

# DECONSTRUCTIVE READING OF ALEXANDER RAJU'S POETIC WORK "THE HOPES AND FEARS"

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper tries to examine Alexander Raju's "Hopes and Fears" (2003) from a deconstructive critical perspective. The study tries to come, as close as it can, to the text in order to deconstruct it and reaches at a new reading of the poem by applying the principles of the theory of Deconstruction. "A New Critical reading of the text" as Tyson declares "is often a useful first step in deconstructing a literary work because such readings can almost always be found to rest on a binary opposition in which one member of the pair is privileged over the other" (260). So, firstly the poem is analyzed from new critical point of view, and then it is analyzed using deconstructive principle. A deconstructive critic looks for meanings in the text that conflict with its main theme, focusing on self-contradictions of which the text seems unaware. The paper begins by discussing the concepts of deconstruction as a modern critical theory. It reveals to the reader an overview of deconstruction as a theory of reading texts. Moreover, it proceeds to examine how deconstruction can illuminate the above-mentioned poem by analyzing its verbal contradictions in terms of meaning and structure. Under the scrutiny of deconstruction, these characteristics ultimately uncover the instability of literary language and meaning. This deconstructive reading of the text will allow the reader to gain a better understanding not only of the poem, but also of deconstruction as a literary theory.*

*Keywords: deconstruction, deconstructivist, Derridean, problematise*

## 1. DECONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

Tyson says that "although deconstruction is no longer a new phenomenon on the academic scene – the theory was inaugurated by Jacques Derrida in the late 1960s and became a major influence on literary studies during the late 1970s" (249). He further elaborates that "many students and faculty alike continue to misperceive deconstruction as a superficial analysis of wordplay that destroys our appreciation of literature and our ability to interpret it meaningfully". This is because, it was new and contrary to the contemporary usual language and literary thoughts that were more stable, centered and unambiguous consideration of language and literature.

Peter consolidates that "Deconstruction is not synonymous with 'destruction'. It is, in fact, much closer to the original meaning of the word 'analysis', which etymologically means 'to undo'" (54). "As used in literary criticism, philosophy, and more recently, legal studies, Deconstruction focuses on the inherent, internal contradictions in language and interpretation" (Edward 110). Language,

according to Deconstructivist view, is not the reliable tool of communication we believe it to be, but a fluid, ambiguous domain of complex experience in which ideologies program us without our being aware of them.

## 2. DECONSTRUCTING LANGUAGE

In our daily lives, most of us take language for granted, assuming that it communicates what we want it to be, and if it does not, we assume that the fault is in ourselves, and not in language. Because we are used to the everyday patterns and rituals in which language seems to work the way we want it to be, we assume that it by nature is a stable and reliable means of communicating our thoughts, feelings, and wishes. “Deconstruction’s theory of language in contrast”, Tyson asserts, “is based on the belief that language is much more slippery and ambiguous than we realize” (250). He further described it by providing the following most familiar old saying as example: *Time flies like an arrow*. The first meaning is: Time passes very quickly in case we take the word *time* (noun), *flies* (verb), and *like an arrow* (adverbial clause). Secondly, the sentence could also mean that time moves in one direction, or straight ahead, because that’s how arrows fly. But what would happen if we thought of the first word of the sentence as a verb in the imperative mode—telling us to do something—and the second word as if it represented a kind of insect? Then the sentence would be giving us the following meaning i.e. get out your stopwatch and time/measure the speed of flies as you’d time an arrow’s flight. And what would happen if we thought of the first two words of the sentence as if they represented a kind of insect—time flies (think of fruit flies)—and the third word as if it were a form of the verb *to like*? Then the sentence would tell us something about the emotional life of a certain kind of insect i.e. Time flies are fond of arrows or at least of one particular arrow. So, we can infer that how, without changing a word, a single sentence can have several meanings.

Derridean deconstruction simply problematises all habits of thought in any ‘discipline’ (the word ‘discipline’ itself shows how our thinking itself is disciplined) by demonstrating how impossible it is to draw a clear-cut line between reality and representation; this, in turn, will evolve a sustained and rigorous attention to the way in which certain notions of ‘language/text’ have been taken for granted. Krishnaswamy, Varghese and Mishra in the book called Contemporary Theory say:

*Though the focus of study in Deconstruction is ‘language or text’, ultimately, deconstruction is a rigorous attempt to (re)think the limits of that principle of reason which has shaped the emergence of Western Philosophy, science and technology at large and its search an answer to question: Is the reason for the reason rational?(30).*

For example, Derrida examines Rousseau’s confession of saying that Writing is a “dangerous supplement”, an addition to the natural resource of speech.....a necessary evil. Derrida, points out that Rousseau uses writing to debunk writing and denounces the very means by which his own

ideas are set down for others to read; writing is exactly the mechanism which allows Rousseau to practice the art of concealment –to express the opposite of what he feels. A supplement is one that adds and makes the original more complete; this means that there is a lack or absence of something in the original; the inadequacy or deficiency in speech can be supplemented only by writing and in this case it is not dangerous; it is not a “necessary evil” as Rousseau says.

Similarly, Derrida as stated in Krishnaswamy and et al, minutely examines Saussure’s ideas on language and points out that Saussure is not so sure of what he says! Saussure says:

*Language and writing are two distinct systems of signs; the second exists for the sole purpose of representing the first. The linguistic object is not both written and spoken forms of words; the spoken form alone constitutes the object. But the spoken word is so intimately connected to the written image that the latter manages to usurp the main role (31).*

Derrida argues that Saussure, like Aristotle, Plato, and Rousseau takes speech as privileged because of its self presence; he says that it is not just speech alone that is privileged but, *presence* is privileged over *absence*. Derrida says; “Voice becomes a metaphor of truth and authenticity....writing, in contrast, destroys the idea of pure self presence.” Rousseau glorifies speech to such an extent affirming it as pure, spontaneous, authentic, original and natural that writing becomes secondary and lifeless. Privileging speech over writing is called phonocentrism; through privileging the spoken word meaning and truth, reason and logic, the phonocentric traditions becomes really logocentric; what is actually privileged through phonocentrism is logocentrism (the Greek word ‘logos’: means word, reason,). Phonocentric/logocentric traditions spans from Plato and Aristotle to Heidegger, Saussure and others. As portrayed by Derrida the logocentric system always the origins of truth to logos –to the spoken word, the voice, reason and the Word of God.

Derrida doesn’t deny that the use of speech comes before the use of writing in the history of language or in the learning of language by human beings. What he argues is that the original/true form is not necessarily the purest form. There is a distinction between the historical and conceptual priority. For example, in mathematics, historically, counting was done in sticks or stones or beads, but they have now been discarded for more abstract forms and formulae. We do not bring in historical priority to decide conceptual importance. (Human beings were in a natural undress state in the beginning, but the dressed state considered more fashionable now!) Thus, Derrida reverses the speech/writing hierarchy and privileges writing. From this we can understand that one facet of post-structuralism/deconstruction relevant here is its tendency to reverse the polarity of common binary oppositions like *male* and *female*, *day* and *night*, *light* and *dark*, man/woman, good/evil, presence/absence, heaven/hell, hero/monster, and intelligence/ignorance, God/Satan,

Christian/Pagan, and so on, so that the second term, rather than the first, is 'privileged' and regarded as the more desirable.

### 3. DECONSTRUCTING LITERATURE

For deconstruction, (1) language is dynamic, ambiguous, and unstable, continually disseminating possible meanings; (2) existence has no center, no stable meaning, no fixed ground; and (3) human beings are fragmented battlefields for competing ideologies whose only “identities” are the ones we invent and choose to believe. Similarly, literature for deconstruction is as dynamic, ambiguous, and unstable as the language of which it is composed.

Meaning is not a stable element residing in the text for us to uncover or passively consume. Meaning is created by the reader in the act of reading. Or, more precisely, meaning is produced by the play of language through the vehicle of the reader. According to Tyson, “literary texts, like all texts, consist of a multiplicity of overlapping, conflicting meanings in dynamic, fluid relation to one another and to us” (259). What have been considered the “obvious” or “commonsense” interpretations of a given text are really **ideological readings**—interpretations produced by a culture’s values and beliefs—with which we are so familiar that we consider them “natural.” In short, we create the meaning and value that we “find” in the text. Just as authors can’t help but draw on the assumptions of their cultural milieu when they construct their texts, readers can’t help but draw on the assumptions of theirs when they construct their readings.

J. A. Cuddon, in his *Dictionary of Literary Terms* asserts that in deconstruction: a text can be read as saying something quite different from what it appears to be saying ... it may be read as carrying a plurality of significance or as saying many different things which are fundamentally at variance with, contradictory to and subversive/rebellion of what may be seen by criticism as a single 'stable' meaning. Thus a text may 'betray' itself. There are generally two main purposes in deconstructing a literary text, and we may see either or both at work in any given deconstructive reading: (1) to reveal the text’s *undecidability* and/or (2) to reveal the complex operations of the ideologies of which the text is constructed. Alexander Raju’s poem, ‘Hopes and Fears’, can be deconstructed on the basis of the above assumptions of language and literature.

“For New Criticism” Arron Kau asserts that, “one objective, knowable meaning there existed within the text itself, which was accessible to the reader by means of careful analysis or close reading of each elements” (3). This implies that New Criticism seeks to reveal how the text works as a unified whole by showing how its main theme is established by the text’s formal, or stylistic, elements: imagery, symbolism, tone, rhyme, meter, plot, characterization, setting, point of view, and so forth. First, the New Critic identifies the central tension operating in the text –the struggle between good and evil, the protagonist’s evolution from innocence to experience, the conflict

between science and religion, or some other tension that is emotionally or morally compelling. Then the New Critic shows how that tension is resolved in the text's advancement of its main theme—for example, that good and evil exist in all of us; that the evolution from innocence to experience, though necessary, can be costly as well as rewarding; that science becomes dangerous when it becomes a religion; or some other theme that has human significance—to which all the formal elements in the text contribute.

A New Critical reading of the text—What is the central tension at work in this poem, and how is it resolved in the poem's unified advancement of its main theme?—is often a useful first step in deconstructing a literary work because such readings can almost always be found to rest on a binary opposition in which one member of the pair is privileged over the other. This binary opposition is usually the key to the text's ideological framework (or at least one of the text's ideological frameworks). Once a New Critical reading is formulated, the binary opposition on which it rests can be deconstructed: that is, it can be examined to find the ways in which the opposing elements in the text overlap or aren't really opposed. And this is how we can learn something about the limitations of the ideology the text (consciously or unconsciously) promotes.

#### **4. BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND OF THE POET**

Alexander Raju, an Indian English critic, poet, novelist, short story writer, and columnist, has many books to his credit. *Ripples and Pebbles* (1989), *Sprouts of Indignation* (2003), and *Magic Chasm* (2007) are collections of his poems. His first novel *the Haunted Man* came out in 1997; his other novels are *Upon This Bank and Shoal* (2008), *when Babel Tower is Falling Down* (2012) *And Still Plays the Abyssinian Damsel on Her Dulcimer* (2014) and *Where They Shattered his Green Dream*. *The Psycho-Social Interface in British Fiction* (2000) is a critical work and *The Voice of Ethiopia* (2008) is an edited work. *Poles Apart on the Same Bad* (2011) is a collection of twenty nine short stories.

As stated in his book *'And Still Plays the Abyssinian Damsel on her Dulcimer*, born on April 1, 1952, Alexander Raju began his career as a freelance journalist as early as 1974, after completing his higher studies in the University of Kerala and Sagar, Madhaya Pradesh. Touring almost every nook and corner of India, he acquired firsthand knowledge of the Indian ways of life among various ethnic groups who differed totally in their culture, religion and language. When Sikkim became the twenty second State of India, he joined the staff of *Sikkim Express* as one of its sub-editors and latter became the editor of *Bullet*, a newsweekly published from Gangtok. "A decade of my wandering through the length and breadth of India and my not to brief sojourn in the Himalayan Valley gave me an everlasting mine of ideas and continuous sources of inspiration that would last a whole lifespan of creative writer," says the author.

Returning to his native state of Kerala, he worked as a lawyer for a short while. In 1981 he joined the faculty of English at Baselu College Kottayam, his own alma mater, as a lecturer. Currently, he is Professor of English at University of Gondar, Ethiopia, after serving at Bahir Dar and Mekele Universities of Ethiopia.

## 5. DECONSTRUCTIVE READING OF “HOPES AND FEARS”

The poem “Hopes and Fears”, by Alexander Raju is taken from his collection of poems titled “Sprouts of Indignation”. The poem is of three stanzas with equal number of lines and it seems to be about the failure of enthusiastically expected, needed hopes. Thus, the persona of the poem at the first stanza looks very concerned, indignant and anguished about the abortion of the expected dream. Dr. John E. Abraham, a reviewer of Alexander Raju’s collection of poems, states in the forward that “for the poet this century appears to be a “dream aborted”. He is unhappy to see the tree of sincerity bearing “sour fruits of indignation.”

In the second stanza the persona reproaches God for His reluctance to keep His promise to spue out the lukewarm who flourished these days and which is not His favorite. God’s favorite/ preference, according to the Bible and the persona of the poem, are both the extreme opposites- hot and cold. The last stanza also consolidates what is said in the above stanzas i.e. in between that extreme solstice –lowest and highest points – which implies between the uncalled successes or failure is not acknowledged by the persona. The persona in this stanza also proves that to be in between success and failure, to be in between the solstice hot and cold is not a way of being sincere and pure.

The poem is brought together into one cohesive piece of writing by the anger/hot tone. Various literary devices have been used to show this. Multiple binary oppositions can be isolated here as well: sincerity –insincerity, sweet –sour, concerned – indifferent, hot and/or cold –lukewarm, etc, but the most important of these oppositions are that success –failure and hopes –fears. As described in stanza one, the persona of the poem expresses its feeling of anger by contrasting the awaited hopes and cheers with the aborted hopes and cheers (dreams), concerned with indifference etc.

As this awaited century dawns  
 With hopes and cheers on the anvil,  
 But symptoms of dreams aborted,  
 How could one remain indifferent,  
 When the tree of sincerity  
 Bears sour fruits of indignation?

Here the persona uses a metaphor to compare the abortion of the awaited dreams/hopes with the tree of sincerity which bears sour fruits of indignation. Moreover, the persona uses a rhetorical question, ‘How could one remain indifferent/ When the tree of sincerity/ Bears sour fruits of

indignation?’ to express its anguished anger towards the abortion of the awaited dreams. The persona is not indifferent; rather he/she is very concerned and it looks reproaching the people for their uncaring or unresponsive nature. The punctuations in the first stanza help us to understand the angry tone. Except the three commas in the middle of the poem that implies the abrupt pause, there is no long pause. The lines in this stanza are en-jambling one into the next instead of cutting short. This implies that when a person being in a state of anger/strong emotion, she/he may make a breathless, continuous speech.

In the second and third stanza too, we can see the similar tone and idea. But the context only is different. Here the persona criticizes God’s unwillingness to keep His promise to spew out the lukewarm – which refers the indifferent who flourished these days. In this stanza too there is a binary opposition in which the poem built on –cold/hot with lukewarm. This is actually a Biblical allusion in which God Himself has spoken out in the Revelations 3:13.

Where even God is reluctant  
To keep his promise and ‘spue out’  
The lukewarm who flourished today,  
How could not the cold and the hot,  
His favorite sincere to the core,  
Brew hot drops of indignation?

In this stanza, the persona’s rhetorical speech asks the inability of God’s preference –cold or hot –to brew hot drops of indignation to avoid the lukewarm which flourished these days. The lukewarm here are the people who are indifferent of the abortion of the dreams/hopes.

The last stanza too consolidates what is said in the above two stanzas. Both the concept and structure are the same except the reduction of the pauses and some punctuation differences. In case of the punctuation, there are three pauses/commas in the above two stanzas while in the third one there are two pauses/commas; moreover, the rhetoric in the two above stanzas ended by a question mark, where as the third stanza ended by an exclamation mark which is more stronger in expressing emotion. In terms of binary opposition, the following are some of them: success and failure, ebbs and flows, highest day and the lowest day (extreme solstice) are dualisms that make and maintain the unity and coherence of the stanza and the poem at large.

In between those extreme solstice  
Of uncalled success and failure,  
Floating on fortune’s ebbs and flows,  
How could one be sincere and pure

Without sprouts of indignation  
Germinate, marking immortal life!

Repetition is a recurring device in the poem, in both vocabulary and concepts. The word sincere/ity and indignation are used in the same structure – in rhetorical questions – in context and meaning in order to maintain the unity and coherence of the poem as well as to display the persona's tone. From the first stanza, the persona speaks out its concern when the tree of sincerity bears sour fruit of indignation. In the second stanza, the speaker asks the inability of the God's preferences/sincere, hot and cold, to brew hot drops of indignation. The last stanza also tries to tell the reader that if sincere and pure, the sprouts of indignation are indispensable.

But how do we know the poem means any of this? Couldn't this binary opposition set up between hopes and fears; success and failure and some terms mean absolutely nothing due to the variability of those terms, the shifting meanings they might take on in different contexts? Can't they easily be read in multiple ways, rather than in a single, unified way the poet probably wants us to read them? If we were to assume these words actually meant something coherent that he wants them to mean, couldn't they just as easily mean something other than we initially expect them to mean? Is there any ground/valuable reason for the persona of the poem to feel hot/anger and to be concerned? Do we have to agree with the poet? These are some of the basic questions that require us to see/read the poem closely.

When it is read from the deconstructivist approach, the poem can get another meaning. That means; the poem cannot be as stable, coherent and unified both linguistically and ideologically/thematically as it is intended to be. The words in the title 'hopes and fears', literally look extreme opposite. Rather they are supplementary that one cannot exist without the other. The word 'hope', according to Advanced Oxford Dictionary, is a belief that something you want will happen. It is a belief, expectation, anticipation, opinion, wish, and/or optimism about something. Thus, when we hope something to happen, there is a probability of half to happen and another half not to happen- at least in some extent. We are not hundred percent sure of the same to happen. This means, there is a fear, uncertainty, and/or hesitation of not happening what we expected. Similarly, the word fear is defined as – a bad feeling that you have when you are in danger; when something bad might happen now or in future; when a particular thing frightens you. So, there is a probability to happen or not to happen something bad.

What are the persona's hopes? What is the reason behind the hopes? What is/are the situation/s that leads the persona to hope? The persona's hopes/wishes/dreams were the end/ termination of the bad situation/maladministration as well as the worsened living conditions probably which existed in his/her country. Thus, this situation leads the persona/poet to hope/dream/wish the ending of these

conditions and in place of these conditions; he/she hoped the good condition – which is absent. What here existed is the bad condition which refers to the fears. However, the hopes are absent. As Derrida reverses the speech/writing hierarchy and privileges writing, hopes/fears should be reversed and fear/presence privileged over the hopes/absence, because what is here more desirable available is fears/existence/presence.

When we come to the first stanza, the poem/the speaker of the poem contradicts itself. The first three lines, “As this awaited century dawns /with hopes and cheers on the anvil, / but symptoms of dreams aborted”, contradict with the rest of three lines both linguistically and thematically, which are: How could one remain indifferent, /when the tree of sincerity /Bears sour fruits of indignation? As it is described earlier, the persona as well as the people seem very eager of the good change in the coming/ the awaited century dawns/ begins. But, how do the speaker together with the people were waiting for the good fortune - is the basic question that should be given due attention. ‘With hopes and cheers on the anvil’ is the answer. Hope is a wish, desire, speculation or imagination. This is a blurred thing that can or cannot happen. The word anvil is an iron block on which a black smith puts hot pieces of metal before shaping them on it. It is a sign that has got a symbolic effect on the readers’ mind. The hot pieces of metal may represent the strong desire/wish/hope of the speaker and the people who live with for the good fortune to happen. Here, the speaker’s and the people’s strong desire is not escorted with their effort or action. Hopes and cheers are on the anvil in which they need to be forged / hammered in order to get the kind of shape/tool which we want to be. Unless we hit the iron while it is hot, it becomes strong and difficult to shape it. Likewise, unless we strive to achieve what we strongly wish, desire or hope, it cannot be solidified rather it remains a dream, or nightmare. So, it is indispensable for a given dream to be aborted let alone the indicators/symptoms of dream. Moreover, the word ‘symptom’ is defined as a change in your body or mind that shows that you aren’t healthy/ a sign that something bad exists. The dream which is mentioned in line three is not a healthy, or normal one; it is rather a symptomatic dream. Or the dream/hope by itself is a disease. If it is so, what is the need for the persona to be enraged? Why he/she is concerned about the unhealthy dream or hope? How come such dreams or hopes stand for the tree of sincerity? And how come we expect sweet fruits from such dreams? In this respect, the persona’s vexation and the situation which the speaker lives with/observes contradict each other.

In stanza two too, there are contradictory ideas. Why do the cold and the hot become God’s favorites? Which one is dangerous/unsafe, are the cold and hot or lukewarm? Which one is drinkable/stay for the extent of time at the mouth of a given person or God –cold and hot or lukewarm? Why God is reluctant to spue out the lukewarm – the indifferent? Such and other questions are very important questions that need to be considered when we examine this text closely. Whenever we heat a vessel of cold water, it cannot directly become hot. Firstly, it becomes cool, then lukewarm / tepid, then warm, then hot. For drinking as well as for washing our body and

our clothes, it is not the hot and/or the cold water safe; rather either the cool or the lukewarm water and/or the warm, depending on the nature of climatic/weather conditions and a given person's timing preference, is preferable. Cold and hot are destructive waters that we might not need them in the extent we use/need cool, lukewarm and/or warm waters. Hence, the text as well as God contradicts with the reality. God and some of the people are really right to ignore or to be reluctant about the dreams/hopes which are not supported by practical activities. So, what is the need for the God to spue out the lukewarm and what is the need of God's preferences- cold and hot – to brew hot drops of indignation? So, God agree with those who are indifferent/ lukewarm. We cannot expect indignation from the people and God, for the useless, irrelevant, and nightmare dream or hope. (Perhaps what the poet means is that God prefers those who are strong enough to say 'yes' or 'no' to those who say 'yes-no' according to the situation).

The last stanza also supports what is said in the above two ones. Here, the persona criticizes being in between success and failure. Normally, success may not be attained at the first attempt; it passes through different kinds of challenges and drawbacks to reach its peak. Hence, such challenges and drawbacks (failures) are steps in the process of development. So, being in the middle of failure and success is also a half way. Here we can remember the mythological story about Thomas Edison's, one of the world's remarkable innovator and his statement about his failure in his light bulb refinement. He is supposed to be failed 9,999 times to create the light bulb. Just imagine if he had given up after the 9,999th time! A journalist asked him: "How does it feel to have failed 9,999 times?" and Edison said "I haven't failed; I have had great success, finding 9,999 ways that do not work" (SelfGroth.com). From this story, we can understand that failure is success; we can learn from our each failure our stage/trial. So, failure is not the opposite of success; it rather a way, method, step of success. Why does the persona disappoint by those who are in between success and failure? Is the 'in between' really the persona's concern?

Another important point is the so called 'in between' floating on fortune's ebbs and flows. Here, the word fortune is the key word. It is chance or luck in the way it affects people's lives. The fortune is congruent with the dream/hope which is stated in the first stanza. It is a state of a person that waits/wishes success without any action or practical activity. It is about the absent, impractical, unrealistic things that may or may not happen and/or people who are opportunist or fatalists. So, what is the need to be concerned about those who are dreamers, opportunists, and chance/fortune waiters?

The last three lines in the last stanza shifts ideologically from the persona's concern about the abortion of the dream/hope and/or reproaching the genuine indifference to the idea of hard working, striving, growing or any practical movement that implies the sprouts of indignation. The word sprout is a new part growing on a plant. Indignation is a feeling of anger and surprise caused by

something you think is unfair or unpleasant. It is also the belief that you are right to be angry even though other people do not agree. Therefore, sprouts of indignation are activities, movements, efforts, trials, and struggle to be sincere and pure. This must be the persona's real worry and concern.

## CONCLUSION

"Hopes and Fears," when studied from a New Critical standpoint, comes together nicely, conveying a unified message of dream abortion with its embedded binary opposition of hopes and fears, and success and failure. But when we re-read it from a Deconstructionist "perspective" the poem means little or at least nothing that is unified and cohesive and stable. The reading deconstructs the text to prove that there is no one particular meaning of the poem. The poem proves the Deconstructive principles which try to show how meanings, structures, and ideas keep on replacing each other. Certain textual facts can alert us to possible intentions and interpretations which we might otherwise not be aware of, and so provide a basis, and a stimulus, for further empirical enquiry into the pragmatics of discourse and the nature of human communication. This reading may remain valid until it is replaced by another one which will deconstruct it and take its place. Deconstructionists have to be aware of the text's shifts or breaks that may eventually create instabilities in attitude and meaning. At the verbal level, a close reading of the text will highlight its paradoxes and contradictions, a reading against the grain, in order to reveal how the "signifiers" may clash with the "signifieds". Moreover, deconstruction can improve our ability to think critically and to see more readily the ways in which our experience is determined by ideologies of which we are unaware because they are "built into" our language.

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