Abstract

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Reader-Response Theory: A Comprehensive View

This thesis is an attempt to present a comprehensive view of the role played by the reader in the reading process, what is labeled as reader-response criticism. It starts with a diachronic study tracing the instances of attention paid to the reader across the history of literary criticism and whatever fields it became attached to during its history of evolution. After that, the thesis displays the diverse models encompassed under the umbrella of what is modernly labeled reader- oriented theories. These models are: the inter-subjective model, the social model, and the psychological model (or the subjective model). The diversity of outlooks which these models exhibit is due to the fact that each model comes from a different disciplinary background. The next part of the thesis is an application of these models to Selected parts from Daniel Pollock's novel Precipice (1997). The application is carried out from the perspectives of real readers through a questionnaire which is prepared by the researcher. This application also aims at assessing the models' theoretical propositions, and providing a plateau on which a synthesis between their conflicting outlooks can be built. The last part of the thesis includes the proposition of the attempted synthesized model which provides the desired comprehensive view, and in the end comes the conclusion that such a synthesis is possible on two bases, the common grounds provided by the theoretical propositions of the three models, and the real-readers' justification of such propositions. The main core of this synthesis is a five-leveled hierarchy of responses which succeeds in integrating the validated propositions of each model into a responses matrix.