



Scrutiny and The Growth of English Studies

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English Studies, Education, Scrutiny, English Criticism.

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ABSTRACT *The journal Scrutiny significantly contributes to the growth of English as a central discipline in the educational institutions in Britain after the First World War. The journal harnesses the spirit of national consciousness regarding English education. Scrutiny through its criticism provided a strong ground for creating an intellectual environment among the critical and conscious minds in the period.*

The Newbolt Report of 1921 on *The Teaching of English in England* states that English is near than before to becoming a universally known language. The conditions created by the war have spread the knowledge of our language over the five continents of the earth. Most of this extension of English may be due to political or commercial reasons. But there are higher reasons too. The intrinsic value of our literature is increasingly recognized.

Moreover, The Newbolt Report was seriously concerned with Lloyd George's remark in 1918. George puts forward that:

The most formidable institutions we had to fight in Germany was not the arsenals of the Krupps or the yards in which they turned out submarines, but the schools of Germany. They were our most formidable competitors in business and our most terrible opponents in war. An educated man is a better worker, a more formidable warrior, and a better citizen. That was only half-comprehended before the war. (Baldick 93)

Thus, in the post-war period the Newbolt Report aimed to adopt some practical measures upon the development of English Studies in schools and universities in England. The committee perhaps acknowledged two benefits that English Studies owed to the war.

Firstly, the new sense of national pride provided for literature to become a standard bearer.

Secondly and most importantly, the committee noted with satisfaction that a new importance was attached by the government and people alike in education.

Yet in the time of the First World War the nation led people to believe in the power of the schools for social and intellectual progress. The sense of pride in the national language and culture developed increasingly. Education in English came to be perceived as inevitable for inculcating discipline, adaptability, and intelligence among the soldiers and countrymen. But such spontaneous inclination towards education was not sufficient for the development of English Studies in the future. So, the Newbolt Report built certain plans and principles for the new national education. The Report expressed the ambitious goal for English Studies in order to boost up the development of the acclaimed world language. The Report gave the slogan *Culture unites classes* which Newbolt attributes to Matthew Arnold in his Introduction. Another section in the Report entitled

"Literature and the Nation" contains the same goal with even more urgency. The Report recognizes that great literature and common life have been increasingly separated since the middle ages. So, it proposes a liberal education based on English that would form a new element of national unity, linking together the mental life of all classes. But in the post-war critical period the committee could not execute its objectives on liberal education.

As a result, the lofty ambitions of the Newbolt Report, the high hopes for literary study as a renewal of civilization were dampened. At this crucial point in the history of English Studies, it was only at Cambridge, that English was established as a truly central subject with the innovative criticisms of T. S. Eliot and I.A. Richards. In this context the role the periodical entitled *Scrutiny* played a significant role in the Emergence of Criticism that facilitated the Revolution of English Studies.

The aim of this paper is to show the growth of English Literary Studies through the contribution of the critical journal *Scrutiny*. The paper attempts to throw light on how *Scrutiny* provided for the exploration of the possibilities of English Studies as a central discipline and paved the pathway for the development of English Studies. The main focus of the journal *Scrutiny* was to have a literary criticism at a time when significant changes in method were initiated in England by T. S. Eliot and I.A. Richards. F. R. Leavis, the editor of *Scrutiny* claimed in an article in 1963 that *Scrutiny* affected something like a revaluation of English Literature. The journal was widely read amongst the influential readers of schools and universities. Therefore, the aim of the journal was to a great extent educational. In its first number itself, *Scrutiny* proposed that:

a serious educational movement (that) will---aim fostering in schools and education generally, an anti-acquisitive an anti-competitive moral bent, on the ground that the inherited code disastrously and obviously inappropriate in modern conditions. (Musgrave 254)

Leavis in *Mass Civilization and Minority Culture*, views that in the post-war period Civilization and Culture became antithetical terms. The growth of English Studies threatened the sense of power and authority which challenged the prevailing class hierarchy in the society. As the literary criticisms made English Literature familiar to the intellectual minority, it provided for the expansion of English Studies.

Scrutiny was not a journal that entirely devoted its editions for publication and discussion of the educational policies in England. There were issues which did not have even an article on education. But it is through its literary criticisms of English literature that *Scrutiny* makes its remarkable contribution to the development of English Studies. Leavis in *Restatement for Critics* emphasizes the need of criticism to attain the centre of real consensus for a fruitful engagement with literary studies.

Leavis's opinion is practiced through *Scrutiny* where, the journal cultivated a new interest in the readers, writers, students and teachers--the entire literary minority, towards literature by reorganizing it on the basis of tested values. Leavis argues about values, about judgments that are continuous with our daily lives. The centre of the educational point in *Scrutiny* was made by Leavis in connection to I.A. Richards who said 'to set up a critic is to set up a judge of values.' It was how Richards made a special claim to criticism itself. Richards' views along with Leavis's conception of English Literature as a central subject at the university level was equivalent with the ambitions of the Newbolt Report to have English as the 'keystone' of national education. Thus Leavis explains in *Retrospect to Scrutiny*, how the creative process of criticism allowed to renew and kept living the interest in literature.

Our special business was literary criticism but saw nothing arbitrary in taking the creative process of criticism--as representative and type of the process in which the human world is created and renewed and kept living-- (Baldick 225)

He wrote in *The Common Pursuit*:

"Literature cannot confine itself to the intensive local analysis associated with practical criticism--to the scrutiny of the 'words on the page'--: a real literary interest is an interest in man, society, and civilization, and its boundaries cannot be drawn." (Gregor 437)

Such linking of literature to day to day life through its critical concerns attributes to enlarge the scope of English Studies. For Leavis Literature is something of the first importance and a substitute way of life.

Literary Criticism was the essential discipline of an English school because it was possible only through criticism to fulfill the needs of contemporary education by relating to contemporary social needs. In May 1933, a meeting was held in Cambridge to discuss whether:

the education movement that *Scrutiny*-- in any case represents now be profitably made more explicit a movement. Further, the hope was that *Scrutiny* would provide men and women in schools, colleges and universities with lines of communication and a focus--Such a conception, of course, involve a conception of a desirable society. (Musgrave 255)

Scrutiny played a pivotal role in the professionalization of English by emphasizing the profession of teaching as a whole. Leavis uses Richards to motivate the teachers of English and to make them realize their importance in the future. Richards states that the instinct towards health--the instinct of self-preservation--that we must believe to be in the human spirit will take effect through them--will yield enough in immediate effect to make whole-hearted devotion possible. Leavis on the basis of this insists that the aim of education should be to give command of the art of

living. I. A. Richards asserts the significance of advertisement as a means of criticism to provide new ideas to the multitudes. Accordingly, he casts that "Criticism will justify itself as an applied science when it is able to indicate how an advertisement may be profitable without necessarily being crass" (Baldick 140).

English Studies which began as a civilizing and humanizing agency could attain its practical directions through criticisms. Literary Criticisms formulate the line of thinking and thereby bears an educational importance. It is hereby significant to consider that the students of English Literature are not required to compose a poem or a play but to comment and write critically on them. Therefore, it is seen that Literary Criticism proper allows for the development of English Studies. English Literature, therefore as it came down to us today is conditioned by the issue of criticism. *Scrutiny*, in the long run, confirmed the social function of English Criticism and formulated the basic platform for English Literature to evolve.

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