts of semiotics in illustrating the theory's premise. Concepts of the sign and its nature as developed most notably by Ferdinand de Saussure at the start of this century have had tremendous impact on modern scholars and Derrida was no exception. For this reason, a concise model of deconstruction can still be most easily presented by way of fundamental semiotics. The subjects of Derrida's early criticism, such as the discourses of Husserl, will make an appearance only as brief examples.

Semiotics (or semiology) is the science of signs and it begins with the recognition that all acts of signification involve a signifier (the sign) and the signified (the

objects to which the sign refers). Anything, from a traffic sign to the words on this page, can be considered as a signifier referring to a signified. Terms such as "sign," "signifier," and "signified" identify the functional role of an object in a particular instance only, rather than its inherent property. For example, a teddy bear in relation to a real bear can be considered to be a signifier while in relation to the term "teddy bear" it acts as the signified. We call the teddy bear a "signifier" or a "signified" according to the function which we wish it to fulfill.

When we consider the various types of signifiers and signifieds which are always at our disposal we find that their relationships are not one-to-one. On one hand, a signified can have more than one signifier. As Shakespeare suggested, a rose might be called by many other names. This many-one relationship between signifiers and signified is called synonymy. On the other hand, one signifier can have a variety of signifieds. The pronounced sound "shiri" (|shĭri|) in the Greek language means what we in English call "lips," while in Japanese, it means the same thing we mean when we say "buttocks." This relationship is called homonymy.

Aside from synonymy and homonymy, there is another set of categories by which semiotics classifies signs; index, icon, and symbol.[2] An index is a sign in which there is a causal relationship between signifier and signified. Fever is a sign (index) of sickness because we know fever is

caused by sickness. An icon is a sign in which there are inherent similarities between the signifier and signified. A picture of a rabbit, for example, should in most cases have a depiction of long ears, for it is an icon. Symbols, the type of signs we are primarily concerned with, are signs in which signifiers are arbitrarily assigned to signifieds. The sound of a bell indicating dinner-time is an example of a symbol.

Language, then, is a system of symbols. Conventions of various languages arbitrarily assign words to objects, graphic symbols to sounds, syntax to meaning, and so on. (A few exceptions, such as onomatopoeia or the Chinese written characters, exist but they will be of no consequence in our discussion of deconstructionism.) Furthermore, in language, as in any system of symbols, one can distinguish one signifier and its signified from others because of the difference between the former and the other signifiers in the system. "Cat" can be distinguished from "hat" because of the difference in phonemes. Indeed, Saussure once said of language, ".... dans la langue il n'y a que des differences."[3] It is a system in which different signifiers are arbitrarily assigned to different signifieds.

This is an extreme simplification of the model developed for sign systems from which many theories concerning language, philosophy, psychology, and various other disciplines, including literature, have been developed in this century. In fact, it is applicable to any type of

discourse, ranging from biographical essays to a research paper in science. The discourse acts as signifier to the structure of meaning it provides.

The discourses which were Derrida's subjects of deconstruction shared a common characteristic which he viewed as a tradition of logocentricity or "presence." To put it simply, in this tradition, discourses centered around the assumption that some "presence," a truth, a fact, a concept, a meaning, a trace, or a logos, can exist as a signified independently of any signifier. Recall our example of the teddy-bear which acted as both signifier and signified. Whatever "truths" these discourses professed, the scholars of this tradition believed them to be autonomous signified, existing, one may say, "all by themselves." For example, regarding linguistics Derrida observes;

> The science of linguistics determines language -- its field of objectivity -- .... in the irreducible simplicity of its essence, as the unity of the phone, the glossa, and the logos. This determination is by rights anterior to all the eventual differentiations that could arise within the system of terminology of the different schools. (language/speech [langue/parole]; code/message; scheme/usage; linguistic/logic; phonology/phonemalics/phonetics/glossematics).[4]

The problems in logocentric discourse begin to reveal themselves when one tries to isolate this "absolute" signified, this essence of meaning of which Derrida speaks. For example, what can be said to be the essential meaning of the word "table" as the signifier is used in cases such as

"kitchen table," "coffee table," or "dining-room table"? When we point from the signifier to the "absolute" signified we find that the latter always eludes us, whether we think in terms of "objective meaning," Bedeutung, "total inherent properties," or the "unity of the phoné, the glossa, and the logos." A table can have any number of legs, be any color, and be made of anything. One can dance on tables as well as eat on them. Chairs can be used as tables. Pieces of wood are not tables until someone makes a table out of them. For this reason, logocentric discourses which have attempted to isolate the essential meaning of a word, or its "absolute" signified, have always run into difficulties.

Thus, in Speech and Phenomena on the one hand, Derrida acknowledges one's ability to communicate through language.

> I say, 'I see a particular person by the window' while I really do see him. It is structurally implied in my performance that the content of this expression is ideal and that its unity is not impaired by the absence of perception here and now. Whoever hears this proposition whether he is next to me or infinitely removed in space or time, should by right understand what I mean to say.[5]

On the other hand, he knows that this cannot be due to any meaning objectively inherent in the word "I":

> If, for example, I tried to substitute for the word I as it appears in a statement, that I take to be its objective conceptual content ('whatever speaker is designating himself'), I would end up in absurdities. Instead of 'I am pleased', I would have 'whatever speaker is now designating himself is pleased'.[6]

To recognize the equivocal nature of signs and still restrict oneself to logocentric beliefs is to inevitably

fall into contradictions. Consequently, Husserl's theories in the phenomenology of language, the subject of Speech and Phenomena, fall prey to Derrida's deconstruction;

> Does not Husserl contradict the difference he established between Gegenstandslosigkeit and Bedeutungslosigkeit when he says 'The word "I" names a different person from case to case and does so by way of an ever altering meaning (Bedeutung)'? Does not speech and the ideal nature of every Bedeutung exclude the possibility that a Bedeutung is ever altering?[7]

"The name that can be named is not the eternal name." So Lao-Zu is to have said, but what do we name "table" if there is no objective meaning to the word? The answer, at first glance, is as puzzling as the question. The signifier "table" points to the signified concept, but this concept is nothing if it is not another signifier first. We cannot talk of a concept which precedes all signification because conceptualization is itself an act of signification.

There is another school of thought which holds a theory called "symbolic transformation" which differs greatly in attitude from deconstruction, but still follows the same train of thought. One of its celebrated theoreticians, Susanne Langer, explains the act of conceptualization in the following passage from Philosophy in a New Key;

> Whenever we deal with a concept we must have some particular presentation of it through which we grasp it. What we always have 'in mind' is always universalium in re. When we express this universalium we use another symbol to exhibit it and still another res will embody it for the mind that sees through our symbol and apprehends the concept its own way.[8]

Those who have read Derrida's Of Grammatology will

recognize Langer's comment as a simpler version of the former's formulation of how "writing" precedes language.

> Writing is not a sign of a sign, except if one says it of all signs, which would be more profoundly true. If every sign refers to a sign, and if 'sign of a sign' signifies writing, certain conclusions .... will become inevitable.[9]

Writing precedes language, Derrida says, because, "We think only in signs."[10] Let us return to the word "table." The word is one signifier in a system of symbols we call language which distinguishes itself from other signifiers in the system because of its "differences." It is assigned to a concept but that concept is also one among many in a system of different concepts and the differences among the concepts are assigned by the very language from which the word originally came. A clearer example may be the case of the colors "black" and "grey." If one calls the latter "light black," the two concepts would not be differentiated, as they are with "black" and "grey." "Light black" would only be a qualification of the concept "black" but would not introduce a new concept. Similarly, chairs can be used as tables because language itself differentiates two concepts within one object.

Moving beyond language, even basic human perception can be recognized as an act of symbolization. Perception occurs when our nerves codify external stimuli into electric impulses (symbol) and send them to the brain. Furthermore, it is commonly believed in psychology that our use of this system must be acquired in part. A human infant, for

example, is thought to see everything "upside down," for that is the image of the external world projected through the eye's lens. A period of "re-orientation," it seems, is necessary before the child can see things "correctly."

Thus, even what we perceive through our senses are actually signifiers, and what are concepts if they are not signifiers of what we perceive? If concepts are signifiers of what we perceive, and if language is a signifier of concepts, because we also perceive language, concepts are signifiers of language which signifies itself. One cannot name anything that is not already another name for something else.

Deconstruction is, then, the revelation that the "presences" to which logocentric discourses point, the centre around which a discourse is built, are inevitably more signifiers, and that as human beings, we cannot escape beyond this realm of signifying acts. A "presence" therefore, cannot exist prior to signifiers which we as living beings supplement. It is likely the curious question of a tree falling in a forest when there is no one around. As soon as one conceptualizes the situation, it makes a sound. Before the question is asked, however, neither the tree nor the forest, nor even the ground itself cannot exist anywhere. The state of the universe, prior to its "conception," Derrida calls differance. "Differance," not to be mistaken with difference, he says is neither a word nor a concept.[11] The state of the universe before we assign

signifiers to it cannot be conceptualized because a concept already presupposes a signifier. Indeed, "The state of the universe before we assign signifiers to it," is a concept itself. What Derrida calls differance cannot be touched, nor even thought of. It forever eludes us, for by definition, one can never say one knows it.

Because one cannot enter the realm of différances, we are always substituting signifiers in their place. Reality, man's own creation, is a system in which an infinite number of such substitutions take place. Derrida calls it a system of play, and from this model of reality comes the deconstructionists' disbelief in "centres" around which previous metaphysical discourses have been developed. For the same reason, they do not believe in a "totalization" of all truth;

> Totalization can be judged impossible in the classical style: one then refers to the empirical endeavor of either a subject or a finite richness which it can never master. There is too much, more than one can say. But nontotalization can also be determined in another way; .... from the standpoint of the concept of play. If totalization no longer has any meaning, it is not because the infiniteness of a field cannot be covered by a finite glance or a finite discourse, but because the nature of the field -- that is language, and a finite language -- excludes totalization. This field is in effect that of play, that is to say, field of infinite substitutions only because it is finite, that is to say, because instead of being an inexhaustible field, as in the classical hypothesis, instead of being too large, there is something missing from it; a centre which arrests and grounds the play of substitutions. One could say .... that this movement of play, permitted by the lack

> or absence of a centre or an origin, is the movement of supplementarity. One cannot determine the centre and exhaust totalization because the sign which replaces the centre, which supplements it, taking the centré's place in its absence -- this sign is added, occurs as a surplus, as a supplement. The movement of signification adds something, which results in fact that there is always more, but this addition is a floating one because it comes to perform a vicarious function to supplement a lack on the part of the signified.[12]

In other words, in formulating a concept to act as a centre, logocentric discourse to a pre-existing set of signifiers adds another signifier, the central concept itself. If a model of language, for example, is seen as the set S = {signifier$_1$, signifier$_2$, signifier$_3$,....signifier$_n$} then a logocentric analysis will produce another set of signifiers, one in which the items would be {signifier$_1$, signifier$_2$, signifier$_3$,....signifier$_n$, signifier$_{n+1}$}. Furthermore this set in turn can yield to yet another act of analysis which would produce another set of signifiers {signifier$_1$, signifier$_2$, signifier$_3$,....signifier$_n$, signifier$_{n+1}$, signifier$_{n+2}$}. It is not the domain of language that is infinite then, but the amount of signifiers which one can add to it for the sake of calling one of them its "centre." This is the inherent "flaw" in logocentric discourse as revealed by deconstructive analysis.

What I hope to have illustrated thus far, through a very simplified model, is the genesis of deconstructive criticism. Let us proceed now to see how deconstruction has

been applied by scholars in the field of literary scholarship. One can notice, first of all, a basic change in the form of discourse. Earlier deconstructionist writings of Derrida still retained the basic characteristics of logocentricity. Indeed, if one was so inclined, one could return to the beginning of this chapter and deconstruct the very premise out of which I produced my deconstructionist model. The distinctions between signifier and signified, synonymy and homonymy, and icon, index, and symbol, are all vulnerable to deconstruction. To put it simply, this is because the distinctions themselves are signifiers, but it would be fruitless for our purposes to return to the beginning of this discussion to deconstruct ourselves. The point is that in the works of Derrida, deconstruction deconstructed the premise of logocentric discourses out of which it initially rose. No longer could deconstructionists return to the "stable" position of "presence." Having burnt the bridge it had just crossed, deconstruction had no choice but to develop on its own. What else could the result be but a tradition which centred around the signifier rather than the signified?

There are many concepts which are considered "present" in literary studies; "text," "genre," "intention," to name only a few. From the deconstructionist viewpoint, these concepts are signifiers <u>supplemented</u> by critics but traditional criticism unjustly overlooks this supplementation. Even the author of a work, according to

deconstruction, is "only" a signifier, at least to the reader and critic. A curious convention, for example, in literary criticism is that one uses present indicatives in descriptions of how the author wrote. In describing a work by author-x, a critic conventionally writes, "x writes this way or that way" or "x uses this or that device." This is a clear indication of how critics supplement a signifier in lieu of the "real author." Indeed, when can a critic ever say that he has pinpointed the "real author"? What is Homer in our day and age but a signifier? Who was Dostoyevsky? Even if a contemporary writer, say, D.H. Thomas, was sitting with me here at this very moment, could he tell me who he is? Yet, most of the time, the concept of the author is taken for granted as the author "present" even when historical studies often discover previously unknown data of an author, thereby putting into question the manner in which he was conceptualized. The different conceptualizations of an author by different critics of different times could not, until deconstruction, reveal that the author has always been, and always will be, signifiers. Other concepts such as "text" or "genre" have been more or less given the same treatment, as a "presence" rather than a supplemented signifier.

Deconstructionist critics also conceptualize. However, the fundamental thoughts behind deconstruction, as illustrated in this chapter forbid these conceptualizations from being self-effacing. Deconstructionist writing, in

literary studies, is that which makes clear to its readers that it is a signifier which has been supplemented to another signifier, namely, its subject, whether it be a general concept of literature or a particular work.

Two characteristics can be clearly recognized in deconstructionist criticism. The first is the "literariness" of its language. It leans away from standard to poetic language. Metaphors are used extensively. Oftentimes it is confusing, and the student who turns to a deconstructionist critic for the "meaning" of a particular text may find the criticism to be more puzzling than the text itself. Of this "new" critical language, Geoffrey Hartman in Criticism In The Wilderness comments;

> This issue of language has now reached criticism itself, which becomes aware how much it has given up or repressed. Criticism is haunted by an archaic debt, by the eccentric riches of allegorical exegeses in all its curiously learned, or enthusiastic and insubordinate modes .... the digressive essays of Coleridge, the freakish style of Carlyle and Nietzsche, Benjamin's packed prose, Bloom's and Burke's conquering chariot of tropical splendors, the outrageous verbalism of Derrida, or the 'ridiculous terminology' (Artaud) of psychoanalysis, even the temperate taxonomic inventiveness of Northrop Frye -- these amount to an extraordinary language movement within modern criticism. We cannot distinguish in this movement the vernacular energies from an artificial rage, but perhaps that has always been a defining condition of literariness. Criticism is freed from a neoclassical decorum that, over a space of three centuries, created a enlightened but also over-accommodated prose.[13]

The significance of this "literariness" in deconstructive writing will be discussed in a moment.

However, I would like first to take note of the other typical characteristic of deconstructive criticism of literature.

It is common for deconstructionist critics to refer to a particular critic's interpretation of a text as that critic's "reading." Since "objective meanings" do not exist for words, it should be reasonable to assume that they do not exist for texts. Thus, "reading" is an interpretation created, or a meaning constituted, by the critic. For this reason, it is a common characteristic among deconstructionist critics to assign meanings to texts, in other words, to misread texts. Indeed in Hartman's Saving the Text numerous passages from various works of literature are taken completely out of context to serve Hartman's purposes. His references to these texts are similar to my own reference in this chapter to Lao Zu, which I wish to use as a small example of deconstructionist interpretation. Obviously, Lao Zu could not have heard of deconstruction, and though it is possible that Derrida was familiar with his writings, this has never been brought to my knowledge. My reference to Lao Zu in relation to earlier works of Derrida, is typical deconstructionist interpretation of the former, since I assign my own meaning to Lao Zu's phrase for my own purposes.

It is not unreasonable that authors and their intentions play little or no significance in deconstructive criticism. While it cannot be denied that the author wrote

the work, to the deconstructionist, this author is only a signifier, and what "intention" can a signifier have except that of the one who assigned it? By convention, a deconstructionist may say "Author x writes this way or that way," but it is only with the understanding that author x is another signifier substituted for the "real thing."

Thus Harold Bloom writes;

> I only know a text, any text because I know a reading of it, someone else's reading, my own reading .... But I do not know Lycidas when I recite it to myself in the sense that I know the Lycidas by the Milton. The Milton, the Stevens, the Shelley, do not exist.[14]

Similarly, Paul De Man writes;

> If .... compelling rhyme scheme such as 'billow,' 'willow,' 'pillow' or transformations such as 'thread' to 'tread' or 'seed' to 'deed' occur at crucial moments in the text, then the question arises whether these particularly meaningful moments are not being generated by random and superficial properties of the signifiers rather than by the constraints in meaning.[15]

Thus, one inevitably returns to signifiers and these two characteristics just described -- which typify deconstructive criticism -- serve to clearly indicate this inevitability. The result is what can be viewed as the "liberation" of a signifying acts. Hartman calls traditional criticism a "closure," or in other words, the confining of signifying acts.[16] Reading occurs after a complex interaction between signifiers; between perception and concepts, concepts and words, spoken and written words, meanings drawn out of and put into texts. A false illusion of the attainment of a "objective" or "correct" interpretation of a text, brings the signifying act to an

abrupt halt. The text cannot continue to signify. It would, in this sense, be dead. However, if an interpretation of a text is seen only as someone's "reading," or "misreading," of the text, the text continues to "live." It continues to signify other meanings, and continues to be signified by other critical works. There can in principle only be one "correct" reading but there is an infinite possibility of "misreading."

Furthermore, the "literariness" of deconstructionist writing not only entertains some readers but more importantly, boldly claims itself as another signifier. "This critical work is another signifier", the writing seems to imply, "Make out of it what you will." Thus, the critical work itself is free to bring forth a multitude of meanings. The complex web of interactions between signifiers is then expanded by deconstruction and room is left for further expansion.

Let us return now to Leitch's proposition quoted at the start of this chapter. Hopefully it does not seem as absurd or shocking now as it may have seemed at first. Granted, it is a paradox. Firstly, because deconstructionist criticism is actually a creation rather than destruction, and secondly, because after Derrida's initial "de-centering" of discourses, later deconstructionist criticism came to centre itself around this creativity. However, deconstruction does not discredit the role of the critic. On the contrary, it

is an echo of Oscar Wilde's praise that critics are artists, who may even be considered to be more creative than their subjects;

> Who cares whether Mr. Ruskin's views on Turner are sound or not? What does it matter? That mighty and majestic prose of his, so flevid and so fiery-coloured in its noble eloquence, so rich in its elaborate symphonic music, so sure and certain, at its best, in subtle choice of word and epithet, is at least as great a work of art as any of those wonderful sunsets that bleach or rot on their corrupted canvases in England's Gallery ...[17]

As an artist, the deconstructionist liberates the literary work into the deconstructionist field of play for criticism as an art bodly declares itself as another signifier among many. As an artist, the deconstructionist no longer puts the literary text to its death by explaining away its life, its ability to signify. As an artist, the deconstructionist is no longer obligated to meet the same criteria as other types of critics but as Leitch proposed, must take pains to make his "misreadings" more energetic, interesting, careful, and pleasurable.

Returning finally to the student of literature who cannot understand why he must work so hard just to "misread" texts, let us now try to resolve his problem. First of all, deconstructionism does not facilitate the task of the critic. To create a "good" reading is difficult. As a professional, the deconstructionist critic must be at least as well educated as any other, for his background of experiences is what may be called his tool of trade. The meanings which he assigns to texts must come from somewhere.

Even a casual glance at the deconstructionist works of the Yale critics reveal the rich background of these scholars out of which their readings of various texts were produced. Secondly, for those who strive for "correct" readings, to whom the notion that there can only be misreadings is particularly distasteful, let us examine carefully this concept of "misreading". There is an obviously intentional paradox on the part of deconstructionists when they say that we can only "misread" texts. The intended meaning behind this proposition is, I hope by this time adequately clear, but if there is no "correct" reading how can there be misreadings? This conscious contradiction in Bloom and Leitch's conceptualization of "misreading," is the key to reconciliation between deconstruction and other types of criticism. Those, such as hermeneutic critics, who strive for the "correct" reading of the "correct" meaning believed to be "present" in texts, make the distinction between "correct" reading and misreading within the realm of general reading. In other words, "correct" reading and misreadings are subsets of reading. If this distinction was made also by deconstructionists, there would be an opposition between deconstructive criticism and other types of critical discourse. However, we have just seen that this distinction cannot be maintained if we accept the deconstructionist proposition that there are <u>only</u> misreadings. If there are "correct" readings and misreading, one cannot exist without the other. Rather, to the deconstructionists, reading,

"correct" reading, and misreadings, are only concepts, or signifiers, and as signifiers they can be moved or substituted for each other. One can call it "reading" or "correct reading," or "misreading." The distinction was never there to begin with. "Correct" reading and misreading, to the deconstructionist were never subsets of reading. One can call all readings "correct" readings, just as easily as calling them misreadings. The opposition does not exist. To the deconstructionist, a critic is only evaluated as an artist. He may approach a text any way he chooses as long as there is an understanding that his product will inevitably be another signifier.

Is this last point acceptable? In my view, it should prove invaluable to literary scholarship for it leaves the student considerably less likely to fall into dogma or prejudice. Take for example, Edward Said's celebrated work Orientalism.[18] His work may be described as the revelation that the words "Orient" and "Occident" are merely superficial signifiers. The subjects of his criticism are scholars who, with often socially destructive results, dogmatically professed an Orient "present". In striving to understand another culture, a signifier which naively claims "totality" over this culture can in the long run only be a hinderance. Granted, it may not seem agreeable at first to refer to the results of our efforts to "understand" as "another signifier" but for all pragmatic purposes, it really should make no difference. The very process of

understanding is signification. There are only signifiers, there always have been only signifiers and there will be only signifiers. Indeed, this is just another signifier which serves as just one model of our reality. What does it matter if now instead of a better understanding of truths, scholars have a better understanding of signifiers? At least in the latter case, the scholar feels free to continue further in this complex labyrinth we call our universé. "It is like pointing a finger at the moon," said Bruce Lee. "Concentrate on the finger and you shall miss all the heavenly glory."

Notes

[1]Vincent B. Leitch, Deconstructive Criticism (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1983), p.52.

[2]Leitch, p.9.

[3]Ferdinand De Saussure, Cours de Linguistique Générale (Paris: Payot, 1955), p.166.

[4]Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1974), p.29.

[5]Jacques Derrida, "Speech and Phenomena", in Speech and Phenomena; and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs, trans. David B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), pp.92-93.

[6]Derrida, "Speech and Phenomena", p.94.

[7]Derrida, "Speech and Phenomena", p.95.

[8]Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy in a New Key (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p.72.

[9]Derrida, Of Grammatology, p.43.

[1] Derrida, Of Grammatology, p.50.

[11]Derrida, "Speech and Phenomena", p.130.

[12]Jacques Derrida, Writing and Difference, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1978), p.289.

[13]Geoffrey H. Hartman, Criticism in the Wilderness (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1980), p.85.

[14]Harold Bloom et al., Deconstruction and Criticism (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979), p.8.

[15]Harold Bloom et al., p.61.

[16]Geoffrey H. Hartman, Saving the Text (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1981), p.50.

[17]Oscar Wilde, "Intentions", in The Artist as Critic, ed. Richard Ellman (Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968), p.366.

[18]Edward W. Said, Orientalism (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

II. Reconstructing Hermeneutics

In modern literary hermeneutics there always has been a tension between theory and practical criticism, between skepticism and faith. It is indeed a curious animal. It distinguishes itself from formalism and structuralism, yet retains many of their characteristics and methodologies. It is not primarily a historical survey but its primary concern is history. It relentlessly reveals the subjectivity in objectivism but inevitably falls back onto an objective view of subjectivity. It is, in essence, a claim to individuality without denying the individuals' integration into the whole of humanity. Hermeneutics does not go to extremes, and for this reason, there seems to always be some sort of tension in hermeneutic theories, a conscious effort to keep the balance between skeptical subjectivism and positivist objectivism. The fundamental hermeneutic attitude which brings about this tension was stated clearly already in the writings of Dilthey:

> Interpretation would be impossible if expressions of life were completely strange. It would be unnecessary if nothing strange were in them. It lies, therefore, between these two extremes. It is always required where something strange is required to be grasped through the art of understanding.[1]

Modern literary hermeneutics is, however, more than the

"art of understanding." It is the theory of it as well, and when one separates hermeneutic theory from practical criticism, one finds that the desire to remain "somewhere" between the two extremes leaves the former lacking in a solid premise on which to build theoretical models. The more one regards an individual, for example, a reader, as separate and unique, the more difficult it becomes to integrate him back into a greater public. A major concern of modern hermeneutics has been the reconciliation between the two extremes.

The concept of "historicity" was made popular by scholars such as Dilthey, Heidegger, and, of course, Gadamer. To put it simply, historicity is the change in the significance of an object from one historical period to another due to the cultural differences between them. It is, in a way, a not-so-radical deconstruction. Attitudes towards any concept, from race to religion, change with time. As the joke goes, "You know you're old when you can remember back when 'made in Japan' meant 'cheap and unreliable.'" It would follow then that any text from the past when read in the present, is met with the reader's historical biases which change its meaning. The text is taken out of its historical context, its original system of signifiers, and transposed to that of the present.

To these separate system of signifiers specific to different historical periods, the name "horizons" was given. Gadamer first applied the word to historicity;

> The word has been used in philosophy since Nietzsche and Husserl to characterize the way in which thought is tied to its finite determination, and the law of the expansion of the range of vision. A person who has no horizon is a man who does not see far enough and hence overvalues what is nearest to him. Contrawise, to have an horizon means not to be limited to what is nearest, but to be able to see beyond it. A person who has an horizon knows the relative significance of every thing within its horizon, as near or far, great or small.[2]

In the above passage from Truth and Method it is clear that Gadamer wishes the word "horizon" to encourage the scholar to question beyond what is immediately apparent. Gadamer chooses the word for its "literariness" and thus, his use of the "term" is rather flexible. In other instances, for example, such as in the paragraph immediately following the passage above, the past is given its own "horizon." In this case one must take the word to mean simply a particular frame of reference. The word however still held appealing significance for it denoted an area which was vast despite its finiteness and at the same time was finite despite its vastness. Thus in the writings of Gadamer and later hermeneutic scholars, one encounters a variety of "horizons" such as "historical horizon," "inner and outer horizon," "horizon of meaning," and "horizon of expectation." The word also made the distinction between temporal and spatial dimensions. No matter how vast one's own horizon may be, it was still separate and distinct from a "historical" horizon because of the temporal distance between the two frames of reference.

Thus, understanding was described by Gadamer as the "fusion of two horizons,"[3] and this conceptual model for the most part has been consistently accepted. However, as already mentioned, the more one sees two elements as distinctly separate, the more difficult it becomes to assimilate the two.

For example, in "Narrative Strategies as a Means of Communication," Iser models an understanding of the text in the following manner.[4] First of all, it is the reader who organizes the meaning of the text. This organization occurs through our perception of contrast between what Iser calls "background" and "foreground" and what he calls "theme" and "horizon," his application of the word differing from that of Gadamer's "historical horizon." The foreground-background relationship is that between the text and its external norms, both social and literary. In other words, some backdrop of norms must be present, against which the text may be placed. In narratives, Iser's subject of discussion, a world is created within a text which will contrast to the pre-existing world around it. The "world within the text" does not refer to the setting of the story but the situation created by it. The setting may be realistic or surrealistic, but in relation to the external world around the text the situation of plot, characters and so on, within will be different (recall that one can only distinguish one object from another through the differences between them.) This situation then is foregrounded against

the external world. Similarly, the text will also stand before a background of established literary conventions. Parody, for example, is a mode of writing which is defined precisely by the relation of a particular text to pre-existing literary norms.

The relationship between theme and horizon refers to internal structure of the text. According to Iser's model, narrative texts present a number of different perspectives; that of the author, that which is presented in dialogue, that which is implied in the development of the plot, and so on. A view of a textual element from the particular perspective with which the reader is involved is considered its theme while all that is embraced by the view of other perspectives of this element is considered its horizon. During reading, a theme always stands before a horizon. Various views of the protagonist, for example, may be present in a text, but the reader at any given time in reading will be involved with only one.

To conclude, Iser very quickly postulates that a "system of equivalences" is produced by the reader from these relationships and that this is what fulfills the communicative function of a literary text. Unfortunately, Iser does this so quickly that one is left without the slightest idea of how this system of equivalences is produced (much less what it is), or how, if it is produced, it can fulfill the text's communicative function. It is quite clear that he wishes his extensive model of theme and

horizon to be an explanation of how the fusion of Gadamer's two "horizons" can occur;

> The structure of there and horizon underlies the combination of all the perspectives, and it enables the literary text to fulfill its communicatory function: namely to ensure that the reaction of text to world will trigger off a matching response in the reader.[5]

but without an explanation of his conclusions, namely, an outline of how "the system of equivalences" is produced from the relationship between themes and horizons, his model simply illustrates the structure of a narrative, not the process of its understanding. Even if one assumes that by "equivalence" Iser means that between the relationship of text to its world and the reader to that world, if the reader organizes both relationships, no act of communication takes place. On the other hand, if there is a relationship built between the text and its world by the narrative strategies within the text that can be objectively observed there is no need to bring into the analysis the subjectivity of the reader.

If the reader and the text, or the reader and the author constitute two separate horizons, a bridge must be built between the two which would enable the reader to cross from his own horizon to the other. Iser's inability to build this bridge is not unusual in modern hermeneutic theory. Hans Robert Jauss, for example, also conceptualizes a "horizon of expectations" around the reader. His expectations are satisfied or disappointed in reading specific texts and each reading constitutes a change in his

horizon for the expectations of the reader change as he accumulates more literary familiarity. However, in Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics, Jauss at length illustrates how the reader, any reader, identifies with the hero of narrative, objectifying, as it were, all readers' subjective horizons[6]. If common responses to a particular text or a textual structure can so easily be observed among readers, there is no need to incorporate into them the conceptual model of individual horizons.

E.D. Hirsch in Validity in Interpretation focuses on the problems of basing a hermeneutic theory on the premise of separate horizons among individuals. Gadamer resolved the problems of how individuals, separated from one another each by his own horizon, can come to understand each other by "fusing" the two horizons. On this "fusion," however, Hirsch writes;

> ....Gadamer's attempted solution turns out, on analysis, to exemplify the very difficulty it was designed to solve. How can an interpreter fuse two perspectives -- his own and that of the text -- unless he has somehow appropriated the original perspective and amalgamated his own? How can a fusion take place unless the things to be fused are made actual, which is to say, unless the original sense of the text has been understood? ....
>
> ....If the interpreter is really bound to his own historicity, he cannot break out of it into some halfway house where past and present are merged .... For once it is admitted that the Interpreter can adopt a fused perspective different from his contemporary one, then it is admitted that he <u>can</u> break out of his own perspective. If that is possible,

> the primary assumption of the theory is shattered.[7]

Here, Hirsch makes an error in assuming that Gadamer's conceptualization of "horizon" was formulation of a premise for a theory of understanding. Unlike Iser or Jauss, Gadamer, drawing on the literary quality of the word, only wishes to encourage historians to be aware of their own biases. This is quite clear, for, as mentioned before, Gadamer's use of this word in Truth and Method is very flexible. In overly concentrating on conceptualizing the fusion of two completely separate horizons, Hirsch overlooks other passages in Gadamer's text such as the following;

> There is no more an isolated horizon of the present than there are historical horizons. Understanding, rather, is always the fusion of these horizons which we imagine to exist by themselves .... If however, there is no such thing as these horizons that are distinguished from one another, why do we speak of the fusion of horizons and not simply of the formation of the one horizon, whose bounds are set in the depth of tradition? To ask the question means that we are recognizing the special nature of the situation in which understanding becomes a scientific task, ... Every encounter with tradition that takes place within historical consciousness involves the experience of the tension between the text and the present. The hermeneutic task consists in not covering up this tension but consciously bringing it out. This is why it is part of the hermeneutic approach to project an historical horizon that is different from the horizon of the present.[8]

Contrary to Hirsch's interpretation of Gadamer's historical horizon as that which exists prior to understand, the above passage shows that Gadamer simply wishes to use

the word to encourage scholars to resist being taken over by immediate apparencies that are within the frame of reference specific to the present. Hirsch's argument, however, would be valid if directed towards such work as Iser's "Narrative Strategies." For in this case, as already illustrated in this chapter, a clear distinction is made between the "horizon" of the reader and that which is inherent in the text. The same holds true for much of contemporary hermeneutic theories.

The concept of horizons was never meant to be used as a premise for a theoretical model of understanding. If one wishes to formulate such a theory, however, one cannot neglect to build a bridge on which the two horizons can meet. Iser, for example, must verify at least the possibility of the reader's comprehension of the text's inner horizon before illustrating how narrative strategies shape this comprehension. Otherwise, the existence of horizons will always act to discredit the model of understanding. To build a hermeneutic theory on the premise of a separate horizons can be said to be as difficult a task as building a snowman on top of a burning stove.

Before moving on to formulate a solution to this problem on how it can be possible for two horizons to "fuse," let us first observe Hirsch's own hermeneutic theories in relation to "historicity." Hirsch, while recognizing the importance of being aware of one's subjectivity, does not accept that an interpretor is trapped

within his frame of reference. This entrapment can only be noticed with an awareness of another frame of reference. His fundamental attitude points not towards an understanding of a text which is partly subjective and partly objective, but rather to one of total objectivity. What is required is a point of reference against which to define an objective or "valid" meaning. For this referential point, Hirsch chooses the author of the text, thus, "valid" interpretation to Hirsch is that which interprets the author's original meaning. He excludes also the possibility of a text having its "own" meaning. The meaning must come from either the author or the reader;

> .... meaning is an affair of the consciousness and not of physical signs or things. Consciousness is in turn, an affair of persons, and in textual interpretation the persons involved are an author and a reader .... What has been denied here is that linguistic signs can somehow speak their own meaning -- a mystical idea that has never been persuasively defended.[9]

From this premise, Hirsch proceeds to formulate methods of producing and testing valid interpretation of literary texts. Curiously, however, although Hirsch's primary concern is the retrieval of the author's original meaning, he does not place a great deal of emphasis on historical data but rather bases his methods of interpretation on linguistic premises. The external realm in which the text was produced is given virtually no attention. Rather, his interpretation is based on the internal structures of the text. This is due to Hirsch's desire to include within "the

author's meaning," meanings which the author was not aware of. Hirsch separates interpreting and understanding.[10] Understanding according to his definition can occur for example when a literary scholar has enough historical and biographical data about the author to recognize what an author consciously meant in a particular text. It is the basic construction of meaning. Interpretation then goes beyond understanding. Here Hirsch uses the word "horizon" for his own purposes to mean "horizon of meaning." A text can only have a finite meaning yet it goes beyond the author's immediate and conscious meaning. This is Hirsch's way of accommodating interpretation of anonymous literary works to his system of validation. More importantly this distinction allows the text and the art of its interpretation to retain its vitality. Interpreting a text need not be stopped as soon as one understands what the author "intended" to say for interpretation moves beyond that meaning towards a horizon of textual meaning. This horizon Hirsch credits still to the author;

> How can an author mean something he did not mean? The answer to that question is simple. It is not possible to mean what one does not mean though it is very possible to mean what one is not conscious of meaning.[11]

The tension between objectivism and subjectivity again begins to present itself. Unfortunately, Hirsch seems to be unaware of it in his own discouse, although he recognizes it in that of others. Granted, by using the original author's meaning as a reference point, Hirsch makes an objective

system of validation possible, but he turns around and expands this reference point into a "horizon" thereby making objectivity impossible again. For Hirsch's interpretation is a narrowing-down process. An interpreter must reject purely subjective meanings and narrow down the textual meaning to that of the author, but once it is narrowed down to the author's conscious meaning, we no longer have interpretation, we have only an "understanding." Thus, an interpreter only narrows meaning down to the "horizon" of the author's meaning. Who, then, draws the border of this horizon? Where is the reference by which one draws it? If an author and an interpreter disagree on the meaning of the former's text, and the author says, "I did not mean that," is the interpreter free to say, "Yes, you did. You just were not aware of it"? Where then is the reference point which Hirsch so fervently sought to defend?

Meaning must come from somewhere. Recall that Hirsch said that it cannot come from the text because meaning is an affair of consciousness. This means that meaning must come from the author or the reader, but if an author was not conscious of a meaning of a text, it cannot come from his consciousness. The only other possibility then, is that it came from the reader. In spite of his emphasis on objectivity, Hirsch unfortunately falls into the subjectivism which Gadamer warned against.

Is hermeneutics possible then? Is there a way to bridge "horizons" that are separate? Can we build a model

of understanding despite our recognition of our subjectivity?

Ironically, the solution comes from the model which I used in the previous chapter to illustrate deconstruction. From that model we came to the conclusion that each of us can exist only within his own system of signifiers. A further development of the model however, helps to explain why, despite our "isolation," we can communicate with one another.

The relationship between a word and its meaning that we arrived at through the model was that between signifier and another signifier. A meaning can signify a word just as the word signifies the meaning. It was illustrated also how it was not possible to isolate the absolute meaning of a word because in a "field of play," a concept as a signifier can move or, in other words, because the concept constantly changes. I would like now to illustrate why it moves or changes. In order to illustrate this however, I must first show how a concept acts as a signifier.

We said in the previous chapter that we distinguish things from one another due to their differences. When the concept of "table" signifies the table in front of me it is the uses of these differences which it signifies. By use, I do not mean the functional definition of the table. After all, the table can be used for many things and at the same time I can use something else to write on. This also does not mean that the concept signifies the differences between

tables and other things because these differences are assigned by us (Recall the example of "black" and "grey" in the previous chapter). Rather, it is the uses of various differences that the concept signifies. This does not mean that we can substitute these uses for the concept, but that the concept signifies uses. We use certain differences to distinguish this table from a chair and use other differences to distinguish it from a cat. The concept signifies these possible uses. This is why the significance of the concept changes from the case in which the table is compared to a chair and to the case in which it is compared to a cat.

This can be better illustrated through the relationship between a word and its concept, because language, as we said, is a system made up of differences, and these differences lie in the different words used in language and the different ways in which they are used. Concept in relation to a word, signifies the uses of the word. Again, we cannot substitute the uses of words for concept, but the concepts decide, therefore signify the words' uses. Concepts signify how words are to be used within the system called language.

Although it may be paradoxical to consider a concept as a signifier of a word, but upon consideration, one can find instances in which its signifying action is apparent. It is not unusual, for example, for someone to search for the right word to convey a meaning one already has in his head.

It may be simply a word he has forgotten. "Where is that 'thing' that has a handle with a heavy metal piece at the end with which you hit nails into pieces of wood?" one might say. Similarly, a person who is not a native speaker of English may ask a North American the right word to convey the idea he wishes to express. The North American, after listening to an explanation of this idea, may reply, "From what you say, the word you're looking for is so-and-so." This simply means that although the signifying act takes place from the word and its uses to its meaning, after concepts are formed, it becomes a two-way street. The concept can and do often signify the word.

For the purpose of further explication of this model, I would like to make certain distinctions within uses of words. There is in popular music a variety of uses of the word "love." "Love" can be "higher than a mountain"; be "blue"; be "a razor that leaves the soul to bleed." For myself these are possible uses of the word "love." Possible uses are those uses of a word which do not require the speaker to change his pre-existing concept of the word. My concept of "love," on hearing phrases such as "love is blue" already embraces this use of the word. However, "love," to me is not "a sneezing elephant." This would be an impossible use of the word. In order for this use of "love" to become a possible use, my concept of the word must change. This does not mean, however, I must twist my concept to fit the use, for unless I was totally gullible,

that would be impossible. I might, however, after a great deal of thinking find similarities between love and a sneezing elephant, but the discoveries of these similarities will also change my pre-existing concept of the word "love." In other words, the concept would become capable of signifying a use which it could not previously.

This is of vital importance because it means the use of the word, as well as the word itself, signifies the concept. This explains why a concept signified by a word constantly changes. As impossible uses become possible, the concept can signify, or stand for, a different set of uses than before. Similarly, when a person, for example, discovers that he has been using a particular word incorrectly according to the conventions of the language to which it belongs, possible uses become impossible, changing his concept of the word. A concept then, is the aggregate of possible uses of the signifier at a given time. Because each individual has his own set of possible uses of a word, and because within this individual this set constantly changes, there cannot be, as Derrida pointed out, one objective meaning (Bedeutung) of a word.

Notice how when a person asks about the meaning of a word which he has not seen before, the easiest way to illustrate it is to use the word in a sentence. Notice how the best way to learn a foreign language is to live in a culture which uses it. Only through possible uses of signifiers in language can we form their meanings.

Concepts must come from perception, for if there was nothing perceived, there would be nothing to conceptualize. As one conceptualizes, what he is doing is assigning differences and possible uses of these differences to what he perceives. If there is no use to the differences, there is no need to distinguish. An infant will not begin to distinguish anything unless some need becomes apparent. However, life itself imposes this need upon us. The very act of living involves distinguishing between what keeps an organism living and what kills it, and in the development from a fertilized egg to an adult, a human being accumulates more and more needs to distinguish, to assign differences according to possible uses.

I digress, however, from the subject at hand. Concepts arise from our field of perception. What is important is that, as mentioned in the previous chapter, language lies within this field and because it does, this will effect our conceptualization of things. The possible uses of the signifiers of language will form concepts within an individual but in acquiring language, where do these possible uses come from? The answer is obvious. These signifiers were already part of someone else's possible uses. In other words, acquiring language is the accumulation of someone else's possible uses of signifiers, and concepts will be assigned to correlate with these possible uses. In using language, however, an individual discovers his own possible uses for linguistic signifiers,

and thus, changes the corresponding concept (this discovery is possible because language is not the only thing in our field of perception). This change in turn will be signified to someone else by his own possible use. This someone will then add this possible use onto his own, thereby changing his corresponding concept also. The possible uses which two or more individuals have in common at a given time form the bridge between the separate "horizons." "Horizons" are, after all, a set of possible uses. Without uses signifiers would not exist. Since concepts are an accumulation of possible uses of signifiers, even when one begins to use an acquired language and formulate possible uses of one's own, concepts formulated through use will have a great deal in common with those of other people. This is precisely why communication and understanding is possible between two individuals.

When a word's possible use for one person is impossible to another, the former has at his disposal the possible uses of other words in the language as well as of those of signifiers in other sign systems (gestures, for example) which they have in common in order to illustrate the possibility of the first use. If I do not understand what a person means I can ask him to explain. If a person I'm talking to does not understand English, I can use other languages to explain the meaning of what I just said. This is why deconstruction cannot deconstruct language completely, because language does not exist in a vacuum. We use it all the time.

Let us then return to the subject of literature. Literature also uses language, but it also uses other systems of signifiers. The use of themes and motifs, plot, character, style, and other things which we call "devices" constitute themselves a type of "language." I do not wish to separate "form" from "content", for the literary system of signifiers embraces both. I simply want to say that this system has other signifiers besides those of the system we normally call language, but within itself it still constitutes another system of signifiers.

A phenomenon such as "historicity" occurs because two individuals or two cultures do not share certain possible uses of the same signifiers, linguistic or literary. It is common knowledge that the more experience two individuals share, the easier it is for them to communicate. This is because they have in common a great number of possible uses of the same signifiers. Old people are often heard complaining of how they cannot understand the language of teen-agers. This is unavoidable for not only do teen-agers find new possible uses for existing signifiers from their own set of experiences, ("far out!") they also invent new signifiers ("groovy!"). Old people cannot understand the use of new slang until they accummulate enough possible uses of its signifiers. Similarly, a baby may say something like, "Grumplelump" when it wants a glass of water. The mother who has already acquired this signifier's possible use would give him a glass of water. A baby-sitter who has

no idea of this possible use, on the other hand, may do anything from ignoring the signifier completely to giving him a biscuit while making funny faces and saying, "Yes, dear. Grumplelump, grumplelump!"

As a text moves through time, the temporal distance between the author and the reader reduces the number of possible uses of signifiers which they have in common. This us what causes historicity. In order to better understand the author we must acquire more of his possible uses but as we do this our present concept of the signifier changes and become closer to that of the author. On the other hand, we may discover a possible use in our own time which was impossible at the time of the author. This will then differentiate our concept from the author. This is what Gadamer meant by "projecting a historical horizon" and "the fusion of horizons."

I should clarify, however, what I mean by "Gadamer meant." Unlike Hirsch, who says that a person can say what he is not conscious of meaning, I am saying that Gadamer was actually conscious of this meaning. Although I use a different set of signifiers to convey this meaning I take the meaning itself to be the same, or at least be greatly similar to Gadamer's. In order words, if it was possible for me to talk to Gadamer, I could tell him what I have said in this and the previous chapter and ask, "Is it possible for your concept of "horizons" and "historicity" to be used to signify this model of analysis?" A positive answer to

this question would mean that it is possible for the model to be used to signify his concept and that I have understood him.

Lastly, validity of a certain approach to literature will never be objectified. This is simply because the concept of "validity" is itself a signifier, and it simply becomes a matter of "valid to whom." Indeed, the model of possible uses of signifiers can validate all approaches to practical criticism. Every text is a signifier. A historical critic who studies an author's biography in order to understand the latter's text is simply seeking to acquire the author's possible uses of the text. If a critic formulates a model which illustrates how a text is received in the present, as Iser and Jauss often do, he is deriving a set of possible uses of the text common to all individuals of contemporary culture. Criticism of a foreign text involves the acquiring its possible uses to the culture it came from. Finally, deconstructionist criticism is the discovery of new possible uses while hermeneutic criticism is the accummulation of common possible uses.

However, we have now arrived at a conclusion that does not deny validity to any method of criticism. Is this a satisfactory conclusion? Contemporary literary scholarship has been described as being in a state of anarchy. Is this inevitable, or even ideal, since each critic would then be free to choose any approach he wishes? Does anarchy mean that anything thrown together and called criticism is valid criticism?

Notes

[1]Wilhelm Dilthey, Meaning in History, ed. H.P. Richman, trans. H.P. Richman (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961), p.77.

[2]Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method, trans. Garret Barden and John Cumming, 2nd ed. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975), p.262.

[3]Gadamer, p.273.

[4]Wolfgang Iser, "Narrative Strategies as a Means of Communication," in Interpretation of Narrative, ed. Mario J. Valdés and Owen J. Miller (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1978) pp. 100-117.

[4]Iser, p.114.

[6]Hans-Robert Jauss, Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1982).

[7]E.D. Hirsch, Validity in Interpretation (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1967), p.254.

[8]Gadamer, p.273.

[9]Hirsch, p.23.

[1] Hirsch, p.135.

[11]Hirsch, p.22.

III. Conclusions

What I have done in this study is present two approaches to interpretation that are radically different from each other in, hopefully, such a way that both would be found to be based on sound reasoning and therefore, would be seen as acceptable forms of literary scholarship. To summarize briefly, deconstruction was shown to be founded on the premise that textual meaning will always be no more (or no less) than signifiers. The deconstructionist sees as his task to assign new meaning to texts rather than to stagnate their signifying acts. On the other hand, although the deconstructionist model formulated in the first chapter showed that each of us exists in his own separate "horizon" of signifiers, hermeneutics could still be shown to be valid because two individuals can share common possible uses of the same signifiers.

We also arrived in the preceding chapter at the conclusion that, as approaches, neither hermeneutics nor deconstruction could be shown to be invalid. In order to keep this last point from being misunderstood as saying "anything goes," I would like to end this study with a short clarification.

It cannot be denied that equally strong arguments exist in support of both arguments. Firstly, the hermeneutic

function of exploring historical and cultural justifications for interpretations is essential to comparative literary studies. For example, the naive exercise of applying Freudian psychology directly to works of Shakespeare in order to gain insight to his mind is criticized here by D.W. Robertson;

> ....Freudian psychology is a part of a 'universe of discourses' with a nexus of relationships in that 'universe.' To insert it into an earlier universe of discourse where no such nexus exists is to create absurdities. That is, Freudian 'complexes' have about as much place in discussion of Shakespeare as carburetors or semiconductors.[1]

Here, "universe" acts as an equivalent signifier to Gadamer's "horizon."

Furthermore, perhaps the strongest argument for the hermeneutics is the benefit to be gained from a solid understanding of art forms from another "universe." I recall an instructor of Japanese literature commenting that scrutinising another culture without an understanding of its art forms can never instill an empathy for its people in the scholar. At a time when internationalism is becoming essential in our lives, the importance of hermeneutic studies increases significantly.

A deconstructionist, however, would argue that to assign any absolute meaning to a text is to halt its signifying function, and therefore, is to put it to its "death." Indeed, there is no manner in which to study literature more mundane than that practiced in totalitarian

states (including high school of so-called "free" nations), where every meaning of every symbol is forced upon the student. A reader's enjoyment of a text, in fact, is not dependent on his understanding of its author or the culture from which it came. In other words, most readers find enjoyment in reading simply by assigning their own meanings to texts. If enjoyment entailed a hermeneutic understanding of the text, works of literature would most likely be read only by scholars.

It seems, then, that in order to choose one approach over another, one must first accomplish the impossible task of defining the purpose of literature and criticism; a task which Edward Davenport in "Why Theorize About Literature?" describes as one which has never been satisfactorily accomplished nor meant to be.[2] Without such a definition, one finds that there is no premise in which to formulate a set of criteria with which to evaluate fundamental approaches to their interpretation.

Does this mean that every critic is free to do as he pleases? Have we once again arrived at an "anything-goes" conclusion since there are no criteria by which to evaluate criticism? The answer, interestingly, is the opposite.

First of all, criticism, when viewed as a whole, is a synthesis of fundamental approaches such as those presented in this study, and with regard to deconstructionism and hermeneutics, one cannot neglect one or the other in order to get a full view of the literary "phenomenon." Paul De

Man once wrote of history and modernity that, "If history is not to become sheer regression or paralysis, it depends on modernity for its duration and renewal; but modernity cannot assert itself without being swallowed up and reintegrated into regressive historical process."[3] Substitute in this passage the terms "hermeneutics" and "deconstruction" for "history" and "modernity," respectively, and one begins to see the balanced relationship between these two interpretive approaches to literary scholarship.

More importantly, it can be strongly argued that an absence of a concrete premise by which to evaluate criticism, rather than make matters easier for the critic, increases the demands placed on him.

For the sake of illustration, one may begin by saying what while it seems impossible to evaluate deconstruction and hermeneutics according to the same set of criteria, one could reasonably say that within the same approach, one can say one work of criticism is better or worse than another. Since some premise of "purpose" would be established, it should be possible to compare two or more deconstructionist works of criticism, for instance, on the basis of innovation, or evaluate different hermeneutic critics on the basis of logical consistencies within their theories.

However, one can see that, in actual practice, criteria are not specific to any particular approach to literature, Criteria applied to deconstructionist works of criticism can be applied to hermeneutics and vice versa. For example, it

is difficult to conceive Derrida's Glas as even a work of criticism without the logical foundation on which deconstruction was built.[4] Even with this recognition, it is still debatable whether or not Derrida is not being overly self-indulgent in this work. The criteria of communicability and logical consistency can be applied to deconstruction just as easily as those of innovation and effective writing style can be applied to works of hermeneutic criticis.

The key to this paradox is the fact that, although in the institution of literary studies, critics are often divided into "schools," these "schools" are also, once again, simply signifiers manifesting what has been presented in this study as "approaches." This puts criticism in a field of play, and although no finite set of criteria can exist without a premise in which to formulate it, the lack of such a premise creates an infinite set of criteria.

What this means is that while fundamental approaches cannot be evaluated over another, individual works within those approaches can be judged according to a infinite set of criteria. It is not an "anything-goes" situation. On the contrary, the essential natures in opposition between deconstruction and hermeneutics make it just the opposite, for criticism can no longer be "just" creative or be "only" logically consistent or "simply" present relevant information. It is called upon to do all of these and more.

Criticism, like any form of creativity, must be innovative in order to avoid stagnation. At the same time, like any form of education, it must rely on traditional methods of communication, in order to avoid self-indulgence. Truly significant criticism occurs on the fine line which balances these criteria, as well as an infinite number of others.

Notes

[1]D.W. Robertson Jr., "Some Observation on Method in Literary Studies," New Literary History, 1, No. 1 (1969), pp. 28-29.

[2]Edward Davenport, "Why Theorize About Literature?" in What Is Literature? ed. Paul Hernandi (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 35-46.

[3]Paul De Man, Blindness and Insight (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), p. 151.

[4]Jacques Derrida, Glas (Paris: Galilée, 1974).

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