

The Evasion of Young Adult Literature from Criticism and Theorisation to Its Inevitability: A Framework for Endogenous Theory and Criticism of Young Adult Literature

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Abstract

This research aims to provide a framework for the theory and criticism of young adult literature, which is different from children and adult literatures. Hubert Hermans' Dialogical Self Theory (DST), in conjunction with the field of adolescent psychology and philosophical ideas related to adolescence, offers a promising approach to progress in this direction. To this end, it is necessary to first conceptualise "adolescence" and understand the issue of young adult literature. The article then proceeds to discuss the implications of this symbiosis for the theory and criticism of young adult literature which conceptualises the adolescent as a dialogical and polyphonic being. The problem of young adult literature lies in the interaction between internal and external voices of adolescents, specifically in terms of dialectical movements of centralisation and decentralisation within the self. This interaction occurs within the tensions of the self, which can ultimately lead to self-development. This framework has implications for the theory and criticism of young adult literature, including the differences between this literature and children's literature. Furthermore, it invites a reconsideration of the definition of young adult literature. Drawing upon typical devices in Dialogical Self Theory, it provides an approach for the criticism of young adult literature.

Keywords: Young Adult Literature Theory and Criticism, Dialogical Self Theory (DST), Hubert Hermans, Dialogue, and Polyphony

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Young adult literature scholars investigate the expansion of the theoretical horizons of Young Adult literature. As Karen Coats maintains, Young Adult literature has been instrumentalised, as if it were a house one passes on the

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way and not a destination in and of itself. Coats believes that to recognize the independence of YA literature, it is necessary to theorise it as a type of literature with its unique objectives and subject matters, the ones that distinguish it from children's and adult literatures. In other words, the theory and criticism of YA literature require endogenous approaches. This article aims to address such a need. Hubert Hermans' Dialogical Self Theory (DST) in symbiosis with theories of adolescent psychology and philosophical ideas about adolescence (which can be aligned with DST) identifies the concept and problem of adolescence. It will be revealed how this symbiosis contributes to the theory and criticism of YA literature. The present research investigates the contribution of this symbiosis to YA literature theory and criticism and takes a fresh look at the 'philosophy of adolescence.'

2. Methodology

This qualitative study employs an abstract-interpretative approach. The method of data analysis is inductive, as it extracts the concept of adolescence and orientation towards theory and criticism of adolescent literature in light of Hermans' view in conjunction with adolescent theories.

3. Theoretical Framework

This research draws upon Hubert Hermans' Dialogical Self Theory (DST). Hermans, a Dutch psychologist and a well-known scholar in narrative psychology, developed his theory in the 1990s. DST provides a conceptualisation of the self and fluid identities. In this theory, the self is originally social and potentially dialogical. It consists of multiple "I-position" or multiple and dynamic voices that maintain dialogues in the self. Re-positioning itself spatially and temporally, the self continuously adapts I-positions or the voices of the society and others, and the acquired voices or positions are always in the process of becoming and reconstructing in the self. Positions in the self, are analogous to people's behaviour in a community: some cooperate and form a coalition with common purposes or values, whereas others are more competitive and less tolerant toward the others (Hermans, 2002: 149). This theory is in line with Pragmatist traditions about the self and literary and philosophical traditions about dialogue.

4. Discussion and Analysis

In Hermans' theory, the major problems in adolescence are 'dialogue and polyphony.' They are intersects where the adolescent and YA literature meet. In the theory and criticism of YA literature regarding adolescence concerns, the knowledge of theory and criticism of YA literature joins these two subjects and

forms an interconnected triangle. Through I-position, meta-position, etc., DST explains the mechanisms and processes of power representation, subjectivity, identity, conflict, growth, maturity, and abjection as prevalent issues in YA literature. One of the implications of DST in symbiosis with adolescent theories for endogenous theory and criticism of YA literature is a fresh interpretation of the difference between children's and YA literature. In this light, the differences between the two need to be seen in the quantity and quality of children's and adolescents' internal voices or positions, the types of dialogue they have with each other, and the way the voices play their role under the influence of the two fundamental structures of development, i.e., centralising and decentralising forces. Re-defining YA literature in light of this development and search for meaning and identity are intersubjective processes between adolescents and adults and are among the central concerns of the present study.

5. Conclusion

1. 'Voice' is a fundamental motif in adolescence and YA literatures. Given the fact that the concept of voice as a process and is always in change and reconstruction, and YA literature is a manifestation of this process, the critics and researchers of YA literature need to pay special attention to the existing and emerging voices in YA literature.
2. While most YA literature theories consider the process in which the adolescent character reaches maturity after dealing with different voices as bildungs literature, in accordance with DST, maturity and the search for identity are intersubjective; this renders the development of the self 'relational.' In this process, people of all ages might achieve a more mature mental state.
3. The difference between adult and YA literatures is in the quantity and quality of the repertoire of voices and manifestations of centralising and decentralising movements.
4. DST provides an appropriate framework for the analysis of emotion as a marginalised issue in YA literature. In a detailed analysis of emotion, one should identify interactive voices, the process of emotion/cognition interaction, the relation between them, the orientation of the author regarding their authenticity, and the position of the implied adolescent on the rational/emotional scale.
5. When analyzing YA literature, the critics need to focus on voice devices embedded in literary work and assess such devices as I-position, third position, enhancing positions, de-positioning, combination, etc.

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How to cite:

Shokrollahzadeh., S. 2023. "The Evasion of Young Adult Literature from Criticism and Theorisation to Its Inevitability: A Framework for Endogenous Theory and Criticism of Young Adult Literature", *Naqd va Nazaryeh Adabi*, 15(1): 29-56. DOI:10.22124/naqd.2023.25198.2491

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