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READER-RESPONSE THEORY AND WOLFGANG ISER'S
"INTERACTION BETWEEN TEXT AND READER"

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ABSTRACT

The Reader-Response criticism is an interesting approach of literary text in that it places the reader at the centre and the process of reading itself viewed as a dynamic and ever changing experience depending on the readers, their background and combined set of experience. The readers will bring their own perception and experience to bear on a text and no two will bring same interpretation.

KEY WORDS: Reader- Response, Interaction, Gap, Blank etc.

INTRODUCTION

Reader-Response criticism is based on ideas drawn from phenomenology and hermeneutics. Phenomenology is the study of how we understand the world and hermeneutics is a theory of textual interpretation, especially those texts dealing with human acts, products and life. They are interrelated and involve mainly the analysis of perception and interpretation of the world and human life. Phenomenology deals with psychology and social theory. As a movement in philosophy, it began in the late 19th century and the founder of this movement was the German theorist Edmund Husserl. Reader-Response theory is an interesting approach of literary text in that it places the reader at the centre and the process of reading itself viewed as a dynamic and ever changing experience depending on the readers, their background and combined set of experience. The readers will bring their own perception and experience to bear on a text and no two will bring same interpretation.

FEATURES OF READER- RESPONSE CRITICISM:

1. Reader- Response criticism is based on reader's perception and reaction to literary interpretation and it shows strong reaction all the text oriented critical method like formalism and new criticism.
2. In traditional criticism author was the central of literary criticism. In new criticism text was the central focusing point but the German theorist first brought out reader at the centre of literary discussion.
3. New criticism believed that the literary text was the close text which can only be understood by understanding its internal structure. The text offers important clues to reader and by these they can construct their response. This means reader is the passive and at the receiving end. The author, the text and socio-political factors in literary interpretation that constantly replaced each other but the individual reader as a factor was largely ignored.

4. Hans Robert Juss combines the formalist focus on text and the socialist focus on history in the meaning making process. Juss propose the concept of horizon of exception which stated that readers bring many contexts to literary text and interpret accordingly but the meaning changes with the change of context.
5. The view changes with the Wolfgang Iser's version of Reader-response criticism. Iser propose reading to be a collaborative activity between readers and text . He explain that during the process of reading the text or eats gap and invites reader to fill them, these helps them to formulate their response.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERACTION BETWEEN TEXT AND READER

Iser points out that the literary works has two parts artistic and the aesthetic. The artistic pole is the author's text and aesthetic pole is the reader's realization of the text. It means that literary text is neither entirely the author's text and nor reader's objective understanding. The work situated between reality of the text and the readers realization. Iser insist on taking into account both aspect of literary work- the author's technique and the readers psychology. Thus Iser suggest the process of "**Interaction between text and the reader**". The interaction between text and reader based on certain kind of communication. Iser refers to certain types of communication from psychoanalytic research which can provide common codes that govern interaction between text and reader. Psychologist R.D. Laing observes that we cannot experience the expression of one another. On the assumption that we know what other think of us . But there always remain a gap in such interaction. This gap can be filled in by interpretation.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE INTERACTION BETWEEN THE TEXT AND THE READER AND OTHER SOCIAL INTERACTION :

- 1) Reading is not a face to face interaction. The text never tells the reader about the accuracy and inaccuracy of his views of text.
- 2) There is no certain or fixed context which can regulate the process of interaction between text and reader.
- 3) The absence of common codes or context leads the creation of gaps between the text and the reader.
- 4) Iser argues that this gaps gives raise the process of communication in the reading act, thus the readers fills gaps and enters into an interactive relationship with the text.
- 5) This is a bilateral process, Iser points out that for such communication the reader's activity of filling the gaps must be controlled in some way by the text. For example Virginia Woolf's observation about Jane Austin. Woolf state that for better understanding of Austin's novel it is important to relate the unimportant aspects of the text. Iser called this the act of 'filling the blanks'.

THE FUNCTIONS OF "BLANKS"

- 1) Blanks make organization of referential field of interacting textual perspective possible.
- 2) It enables the reader to create a determinate relationship between perspective. (Subject+ its main part)
- 3) Blanks helps to create structure, where perspective become theme.

ISER EXPLAIN FOUR MAIN PERSPECTIVE OF A NARRATIVE

Iser explain four major perspective of a narrative text: the narrator, the characters, the plot and the factious reader. This perspective never tells in the meaning of text separately. They should be understood collectively in the reading process. For example: Fielding's "TOM JONES". In this novel Fielding portrays the each character that represents 18th century society. He portrays those characters with specific traits and more often contrasted to other characters. For example: the character of All worthy who represent benevolence, is contrasted with Squire Western who represent lust for wealth and power. The hero of the novel Tom in his interactions and negotiation with the different characters and really negotiating with the norms of contemporary social system.

CONCLUSION

Critics neglected the role of the reader for a very long time in the name of objective and impersonal analysis. Such classical notions of fixed meaning and objective interpretations kept readers and context away from the process of meaning making. It was only during the period of romanticism that context and readers were taken into account in literary analysis. But it was short-lived and limited in scope. From the mid-19th century onwards, the focus shifted back to objective and disinterested analysis, as advocated by Matthew Arnold's literary theory, Eliot's literary theory in the early 20th century, and the strictly textual analysis practice by New Critics. Reader- Response theory, contrary to the dominant critical stance held for several decades, showed the role of readers in the act of interpretations and thus the relevance of contexts in the meaning making process.

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