

A STUDY ON WOLFGANG ISER: THE ACT OF READING AND ARTISTIC RESPONSE BY READERS

ANU ARORA

M. A. (ENG)

Abstract: Wolfgang Iser (b. 1926) is professor of English and comparative literature at the University of Constance, in Germany, and has taught at many universities in Europe and America. He and his colleague at Constance, Hans Robert Jauss, are the well-known exponents of a distinctively German school of modern criticism known as 'Reception Theory'. It was developed in Germany concurrently with the changes in French & Anglo-American criticism from a structuralist focus on the literary text to a post structuralist view of the text as a site for the formation & proliferation of meaning. It owes much to the philosophical tradition of phenomenology that started with Husserl, especially the aesthetics of the scholar Roman Ingarden and the hermeneutics of the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer – a custom which emphasized the focus of consciousness in all investigations of explanation. In his essay he explained the role of reader and scope of creativity for reader for his own illusions, interpretations. This manuscript aims attention at Wolfgang Iser's phenomenological access to reader acknowledgement, procreation of meaning & description of readers. This approach concentrates on the reader & his role in the making of an erudite attempt. The text does not subsist without the reader. Reader is an efficacious contributor in the production of elucidation.

Keywords: production of meaning, phenomenological, meaning, Reception Theory, , text, reader, interpretation, Reader-Response Theory, literary text, task of reading.

1. INTRODUCTION

This approach examines, perceives reader's task in production of explanation, elucidation. Text itself means nothing until someone reads it. Reading is an affair of secluded distinctiveness. This paper undertakes to contribute an comprehensive interpretation of Wolfgang Iser and quests into his Reception Theory in the following seven facets the elongation of signification, the indicative reader model; the functionalist model of text; performing the intentionality of reading ;literature & communication: interaction between text and reader; Iser's literary anthropology; and reception theory meets cognitive criticism.

Reader-response critics of all imaginative conversions agree that, at least to some reasonable degree, the meanings of a text are the "production", fructification or "explanation", definition of the individual reader, hence that there is no one correct meaning or creation for all readers either of the linguistic (phonetic, morphological, semantic, syntactical) parts or of the artistic whole of a text. French structuralist criticism, as Jonathan Culler said in *Structuralist Poetics* (1975), "is substantially a theory of reading " that targets to "specify define, determine how we go about making perception of texts ." (pp. viii, 128). Reader -response criticism coincides with the "post – structuralist "view of the text as a side for a seemingly endless proliferation and subversion of meaning. " –(Payne 456). Unlike Reader – response criticism, post structuralism does not assume "that all perception necessarily entails interpretation. "(Payne 456). The meaning of a text is never stable because It is constantly changing. Words only have meaning in relation to the other words around them. Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to compute it.

Fish analyses, interprets and averts, the role of the proficient" discursive association" of academic (erudite) critics in classical studies; he also augments his views of literary apprehension into the dominion of legitimate interpretation. In

augmentation to the captions considered in this essay, the following are remarkable epitomes of reader-response criticism: Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in "paradise lost"* (1967); Norman Holland, *The Dynamics of literary Response* (1968) and *Five Readers Reading* (1975); Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader* (1974) and *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (1978). Roland Barthes bring forward the famous announcement in "The Death of the author" in the 1960's. Iser's work in the realm of reception theory positions as his most eloquent contribution to literary theory. The experience of Iser's own quest for answers was the condemnation that the literary content as an instance for the creative had a function radically discrepant from other types of memoir and that in the text-reader relationship too much had been taken for-granted, or not taken into account at all, by traditional criticism. "A text should be understood as a reaction to the thought systems which it has chosen & incorporated in its own response." (Iser, 1978, p. 72) The literary text always take on a range of accessible intimations, According to Iser's opinion. According to Tompkins: Iser's Intentionality of the reading procedure, with its displacement from anticipation to reminiscence, it's making & unmaking of gestalts, like prince's taxonomy of readers & narrates, supports critics with a new repertoire of discursive devices and thus leads to light a new set of facts for surveillance and delineation.

2. WOLFGANG ISER: THE READING PROCESS

Iser's work has affinities with the so-called Geneva school of phenomenological criticism, whose doyen, Gorges poulet, he discusses at the end. Iser is less 'mystical', more 'scientific' than the Geneva critics in his manner of literary explanation. Indeterminacy is the way in which 'gaps' or 'blanks' in literary texts accelerate the reader to form meanings which would not otherwise come into existence. Author gives the text which is loosely threaded & it has many gaps reader has great scope for creativity, for illusions & interpretations. (positive/ negative). His phenomenological theory of art lays full emphasize on the fact that in acknowledging a literary work, one must take into consideration not only literary text but also& in equal measure the actions, works included in reacting to that work. This Roman In garden confronts the structure of the text with the ways in which it can be realized. Literary work has two poles -artistic & the aesthetic. Artistic refers to the text created by author and aesthetic refers to the realization accomplished by the reader. So a literary work cannot be completely identical with the text or with the realization of the text, but infact must lie halfway between two. It is the virtuality of the text that gives rise to its dynamic nature. Laurence Sterne in 'Tristram Shandy': no author, who understands the just boundaries of decorum and good – breeding, would presume to think all. The truest respect which you can pay to the reader 's understanding, is to halve this matter amicably, and leave him something to imagine, in his turn, as well as yourself. Sterne's conception of a literary text is that it is something like an arena in which reader and author participate in a game of the imagination. Reader while acknowledging the interpretations between past, present & future, actually causes the text to show its potential abundance of connections. A good text always give you feeling about verisimilitude. The process of anticipation & retrospection in any way does not Flourish in a smooth flow. Ingarden gives a prominent significance:

"once we are immersed in the flow of Satzdenken ; we are ready, after completing the thought of one sentence, to think about the 'continuation', also in the form of a sentence- and that is, in the form of a sentence that connects up with the sentence we have just thought through. . . . This hiatus is linked with a more or less active surprise, or with indignation. We may say that the reading process is selective, and the potential text is infinitely richer than any of its individual realizations. The reader may link the different phases of the text together, It will always be the process of anticipation & retrospection that leads to the formation of the virtual dimension. The literary text acts as a kind of mirror which reflects different interpretations, assumptions. In his essay, Iser has talked about time-sequence, paradoxical situation, recognition, indeterminacy, escapism, illusion, consistency, verisimilitude, recreation, tension, conception, deciphering, gestalt of the text, dialectical structure of reading, virtual dimensions, text & imagination, virtual dimensions, Illusion forming & illusion breaking, irony, repertoire, deciphering, willing suspension of disbelief, pre intentions, imagination, anticipation, retrospection, recognition . While reading Tom Jones, they may never have had a clear conception of what the Hero actually looks like, but on seeing the film, some may say, 'That's not how I imagined him. 'The point here is that the reader of Tom Jones is able to visualize the hero virtually for himself, & so his imagination senses the vast number of possibilities; the moment these possibilities are narrowed down to one complete & immutable picture. . . In this reading process, we have observed three important aspects that form the basis of the relationship between reader and text; process of anticipation & retrospection, the consequent unfolding of the text as a living event, and the resultant impression of lifelikeness. Poulet thinks regarding this –", Such is the characteristic condition of every work which I summon back into existence by placing consciousness at its disposal. I give it not only existence, but awareness of Existence. "The writer leaves a gap for reader's imagination. Text makes reader to interpret, to fill the gaps & blanks by evolving religion. Real

thinking is done by reader. Reader's interpretations and assimilations are most important than author's writing. According to Frantz Fanon (linguistics) – "To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture. The segment on which the view point focuses in each particular moment becomes the theme. The theme of one moment becomes the background against which the next segment takes on its actuality, and so on. Whenever a segment becomes a theme, the previous one must lose its thematic relevance & be turned into a marginal thematically vacant position, which can be & usually is occupied by the reader so that he may focus on the new thematic segment.

"Reader response in literary theory gestates a literary text as incomplete which accomplishes its plenitude only when it is read. Iser says that some elements of text are indeterminate & their meaning must be worked out by the reader." - Habib (728). Language manifests itself in the forms used to express meanings & it has inherent possibilities which are exploited by its users.

The contemporary critic of theorist Wolfgang Iser studies the phenomenological form of the reading process introduced by Roman Ingarden. However, there are enormous differences amidst the two. Ingarden just begets a general confession of the reading process; whereas Iser augments his study and administers his theory to many distinct literature works, even prose fiction. According to Iser, any literary text is a product of the writer's phenomenological deeds and, it partly commands the reader's response, however it involves a great accord of "gaps" or "indeterminate elements". In order to apprehend much better, the reader must take an progressive assistance & bid to fill in these apertures creatively, with the obsessed information in the text before him. The inclusive understanding experience thus emerges an evolving process of contemplation, grievance, reminiscence, reconstruction & compensation. Iser makes a difference amidst the inferred reader & the absolute reader. The implied reader is constituted within the text, and he is contemplated to acknowledge in many distinct ways to the "response - inviting structures" of the text. The actual reader, however, with his own peculiar acquaintances amalgamated little by little, his reactions veritably are unavoidably and sequentially changed & reassembled. The repertoire considers a dual capacity in Iser's model:

"It reshapes familiar schemata to form a background for the process of communication, & it provides a general framework within which the message or meaning of the text can be organised." - (Iser, 1978, p. 1) "They incorporate the immanent structure of the text & the acts of comprehension thereby triggered off in the reader." - (Iser, 1978, p. 86) "After all, the ultimate function of the strategies is to defamiliarize the familiar." - (Iser, 1978, p. 87). Lois Tyson writes: Reader-response theorists share two beliefs:

(1). That the role of the reader cannot be omitted from our understanding of literature & (2). That readers do not quietly absorb the meaning bestowed to them by an objective literary text, rather they actively make the meaning they find in literature. With retrospection, only more intricate associations can be formed "the reader in stabilizing these intercourses between past, existent & future literally considers the text to acknowledge its potential abundance of connections." Husserl's observation draws our attention to literary poles that plays a significant part in the process of reading, originally constructive process is inspired by pre-intentions. They also form an expectation in this regard. Husserl calls this expectation 'pre-intentions'. 'A literary text must be conceived in such a way that it will engage the reader's imagination in the task of working things out for himself, for reading is only a pleasure when creative & instinctive. According to George Steiner (linguistics) – "when a language dies, a way of understanding the world dies with it, a way of looking at the world."

It is an anti-realist theory of literature for in the realist text, the reader has rarely to recover or re-experience, where the reader is an emulative reader. It is like a sapient text to a common sensical reading under the assumption that a text has a single meaning of which Iser objects saying that meaning of a text is not a fixed, definable entity but a dynamic phenomenon. When, for instance, we say that a literary work is good or bad, we are making a value judgement. . . objective evidence for subjective alternatives does not make the value judgement itself detached but merely objectifies the preference.

Virginia Woolf's in her study of Jane Austen: 'Jane Austen is this a mistress of much deeper emotion than appears upon the surface. She stimulates us to supply what is not there. What she offers is, apparently, a trifle, yet is composed of something that expands in the reader's mind.' Walter Pater once observed: 'For to the grave reader words too are grave; and the ornamental word, the figure, the accessory form or colour or reference, is rarely content to die to thought precisely at the right moment, but will inevitably linger awhile, stirring a long "brainwave" behind it of perhaps quite alien association. "so in reading there are two levels-," the alien 'me' and the real, virtual' me- which are never completely cut off from each other. Philosophically sceptical approach to the potentiality of coherent meaning in language, inunciated by

the French philosopher Jacques Derrida in a series of works have printed in 1967 and approved by several leading literary critics either in United States from early 1970's & onwards. The readers claim is that the imperative westward attitude or deliberation, cogitation has aimed to setup the grounds of credence & verisimilitude by dejecting the limitless fluidity of a language. This "logo -centric" tradition caught some outright or guarantee/meaning which could counterpoise the uncertainties /assurances through a set of "violent echelons" prevailing a central term over a peripheral one: nature over culture, male over female and most dominantly speech over writing. The term "Differance" coined by the French Theorist of Deconstruction Jacques Derrida, suggesting the French verb "differer" which can mean either "to differ" or "to defer" implying postponement. Structuralism looks at the relationships between various elements within the self-contained, well organised structure of a text in order to understand the ways by which the text produces a meaning. proairetic (way to read a text), Hermeneutic (interpretation after reading). It focuses on various elements of text -voice, character, setting & their combinations. Jonathan Culler says – "there should be distinctiveness of literary structures, we have to see narrative is constituted of developed cultures. " Everybody writes same thing but there is difference in nationality & language according to their own ideas, intellect, emotions & state of mind.

Northrop Frye says " , Illusion is fixed or definable & reality is at best understood as its negation."

The world presented by literary texts is formed of what Ingarden has called intentionale Satzkorrelate : " Sentences link up in different ways to form more complex units of meaning that show a very varied structure giving rise to such entities as a short story, a novel, a dialogue, a drama, a scientific theory If this complex finally forms a literary work, I call the whole sum of sequent intentional sentence correlatives the 'world presented ' in the work. The 'picturing' that is done by our imagination is only one of the activities through which we form the 'gestalt ' of a literary text. The 'gestalt 'is not the true meaning of the text ; at best it is a configurative meaning;.

3. WOLFGANG ISER: "THE INTERACTION BETWEEN TEXT AND READER

Post- structuralism therefore is not an relinquishment of arrangement but rather a analytical contemplation upon its dynamics. "(Payne 437.) It combines aspects of reader – response criticism and deconstructive criticism. Deconstruction affirms the arbitrariness of language most strikingly by exposing the contradictions in a discourse. (Lynn 112). The text's structure changes when the reader refers to these other words. Gaps are created by contradictions & ambiguities within a text . Gaps creates an unstable meaning; and show the unity and division of the text. According to Iser (1679) "blanks refer to the suspended connectability in the text . . ." The structure of the literary text guides the reader's interpretation which is constantly being modified. Interpretation is the result of the dynamic interaction between the text & the reader. The combination of the two is what Iser calls the "virtual text". The virtual text lies between the artistic pole (the author's text) & the aesthetic pole (the reader's interpretation). Interpersonal experience is the isolated experience we have of each other in our minds, but we cannot fully experience what others experience. Thus the gaps in are experiences are filled in by dyadic interaction. Textual Experience does not allow oral communication and interchange of ideas, meaning there is no dyadic interaction. Thus, there are doubtful gaps between the reader and the text. Gaps & blanks are the most important elements of post-structuralism. Communion of gaps: The text – reader relationship alters when gaps between what is "revealed" are connected. Blanks leave open the connection between the textual perspectives, and so spur the reader into coordinating these perspectives and patterns . . . they induce the reader to perform basic operations within the text. (Iser 1677). "Negations" adjure accustomed knowledge and then cancel it out. The cancelled knowledge still "remains in view" as the reader modifies his /her interpretation. " It makes possible the organisation of a referential field. " – (Iser 1678).

Rosenblatt 's reader response Transactional Theory (1938, 1978) proposes that : Rosenblatt : the reader, rather than the text, dictates stance ., readers' attention narrows, any text can be read either way, when reading any one text, readers transfer along a perpetuity from the aesthetic to efferent stance .

"Literature is the means of promoting critical thinking and multiple perspectives, (given that) readers bring a wealth of emotions, experiences & knowledge to a reading that, in turn, provoke associations with the words, images and ideas in the text. (Rosenblatt 2). Readers are thinkers. They build up meanings, ideas to be retained.

According to Robert A. Heinlein, Stranger in a Strange land (linguistics) – "Long human words (the longer the better) were easy, unmistakable and rarely changes their meanings . . . but short words were slippery, unpredictable, changing their meanings without any pattern . "

During the late 1970's and 1980's, reader response criticism, inveigled in part by tendencies in other disciplines, especially behaviourism and psychoanalytical theories expanded to include a study of the reader as subject a combination of various social conventions, defined and positioned socially by his environment. This shift from the relationship between reader and text and their respective impact, to a focus on self knowledge and observation has been epitomized in compilations, accommodating Jane Tompkins's Reader- response Criticism ; from formalism to post structuralism (1980). Recent works by critics including David Bleich, Norman Holland and Stanley Fish, have also augmented the cynosure of reader -response theory to include legitimacy & importance of interpretations commanded by the association or environments colonized by the readers. This is a departure from their prevenient held position, which asserted the supremacy of relationship between reader and text, disregarding the environment. Fish, in peculiar laid out his theories regarding interpretive strategies, which he stated are shared by " illuminative localities " in several essays during the 1980's and later . In his study of the history of reader – response criticism, Terence R. Wright explains that -

While the field has extended its lines of demarcation to constitute copious accessions, the advent reader-response critics have with the act of reading remains consistent. What has commutated is the realization these theorists now have of the ways in which environment, history, politics, and even sexual acclimatization can effect a reader response to a text. This augmentation yardstick has led many latest critics to refer to this type of hyper critical theory as reader – oriented criticism rather than reader – response criticism.

This theory has some limitations also –1. Not every apprehension, perception, assimilation may be authentic, logical. 2. Students can also surpass (outstrip)the interpretation levels. 3. Students can also disharmonize & altercate with each others interpretations.

4. CONCLUSION

Even the author's meaning is no barring. The prerogative of the text must be awaited upon. Iser's work has come in for a good deal of colloquy, Stanley fish, for example, advances rejections to his defiance to take a firm stand and his covenant on several issues. On question of determinacy, Fish says that the blanks in a text do not exist independent of reader; nor do they exist prior to act of interpretation. Interacting with the text and interacting with the world are activities which are mediated. In the same way, there is nothing totally indeterminate, since all the time the reader operates within an interpretative framework. There is no such thing as something being given, and the reader's contribution. But each interpretative strategy is valid only within a particular system of intelligibility.

REFERENCES

- [1] Iser, Wolfgang. "The Reading process : A phenomenological Approach, " New literary history, Vol. 3, No. 2, On Interpretation: 1 (Winter, 1972):(188-203).
- [2] <https://www.slideshare.net/mobile/rea> . . .
- [3] Iser, Wolfgang (1978). "The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response: "London and Henley: The Johns Hopkins University press.
- [4] Abrams, M. H. Harpham Geoffrey Galt. "A Glossary of Literary Terms " , ELEVENTH EDITION: (330-333).
- [5] Sterne, Laurence, "Tristram Shandy "(london, 1956), ii, chap. 11, 79.
- [6] Woolf, Virginia "The Common Reader " , First series (London, 1957), p. 174
- [7] Frye, Northrop. "Anatomy of Criticism " (New York, 1967), pp. 169ff.