

## Schleiermacher's Hermeneutics and John Keats' Poetry

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### 1. Introduction

Friedrich Schleiermacher was the first philosopher to propose the general Theory of Interpretation. He maintained that hermeneutics exists in two forms: One is the *grammatical interpretation* which is concerned with language and semantics of a text; the other one is the *technical interpretation* which steps beyond language and analyzes the mindset of the writer. In his later works, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1977, p. 36) emphasizes on "the technical interpretation or the style of predictive hermeneutics". As mentioned before, hermeneutics deals with the interpretation of language and human interactions and achievements and therefore it is closely connected with linguistics and Speech Act Theory. This is because utterances provoke certain actions in the audience both at the time and after articulation so that the hidden message of the utterance is revealed in the utterance or the text. Hence any delay, hesitation or postponement in grasping the new concepts is an attribution of the Derridean theory of *différance*. This postmodern perspective is discernable in the poetry of Keats, the 19<sup>th</sup> century English Romantic poet. Thus, the present article is an attempt to illustrate how hermeneutics, *différance*, and Speech Act Theory are related and how they are represented in Keats' poetry.

### 2. Methodology and Critical Approach

When an utterance is articulated or words are inscribed on a surface, three acts are carried out simultaneously. Locutionary act which is the primary act of every utterance and is defined as "the utterance on the plane of lexicon, syntax, syntagm, and phonology" (Yule, 2000, p. 48). The interlocutor act, by making an utterance, has an intent which is mostly not compatible with the locutionary act and is beyond the linguistic form. This, in fact, is the hidden message of which the utterance is only a clue or a beginning to reach that illocution-zed act. This kind of speech act is named the illocutionary act (Yule, 2000). In addition to the illocutionary act meant by the interlocutor or the writer, there is a third act which is called perlocutionary act. In this act, in addition to the above acts, the interlocutor is also trying to use rhetorical, psychological, structural, etc. means to somehow make the

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correct utterance and have the ultimate effect on the addressee (Yule, 2000). This is the act which Fairclough(2010, p. 75) refers to as "genre-discourse-style".

It seems that the Speech Act Theory is comparable with Jacques Derrida's notion of différance. Différance means both to differ and to defer because it results in the modification of the existing concepts and understanding new concepts with some delay in a reader. Therefore, "the reader is obliged to consider the new concepts differently" (Shkolovsky, 1917, p. 209). This tendency will pave the way for the new concepts which are born with some delay. These new concepts are different from the old notions (to differ) so the reader or the observer is challenged through the delay in his understanding. S/he conquers this challenge and after a while succeeds in gaining the new concepts. Thus, defamiliarization and différance are moving along the same line. Hence, the present study aspires to show how John Keats has applied this technique in his poetry.

### 3. Findings and Discussion

One of the outstanding peculiarities of John Keats as a poet is his sensitivity to beauty and the principles of aesthetics. He was rejoiced by beauty, and in an aesthetic manifestation he was in search of delicacy and power from where his poetic inspiration originated; this sensibility would grant him such a magical power which makes readers to share with him such an ecstasy. The purity of the colors he uses reminds us of painters. His poetry enjoys a richness which is full of energy and freshness. He revives old words in order to coin them anew and generate new styles. His poem *Endymion* is a labyrinth of flowers after no certain purpose (Rollins, 1958)

In his *Ode to Psyche*, Psyche is punished by Venus because of her violations against Cupid; but, after showing her good intentions and having served her punishment she is forgiven by the goddess of beauty and attains the stages of immortality. In fact, Keats demonstrates his hidden desire for immortality in the form of the marriage between Cupid and Psyche. This tendency toward the immortality is further seen in Keats' other poem entitled, *Ode to a Nightingale*. Keats, in *Ode to a Nightingale*, which has an interesting theme, has tried to address the difference between reality and imagination and imply pain and joy.

### 4. Results

Schleiermacher has considered it as a personal responsibility to mediate between the internal nature of the philosophy of sublime and the external nature of the positivistic and scientific method. His presumption is that there is a difference between the inner essence and the ideal and the external representations. Therefore, text cannot be taken as the representation of the inner thought, but, it should be considered as something which yields to the experiential requirements of language and, in this way, invites the reader to freely struggle to recognize and conceive the

concepts. This is the very free play of language which refers to the metaphysics of presence - a concept which gives its place to a new one by defamiliarizing the older concept, and in this way creates new concepts. Therefore, it can be inferred that defamiliarization provides the grounds for the new and different concepts. These differences create *différance* and the reader is made to attain a new and different concept by some contemplation. The purpose of the hermeneutics is the reconstruction of the mental act of the writer. Yet, this presupposition is quite dubious since the understanding of the text is not only viable through an obscure mental act, but also by referring to the theme and the background which refers to that text.

**Key Words:** Keats, *Différance*, Opposition, Being, Existence.

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