

# ഇശൽ പൈതൃകം

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2022 ഡിസംബർ

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## Beyond Theory: The Cognitive Turn and the Revival of Reading in Literary Studies

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*Literary theory had been a revolutionary intervention in the study of literature when it sprouted. Moving in and through this world has perplexed, confused and complicated the perspectives of the reader in various ways. For many people, the shift to theoretical and philosophical approach in interpreting a literary text from the pleasure seeking exercise made reading a rigid and often disturbing process. The sclerosis brought about by theory in reading has been interrogated and problematized by many anti-theoretical approaches. This paper attempts to establish that there is a cognitive turn in literary studies by tracing the trajectory of cognitive attitudes in the critical methodologies existing since classical times. A change in perspective helps criticism to transcend this rigidity. This Paper attempts to offer a solution to the problem by calling forth a perspectival shift in viewing critical methodologies from a cognitive point of view. This study tries to prove that subjective reading has its place in various critical strategies which are generally observed as objective interpretative tool. It also shows how the cognitive approach prioritize the elements of empathy and experience in literary reading which are often unnoticed in the process of theoretical interpretation.*

**Keywords:** Cognitive poetics, reading, interpretation, literary theory, Romanticism, Cognitive Cultural Studies

The critical perspectives in textual reading change from time to time. The prescriptive rigor of classical criticism, the emotional turbulence of romantic criticism, formalistic fervor of New Criticism, the linguistic turn of Structuralist and Poststructuralist theories, and the political turn of Cultural Studies are some of the shifts in perspectives that came in literary criticism from time to time. Literature is meant for reading, and the concept of reading changes from time to time especially with the coming of literary theories as a framework of interpretation. In order to give an intellectual face lift for literary criticism there has been attempts to deteriorate the subjective and emotive critical responses to a text as mediocre. Any reading that demands the company of a theory is a tedious and intellectual exercise. When reading becomes a brainy compulsive effort, the readers feel exhausted. So, reading should cease to be a play of theoretical jargons and it should be a pleasurable exercise.

The major mission of Post theory was to tackle this issue of over theorizing in reading. McQuillan (1999) in his introduction to Post-Theory looks at the post theoretical project as “impatience.”

'Post-Theory', for Geoffrey Bennington, means a falling-off-from theory (theory, for Bennington, being the practice of 'thinking hard'). 'Post-Theory', for Nicholas Royle is the possibility of the hitherto unthought. In their opposition, each definition assumes certain impatience with Theory at this stage in the theoretical game. If the collection entitled Post-Theory can be said to represent something, then it might represent this impatience, and the effort to revise it (the impatience, the theory) in productive directions. (p. ix)

The revision that the post theoreticians talked about was accomplished with the cognitive approach in various disciplines. The idea of the cognitive or the mental process involved in understanding has been latent in literary theory and criticism for several centuries. But, there was no proper text documenting it till Peter Stockwell's project on Cognitive Poetics. According to the Oxford English Dictionary the term cognitive refers to the “the process by which knowledge and understanding is developed in the mind.” In Literary criticism the cog-

nitive approach attempts to unravel the mental process involved in reading.

The theoretical edifice of cognitive approach in literature got established in the twentieth century and is a still continuing project. But the cognitive turn happened in the eighteenth century slightly with the neoclassicists and prominently with the Romantics. In her study on the relationship between Cognitive Cultural Studies, Amanda Hiner (2018) showcases several works which authenticate that the cognitive turn happened in the eighteenth century. According to her, Karin Kukkonen's *A Prehistory of Cognitive Poetics* (2017) examines a neo-classical equivalent of cognitive poetics and demonstrates how eighteenth-century writers constructed a "principled, multi-faceted account of how literature entangles and delights the mind" (xi). Another work by Wendy Jones's titled *Jane on the Brain: Exploring the Science of Social Intelligence with Jane Austen* (2017) is an exploration of Austen's novels through the "lenses of cognitive, social, and evolutionary psychology" (Hiner, 2018).

The seeds of cognitive approach in literature were laid very early in the classical criticism since the time of the classical 'romantic' critic Longinus. The notion of sublimity that sprouted in classical times is quite a romantic ideal. Longinus's notion of sublime or aesthetic elevation of the mind refers to the way in which the text influences the reader's mind and senses. Though the five sources of sublime – "Power of forming great conceptions, Vehement and inspired passion, the due formation and use of figures of speech, noble diction, dignified and elevated composition" (Bryson (n.d)) – form part of the rhetorics of a work of art, they are directed towards the emotional fulfillment of the reader.

On the sublime has traditionally been read as a manual of elevated style and relegated to the domain of the merely rhetorical. The rhetorical sublime has in turn been linked with a notion of affective criticism in which analysis of style and expression centres upon questions of subjective feeling and emotive force. (Guerlac, 1985, p. 275)

Romanticism idealised the emotive as the heart of poetry. The romantics who spoke about poetry as “the spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions,” and “emotions recollected in tranquillity” were approaching texts cognitively. The idea of imagination is the converging point where the romantics and the cognitivists meet. Coleridge spoke of imagination as the greatest faculty of creative genius. He dedicated a chapter of *Biographia Literaria* to talk about the faculty of imagination. Bruhn (2009) says that “when it comes to the imagination, Cognitive science picks up where thinkers like Immanuel Kant and Samuel Taylor Coleridge left off” (p. 544). He gives an account of several treatises on imagination as a signature aspect of human cognition as seen in the theorizations of Gilles Fauconnier, Mark Turner, Mark Johnson and George Lakoff (Bruhn, 2009, p. 543). Fauconnier and Turner (2002) say “The next step in the study of the mind is the scientific study of the nature and mechanisms of the imagination” (p. 8).

Notwithstanding Romanticism being an ideology of simplicity, deep down, it is the philosophy of the complexities of the mental processes. The *Neural Sublime: Cognitive Theories and Romantic Texts* by Alan Richardson “intends to provoke a more interactive dialogue between the humanities and sciences, which brings into play current scientific theory to open a new perspective on Romantic literary texts and praxis” (Heymans, 2012, p. 127). Through the six essays in the text he shares his interest in Romantic literature and Cognitive Science. Each essay explores a different intersection of Romanticism and the sciences of the mind and brain. The deliberations include “experience of the sublime and the neuroscience of illusion, the Romantic imagination and visual imaging, the figure of apostrophe and linguistic theory, fictional representations of the mind and “theory of mind” theory, depictions of sibling incest and neo-Darwinian theories of mental behaviour, and representations of female speech and cognitive developmental psychology” (Richardson, 2010). Richardson's insightful analysis opens fresh perspectives on British Romanticism, persuading critics to initiate new perspectives in cognitive literary studies.

One of the names highly remembered along with Coleridge for the reflections on imagination is the enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant. Though Romanticism is generally viewed by many critics as an anti-enlightenment project, the high defender of enlightenment, Immanuel Kant's affinity with romanticism can be seen in his account of imagination. "Whatever other influences it had on his contemporaries and successors in German philosophy, Kant's philosophy, especially his aesthetic theory with its path breaking new view of the power of imagination, contained the seeds of early German Romanticism" (Kneller, J. (2007). Kant looked into the cognitive process involved in imagination. "Kant proffers a highly nuanced and complex psychological account of the origins of our feeling of the mysteries and majesty of nature" (Kneller, J. 2007).

The Aesthetes' slogan "art for art's sake," that proclaimed aesthetic beauty as the end of art also highlights the importance of subjectivity and feeling in reading the text. Walter Pater's impressionistic and subjective criticism had unforeseen influence upon many modern tendencies, especially cognitive critical methodologies like Reader Response Criticism of 1960s. Aestheticism focuses on experience and embodiment of aesthetic beauty in art works. Nevertheless we identify any one to one correspondence between cognitive theory and Aestheticism, the ideals of 'experience' and 'embodiment' are common to both. The reader experiences the embodied reality of the text, the texture, as it is called in the Cognitive Poetics. Cognitivists focus on this texture and its experience and how the subject matter of experience is embodied linguistically, stylistically, historically, culturally, psychologically and in all other related ways. The Aesthetes also value the beauty and experiential quality of a text.

In the twentieth century Cognitive Poetics stabilized all such cognitive responses till date under a single roof. Cognitive Poetics encompasses all mental and emotional processes in reading. The term is coined by Reuven Tsur. Though the term poetics takes us back to the classical times of literary appreciation, cognitive critics looked through and beyond the poetic devices and their rhetorical affluence. Cognitive Poetics works at the experiential level of literature. The cognitive turn in literary theory can otherwise be labeled as the return

of reading. With Barthe's (1977) classic declaration of the death of the author, it was not only the author who was dead, but also the process of reading. The Poststructuralist obsession with the text valued interpretation above reading. Hence reading became a heavy intellectual exercise in academia devaluing all simple readings of a text useless. It is at this juncture that the cognitive theorists came with the liberal idea of reading a text rather than interpreting. It "is all about reading" (Stockwell, 2002, p. 2). This is an emerging interdisciplinary field that focuses primarily on reading the text rather than interpreting it. Peter Stockwell simplifies the task of the reader to reading and not to a theoretical exercise.

In scientific terms, readings are the data through which we can generalise patterns and principles across readers and texts. However, understanding what we do when we engage in reading literature need not be an abstract or highly and purely theoretical exercise.... In short, cognitive poetics takes context seriously. Furthermore, it has a broad view of context that encompasses both social and personal circumstance. (Stockwell, 2002, p. 4)

Cognitive Poetics promotes plain reading over interpretation that demands much intellectual exercise. It celebrates reading that does not demand discussion. While promoting reading over interpretation, Stockwell is not taking the position of a liberal humanist. He does not neglect scientific criticism; rather he focuses on scientific reading. Based on the precepts of Psychology and Linguistics, Cognitive Poetics talks about what happens with the natural process of reading. It also scientifically studies the internal process involved in reading. "We can read literature any time we want to, but when we want to think about what we are doing when we read, when we want to reflect on it and understand it, then we are not simply reading; we are engaged in a science of reading" (Stockwell, 2002, p. 2-3).

To understand cognitive turn in literary theory as an anti-theoretical move within literary theory we should go back to Terry Eagleton. Eagleton's account on the historical context of literary theory states the importance of experience in theoretical formations. The discussion on what after theory started with Eagleton's groundbreaking in-



roduction to his volume, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* that was published in 1983. In the introduction as well as in his subsequent work, *After Theory* he declared that the theories of Poststructuralism, Deconstruction and other cultural theories did not achieve its aim of interrogating the power system and in a way strengthened the system that they wanted to dismantle. Eagleton urged his readers to focus on issues of class, power, ideology and resistance while studying literature. In short, Eagleton wanted his readers to transcend the confines of literary theory and criticism for the sake of cultural theory. Through the cultural perspective he wants to bring social change through literature. He concludes his book by saying that he wanted “to help the lion to awaken” (Eagleton, 2011, p. 217)

Though Eagleton discusses the problems with the literary theory, the solution he provides seems incomplete and still theoretical. His indirect suggestion of a socialist society as the ideal one still looks political. It is not about the creation of an ideal society that we should speak, but about creating an ideal perspective. The happiness of the people is important. It is part of the emotional well-being of the community. But no theorist talks about the emotional contentment of the people while getting busy with interrogating the power system. And there lies the core of all the issues. The cognitive approach to literary theory becomes relevant at this juncture. This approach provides the answer for the doubts raised by Eagleton in his works.

Cognitive turn in literary theory finds a renewed interest in the aesthetics of the text by focusing on the formalistic aspects of text which were discarded by the poststructuralists. Images and metaphors play an important role in cognitive approach in arts and humanities. The idea of embodiment is central to this approach. This is because the approach gives importance to experience and feeling which are mediated through embodiment. “Cognitive science and the embodied mind theory have created a stronger interdisciplinary connection between cognitive understanding in social science and humanities” (Bondebjerg, 2017, p.1). The notion of embodiment replaces text with texture, which is the feeling of the text.

Even when the idea of embodiment acquires an important place in cognitive approach, there is also a close connection with language. It takes aspects from cognitive linguistics which combines language and psychology. Besides having this connection, it also reacts to the traditional assumptions of linguistics which inspired several literary theories. Saussurian Linguistics which became the bases of the theories of Deconstruction, Semiotics etc. gave prominence for the truth in language. In other words, these theories proposed the idea that nothing exists prior to language. For Saussure “our thought – apart from its expression in words – is only a shapeless and indistinct mass” and that “there are no pre-existing ideas, and nothing is distinct before the appearance of language” (Saussure 111-112). He disregards the mental process involved in the formation of ideas. Cognitive scientists contradicted this idea. “Most cognitive scientists would agree that language has a role to play in the construction of thought, but its role derives from the embeddedness of language in the workings of the mind/brain, which is not at all ‘shapeless and indistinct’ when it comes to making meaning” (McConachie, 2006, p. 3).

With this cognitive turn in theory the boundaries that existed between different theories got blurred. It also offers a mixed way of looking at culture and cultural representations. In this approach “we are not constrained by the choice of methodology by a consideration of boundaries between different sub fields. The same cultural phenomenon can be approached from a variety of cognitive theoretical perspectives; sometimes the best strategy is a combination of different methodologies” (Zunshine, 2015, p. 2-3). By doing so the traditional divide between culture and cultural artefacts is erased and both culture and cultural representations are considered as similar experiences of the mind.

The cognitive approach by itself is evolving day by day. It surpasses the stagnation of thought in other literary theories by adding new collaborations every time.

Cognitive scientists cross disciplinary boundaries daily, attracting new academic fields into their orbit. If the traditional cognitive sciences drew on neuroscience, philosophy of mind, artificial intelligence, linguistics, evolutionary anthropology, and cognitive de-

developmental and clinical psychology, today the list is expanded to include work done in comparative psychology, law, economics, music, engineering and political science. (Zunshine, 2015, p. 3)

Umberto Eco has talked about open text in the context of interpretation. Cognitive turn in literary studies offers openness in the context of reading. The cognitive reading that focuses on the texture accommodates any method in reading that supports the feeling of that text. This tendency in cognitive approach to texts takes away the burden of philosophizing that the literary theories brought in the literary world. It is with Eco's architectural semiotics that he introduced a cognitive approach towards the text. The essay "Function and Sign: Semiotics of Architecture" (2005) not only decolonizes architecture from the dictum, buildings cannot communicate, but also opens the possibility of applying the equations of architecture in reading. Through this Eco liberates Semiotics from limiting itself within the framework of Linguistics.

The path breaking introduction of architectural semiotics goes beyond the architecture and related studies. When it is applied to texts other than buildings, especially artistic works, readers get an opportunity to view those texts also as an embodiment. The idea of embodiment central to cognitive approach is part of the architectural discourse. Eco's attempt is to broaden the concept of architecture to Semiotics. "It should be noted that the term architecture will be used in a broad sense here, indicating phenomena of industrial design and urban design as well as phenomena of architecture proper (Eco, 2005, p. 174). Beyond the concept of building, architecture is an experience which in turn connects architectural discourse to cognitive studies. It is evident when Vitruvius, the classical architect, says in his *Ten Books of Architecture* (2001) that this science is acquired by practice and by theory. Pellagrino (2006) views Architecture as the science of all sciences and therefore its application is unlimited.

Architecture is a science that should be accompanied by a great variety of studies and knowledge, by means of which it judges all works of the other arts that belong to it: to the point where most cannot comprehend that the understanding and memory of one

man should be capable of so much knowledge. All sciences, however, have a communication and link between them; universal science is composed of all these sciences, so that it is enough for the architect to know the consistencies... between certain things that are common to all the sciences, one of which helps in learning another more easily. (p. 213-14)

The architectural perspective in reading works that started with Umberto Eco is seminal in cognitive approach. Though, Eco was a semiotician, his attempts to study the semiotics of architecture add a different parameter to the study of signs. Till Eco's introduction of architectural semiotics, Semiotics remained a linguistic discipline. The inclusion of functionality and communication in relation to architectural signs, and their application in the field of literary analysis, paved way for the cognitive turn in Semiotics. This came to be called as Cognitive Semiotics. Though Eco foresaw the cognitive side of semiotics, it was Thomas C. Daddesio who talked about the possibility of connecting cognitive studies and Semiotics for the first time. There were many theorists who supported this idea. "Cognitive studies need to become (more) semiotic, as much as Semiotics needs to become (more) cognitive (Brandt, 2020)." Cognitive Semiotics aims at "...integrating methods and theories developed in the disciplines of cognitive science with methods and theories developed in semiotics and the humanities, with the ultimate aim of providing new insights into the realm of human signification and its manifestation in cultural practices (as cited in Zlatev, 2015, p. 1043)." It concentrates on meaning. Besides the meaning level it involves investigations at the experiential and ethnographic level.

In film studies also we can see the influence of cognitive Semiotics. *Cognitive Semiotics of Film* (2000) is a monograph written by Warren S. Buckland. Within the monograph, Warren Buckland argues that the conflict between cognitive film theory and contemporary film theory is unproductive. According to him cognitive semiotics of film is a neglected branch of film theory that works together with the terms linguistics and semiotics.

Cognitive approach revolutionised various fields in literary studies. This approach has brought back the element of the emotional and the subjectivity of the reader. In this context, the impact of the cognitive approach is seen in various fields. The cognitive turn in literary studies releases the process of reading from the exegetical rigour of philosophical reading, but without losing the scientific nature of reading.

The impact of cognitive turn is perceptible in Cultural Studies. In Cultural Studies which itself is an interdisciplinary formation, the cognitive turn resulted in the blurring of boundaries between various disciplines. “The boundaries between various subfields of cognitive cultural studies thus remain fluid as a function of the opportunistic nature of cognitive science, that is, of its tendency to grow and change by complementing and enhancing various aspects of other disciplines” (Zunshine, 2015, P. 4). Cognitive Cultural studies “features work that combines literary and cultural analysis with insights from neuroscience, discursive psychology, cognitive evolutionary psychology and anthropology, cognitive linguistics and philosophy of mind.” (Zunshine, 2015, P. 1).

The decanonization of texts and the growing academic interest in popular culture which happened in Cultural Studies triggered the cognitive turn in Cultural Studies. The obsession with canonical literature in academia echoed a high sounding segregation of what is high and low culture. Cultural Studies interrogated this great divide between the texts. It looks around the texts differently.

Cultural Studies moves toward a replacement of an aesthetic definition of culture with an anthropological one, cultural studies is perceived, correctly, as an expansion of the range of objects of study beyond traditionally appreciated literature – first in order to include works by authors deemed to have been marginalized unfairly, second to approach non-traditional aesthetic material from popular culture (such as film), and third to move beyond the aesthetic altogether to a study of the artefacts of everyday life. (Berman, 1999, P. 174)

The divide no more exists when the emotional replaces the intellectual. Popular culture is the culture that is widely favoured or well-liked by many people. (Storey, 2009, p. 5). This is the most widely accepted definition of popular culture, which gives a cognitive perspective for popular culture. This quantitative definition focuses on the emotional aspect of reception. Something becomes popular when the mass of people quickly gives an emotional response to it. So while analysing the popular culture, it is impossible to discard the working of mind in popularizing something, alongside with the ideological matters ruling the popularity. The popularity of a work of art or a cultural production is determined by the range of communication of that work.

The idea of communication is central to cognition. Cultural Studies, since its beginning, focuses on the politics of communication. In the essay “Encoding/Decoding,” Hall speaks about the politics involved in encoding and decoding the messages disseminated especially through television programmes. “Hall goes on to argue that messages have a ‘complex structure of dominance,’ because at each stage they are ‘imprinted’ by institutional power relations (During, 2001, p. 507).”

These messages are highly influential that people are emotionally moved by the television programmes. Hall (2001) talks about this cognitive side of meaning generation involved in decoding the message.

It is this set of decoded meanings ‘which have an effect’, influence, entertain, instruct, or persuade, with very complex perceptual, cognitive, emotional, ideological or behavioural consequences. In a ‘determinate’ moment the structure employs a code and yields a ‘message’: at another determinate moment the ‘message’, via its decodings, issues into the structure of social practices. We are now fully aware that this re-entry into the practices of audience reception and ‘use’ cannot be understood in simple behavioural terms. The typical processes identified in positivistic research on isolated elements – effects, uses, ‘gratifications’ – are themselves framed by structures of understanding, as well as being produced by social and economic relations, which shape their ‘realisation’ at the reception end of the chain and which permit the meanings

signified in the discourse to be transposed into practice or consciousness (to acquire social use value or political effectivity). (p. 509 – 510)

Hall focuses at the reader's end conceptualizing the mystery behind communication in cultural productions. So it won't be wrong to say that the cultural turn in literary studies is also a cognitive turn. Even before Zunshine's famous labelling "Cognitive Cultural Studies," the cognitive aspect of reading was inherent in Cultural studies since its inception.

After getting bored with the homogenization of cultural readings in Cultural studies many of the cultural theorists started focusing on the regional cultures. Regional culture is a mixture of local practices and behaviours of any region. Attempts to read the region cannot be devalued as narrowing down the global perspectives of culture. Bringing out the regional voices that are often left unnoticed is an attempt to satiate the cognitive requirements of any community. By doing so, their emotions are respected, valued and upheld. Individual voices are sharpened instead of subsuming under the mass outcry. Moreover the recent researches in Cognitive Psychology prove that cultural factors influence cognition. This means that our understanding of any idea is driven by the culture in which we live. Li-Jun Ji (2016) makes a review of the researches conducted on the relationship between culture and cognition. He brings out the details of an empirical research conducted by Witkin and Berry in 1975, which is relevant to the research on culture and cognition.

They reviewed cross cultural studies on psychological differentiation and proposed that one's eco-cultural environment shapes individuals' field dependence — the degree to which the perception of an object is affected by contextual factors surrounding the object. In particular, the field-dependent perceptual mode is associated with tight social structure and sedentary agricultural ecological settings, whereas the field-independent perceptual mode is associated with loose social structure and mobile hunting ecological settings. (p. 105)

Therefore region specific readings of cultures and their representations in cultural production contributes to the cognitive take on Cultural studies. The above theorization of cognition, nevertheless being a psychological explanation, confers Cultural Studies as a precursor to the exuberance of cognitive readings that became prominent with Cognitive Poetics.

Cognitive Cultural Studies is a pivotal point in the timeline of cognitive turn in reading. The cognitive turn is not limited to this. The cognitive turn in several fields transformed them by looking beyond the traditional prescriptive or descriptive theories of criticism. One such field is the theatre, which by itself is cognitive in several senses.

The Cognitive approach in theatre studies is a response to the Saussurian Linguistics. “Most cognitive scientists would agree that language has a role to play in the construction of thought, but its role derives from the embeddedness of language in the workings of the mind/brain, which is not at all ‘shapeless and indistinct’ when it comes to making meaning” (McConachie, 2006, p. 3). In theatre the concept of audience is not limited to readership. Theatre considers them as spectator. Empathy and emotional response are more crucial to a spectator’s experience. The attitudes in theatre started changing with the cognitive approach. Rather than deciphering the sign systems working within a drama, the cognitive approach gives importance for the empathy that the drama evokes in the spectator. It is in a way a reinvention of the Aristotelian theory emotional purification, Katharsis. Tragedies are meant for emotional purification. There is no difference in the case of the eighteenth century sentimental comedies. As the title indicates these plays focuses on sentiments. These comedies concentrate on the inner virtues of the man to show how the inherently good characters go astray through misleading or bad examples. These comedies portray how “middle-class protagonists triumphantly overcome a series of moral trials.” Such comedy aimed at producing tears rather than laughter” (Britanica Encyclopaedia, 2018). Therefore, drama whether it is tragedy or comedy looked into the psyche of the people through its characters to understand the mental process of real human beings. So in cognitive approach to drama “knowledge, particularly self-knowledge, became equated with texts; and in the



theatre this metaphor manifested itself in the fetishizing of the gesture as the corporeal equivalent of the written sign, both evoking from their “readers” emotional, even confessional, self-evaluations” (McConachie, 2006, p.10).

The discourses on body became the breeding point of cognitive approach in Gender and Queer Studies. Foucault’s idea of body as an experiential space has revolutionised not only the field of Gender Studies, but also created a value for real bodily experiences in academics. The idea of biopolitics is also moving in the same line. The notion of body politics is not limited to sexualities alone. It has made exciting views in the discourses of power and dissention.

The cognitive turn in Queer studies views sexuality as a relationship and a feeling rather than an individual identity. “Sedgwick and Foucault worked to shift the focus away from uncovering the ‘truth’ of other people’s sexuality and towards an examination of how both expert knowledge and everyday thoughts about it get produced, how they circulate, and whose interests are served by their propagation” (Vincent 201). Foucault’s History of Sexuality documents how sexuality turns out to be a feeling and experience rather than an inner essence that comes from within. The “precarity” (Butler, 2009, p.1) of the Queer also results from the experiences of the people when they live in a heteronormative society.

Like many queer theorists who would follow later, Sedgwick and Foucault worked to shift the focus away from uncovering the “truth” of other people’s sexuality and towards an examination of how both expert knowledge and everyday thoughts about it get produced, how they circulate, and whose interests are served by their propagation....although Sedgwick does not engage with cognitive studies directly in Epistemology, the word ‘cognitive’ does come up repeatedly throughout the book—we hear of relations of ‘cognitive mastery,’ ‘cognitive wattage,’ ‘cognitive maps,’ ‘cognitive privilege,’ ‘cognitive bite,’ ‘cognitive hyperstimulation,’ ‘cognitive hiatus,’ and ‘cognitive exemption.’ (Vincent, 2015, p. 201 - 202).

Foucault's contribution to the cognitive turn is unparalleled. His genealogical approach, that discards the traditional historical approach of documenting very impersonal events chronologically, is an attempt to historicize everyday matters that are felt and experienced by people.

Feminism as a movement always looks into the experiences of women. The devaluing of their experiences becomes the central concern of feminists. The loud cry for suffragette and equality of treatment in all fields were the direct results of women's experiences. The feminist movement took a cognitive turn with the phenomenological responses headed by feminist like Simon de Beauvoir. They transformed Feminism from mere activism to an ideology that looks into the working of the mind and consciousness of women.

Recent years have seen an increased attention to the ways in which environmental narratives engage the human mind and what emotional dimensions such engagement can have. Alexa Weik von Mossner's *Affective Ecologies: Empathy, Emotion, and Environmental Narrative* makes the case for incorporating insights from cognitive science in environmental studies. The study is organized around the question of how environmental narratives appeal to our sensual perception and embodied cognition. Environment by itself is a term that can be understood based on experience. Cognitive Ecocriticism decentres anthropocentric discourses and offers an ecocentric perspective as it talks about the experiences of nature rather than the feelings of the human beings. A perspective from the point of you of how nature experiences man's actions was not present in traditional Ecocriticism. "The term embodied cognition refers to the work of neurologists, most influentially Vittorio Gallese, who have shown that humans respond to their social and material environments by mapping movements around them onto their own bodies" (Müller, 2017). This shift in focus from an anthropocentric view of nature to a nature centric view reiterates the precept of empathy and embodiment the cognitive approach upholds. Nature's experience of man's actions can be understood only when that experience is personified, embodied and empathetically viewed.

The cognitive turn in criticism thus spreads over diverse fields. The long list of fields that witnessed the cognitive approach definitely speaks a lot about the importance and rationale behind understanding the mental processes involved in any reading. The cognitive turn proves that even when criticism develops certain stigmas about being personal and emotional in the analysis of a text, the working of the author's and reader's mind in authoring and perceiving a text is an undeniable fact. Any idea that fosters total indifference to the emotional writing as well as emotional understanding of a text is baseless and illogical.

While discussing the cognitive approach, there is an endless feeling of déjà vu. Though the label was often absent while tracing the trajectory of the cognitive turn, it was dormant in several critical and philosophical methods use for reading a text. The ontological concerns about cognitive studies may be confusing and indistinct for several scholars even now. However the cognitive approach existed in criticism since classical period and got established in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with Romanticism. Like the post theoretical response to theory, the cognitive turn is also a response to the over intellectualisation of reading process. Cognitive approach in literature and theory has added emotional, empathetic and subjective responses to various issues rather than viewing literature through the objective lens. It rules over the obsession with objective criticism. It has made the readers feel that they read rather than interrogating the texts.

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