Rilke & Deconstruction

Regarding the web links to "The Panther" analysis: they'll take you to a site that discusses in great detail one of Rilke's more famous poems, "The Panther." Read the two versions of the poem reproduced in my link first, and then in the external Web links to find examples of how to begin analyzing a poem.

Also, look at the last web link for multiple translations of the same poem that Rilke, of course, wrote originally in German. The translations of the poem you'll see on this link were all made by *other* people, not Rilke himself.

But we should remember to take note that these translations are only *interpretations* of Rilke's work, not exact duplications, since that's never possible when translating from one language to another. Languages are express ideas differently, and it's important to remember that translations are only an approximation of the original version, not a direct transcription.

This should help illustrate for you what it means when deconstruction calls language "slippery and arbitrary," that it is communally agreed upon but never actually linked to any stable or permanent meaning because that kind of "meaning" doesn't really exist. Again, words don't replace the things they refer to, they just suggest or imply the idea of those things with little artificial linguistic things we call "words." There is no *natural* link between a word and the thing it's referencing.

Language, practitioners of Deconstruction like to point out and these Rilke translations demonstrate, is only ever <u>really</u> capable of *suggesting* a set of temporary, partial, and incomplete meanings that "always already" elide or leave out other meanings.

Compare the different translations of Rilke's poem with one another and you'll see what I mean: different people translate the same set of words in entirely different ways, thereby fundamentally altering the "original" version past the point of comprehension. Interpretation and "truth" and "meaning" are, in the end, highly variable, unreliable, and unstable.