



Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences Dhar El Mehraz Fes Department of English Studies Semester 4 Group 3 Introduction to Cultural Studies Prof. MOHAMMED BENNIS

Cultural Studies Concepts/Terms /Theories (continued)

« DECONSTRUCTION » JACQUES DERRIDA

- In cultural studies 'Deconstruction' is an approach, a strategy of reading and interpreting cultural texts.
- Deconstruction looks at the multiple meanings of a single signifier, word or text.
- Deconstruction uses binary oppositions.
- In his book *The Sage Dictionary of Cultural Studies, Chris Barker* defines *deconstruction* as follows :

« This concept is associated with the work of Derrida and his 'undoing' of the binary of Western philosophyas well as its extension into the fields of literature...and postcolonial theory...To deconstruct is to take apart, to undo, in order to seek out and display the assumptions of a text. In particular, deconstruction involves the dismantling of hierarchical binary conceptual oppositions such as man/woman, balck/white, realty/appearance, nature/culture, reason/madness etc. that serve to guarantee the status and power of truth-claims by excluding and devaluing the 'inferior' part of the binary.

The purpose of deconstruction is not simply to reverse the order of binaries but to show how they are implicated in each other. Deconstruction seeks to expose the blind spots of texts, the unacknowledged assumptions upon which they operate. This includes the places where a text's rhetorical strategies work against the logic of a text's stated arguments. That is, deconstructionism highlights the tension between what a text means to say and what it is constrained to mean. One of the central problems of deconstruction is that it must use the very conceptual language it seeks to undo. For example, to deconstruct Western philosophy is to use the very language of Western philosophy. To mark this tension, Derrida places his concepts 'under erasure'. The use 'uder erasure' faccustomed and known concepts is intended to de-stabilize the familiar, making it useful, necessary, inaccurate and mistaken. Thus does Derrida seek to expose the undecidability of meaning. »

-According to Derrida, meaning is not static, so deconstuction attempts to find out the multiple layers/levels of meaning embedde/latent/implicit into texts.





-Deconstruction also seeks to dismantle/break up binary oppositions and hierarchies that are based on power relations, such as gender (man/woman), class (upper class/lower class), race (white/black) etc.

-Deconstruction is used in literary criticism and litarary studies to reveal hidden assumptions, representations, messages and ideologies in literary texts.

-Deconstruction is also used by feminists to subvert/undermine/challenge male dominance/patriarchy/androcentrism through their writings/texts.

-Deconstruction is to a large extent employed by postcolonial writers and critics to unravel/unfold/show cultural, racial, ethnic stereotypes and ideologies embedded in colonial texts and discourse.

-Examples of feminist litarary texts : .Laila Abou Zeid's Year of the Elephant .Fatima Mernissi's Dreams of Trespass...

-Examples feminist theories :

.Simone de Bouvoir's The Second Sex

.Judith Butler's theory Gender Performativity

.Gayatri Spivack's essay « Can the Subaltern Speak ? »

-Quote from Derrida's Dissemination :

« A text is not a text unless it hides from the first comer, form the first glance, the laws of its composition and the rules of its game. A text remains, moreover, forever imperceptible. Its laws and rules are not, however, harbored in the inaccessibility of secret ; it is simply that they can never be booked, in the present, into anything that could rigorously be called a perception. »