

## DECONSTRUCTIVE STUDY OF *JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK* BY SEAN O' CASEY

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### Abstract

*Literary works lead to various interpretations as the language carrying the meaning is characteristically unstable and uncertain. The present study aims to explicate the instability and uncertainty of language in the play Juno and the Paycock written by Sean O'Casey. The study is qualitative in nature as the analysis involves the subjective interpretations of the text. The analysis of the purposively selected text has been carried out by applying Derrida's concept of deconstruction. The findings of the study reveal that the text of the play contains paradoxes and contradictions. Furthermore, the results depict that Casey utilizes the techniques of shifts and breaks of time and tone in developing the plot of the play. In addition to that, the absences and omissions are also found in the text of the play. The findings of the study also suggest that there are instances of linguistic quirks and aporia in the text that question the credulity of the language itself. The significance of the study lies in the fact that it is helpful in drawing various interpretations of the text of the play Juno and the Paycock. Therefore, it is helpful for the readers, students of literature, and the teachers of the literature. Furthermore, the study is helpful for the researchers who are interested in applying the concept of deconstruction, an aspect of post-structuralism, to analyse the literary writings.*

**Keyword:** *instability and uncertainty of language, deconstruction, Juno and Paycock, Sean O' Casey, post-structuralism*

### Introduction

Jacques Derrida is known as the father of Deconstruction and his theory is aligned with Post-Structuralism. His theory was heralded by Saussure's concept of signifier and signified but he broadened this concept. Derrida was influenced from Nietzsche's philosophy i.e. *Death of God* and Roland Barthes' essay *Death of the Author*. Barthes' essay is an indication towards readers' role in literature as he insists that: "The reader should not be left with more than the poor freedom either accept or reject the text" (cf.Barbar:1984:50).

Derrida opposes and challenges the concept of Logocentrism. He rejects any conventional authority over text. According to Derrida: "There is nothing outside the text"(136). This idea was also presented by Barbar as thus: "The barriers are drawn not only between one literary work and another but between one literary work and everything outside of it.(504)." Deconstruction aimed that authority should be given to the text to decide the meanings. For Derrida, "Text is unstable" so the meanings derived from the text are also changeable. Therefore, the focus should be on understanding the internal meanings of the text.

Deconstruction talks about ambiguities of meaning, undecidability and complexity of text and that the text does not have any conventional sense of world. According to Deconstruction, the text should be studied in view of signs in it and then examine the society from which the writer has drawn the meanings.

The present study aims to analyse the text of the play *Juno and the Paycock* by Sean O' Casey, an Irish dramatist. The deconstructive analysis of the text has been provided to highlight the instabilities of language, and to provide the various interpretations of the text.

### Problem statement

The literary writings mostly do not have the single interpretation because the explicit meanings can be different from implicit meanings. Therefore, it is required to deconstruct the text of the literary works to find out the faults, imbalances, and instabilities of language. The present

study, therefore, focused on deconstructionist analysis of *Juno and the Paycock* by Sean O' Casey.

### Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the present study are as under:

1. To find binary oppositions present in the text of *Juno and the Paycock*
2. To find paradoxes and contradictions in *Juno and the Paycock*
3. To find shifts and Breaks
4. To Find linguistic quirks and aporia

### Research Questions

The present study answers the following questions:

1. How binary oppositions are used in text of the play?
2. How the paradoxes and contradictions are at work in the text of the play?
3. How shifts and breaks are represented in the text of the play?
4. How does the text of the play depict linguistic quirks and aporia?

### Significance of the Study

The significance of the study lies in the fact that it provides wider interpretations of the text of the play *Juno and the Paycock* by Sean O' Casey for the readers. The study is helpful for the students as it helps them understand the play from various angles by deconstructing the text. Furthermore, it is significantly supportive for the teachers in teaching the text to the students. In addition, the study is helpful for the researchers interested in applying Derrida's concept of deconstruction on literary writings.

### Literature Review

Deconstruction is basically a reference to methods and approaches to understand the relation between text and meaning. The concept of deconstruction was first derived by Jacques Derrida in his book *Of Grammatology*. Derrida tried to elaborate deconstruction to others most notably the *Letter to a Japanese Friend*, it is possible to provide basic elaboration to understand deconstruction. According to Paul Ricoeur, deconstruction is a way of uncovering the questions behind a text or tradition. Barbara Johnson says that, deconstruction and destruction are not synonymous, in her book *The Critical Difference (1981)*. Deconstruction, as a technique for literary interpretation, has been used by various scholars to draw interpretations of literary works. Some of the applications of deconstruction in interpretations of literary writings of various genres of literature which were helpful in conducting this research have been reviewed here.

Hafsah (2009) carried out the deconstructive analysis of a short story *I want My Son To Become a Murderer*. She tried to understand the logical and rhetorical imbalances in explicitly written text and the implicitly hidden meanings in the text. The results of the study revealed the opposition between the title of the story and the story itself, story and the footnote, fiction and fact, and the opposition between reader and author. Similarly, Hamid and Farnoush (2012) analysed the two short stories of Najdi, a Persian writer. The stories which were analysed include *Asb-rizi* and *The Night of Killing Sohrab*. The results of the study suspected the axiomatic beliefs of the time. The results also revealed that the stories contained binary oppositions of 'man and animal', 'man and nature', 'man and civilization', and 'harsh patriarchal world and innocent childish world'

or inexperience and experience'. In another study, a deconstructive analysis of the short story *Saleema* by Daniyal Mueenuddin was carried out by Tanvir and Amir (2017). They aimed to dismantle the feminist aspects of the short story. Through deconstructive analysis of the text of the short story, they interpreted the power imbalances existing in the patriarchal context of Pakistani society. The results of the study showed that the female protagonist of the short story named Saleema was not as much weak as she was considered.

The research has also been carried out aiming to deconstruct the text of novels. For example, Shah and Abahussain (2019) conducted a research aiming to deconstruct *Lord of the Flies* by Golding. Furthermore, Qin (2018) analysed *The Great Gatsby* from the perspective of deconstruction. The study aimed to subvert the logo-centrism present in the text by analysing the binary oppositions of 'dream and reality' and 'past and present' existing in the text. Though the analysis also incorporates the application of Lacanian concepts to the notions of dream and reality, this study was useful in understanding the application of deconstruction in analysis of literary writings.

The deconstructive studies of poems have also been carried out by the researchers. Al- Jumaily (2017) studied the poem *The Road not Taken* by Robert Frost from the perspective of deconstruction. The results of the deconstructive analysis of the poem depicted that the text was full of interpretations which were clustered around the oppositions and the differences. Furthermore, Almasalmeh (2014) carried out deconstructive analysis of *Sailing to Byzantium* and *London*, two poems written by William Butler Yeats and William Blake respectively. The results of the deconstructive study of the two poems revealed the instability of the language in embodying meaning as the texts of the poems depicted various interpretations of the meanings. The deconstructive studies of Plays have also been carried out. Akhtar (2016) studied *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett from the perspective of deconstruction. The study tried to find out the depiction of western traditions. The results of the deconstructive analysis of the play showed the stumbling aporic blocks of preventions of the centralized structures in the minds of the characters portrayed in the play. Furthermore, Nesari et al. (2011) analysed the play *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, written by Luigi Pirandello. The results of the study highlighted the paradoxes, contradictions, oppositions, aporia and dissenting voices present in the play.

Sohaib Malkawi (2019) carried out a research on *The Darling Men of Sean O'Casey's Juno and the Paycock: An Early Post modern Representation of Masculinity.*(June,2019). He examines postmodern deconstruction of gender as a repetitive pattern of behaviours. His study reveals the deconstruction of gender roles in Postmodernism. The result of the study anticipates the deconstruction of traditional gender roles and identities in the play *Juno and the Paycock* (1924). Moreover, Sally Seifert (2015) in her research tried to find out *Expressionism in Sean O'Casey's Juno and the Paycock.* (2015). Her study reveals that she tried to understand that Irish history was formative to the author Sean O'Casey and he was concerned with the Irish war of Independence, Civil War of Ireland, World war one etc. Furthermore, Claudia Parra has recently carried out a research on *Sean O'Casey's Feminist vein: Empowered Female Representation in Juno and the Paycock.*(2020). The study tried to reveal the portrayal of women in the play. The female characters of O'Casey challenge the conservative and oppressive gender presumptions. The study demonstrates that the play confers pertinent portrayal to those marginalised women.

The focus of the research has been on deconstruction of the short stories, novels, and poems. Comparative to other genres of literature, the deconstructive studies on plays are less in number. No study aiming at deconstructive analysis of the play written by Sean O'Casey, an Irish dramatist, has been carried out. This indicates that there exists a gap, and study can be carried out in order to explicate the deconstructive aspects of the play as it would provide insightful interpretations of the text by elaborating the instabilities and uncertainties of

language in the form of oppositions, paradoxes, aporia, linguistic quirks and contradictions. Therefore, the present study aims to carry out deconstructive analysis of the play 'Juno and Paycock' by Sean O' Casey.

### **Methodology**

#### **Overall Methodological Approach**

The study is qualitative in nature as it involves the subjective interpretations of the text from the perspective of Derrida's concept of deconstruction.

#### **Sampling and Data Collection**

As the research is text-based, the data of the research is the text of the play *Juno and the Paycock*. The technique of 'purposive sampling' was adopted to select the data. Purposive sampling is a sub-technique of non-random sampling. The data supporting the research or representing certain features of deconstruction was purposively selected.

#### **Framework**

The data was analysed from the perspective of Derrida's Deconstruction.

#### **Deconstruction**

The text of the play *Juno and the Paycock* was analysed to find out the following features in the text:

**Contradiction and Paradoxes:** A paradox is a self contradictory statement that leads to unexpected conclusion or the statement containing logical connection which leads to illogical conclusions. Contradiction is same as paradox, it is a conflicting element within a system or sentence.

1. **Shifts and Breaks in time, tone, point of view, attitude, and tense:** The shift in time refers, for example, text's shift from present to past or past to present. The shift in tone basically refers to mode of the text which for instance shift from happy to sad. Similarly shift and break in point of view refers to change in ones ideas about something within the text. The shift and break in attitude can be seen as shift in characters' behavior for example from good to bad or bad to good. Lastly, shift in tense means at first the text has been written in past tense but then it shifts towards present tense.

2. **Conflicts:** A conflict can be a clash or disagreement between ideas.

3. **Absences and omissions:** Absences basically refer to state where something which should be present is absent like details or information about an event or a person. While, Omission is something which has consciously or unconsciously been omitted.

4. **Linguistic quirks and Aporia:** Linguistic quirks are oddities of language use. On the other hand, Aporia calls the credibility of the language into question. It refers to the language that arouse doubts in the mind.

The aim of finding out these characteristics was to judge the effect of textual disunity in the text. These features were analysed in the following three stages.

#### **Verbal stage**

This stage involved the analysis of contradictions and paradoxes at individual levels (phrases, sentences, or dialogues).

#### **Textual stage**

This stage focused beyond the individual phrases and sentences and involved the analysis of overall view represented in the play. This was done by finding out the breaks and shifts existing in the play. The omission and absences were also analysed at this level.

#### **Linguistic Stage**

At this stage of the analysis, the worthiness of the language itself was called into question. This was done by finding out the refutations, linguistic quirks, and aporia.

#### **Analysis and Findings**

The deconstructive analysis of the play *Juno and the Paycock* was carried out at three levels. The levels have been given below:

1. Verbal stage
2. Textual stage
3. Linguistic stage

### Verbal Stage

The verbal stage involved the analysis of paradoxes and contradiction present in the play. A paradox is a self-contradictory statement that leads to unexpected conclusion or the statement containing apparently logical connections but leads to illogical conclusions. At this stage of analysis, the contradictions at the individual level (phrases or sentences) were analysed. The examples from the text of the play have been given below:

*“Didn’t they say that hell wasn’t hot enough nor eternity long enough to punish the Fenians?”*

This was the dialogue spoken by Mr. Boyle to Joxer, his friend. The point here is that nothing could be hotter than hell. Similarly, eternity is never ending time period and the statement contains paradoxical elements. These paradoxes are sentence level.

When Mr. Boyle says, *“Ah, I’m not too well at all; I suffer terrible with pains in my legs”* (Act 1) another contradiction can be seen. The use of too well suggests that there must be something or some activity or anything that has some connection with too well as in case of “too well to do that” etc.

### Textual stage

At this stage, the analysis of shifts and breaks in the time and tone were evident in the play. Similarly, the omissions and absences were present in the play. These have separately been explained with examples from the play.

### Shifts and Breaks

The shifts and breaks in the time and tone of the play is significant. The play starts with different tone. The first act contains the information about the character and introduces the plot. As the second act starts, there is marked difference in the tone of the play. There is excitement, artificiality, and ornamental touch to everything in the second play as the family is expecting a good some of money in inheritance to a diseased relative. The time is the significant factor that is leading to the change of the tone in the play. The third or the last act of the play contains melancholic touch. The examples of the shift of the tone from the second act to the third act have been given below:

*“The same, but the furniture is more plentiful, and of a vulgar nature. A glaringly upholstered armchair and longue; cheap pictures and photos everywhere. Every available spot is ornamented with huge vases filled with artificial flowers....”* (Act 2)

*“Come on, come on ; that doesn’t matter; I’m master now, I’m goin’ to remain master”* (Act 2)

The first example is the description note given at the start of the second act. While, the second one is the dialogue spoken by Mr Boyle to Joxer. Mr. Boyle is talking to Mr. Joxer who is not believing him to have the command on the matters and is afraid of his wife, Juno.

In the first act, Mr. Boyle is always afraid of his wife and cannot even have a cup of tea or drink with his friend, Mr. Joxer.

As soon as the third act starts, the tone of the play again changes. The examples of the shift can be seen in the description provided at the third act of the play.

*“ Mary dressed to go out, is sitting on a chair by the fire, leaning forward, her hands under the chin, her elbows on her knees. A look of dejection, mingled with uncertain anxiety, is on her face. A lamp, turned low, is lighting on the table. The votive light under the picture of the virgin gleams more redly than ever. Mrs. Boyle is putting on her hat and coat. It is two months later.”*

It is evident from the lines that after the passage of the two months, the two months which were spent with vigour and hope of money and Bentham marrying Mary, the excitement and vigour had now turned into sadness, anxiety, and depressed feelings.

In another instance Marry says, “*(Tonelessly) not even a line mother*” (Act 3)

Similarly, When Joxer says, “*Did you ever do anythin’ else! Sure, you can’t believe a word that comes out o’ your mouth*” (Act 3) the shift can be seen. Joxer is the character that is seen supporting Mr. Boyle in previous two acts and now he is not agreeing with his friend Mr. Boyle. The optimism and hope of Mrs. Boyle witnessed in second act of the play is vanished in the third act and is replaced with anxiety as evident in her dialogue:

“*Are you blind, man, that you can’t see that it was Bentham that has done this wrong to her?*” (ACT 3)

Besides that, the shift of time can be seen within the single acts. For example, the kind of character of Mr. Boyle, when he was captain, is different as he is now. Now and then, he goes back to the past to relive those moments. For instance, he says “*Them were the days, them were the days*” (Act 1)

In addition to shifts and breaks in time and tone, the absences and omissions were also found. There are references to this events taking place country now and then, but the explanation is missing. Similarly, the information about the kind of work Mr. Boyle used to do in the past has not sufficiently been given. The absence of many other things is evident in the text of the play. The omissions are also found in the text of the play. The examples of the omissions found in the text of the play are evident in the following examples:

“*Ah, a cup o’ tay’s darlin’ thing a daaarlin’ thing- the cup that cheers but doesn’t...*” (Act 1)

“*Ah, I’m not too well at all; I suffer terrible with pains in my legs. Juno can tell you there what...*” (Act 1)

### Linguistic Stage

At this stage of the analysis, linguistic quirks and aporia present in the text of the play *Juno and the Paycock* were analysed. Linguistic quirks are oddities of language use. In case of this play, linguistic quirks are present in plenty. The way almost every character uses the language is odd. Although O’ Casey has depicted a specific dialect of the language, still at certain places the use of language by the characters of the play is odd one. Some of the example of the linguistic quirks present in the text of the play have been given below:

“*Them were days, them were the days, when the win blowed and blowed*” (Act 1)

The right word is not blowed but Mr. Boyle uses this word when talks about his good old days when he use to sail as captain to Mr. Joxer, his friend.

“*Ah, a cup o’ tay’s darlin’ thing a daaarlin’ thing- the cup that cheers but doesn’t...*” (Act 1)

In this example, it can be seen that the use of tay instead of tea and the use extending ‘a’ sound in case of ‘daaarlin’ is also the example of linguistic quirk or these words have used oddly.

There are places where Mr. Boyle claims so many things which he does not do. For example, he says “*Let her hop in; we may as well have it out first as at last. I’ve made up me mind-I’m not goin’ to do only what she damn well likes*” (Act 1)

In this scene, Mr. Boyle is talking to his friend Mr. Joxer and says that he is going to confront Juno to demand for his right of freedom. On the contrary, it is seen that he does not do anything when Juno actually arrives. Rather, he subdues and goes on backfoot. Apart from the linguistic quirks, aporia is a feature that calls the credibility of the language into question. Aporia is the figure or speech that refers to the language that arouses doubt in the mind of hearer or the reader. The use of rhetorical questions, at certain occasions, can be seen working as aporia. Furthermore, when the two side of one issue have been dealt in the text and no clear stance has been adopted, the doubt arises in the mind of the reader or hear. Such use of language can also be termed as aporia. There are instances in the text of the play that contain the use or aporia. Some of the examples of aporia from the text of the play have been given below:

“*Ah’ then, I’d have another look, an’ I’d ass meself- what is the moon?*” (Act 1)

“*She has her rights-there’s no one denyin’ it, but haven’t I me rights too?*” (Act 1)

## Conclusion

This study was conducted to explore the instabilities and uncertainties of language in the play *Juno and the Paycock*. The deconstructive study of the text of the play focused on explicating that how the instabilities of language lead towards various interpretations of the text. Derrida's concept of deconstruction was applied to analyse the text of the play. It was revealed in the deconstructionist analysis of the text that the play contains paradoxes and contradictions, omissions and absences, and Linguistics quirks and aporia. On the basis of the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that the language of the play is questionable as it does not convey single meaning. It means that one can draw various meanings based on interpretations of contradictions and paradoxes, shifts and breaks witnessed in time and tone to develop the plot of the play accordingly, and the linguistic quirks and aporia.

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