

Reconstructing the Vision of Reality: Analysing Becky Chambers' *A Psalm for Wild-Built*

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ABSTRACT

Becky Chambers' *A Psalm for Wild-built* talks through the lenses of human Dex and robot Mosschap, discussing the repercussions that happened in the world where they lead their livelihood. Deconstructivism is a postmodern literary movement emphasising language and meaning, fragmentation and instability. This article makes the case that deconstructivism is an effective technique for examining intricate and nuanced literary themes by carefully examining the text and taking into account pertinent literary theories. This article highlights the interconnectedness of all beings while attempting to highlight the difficulties the author encountered when addressing the ideas and concepts of conventional narratives about the relationship between humans and nature. This research article also uncovers the conventional ideas of these concepts, showing non-human characters as completely realized people with their possessed considerations and feelings. The novella further bridges the communication gap between the human and nonhuman entities. The article entitled "Reconstructing the Vision of Reality: Analysing Becky Chambers' *A Psalm for the Wild-Built*," tries to decode the aspects of the future in connection with the current scientific development and the civility of nonhuman character. It also highlights the concern of character towards the position of holding the power.

Introduction:

Becky Chambers' *A Psalm for the Wild-Built*, is a science fiction novella, explores and addresses the issues of environmentalism, spirituality, and social justice. The study "Reconstructing the Vision of Reality: Analysing Becky Chambers' *A Psalm for the Wild-Built*" analyses the novella and considers the significance of consciousness, individuality, and the reconstruction of the vision between human and non-human species in an effort to unearth and decipher the hidden truth. The protagonists of the novella are a robot named Mosschap and a tea monk named Dex who are searching for a wilderness. Dex comes across a range of people and environments on his quest for wilderness that contradict his views on the coexistence of humans and the natural world. It highlights how interconnected all beings are while subverting the conventional narrative.

The Deconstructivism literary movement emerged in the late twentieth century as part of the postmodern era. Its proponents hold that language and meaning are inherently unstable and

fragmented. They also contend that conventional narratives can be restrictive and oppressive. As such, Deconstructivists emphasize the necessity of challenging and destabilizing dominant narratives to expose underlying power dynamics. This research article analyses the use of Deconstructivism in the novella, exploring the implications of this literary technique for literary criticism and the wider cultural landscape.

Literature Review:

In the book *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (1982), Jonathan Culler defines as it “destabilizes language and concepts, shows the way they generate multiple meanings, and reveals how meaning is always deferred and never fixed” (129). Its way of analysing and destabilizing the underlying contradiction of dominant narratives in literature.

Science fiction use deconstructivism as a technique to challenge the traditional narratives about the relationship between humans and their environment. Timothy Morton, in the book *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (2007), argues that science fiction offers a way to envision creative probabilities about humans as well as nature. According to Morton, Science Fiction “invites us to imagine what it would be like to live in an environment that has not yet existed, or to encounter beings that have not yet been encountered” (27).

Nicole Shukin's *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times* (2009) also tackles deconstructivism in its way of analysing animal representations in contemporary culture. He argues that depictions of animals in the media and popular culture are shaped by biopolitics, which employs animals as a means of empowering dominant power structures. It offers a way to disrupt these power structures and introduce unique ways of representing animals.

Nature - Human Relationship:

In Becky Chambers' *A Psalm for the Wild-Built*, tackles deconstructivism by exploring man's relationship with nature and spirituality. The novella challenges traditional narratives about the environment and presents a different way of thinking about the relationship between humans and non-human beings. One of the key ways Chambers subverts traditional narratives about nature is through the character of Dex, a tea monk who gives up a life of service to travel the natural world in search of answers. Dex's journey is motivated not by a desire for power or control of nature, but by genuine curiosity and respect for the environment. Realizing that his previous way of life has disconnected him from the natural world, he seeks to reconnect with it.

Chambers also challenges the idea that nature exists solely for the benefit of humans. Through the character of Mosschap, a member of a society living in harmony with nature, the novella presents a different way of thinking about the relationship between humans and nature. Mosschap explains that their society sees the environment as a 'partner' rather than a resource to be exploited (86). This perspective recognizes the interdependence of humans and nature and the importance of working together for mutual benefit.

In addition, Chambers' use of language and imagery emphasizes the importance of interconnection and integration. The novella's title evokes religious and spiritual connotations and suggests a respect for the natural world. Throughout the novella, Chambers uses metaphors and similes that emphasize the connection between humans and nature. For example, Dex describes trees as “thick and crowded, like a crowd at a festival” (16). These images highlight how humans are part of a larger ecosystem and the importance of being aware of the impact our actions have on the environment.

Chambers presents a splendid and delicate vision of the natural world, by emphasizing the importance of caring for the planet: “The world was so much bigger than any one of them. So much older, so much wiser. So much more beautiful, too. And they were all just a tiny part of it, mere moments in its history. It was humbling, but it was also a comfort” (90). This passage

spotlights the author's use of deconstructivist techniques to challenge the traditional narrative of human superiority over nature. By portraying nature as vast and wise, the author urges the readers to rethink their relationship with the natural world and recognize the importance of superintendence and benevolence towards it.

Human and Non-Human Relationship:

Chambers also renders a different way of thinking about non-human beings in the form of wildly constructed mechanical beings who have obtained consciousness and are researching their place in this world. The novella challenges the traditional dichotomy between humans and machines, offering the possibility of a more integrated relationship between the former and the latter. As Wild-built puts it, "I want to be recognized as what I am. Not a person, but not a machine. A different kind of being, but still a being" (35). The Declaration emphasizes the importance of recognizing the subjectivity and individuality of non-human organisms and treating them with the same respect and care as humans. It further emphasizes the novella's central theme of blurring the line between human and non-human. It is exhibited as beings that exist outside the traditional dichotomy of man and machine, it challenges the notion that sense and consciousness are in humans. By declaring its own identity as 'a different kind of being,' it asserts its agency and autonomy and demands recognition and respect. It challenges conventional narratives that position machines as passive objects that humans use and dispose of. Instead, it offers the possibility of a more integral relationship between humans and machines, recognizing their individuality and subjectivity.

"The only difference between humans and machines is that we have flesh and blood, and they have gears and wires. But in the end, we're all just machines, one way or another" (47). These words come from Dex, a tea monk who embarks on a journey to learn more about the natural world. It highlights the novella's deconstructive approach to the relationship between machines and humans, challenging the traditional duality between man and machine. Dex's words suggest that humans and machines are more alike than different and their differences are ultimately arbitrary. This challenges the traditional narrative of humans being superior and machines being inferior suggesting that the two can coexist on equal terms.

Furthermore, it also emphasizes the importance of recognising the function and personality of machines rather than treating them as passively used and discarded. This is consistent with deconstructivist theories that seek to challenge the dominant narratives that shape our understanding of the world and explore alternative perspectives and possibilities. By portraying the relationship between machines and humans in this way, Chambers invites readers to question their presumptions and prejudices and envision a world in which machines and humans can coexist harmoniously.

The notion of Consciousness and Individuality:

Becky Chambers explores the concept of consciousness and individuality through her portrayal of human and non-human characters. The novella inquires what it means to be conscious and personal, and whether these traits are limited to humans. The most prominent non-human character is Mosschap a robot who has reached a level of consciousness capable of forming personal connection and experiencing emotional connection with humans. Mosschap's consciousness is a reciprocated outcome of his adaptability and ability to learn over time, allowing him the sense of introspection: "Mosschap had been taught to learn. It had been given the tools to adapt. And, through those tools, it had found its own way. Mosschap was its own creature, with its own thoughts and feelings and desires" (76). Chambers, through the experience of robots, points out that consciousness and individuality are not unique to humans, but are products of learning and growth.

The novella ponders the journey of finding the purpose closely coupled with his confidence and awareness. As Dex reflects on his experiences, they begin to question the nature of consciousness and personality: "Who was Dex? Was there a thing that made Dex, or was it

just a bunch of experiences and preferences mashed together?" (41). Over investigating the question raised by Dex, the author urges the readers to consider consciousness and personality are not static, but fluid and constantly evolving.

Chambers emphasizes the complexity and inner souls of machines: "Mosschap was quiet for a moment. 'I have been thinking,' they said finally. 'I believe that you humans are more complicated than we once thought and that perhaps we machines are, too'" (86). This highlights Chambers' use of deconstructivist techniques to challenge traditional narratives about machines and bid readers to embrace complexity and ambiguity. Representing a machine as a capable being of introspection and self-awareness, the author challenges the idea consciousness and individuality are inherent in humans. This is consistent with a post-humanist perspective that seeks to break down traditional boundaries between humans and non-humans.

Eventually, Chambers proposed that consciousness and individuality are not only limited to humans but are products of learning and growth. Her portrayal of characters like Mosschap and Dex stimulates the readers to think critically about what it means to be truly conscious and individual, thereby questioning the boundaries between human and non-human.

Blurring the Line between Human and Non-Human:

The portrayal of characters in the novella by Chambers blurs the line between human and non-human. Instead of portraying Wild-built as a soulless machine, Chambers spotlights its agency and ability to respond to the natural world

She depicts, "The wild-built didn't move. Dex waited, trying to gauge some sort of response. Nothing. The machine sat there, utterly still, until a small gust of wind nudged one of its branches. The movement was small, barely noticeable, but it was enough to show Dex that the machine was alive" (18).

This passage challenges traditional dualistic thinking and invites readers to embrace complexity and ambiguity through deconstructivist methods. Chambers explores the possibility of a more fluid and holistic approach challenging the conventional notions of what it means to be a human, thereby blurring the lines between machine and nature.

Chambers' portrayal of Dex is evident as the blurring lines of the human-nonhuman boundary. As a tea monk, Dex rejects traditional gender norms for a more fluid and holistic approach to identity: "Dex didn't care what they looked like. They weren't sure if they were a man or a woman, and that was okay. They were Dex, and that was enough" (24). Chambers in this passage invites readers to embrace complexity and ambiguity challenging the traditional gender role through his use of deconstructivist techniques. By blurring the lines between male and female, the author challenges the traditional notions of what it means to be human and invites the readers to explore the possibility of a more holistic and collaborative approach to identity.

Chambers invites the readers to consider the possibility that machines and nature have complex thoughts and feelings thereby challenging the traditional notions of what it means to be human: "Machines, Dex had learned, could be wise. Machines, Dex had learned, could be compassionate. Machines, Dex had learned, could be kind" (57). The author in this passage challenges the traditional narrative that machines are soulless and callous through his usage of deconstructivist techniques. By presenting machines as capable of complex emotions and thoughts, the author motivates the readers to rethink the assumptions about what it means to be human and to comprehend the possibilities for a more comprehensive and collaborative destiny.

Quest for Purpose and Fulfilment:

The novella examines the themes of the quest to achieve purpose and fulfilment through Dex, who feels unfulfilled in everyday life and craves something new. The Initial part of the novel shows Dex's dissatisfaction with her life, which reflects on their daily activity: "Tea, meals, tea, chores, tea, and sleep. Rinse, repeat. It was all so orderly, so precise. So utterly,

unbearably dull" (4). The Author through Dex's experience tries to express the idea to the readers, that the realization is not to be found along pre-determined paths but rather on the flip side, it must be discovered through self-discovery and investigation.

As the novel advances, Dex undertakes a journey to find answers and their purpose. During the voyage, they meet many people and machines, each with their own perspective on what life is and what it means to be fulfilled. One of the author's key themes that emerges from Dex's journey is the importance of finding out the purpose and satisfaction towards their own course in life.

Chambers points out that the traditional notion of a predetermined path in life is being modified, and that true fulfilment lies in following one's unique journey: "Dex was not sure what their purpose was, but they knew they had one. They didn't know where they were going, but they knew they were headed in the right direction" (163). By presenting Dex's journey as a process of self-discovery, Chambers challenges traditional narratives of identity and purpose. She encourages readers to consider that there is no single path in life and that fulfilment can come from many different sources. The theme of the quest for purpose and fulfilment in the novella is a complex and nuanced exploration of human existence. Through the character of Dex, the author tries to present a vision of a world where fulfilment comes not from conforming to preconceived notions of success and happiness, but based on embracing the unique journey and finding the meaning in the current juncture.

Conclusion:

Becky Chambers' *A Psalm for the Wild-Built* explores the relationship between machines and humans in a deconstructive way, challenging traditional narratives of superiority in humans and inferiority in machines. By characterizing wild architecture, Chambers presents a vision of a world where machines are perceived as intelligent, autonomous beings, rather than mere use and disposal of tools. This perspective challenges their assumptions and prejudices about the nature of consciousness and humanity and invites readers to consider alternative ways of understanding the relationship between humans and machines. The novella's emphasis on connectivity and interdependence is consistent with deconstructivist theories that seek to challenge the binary thinking that shapes our understanding of the world. It offers a thought-provoking and timely exploration of the relationship between machines and humans, prompting readers to ponder new possibilities for the future.

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