

RECONSIDERING INTERPRETATION: SURFACE-ORIENTED APPROACHES TO RENAISSANCE LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the emergence and application of surface reading methodologies in Renaissance literary studies, challenging traditional hermeneutic approaches that prioritize depth, symptomatic reading, and hidden meanings. Surface reading, as theorized by scholars such as Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, offers an alternative interpretive framework that attends to what is evident, literal, and present in texts rather than what lies beneath. This study surveys the development of surface-oriented criticism, analyzes its theoretical foundations, and evaluates its implications for reading Renaissance literature. Through examination of key Renaissance texts and current scholarly debates, this paper demonstrates how surface reading can illuminate textual features previously obscured by depth-oriented methodologies while acknowledging the approach's limitations. The findings suggest that surface reading provides valuable tools for Renaissance literary analysis, particularly in revealing formal patterns, material textual properties, and the historical specificity of literary language, though it works best in dialogue with rather than replacement of traditional interpretive methods.

KEYWORDS: *Surface Reading, Renaissance Literature, Literary Interpretation, Hermeneutics, Close Reading, Methodology*

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