

Vom Lesen lesen

Zur Konzeption und Darstellung des Lesers im postmodernen Roman

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Abstract

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This dissertation examines the reader's role in postmodern novels in which they often appear as protagonists, and in which the reading process itself is frequently depicted. Based on the aesthetic reception theories developed in Germany in the late sixties and referred to by the term "Rezeptionsästhetik", the thesis identifies different narrative strategies employed in postmodern novels in order to show how they construct a certain type of fictionalised reader, while they also contribute towards making the real readers aware of both the creation of fiction and their own active role in the reception process.

The study begins with a chapter on Italo Calvino's *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* (1979). Due to the novel's status as a paradigmatic example of postmodern reader fictionalisation, its analysis will introduce and describe central literary patterns and topics as well as theoretical concepts, which will serve as a basis for the following investigations of four German-language postmodern novels: Gerhard Köpf's *Die Strecke* (1985); Christoph Ransmayr's *Die Schrecken des Eises und der Finsternis* (1984); Felicitas Hoppe's *Pigafetta* (1999) and Walter Moers' *Die Stadt der Träumenden Bücher* (2004).

The thesis suggests that fictionalised readers are indeed portrayed in a similar way in all the examined texts. It has therefore been possible to map recurring patterns in the representation of the reader, as well as similar reader types, and topics related to reading, all of which reveal themselves to be distinctive in the depiction of readers and reading in postmodern novels. All five novels emphasise the productive power of reading, the understanding of the reader as the author's copartner in the construction of textual meaning and thus the close relationship between reading and writing.

The thesis also shows how the chosen strategies (for example reader fictionalisation, intertextuality, dialogic narration, metafictional mirroring) and their complex interaction can create the premises for the actualisation of the postmodern "play" in which readers are understood as central players, and are thus made aware of their own productive and creative power in the reception of fiction. This is achieved especially through the fictionalisation of the reader: by reading about reading, readers can become aware not only of different aspects of the reading process, but notably also the crucial role they are given in postmodern novels.