

Contribution of reader response theory in the study of literature

Literature



Synopsis Feeling dissatisfied from the traditional approaches, I found shelter in Reader Response theory, which acknowledged not only my role as a reader in giving meaning to the text but also considered me a scholar who had the right and duty to stand in judgement on the text. In the first chapter the rise of English is traced, in order to approach the methods in the teaching of English which were employed when English was established as an academic subject in the universities of England, which further leads us in the direction of New Criticism. New Criticism emerged as a response to the traditional approaches which believed that the function of criticism is not to find meanings but to discover the historical context of the text. It was widely felt that New Criticism put the literary criticism on the right track, which maintained that the chief function of criticism is to specify meanings. New Critics located meanings in the text. Reader Response theory emerged mostly as a reaction against the New Criticism after 1968. It opposed the idea of locating meaning in the text and challenged the autonomous status of the text. Reader Response critics claimed that meanings reside in the reader rather in the text. Similarities and differences between New Criticism and Reader Response theory have been identified to know the aims of both theories. Both New Critics and Reader Response Critics agree that the chief aim of criticism is to locate meanings but they differ on the locus of meaning. Reader Response critics started locating meanings in the reader rather in the text. I shall be employing the Aristotelian method of cause and effect in exploring the factors which were responsible for this shift of locus of meaning from the text to the reader. The factors responsible for the rise of Reader Response theory were at the same time responsible for the decline of

New Criticism. The factors responsible for the birth of Reader Response theory were: Phenomenology, Hermeneutic, Reception theory, Structuralism, Post-structuralism and the writings of Nietzsche, and Rosenblatt. I shall be exploring how one factor became the cause for the birth of other factor. All these factors contributed to the birth of the reader. In the last chapter i have assumed the role of critic but before setting down my own response I shall be discussing Reader Response theory itself. My critical stance is in opposition of Achebe's response on the novel " Heart of Darkness". Achebe called Conrad " a bloody racist", who dehumanised Africans in the novel " Heart of Darkness". I have chosen this novel for my response in order to show the manner in which the reader's role assumes significance in discovering the emotional and moral centre of Conrad's art. I will attempt to show how the reader becomes the ultimate judge of values. Daniel Malnick, s views n this regard and quite relevant as cited here: There is no morality, no knowledge and no hope; there is only the consciousness of ourselves which drives us about a world that is always but a vain and floating appearance. Believing in D. H Lawrence's dictum " never trust the artist, trust the tale" I beg to discuss Achebe's view that Conrad is a racist and has dehumanised the Africans. I believe that there are no facts in the world but opinions. In this case Achebe has as much a right to his opinions as I have to mine. I will bring up the fact that how any novel, and particularly this one is a multi layered text and its polysemous potential should not be curtailed in the name of political ideology.

CONTRIBUTION OF READER RESPONSE THEORY IN THE STUDY OF LITERATURE Chapter one: INTRODUCTION It is difficult to understand the contribution of Reader Response theory to English studies

without knowing something about how English developed as an academic subject and the factors that were responsible for its establishment as an academic subject. It is also necessary to shed some light on the approaches which were employed when English achieved currency as an academic subject in the universities of England. There were only two universities in England — Oxford and Cambridge- until the first quarter of the nineteenth century. These universities were only for men. The subjects taught in these universities were the classics (ancient Greek and Latin literature), divinity and mathematics. Many attempts were made in order to introduce new subjects but all in vain. The conservative forces did not encourage reforms. But the breakthrough came in 1826, when a University College was founded in London. From 1828 English was offered as a subject for study. It is worth mentioning here that “ it was mainly the study of English language, and literature was used merely as a source of linguistic examples" (1), says Peter Barry. English literature in its true nature and spirit was first taught at King’s College, London. The groups were responsible for the rise of English as a university subject were those entering the service of the British Empire, working class men, and women. The decision was taken by the civil service of the East India Company in 1855 to fill the administrative posts through competitive exams, which greatly influenced English as a discipline. English was incorporated as a subject to be examined in civil service exam before its studies were institutionalised. It was maintained that knowledge of the cultures and languages of the natives will be taught only to those students who will qualify for the administrative positions. The aim was two-pronged: first, to pour into the minds of the successful candidates, knowledge of the

cream of their own culture; secondly, to encourage a taste for reading. The influence of this step was somewhat ambivalent; the written exam was taken before any organized teaching. Baldicks unleashes his ideas pertinent to it in these words: “ English studies were subordinated to examinations before anyone could really say that English studies existed”(2) English literature was used for the education of the working class in the nineteenth century. It was believed that literature had a humanizing effect on the reader, and it was also being conceived that it would provide an antidote to a purely money-driven life. F. D. Maurice, a founder of the Working Men’s College held the opinion that grounding in literature would have a unifying effect on the nation as a whole. It would create the feelings of Englishness in the hearts of working class. He was of the view that aristocracy is the part of the international elite and the lower class had no time for study because of its economic problems. The only class which remained was the middle class. Peter Barry says that: “ Maurice regarded literature as the peculiar property of the middle class and the expression of their values. For him, the middle class represented the epitome of the Englishness" (3) The teachings of English would be a “ social cementing factor”(4). F. D Maurice was well aware of the political dimensions of English. He was of the view that learning English will give people a stake in maintaining the political status quo without any redistribution of wealth. It would serve as a spiritual panacea because at that time the attendance at the church was declining day by day. The faith of people in religion was dwindling. People thought that they had neither share in the country nor religion to teach them morality and restraint. It was the need of the hour that literature should preach the people

self-restraint, which is the beginning of civilization, without it something like the French Revolution would take place, which would cause blood shed and destruction. It was also thought that the study of English would bridge the gap between the upper and middle class and would create a kind of bond between them. Lord Playfair said that: The main purpose was not to educate the masses, but to permeate them with the desire for intellectual improvement, and to show them methods by which they can attain this desire. Everyman who has a taste for learning and has a desire to acquire more values is a valuable citizen, because he is more intelligent and perceptive.(5) The final group, which also played an important role in raising the profile of English, was composed of women. Women were excluded from scientific trainings and other professions. They were almost restricted to the soft subjects for example, English, History and Political Science. F. D Maurice, who was a man of prophetic vision, foresaw the dangers of leaving female education in a completely undefined sphere. He established the Queen's College for women in 1848. It was thought that it would help women assume their roles as wives in a more efficient manner. Charles Kingsey, Professor of English at the Queen's College, put it in these words: women should be initiated into the thoughts and feelings of their country men in every age... that knowing the hearts of many, she may in after life be able to comfort the hearts of all...such a course of history would quicken women's inborn personal interest in the actions of this life-drama, and be quickened by it in return, as indeed it ought: for it is thus that God intended women to look instinctively at the world. Would to God that she would teach us men to look at it thus likewise. Would to God that she would in these days claim and fulfil

to the uttermost vocation as the priestess of charity. (6) The next phase in the development and progress of English was riddled with many problems. In 1887 the first attempt was defeated because of Edward Freeman's speech, who was a professor of history at Oxford. In his speech he said that " we are told that the study of literature cultivates the taste, educates the sympathies and enlarges the mind".(7) He was of the view that " these are excellent things but the problem is that how examiners would be able to measure these things"(8) Literature was studied with language because of Freeman's arguments against the separation of language from literature. Literature had to be studied with language. It was the main reason that when the English course was finally set up at Oxford in 1894 it contained historical language study a lot. English got greater sense of direction in Cambridge in 1920s. It was founded in 1911, therefore it had not to fight with the conservative forces which always discouraged change. The engineers of this change were no other than I. A. Richards and his pupils. He is the first who separated literature from language. He pioneered the technique called practical criticism. He is the father of the decontextualized approach to literature which became the norm in Britain from the 1930s to 1970s as the practical criticism, and in America during roughly the same period as the New Criticism. New Criticism emerged mostly as a reaction against the traditional approaches and reader response theory emerged mostly as a reaction against the New Criticism after 1968. In the next chapter we will be shedding light on New Criticism and the factors responsible for its decline in literary analysis. It is worth mentioning that the factors which were responsible for the decline of New Criticism were at the same time responsible for the

emergence of reader response theory. Chapter two (a) New Criticism The process of separation between political life and literature began to occur in the second half of the eighteenth century. At that time there was growth in commercial printing and the breakdown of patronage system. The eighteenth century not only paved the way for the advent of New Criticism but also left straws in the wind for the birth of the Reader Response Theory. William J. Long writes that: The first half of the eighteenth century is remarkable for the rapid social development in England. Hitherto men had been more or less governed by the narrow, isolated standards of the middle ages, and when they differed they went speedily to blows. Now for the first time they set themselves to the task of learning the art of living together, while still holding different opinions.(1) The Reader Response critics define their work as a radical departure from New Critical principles, but as on a closer look at the theory and the practice of these critics show that they have not revolutionized theory but merely shifted the locus of meaning from the text to the reader. Both New Critics and Reader Oriented Critics assume that the chief and ultimate goal of criticism is to specify meanings. " This assumption not only joins these opposed theories but binds them together in opposition to a long history of critical thought in which the specification of the meaning was not criticism's ultimate concern"(2). New Critics are of the view that meanings are to be located within the text, while Reader Response Critics are of the view that meanings are to be located in the reader. New Criticism got currency with the publication of John Crowe Ransom's the " New Criticism". In his book he came out with the idea that " literary work is a concrete entity like Leonardo da Vinci's " Mona Liza or the score of Handel's

Messiah or even any chemical element such as iron or gold. Like these concrete objects, a poem can be analyzed to discover its true and correct meanings independent of its author's intention or emotional state, or the values and beliefs of either its author or its reader's"(3).(q. t. d in Literary criticism) New Critics assert that the text is autonomous. Meanings do not exist outside the domain of the text. New Criticism opposed the ideas of biographical and historical approaches that dominated the literary arena at the beginning of the twentieth century. The advocates of these approaches believed that the function of criticism is not to find the meanings but to discover the historical context of the text and to find out how authors lives influenced their writings. But all modern criticism whether psychological, mythopoeic, structuralist, thematic response-oriented or formalist takes meanings to be the chief object of critical analyses. It was widely believed that New Criticism which set criticism on the right track. They believed that the chief concern of criticism is to find out the meanings and in order to know the meaning the reader need not to take pains for knowing the autobiographical details, political and social conditions because meanings do not reside in these extrinsic elements but reside inside the text. Everything is in the text which the reader has to know. " The only thing which the reader has to do is that he has to master the technical jargon and techniques to unlock the meaning from the text", says Brassler.(4) New Critics give importance to the etymology of individual of words. There is change in the meanings of words from one period to another therefore it is necessary for the critic that he should be involved in historical research and what individual words meant at the time when the poem was written. In other

words dictionary should be critic's best friend. New Critics place little emphasis on the author, the social context, or a text's historical situation as a source for discovering the meaning of the text. The New Critics also say that a reader's emotional response to the text is neither important nor equivalent to its interpretations. This is as an error of judgment, which is called the Affective fallacy. It confuses what a literary work means with what it does. Although New Criticism rose to prominence in 1940s, its roots go back to the early 1900s. Two British critics and authors, I. A. Richards and T. S. Eliot, played an important role in laying the foundation of this form of formalistic analysis. From Eliot New Criticism borrowed the idea that criticism should be directed towards the poem, not towards the poet. Eliot was of the view that: The poet does not influence the poem with his personality or emotions but uses language in such a way as to incorporate within the poem the impersonal feelings and emotions common to all human kinds. Poetry is not the expression of personality but escape from it. The text is not a mere reflection of the poet's personal feelings (5) Wellek and Warren went to the extent that they say that " even ' I ' in the lyrical poetry is not the poet himself". (6) The New Critics also believe in Eliot's belief that the reader of the poetry should be taught literary techniques for analyzing the text. T. S. Eliot was of the view that a good reader perceives the poem structurally, resulting in good criticism. Such a reader must be trained in reading good poetry especially the poetry of Elizabethan, John Donne, and other metaphysical poets. He believed that a poor reader merely gives vent to his personal experiences and emotions concerning a text. A poor reader is untrained in literary techniques and craftsmanship. Treading upon the steps

of Eliot, New Critics declare that from good reader comes good criticism. And from bad reader comes bad criticism. This text-oriented approach automatically leads to many divergent views pertaining to the elements that constitute what the New Critics call the poem, which is synonym for literary work. Since many practitioners of this approach disagree with one another pertaining to the elements that make up the poem and adhere to different approaches for textual analysis therefore it is difficult to cite a definite list of critics who considers themselves New Critics. But we can however, group together those critics who hold to some of the same critical assumptions pertaining to poetic analysis among this group are John Crowe Ransom, Rene Wellek, W. K. Wismatt, R. P. Blackmur, I. A. Richards, Robert Pennwarren, and Cleaneth Brooks. (B)Factors responsible for the birth of reader and Reader Response theory The factors which are responsible for the rise of Reader Response Theory are also responsible for the decline of New Criticism. Birth of new theories and philosophies are the factors which contributed to the rise of Rader Response Theory. Before the birth of these theories and philosophies which we are going to discuss the reader was considered passive. It was thought and preached that the reader had no role in giving meaning to the text. In vulgar words the readers were considered no more than the herd of goats which are driven by shepherd (author). In order to show them the right track and leads them to home (meaning), before the rise of Reader Response theory. This theory took the reader from the dust to the sky and established his creative role. From Plato's time until the beginning of the Romantic Movement in literature the passive view of the reader prevailed in the literary arena. Many critics accepted the fact; a text

has an effect upon its reader. But the criticism of those ages focused primarily on the text. There was a shift in the literary analysis from the text to the author with the advent of romanticism. The author became the genius, who could assimilate the truth that was unknown or unseen to the readers. And with the progress of the nineteenth century, the concern for the author continued in literary criticism, focusing upon the author's life, age and social context as the chief aids in literary analysis. But by 1920s emphasis in literary analysis once again shifted from author to the text, which culminated into the advent of New Criticism that advocated literary text as an objective entity but at the same time New Critics acknowledged the effects that a text could have on the reader. It emphasized on the objective nature of the text, once again created a passive reader. This reader did not bring personal experiences and past literary experiences while going through the text. In the hey days of new criticism, one of its founding fathers, I. A. Richards started taking interest in the reading process itself. He distributed the copies of poems in classes without their authors and titles, he asked his students to jot down their free responses to the poems. He was shocked when he came across the contradictory responses of the students while analyzing the same text. After this experience he came to the conclusion that the readers brings to the text the ideas related to their past life and past literary experiences. After this experience he did recognize the active role of the reader. The theory of Phenomenology played its role in the rise of the Reader Response theory because it established the importance of human subject." This theory emerged as a consoling doctrine after the First World War, in order to give certainty to the disintegrated civilization" says Terry Eagleton(7).

Phenomenology is a philosophic tendency that establishes the importance of the perceiver. Phenomenologists say that objects have meanings because of an active consciousness (a perceiver) notes their existence. Terry Eagleton expresses this idea in these words, "the act of thinking and the object of thought are internally related, mutually dependent. My consciousness is not just a passive registration of the world but actively constitutes or "intends" it"(8). Edmund Husserl was one of the philosophers who took up the cudgels in order to give certainty to the world. He rejected the natural attitude that objects exist independently of us in the external world. He was of the view that we are not sure whether things in the external world are dependent of us or not, but we are sure how they appear immediately to our consciousness. He came out with the idea that "objects can be regarded not as things in themselves but as things posited, or "intended", by consciousness". (9) Husserl's intention theory of consciousness suggests that being and meaning are always dependent on one another. He was of the view that there is no object without a subject, and no subject without an object. In this way, Husserl establishes the importance of the human subject in whose consciousness the things exist in the external world. In this way we can say that mind and world are inseparable. When the reader goes to the literary text then he becomes the subject and the text becomes the object. In this way we can say that the text is dependent on the reader, who gives meaning and existence to the text. The text has no meanings of its own. Husserl's view of dependence of object on the subject and subject on the object supports Reader Response critics' assumption that the reader and the text equals meaning. The Reader Response critics believe that a literary text

acquires meaning only in the mind of reader. Phenomenologists believe that the objects exist only when human subjects register them in their consciousness (mind). Rosenblatt has similar views; the true poem does not exist on the printed pages but in reader's consciousness. The theory of Hermeneutics is a leading factor in the rise of Reader Response theory. Hermeneutics gave birth to the reception Theory, which is considered as a version of reader response theory. Scholars adhere to a set of rules on which to base their interpretations. The rules which are employed by the scholars in order to interpret and understand a literary text in its true nature and spirit are collectively known as Hermeneutics. In ancient Greek mythology there was a god by the name of Herms, who served to interpret messages from the other gods. The term Hermeneutics comes from the Greek word for interpreter. Aristotle is the first person who was of the view that in order to interpret the literary texts a specific system should be employed. The Hermeneutic philosopher E. D Hirsch propounded the idea that the meaning of the text can be got only by means of investigating the authorial intention. He was bent upon fixing the meaning. He believed that the literary work is the private property of the author. Terry Eagleton says that E. D Hirsch was himself aware of the fact that the meanings are not fixed. Hirsch said so, only because he was afraid that if he would give permission to the readers for interpretations then every other person will be interpreting the text according to his own likes and dislikes. Terry Eagleton is of the view that if Hirsch believed that meanings of the text are fixed then it means that he was unaware of the fact that truth does not exist outside the domain of the language. Truth is not only communicated and expressed through language

but created by it. Peter Barry has also similar views. He says that " every story has three versions: my version, your version and truth. It is universally recognized that truth resides in language. " (10) Gadamer, who is also a Hermeneutic philosopher does not support to Hirsch's view that meanings are only which the author had in mind for the text. He was of the view that the work passes from one cultural and historical context to another. New meanings are given to the work by the readers of every age according to their common sense. In every age the common sense is different from the other age and common sense is based on the available knowledge in the age in which the reader lives. In this way we can maintain that the meaning of the same text will be different to the 21st century reader to the plays of Shakespeare than the 18th century reader or for the reader of any other age. The bread and butter of all that discourse on Hirsch's Hermeneutics is that there are no such things as fixed meanings in the literary analysis. Gadamer refutes and confutes the misperception of Hirsch and at the same time he paves the way to the reception theory. Reception Theory is the most recent form which Hermeneutic took in Germany. It is considered as one of the versions of the Reader Response Theory. It emphasizes the reader's reception of a literary text. The Reception theorists are of the view that the reader is involved in unconscious labour. He is always engaged in constructing hypothesis about the meaning of the text. He does not perform this activity consciously. The Reception theorists say that the text itself is no more than a chain of organized black marks on a page, which invites the reader to construct meaning without the active participation of the reader; there would be no literary work at all. This idea reminds us the theory of

phenomenology that the object (text) is dependent upon the subject (reader) reception theory laid a significant role in recognizing the role of reader in giving meaning to the text. Louise Rosenblatt's ideas established the role of reader in giving meaning to the text. In her text, *Literature as Exploration*, published in 1938, she asserted that "the reader and text must work together to produce meaning"(11). She shifted the emphasis of textual analysis away from the text alone and viewed the reader and text as partners in the interpretive process. She challenged the Formalist's assumption that the text is autonomous and therefore can be scientifically analyzed to discover its meanings. In the late 1930s Rosenblatt's ideas seemed too abstract because these were the heydays of New Criticism. Her ideas seemed revolutionary and off the beaten critical path. Although New Criticism dominated the literary text for the next thirty years but Rosenblatt continued to develop her ideas. Her efforts culminated in the publication of critical works, *The Reader, The Text, and The Poem* in 1978. The ideas propagated by her in these works are supported by many theorists even today. The other factor which contributed to the rise of reader response Theory is the rise of capitalism. It changed the old institutions which were controlled by church and the king. This change gave rise to modern democracy which believes in the belief that the truth is determined by consensus. Capitalism and democracy brought about the demise of the old institutions, authority and promoted that authority lies in the people. They are master of their destiny. The old authority rooted in God, with unaltered principles, has given way to a new order which was founded upon rationality. The anti-hierarchical ideas found in the philosophical writings of Nietzsche.

He believed that “ the recent developments in the field of science and the increasing secularization of the European society had killed the Christian God, who had served as a basis for meaning and value in the west for centuries”.(12) He claimed that the death of God would lead the world to the loss of universal perspective of things. Nietzsche announced the death of god and not long after that the notion of an author lost its meaning in literary analysis. There was demise of the author in the field of literature which resulted from the demise of god in the philosophy of Nietzsche. The essay “ The Death of the Author” came from the French literary critic and theorist Roland Barthes, who was influenced by the ideas of Nietzsche. In this essay Barthes criticises the literary criticism that gives importance to the author’s intentions and identity. Barthes was of the view that this method of literary analysis is flawed . He says that “ to give a text an author” and assign a single corresponding interpretation to it “ is to impose a limit on that text”. (13)In this essay Roland Barthes announces the death of the author. It is a rhetorical way of asserting the independence of the literary text. The literary work is not determined by the intentions or context . The text is free from all such restraints . He says that the birth of the reader must take place but at the expense of the death of author. In the 1950, an intellectual movement began in France, known as Structuralism. It gave birth to Post-Structuralism, which is known as the close relative of the reader response theory.

Structuralism aims to understand the individual item by placing it in the context of the larger structures to which it belongs because things can not be understood in isolation. It is greatly influenced by the thinking of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, whose role can not be ignored in the

rise of reader response theory. He believed that “ meanings are not with in the things but outside which are attributed by the human mind” (14). His views negated the New Critic’s misperception that meanings are with in the text (things). Post-Structuralism emerged as a direct response to Structuralism in France in the late 1960, s. The two eminent figures, associated with its emergence were Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida. Roland Barthes essay “ The Death of the Author” gave license to the reader for free play of meanings. “ Derrida embraced the decentred universe of free play. There are no fixed meanings, because there are not fixed points in this universe” (15). All the assumed centres proved to be false e. g. in the Renaissance age there was a slogan that man is the measure of every thing in the universe. In the past, Europe was considered as the centre of civilization . in the twentieth century all these centres were destroyed because of the historical events which took place such as the First World War and holocaust. These events destroyed the illusion of material progress and Europe the centre of civilization. Derrida was influenced by the ideas of Nietzsche, who said that: “ there are no facts but interpretations” (16) When there are no facts in this world then we can not bear the stamp of authority on any interpretation. With the destabilizing or decentering of the author, the reader became the focal point of post-structural theory. According to “ deconstruction” a theoretical approach to written texts, considered as an offshoot of post-structuralism , any text comprises a chain of signifiers which appear to evoke a singular meaning, but upon close and critical investigation it contradicts itself and thus deconstruct whatever meanings it contains. In the most extreme forms of deconstruction, meanings are fully indeterminate.

All these factors which we mentioned played an important role in the rise of reader response theory in one way or the other. In the next chapter we shall be skimming through the reader response theory and its types, and the author of this research will be looking at the response of Achebe about the novel "Heart of Darkness" who called Joseph Conrad "a bloody racist"(17). The author himself will be judging whether Conrad was racist or not. Before going for his own response it is necessary to discuss about the theory itself, which is discussed in the beginning of the next chapter. Chapter Three (a) Reader Response theory Although Reader-Response Criticism rose to prominence in the early 1970s and 19780s but it still influences much literary analysis. Its historical roots can be traced to the 1920s and 1930 s. Such precise dating is artificial because readers have been responding to what they have read since the dawn of literature itself. We have classical commentaries on literature which shed light on the audience response . For example Plato banished the poets from his ideal state . He asserted that watching a play could so inflame the passions of the audience that the viewers would forget that they are rational beings and allow their emotions to govern theirs actions. Similarly Aristotle, though he spoke of pity and fear as the emotions proper to tragedy, judged the drama on " concentrated effect, and said that the " striking" should be the end of art.(1) Both Plato and Aristotle discussed literature primarily in terms of its effects upon the audience. On initial over view of classical commentaries give the impression that there is much in common between Reader Response theory and Classical literary theories but it is only misperception. One at the very moment discovers that it is not at all what Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish

have in mind. " It is a fact that Reader Response theory owes nothing to the ancient rhetorical tradition. Reader Response critics take response as meaning and for the ancient Greek theorists take response as action or behaviour" says Tompkins.(2) Reader Response theory does not give a unified body of theory or a single methodological approach for literary analysis . All those who call themselves reader response critics, or audience-oriented share is a focus on the reader. They believe that a literary work comes into existence only when a reader and a text interact. A book lying on a shelf has no existence until it is not read ". For reader response critics, the reader and the text equals meaning" (3) says Brassler. Louise Rosenblatt formulated the " transactional reader response theory" (4) in 1978, although its ground work was laid much earlier. According to this theory there are two types of responses, of the reader, when he goes through the text . Efferent responses are fact-oriented and may generate opinions. The reader only gets information from the text. Aesthetic responses are based on personal experiences and emotions, which may ask the readers to communicate what they felt, what was interesting and what appealed to him, etc. Effective stylistics believes that text should be examined very closely in order to determine the meaning and how it affects the reader in the reading process. Stanley Fish describes stylistics as the structure of the reader's response as it occurs from moments to moments, not the structure of the text as we might assemble it. Fish believes that " literature is designed for the reader who is well aware of the age in which the work was produced".(5) Subjective Reader Response critic David Blich says that the text is subordinated to the individual reader. The theory claims that reader's responses are the text.

There are no literary meanings beyond what the reader infers. The text is does not exist on pages but in the minds of readers. Real Objects are the printed pages of a text are real objects. Symbolic objects the reading of printed pages creates an experience which is like language itself.

Psychological Reader Response critic Norman Holland says that reader likes or dislikes the text because text has the ability to tap into reader's unconsciousness. The reaction of the reader to texts is influenced by the psychological responses which he brings to events in his daily life. Social Reader Response critic Stanley Fish says that there is no such thing as individual subjective response. The reader's response to a literary text lies in the "interpretive community"(6) to which he belongs. The readers imbibe interpretive strategies from various institutions (school, university, and church) and these strategies shape what the readers define as literary text. There are two types of readers: informed reader is the one, who has literary competence, which is necessary to experience the text in the way as the author does and implied Reader is the reader whom the text seems to be addressing. He varies from genre to genre. (b)Author's Critical Response in Opposition of Achebe's response on the novel "Heart of Darkness" Before going for my own response to the novel "Heart of Darkness" it is necessary to give the response of critics and explain the reason for choosing this novel for response. The reason behind choosing this novel is that in this novel the hero is neither Marlow, nor Kurtz, but the reader. And other most important thing about this novel is that it is written in the way that it invites the reader to judge the characters. The writer does not pass any judgement. The novel "Heart of Darkness" is about Africa therefore it is necessary to look at the

views of Achebe, who is the most prominent African writer. He is against Conrad's views presented in the novel. Achebe calls Joseph Conrad's "a bloody racist" on the account of his ideas in the novel about Africans. Achebe asserts that Conrad's famous novel "Heart of Darkness" leaves no stone unturned to prove that Africans are barbarian and uncivilised. He goes to the extent that Conrad's has dehumanised African. Achebe was of the view that Conrad's views about Africans were not based on reality but a product of his own imagination. In order to support his views Achebe says that Marlow who is the narrator of the story describes the Africans as inhuman and in the novel black people have no names in their language is describe as no more than grants. They are presented as cannibals. The only explanation, Achebe concludes, is "racism" he further says that Conrad is a seductive reader, who not only portrays the Africans inhuman but also makes the reader see through his lens. Edward Said also agrees to Achebe. "As a creature of his time Conrad's could not grant his natives their freedom, despite his severe critique of imperialism that enslaved them".(7)(q. t. i Conrad's Darkness) The reader finds moral commitment neither in Kurtz nor in Marlow. He has to rely on himself in order to judge the characters. The reader does not only take the role of interpreter himself but Conrad also offers him this role. To Conrad modern novel is a vital product of imagination only. The emotional and moral centre of his art is not finally located in a single character's fate and not in the author. Reader Response critics say that meaning is in the mind of the reader rather in the text. This assumption of Reader Response critics is true in the case of Conrad's novel "Heart of Darkness". Daniel Melnick says that "Conrad's fiction calls upon the reader to take the responsibility for moral

exploration and judgement that arises from the experience of such work".(8)

In this novel the reader has to assume the role of critic. He has not to believe in the notions that Africans were uncivilized and barbarians. On the other hand Europeans were civilized and they were in African on a civilizing mission. In the beginning of the novel Conrad makes it clear to the reader that he should discard his preconceived notions. Conrad does so by making Marlow sit in the posture of Buddha. He makes it clear to the reader that what Marlow is narrating is necessarily true. Marlow says that the chief aim of Romans in conquering England was looting and plundering. They were themselves barbarians. They have no civilizing mission, while Europeans are on the civilizing mission in Africa. They are not in Africa for looting and plundering. These ideas in the beginning seduce the reader, but after reading the novel he does not agree with Marlow's views. He formulates his own opinion about Africans and Europeans. The reader does not find Africans uncivilized but Europeans. Kurtz, who is a conglomeration of whole Europe and he is the representative of the European society. He has no self-restraint, which is the beginning of civilization. When Marlow arrives at his post he finds human skulls hanging over his post. The other important thing is that Kurtz deals in ivory. The business of ivory is not itself a decent business to deal in, because ivory is got after killing elephants. The reader, who is the ultimate judge of values finds that Kurtz is barbarian and uncivilized. Kurtz was bent upon killing Russian for mere pieces of ivory. The reader also finds that the notion that Europeans were in Africa on a civilizing mission, is not true. Kurtz, the representative of the European society is not involved in any civilizing activity but plundering ivory. The reader also

witnesses that Africans are more civilized than Europeans, because they have self restraint. They could easily kill Marlow and extinguish their hunger by eating his flesh at the time when they were hungry. Marlow was unable to find out why the natives did not exercise their cannibalistic tendencies on him. He felt that restraint was a part of those Africans. He was also aware of the fact that necessity has no law. No superstition, disgust, patience, fear and honour can stand against hunger. It is self restraint which elevates them from Europeans. The reader does not find any evidences of racism in the novel. He exculpates Conrad from the charge of racism. God is the creator of this world. The power to award life and death to any one rests with Him. Same is true in the case of author. He is the god of his created world (novel). In the novel " Heart of Darkness" Conrad in the end does not give him the right to live anymore. Conclusion The establishment of English has been traced as an academic subject in the universities of England in order to understand the contribution of Reader Response theory to English studies. It leads us to the methods which were employed in the teaching of English in the beginning. The most prominent method was New Criticism, which emerged as a response to the traditional approaches. It maintained that the chief aim of criticism is to find meanings, which reside in the text. Reader Response theory emerged mostly as a reaction against the New Criticism. It challenged the autonomous status of the text. It acknowledged the role of reader in giving meaning to the text. I have compared and contrasted New Criticism with Reader Response theory in order to know the similarities and differences between these approaches. Both agree on the point that the chief aim of criticism is to find meanings but differ on the locus of meaning.

New Critics locate meanings in the text while Reader Response critics locate meanings in the reader. I have explored the factors that were responsible for the rise of Reader Response theory. The factors responsible for the rise of Reader Response theory were: Phenomenology, Hermeneutic, Reception theory, Structuralism, Post-Structuralism and philosophical writings of Nietzsche. I have not stressed on the above mentioned theories themselves but on their role for paving way to Reader Response theory. In the last chapter I have given my response in opposition of Achebe's response on the novel "Heart of Darkness". Achebe called Conrad "a bloody racist" on the basis of novel. He not only portrayed the Africans inhuman but also made the reader see through his lens. I as a reader did not find any signs of racism in the novel. I gave my verdict in the favour of Conrad and exculpated him from the charge of racism. I also believe in the teachings of T. S Eliot who came out with the idea that criticism should be directed towards the poem (text) rather than the poet himself, which led me to say that Achebe had the right to criticize the text but no right to criticise the author. References of chapter one 1. Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002. Print, p12 2. Exposition, Basil. "The Rise of English as an Academic Discipline". 4 April 2009. Web. 5 May 2010 3. Op. cit. Peter Barry. P 14. 4. Eagleton, Terry. *Literary theory: An introduction*, Great Britain, Basil Blackwell publisher limited, 1983. Print , p 25. 5. Op. cit, Basil Exposition 6. Ibid 7. Op. cit. Peter Barry. p14 8. Ibid. p14 References of chapter 2 1. J. Long, William, *English literature: its history and its significance for the life of the English speaking world*. Delhi, A. I. T. B. S publishers. 1998. Print. P 258 2. P. Tompkins, Jane.

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