

SURFACE READING AS METHOD: NEW CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON RENAISSANCE TEXTS

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the application of surface reading methodologies to Renaissance literary texts, exploring how this critical approach offers fresh interpretive possibilities for early modern scholarship. Surface reading, which emphasizes attention to textual surfaces rather than symptomatic interpretation, challenges traditional hermeneutics of suspicion that have dominated literary criticism. By investigating how surface reading can be productively applied to Renaissance drama, poetry, and prose, this study demonstrates the method's capacity to reveal overlooked formal features, rhetorical strategies, and aesthetic dimensions of early modern texts. The paper proposes a framework for integrating surface reading with historical contextualization, argues for its methodological strengths and limitations through SWOT analysis, and presents case studies demonstrating its application to works by Shakespeare, Spenser, and Donne. Findings suggest that surface reading enriches Renaissance studies by fostering more attentive engagement with textual materiality, language, and form while complementing rather than replacing depth-oriented approaches.

KEYWORDS: Surface Reading, Renaissance Literature, Literary Methodology, Formalism, Close Reading, Textual Criticism

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