

**The Derridean Ten Commandments: The Protocols Of
Deconstructive Interpretation In Derrida's Writings**

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Abstract

Paradoxically referring to the Biblical *Ten Commandments*, this paper gives an account for how Derrida, implicitly, deconstructs the canon-centred reading through providing certain protocols of deconstructive interpretation. It aims to appropriate Derrida by arguing that throughout the Derridean oeuvre, ten deconstructive protocols, analogous to the Biblical Ten Commandments, can be elicited to constitute a “force of rupture” that constantly de-territorialises any given context and defies the idea of the self-presence of meaning. These interpretative protocols are always already open and fluid, and any attempt for deciding the meaning will thus become an activity that shows both the possibility and the impossibility of interpretation. Concerned with the predefined limitations of texts, Derrida touches upon several politics of interpretation such as the play of differences, the trace, and the dynamics of intertextuality, the *sous rature*, decentering of the structure, the bricolage, the supplementary, the indeterminate, the disseminal, and the undecidable principles in texts.

Keywords

Derrida, Deconstruction, Interpretation, the Ten Commandments, Protocols, Undecidability.

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الوصايا العشر: بروتوكولات تفسير التفكيكي في كتابات دريدا Derridean و

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ملخص

في مفارقة بلاغية، تقدم هذه الدراسة ربطاً بين "الوصايا العشر" بالكتاب المقدس وفكر جاك دريدا التفكيكي القائم ضمناً على تفكيك القراءة ذات المرجعية الفكرية من خلال عرض بروتوكولات معينة للتأويل التفكيكي؛ ومن ثم فإن الدراسة الحالية تهدف إلى استنباط عشرة بروتوكولات من كتابات دريدا عن التفكيك، مماثلة للوصايا العشر المذكورة في الكتاب المقدس؛ ويمكن لتلك البروتوكولات أن تشكل "قوة هدم" وخلقاً لأي سياق معين وأن تهدم فكرة الحضور الذاتي للمعنى؛ تمتاز هذه البروتوكولات التفسيرية بالمرونة و الانسيابية على الدوام مما يجعل أية محاولة لتحديد المعنى نوعاً من الممارسة التي تفرز أو يستحيل معها الوصول إلى تفسير ما؛ لذا فإن دريدا ومن واقع اهتمامه بالقيود المحددة سلفاً على تفسير النصوص، وضع يده على العديد من طرائق التفسير التفكيكي التي هي بمثابة بروتوكولات مثل اللعب بالعلامات، الأثر، وديناميكيات التناص، واستراتيجية الخضوع للحذف، وخلق البناء، واستراتيجية التجميع، واللاحق، و المراوغة، و التشتت، ومبادئ اللاتقرير في النصوص.

1. Introduction

In the book *Deconstruction in a Nutshell* (1997), Jacques Derrida states that deconstruction is the way through which, he tried to interpret the literary canon. According to him, it “is not a way of commanding, repeating, or conserving this heritage ‘but’ it is an analysis which tries to find out how their thinking works or does not work, to find the tensions, the contradictions, the heterogeneity within their own corpus. What is the law of this self-deconstruction?” (9). Therefore, deconstruction offers unique interpretative protocols of language. Derrida, in *Writing and Difference* (1978) denies the possibility of a transcendental and language free standpoint for human understanding. Thus, the deconstructive interpretation has been widely inspired by “The Nietzschean critique of metaphysics; the critique of the concepts of being and truth”, “The Freudian critique of self-presence; the critique of consciousness,” and “The Heideggerian destruction of metaphysics, of onto-theology, of the determination of being as presence” (280).

2. Discussion

The term “deconstruction” itself is Derrida’s own interpretation of Heidegger’s two words, *Destruktion* and *Abbau*. The first word, in Heidegger’s terms means, “Precisely a de-structuring that dismantles the structural layers in the system.” The other word means “to take apart an edifice in order to see how it is constituted or de-constituted” (Derrida, *The Ear of the Other* 86-87).

Instead, it allows a text to dismantle itself by bringing forth the internal inconsistencies and implicit significance, which lie concealed within the textual network. While sympathetic to the Heideggerian project, Derrida is explicit in isolating his own method from Heidegger’s attempt of escaping onto theology. Therefore, in *The Structuralist Controversy* (1970), Derrida claims that his deconstructive interpretation has nothing to do with destruction. Instead, he states that “it is simply a question of (and this is a necessity of criticism in the classical sense of the word) being alert to the implications, to the historical sedimentations of the language which we use and that is not destruction” (271).

Since there is no presence of pure and intrinsic meaning,

concepts are constituted in a reciprocal determination (Derrida, *Positions* 26). Various oppositions such as perception, speech, writing, and sense have contradictory terms that may have a different stance. The two terms that will be discussed extensively are signifier and the signified. Deconstruction begins at philosophy and later reveals the operations in literary texts. The final objective of deconstruction influences it to cross all oppositions. Oppositions occur in a hierarchy and cannot establish themselves without the counter arbitrary texts (Derrida, *Positions* 41). Derrida feels that exposing and deconstructing oppositions produces meanings and values. In order to come into effect, the deconstruction has to develop new terms that will synthesize opposing concepts (Derrida, *Positions* 42). According to Derrida, the deconstructive interpretation must always aim at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of the language that he uses (*Of Grammatology* 158, 163). This paper identifies Ten Commandments of Derrida that constitute the protocols of deconstructive interpretation of literary texts. These protocols can be described as the “strategies and tactics which highlight potential disruptions *already contained within the text*” (Hepburn, “Derrida and Psychology” 641; *original emphasis*).

3. The Protocols of Deconstructive Interpretation

3.1 First protocol: Question the Metaphysics of Presence

Derrida’s first protocol of deconstructive interpretation is based primarily on questioning “the metaphysics of presence” in structuralism and Freudian psychoanalysis. For Derrida, this ‘presence’ describes a direct relationship between the reflective consciousness of the thinker and the objects of analysis.

This emphasis on presence makes Derrida believe that the history of metaphysics in the West is in reality that of the presence of metaphysics. Pertaining to the meaning of “presence,” M. H. Abrams provides a succinct and useful summary:

By “presence” or in alternative terms, a “transcendental signified” or “ultimate referent,” [Derrida] designates what I call an absolute. Which means that, a foundation outside the play of language itself, which is immediately and simply present to us as something ultimate, terminal, self-certifying, and thus, adequate to “centre” the structure of the linguistic system and to guarantee the

determinate meaning of an utterance within that system. (*Doing Things with Texts* 273)

Therefore, it may be appropriate to suggest that “presence” is similar to or even identical with what Derrida calls the “referent.” That is, the “reality that is metaphysical, historical, psycho biographical, etc.,” or the “signified,” which is “outside the text whose content could take place, could have taken place outside of language, that is to say, outside of writing in general” (*Of Grammatology* 158).

Derrida however, follows the negative characteristic of the sign, “absence,” to its extreme implications through the analysis of difference without positive terms. He states that, “The play of differences supposes in effect, synthesis and referrals, which forbid at any moment, or in any sense, that a simple element be present in and of itself, referring only to itself” (*Positions* 26).

The opening chapter of Derrida’s *Of Grammatology* (1976), identifies phonocentrism with Logocentrism, both of which are inseparable from the metaphysics of presence. Traditionally, as Derrida maintains the metaphysics of presence, phonocentrism and Logocentrism are essentially entwined together to “construct the privileged system of immediate relations between the voice, consciousness, reason, essence, goodness, meaning, and truth” (Harvey 141).

Etymologically, the cognate verb of the word logos is “*legein*” that means “tell” or “say,” and therefore, the logos is also the divine “word.” The logos designates the “cosmic reason which gives order and intelligibility to the world” (Runes 199), as well as the “deconstruct able origin of the meaning of being, the rationality of thought, the absolute interiority of truth” (Lucy 71).

The closeness of the speaker and the listener of an utterance, guarantees the expression and reception of ideas or mental experience. On the contrary, writing has always been condemned for being as the “sign of the sign,” the secondary symbol, which supplements speech (Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy* 24). Written language poses the opportunity for misunderstanding and the possibility of multiple interpretations. It is therefore, “an orphan or a bastard,” as opposed to spoken language, the “legitimate and highborn son of the ‘father of logos’” (Derrida, *Positions* 12). Accordingly, priority and privilege are given to spoken language.

Saussure's theory discusses that "in language there are only differences without positive terms" (Saussure 120), Derrida suggests a similar viewpoint. The initial result from this is that signified concepts are never present on its own (*Margins of Philosophy* 11). This systematic play of differences is termed "différance," a word invented by Derrida. Différance welds together difference and deferment, referring to a configuration of both spatial difference and temporal difference. A signifier is displaced by more signifiers which are different from it, and which are different from one another; in fact, the sign is already distinct from what it intends to represent, that is, the referent, from the beginning.

"Différance" is a Derridean neologism, which in French can mean either "to differ" or "to defer." Norris gives a further explanation noting that "[w]here Derrida breaks new ground, and where the science of grammatology takes its cue, is in the extent to which 'differ' shades into 'defer'" (*Deconstruction, Theory and Practice* 32).

Hence, différance is a concept or a process rather than a term; its notion is against the structuralists' views on the determination of 'meaning.' For Derrida, if a term is fixed within a given explanatory structure, it will deter itself from exploring its further meanings. Arising from Derrida's appropriation of Saussure's concept, all signs have différance, which constitutes them as signs, and that which makes 'presence' possible while at the same time making 'presence' differ from it. Like many other terms Derrida has employed that, différance cannot be defined in an exhaustive and satisfactory way. According to Spivak, Derrida "does not hold on to a single conceptual master word for very long" ("Translator's Preface" lxxi). Besides, to give a fixed and final definition to any term is impossible for Derrida, because a fixed and final definition can take place only in the logocentric tradition. Viewed from the deconstructive perspective, meaning can never be fixed and final; it is always provisional and is always dynamic and against fixation.

Derrida gives an example to demonstrate that "every apparently rigorous and irreducible opposition is thus said to be, at one time or another, a 'theoretical fiction'" (*Speech and Phenomena* 150). Derrida questions Freud's claims that the ego's instinct of self-preservation persuades the reality principle in replacing the pleasure principle, when the latter cannot be realized safely or immediately.

Therefore, the reality principle and the pleasure principle are not mutually exclusive opposites. Derrida concludes, "The one is only the other deferred, the one differing from the other. The one is the other in *différance*; the one is the *différance* from the other" (*Speech and Phenomena* 150).

3.2 Second protocol: Critique the Element and the Trace within

Because the unmediated presence has never been given to both the signifier and the signified, the dividing line between the two thus becomes non-existent. This leads to the second protocol of deconstructive interpretation where Derrida focuses his critique on the "element" itself and the "trace within it." He stresses on a repeated process of criticism and re-inscription of interpretation. It is obvious that one of the main concerns of the Derridean deconstructive interpretation is language. The consulted word instigates more words instead of the word's "meaning" per-se. In Derrida's words, "every signified is also in the position of a signifier" (*Positions* 20). One continues to direct towards more consultation, yet the complete and final meaning of the word can never be attained. In such an endless and sometimes circular process of signification, a signifier can in other words, entail only more signifiers, and the ultimate signified cannot be located for the purpose of definition.

The systematic play of differences is in the Bakhtinian sense of the *chronotope*; namely, the spatial difference (to differ, to be different from) and the temporal difference (to defer, to postpone) at the same time. "It is because of *différance*," Derrida points out, "that the movement of signification is possible" (*Speech and Phenomena* 142). Strictly speaking, the signified of a signifier, seems to have secured, when reading a piece of writing is merely the production of the trace, which is highly charged, yet invisible. The trace is never the meaning per-se of the signifier (Leitch, 1983).

As a linguistic sign is not an autonomous entity, a piece of writing is not a self-sufficient object either, whose reference may initially originate from. One is incapable of comprehending the meaning of a piece of writing when it segregates from other writings. If it is to have any meaning, a piece of writing must be perceived in the specific social or cultural context it resides. As Graham Allen maintains

Whilst formalism seeks to explain the general “literariness” of literary works, and Saussurean linguistics seeks to explain language as a synchronic system, what is missed by both approaches is that language exists in specific social situations and is thus bound up with specific social evaluations. (16)

In brief, Derrida accounts for three aspects of differences as a structure and a movement. First, he considers the play of differences among elements. Second, Derrida reveals that the systematic play of traces of differences within each element also contributes to signification (Anderson 140). Consequently, in any instance of speech or writing, we can never have a fixed and decidable present meaning. The same attitude applies also to the notion of text. “A text,” Derrida explains, “is henceforth no longer a finished corpus of writing, some content enclosed in a book or its margins, but a differential network, a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces” (“Living On/Border Lines” 84). Similarly, Derrida points out what a deconstructive interpretation should produce:

It must always aim at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of the language that he uses. This relationship is not a certain quantitative distribution of shadow and light, of weakness or of force, but a signifying structure that a critical reading should produce (*Of Grammatology* 158).

3.3 Third Protocol: No Text is the Author’s

The Third protocol of deconstructive interpretation is the dynamics of intertextuality. Kristeva originally introduces the term ‘intertextuality’; Kristeva along with theorists as Barthes, Derrida, Foucault, and Lacan, propound new theories in various respects. In Bakhtin’s opinion, one should not interpret a linguistic utterance as if it were confined only to the lexicon or the dictionary. As a result, no word or utterance is genuinely neutral.

According to Bakhtin, in his “The Problem of Speech Genre.” (1986), every utterance, when situated in the specific context, is a response to prior utterances and, at the same time, a stimulus to future utterances. Every utterance is thus “dialogic”; that is, it owes its meaning to some attendant elements and the relation of the previous, as well as the subsequent, utterances to it. As Bakhtin asserts, “the word enters a context from another context, permeated

with the interpretations of others” (201).

In the same vein, Kristeva states that a text is not the production of the author’s original mind; rather, it is the assemblage of materials from other texts. It is more like the product through the process of appropriation of, or compilation from the texts, which have already existed. Both Kristeva and Bakhtin agree that a text is never a static and purely linguistic object. Therefore, a text is always in the condition of production, that is, in the process of being produced. In Kristeva’s phrase, the text is thus, a type of “productivity” (*Desire in Language* 36).

Barthes takes the same track by asserting that the original meaning of the word ‘text’ is “a tissue, a woven fabric.” Such an etymology implies the “stereographic plurality” of the text. A set of relationships with other texts, the text encompasses within it unaccountable references and echoes which may even be mutually incompatible. Therefore, what the reader perceives in the text is “multiple, irreducible, coming from a disconnected, heterogeneous variety of substances and perspectives” (*Image, Music, Text* 159). In Leitch's words, the text, “explodes beyond stable meaning and truth toward the radical and ceaseless play of infinite meanings spread across textual surfaces dissemination” (105).

Derrida’s deconstructive interpretation maintains that no border of reference inside or outside a text should be set up. As Derrida suggests, “no text is saturable anymore. No one inflection enjoys any absolute privilege; no meaning can be fixed or decided upon. No border is guaranteed, inside or out” (“Living On/Border Lines” 78). Later, he rephrases his viewpoint as follows:

This is my starting point: no meaning can be determined out of context, but no context permits saturation. What I am referring to here is not richness of substance, semantic fertility, but rather structure: the structure of the remnant or of iteration. But I have given this structure many other names (81)

Derrida explains that, when asserting that the text has not chances of containment, by boundaries or limits, he is not essentially referring to the “richness of substance” or the “semantic fertility” of the text. Instead, he is talking about the “structure of the remnant or of iteration.” (“Living On/Border Lines” 81)

In *Glas*, Derrida demonstrates how the excess of

intertextuality subverts the referential realm. On each page of *Glas*, there are two columns of prose, set in different sizes of type. The left column is concerned with Hegel, whereas the right column dwells upon Genet. Let into these columns at the side are boldfaced interruptions, some of which are short and some are long. These interruptions resemble footnotes insofar as they relate to the subject matter discussed on the page. However, they are different from regular footnotes at the same time, because they do not essentially refer to any specific word or sentence.

Genet is a literary man renowned for having been a convicted thief early in his life, and theft is fittingly suggestive of intertextuality. In *Glas*, there are numerous quotations, some of which are with quotation marks while the others are not. From the very beginning therefore, the reader of *Glas* is confronted with the difficulty of distinguishing quotations from non-quotations. Since there are so many “stolen things” in *Glas*, Derrida thus announces that *Glas* is “in effect a book on theft,” because “it revolves round property, appropriation, and usurpation” (*Glas* 18). The unmediated presence is impossible; presence always mediates. Neither the signifier nor the text is an autonomous entity.

3.4 Fourth Protocol: Suspend all Concepts and Put Words *sous rature*

The fourth of Derrida’s protocols of deconstructive interpretation is a deliberate suspension of concepts. Following Heidegger’s way to deconstruct philosophical texts, Derrida adopts the same method of Heidegger’s to put words ‘under erasure’. In short, words in the text can be crossed, and thus reminding the reader not to accept them at face value. The method is noted in Derrida’s *Of Grammatology* (1976):

The ‘formal essence’ of the sign can be determined in terms of presence. One cannot get around that response, except by challenging the very form of the question and beginning to think that the sign ~~is~~ that ill-named ~~thing~~, the only one, that escapes the instituting question of philosophy. (18-19)

Language is inaccurate yet indispensable, which is why Derrida sometimes writes a word, crosses it out, and then prints both the word and the deletion. Words, associated with key metaphysical concepts in particular, frequently go “under erasure” (*sous rature*) (Spivak xiv). By writing a word and crossing it out, it means that the

word is inaccurate. However, by typing both word and deletion, it means that the word is necessary and it remains decipherable. These words stay because they are necessary; they get omitted since they are inaccurate. By placing a word “*sous rature*,” Derrida can recognize and question the meaning of the word simultaneously. In Derrida’s assertion,

That mark of deletion is not however, a ‘mere negative symbol,’. Under its strokes the presence of a transcendental signified is effaced while still remaining legible. Is effaced while remaining legible is destroyed while making visible the very idea of the sign. In as much as it de limits onto theology, the metaphysics of presence and logocentrism, this last writing is also the first writing. (Of *Grammatology* 23)

This deconstructive interpretation protocol is particularly interesting. By examining familiar things, the deconstructive interpretation may produce unfamiliar readings of the literary language that may be bent and twisted. Thus, the mark of erasure helps bring a transformation and subversion of the old terms. Moreover, this idea is much similar to the notion of *différance*, which implies meanings should be persistently shaken, and under reinterpretation.

3.5 Fifth Protocol : Dismantle the Hierarchies and Search for the Aporias

The fifth protocol of Derridean deconstructive interpretation is the ‘decentring’ of structure, of “thinking the structurally of structure” (*Writing and Difference* 354). Derrida suggests that there are various drawbacks of establishing a centre in a structure or by referring it to a fixed point of presence. He argues for a thinking of the ‘structurality of structure’ and it is essential for the reader to think that there is no centre. This is so because, if the reader always thinks that there is a centre, he will remain forever trapped in circular logic of a discourse that ceaselessly confirms its truth. Moreover, Derrida states that by assuming that, there is no centre. This means, “a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified, extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely” (*Writing and Difference* 354).

According to Derrida therefore, every text performs on itself

the act of deconstruction. In every text, there are always already the 'aporias' or 'fractures' where the text betrays itself involuntarily or unaware. In Spivak's words, there is constantly the "moment that is undecidable in terms of the text's apparent system of meaning," the "moment in the text that seems to transgress its own system of values" (*Of Grammatology* xlix). This moment is usually unnoticed or deliberately ignored by the critics. Meanwhile, it genuinely threatens to collapse the entire system of signification. Spivak suggests this deconstructive interpretation protocol as follows:

To locate the promising marginal text, to disclose the undecidable moment, to pry it loose with the positive lever of the signifier; to reverse the resident hierarchy, only to displace it; to dismantle in order to reconstitute what is always already inscribed. (lxxvii)

This is also what Derrida means when he explains in *Of Grammatology*, that the deconstructive interpretation must always "aim at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of the language that he uses" (158).

3.6 Sixth Protocol: Every Discourse is Bricoleur

The sixth protocol of deconstructive interpretation is what Derrida (1978) calls language 'bricolage.' According to Derrida (1978), speech is not preferable to writing, since neither of the two are capable of making meaning or the reference fully present. However, Derrida still has to employ words to present his concepts, because there is no escape from language, spoken or written. Derrida terms such an inevitable act of employing language 'bricolage' (1978: 360).

The 'engineer,' in contrast with the 'bricoleur,' is the person who constructs the 'totality of his language, syntax, and lexicon.' In this sense, Derrida, announces, 'the engineer is a myth' (*Writing and Difference* 360). The 'engineer' is the subject that "supposedly would be the absolute origin of his own discourse and supposedly would construct it 'out of nothing'," and thus, the concept of the 'engineer' is a "theological idea" (*Writing and Difference* 360). That is to say, the 'engineer' must invent his/her language, which is essentially novel and alienated from the language we have been employing. In deconstructive interpretation, one cannot decide on

the privileged voice, which is the source of meaning in the text since “there is no last word, no metalanguage or voice of authorial control that would ultimately serve to adjudicate the matter” (Norris, *Derrida* 64). In *Glas*, Derrida demonstrates that both the “author” and the “book” are no longer valid and that any meaning or reference one can locate in the text is only the suspicious composite of the signifiers ceaselessly interacting with one another. Therefore, bricolage opens up a new epoch where one may find ideas such as absence, intertextuality, play, dissemination, and indeterminacy.

3.7 Seventh Protocol: All Signifiers Have Supplementary Characters

The intersection of the above-mentioned Derridean protocols of deconstructive interpretation, results in the seventh protocol, that is, the supplement. Derrida argues that signifiers have a supplementary character in that they are meant to both *add to* and *to replace* some original absence (Hepburn, “Derrida and Psychology” 648). However, since there is no fixed point of reference for a signifier, supplementarity takes on a double meaning in that the supplement “adds only to replace” (*Of Grammatology* 145). Derrida explains that the supplement operates, on the one hand, as a measure of presence, implied by the notion that it is a surplus added to something that is already complete; on the other, it is an indication of a void. The supplement highlights how meaning is always constructed through a play between presence and absence:

As substitute, it is not simply added to the positivity of a presence, it produces no relief, its place is assigned in the structure by the mark of an emptiness. Somewhere, something can be filled up of *itself*, can accomplish itself, only by allowing itself to be filled through sign and proxy. The sign is always the supplement of the thing itself. (*Of Grammatology* 145, original emphasis)

In Derridean deconstructive interpretation, the supplement is used to “[expose] a lack of completeness” (Hepburn, “Derrida and Psychology” 647-648). As a protocol in interpreting texts, Derrida replaces the either/or distinction with his logic of supplementarity that relies on a both/and, neither/nor construction. This allows one to illustrate the supplementary quality of terms that are presented in logocentric thought as fully present and already complete (Hepburn,

“Derrida and Psychology” 648).

Derrida gives a more detailed explication of how supplement by discussing the mime. According to Derrida, when the mime is acted out on stage, reality is already lost. In order to emphasize that the mime is far from mimetic, Derrida reminds us that,

In the beginning of this mime was neither the deed nor the word. It is prescribed to the Mime that he not let anything be prescribed to him but his own writing, that he not reproduce by imitation any action (pragma: affair, thing, act) or any speech (logos: word, voice, discourse). The Mime ought only to write himself on the white page he is; he must himself inscribe himself through gestures and plays of facial expressions. (*Dissemination* 198)

In addition, Derrida provides another fact, which may convincingly prove that the mime cannot be mimetic. The mime that is supplemented is not a self-sufficient entity itself. The presence the supplement offers us is a “chimera” (*Of Grammatology* 154). As Derrida suggests,

The sign, the image, the representation, which come to supplement the absent presence, are the illusions that sidetrack us [.....] The supplement is maddening because it is neither presence nor absence and because it consequently breaches both our pleasure and our virginity (*Of Grammatology* 154).

Leitch also maintains that the supplement lacks “substance and essentiality: it cannot be touched, tasted, heard, smelled, seen or intuited” (174). As Derrida observes, the supplement is ‘exterior, outside of the positivity to which it is super added, alien to that which, in order to be replaced by it, must be other than it’ (*Of Grammatology* 145). Like the desperate ongoing substitution of signifiers and signifieds in the process of signification, the chain of the supplement is endless, and something that is infinitely supplemented, it can never have its complete presence. Thus, Derrida proclaims that another possible name for the logic of supplementarity is *différance* (*Of Grammatology* 150).

3.8 Eighth Protocol: There is no Master Text

The eighth protocol of deconstructive interpretation is the indeterminate location of the author of the literary text. The concept “book” is a unitary, self-enclosed and finite entity, a piece of writing kept within bounds by the author’s “sovereign presence” (Norris,

Derrida 63). In Leitch's words, a book possesses "a title, margins, signature (author), a beginning, an end, overall unity, and limited content" (118). Thus, the notion of 'writing' replaces that of the 'book' as the concept of the 'text' substitutes that of the 'work.' In contrast to the 'book' and the 'work,' 'writing' and the 'text' now open up a new epoch in which such notions as closure, totality, referentiality and authorial intention are all called into question. The author, as the alleged source of a piece of writing, cannot be restored again, and the meaning or reference of a piece of writing becomes indeterminate.

The task of any deconstructive interpretation is to show that there is no master or canonical text that stands firm, guiding by whatever methodological principle gains access to its innermost secrets. Derrida, thus, asserts that deconstructive interpretation of a text "is no longer turned toward the origin," (*Writing and Difference* 370). Rather, it affirms the free play and the plurality and multiplicity of interpretation. Therefore, the deconstructive 'interpretation' that disrupts the structure of the text is in principle labyrinthine, endless, and wayless.

3.9 Ninth protocol: All Texts Have a Disseminal Force

The ninth the protocol of deconstructive interpretation is the multiplicity and dissemination of meanings. The 'text,' when dissociating itself from the 'work' and the 'author,' disseminates several meanings. According to Barthes:

The Text is plural. Which is not simply to say that it has several meanings, but that it accomplishes the very plurality of meaning: an irreducible (and not merely an acceptable) plural. The Text is not a coexistence of meanings but a passage, an overcrossing; thus, it answers not to an interpretation, even a liberal one, but to an explosion, dissemination. (*Image, Music, Text* 159)

When explaining the term 'dissemination,' Derrida points out that it cannot reassemble into a particular definition due to the force of the disruption that explodes from the semantic horizon. This irreducibly marks a generative multiplicity (*Positions* 44-45). Like any other term, 'dissemination' cannot be defined, because the so-called 'meaning' is produced without ever being fixed strictly in a way that a definition is supposed to work. It designates the process of

signification without coming to an end. Thus, Derrida embraces and seeks to encourage the disseminal force of deconstructive interpretation couched both within the initial unravelling of meaning and in subsequent efforts to negate the persistence of instability.

3.10 Tenth protocol: Determine the Undecidable and the Free play

The tenth protocol of deconstructive interpretation is what Derrida maintains as the un-decidability and fluidity in meanings. The undecidable is an interpretive protocol to disrupt the logocentric claims to fixed meaning made by texts. It focuses on disrupting the taken-for-granted stories or metanarratives of fundamental truth created and recreated in texts (Hepburn, "Modernity and the Politics of Feminist Psychology" n.p.). It necessitates the methodological protocol of undertaking a critical interpretation of the text, for what it says, does not say, marginalizes and what are revealed when it is contextualized.

The subversive potential of Derrida's undecidables of language lies in the manner in which they defy binary logic. Undecidables are fusions that disrupt binary oppositions through inhabiting both sides of the opposition; in that manner, "it is not just the binaries themselves that are undermined but the logic on which they are based" (Jagger 195). Collins offers the zombie as an example of Derrida's undecidables, in that the zombie is neither alive nor truly dead – it functions as an undecidable in that it slips across both sides of binaries, such as presence/absence, life/death and good/evil, without properly fitting either (*Introducing Derrida* 19-23). According to Derrida, the "undecidables" are unities of simulacrum, 'false' verbal properties (nominal or semantic) that can no longer be included within philosophical (binary) opposition, resisting and disorganizing it, without ever constituting a third term, without ever leaving room for a solution in the form of speculative dialectics (*Positions* 42-43).

It is obvious, then, that the undecidable is both present and absent simultaneously. For Derrida, all texts go beyond the original meaning expressed by the author. In this way, any process of writing uncovers the repressed and violates the existing binary oppositions determining the intention of the author. In this light, the field of undecidability constitutes the very core of the text, and it

reconfigures the text in each and every attempt of rewriting any notion. As a result, we do not have any level of assumed purity of the original term. Within this process, origins remain open to their outside context, which is underscored by a deconstructive interpretation.

In light of the deconstructive Interpretation, Derrida distinguishes between undecidability and indeterminacy. In the words of Derrida, the undecidables at once inhabit both terms of an opposition while at the same time also confuse them, through being both interior and exterior to the opposition (Jagger 195). The undecidables is “not merely the oscillation between two significations or two contradictory and very determinate rules” or “the tension between two decisions”. However, “it is the experience of that which, though heterogeneous, foreign to the order of the calculable and the rule, is still obliged ... to give itself up to the impossible decision, while taking account of law and rules” (“Force of Law” 24).

In this regard, Derrida uses the word ‘freeplay’ in the meaning of undecidability, and he continues to say that the “concept of undecidability, and thus free-play, refers to a determinate openness. It refers to the structurality of the structure, to the field of discursivity which makes possible the formation of metaphysical hierarchies of minor structures in terms of concrete discourses” (*Writing and Difference* 155). Derrida’s undecidables, thus, provide valuable tools with which to interrogate the production and regulation of borders in gendered and generic identities, particularly where these borders are blurred.

4. Conclusion

Summing up, the deconstructive interpretation of any literary text establishes on certain protocols or strategies, used by the deconstructive critic. This paper maps out ten protocols used by the deconstructive critics to interpret a literary text. Paradoxically and deconstructively, these protocols are given the theological name 'The Ten Commandments.' The deconstructive meaning of a linguistic sign is never present in and of itself. Therefore, the world can never be present to a persona that it truly and purely is. As the linguistic sign acquires its value through continuous substitution and association, one's knowledge of the world is equally the product of the indefinite process of differentiation. The condition of unmediated presence, or the point of origin, is nothing more than some illusion. Shedding light in this view of deconstruction, the linguistic sign marks the absence, rather than the presence, of the 'thing itself' or the referent, to which the readers entangle in the endless jar of interpretation. As stated, there is only interpretation. The ultimate truth is not what can be located in the text, where there is only a combination of signifiers. Since language is the path of thinking, and since these paths differ to different people, readers, when pondering on the same linguistic sign, we led to different areas of association and substitution. When confronted with the same word in a text, various readers have their own set of possible alternatives, though they may not be aware of such a fact. Every interpretation of the text is thus dependent upon the logic of supplementarity or différance. In other words, the alleged truth one appears to have disclosed in a text is in fact the production of several crucial elements not present in the text.

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