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Paul de Man's Resistance to Reading: Nietzschean Aesthetics, Rhetoric and Aporia

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Paul de Man's theoretical proposition of reading is a version of deconstruction that continues the close reading of the text in the manner of New Criticism. However, it is not concerned with semantic and syntactic coherence in the text; instead, it exposes *aporias*, contradictions and ambivalences that radically challenge aesthetic and organic unity of the work and the meaningful totality. The de Manian approach engenders the failure of reading, and promotes an experience of the impossible that emerges from rhetoric, "blindness," misreading and figurality. These aspects are rightly called "an allegory of unreadability". This article is concerned with Paul de Man's negation of the methodology of understanding literature established by such influential text books as *Understanding Poetry* and *Understanding Fiction* (Brooks and Warren), *Theory of Literature* (Wellek and Warren), *The Well Wrought Urn* (Brooks), or such theoretically oriented texts like *The Mirror and Lamp* (Abrams), *Language as Gesture* (Blackmur) and *Verbal Icon* (Wimsatt). This study shows that de Manian deconstruction begins with the paradigms of New Criticism in its approach, but concludes in Derridean undecidability.

Paul de Man's theoretical proposition of reading goes against New Critics who conceive a definite meaning in the text which could be grasped by a thorough study. For instance, Brooks and Warren's *Understanding Poetry* shows that there is a fixed methodology of reading which could be applied to any text for arriving on the true meaning. The some of the topics covered in this book— "The Intention of Fiction," "How Plot Reveals," "What Character Reveals," "What Theme Reveals," and "Fiction and Human Experience: How Four Stories Came to Be Written"—reveal that the text has a transcendental meaning which the readers need to explore from the point of the view of purpose, structure, nature, contents, functions, form and style. Similarly, Rene Wellek's *Theory of Literature* focuses on how meaning can be understood in the text by the establishment of evidence, the extrinsic approach and the intrinsic approach to the study of literature. But, the de Manian mode of reading shows the impossibility of arriving on the final meaning due to inherent aporia and *différance* in the text itself. In other words, the text instead of providing simplistic signification of the elements of the text—plot, character, diction, content, style, and the like—resists the very possibility of reading as such.

Rhetoric: Nietzsche in de Man

de Man's views on the mode of reading and understanding of language are influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche. Taking Nietzsche's concept of truth into account, de Man refers that there is no consistent logos in a text which can offer a fixed meaning, and moreover, there is no single event and context more reliable than any other which can be taken as reference to beginning interpretation. Such resistance in a de Manian reading is the Nietzschean critique of truth which focuses on the polysemy of the signifier, and questions the authority of the concept in order to reveal the construction of Metaphysical truth through tropes, rhetorical figures and the like. de Man's deconstruction is a radical Nietzschean critique of determinism offered by linguistic rationalism and Hegelian conceptualism, and follows Nietzsche in its

assertion of the allegories of reading and blindness in insights. Peter V. Zima has rightly remarked that “Paul de Man . . . has developed a deconstructive theory of literature that derives from Nietzsche and questions some basic assumptions of German idealism” (*Deconstruction and Critical Theory* vii). For de Man, an interpretation of the text does not provide any epistemological consistency to the meaning that it brings out, and therefore, no version of interpretation can be taken for semantic finalization.

Before Paul de Man, there are a number of critics and philosophers who have followed Nietzsche in their endeavor of reading the text. Roland Barthes’ emphasis on openness and plural character of the text as propounded in his concept of *texte scriptible* is a paradigmatic shift towards Nietzscheanism and poststructuralism. Barthes’ idea of the “text” not as a meaningful structure of signifieds but as “a galaxy of signifiers” brings him closure to Nietzsche. The Nietzschean turn in Jacques Derrida and deconstruction rejects the very notion of concept “based on the assumptions that all concepts are pseudo-concepts because they depend on rhetorical figures and tropes: on metaphors, metonymies, synecdoches”. Derrida’s never-ending interplay of signifiers puts his theory of deconstruction in an open ended process of meaning. Derrida’s critique of Heidegger and the metaphysical truth is Nietzschean. Derrida’s Nietzschean heritage is explicit in his subversion of binary oppositions, ambivalence, *écriture*, *itérabilité*, *différance*, dissemination, and such other terms. In Nietzsche, the distinction between good and evil is impossible to differentiate: “Is Good not Evil? and is God not a simple invention, a rush of the devil? It is conceivable that in the end everything is false”. Derrida’s strategies in deconstruction of the present meaning, truth and being have a Nietzschean legacy. de Man’s emphasis on undecidability and aporia in language is directly borrowed from Nietzsche and Derrida.

de Man in the forward to his *Blindness and Insight* cautions the reader that this book is no way “the history of criticism” or “a theory of criticism,” rather it is concerned with literary language in general and the modes of writing, which literary texts have in common. However, de Man does not provide any direct theory of language, but his opinions on the complexities of reading reveal his concerns with language. The unreadability of the text is determined by the complexities so intensely rooted in the language. Language is the crucial concern in de Manian version of reading and deconstruction.

de Man, following Nietzsche, considers language replete with rhetoric, tropes and allegories. “What is truth”? asks Nietzsche and himself answers: “A moving army of metaphors, metonymies and anthropomorphism. . . . Truths are illusions whose illusionary nature has been forgotten, metaphors that has been used up and have lost their imprint and that now operate as mere metal, no longer as coins” (cited in *Allegories of Reading* 110-11). This quotation reminds the figurality of all language. Explaining the above quotation, de Man writes that the forgotten aspect in false literalism is “precisely the rhetorical, symbolic quality of all language. The degradation of metaphor into literal meaning is not condemned because it is forgotten of a truth but much rather because it forgets the un-truth, the lie that the metaphor was in the first place” (111). The literary language with its sub-sets like metaphor or metonymy poses the utmost probability of misreading of the text and exhibits the simultaneous presence of the highest blindness at the point of greatest insight. In this sense misreading occurs, or reading is impossible, due the very nature of language. The figural dimension of language destabilizes the foundational meaning of the text and makes references to a chain of signifieds. In other words, the figural and rhetorical language does not allow absolutely fixed and single meaning to the text; so, any reading is provisional and any conclusion is a misreading.

Literary Language and the Rhetoric of Blindness

In the essay “The Rhetoric of Blindness: Jacques Derrida’s Reading of Rousseau” de Man illustrates his notion of critical insight and blindness in relation to Derrida’s *Of Grammatology*. In delineating his own method of reading, de Man shows ambivalence to Derrida’s deconstruction, and discovers the misreading of literary language as most important part of many contemporary critical theories. It makes him to assert that critics (paradoxically) show the greatest blindness at their moments of greatest insight—“critics seem curiously doomed to say something quite different from what they meant to say. Their critical instance ... is defeated by their own critical results. A penetrating but difficult insight into the nature of literary languages ensues. It seems, however, that this insight could only be gained because the critics were in the grip of this peculiar blindness: their language could grope toward a certain degree of insight only because their method remained oblivious to the perception of this insight” (*Blindness and Insight* 105-106). The blindness is embedded in the act of “writing” itself which assumes the broader sense of constructing meaning. The idea of “blindness” and “insight” emerges from the attempts of explicating the text with the sense of an ending coming out of a rightful approach. But, on the contrary, de Man undermines the possibility of reading because it is an act of understanding which cannot be observed, prescribed and/or verified.

Concerned with the notion of blindness and insight, de Man evaluates his own essays on such writers as George Lukacs, Maurice Blanchot, George Poulet and Ludwig Binswanger, and finds a “considerable amount of insight into the distinctive nature of literary language,” but it is not an essential, fundamental and explicit assertion of a knowledge derived from the understanding of literary works. In order to be able to read the text, de Man suggests a Nietzschean paradigm which proceeds without the interference of an interpretation. In this connection, a tentative methodology of the possibility of reading is proposed in *Blindness and Insight* which emphasizes “to read beyond some of the more categorical assertions and balance them against other much more tentative utterances that seem to come close, at times, to being contradictory to these assertions. The contradictions, however, never cancel each other out, nor do they enter into the synthesizing dynamics of a dialectic. No contradiction or dialectical movement could develop because a fundamental difference in the level of explicitness prevented both statements from meeting on a common level of discourse; the one way always lay hidden within the other as the sun lies hidden within a shadow, or truth within error” (102 – 103). The above assertion shows that no interpretation could be perfect and complete, and any claim of the validity of meaning is blindness towards the text’s inexhaustible openness. The critical interpretations of the text could be contradictory to each other, but none of them could be regarded as more valid and “scientific” due to impossibility of verification. In this way, the text cannot be granted a positive existence, instead its mode of being lies in the inscription of meaning through reading and a construction of the sense.

The critical texts are, for de Man, not intrinsically unwavering. It does not have any definite interpretation; they depend on the openness of reading. No two readings of the same book are ever identical. How could one, asks Todorov, write a text that remains faithful to another text and still leaves it untouched? How could one articulate a discourse that remains immanent to another discourse? This leads de Man to claim that “the semantics of interpretation have no epistemological consistency and can therefore not be scientific” (109).

However, instead of dismissing an interpretation as “an arbitrary addition or subtraction” or as “mere error,” he puts forward a new paradigm:

Since they are not scientific, critical text have to be read with the same awareness of ambivalence that is brought to the study of non-critical literary texts, and since the rhetoric of their discourse depends on categorical statements, the discrepancy between meaning and their assertion is a constitutive part of their logic. (110)

It has become clear now that critical texts are equally wavering in its meaning like non-critical texts. But, since they are critical texts, they try to exhibit their “fixities and definitives” in their meaning, but this changeability is what makes a critical text possible.

In the other half of the same chapter, de Man turns towards Derrida, who reinstates “the complexities of reading to the dignities of philosophical question” and makes “his own reading an integral part of a major statement about the nature of language in general” (110). His insights are based on the actual encounter with texts with complete engagement with the complexities involved in such an encounter. He favours Derrida’s reading of individual texts rather than generalization about the reading process from a wide-ranging experience of reading. However, Derrida own method is not devoid of blindness and insight. Blindness and insight are inevitable and unavoidable, and every moment of blindness achieves an insight. This way, to de Man, Derrida’s reading of Rousseau can be used as an “exemplary case of the interaction between critical blindness and critical insight, no longer in the guise of a semiconscious duplicity but a necessity dictated and controlled by the very nature of all critical language” (111). In this way, de Man takes into account Derrida’s deconstruction to his own ‘pre-deconstructive’ study.

de Man asserts that Derrida, in his reading of Rousseau, points out a presence (the voice as the origin of writing) which is undermined by his (Rousseau’s) appeal to a prior moment of authenticity and so implicitly loses its privileged status as a point of origin¹. Any endeavour to trace the origin of written word back to spoken word results in a repetition of the distance between meaning and source which characterizes the absence of writing. This reveals that speech is not the origin of, or more authentic than, writing. However, Rousseau does not make this implicit argument explicit. For de Man, this contradiction is an insinuation of critical blindness. Thus Rousseau’s texts explicate the strongest substantiation in opposition to his ‘logocentric’ doctrine; and, further, “he ‘knew’ in a sense, that his doctrine disguised his insight into something closely resembling its opposite, but he chose to remain blind to his knowledge” (116).

Literary Language as Resistance to Reading

Rhetoric or figurative language makes single, stable, or essential meaning impossible. The term literary in its fullest sense designates “any text that implicitly or explicitly signifies its own rhetorical mode and prefigures its own misunderstanding as the correlative of its rhetorical nature” (*Blindness and Insight* 136). One of the most significant aspects of allegorical negativity is aporia. Like Derrida, de Man considers rhetoric, logic and grammar not simply a different mode of language but elements which generate conflicts, undecidabilities and aporias. The apparent symbiosis between a grammatical and a rhetorical structure, the so-called rhetorical question, engenders two different meanings that are mutually exclusive. The literal meaning of the concept is denied by the figurative meaning. The difficulties in deciding the literal and figurative nature of concept is illustrated by de Man in the following words:

The grammatical model of question becomes rhetorical not when we have, on the one hand, a literal meaning and on the other hand a figural meaning, but when it is impossible to decide by grammatical or other linguistic devices which of the two meanings (that can be entirely incompatible) prevails. Rhetoric radically suspends logic and opens up vertiginous possibilities of referential aberration (*Allegories of Reading* 10).

The rhetorical and figurative potentialities of language are associated with literature by de Man. He pursues the matter of rhetorical question in his analysis of W.B. Yeats' poem, "Among School Children" which ends with the notable stanza:

O chestnut-tree, great-rooted blossomer,
Are you the leaf, the blossom, or the bole?
O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
How can we know the dancer from the dance?

(Cited in *Allegories of Reading* 11).

These lines show an allegory of its own unreadability, undecidability and inherent inconsistencies, particularly in the last verse. The traditional reading of the poem gives emphasis on "a rhetorical device, the potential unity between form and experience, [and] between creator and creation". But de Man takes a different path and asserts that the poem can be read both as rhetorically and literally because 'the two essentially different elements, sign and meaning, so intricately intertwined in the imagined "presence" that the poem address, how can we possibly make the distinction that would shelter us from the error of identifying what cannot be identified?' The problem of undecidability in the stanza poses a difficult situation, as de Man regards, "the figural reading, which assumes rhetorical question, is naïve, whereas the literal reading leads to greater complication of theme and statement". The literal reading shows a kind of urgency from the audience to differentiate between the dancer and the dance: "Please tell me, how *can* I know the dancer from the dance" – to tell them apart.

In addition to the figurative dimension of language, the resistance of reading also emerges from literature's (the text's) own mode of presenting meaning and internal instability, uncertainty, undecidability and unpredictability. The presence of these elements leads to misreading, failure of reading or impossibility of reading. de Man provides two different aspects on reading wherefrom the problems of reading occurs:

First of all, it implies that literature is not a transparent message in which it can be taken for granted that the distinction between the message and the means of communication is clearly established. Second, and more problematically, it implies that the grammatical decoding of a text leaves a residue of indetermination that has to be, but cannot be resolved by grammatical means, however, extensively conceived (*The Resistance to Theory* 15).

"Literature and Language: A Commentary" in *Blindness and Insight* is the most important essay concerned with de Man's question of reading. In this essay de Man promulgates his ideas taking into considerations such various theorists as Michael Riffaterre, Stanley Fish, Seymour Chatman, and George Steiner. He says the popular understanding of literary language in literary criticism is easy to demarcate as metaphor or rhyme but

extremely complicated to formulate a general notion of literary language. A general concern of each essay, to de Man, is a critical reading of previous, supposedly incorrect, theories of literary language, and thus erasing its own concern as example of reading. In consequence, each essay misreads literature by copying or doubling a misreading of someone else. For instance, if Formalism gives its own definition of literary language as a development of New Criticism's description, then Formalism involves a reading of a misreading and so produces another misreading. In order to avoid the misreading by every proposed theory, de Man contemplates over the nature of literary language, and finds that reading itself is an obstacle to literary language. In other words, literature is a problem of reading or more accurately misreading:

The systematic avoidance of the problem of reading, of the interpretive or hermeneutical moment, is a general symptom shared by all method of literary analysis, whether they be structural or thematic, formalist or referential, American or European, apolitical or socially committed (*Blindness and Insight* 282)

de Man is of the opinion that literary language and misreading are interrelated. Literary language is classified on the basis of rhetorical schema. However, it is difficult to maintain a boundary between two different rhetorical tropes. It is not easy to distinguish where one begins and other ends. In other words, the transition from one rhetorical figure to another is fluid. Figurality, thus, is one of the fundamental aspects of determining literary characteristics. In this respect de Man very categorically claims:

... the determining characteristic of literary language is indeed figurality, in somewhat wider sense of rhetoricity, but that, far from constituting an objective basis for literary study, rhetoric implies the persistent threat of misreading (285).

In this way, it incorporates the impossibility of truthful reading in both so-called "literary" and so-called "ordinary" language². The same argument has been embedded in another essay, "Criticism and Crisis," of de Man. He is in favour of multiple interpretations because this will not result in "the fallacy of a finite and single interpretation ... this leads, in turn, to the endless oscillation of an intersubjective demystification" (10).

Rhetoric: Allegory and the Text

According to de Man, reading is the elucidation of figurative language. Since literary and ordinary language do not presume any dissimilarity, de Man reading calls for textuality—the world around us. Figurality is an essential facet not only of literature but also of philosophy, history, film, biography, conversation, art, journalism, advertising and the like. In fact perception itself cannot escape figurality.

Allegories of Reading copiously develops the idea of rhetoric³ slightly dealt in *Blindness and Insight*. It is essentially associated, says de Man with the "problematics of reading". For this promising reason, it leads to "a rhetoric of reading reaching beyond the canonical principal of literary history which will serve ... as the starting point of their own displacement," and consecutively, subverts the "system of tropological transformation in the form of a sustained argument" (*Allegories of Reading* ix). In this way it breakthroughs into deconstruction.

Rhetoric has been used by de Man as an apposite contrivance to explore the function of logocentrism⁴. De Man intends that all language is figural. Therefore, according to de Man, philosophy is figural. This implication deconstructs the dichotomy between philosophy

and literature. The major components of literary aspect, eloquence and style, are an applied form derived from the theory of figures. Actually, “all that is generally called eloquence is figural language”. de Man gives a very cerebral observation on the nature of figurative language:

The trope is not a derived, marginal or aberrant form of language but the linguistic paradigm par excellence. The figurative structure is not one linguistic mode among many others but it characterizes language as such (105).

de Man consents to the Nietzschean notion of rhetoric, that is, it is not just a “technique of eloquence and persuasion”. Some of the figural categories, recognized by de Man, are metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, catachresis, allegory, irony, metalepsis, etc. de Man calls rhetoric a “semiological enigma”. The state of rhetoric, describes as—

The grammatical mode of the question becomes rhetorical not when we have, on the one hand, a literal meaning and on the other hand a figural meaning, but when it is impossible to decide by grammatical or other linguistic devices which of the two meanings (that can be entirely incompatible) prevails. Rhetoric radically suspends the logic and opens up vertiginous possibilities of referential aberration (10).

Aporia: Grammar and Rhetoric

Another method of reading by de Man is “rhetorization of grammar” and “grammatization of rhetoric”. A text is generated out by the conflicting tension resulted from the undecidability of rhetorical action which takes grammar as closed, individual, and deterministic on the one hand, and open field of meaning, on the other. The former results in indetermination and deferred certainty making impossible to choose between two forms of reading, whereas, the latter aspires to find a truth, though by adopting an inappropriate path and a false mode that conceals the error. The problems in constructing meaning through these two aspects are very clearly explained in *The Resistance to Theory*: “Difficulties only occur when it is no longer possible to ignore the epistemological thrust of the rhetorical dimension of discourse, that is, when it is no longer possible to keep it in its place as a mere adjunct, a mere ornament within the semantic function” (14). In this way the rhetorical elements resists the conceptualization. The literariness of the literary text “foregrounds the rhetorical over the grammatical and logical function” (14). Even the functioning of factual discourse is impossible without rhetoric, but rhetoric cannot be lessened to grammar and logic. For “[T]here are elements in all texts that are by no means ungrammatical, but whose semantic function is not grammatically definable, neither in themselves nor in context” (*The Resistance to Theory* 15-16). The Nietzschean rhetorical dimension leads him to go beyond the concerns of New Critics. de Man attempts to foreground the rhetorical mode of reading. Jonathan Culler in *Framing the Sign* writes the impossibility of “escaping from the pitfalls of rhetoric by becoming aware of the rhetorical nature of discourse”. However, it is not completely the rhetorical aspects of the text which problematise the text, instead the text itself is problematical. de Man defines the text as:

the contradictory interference of the grammatical with the figural field emerges in its most syntactic form. ... We call text any entity that can be considered from such a double perspective: as a generative, open-ended, non-referential grammatical system and as a figural system closed off by transcendental signification that subverts the grammatical code to which the text owes its existence. The “definition” of the text also states the impossibility of its existence and prefigures the allegorical narratives of this impossibility (*Allegories of Reading* 270).

Allegory is one of the crucial concerns in de Man's theory of reading. It is the non-Hegelian or even anti-Hegelian category as it challenges Romantic aesthetic illusion of unified work of art, unity of subject and object, and dissolves the Hegelian view of the reconciliation of thought and reality. To de Man, allegory is a critical counter response which "designates primarily distance in relation to its own origin, and, renouncing the nostalgia and desire to coincide, it established its language in the void of this temporal difference. In doing so, the self from an illusory identification with the non-self . . ." (*Blindness and Insight* 207). Since allegory negates the reconciliation of subject and object, it also rejects the elements of aesthetic ideology: the idea of morality, beauty, knowledge, and the like. de Man regards "beautiful" as manifestation of "good" as an aesthetic ideology which is logocentric and dominated by the illusion of unity. The idea of allegory in de Man stands opposite to that of symbol which postulates "the possibility of identity and identification". Describing the function of allegory in de Man, Michael Cebulla writes that in contrast to symbol it resists the illusion of embodiment and reconciliation, and designates the very impossibility of embodiment of its own origin. Allegory, a form of rhetoric, attacks on and is "closely bound up with a political critique of powers vested in aesthetic ideology".

Aporia: Narration and the Text

de Man opines that a narrative is allegorical because it always refers to something else than itself. All narratives are allegories of their own (mis)reading. And then, "Since any narrative is primarily the allegory of its own reading, it is caught in difficult double bind. As long as it treats a theme (the discourse of a subject, the vocation of a writer, the constitution of a consciousness), it will always lead to the confrontation of incompatible meaning, between which it is necessary but impossible to decide in terms of truth and error" (*Allegories of Reading* 76). Nevertheless, following the concept⁵ puts forward in *Blindness and Insight*, the design of narrative built-in in *Allegories of Reading* emphasizes that a narrative will produce not only something that narrative does not say but also something that reader does not mean to say. Therefore, narrative also refers to something other than itself. Since one does not get access to the narrative outside of the reading of it, this reading will be a misreading; and since it refers to other than itself, it will involve a gap between the text and the thing referred to, and make the narrative allegorical. This is not only the nature of narrative, but is a general condition of all language. All narratives resist their own possibility of reading, but all narratives are not the same:

The paradigm of all text consists of a figure (or a system of figures) and its deconstruction. But since this model cannot be closed off by a final reading, it engenders, in its turn, a supplementary figural superposition which narrates the unreadability of the prior narration. As distinguished from primary deconstructive narratives centered on figures and ultimately always on metaphor, we can call such narratives to the second (or the third) degree *allegories*. Allegorical narratives tell the story of the failure to read whereas tropological narratives . . . tell the story of the failure to denominate. The difference is only the difference of degree and the allegory does not erase the figure. Allegories are always allegories of metaphor and, as such, they are always allegories of the impossibility of reading—a sentence in which the genitive "of" has itself to be "read" as a metaphor (*Allegories of Reading* 205).

de Man's rhetorical perspective makes not only literary and philosophical text aporetic, but also considers history, as the essay "Literary History and Literary Modernity" in *Blindness and Insight* shows, governed by competing aporias. If, as the essay shows, literary history is ruled by aporia, the historical science in general becomes self contradictory and

aporetic. The undecidabilities and aporias produced by logic, grammar and rhetoric are responsible for unreadability of texts. “The ambivalence de Man highlights in almost all philosophical and literary works,” writes Zima, “results from an extreme (Nietzschean) ambivalence and are symptoms – as they were in Derrida – of a ‘dialectics without synthesis’ . . .” (*Deconstruction and Critical Theory* 95). The relationship among aporia, rhetoric and ambivalence are explicit from a statement in *Allegories of Reading*: “Tropes are neither true nor false and are both at once”.

With all his critical temper, de Man does not make himself in a safer zone, and as a result following charges have been raised against him by Wlad Godzich. “What is the status of a discourse that questions the status of all discourses? Does de Man escape his blindness? If so, by virtue of what dispensation? If not, where is it located and why is it not fatal? Where does the authority of his discourse come from? Is there more to it than a rhetoric of mastery?” (*Blindness and Insight* xvi). Whatever may the concerns of the above question be, it presupposes that de Man has been read.

Paul de Man asserts that deconstruction is concerned with illogicalities contained in the text, and disregards the problem of meta-language. Such views show, in the words of Zima, that “de Man seems to commit the very Hegelian error he criticizes when he declare that ‘a deconstruction always has for its target to reveal the existence of hidden articulations and fragmentations within assumed monadic totalities’” (*Deconstruction and Critical Theory* 85). de Man’s critique of aesthetic ideology is very similar to Theodor Adorno’s critique of ideology. According to Zima, “Like de Man, who comments on contradictions and aporias of literature as ‘allegory of unreadability’, Adorno attempts to preserve the negativity of art from affirmative thinking and ideological encroachment” (92). de Man emphasis on the unstability of language undermines epistemological position. One of the aspects of language in decoding meaning in the text is concerned with a gap between signifier and its insight. It deconstructs totalization of meaning and methods which was a pertinent focus in New Criticism. The theory of resistance to reading shows an uncompromising property in language which deconstructs the closure of meaning.

Notes

1. de Man has given a very thought provoking commentary on the issue of ‘origin’ and ‘center’ in “Criticism and Crisis”. He affirms, “There are no longer any standpoint that can a priori be considered a privileged, no structure that functions validly as a model for other structures, no postulate of ontological hierarchy that can serve as an organizing principal from which particular structures derive in the manner in which a deity can be said to engender man and the world. All the structures are, in a sense, equally fallacious and are therefore called myths” (*Blindness and Insight* 10).
2. de Man demystifies the existed discrepancy between the privileged status given to literary language and secondary position to everyday language. He writes in “Criticism and Crisis,” “The interpretation of everyday language is a Sisyphean Task, a task without end and without progress ...” (*Blindness and Insight* 11).
3. Here the term rhetoric does not include only rhetorical language, but encompasses figural language and/or so called literary language.
4. Logocentrism presupposes a binary opposition where it gives priority to the first term and conceives the second in relation to the first. It aspires for the authority of presence, and fixed and stable meaning at the center of texts. Logocentrism has been named as metaphysics in philosophy.
5. It refers to the indecisiveness of interpretation and the openness of reading.

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