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## Re-Thinking Theory: A Study of Literary Criticism

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### ABSTRACT

The following is an archival work of the syllabi using the method of English Studies in the field of literary criticism. It does not claim to be an authority on it but is simply opens up the question of how the idea of literary criticism has been shaped in academia.

### Introduction, Objective and Research Question:

English studies are an academic discipline that includes the study of literatures written in the English language, English linguistics and English sociolinguistics. More broadly, English studies explores the production of and analysis of texts created in English (or in areas of the world in which English is a common mode of communication). It is common for academic departments of "English" or "English Studies" to include scholars of the English language, literature (including literary criticism and literary theory), linguistics, law, journalism, composition studies, the philosophy of language, literacy, publishing/history of the book, communication studies, technical communication, folklore, cultural studies, creative writing, critical theory, disability studies, area studies (especially American studies), theatre, gender studies/ethnic studies, digital media/electronic publishing, film studies/media studies, rhetoric and philology/etymology, and various courses in the liberal arts and humanities, among others.

But in the wake of what is termed as the 'Crisis in English Studies' the whole discipline has come under question not only in terms of its definition but also its scope of study like cultural studies, Criticism and Theory etc. The aim of this paper is to explore the dynamics of the site of

Conflict in the discipline of Literary Criticism and Theory on the basis of an examination of the syllabi of the same

### Scope and Methodology:

This paper will examine the curriculum and texts being taught in the department under the titles like "History of Literary Criticism", "Theory of Literary Criticism", "Modern Literary theory and Criticism", "History of Criticism and Theory" etc.

The method of examination will be a quantitative analysis of the data mentioned from which observations will be drawn and studied on the basis of the framework provided by works of Suvir Kaul "The Indian Academic and Resistance to Theory" and Chris Baldick's "The Social Mission of Criticism".

### Observations:

A quantitative analysis of the data reveals that the structure of syllabus both at undergraduate and post-graduate levels has remained the same both at the undergraduate and at post graduate levels with changes being made over-time in the texts being taught at a gap of every three to five years. The basic structure however is that at the undergraduate level the texts which are being taught offer a historical account of the discipline of Literary Criticism right from ancient

Greek criticism to the present Post-Modern areas like New-Historicism, its basic concepts, critical terms, and formation of English critical texts and critical traditions with the exception of syllabus from 2004-07 where one unit was dedicated to practical criticism. While at the Post Graduate level the papers of Literary Criticism and Theory include works of individual critics and authors divided either chronologically or genre wise on the basis of the policy of Board of Studies The detailed analysis further reveals that the had a unit dedicated to the 'Indian Poetics and Theories' which was absent in any of the earlier syllabuses and was later removed. An optional paper at post-graduate level in the fourth year is dedicated to practical criticism which includes Feminist, Psychoanalytic and Structuralist approaches and their application in poetry. There has been noted an absence of application of such approaches to prose texts. Also earlier the syllabus followed an annual pattern of designing wherein the whole course was taught in an entire academic year and was evaluated at the end of the year by a single examination. But later on with the introduction of Choice Based Credit System(CBCS) as a pattern of teaching and evaluation of students has divided the academic year into two semesters with two examinations being conducted at the end. Hence the papers on Literary Criticism and Theory to have been divided into two papers I and II with Four Units respectively. Also, since than the paper includes a fourth self-study unit a feature which was absent in the annual pattern.

The study also seems to be suggesting that students might find it quite challenging with the significant presence of western critical texts and theories, which might alienate the readers and students from the discipline coupled with all the technical language, and neologisms of especially the Structuralist and Psychoanalytic theories. One scholar gave their view on Literary Criticism and Theory. The views were that this paper has been kept at various levels because it begins always at the beginning right from Aristotle and newer concepts keep on adding. It was not possible to have all this under one paper. "It gives us critical abilities not just in literature but also in life, develops our critical sensibility and critical thinking

but with an attitude of questioning." Finally there is a laments of the lack of Indian Poetics and Theories, its perspectives and ideas in the syllabus which she suggests can be done by keeping any exhaustive anthology on Indian Criticism and Poetics in Syllabus.

Another scholar who has a taught this paper since 1998 at regular intervals also gave their views. The response was that they did not find any such major change in the structure of the syllabus over the period of time and that "it has remained same and monolithic and has now become obsolete in the sense that the contemporary areas of study like 'The New Media Studies' and 'Digital Humanities' which have been around for about the past thirty years have not yet found place in our syllabuses". However, they did point that "this particular paper was one of few in the country which has a separate section on English studies as a disciplinary self-reflection and introduction of areas like Post-Colonial studies here make it more relevant to the Indian context". Talking about the reception of the paper among students they said mostly that they have found this paper "challenging and boring". Finally commenting on the practical application of this paper "Its significance has increased in terms of applicability after the introduction of projects in higher education.

Another scholar who has also taught both theory and practical papers on criticism commented that "This course was designed to bridge a gap between the theory and practice of criticism which we have achieved. The lacuna which they find is the division of the paper into theory and praxis which makes it difficult for them to first teach theory than go to praxis. Hence it might be easier if both these papers were combined under a single core paper." Commenting on the differences between the teaching strategies of this paper in India and West they respond "A lot of difference is encountered in the teaching of this paper everywhere in the world. In the west, the students undertake active learning and their contribution is lot more than in Indian classrooms where they have to teach basics of theory than the practice. Here, passive learning takes place; hence suddenly students find it difficult to perform active practical

learning.” Another problem which teacher face according to her is especially practical criticism papers “The lack of application of isms to prose passages. The system might restrict such prolonged applications hence if the literary criticism and theory papers were combined and restricted to maybe one or two isms the application can be more exhaustive.” Commenting on the lack of Indian Poetics one scholar comments “We should have Indian Poetics and Theories at least at post graduate levels as students responded much better to them.”

The final observation is that the earlier syllabus seemed to be more exhaustive, process oriented and there was a deeper engagement and understanding with the texts whereas the current pattern seems more evaluative and product oriented.

#### **Resistance to Theory: An Overview of Indian Academia and Pedagogy:**

The position of literary theory and criticism in Indian academia is quite complex. It is a site of a major conflict about acceptance and rejection of the western concepts of literary theory. This filters directly into the site of what post-colonial critics have called the ‘crisis of English studies’. A major position of such Indian academicians like Suvir Kaul is that of resistance to literary theory and an attempt of creating an alternative pedagogy in Indian classroom in his “ The Indian Academic and Resistance to Theory”. It serves an entry point in the study of an ambivalent position of literary theory in India. Kaul’s position is that most members of Indian university and college departments ignore the entire production of contemporary literary and critical theory. They reject any examination of the ideology and history of their academic activity. For traditional academics, this is justified in the name of Arnoldian and Leavisite models of literary and cultural values. For younger academics, this is the result of the restricted exposure to the curriculum and pedagogy that celebrates certain concepts and rejects all other social, philosophical and historical concerns. Most Indian academics and students of Indian literature are concerned with largely giving

demoralized lectures, taking examinations and sticking to guide-books of Kunjis for model answers.

Teachers are less interested in recent theoretical examinations of the problems and presuppositions of literature and pedagogy. They are encouraged to develop a strictly professional, non-academic and anti-intellectual and sterile concern with the syllabus dictated to them by university authorities. They do not choose their classroom texts, structure of their courses etc. which more or less completes their alienation. For Kaul however it is this very alienation that can generate productive energies provided its pedagogic forms are recognized and its historical, socio-cultural and institutional co-relatives articulated and made part of English studies. Here theory is of greatest consequence. For theoretical inquiries are sustained inquiries into value-laden assumptions-cultural, ideological, psychological-that structure and lend coherence to any academic discipline. In the case of criticism in India, to think theoretically is to think about the historical and pedagogic issues for there is no escaping the colonial provenance of the subject, nor of the fact that the discipline was born of the imperial need to engender the deracinated colonial subject and to facilitate the centralized administration of the colonial state. Theorizing the disciplinary history and historicizing the theoretical can be the twin routes for a more academically viable and intellectual version of the subject.

Kaul’s claim is that discipline entails intellectual and institutional coercion. Teachers discourage students from reading certain writers and engage them only in particular issues. The courses on Literary Criticism and critical approaches to literature stop with T.S Eliot and his ‘Tradition and Individual Talent’ or ‘What is a Classic?’ These academicians who do not read critical theory think to deny its value or relevance. They who insisted earlier that the Marxist readings of cultural texts belonged to sociology and not literature now see in the entire complex internally differentiated and contestatory corpus of theory a single repudiation of all the glories of the high cultural literary tradition. Those who have been teaching a catechism based on the dogmas of ‘negative

capability', 'primary and second imagination', 'spontaneous overflow of powerful emotion recollected in tranquillity' now claim it impossible to read the jargon and the neologisms of deconstructive and psychoanalytic, Marxist and feminist theories. The critical vocabularies of Arnold, Leavis and Eliot are taken as pre-discursive and self-evident as belonging to no histories and staking no ideological positions. There are virtues of universal concern, trans-historical and cultural meaning and value. Any other critical vocabularies especially those that derive their fundamentals from disciplines other than literature and which are of comparatively recent provenance and thus demand an extra effort to lean are rejected as motivated and partisan. The decline and dismissal of theory has to do with wilful ignorance, an academic prejudice and intellectual sloth and less with an engaged, informed and rigorous response to or rebuttal of competing ideas. What is lacking is a fundamental seriousness or integrity of academic purpose.

While there are some academics in Indian universities whose postgraduate studies in progressive departments of literature have trained them in the various forms of theoretical enquiry, it will be a tremendous overstatement to claim that it is solely or largely their efforts which are challenging the ideologies dominant in these departments. This theory debate is combined with the efforts to broaden syllabi to include courses in Indian Writing in English, Commonwealth literature, in African and Afro-American Literature etc. to modernize the departments. These decisions about the academic canon involve all the issues of language, race, gender, colonialism and the class co-ordinates of cultural production that have so energized theoreticians in the last two decades. It is not the theory that is at the root of demands to expand the curriculum. Such demands are most often the product of the exigencies of academic specialization and when such new courses are allowed they are usually taught in the same ways and communicate the same values as the earlier orthodox courses of English literature. The canon is occasionally expanded but the canonicity and the ideological formations of canon are rarely made the

explicit subjects of discussion and inquiry which the present project aims to do. Such an expansion of curriculum for Kaul does not interrogate but actually strengthens notions of the universal validity of those cultural and literary criteria which show the achievement of English literature. For Kaul to teach literary criticism as a way of rendering their very idea of literature problematic, as a way of acknowledging the historical contingency of ethical and social values, as a way of investigating the ways in which linguistic and semiotic systems construct, naturalise and thus mystify cultural meanings have not yet reached the top of the pedagogical and academic agenda in Indian Universities.

Kaul's case-study and a critical understanding of three essays: Jonathan Culler's 'Literary Theory in The Graduate Program', Paul De Man's 'The Resistance to Theory' and Homi Bhabha's 'The Commitment to Theory' as representative of recent attempts to examine institutional and ideological resistance to the analytical and intellectual priorities encouraged by literary theory with each of them arguing for the necessity of a continuous commitment to such revisionary strategies of reading serve as a counter-narrative for the site of crisis of English studies and literary theory in Indian classrooms. His argument that the assumptions and goals which motivate Culler, De Man and Bhabha enables only partially similar attempts by the Indian student of literature and culture sounds very convincing. His stand is that it is only through a critical engagement with such works that a specific sense of the historical and political dimensions of English and criticism in India will emerge. For the necessity of an alternative space of criticism the need is for the establishment of a critical dialectic that respects the protocols of theory even as it responds to the urgencies of our pedagogical practices and cultural situation.

Thus, our pedagogic crises for literary theory and criticism must emerge from the contradictions of our classroom experiences. Working out the nature of these experiences of alienation and belonging to literary theory and criticism is coming to terms with the historically and structurally overdetermined processes that

Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan has described in her 'Social Scientist' article, 'After Orientalism: Colonialism and English Literary Studies in India':

"Having been constructed unproblematically as members of the community of western readers or western texts we find ourselves as critics a) naturalised into the role of western type critics, b) suffering from a sense of inferiority or lack of worth as second order critics (lacking in true language facility, sufficient scholarship etc.) and c) experiencing a loss of natural identity and alienation from lived experience."

Such an analysis of criticism offers an alternative paradigm to deal with this self-marginalization by calling for a radical politicization of English literary studies both pedagogical and critical in India. The lived experiences of the relations of power and knowledge in our classrooms teach up about the conjunctions of power and knowledge outside of our classrooms and about the privileged and co-ordinating role English has had in the historical construction and continued perpetuation of those conjunctions.

#### **The Social Mission of English Criticism Revisited:**

The place of criticism and literary theory in the Indian pedagogy can also be studied and critiqued in terms of its utilitarian, ideological, cultural, socio-political and psychological functions. One such move was made by Chris Baldick in his "The Social Mission of English Criticism" which gives this topic its title. It has frequently been argued that the study of English literature is in "crisis." At the same time, so broadly has the literary institution become naturalized in education that it is rarely recognized just how recent is the emergence of "English" in its privileged curricular place, or how deeply its emergence, consolidation, and particular shape have from the beginning been entangled with the ideological structures, objectives, and fortunes of literary criticism. The novelty of contemporary literary disputes rests on the sharp challenges raised against the canons and traditional assumptions of both English Literature and literary criticism by a rising oppositional

network within the literary institution. This network links together dissident currents from structuralist, post structuralist, Marxist, feminist, and other non-canonical or pre-canonical quarters, writing on behalf of non-canonical or pre-canonical texts, audiences, and critical or theoretical models. As a result, the status, integrity, stability, and legitimacy of both the received canons of Literature and Criticism and also of the methodological assumptions pertinent to the procedures through which these canons are produced—indeed, the basic paradigmatic parameters of the object of knowledge and the modes of knowing on which the literary institution is established—have become subjected to increasingly vigorous and rigorous questioning.

Chris Baldick's frame places itself within this oppositional network, with the intention of denaturalizing established literary criticism and revealing it, within the period he examines (Arnold to the Leavises), as an ideological practice moving in what he considers an increasingly "conservative and obscurantist direction". This strategic decision is supported by two important tactical manoeuvres, designed to redress "shortcomings" in the oppositional posture. There is, first, an argument that the discipline of English studies should examine its own history, that is, attended to the historiography of criticism as an independent field which is not only not parasitic on literature (as secondary interpretation), but which is primarily constitutive of the judgments and procedures that account for the identification of what is Literature, especially English (read: National) literature. The mutations in the dominant meaning of "literature," as Raymond Williams and others have shown, display continual narrowing from the seventeenth century (when it referred to printed texts) through the nineteenth century (when it was restricted to imaginative works) through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (when it came to signify in particular the minority of texts legitimated by criticism as part of the canon of Literature, or even more narrowly, English Literature). Baldick's concern is with the final moments in this process of selective specialization, the moments when the modern English literary institution (Criticism, in its

pedagogic gloves, shaping the object, Literature) was being founded.

If this consolidation of a selective tradition were only an internal matter of literary studies, perhaps uncovering its logic and intentionality would have a scholarly significance of somewhat limited scope. But if critics are accepted as self-appointed authorities in social as well as literary comment, and if criticism is seen as responding to problems posed by society in a given historical moment, then the urgency of historiographic reconstruction is experienced with wider reference. Thus, Baldick's first tactical move is reinforced with a second: the argument to recognize literary criticism, at least in the founding period, as an unavoidably composite discourse, reaching economic, political, and judicial registers, and sustained by premising a continuity and drawing constant analogies (implicitly or explicitly) between the literary order and the social order. On this account, from Arnold to the Leavisites, the social, political, and religious interests of the literary critics simply cannot be isolated as separate pursuits from their literary criticism proper. Perhaps it is not overstressing the point to suggest that the broader strategic value of this kind of historiographic reconstruction of literary discourse as a social-ideological practice is to direct continuing attention, beyond the boundaries of the period that Baldick examines, to the dense imbrication of both social and literary interests in even the most professionally specialized variant articulations of the contemporary literary institution. In short, then, Baldick sets out to reconstruct the social objectives of the pioneer critics and educationalists who established modern English studies and to review their ideas on the social functions of criticism. He writes, in introduction: "My approach has been a deliberately unsophisticated attempt to drag back into the light the views taken by the founders of modern English studies and literary criticism regarding the wider social effects and aims of this activity; to restore to what is now a severely truncated vision of criticism's recent past those neglected but essential statements of its original purpose as an active participant in society". He will then be concerned to

find relationships between, for example, the new vocabulary of "culture" and the political/economic requirements of national unity and class reconciliation, that is, between the emergence of English studies with its increasingly sacred social mission to civilize, cultivate, in brief "to save us" (as Richards wrote), and the very profane interests of social order, political hegemony, class compromise, and cultural hierarchy

Chris Baldick complains that much of the current scrutiny of the ideological basis of English studies lacks historical awareness. His 'deliberately unsophisticated' account tries to show a persistent social mission underwriting the transformation of literary criticism into an academic discipline. Beginning with an analysis of Arnold, he goes on to describe the strange mixture of ideals in the movement to insert 'English' into the university curriculum before and during the Great War, and, in a sequence of chapters on Eliot, Richards, and 'the Leavisites', shows that their 'professionalization' of the subject enhances rather than transcends that mission. He does not claim to tell the whole story, and, within its self-imposed limits, the argument is important and just. Arnold's anti-philistinism is equally anti-intellectual: the 'evacuated realm of theory' is occupied by an 'innocent language' which has an analogous disinterested function to that of the state, preserving an order unviolated by disturbance or radical questioning. Between Churton Collins and Quiller-Couch, the pressure to make English a university subject shows a continued commitment to containment and conservation. Literature will civilize the working class, provide a womanly subject for the aspiring female, and carry gentility to the colonies. The war added a dimension of social unity ('immaterial communism') and patriotic fervour (the hostility to philology was strikingly anti-German). 'Practical Criticism', which emerged from the dominant post-war critics, becomes a means of preserving tradition, and, more importantly, of testing the elitist sensibility of the reader. The word 'criticism', Chris Baldick concludes, was usurped by a literary discourse whose attitude 'was at heart uncritical'. Though it is generally right-minded and locally often sharp, the work has many inadequacies. The

narrative adds little to D.J. Palmer's 'The Rise of English Studies (London, 1965)', and the analysis fails to take sufficient account of Francis Mulhern's 'The Moment of Scrutiny (London, 1979)'. Arnold's importance is much overrated; the immediate perception of his limitations by, for example, Dallas, Swinburne, and Pater (who is dealt with misleadingly as an Arnoldian appendage) is ignored. So is Symons, and the possibility of an entirely other critical method whose traces were disingenuously covered by Eliot's appropriation thus repressed in an overall picture which leaves the status of the orthodoxy unchallenged. As far as the post-war period is concerned, Richards, and to a lesser extent Rickword and Empson, are 'dragged' (to use Baldick's word) into a 'light' in which they are not so much clarified as subordinated to the convenience of the argument. That 'The Meaning of Meaning' should have an appendix on the founder of semiology, C. S. Peirce, that Milton's 'God and Culture and Society' should have come from this incorporation of criticism, ought to have alerted the author at least to the complexity of his subject. His historical naivety, ironically, reduces him to a limited empiricism. The 'social mission' is observable, but he does not show whether it is a fundamental condition of the practice he discusses. The writing itself is, too, a reflection of the ineffective radicalism of the 'unsophisticated' approach. We have to penetrate a veritable charnel-house of dead metaphors which are the linguistic causalities of indolent thought. 'The inauguration', he writes, 'of the modern epoch of wars and revolutions triggered, as one of its remote ripples, what one of its[?] participants described as the "Revolution in English Studies". The slack, muddled writing is pervasive and will convince no one who does not want to be convinced.

Baldick's study is a survey of the major developments in criticism from Arnold to the early F.R. Leavis. His stance does not seek to provide any dramatically new information on the subject but does view this critical tradition from a valuable and lesser-used perspective: Baldick reminds us that the development of English criticism is also the development of English studies in the university, and his work is a stimulating examination of how

"English" came to be what it is today. The early chapters, focusing on Arnold, are the weakest part, as they are often little more than a summary of Arnold's major ideas. Baldick describes Arnold's search for an "innocent language," one which would reveal the critic's disinterestedness clearly, and Arnold's developing view of culture and education as being nearly synonymous, both being the necessary civilizing force for the individual. Baldick then surveys some of the lesser-known figures from the generation after Arnold who took the argument to the next stage: the best "civilizing force" in England, they argued, is the study of English literature. World War I helped strengthen the argument, as wartime fervor and nationalism helped make English literature seem more of a central subject. Baldick is particularly good at developing for the modern reader the cultural context of wartime Oxford and Cambridge. He traces, for example, the steps by which philology came to be relegated to a much-diminished role in English studies; its power was weakened by its being so closely associated with "Teutonic" culture. His stance on T.S. Eliot concludes that his direct influence on the development of criticism was weakened by his inability to tie in with the developments in literary education. This may be true, but still it is hard to imagine Eliot as having been any more influential than he was without that tie-in. The work on I.A. Richards, though, is excellent because, again, Baldick recreates so well the social and educational context of Richards' work. The direct effects of practical criticism are traced, and we can see that Richards' major contribution was in giving the non-philologists a definable set of materials for their discipline, some concrete material to teach and examine. The Leavises are seen as the next development. Ezra Pound's statement that literary study can be "the best possible training for intelligence" was taken up by the Leavises, and the university and now, specifically, the English Department was seen to have a major, almost evangelical role to play in modern society. Literary criticism could no longer be considered something for the specialist, but was now to be virtually identified with the formation of (in Pound's words again) "free, unspecialised,

general intelligence." Training in criticism is training in thinking. Baldick's study is somewhat disappointing in that it pays almost no attention to the role the periodical press played in strengthening the public's perception of English literary study as an important, practical part of everyone's education. That story remains to be told, but in the meanwhile, Baldick's is, on the whole, an excellent contribution to the history of English studies, a history we need to be very familiar with if we are to understand our present.

A major aspect of current ferment in literary studies has been the reassessment of dominant traditions - that was associated in the U.S. with the "New Criticism" and in Britain with Q. D. and F. R. Leavis. Given the structuralist impetus of much of the new work, and given structuralism's antagonism to history as an explanatory mode, it is not surprising that reflexivity has often resulted in schematic and indiscriminating historical accounts. But there has also been work which has related the rise literary criticism both to the historical context in which it occurred and to the wider history of ideas. (One thinks, for example, of Francis Mulhern's *The Moment of "Scrutiny."*) Chris Baldick's 'The Social Mission of English Criticism' is a valuable addition to this latter group. Chris Baldick has set himself the task of examining the rise of the English Studies Movement from the moment when Matthew Arnold identified a social function for criticism to the foundation of 'Scrutiny' and the early work of the Leavises. He thus documents the process by which Coleridge's clerisy came to be appropriated by the practitioners of literary studies. The main axis of Baldick's study rests upon Arnold, Pater, Eliot, I. A. Richards, and the Leavises. But also, he brings out the influence upon the movement of World War I and its aftermath, devoting suggestive sections to the report of the Newbolt Commission (*The Teaching of English in England*), and to the work of a number of figures now little known to students of literature. His approach to intellectual history does not overlook the complex dialectical relations between theoretical discourse and other historical forces. Thus, he gives prominence to the university extension movement, the beginnings of higher

education for women, the requirements of the imperial civil service, and the nationalist fervour of the war years. He sensitively indicates the implications of each for the development of English Studies. Above all, Baldick demonstrates how figure after figure made an unmediated theoretical shift from society to psyche in identifying harmony attained in the individual mind (largely through disciplined contact with great writing) with social harmony: the transcendence of class and economics. (From Arnold to the Leavises the material base of culture tends to be discounted as "machinery.") An underlying theme of their work was thus the fear that the state and the traditional forces of social control were no longer potent to contain working-class unrest and social disintegration. Literature was the new gospel of a secular yet unified society, and literary education the "terrain of resistance" to historical trends.

Baldick justifiably draws attention to the "ridiculousness of literary culture's ambitions for bringing about social change". But the claim implicit in this frame is that literary studies cast in an approximately Leavisite mould have acquired a major role in the educational and thus the social scene. Were they a political intervention or were they not? And if not, what significance have books on the literary elite and its ambition? One route towards demonstrating that significance might lie through making more use than Baldick does of theories of hegemony. As he demonstrates, the Leavis project was to develop and bond together in a common pursuit a "minority," an elite raised on the study of major texts who would go forth and do battle with false "mass cultural" values. It is on the presumption that the self-recognition of the elite was the primary aim that we should understand the Leavises' distaste for theory, their appeal to self-evidence, to sensibility, to assumed common values. But the success of the campaign was to say the least ambiguous. On the one hand 'Scrutiny' successfully infiltrated tertiary education, the colleges of education, and on the other, its discourse turned out to be less than critical of the structures of wealth in society. The meaning of this ambiguity - and indeed of the project as a whole - might be more fully graspable if Baldick's work

were set alongside that of Renee Balibar on the development of the national language and the national literary tradition in France. Baldick's excellent work, "A Civilizing Subject" could suggestively be developed by cross-reference to a linguistic imperialism not simply international (look at the role of language and literature in India) but between regions and sociolects in Britain. One way to extend Baldick's work would be sociological - to describe the spread of literary criticism through the educational apparatus, to account for the differences of practice which arose in different sectors, and to speculate on how those practices contributed to wider cultural processes.

### **Conclusion**

The area of criticism and that of English studies is indeed under crisis with constantly changing dynamics and texts in terms of concepts and canons and trying to find its own space, identity and pedagogy in the Academia and classroom and meeting with resistance and reticence leading to the marginalization and alienation of the reader/student.

This paper does not claim to be the sole authority on the dynamics of literary theory and English studies in academia. What it tries to do is to open up the question of resistance and alienation from literary theory and criticism in India and to highlight various entry points of study of the same.

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