

On the Necessity of Reappraising 'Close Reading'

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Abstract

This paper attempts to focus on the necessity of re-appraising the 'close reading' to investigate the literary texts. The study, being qualitative in nature, uses historical analysis as a methodology for understanding as to why it is essential to re-vise 'close reading'. It argues that, historically, the method during its heyday was confined to the study of the text sans context; had an instructional, reformatory, disciplinary and programmatic appeal with the impression as if its pioneers were the only elected, intellectual and moral elites to comment on the texts. The study further shows that 'close reading' amassed severe criticism for being designed for fulfilling institutional demands so it was dismissed for being narrow, routinized and closed instead of being close. It was even labeled as theological. Importantly, the study indicates that the history and critique of 'close reading' paves a way for the reappraisal of the methodology on the grounds that the closeness of readings could not be confined and controlled because readers and thoughts are diverse. Besides, the richness of reality and knowledge make theoretical concepts appear as narrow and poor and most of all knowledge is not simply a matter of cognition but recognition too. The findings of this research thus ask for revisiting 'close reading' because the original meaning and essence of the word 'close' cannot be closed on the ground that it has been declared as 'closed.'

Keywords: Close reading, New Critics, New Criticism, Qualitative Research, Historical Analysis

1. Introduction

Literary interpretations, explanations, and analysis have since long been done through different methodologies and the spirit has not yet died out. Analysis of literary texts through 'close readings' was one such method which enjoyed great status during its prime time, yet it invited criticism from different quarters for being narrow in scope as its focus remained to the four walls of the page alone. Furthermore, it cut off contextual details from analysis. Although this historical methodology has become obsolete, yet its title contains great vastness and an openness of a sort that could help one analyze texts, especially the literary ones, from new angles and dimensions because thinking faculties cannot be chained for a long time. With an aim to understand this phenomenon, the present study first of all takes up the history of the methodology. Secondly, it documents the criticism that this technique invited. Thirdly, there is a discussion on the need of the re-appraisal of 'close reading.' This paper also presents some findings which could be helpful in introducing close readings of texts. The methodology adopted for this research is 'historical analysis' as it covers past, present and encompasses even the future.

2. Research Methodology

This is a qualitative research and the quality, according to Berg (2001), "refers to the what, how, when, and where of a thing – its essence and ambience. Qualitative research thus refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and description of things" (p. 3). Having defined the qualitative type of research, Berg (2001) further points out its scope by

saying that it encompasses "observation of experimental natural settings, photographic techniques (including videotaping), historical analysis (historiography), document and textual analysis, sociometry, socio-drama, and similar ethnomethodological experimentation, ethnographic research, and a number of unobtrusive techniques" (p.3). On the other hand, Marsen (2006) propounds that "qualitative methods recognize that reality can be diverse and open to interpretation" (p. 23).

This research, thus being qualitative in nature, attempts to use historical analysis as a methodology to familiarize the readers not only to the past, but to the present too with futuristic implications. Berg (2001), thus observes that the "historical research extends beyond a mere collection of incidents, facts, dates, or figures. It is the study of the relationship among issues that have influenced the past, continue to influence the present, and will certainly affect the future" (p. 211). This shows that history is not just about the past but the present too. Similar views are also expressed by Rousmaniere (2004) who opines that history "also helps to make meaning about the present" because it "is the study of change" (p. 50).

Engaging with the past is thus not unimportant; rather it seems very significant and embodies a huge appeal for its retrospective as well prospective aspects and effects. The significance of the historical analyses could further be understood through the ideas of Pickering (2008) who states that the past is studied not for how was it lived; instead the purpose is the selection of particular features from the past so that it could be analyzed from different perspectives. He adds that since we too are historical, so there is a need to know how were others formed and conditioned historically as this analysis will help us know the difference between "then" and "now." Pickering (2008) elaborates this difference between 'then' and 'now' with the arguments that

This distinction explains why over time our ways of engaging with history do not remain the same. Historical accounts and representations are continually subject to challenge and revision because of changes in historicities and historical variations of outlook and perspective (p. 208).

The methodology thus seems suitable to understand why and how we need to re-investigate what is considered as a story of the past. Moreover, this reinvestigation can be helpful in understanding all those literary texts which were written in the past, are written and will be written in the future.

3. Historical Background

Historically, the 'close reading' of literature, especially poetry, emerged first in England, where the name of I. A. Richards – the Cambridge academic - is taken as its pioneer. It is further noted that the historical accounts of the 'close reading' show it as a New Critical practice and Richards' Practical Criticism has been considered as its starting point. North (2013) studies this methodology and is of the view that in his famous historical work Richards selects short lyric poems for his analysis and the focus of his attention are the smallest units of language. This approach towards the poem thus led the New Critics, firstly, to focus exclusively on the poem; secondly, they rejected any such analysis which is based on utter historical or political context.

As regards the exclusive focus on poetry for 'close reading', Richards had forwarded the idea as a legacy of Matthew Arnold and T. S. Eliot. North's views on the method also resonate in the words

of Bertens (2008) who states that Eliot's ideas of the emphasis only on the poem when came in Richards' hands, it became what we now call practical criticism. Richards, however, added more to this methodology by withholding all extra textual information like dissociating the text from its author, period, and explanatory comments. He thus asked his students as well as teachers to respond to the poems by stripping them completely from their context.

The only difference that one observes between North's and Bertens' accounts of the method is that North associates the process of withholding extra-textual information with the New Critics whereas Bertens links it with Richards. The common thread of their argument is, however, the special status that poetry once enjoyed. This significant role attributed to poetry by Richards and his predecessors was the outcome of the feeling that it had a great role to play in the education and civilization of the society. Why Richards was inclined towards the educational and civilizational aspect and role of literature can be understood by the views of Bertens (2008) that he "had deep misgivings about a contemporary world which seemed to have lost its bearings. He also saw in poetry an antidote to the spiritual malaise that seemed to pave the way for chaos"(p. 13).

Moral deterioration of society, the idea of the corrective role of literature as perceived and advocated by Arnold and Eliot on the one side, and on the other Richards' own training in moral philosophy, according to Murray (1991), had made him "concerned with a perceived social disintegration and ideational erosion – caused, as he had come to see it in the late 20's, by the rise of mass culture" (p. 205). The growing threat of the social disintegration at the hands of mass culture did not only need poetry to play its role. Literary criticism was also viewed to be directed towards this end as according to North (2013), Richards wanted to use it as an aesthetic educational tool in order to improve the lives of the people. This tool was something like scientific footing which was required for its qualification as a discipline in the modern research universities and which, even sometimes, had to compete with the literary scholarship, philosophy and literary history.

The extraordinary circumstances of the times, the growing influence of mass culture and the resultant need of protecting people from this influence are telling accounts of the force with which 'close reading' was championed. This testifies North's account of the need for a 'discipline' that Richards might have aspired for, consciously or unconsciously. The status that poetry enjoyed so far in England at the hands of Richards was destined to be questioned and replaced with another literary genre but the educational and instructional role of literature and literary criticism remained there. F. R. Leavis – another Cambridge academic – emphasized the importance of the study of the novel. So, Bertens (2008) maintains that "Leavis elevated this interest into a programme. Moreover, he significantly expanded its scope, arguing that literary criticism, and in particular criticism of the novel, provided the best imaginable basis for criticizing contemporary culture" (p. 17).

The 'discipline' that Richards might have envisioned and propagated, now seems to have turned into a 'programme' in the hands of Leavis. The force that the words 'discipline' and 'programme' carry in their bosoms highlight not only the significance of 'close reading' that once was, but their importance echoes also in some modern literary trends where the 'ism' suffix seems to have turned into disciplinary and programmatic thoughts which can be seen reflected in various literary theories.

In England, despite the generic shift in interest of the literary academics, the method of analysis of the text remained 'close reading.' In due course of time, this textual interest with its instructional aspects travelled across the Atlantic to the United States where, in the words of Bertens (2008), the close reading methodology became closer and closer in the hands of the New Critics as compared to its focus on the text that Richards and Leavis promoted in England. Hence, the New Critics, by removing the authorial intentions and readers' responses from the scene, restricted the study of literature to the analysis of techniques and strategies which the poems employed for delivering their paradoxical effects.

American academics – John Crow Ransom, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, and Cleanth Brooks – followed their English counterparts in four important respects. First, they embraced the concept of 'close reading' as the only valid methodology of reading. Second, they saw in poetry an antidote for the social malaise. Third, according to Tyson (2006), "The text itself" became the battle cry of the New Critical effort to focus our attention on the literary work as the sole source of evidence for interpreting it" (p. 136). Fourth, Bertens (2008) maintains that the New Critics were also apprehensive of the contemporary world like their English colleagues as they saw around them a world driven by a desire for profit in which the so-called triumphs of modern science, in combination with capitalistic greed, threatened to destroy tradition and everything that was not immediately useful – including poetry . . . the New Critics, then, saw poetry as a means of resisting commodification and superficiality (p. 17).

Why and how poetry could serve as a method and means of 'resisting commodification and superficiality' can well be understood through Fekete's (1997) account of the definition of a poem which according to John Crowe Ransom is "a small version of our natural world in its original dignity . . . like a democratic state . . . which realizes the ends of a state without sacrificing the personal character of its citizens" (p. 193).

The poetic text perceived as a 'natural world' would certainly have an appeal for the American academics in a time when society was experiencing great changes because of industrial revolution. The striking similarities between Richards and New Critics with an emphasis on the 'text-itself' was prompted by the common fear which, according to North (2013), was the result of a romantic sense that the growing industrial modernity was posing through series of threats to the flow and richness of their cultural life. Both, therefore, remained vigilant to the dangers hidden in giving importance to the context of a text.

Whether or not, the advocates of 'close reading' could harness the threats posed by the mass culture and bring the desired changes in the society by changing the mindset of a great number of people, is an important question to be asked and answered. One thing is but sure that they were committed to their cause and had formed a high opinion of themselves with respect to the life as it was and how it should be. It is, therefore, pointed by Bertens (2013) that for half a century a vast majority of the literary analysts on either side of the Atlantic had started seeing themselves as the elected, intellectual, and moral elites whose central task was to protect the life in its fullness of human experience. Although it appears to be a romantic view about the apostles of the 'close reading' technique, the way they tried to use literature and literary criticism testifies Bertens claim.

4. Criticism on 'Close Reading'

'Close Reading' as discussed above though enjoyed great respect during its day, yet with the passage of time, it was criticized on numerous grounds. For example, Bialostosky (2006) raises a deep concern about this method by taking into considerations a number of situations. He thinks that even if close attention is paid to a text, it does not even guarantee a minimal smallest amount of understanding or response. He expresses that we can be carefully attentive to an utterance of any language which could not even be translated, or it might be that we could succeed in decoding the words carefully but putting together the sentences might not be possible, or that we might also understand the sentences and still could not get the drift of the speaker, or even that we might get the drift but do not know how to respond to that. Or in yet another situation, we might get the drift and might also know the ways of responding to it without being attentive to the words and sentences. And this was perhaps the reason that the New Critics expected their readers to keep reading too minutely and deeply till the hidden meanings cloaked under the symbols or themes could be brought to the surface, primarily, for the institutional demands.

One, therefore, notices that the method was used to study closely the words on the page and the purpose was to appreciate the power that the literary language enjoyed. However, it suffered a bad press and since 1980's, according to Day (2008), it has been "dismissed variously as narrow, a – historical and even fetishistic because it concentrates on part of a work rather than whole it has been more or less abandoned" (p. 300).

On the other hand, Schneider (1997) shares a view that New Criticism exposed itself "to routinization, a prospect which left its poet-creators disconcerted" (p. 250). Similarly, the readings directed towards noting the power of literary language, looking at the text for themes alone and finding symbols in it were criticized because Beehler (2008) notes that

such "close" readings were leading to "closed" readings. . . because Professor X had argued so convincingly for a Freudian meaning in D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, the case was closed and any other readings were simply "wrong." . . . A further consequence of this trend was the growing belief that only a select few, the academic elite, could hope to find satisfaction in reading a work of literature: unless one could discover a "true" meaning, there wasn't much point in wasting time with such a work" (p. 39).

The idea that the text could be the domain of only the 'select few' for discovering the 'true' meaning alludes to a powerful notion that art has a colonizing capacity and by this virtue, according to Fox (2012)

Art is not just taken away from the people, it is taken away and then forced back upon them as a means of control," and that "someone or something – the author, the text, or the critic – must control the reader's comprehension of the text (p. 238, 239).

The notion of controlling the readers' comprehension of the texts also seems resonating in Wolf's (2009) statement when the technique of the closeness of reading appears to him as a kind of the politics of "containment." The reasons traced behind this regulatory politics are quite noteworthy that after the devastating historic events like European fascism and World War II. The American academics, intellectuals and politicians wanted to place this troublesome history to the margins of American life. And, in the eyes of Wolf (2009), "the New Criticism may have been, in some ways, an unacknowledged treatment for post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSS) of the Holocaust and Hiroshima" (p. 8).

Similarly, North's (2013) views also, indirectly, show the authoritative mechanism hidden behind the close reading methodology as it was practiced in the United States of America where, instead of educating the readers, the purpose of close reading for a great period of time was but the admiration of the texts only. Another account of the 'close reading' is also worth noting when Moretti (2000) says that "the trouble with close reading . . . is that it necessarily depends on an extremely small canon . . . At bottom, it's a theological exercise" (p. 57). This shows that the method under discussion had become a tool in the hands of its pioneers for controlling the readers as well as the meanings. What possibly might have been the reason behind this mind set can be understood through the words of Fox (2012) who points towards the power of the text and literature and its influence on the readers by saying that "we are swept away by the text, our real world commitments made to vanish in its imaginative potential," so "literature would seem to infect its readers with certain values and beliefs without their notice" (p. 240).

There is also criticism on the New Criticism and the practice of 'close reading' because, according to Colas (2007), they are thought "to be strongly identified, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, as not only outdated but also as stifling and reactionary" (p. 189). Similarly, Robinowitz (1992) makes a case against this reading practice through a different but important aspect when he maintains that 'reading' is "a very general term for a vast number of significantly different kinds of activity. But by privileging close reading, we profoundly reduce this multiplicity" (p. 232).

5. Reappraising 'Close Reading'

Despite severe criticism, the 'close reading' technique has survived the test of time. To say that it had never stopped at any point of time in the study and interpretation of literature will not be wrong. Or to say further that 'close reading' is still practiced worldwide for understanding literary genres holds a good ground. The debated term, in the words of Fisher and Frey (2013), is resurfacing again as "Close reading has received a great deal of attention over the past few years" (p. 30). Similarly, Bialostosky's (2006) argument that "Gayatri Spivak and Camille Paglia have touted "close reading" in recent books" (p. 114) further highlights the rising significance of the method. On the other hand, Rabinowitz (1992) presents a view that "for critics who care all about authors, for instance, close reading entails a questionable notion of the psychology of the creator" (p. 231). Likewise, Murray (1991) also seems to be making a case for the method in the words that "the close reading remains although many of its premises have been questioned" (p. 204).

Making a case for 'close reading,' in the contemporary multi-voiced canon of literary criticism in the light of its history and the criticism leveled against it, appears to be a daunting task. But its own deficiencies, in its historical context, open vistas of advancement for a reading which can be called 'close.' It seems difficult to disagree with the thought that whenever we are agreeing or disagreeing with somebody on any particular issue through any mode of communication, within or outside the academic discipline, we are consciously or unconsciously creating new modes of understanding things. This developmental phase entails leaving or adopting certain ideas with varying degrees until we succeed in fashioning or re-fashioning a new or an old idea. The entire process of this deliberation, however, gives birth to something which characteristically embraces newness of its own. The ideas of Wolf (2009) that "Knowledge is a matter of accretion as well as revision" (p. 3) is, therefore, the same basic tool or principle that one finds working behind the forceful thought process which always remains at work in every discipline and profession

including the literary academy. Building, perhaps, on this premise, the frontiers of 'close reading' from its historic conception to the futuristic borders - the borders that are and the borders that shall be - can further be expanded. Wolf (2009), therefore, points very wisely that the "Close reading... the method contained within its own terms the possibility of revision and expansion, the possibility of connecting life and literature" (p. 12). This relationship between life and literature, to use the words of Colas (2007), may make one observe that "our relationship with things exceeds the relationship available to us through "knowing,"" (p. 172) and this itself alludes to the revisionary and expansionary nature of things, especially the reading processes we are familiar with. Another schema or idea that works behind our understanding of things and advancing towards new dimensions during any prevalent reading practices can be found in the statement of Moretti (2000) that "We know how to read texts, now let's learn how not to read them" (p. 57). The distance between the process of knowing 'how to read texts,' and 'how not to read them' is increased and decreased through knowledge and knowledge knows no bounds. The knowledge that is being advocated here is, though, the literary knowledge which, according to Simpson (2013), is "dependent on recognition. We know because we knew. Literary cognition is fundamentally a matter of re-cognition" (p. 25), yet one cannot confine the recognition process to the literary studies alone. It is this spirit of the re-cognition of knowledge that makes readers and critics familiar with the accretion of newer dimensions of meanings, explanations, interpretations, evaluations, judgments, and approaches to the phenomenon of literary studies. Literary art, therefore, in the opinion of Schneider (1997) "is inventive and novel," and that "if criticism is an art, it can't. . . be routinized" (p. 250). Almost similar thoughts find their reflection in the words of Barth (1984) who emphasizes that "artistic conventions are liable to be retired, subverted, transcended, transformed, or even deployed against themselves to generate new and lively work" (p. 205). Literary inquiry, by this virtue, has been yielding new frontiers of knowledge and this process is essentially linked with what we call critical thinking. It shows that the knowledge that literature and literary criticism contain, because of their roots in words borrowed from the worlds - both fictional and real - help in producing critical thinkers. A critical thinker, according to Sanavi and Tarighat (2014) "is a better language learner" (p. 84) and the language learning cannot flourish when ideas are contained and controlled.

A hurdle, however, that many readers confront during the process of re-cognition of cognition, transformation and transcendence of thought, and hence, inventory ways is that they become victims, knowingly or unknowingly, of traditional thoughts and approaches that are in vogue in various studies, especially the literary study. Simpson (2013) perhaps alludes to this mindset that "our experience of reading . . . is habitual and idealist," and this is why that "As interpreters, we depend on prejudices that produce recognition of already existing truths" (p. 25). Much of our rationality, hence, seems to have been conditioned by what has been said or written in the past. The dictum 'old is gold' resonates in one's mind. Bialostosky (2006) seems to have been supporting this viewpoint as he stresses that "We cannot expect to displace habitual and institutionalized practices with solo performances, however virtuoso they might be" (p. 115). Bialostosky's argument, however, discourages newness which is the trademark of basic research that is carried on in any field, especially literary studies. Instead, he upholds the old practices which run the risk of routinization by being too close to be closed. By making a case for the 'habitual and institutionalized practices', Bialostosky alludes indirectly to yet another important point that this approach yields a thinking which is far better than an effort which is exploratory and novel in nature. Also, the institutionalization of the reading practices in the literary academy is

like institutionalizing literature which, to use the words of Colas (2007), seems to be "the failure of literature, especially, to live up to the emancipatory claims" (p. 203). Moreover, Fahim and Masouleh (2012) are also against this traditional approach towards reading as they emphasize that "better thinking is not a necessary outcome of traditional, discipline-based instruction" (p. 1370). It appears also from this argument that traditionalists want the 'habitual and institutionalized practice' to control and keep the thinking process in their own hands but Spivak (2006) believes that "thinking is a link that may turn up for a reader the writer cannot necessarily imagine" (p. 1609). Spivak's argument breaks the shackles of traditionalism and bespeaks indirectly of critical thinking which according to Fahim and Masouleh (2012) is "the ability of thinkers to take charge of their own thinking" (p. 1374). Here an important discussion can be raised that how and why traditionalism becomes a barrier in our way towards new heights of knowledge. This thought is succinctly explained by Morris and Krajewski (1980) who are of the opinion that "it's easier it seems to looking backward and to hang on to tradition than it is to look forward," we therefore, "need to redesign thinking and behaving" (p. 130). This shows that the development, in any discipline, depends upon the process of redesigning thinking. And the failure to redesign thinking, may give birth to ideas as shared by Culler (2000) that "once upon a time, literature meant above all poetry" (p. 82). So, Culler's views about literature, in the absence of critical thinking, could be equated with the process of 'Close reading' as its history tells us that it was limited to the study of poetry, necessarily, of a short piece of text, within the four walls of the text sans all extra textual details with controlled readings and readers. This is why that the characteristics of 'close reading' were found to be closed in spirit in that readers had, always, to undergo the same cycle of thought process, which appeared to be against the human nature and which instead of being dynamic proved stagnant. How people of different feelings, thoughts, sensations and behaviors could be expected to (have) behave(ed) in the same fashion when, according to Dawes (1995), by human nature, "we refer to human behavior, thoughts and feelings, and possibly normative beliefs and striving," and that behavior is "a joint function of nature and situation" (p. 82). A text, therefore, can both serve as a nature and situation as it is the product of a linguistic experience more refined and elevated which interacts with the readers or critics of different natures. And the nature and situation, of the text and the reader, can only rarely be in accord with each other. The nature of only counted few would remain unaffected by the surrounding environment or situation; otherwise almost everybody is affected by it, and the degree and intensity of the affect may vary from person to person. Some environments and situations can have sweeping effects too. So, this methodology might have served its cause during its day but the limitations it had set for itself had made it a closed practice of reading instead of being close in the literal sense of the meaning. The word 'close' needs to be defined and understood for a broader understanding of the 'close reading' that is the driving force behind this research. Hornby (2010) defines it as "careful and thorough" (p. 276); and for Schwartz (1994) it means "thorough, detailed; rigorous, careful" (p. 324). Similarly, Merriam-Webster's online dictionary defines it as "very precise and attentive to details" (n.d). On the other hand, Britannica online dictionary explains the word close as "maintained or achieved by virtue of unrelaxing scrutiny, acute discernment, and exacting minuteness: strict, rigorous," and "marked by careful or searching attention to details and their relationships or by consideration of or familiarity with details" (n.d.). All these senses of the word 'close' are adjectival in nature, and all share a common sense which is in-depth and minute. Such a minute look, study, investigation, or analysis of any literary text, therefore, unmask either the naivety or the narrowness of the minds of the advocates of the historic method as they tried consciously or unconsciously to narrow down such a broad natured methodology as 'close reading.' The journey of the 'close' reading has

thus not yet finished and may never finish as with each passing day the closeness to the text, in terms of the prevalent and evolving responses and approaches, will take on newer and newer shapes. Leaving aside the limits and the limited sense of the study of the short piece of poetry, the 'close reading' might be applied in different fields in order to find new meanings. It also brings extra textual details in terms of the context into account and assigns an active role to the reader as against the passivity that once characterized the readers of the method.

6. Findings of the Study

Historically speaking, the 'close reading' methodology was the only valid reading during its heyday although it confined both the texts and the readers to the four walls of the page. But etymologically speaking, it is still valid and shall remain valid because it ensures the expansion of knowledge and perceptions about it. By this virtue, it appears to be an antidote to the intellectual malaise of controlling both the meanings and the minds. The study further reveals that the text, context and readers all are independent on each other with varying influences. This is the reason that the contemporary scholarship needs to scrutinize this traditional approach towards the texts to see that neither the text nor the context is falsified. Besides, a real 'close reading' could pose a considerable challenge to the 'programmatic' spirit of the historical method which seems to be running, consciously or unconsciously, behind the modern literary theories. This further shows that the reappraisal of this age-old methodology could put an end to the instructional and institutional demands and can also dilute the colonizing spirit which it carried in the hands of Richards and New Critics. And because traditionalism becomes a barrier in our way towards new heights of knowledge, so the revision of this methodology by opening new vistas of advancements in textual perceptions will further ensure and increase the multiplicity of readings as well as meanings. This study further postulates that the need to redesign thinking and behaving is since consistent and in consonance with human nature so the reappraisal of the 'close reading' methodology could be a leap towards furtherance of existing knowledge in different discipline, especially the literary studies.

6. Conclusion

The study shows that the method of close reading of the text, especially poetry, started in England under special circumstances by Richards who wanted to use literature as an aesthetic educational tool. The method, in its full spirits, was transported also to the United States of America where the New Critics used it to achieve their own objectives. While analyzing the short pieces of lyrical poetic texts, both, Richards and the New Critics withheld all the extra textual information and advocated focus on the linguistic and rhetorical devices of the selected textual pieces. The methodology flourished as a discipline. It turned into a program in the hands of F. R. Leavis who gave it a new turn by advocating the study of novel through the method because this genre could be used as a criticism of contemporary culture. Since the advocates of the method considered themselves as the only elected, intellectual, and moral elites, so the method amassed criticism and it was declared as narrow, limiting, and colonizing.

But there is a need to re-examine and explore the method again as it has a great potential to study the literary texts of different genres. By doing so, one can reduce the chances of narrowing down the texts which are potentially vast enough to open new worlds of meanings. This is all the more important in the light of a thought-provoking argument which, besides warning us to be cautious towards knowledge, guides us also towards its new heights and dimensions, and it says that "we

always pay a price for theoretical knowledge: reality is rich; concepts are abstract, are poor" (Moretti, 2000, p. 57, 58).

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